DOES LACAN HAVE A THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS?

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ABSTRACT

There is a tension between an anti-biological phenomenology and a behaviouristic determinism in Lacan's thought. There are also numerous references to, on the one hand, Kant and Heidegger; and, on the other, Frege and Wittgenstein in his thought. Despite this, there has been little attempt to fully explore the relationship between continental and analytic thought in Lacan's work; and, there has been no attempt to investigate whether Lacan has a theory of consciousness even though Lacan refers to consciousness frequently in both his seminars and his writings. This thesis seeks to redress this gap in understanding.

It is argued that the relationship between consciousness and the unconscious, in Lacan's pre-Second World War (phenomenological) thought, is one of extension rather than opposition. However, his early (post-Second World War) theory of the unconscious is seen to be underpinned by a materialism that we find in the analytic, as well as the continental, tradition where consciousness is surface epiphenomena and what lies beneath (for Lacan, the unconscious) is computational process. This materialism is taken to its hyperlogical extreme in Lacan's later theory of the unconscious which, it is argued, is underpinned by a kind of digital materialism.

The early and later Lacan might be in danger of advocating a view of materialism that supports, rather than negates, analytic thought on consciousness but his theory of the unconscious can also be seen to oppose analytic thought. This thesis suggests that one reading of later Lacanian thought emphasises the relation to Frege; and another emphasises the relation to Kant. However, in this late theory of the unconscious, the rejection of a Kantian framework and the adoption (under the guidance of Jacques-Alain Miller) of a Fregean framework makes Lacan's theory of the unconscious compatible with analytic theories of consciousness.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Although Lacan was one of the most influential theorists of the twentieth century, there are relatively few books on him in English which address his work from a philosophical orientation. Ragland Sullivan's *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* (1987), Lang's *Language and the Unconscious: Jacques Lacan and the Hermeneutics of Psychoanalysis* (1997), Harasym's *Levinas and Lacan: The Missed Encounter* (1998) and Simms' *Ricoeur and Lacan* (2007) are notable exceptions. There have been attempts to explore the relation between psychoanalysis and philosophy from a materialist point of view. For example, Žižek's *Cogito and the Unconscious* (1998), *The Ticklish Subject* (2000) and *Lacan: The Silent Partners* (2006). Also, Derrida's *The Postcard: from Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (1987) and Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe's *The Title of the Letter: A Reading of Lacan* (1992) explore Lacanian thought from a deconstructive perspective. However, even though Lacan references Heidegger and Kant, on the one hand; and Frege and Wittgenstein, on the other, there has been no research on the tension between continental and analytic views in Lacanian thought. Similarly, although Lacan frequently refers to 'consciousness' in his seminars and writings (a section in *Seminar II*, for example, is entitled 'A materialist definition of the phenomenon of consciousness'), there has been no research to investigate whether Lacan has a theory of consciousness.

This thesis argues that Lacan is a materialist but, also, that his thought offers a unique perspective on the drive towards materialism that occurred in both the continental and analytic traditions during the twentieth century. The view proposed, here, is that some continental and analytic materialists view consciousness in a similar way and that

Lacanian thought on the unconscious has reciprocity with, and shows the deficiencies of, a materialist theory of consciousness. In order to clarify Lacan's position, the distinction between pre-Second World War Lacan (phenomenological), early Lacan (structuralist or, rather, materialist – which are close relatives, in the continental tradition, as they see meaning in terms of cultural practices and discourses) and later Lacan (hyperlogical) is emphasised throughout this thesis; and it is in the early and later Lacan that connections between continental and analytic thought on consciousness are seen.

Analytic materialism

Although their conclusions often differ radically, there is a strain of continental thought that seeks to learn from analytic thought and a strain of analytic thought that seeks to transform continental thought. On the analytic side, Searle, for example, reads phenomenology in an analytic way, seeing the two as complementary, and proposing a kind of property dualism in his understanding of the relationship between consciousness and intentionality so integral to continental theories of consciousness such as phenomenology. Dennett attempts to undermine phenomenology's conclusions about the supposedly symbiotic relation between consciousness and intentionality even though, by his own admission, he has not read phenomenology. Dreyfus is another American philosopher who references phenomenology in an analytic context. It is debatable as to whether we could categorise him as an analytic philosopher but he does attempt to accommodate phenomenology to analytic philosophy. He specifically seeks to redefine Heidegger as an analytic philosopher,

and – rather controversially – gives Heideggerian thought a theory of consciousness that it actually opposes.

In the analytic tradition, materialism is understood as a kind of philosophy of empiricism and is used as a descriptive term to define the general empirical approach of philosophers such as Locke, Hume and Mill. It is also used as a synonym for physicalism which is what many analytic philosophers mean when they refer to materialism. Materialists in the analytic tradition, however, have recently sought to synthesise their work with ideas more prevalent in the continental tradition. For example, Dennett defines materialism in the following way:

> The prevailing wisdom, variously expressed and argued for, is materialism: there is only one sort of stuff, namely matter – the physical stuff of physics, chemistry, and physiology – and the mind is somehow nothing but a physical phenomenon. In short, the mind is the brain. According to the materialists, we can (in principle!) account for every mental phenomenon using the same physical principles, laws and raw materials that suffice to explain radioactivity, continental drift, photosynthesis, reproduction, nutrition, and growth (Dennett 1991: 33).

Dennett's references, here, to both material ('brain') and non-material ('mind') concepts give his interpretation of materialism a more descriptive, rather than scientific, flavour which is commensurate with his efforts to account for both third person analysis and first person description, science and philosophy. What is interesting about Dennett's materialism is the extent to which it is already implicit in Engels which we will turn to shortly. We can also see definite parallels between Lacan's thought on the unconscious and analytic thought on consciousness which Žižek's work in *Cogito and the Unconscious* (1998) has helped to illuminate. Lacan, for example, shares with analytic philosophers the desire to distinguish consciousness

from intentionality, reducing consciousness from phenomenon to epiphenomenon, and he turns to Frege in his later thought to define the unconscious. Materialists, of the analytic kind, also use Frege to support their arguments about consciousness. Materialism, as understood by Dennett (and Lacan), is an in-between concept, between science and philosophy, neither empirical nor ideological but both. This materialism is a space between the continental and analytic traditions which functions much like a blend in cognitive linguistics where not only approaches, methods and styles but issues of knowledge, existence, ethics and aesthetics are mapped onto each other and blended together. However, although materialism in the analytic tradition engages with subjectivity, it is never, ultimately, a determining factor. In this tradition, objects can never really be subjects and empiricism, or even symbolic logic, are the proofs which are seen to anchor analytic materialism.

In phenomenology, consciousness is understood in terms of a holistic meaning. In analytic thought, however, consciousness is reduced to form: Dennett's heterophenomenology, on the one hand, and Dreyfus's Heideggerian AI, on the other, are illustrative of this. Analytic materialism – as a place where science meets philosophy – is subdivided further, in this thesis, into digital materialism and ontological materialism. The former is closer in spirit to analytic thought whereas the latter is closer to continental thought. Dennett advocates a kind of digital materialism whereas Dreyfus advocates a kind of ontological materialism. Digital materialism is the treatment of mental phenomena as discrete, atomic units. Ontological materialism is the treatment of human experiences as discrete, atomic units. Both of these materialisms can be viewed as materialist theories of consciousness. The early and later Lacan, this thesis suggests, advocates a theory of the unconscious which sits

between the two materialist theories of consciousness but the emphasis is upon illuminating the parallels with Dreyfus rather than Dennett in this thesis. Although, in *Seminar II,* Lacan distinguishes his materialism from the 'ordinary organicism' (Lacan 1991b: 81) of other "vulgar", or eliminative, materialisms, his thought on the unconscious is often considered a kind of AI (see Forrester 1990: 133) as both Lacan's "science" of the unconscious and AI's "science" of consciousness are underpinned by a view of conceptual modelling as regulatory principle. The argument, here, is that the development of a "science" of the unconscious in Lacanian thought means that it is always veering dangerously close to analytic rather than continental materialism which, I believe, makes his theory of the unconscious problematic.

Towards a new materialism

In the continental tradition, materialism has either been used by idealists as a term of abuse (as neo-Kantians often do); or a philosophy in which material is the "material" of nature as in Engels' *Dialectics of Nature* (1972). For Engels – and, later, Adorno – anything which has not been considered materialist, such as consciousness, is dismissed as ideology. The distinction between dialectical materialism and analytic (or, eliminative) materialism is the distinction between materialism as process and materialism as thing.[1] The goal in analytic philosophy of mind is to rid consciousness of its transcendental associations but this is a similar goal in dialectical materialism.

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[1] Stone (2007: 6-7), in referring to the French materialist feminist Delphy's views of materialism, defines the Marxist view: 'Materialism, [Delphy] says, is the view that: (1) "the way in which life is materially produced and reproduced is the base of the organization of all societies"; (2) the social relations under which the production and reproduction of life takes place are always relations in which one class exploits the work of another; (3) historical change results from changes in these relations of exploitation; (4) and what ideas and beliefs people hold depends on these exploitative social relations, which people's ideas reflect'.

Analytic materialists, such as Dennett, and Marxist materialists, such as Adorno, may be diametrically opposed in terms of philosophy but they do share a similar view of transcendental thought and seek to dismiss it as "idealist".[2] Materialism in the continental tradition has recently been the subject of much philosophical research, notably the 'Materials and Materialisms' conference in 2007 which sought to re-engage with materialism in the twenty-first century. Although traditional continental materialism understands materialism as "cultural materialism" where social reality is interpreted as ideology, there has been a recent movement in continental philosophy to see "things" as having agency which shows the influence of phenomenology and existentialism on continental materialism. Henning's project, for example, is to see 'things which speak in the slag of history ... riddled with metaphor and figuration' (Henning 2007: 18). She wishes to 'expose things as actors' and sees 'romantic animism in a place which at first sight epitomises the modernist and positivist dematerialisation of actuality' (Henning 2007: 18). The goal in this thesis is to read Lacan in the light of the kind of materialism that Henning and Stone promote, and away from analytic materialism, in order to clarify his theory of the unconscious and distinguish it from an analytic materialist theory of consciousness. This is a materialism influenced by post-Kantian approaches which do not oppose idealism and materialism.

The thought of Kant is an object of attention in both analytic thought and continental thought on materialism not least because he was perhaps the first philosopher to

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[2] In this thesis, the term "transcendental" is understood in relation to Kant's understanding of the term: 'I call all knowledge *transcendental* that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our mode of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be possible *a priori*' (Kant 1998a: A11/B25, 149). In other words, the transcendental is not "ideal" but an enquiry into the basis of knowledge. This is why phenomenology, although it opposes Kant in many ways, is a transcendental philosophy even though it is a philosophy of "things".

attempt to systematically connect the worlds of rationalism and natural philosophy (science). Kant distinguishes between the phenomenal (perception and sensory experience) and the noumenal (that which is outside perception and sensory experience – the thing in-itself and, also, noumena – objects of reason). He effectively sees the noumenal in both rational and empirical ways which has led to divergent interpretations of his thought. Kant is concerned with reconciling the "concrete" modes of experience or the unity of consciousness (a proto-phenomenological view) with the "abstract" structures of knowledge (empiricism *and* rationalism). He sees the Cartesian, epistemological, effort to make the abstract concrete – the *cogito* most notably – as a paralogism, an error in reasoning. Dennett, also, sees Descartes' epistemological argument ("I am thinking, therefore I am") as an error but, in contrast to Kant, as a surface error. For Dennett, it is a mistake to apply the kind of substance that is available to phenomenological reflection to structures of knowledge. This merely results in folk psychology. For Lacan, the gap between the two – unity of consciousness and structures of knowledge – is the unconscious. Žižek pursues a reading of Lacanian thought that seeks to connect the thought of Kant and Dennett. However, in chapter five, it is suggested that he reads Lacan, and Kant, too close to Dennett. Ultimately, Kant's transcendental idealism is the very negation of eliminative materialism and Žižek's reading of him (1998) alongside Dennett has more in common with analytic interpretations of Kant's (such as Brook's and Meerbote's) which tend mistakenly to read Kant in terms of understanding determining reason rather than reason determining understanding. In contrast to Žižek, this thesis suggests that the unconscious can be read from the perspective of reason rather than understanding, as the meaning that cannot be objectified or

formalised. This is also explored further in relation to Lacan's theory of the unconscious in chapter five.

If traditional continental materialists negate Kant and analytic theorists functionalise him, recent feminist materialists seek to re-engage with Kant's thought by emphasising a synthetic relation between what is transcendental and what is material. Sandford, for example, questions, with reference to Kant, whether the natural-biological view of sex difference – supposedly attributable to Plato – is a transcendental illusion. Transcendental is understood, in this thesis, not as merely the opposite to materialism, i.e. idealism, but as an engagement with that which lies beyond material, everyday experience; or, what allows the latter to be known to us, what allows the unknown to be known. Lacanian thought on the unconscious can be seen not, like his thought on consciousness, only in terms of materialism but also in terms of the transcendental. In chapter four, the thesis investigates this tension between the unconscious as a scientific object and the unconscious as transcendental illusion. This is taken further in order to question the extent to which Lacan shows us that a materialist theory of consciousness (which is underpinned by the kind of materialism – between philosophy and science – to which Dennett and Dreyfus refer) is also a transcendental illusion. I suggest that Lacan sees Kantian thought as a position from which to engage transcendentally with both existentialism and materialism. Unlike materialists, existentialists see the noumenal as unknowable – for materialists, the outside can be known analytically whereas, for existentialists, the outside is known synthetically. Lacan sees the outside as both synthetic and analytic.[3]

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[3] This thesis understands the terms analytic and synthetic according to Kant's definition. An analytic statement is "all bachelors are unmarried". Here, the truth of the predicate is supported by the subject of the statement so there is no need for reference to experience to qualify the whole statement. A synthetic statement is "all bodies are heavy". Here, the truth of the predicate is not supported by the

This position represents a third view of materialism which is seen to form the basis of a new theory of the unconscious. This is existential materialism and before I explain this concept, it is important to explain what I mean by existentialism.

From existentialism to existential materialism

Existentialism is a philosophy of existence. Sandford defines it as a 'philosophical tradition and orientation concerned with the analysis of "existence", where "existence" is the term for the being of the human: its nature, its meaning, its possibilities ... it undertakes to describe the fundamental characteristics of *existing* as a human in the midst of the world of humans and others' (Sandford 2006: 4). Sartre's existentialism is a transcendental philosophy that views the world in terms of existence and essence. As he comments: 'we have already noticed, furthermore, that with man the relation of existence to essence is not comparable to what it is for things in the world. Human freedom precedes essence in man and makes it possible; the essence of the human being is suspended in his freedom' (Sartre 1996: 25). For Sartre, our existence is characterised by freedom but our essences are characterised by a determinism. Sartre thinks of existence as 'for-itself' and essence as 'in-itself' (Sartre 1996: xxviii), and that the former precedes the latter. According to Sartre, the relation between *a priori* existence as freedom and *a posteriori* essence as determinism creates anxiety in the subject. For him, *a priori* existence has no essence, it is based on nothingness which, for Sartre, leads to angst: 'anguish as the manifestation of freedom in the face of self means that man is always separated by a nothingness from his essence' (Sartre 1996: 35). We can see the Lacanian theory of the unconscious, here,

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subject of the statement so there is need for reference to experience in order to qualify the whole statement.

as many have commented. However, for Sartre the aim, as a humanist, is to transcend angst. Sartre believes that human beings must create themselves and so science, technology and even language and consciousness are all seen as a consequence of existence made essence. He sees the union of existence and essence as a transcendental goal rather than a scientific objective:

> This perpetually indicated but impossible fusion of essence and existence does not belong either to the present or the future, it indicates rather the fusion of past, present and future, and it presents itself as a synthesis to be effected of temporal totality. It is value as transcendence; it is what we call beauty. Beauty therefore represents an ideal state of the world, correlative with an ideal realization of the for-itself, in his realization the essence and the existence of things are revealed as identity to a bring who, in this very revelation, would be merged with himself in the absolute unity of the in-itself (Sartre 1996: 194).

Here, Sartre expresses the view that existentialism is a transcendental philosophy, an engagement with the world to define our existence as essence or the (impossible) unity of existence and essence. Although Sartre vociferously opposed Kant's thought, (Kant is an *a priori* universalist, emphasising transcendental idealism; whereas Sartre is an *a priori* particularist emphasising body and context), this thesis understands existentialism as part of the post-Kantian transcendental philosophical tradition even though many of its ideas are opposed to Kant's. It is suggested that Lacan should also be read as part of this tradition.

In contrast to Kant, Sartre focuses upon a transcendental outside rather than a transcendental inside. This outside comprises consciousness which is for-itself and being which is in-itself. Sartre suggests that the latter can only be understood in terms of the former:

> Although in one sense consciousness considered in isolation is an
> abstraction, and although phenomena – even the phenomenon of being
> – are similarly abstract in so far as they cannot exist as phenomena
> without appearing to a consciousness, nevertheless the being of
> phenomena as in an in-itself which is what it is can not be considered
> as an abstraction. In order to be, it needs only itself; it refers only to
> itself. On the other hand, our description of the for-itself has shown us
> how this on the contrary, is removed as far as possible from a substance
> and from the in-itself; we have seen that it is its own nothingness and
> that it can exist only in the ontological unity of its *ekstases* ... the for-
> itself is responsible in its being for its relation with the in-itself, or if
> you prefer, it produces itself originally on the foundation of a relation to
> the in-itself (Sartre 1996: 171-2).

Sartre is intrigued by the outside in-itself but, ultimately, for him, the outside is

another 'thinking substance', another for-itself. The outside, for him, is the Other

which is transcendental and not material:

> The Other is a thinking substance of the same essence as I am, a
> substance which will not disappear into primary and secondary
> qualities, and whose essential structure I find in myself. Yet for all that
> realism attempts to account for knowledge by an action of the world
> upon the thinking substance, it has not been concerned with establishing
> an immediate reciprocal action of thinking substances upon each other
> ... the relation of my body to the Other's body is a relation of pure,
> indifferent exteriority' (Sartre 1996: 223).

Sartre consistently acknowledges materialism but always retreats from a complete

endorsement. He is sceptical of a theory of the unconscious: 'a rigorously objective

psychoanalysis will discover that deeply engaged in the matter of things there are

other potentialities which remain entirely transcendent' (Sartre 1996: 602). However,

Lacanian thought on the unconscious can be seen as the link between existentialist

and materialist ideas which is lacking in Sartre's thought. Existential materialism

takes the view, from existentialism, that consciousness is existence rather than an *a*

priori internal essence such as the *cogito* or the pure ego; and combines it with the

view from continental materialism, that consciousness is socio-politically, and socio-historically, determined. It sees a relationship between the subject as transcendental – a thinking substance, undefined, free and for-itself; and the outside as material – not simply in-itself but with a socio-political history; and lived in by real people who are also socio-political categories and who may have socio-political agendas. Existential materialism thus supplements an existentialist theory of consciousness with the Lacanian theory of the unconscious; and, furthermore, stands in opposition to the view, implicit in Miller and Žižek, that the Lacanian theory of the unconscious supports an analytic materialist theory of consciousness.

We see an existential materialist point of view, implicitly, in some recent materialist feminist theory. In her 'The Incomplete Materialism of French Materialist Feminism' (2007), Stone explains how Anglo-American and French feminism are distinct in terms of their respective emphasis upon biological and gender categorisation. However, she also suggests that French materialist feminism reflects Anglo-American materialist feminism in the sense that materialism, as biological difference, is always already presupposed. The solution, for Stone, is to read materialism not from an Anglo-American centre of gravity but a continental centre of gravity. In short, materialism is read from an idealist point of view: 'we need to combine [materialist feminism] with German Idealist philosophies of nature – philosophies whose 'idealism' consists in their attribution to nature of not only materiality but also rational or aesthetic normativity (i.e. 'ideality'). A fully materialist feminism may require an idealist approach to nature' (Stone 2007: 115). This thesis advocates a reading of Lacan's theory of the unconscious, similarly, as an idealist approach to a materialist concept, rather than a materialist approach to idealism. It ultimately argues

that there are consequences for the viewing of the unconscious as a science, as underpinned by a digital materialism. This consequence is that both consciousness and the unconscious become machines that have models comprised of discrete units as their basis. However, a view of the unconscious as underpinned by existential materialism sees the unconscious as the gap between existence and essence, yes, but also a gap that leads somewhere, to a beyond of the unconscious, to a philosophy that transcends both a materialist theory of consciousness and the materialist theory of the unconscious that underpins it.

CHAPTER ONE

FROM A PHENOMENOLOGICAL THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS TO A
MATERIALIST THEORY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS IN EARLY LACAN

In this chapter, it is argued that although a sceptical, materialist line can be traced

from Engels, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud to Lacan, a phenomenological line can also

be traced from Husserl, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty to Lacan. The pre-Second World

War Lacan attempts to phenomenologise a theory of the unconscious which makes his

theory of the unconscious a humanist concept and merely equivalent to the existential

imagination. The Mirror Stage is considered to be Lacan's first full engagement with

an anti-humanist philosophy which shapes his post-war theory of the unconscious as

materialist.

A *constituted* unconscious

In Lacan's early (that is post-Second World War) and later thought, he is clear that the

unconscious should not be thought of in phenomenological terms. This is apparent in

Position of the Unconscious, for example, which was written towards the end of his

early (structuralist) thought and on the cusp of his later (hyperlogical) thought. In this

essay, Lacan attempts to distinguish Freud's theory of the unconscious from older

theories of the unconscious. In it, he compares old and new conceptions of the

unconscious by referring to a passage in Dwelshauvers' 1916 book *The Unconscious*

where Dwelshauvers attempts to define the unconscious:

What, indeed, could the following possibly have in common – to take the eight definitions collated by Dwelshauvers in a book that is old (1916) , but not so far out-of-date that, were such a catalogue to be prepared anew today, its heterogeneity would be not diminished: the sensory unconscious (implied by the so-called optical effects of contrast and illusion); the automatic unconscious developed by habit, the co-consciousness (?) of split personalities; ideational emergences of a latent activity that appears in creative thought as if it were oriented, and telepathy which certain people would like to relate to such thought; the learned and even integrated reserves of memory; the passions in our character which get the better of us; the heredity that is recognised in our natural gifts; and finally the rational and metaphysical unconscious that is implied by "mental" acts? (Lacan 2006: 704)

The later Lacan is keen to stress that the unconscious has no connection to modes of intentionality such as perception, belief, repentance, remorse, and so on. These 'unconsciousnesses', as defined by Dwelshauvers, are actually, according to Lacan, modes of consciousness and quite distinct from Freud's theory of the unconscious. He lays the blame for the (mis) interpretation of the unconscious, prior to Freud, at the feet of Descartes who established the belief that the world is an extension of a subject who is a point of certainty around which phenomena orbit: 'this error consists in taking the very phenomenon of consciousness to be unitary' (Lacan 2006: 705). Lacan, here, is clear that the unconscious is not a mode, or an extension, of consciousness. In phenomenology, consciousness is intentionality and comprises intentional contents that can be understood and described by the observing subject with the application of concentration and attention. Implicit in Dwelshauvers' definitions, according to Lacan, is a view that all these "unconsciousnesses" are merely intentional contents which serve the interest of an all-seeing, all-knowing subject.

In Lacan's critique of Dwelshauvers' definition of the unconscious, we can detect a materialist critique of consciousness that has been apparent in continental thought since Engels. However, in this essay, Lacan stretches his materialist tentacles further, across the Atlantic, suggesting a view of consciousness which has much in common with analytic thought in its view of consciousness as differentiation rather than unity: 'everything on the contrary points to the distribution of consciousness in psychical reality ... that distribution being heterotopic in terms of levels and erratic at each level' (Lacan 2006: 705). This view of consciousness, as heterogeneity rather than homogeneity, is made consistently by Lacan throughout his post-Second World War thought and has contemporary resonance with Dennett's, in particular, which we will return to at the end of this chapter.

The notion of Lacan as an analytic materialist seems unusual because it is the sceptical, continental materialist Lacan – or, rather, Lacan as anti-philosopher – with whom we are most familiar. In the tracing of his anti-philosophy, a line can be detected from Freud to Lacan via Groddeck and Nietzsche who argue in contradistinction to phenomenology that things, as well as subjects, can think. Materialists, in the continental tradition, oppose theories of consciousness which turn absences into presences and make the world more and more immediate to the self or the *cogito*. Engels' and, later, Adorno's theories question this unmediated transformation of absence into presence and view immediacy as an ideology.[4] These

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[4] We first see the origin of this in Engels: 'dialectics, so-called objective dialectics, prevails throughout nature, and so-called subjective dialectics, dialectical thought, is only the reflection of the motion through opposites which asserts itself everywhere in nature, and which by the continual conflict of the opposites and their final passage into one another, or into higher forms, determines the life of nature' (Engels 1972: 211). This is the essence of a materialist theory of consciousness in the continental tradition where thought is merely the effect of a dialectical relation between body and world, mediation rather than immediacy, epiphenomena rather than phenomena. We perhaps see the fullest expression of this materialist critique of "transcendental" consciousness in the work of Adorno: 'the first and

continental theorists label theories of consciousness as "transcendental" and argue that consciousness is, rather, "materialist". In Engels' and Adorno's views, the relation between so-called transcendental and materialist theories of consciousness is akin to the relationship between the universal and the particular in philosophy – materialists seek to make what is universal and transcendental particular and material. According to Adorno *et al*, transcendental theories of consciousness cannot sustain themselves because there are always gaps in consciousness which are objective rather than subjective gaps – gaps in the world rather than gaps in our representation of it, to use Van Gulick's words (Van Gulick 2003: 329). Adorno's view also has strong affinities with Anglo-American views of materialism and we can see an unconscious alliance between continental and analytic materialism in this respect.

The "materialist" Lacan, as an heir to Engels and Adorno, might be one that we are familiar with but it is not the position of the pre-Second World War Lacan. Although in *Position of the Unconscious*, Lacan posits an unconscious that is inaccessible, that is not a mode of intentionality, in his pre-Second World War theory of the unconscious, the unconscious *does* appear to be a mode of intentionality as he uses phenomenology to tentatively articulate a theory of the unconscious. Indeed, unlike Adorno, Lacan appears to be positively on the side of continental thought in his early thought. Although their ideas about the unconscious became bitterly opposed, the view of the pre-Second World War Lacan has some commonality with the view of Ricoeur (1970: 32) who argued that a theory of the unconscious arose out of a 'philosophy of suspicion' concerned with the nature of consciousness as presence.[5]

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immediate is always, as a concept, mediated and thus not first' (Adorno 2000: 117). He further states that 'the subject desperately deceives itself about itself as mediation' (Adorno 2000: 127).

[5] For Simms, also, it is the subjective gaps, the gaps in temporality, that gave birth to the notion of the unconscious: 'just as Husserl was to discover in his investigation into time (and also later Heidegger, in

The unconscious thus arises not because so-called transcendental theories of consciousness cannot account for materialism but simply because a "transcendental" theory of consciousness cannot be consistently transcendental. One could suggest that there is, rather, an implicit transcendentalism at the heart of materialism and that we see it throughout Freud and Lacan's thought which is quite distinct from the view proposed by Engels, Marx and Adorno.

Freud consistently, and confusingly, views consciousness and the unconscious, from both a rationalist and an anti-rationalist point of view. Indeed, although from the outset Freud attempts to treat consciousness as a material thing (as a mechanism in *The Project for a Scientific Psychology* where consciousness is represented by the ω system) in chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams* it does not appear to be a system at all as it is outside the perception, the mnem, the unconscious and the preconscious systems. From 1913 onwards, however, consciousness as mechanism appears to be more and more apparent in Freud's thought as we see in his first and then second theory of instincts. In 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', for example, he states that consciousness is 'not the most universal attribute of mental processes, but only a particular function of them' (Freud 1991: 295). Likewise, in the first and second topography, it is localised as a surface phenomenon. However, he also continues to view it as other than a surface phenomenon which we see in 'The Ego and The Id', for example, where he states that it is the 'one beacon-light in the darkness of depth-psychology' (Freud 1991: 356). Lacan exposes the phenomenological thought underlying Freudian thought which is not that surprising

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his development of time-consciousness a 'protraction' whereby 'presencing' is maintained through the retention of the past in remembrance), so Freud discovers that the *cogito* requires a constant effort, a renewal of effort, of thinking to sustain itself. Thought is threatened by the void of un-thought – and the 'I' of the cogito is threatened by the non-existence or, at least, the failure of apodictic certainty of existence – through the lapse of time (Simms 2007: 16).

considering Freud, like Husserl, was also a student of Brentano's. Freud's first impact in France was in the literary arena – in surrealism and automotive writing – and we see this in Lacan's early thought on the unconscious which also intersects with existentialism. Between *The Project for a Scientific Psychology* and *The Interpretation of Dreams*; between 'On Narcissism' and 'The Unconscious'; between 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' and 'The Ego and The Id', Freud alternates between a materialist and a phenomenological description of the psyche. Lacan, however, rejects the ego-psychological and Anglo-American emphasis of Freud's 'The Unconscious' and 'The Ego and The Id'; and, instead, uses phenomenology to attempt to connect the descriptive *The Interpretation of Dreams* with the dynamic 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle'.

A phenomenological psychoanalysis

Lacan's pre-Second World War theory of the unconscious has its roots in phenomenology even when Lacan is theorising the seemingly anti-phenomenological, Freudian concept of the death instinct. Lacan's pre-Second World War essay 'Beyond the "Reality Principle"' is an attempt at a critical reconstruction of Aristotelian thought in the light of Freudian thought. Indeed, throughout his thought, Lacan frequently refers to Freud in Aristotelian terms. We see this in his interpretation of Freud's pleasure and reality principles which Freud sets out in 'Two Principles of Mental Functioning'. The pleasure principle describes a process of achieving gratification and the reality principle describes a process of deferring gratification. Both principles involve the production and use of mental representations which are images that are generated either to achieve or to defer gratification. In Freud's theory

of the pleasure principle, he presents the organism as constantly directed towards satisfying needs even when the object of need is absent. According to Freud, it generates images in order to satisfy internal needs: 'the state of psychical rest was originally disturbed by the peremptory demands of internal needs. When this happened, whatever was thought of (wished for) was simply presented in a hallucinatory manner' (Freud 1991: 36). Thus, in the absence of satisfaction, an organism will generate an image of the object of need in order to achieve equilibrium, which is the ultimate goal of the organism. However, as the hallucination does not provide "real" gratification, a new principle has to be introduced – the reality principle which establishes images of the world that guide the organism towards achieving appropriate satisfaction: 'what was presented in the mind was no longer what was agreeable but what was real, even if it happened to be disagreeable' (Freud 1991: 37). In the first topography, the reality principle is the principle by which the organism adapts itself to the pre-conscious system. In the second topography, it is the principle by which the organism adapts itself to the perception-consciousness system. According to Freud, the reality principle is a key staging post in the attainment of consciousness which is, in Freud's words, 'the one beacon light in the darkness' of psychoanalysis (Freud 1991: 356). It is for this reason, perhaps, that Lacan is opposed to the whole notion of the reality and the pleasure principles.

In *Seminar VII*, Lacan (1997: 28) sees the reality principle as perception. Freud does not specifically explain the genesis of his pleasure and reality principles but his distinction between them does appear to recall the tension in Aristotle between *aisthesis*, the objects of perception, and *noein*, the objects of understanding. Lacan attempts to locate the origins of the pleasure principle in Aristotelian thought, arguing

that Aristotle makes pleasure into 'an activity that is compared to the bloom given off by youthful activity – it is, if you like, a radiance' (Lacan 1997: 27). According to Lacan, for Aristotle, the objectivity of perception controls the pleasure principle and re-classifies the experience of pleasure. Thus, the goal of the reality principle is to transform pleasure into an epiphenomenon so that pleasure becomes effect and not cause. In Lacan's opinion, the pleasure principle always leads to the reality principle – thoughts always become objects, imagination is always corrected by perception. I would suggest that Lacan depicts the reality principle as a kind of epoché in that the effects of the pleasure principle are suspended.

Lacan, however, locates a gap between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. He suggests that there is a remainder which cannot be accounted for by the union of thought and object. He argues that neither the reality principle nor the pleasure principle can account for the compulsion to repeat – the manifestation of an inertia in which pleasure is derived from the repetition of unpleasant feelings and experiences. Freud names this as the death instinct: 'enough is left unexplained to justify the hypothesis of a compulsion to repeat – something that seems more primitive, more elementary, more instinctual than the pleasure principle which it over-rides' (Freud 1991: 294). Cleverly noticing how we take pleasure in repetitive activities which have no ostensible "life-goal" or intentionality – either at a micro level in satisfying need or at a macro level in procreation, Freud suggests that the organism possesses life-affirming 'life instincts' and life-denying 'death instincts'. The death instinct is the desire to return to an inanimate state and it manifests itself in repetitive formal play. Freud's description of the child's game of 'Fort-Da', for example, is seen to re-enact the primal trauma of the parents' absence in the child's first few months of life. In

'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', the struggle within the organism is not between the pleasure principle and the reality principle but between life instincts trying to achieve satisfaction and death instincts impeding this progress. Freud's theory after 1920 is locked in a relationship of fascination and repulsion with the notion of the death instinct which is reflected in the split that formed ego psychology, on the one hand, and object relations theory, on the other.[6] We see a conflict between Freud's 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', where the psyche is governed by the death instinct rather than the reality principle; and 'The Ego and the Id', which argues that we need to strengthen the ego so that it can form an alliance with the perception-consciousness system and thus overcome the death instinct.

It has been suggested by Deleuze and Guattari (1990: 332) that this psychoanalytical notion of death is merely equivalent to the phenomenological notion of thought. Indeed, preferring 'death drive' to 'death instinct' and 'complex' to 'instinct', Lacan interprets Freud's death instinct phenomenologically: 'it is through the pathway of the complex that the images that inform the broadest units of behaviour are instated in the psyche, images with which the subject identifies one after the other in order to act out, as sole actor, the drama of their conflicts' (Lacan 2006: 72). The death instinct is interpreted as a complex of images in the psyche, an interpretation that is not

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[6] Roudinesco has highlighted the differences. On the one hand, there is ego psychology: 'in the eyes of the theorists of ego psychology, the fable signifies that the ego has grown autonomous by controlling its primitive drives ... it acquires independence in relation to external reality ... channelled toward sublimation, libido ensures a desexualisation or neutralization of aggressive drives. The 'stronger' the ego is, the more it reinforces its quantum of neutralized energy. The weaker it is, the less its neutralization accomplishes. Ego psychology is thus based on a fundamental rejection of the death instinct, accompanied by a recentering of the unconscious on consciousness and of sexuality and its derivatives (Roudinesco 1990: 169). On the other hand, there is the British school from which object relations theory developed: 'opposed to the Viennese tendency, which supported the thesis of monism and a single libido was the so-called British school, represented essentially by Jones, Melanie Klein, and Josine Müller. Its partisans did not contest the entirety of the Viennese theory; they delved into its impasses and implausibilities. While retaining the primacy of an unconscious organization of sexuality, they maintained the existence of a specifically feminine libido and thus of an 'innateness' of bisexuality' (Roudinesco 1990: 508-9).

dissimilar from the imagination in phenomenology. Later, in *Seminar VII*, Lacan relates the death instinct to the acquisition of language, or rather the establishment of the signifier: 'How can man, that is to say a living being, have access to knowledge of the death instinct, to his own relationship to death? The answer is by virtue of the signifier in its most radical form. It is in the signifier and insofar as the subject articulates a signifying chain that he comes up against the fact that he may disappear from the chain of what he is' (Lacan 1997: 295). For the later Lacan, the intervention of this form means that the pleasure principle is over-ridden, the reality principle is thwarted because there is always already something that remains which is material and not transcendental. However, in 'Beyond the "Reality Principle"', 'drive' and 'complex' are ambiguous transcendental categories and not yet equable with language or form. They appear merely aspects of the existential imagination which creates the impression that in his understanding of the death instinct, in this early essay, Lacan is merely describing psychoanalytical concepts phenomenologically rather than materialistically.

Although Lacan appears anti-empirical, his attitude to science is ambiguous. Even early on in his theory, he advocates not phenomenological description but scientific treatment of mental phenomena. As Fink comments: 'while never a biological determinist like Freud, in the early 1930's Lacan nevertheless believed in a sort of psychological determinism permitting of scientific treatment'. By 1964, this had developed into a conception of psychoanalysis as a 'conjectural science' (Fink 1995b: 58). Lacan is concerned, at this early stage of his theory, with what manifests itself in the conscious mind. Indeed, as Sean Homer (2005: 21) comments, consciousness, as well as the unconscious, was of interest to Lacan in the 1930s and 1940s: 'Between

Marienbad and 1949 ... Lacan was preoccupied with the nature of consciousness and specifically self-consciousness'. In 'Beyond the "Reality Principle"', Lacan's phenomenological sympathies are perhaps most evident in his criticism of the associationist emphasis in much nineteenth century psychology.[7] Associationists view true reality as 'the system of references valid in already established sciences ... tangible in physical sciences ... utilitarian in natural sciences' (Lacan 2006: 63). Indeed, it is the empirical origins of associationism that Lacan vehemently opposes: '[Associationism] reduces reality's actions to its point of contact with pure sensation' (Lacan 2006: 61). Lacan speaks of the 'intellectual impoverishment' of the image under associationism and how it is 'reduced in associationism to its function as an illusion, a weakened sensation ... consequently identified with its trace, the engram' (Lacan 2006: 26) and thus sides more with a phenomenological view that psychic images can be taken seriously as an object of enquiry.

For Lacan, in this period, like phenomenologists, there is not *a priori* conscious or unconscious but simply phenomena which, according to him, associationism wrongly reduces to epiphenomena: 'psychical phenomena are thus granted no reality of their own: those that do not belong to true reality have an illusory reality' (Lacan 2006: 63). Indeed, it is associationism's neglect of the imagination that is the subject of Lacan's ire: 'such a conception thus creates two categories of psychical phenomena: those phenomena that fit into some level of the operation of rational knowledge, and

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[7] Associationism was an empirical philosophy which held that memories, and consequently our minds, are the result of an accumulation of sense impressions. It describes an empirical, and simplistic, process in which one sense impression is associated with another and then another and this eventually creates thought. In this theory, it is thought that is conditioned from the outside, 'conditioning' being the operative word. Interestingly, Ricoeur makes a link between associationist psychology and structuralism: 'there is a precedent right in the *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, in the famous chapter on 'Mechanism of Language', for this marriage between associationist psychology and structural linguistics. There, the syntagmatic and paradigmatic operations are interpreted in terms of combination.' (Ricoeur 1997: 117) Associationism has its origins in Locke. It could also be argued, as Simms does, that Saussurean concepts have their origins in Locke.

all the others, including feelings, beliefs, delusions, assents, intuition and dreams. The former necessitated an associationist analysis of the psyche; the latter must be explained by some determinism that is foreign to their "appearance" and that is said to be "organic" insofar as it reduces them to being either the prop of a physical object or related to a biological end' (Lacan 2006: 63). We can detect the influence of Husserl, here, in that Lacan's critique is an attack on those empirical approaches which treat phenomena as epiphenomena which is in stark contrast to his later thought.[8] Indeed, Husserl described phenomenology as a rational psychology (Husserl 1970a: 90), in opposition to empirical psychology, and we can hear this sentiment in relation to psychoanalysis in 'Beyond the "Reality Principle"'.

Phenomenology and existentialism

In order to define Lacan's pre-Second World War understanding of the psychoanalytical situation as phenomenological (or, more specifically, existentialist), it is now necessary to explain what is meant by phenomenology. In his later thought, Ricoeur acknowledged that psychoanalysis taught phenomenology the lesson that thought was not transparent (cf. Simms 2007: 42). One could say also that, conversely, the pre-Second World War Lacan acknowledges that phenomenology can teach psychoanalysis a lesson.[9] Husserl, in effect, reinvents Descartes as a

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[8] Martin discusses the impact of Husserl's phenomenology: 'it is one of the great liberations from empiricism offered to us at the end of the nineteenth century that conscious thought does not always require the presence of an object (or of some surrogate of that object) in order for one's thoughts to be about the object in question' (Martin 2000: 101).
[9] Ricoeur also argues that phenomenology and psychoanalysis have areas of similarity and stark differences. He argues that psychoanalysis and phenomenology share the following fundamental characteristics. Firstly, the phenomenological reduction allows psychoanalysis to come into being: 'the reduction turns phenomenology towards psychoanalysis ... phenomenology begins with the wounding/humiliation of knowledge belonging to immediate consciousness' (Ricoeur 1970: 376-77). Secondly, we intend the other before the self: 'intentionality...concerns our meditation on the unconscious inasmuch as consciousness is first of all an intending of the other and not self-presence or

phenomenologist rather than a dualist and the transcendental ego is put into brackets.[10] He refutes Kant by arguing that there is no *a priori* form that is inaccessible to, and determining of, consciousness, arguing that objects are not always already forms, phenomena are not always already subjective.[11] He tells us that we can know the world as it is and that understanding and reason are not spatial or temporal but spatio-temporal: 'we rather take the terms "understanding" and "reason" as merely indicating a direction to the "form of thinking" and its ideal laws, which logic as opposed to an empirical psychology of knowledge, must follow' (Husserl 1970a: 214). For Husserl, then, the spatial can be known temporally. As Simms comments, Husserl argues that we *can* 'interrogate the noumenal' (Simms 2007: 29) and know it.

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self-possession. Engrossed in the other, it does not at first know itself as intending' (Ricoeur 1970: 378). Thirdly, both understand language as a relation between presence and absence: 'to speak is to set up a text that functions as the context for each word, the potential of words heavily charged with meaning is therefore limited and determined by the context, although the rest of the charge of meaning is not done away with, only part of the meaning is therefore rendered present' (Ricoeur 1970: 384). Thus, Ricoeur sees "Fort-Da" as the creation of meaning, the demonstration of intentionality rather than lack. Fourthly, both consider the subject to be an intersubjective creature and approach desire obliquely: 'psychoanalysis plunges directly into the history of desire ... both have the same aim to return to true discourse' (Ricoeur 1970: 389). However, Ricoeur also argues that psychoanalysis is not phenomenology for the following reasons. Firstly, phenomenology does not recognise the unconscious whereas psychoanalysis does not recognise the non-conscious: 'whereas phenomenology begins with an act of suspension, with an *epoché* at the free disposition of the subject, psychoanalysis begins with a suspension of the control of consciousness whereby the subject is made a slave equal to his true bondage' (Ricoeur 1970: 391). Secondly, in psychoanalysis there are barriers to consciousness: 'meaning is separated from becoming conscious by a barrier ... one moves from phenomenology to psychoanalysis when one understands that the main barrier separates the unconscious and the preconscious and not the preconscious and the unconscious' (Ricoeur 1970: 392). Thirdly, the unconscious is not structured like a language because of the irreducibility of energetics which is, according to Ricoeur, Freud's primary concern: 'the energy aspect is completely paralleled by a linguistic aspect that guarantees the correlation of the unconscious to consciousness' (Ricoeur 1970: 403). Finally, the intersubjective relation is seen as technique in psychoanalysis – as something learned: 'the work of the analyst and analysand conjoined in the struggle against resistances' (Ricoeur 1970: 411).

[10] Husserl's approach is Fregean but he was unaware of Frege when he published his early *Philosophy of Arithmetic* in 1891. In it, he expressed opinions that opposed Frege: 'arithmetic is, in the view of most thinkers, an *a priori* science. This entails that it does not begin with singular facts, in order subsequently to rise to possible generalizations through induction; but rather it begins immediately with assured and indeed with apodictically certain and immediately Evident – generalities' (Husserl 1994: 9). In his 1894 review of Husserl's *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, Frege corrected Husserl: 'what matters to the former is the sense of the words, as well as the ideas which they fail to distinguish from the sense; whereas what matters to the latter is the thing itself; the | *Bedeutung* of the words' (Frege 1997: 225). In his subsequent 'Prologomena to Pure Logic', Husserl accepted Frege's position and modified his thought.

[11] Dreyfus comments that Kant argues that we don't have direct access to synthesising activity and know it only through a transcendental reduction (Dreyfus 1987: 12). Husserl argues that this is unscientific.

He sees perception as the anchor for thought and consciousness is a 'becoming' from a foundation in perception. Consciousness is thus predicative and cannot be determined beforehand. For Husserl, pre-predicative synthesis, as argued by Kant, is a 'retroactive illusion' (Dreyfus 1987: 25). Kant's legacy was to make theories of consciousness vacillate between transcendental and material approaches. On the one hand, consciousness is knowledge, form, symbol, computation. On the other hand, consciousness is experience, context, image, the phenomenal. Husserl, however, puts the former into brackets to explore the latter.

Husserl begins his thought by distinguishing between consciousness and intentionality in order to make consciousness intentionality. His objectivisation of consciousness has its foundation in Frege's theory of logic and, in particular, his 'On Concept and Object'.[12] In *Logical Investigations*, Husserl, like Frege, argues that mental states may have the same objects (reference) but different expressions (sense). Sense and reference are not simplistically, or dialectically, opposed as language to world. For Frege, the two are different and it is human beings who 'grasp' the connection between sense and reference, or grasp logic. For Husserl, sense and reference are connected via intentionality which *constitutes* thoughts and objects in the psyche as

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[12] In his 'On Concept and Object', Frege distinguishes between concepts and objects, stating that the relation between an object and a concept is irreversible whereas the relation between a concept and a concept is reversible (Frege 1997: 183). Referring to the linguistic terms subject and predicate, he states that 'a concept is the *Bedeutung* [Reference] of a predicate; an object is something that can never be the whole *Bedeutung* of a predicate, but can be the predicate of a subject' (Frege 1997: 186-7). He further states that 'the behaviour of the concept is essentially predicative ... consequently it can only be replaced there only by another concept, never by an object' (Frege 1997: 189). This is why the relation between concept and object is seen by Frege as irreversible. Unlike concepts, objects are fixed and cannot be changed by linguistic play. Fregean thought is diametrically opposed to structuralist thought in this sense. Frege comments: 'what is said concerning a concept can never be said concerning an object. I do not want to say it is false to say, concerning an object what is said here concerning a concept; I want to say it is impossible, senseless, to do so. The sentence "there is Julius Caesar" is neither true nor false but senseless, the sentence "there is a man whose name is Julius Caesar has a sense, but here again we have a concept' (Frege 1997: 189). In Frege's comments, we see the very beginnings of phenomenological thought on the relation between the world and language, which is a relation based on logic.

phenomena that have both a matter and a quality: 'matters treated in and for themselves, do not differ from qualities: they are qualities of presentation. What we call the intentional essence of an act is its total qualitative being: this is what is essential to it, opposed to what varies accidentally' (Husserl 1970b: 600). These elements are all part of the unity of conscious experience because of intentionality. Phenomenology is a bridge between Aristotle and Frege but the difference between matter and quality is still rather Aristotelian in *Logical Investigations*. The phenomenological reduction inevitably involves stripping the object of its qualities and moving from an Aristotelian to a Fregean point of view. Indeed, there are parts of *Logical Investigations* where we can see Husserl already moving away from *aisthesis* and towards *noesis*, from images to symbols.

Dreyfus suggests that Husserl is a progenitor of modern cognitive science and suggests that intentionality comprises a hierarchy of rules, an abstract structure built of primitives, a whole made up of parts. According to him, from *Logical Investigations* to *Ideas I*, Husserl's theory becomes increasingly rule-governed. However, in contrast to Kant, this is a structure of content rather than of form (Dreyfus 1987: 10). Although Dreyfus' view (influenced as it is by Heidegger) is rather extreme, there is evidence in *Ideas I* of a more scientific approach. In this text, the relationship between perception and thought is re-classified as the relationship between *noema* and *noesis*. According to Husserl, the *noema* corresponds 'in every case to the multiplicity of Data, demonstrable in actual pure intuition, in a correlative *noematic* content, or in short, in the *noema* – terms which we shall continue to use from now on' (Husserl 1982: 214). The bracketing of the natural attitude, of images, the emphasis on essences and the mathematical attitude is what distinguishes *Ideas I*

from *Logical Investigations*. Dreyfus' point is somewhat supported by Quentin Smith who also contrasts *Logical Investigations* with *Ideas I*, arguing that in *Logical Investigations* there is 'no sharp distinction between the what of intending and the way of intending as later in *Ideas I*' (Smith 1977: 492). In *Ideas I*, he states: 'feelings have intentional objects of their own' and Husserl replaces quality with 'positing' and 'thesis' (Smith 1977: 494). Thus, Dreyfus and Smith see the progress of Husserl's thought as the gradual elimination of the qualitative: 'the matter of an act is what gives it reference to an object'. In *Ideas I* 'all acts are objectifying acts' and we 'no longer distinguish between objectifying and nonobjectifying' (Smith 1977: 495). However, Husserl sees intentionality not only as predicative (sense and reference) but as pre-predicative which he explains in *Ideas II*.

In *Ideas II*, Husserl acknowledges that representational content, or thought-objects, are not enough to account for the unity of psychological experience. He argues that there are other ways of encountering objects that are not just formal or semantic but contextual. Consciousness does not merely comprise static representations, cognition and symbols but movement, imagination and images. This is the theory of consciousness prevalent in existentialism – consciousness is for-itself and not in-itself which favours *Ideas II* over *Ideas I*. Indeed in *Ideas II*, we witness Husserl re-engaging with the imagination as well as understanding, the body as well as the mind:

> As the image, stream of lived experience (or stream of consciousness), already indicates, the lived experience i.e. the sensations, perceptions, rememberings, feelings, affects etc. are not given to us in experience as annexes, lacking internal connection, of material Bodies, as if they were unified with one another only through the common phenomenal link to the Body. Instead they are one by means of their very essence; they are bound and interwoven together, they flow into one another in layers and are possible only in

this unity of a stream. Nothing can be torn away from this stream; nothing can be separated off as, so to say, a thing for itself (Husserl 1998: 98).

Here, Husserl imagines consciousness as a stream of experience. Dreyfus suggests that Husserl interprets the background computationally rather than phenomenally: 'Husserl thus in effect treats the background as a system of frames' (Dreyfus 1987: 23). Husserl's sympathies with Descartes, however, prevents his theory of consciousness from being rule-governed. Indeed, his theory of the pure ego appears a synonym for the *cogito*: 'the pure Ego is indeed nothing other than what Descartes, in his marvellous Meditations, grasped with the insight of genius and established as such once and for all, the being of which it is not possible to doubt and which in any doubt would itself necessarily be found again as the subject of the doubt' (Husserl 1998: 109). Husserl, however, maintains that the pure ego is diametrically opposed to the Cartesian *cogito*. It is the starting point of the phenomenological theory of consciousness and is what enables the constitution of sense and reference, and *noema* and *noesis* to take place. The pure ego is what separates Husserl from materialism but also from both Sartre and Heidegger; and, indeed, from AI and functionalism. For Sartre and (the pre-Second World War and early) Lacan, the notion that there is an *a priori* ego is problematic as they see the ego as *a posteriori* rather than *a priori*.[13] However, Husserl does not see the pure ego as a transcendental self nor an existential thing but rather the essence of intentionality. He sees it not as either content or form but as something which can contain content and form. For Husserl, the *cogito* actually

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[13] Derrida, also, highlights the seeming contradiction between pure and ego. The ego is existential and not transcendental according to Derrida. He comments that: 'the whole difference separating [Husserl] from Kant is that the *a priori* is phenomenological, that is to say, concrete' (Derrida 2003: 146). For Derrida: 'Husserl's thought is an explication of my ego as subject of every possible cognition' (Derrida 2003: 146). He draws attention to the paradox that the pure ego is, on the one hand, not 'empty previousness, a mere form without content' and, on the other that it 'contains a past something' (Derrida 2003: 97). This notion of a concrete *a priori* ego makes it synthetic. He implies that there is a materialism underlying Husserl's non-materialism.

comes from the pure ego and not *vice versa* (Heinsen 1987: 149). It represents a kind of Socratic presence, a synthesis of wisdom and intelligence, *aisthesis* and *noesis*. For Husserl, the pure ego is as much a source of reason as a source of understanding. Reason has no ontological source in Kant but in Husserl it is unmediated presence. Husserl's emphasis upon the pure ego, however, remains an enigma for both his followers and his detractors.[14]

The *epoché* and psychoanalysis

In Lacan's pre-Second World War thought, he depicts the psychoanalytical situation in much the same way as phenomenologists describe the *epoché*. In a psychoanalysis, according to Lacan, psychoanalyst and patient put their "selves" into brackets, and in so doing they recognise the true intentions of the patient: 'it is by suspending [the] impulse to respond that the analyst understands the meaning of the discourse. He then recognises in it an intention, one of the intentions that represent a certain tension in social relations: a demanding intention, a punitive intention, a propitiatory intention, a demonstrative intention, or a purely aggressive intention' (Lacan 2006: 66). For the pre-Second World War Lacan, there are degrees of intentionality which incorporate context as well as content, imagination as well as representation. In this sense, his view is close to the phenomenological view of the thought experiment which involves subjectively transforming reality. Logical behaviourists, such as Ryle and Wittgenstein, claimed that thought experiments were not possible and materialists, like Dennett, see the thought experiment as merely formal play. The notion of

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[14] Tallis sees Husserl's quest for unmediated presence as a tautology because 'the quest has to be conducted in a language which necessarily disarms vigilance at its source' (Tallis 1995: 204). He argues that there are degrees of presence which both Husserl and Derrida deny: 'presence for [Husserl] (and, consequently, for Derrida whose critique takes place from within the Husserlian framework) is all or nothing, non-graded' (Tallis 1995: 208).

experimenting in thought is perhaps best articulated by Frank Jackson's example of Mary, a colour scientist in a black and white laboratory.[15] Jackson describes how Mary learns to experience the phenomenal character of a colour – the redness of red – using her own thoughts and her own intuition without the knowledge acquired from science (Jackson 2004). He argues that this is proof of the primacy of the first person perspective over the third person perspective.

Dennett, however, argues that Mary will have to consult the outside in order fully to understand the redness of red.[16] He rejects the notion of phenomenal consciousness as it involves *qualia* - qualitative or what-it's-like experiences which occupy the gap between content and experience, fact and feeling. Zupančič claims that the thought experiment derives from the Stoic philosopher Epictetus and is critical of it as an "experiment": 'the thought experiment has always to do with ourselves' and 'people are never excited by facts but always their imaginary notions of these facts' (Zupančič 2006: 200) This point is also merely Husserl's, in fact, who acknowledges that a thought experiment involves not just intentionality but imagination: 'In principle now, of course, intuitive phantasies can serve [the individual] just as well as perceptions, and it lies in the nature of things that to an incomparably broad extent his eidetic thinking is guided by fantasy'. However, he concludes that 'fantasy ... does not stand

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[15] 'Mary is a brilliant scientist who is, for whatever reason, forced to investigate the world from a black-and-white room via a black-and-white television monitor. She specialises in the neurophyisiology of vision and acquires, let us suppose, all the physical information there is to obtain about what goes on when we see ripe tomatoes, or the sky and use terms like 'red', 'blue' and so on' (Jackson 2004: 42).

[16] Dennett argues that 'Frank Jackson's Mary is a bad thought experiment': 'Simply imagining that Mary knows a lot and leaving it at that, is not a good way to figure out the implications of the hypothesis that she owned everything' (Dennett 2004: 61). Robinson takes issue with Dennett's argument against Jackson: 'a thought, on [Dennett's] account, is a kind of functional state. It is, roughly, a disposition toward a verbal response, plus other bits of sophisticated behaviour'. He argues that Dennett doesn't resolve the problem of the relationship between thought and experience: 'it follows that the functional account of the demonstrative thought 'that's blue' does not capture its full content, for Mary can understand functionally defined recognitional thought without grasping the nature of the phenomenon recognised' (Robinson 2004: 71).

firm ... it quickly loses its fullness; it sinks into the semiclear and the dark' (Husserl 2001: 26) which is the view expressed in *Ideas I* in which the transcendental becomes materiality, consciousness becomes intentionality. A thought experiment is a method that emphasises context rather than content, being rather than intentionality, imagination rather than understanding.

The validity of a thought experiment lies at the centre of the debate between phenomenologists and materialists.[17] Searle, a supporter of Husserl, argues that in order to understand something, we have to have a mental representation of it that includes matter and quality which he argues are naturally dependent on each other. A computer may be able to learn how to speak Chinese by manipulating symbols but it will not understand Chinese because it cannot represent it internally to itself in the same way a human being can (Searle 1980). In other words, it cannot perform a thought experiment – it may manipulate matter but it cannot experience quality. Dennett, however, argues that mental representations of the world are deeply suspect. He believes that the spirit of empiricism although flawed is essentially correct: 'there is still good reason, however, for acknowledging with the British Empiricists that in some way the inner world is dependent on sensory sources' (Dennett 1991: 55). He acknowledges that mental representations of the phenomenal kind occur even though these are essentially false. In fact, Dennett argues, we know that they are false but refuse to believe that they are. Hence we have an 'objectively subjective' (Dennett 1991: 132) view of the world which, according to him, is a paradox given that the

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[17] As logical behaviourists, Ryle and Wittgenstein were suspicious of the notion of mental representations, or forms, in the mind. Ryle did not believe in the notion that there are different levels of mental representations that we can access via the phenomenological reduction (Ryle 2000). Wittgenstein argued that we are often in the grip of a picture theory of mind in which the distinction between perception and image, outside and inside, is blurred. (Wittgenstein 2001: 10-12)

truth of the world, and of consciousness, lies in matter and not phenomena.[18] In one sense, the pre-Second World War Lacan is on the side of Searle in that he believes that it is more productive to explore the intelligence in the psyche rather than the intelligence imposed upon it from outside. Indeed, in 'Beyond the "Reality Principle"', he argues that this is Freud's legacy: 'Freud [recognised] the very intelligence of human reality in so far as it attempts to transform that reality' (Lacan 2006: 64). In another sense, however, Lacan is on the side of Dennett in that he also believes that these psychical forms are essentially false. According to Lacan, a thought experiment, although useful for the enlightened analyst, is not possible for the unenlightened patient because the human subject enters the psychoanalytical situation as an alienated subject. Nevertheless, the *epoché* is an important element in early Lacanian thought on psychoanalysis. According to Dennett, images are too fuzzy-edged to be taken seriously. We can see this in Dennett's famous comment that when we dream of a tiger we do not remember all of the stripes (Dennett 1969: 137). The post-Second World War Lacan, however, argues that we can both take them seriously and treat them as fuzzy-edged which is, I would suggest, half way between a phenomenological and a materialist view.

In 'Presentation on Psychical Causality', it is still the case, however, that Lacan thinks of the unconscious in relation to phenomenology. This essay is ostensibly a response to fellow psychoanalyst Henri Ey's organo-dynamism and criticises both dualism and (eliminative) materialism. In the 1920s and 1930s, Lacan did not partake in debates between first and second generation psychiatrists who opposed psychogenesis with

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[18] Searle accuses Dennett of being merely another behaviourist who refuses to believe in innate meanings (Searle 1999). Dennett, however, argues that Searle also shares the belief that the brain is a machine but that his argument was contradictory as Searle thought of the brain 'as a very special machine' (Dennett 1987: 70).

organogenesis. Instead, Lacan substituted both these concepts for psychogenius, 'thus granting priority to a mental structure that is a purely psychic organisation of personality' (Roudinesco 1990: 131) which, in its emphasis upon the mental rather than the biological, shows the influence of phenomenology on Lacanian thought even in the early 1930s. Lacan recalls a line from his thesis, 'madness is a phenomenon of thought' (Lacan 2006: 132) to support this. Conversely, for Henri Ey, mental illness is caused by specific chemical and anatomical conditions: 'Ey's organo-dynamism ... cannot relate the genesis of mental problems as such ... to anything but the play of systems constituted in the material substance [*l'etendue*] located within the body's integument' (Lacan 2006: 124). Ey's theory is a kind of emergentism, or emergent materialism, which, for Lacan, results in an eliminative materialism in that he 'reduces the notion of belief ... to that of error' (Lacan 2006: 134) and locates 'the phenomenon of delusional belief, considered as a deficit phenomenon, in the brain itself' (Lacan 2006: 134).

Although his influences are clearly phenomenological, one can detect a proto-analytic point of view in Lacan's stance against Ey in that he acknowledges first person experiences but seeks to interpret them in a third person (albeit psychoanalytical) way. We can see this in his argument for 'a phenomenology of madness' (Lacan 2006: 138) which places him, philosophically, between phenomenology and materialism and more like Searle than Dennett in this early essay. For Lacan, both dualism and materialism arrive at the same conclusion – psychophysiological parallelism which is also Searle's point (Searle 1999: 54). Lacan argues that there is no psycho-physiological parallelism, or dualism between body and mind: 'a weak organism, a deranged imagination, and conflict beyond one's capacities do not suffice to cause

madness. It may well be that a rock solid body, powerful identifications, and the indulgence of fate, as written in the stars, lead one more surely to find madness seductive' (Lacan 2006: 144). He refers to the 'bias of parallelism' in Freudian thought and how Freud 'remained its prisoner even though it ran counter to the entire tendency of his research' (Lacan 2006: 145). Lacan's critique of dualism and materialism brings him into contact with Husserl and Searle. However, there are signs of a shift in Lacanian thought towards the end of the 1940s as Lacan proposes a theory of the unconscious as a network of symbolic processes that pre-predicatively determine consciousness. It is an emerging sense of materialism rather than phenomenology that pre-occupies Lacan in the late 1940s and early 1950s in his interpretation of the unconscious. Lacan's 'The Mirror Stage' anticipates this kind of materialism, and this is the topic of the next section.

Consciousness as misrecognition

In Lacan's pre-Second World War thought, the unconscious appears part of the *constitution* of consciousness. In his early and later (post-Second World War) thought, however, the unconscious is seen to oppose this phenomenological theory of consciousness. He attempts to read the unconscious in the light of, firstly, Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* and, secondly, Frege's 'On Sense and Reference' to argue for a theory of the unconscious which Lacan famously defines as the 'materiality of the signifier' (Lacan 2006: 16). This is the conventional way of reading the development of a "science" of the unconscious in Lacanian thought. However, Freud is neither a linguist nor a logician, as Simms comments (2007: 47) and Lacan takes the Freudian unconscious on a journey of which Freud would have probably not

approved.[19] 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function' is the essay which foreshadows this shift in later Lacanian thought. It sits between an existential critique of the phenomenological emphasis on the ego and a materialist critique of the existential neglect of materialism.[20] In this essay, Lacan's approach appears materialist from the outset. He uses Wallon's 'mirror test' to describe the differing effect of the mirror image on both humans and animals.[21] The child's response to its own reflection is different from that of animals: 'Unlike the monkey (for whom the image quickly becomes useless) this act immediately gives rise in a child to a series of gestures in which he playfully experiences the relationship between the movements made in the image and the reflected environment, and between his virtual complex and the reality it duplicates – namely, the child's own body, and the persona and even things around him' (Lacan 2006: 75). Early on in the essay, Lacan draws a very analytic materialist distinction between phenomenal consciousness which both humans and animals possess and self consciousness which only humans possess.[22] The Mirror Stage shows how we share a phenomenal consciousness with animals but not the unconscious which Lacan sees as phenomenological, self-consciousness.

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[19] Freud did not personally acknowledge the receipt of Lacan's doctoral thesis when Lacan sent it to him: 'from Vienna, in January 1933, came the laconic reply: "Thank you for sending your thesis." The great man hadn't even deigned to open the manuscript that the young stranger had commended to him, no doubt with great ardour' (Roudinesco 1999: 58).

[20] 'The Looking Glass Self' was only partially delivered at the sixteenth congress of the IPA in Marienbad in August 1936. It was delivered at the height of the debates between the schools of Anna Freud and Melanie Klein over the future direction of psychoanalysis. Lacan did not complete the delivery of his paper because it was interrupted by the convenor Ernest Jones. The only real evidence of the contents of the lecture are from the notes of Françoise Dolto (Roudinesco 2003).

[21] Lacan links the development of self-consciousness to the idea of human prematurity at birth, borrowing this idea from Dutch embryologist Louis Bolk. According to Lacan via Bolk, our visual perceptions and intellectual prowess develop in advance of our bodily functions. These ideas are combined with those of Kojéve who argues that the dialectic does not exist in nature and that structure is a purely human phenomenon (Rabate 2003: 30). Roger Callois is also an important influence. Callois argues that 'insects … are captivated by the very space that surrounds them and seek to lose themselves within that space, to break down the distinction between organism and environment' (Homer 2005: 22).

[22] According to Block 'monkeys and dogs have phenomenal consciousness but no self-consciousness' (Block 1997: 390). He defines self-consciousness as the 'possession of the concept of the self and ability to use this concept in thinking about oneself' (Block 1997: 389).

According to Lacan, both humans and animals are subject to a Gestalt.[23] In animals, the function of the Gestalt is straightforward in that there is no division between part and whole. Lacan tells us that a necessary condition for the maturation of the female pigeon's gonad is the sight of another member of its species. Consequently, a mirror can be used to speed up the maturation of a female pigeon's gonad. Similarly, if a solitary migratory locust is exposed to an image of a gregarious migratory locust, then its behaviour becomes gregarious (Lacan 2006: 77). According to Lacan, perceptual Gestalten have differing effects in humans than they do in animals – one could say that animals live in the imaginary but humans have the symbolic. As Boothby comments: 'the imaginary is oriented towards Gestalt unities; the symbolic, by contrast, functions not by unity but by difference' (Boothby 1996: 351). For human beings, The Mirror Stage does not catalyse mimicry or adaptation but foregrounds the gap between the physical and the psychical: 'human knowledge is more independent than animal knowledge from the forcefield of desire' (Lacan 2006: 77). According to Lacan, the relation between object and thought, the part and the whole is not synthesised as it is in phenomenology: 'the jubilant assumption of his specular image

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[23] Boothby emphasises the importance of perceptual Gestalten in Lacan's thought: 'in Lacan's view, the work of Lorenz, Tinbergen and others has established beyond doubt the key part played by perceptual Gestalten in triggering behaviours of parade, territoriality, attack, censorship and mating' (Boothby 1991: 24). Van Gulick comments that Lorenz's *Behind the Mirror* charts the evolution of representational space in animals: 'the phenomenal representation of space appeared evolutionarily with the transition from organisms whose system of spatial representation was linked to the guidance of specific behaviour patterns ... to those with a general representation of space capable of being used to guide a wide range of behaviors in flexible and open-ended ways' (Van Gulick 1994: 152). Lockwood comments that Gestalt theory attempts to explain the link between the physical and the psychical in terms of images or forms: '[there are] certain fields, in the physicist's sense, within the cerebral hemispheres, that may be the immediate objects of introspective awareness ... these might be used to store information in a form analogous to a hologram' (Lockwood 1995: 175). It argues that the brain contains whole forms, or holograms, which determine and affect our perceptions. A Gestalt and a perception are connected as background is to foreground. Searle explains that Gestalt psychology involves the notion of foreground and background. The foreground is determined by the background: 'whatever I focus my attention will be against a background that is not the centre of attention' (Searle 1999: 132-3). Lakoff and Johnson, whose theory also occupies the boundary between the phenomenological and the material, comment that 'a Gestalt structure' is where 'the parts make no sense without the whole. There is no inside without a boundary and an outside, no outside without a boundary, and no boundary without sides' (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 32).

of the child ... still trapped in his motor impotence and nursling dependence ... seems to manifest ... the symbolic matrix in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form, prior to being objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it ... its function as subject' (Lacan 2006: 76). For Lacan, the child's joy results from the prospect of his or her image becoming a symbol but this is followed by an anxiety and subsequently aggressiveness about the gap between the two. In this sense, The Mirror Stage is opposed to the conclusions made in phenomenology.

As well as an emerging materialist argument, it is also easy to see an existentialist critique of the ego underpinning The Mirror Stage. Sartre's *The Imaginary* influences Lacanian thought in the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s, and both Macey (1988) and Jameson (2006) have suggested that Lacanian and Sartrean theory are not diametrically opposed. Indeed, Derrida commented that Lacanian thought was 'neo-existentialist' (Derrida 1998: 56). According to Macey, both Sartre and Lacan define the ego as separate from consciousness: 'the ego is not an agency which founds consciousness, but a focus (in the optical sense) of alienation and inauthenticity. It is ... to be apprehended as existing in the world, as "other than" consciousness' (Macey 1988: 103). Macey argues that the similarities between Sartre and Lacan outweigh the differences: 'Lacan's Mirror Stage takes its inspiration from Kojéve-Hegel, whereas Sartre's pure phenomenology owes its primary inspiration to Husserl. But the structural descriptions they give of the ego function are broadly similar, and both Lacan's psychoanalysis and Sartre's phenomenology are designed to transcend and overcome ego-ology' (Macey 1988: 103). For Sartre, the notion of a pure and transparent consciousness is 'a precondition and an absolute source of existence'

(Sartre 2004: 51) and we gain the ego via engagement with the world: 'the world did not create me, the me did not create the world, they are two objects for the absolute, impersonal consciousness and it is through that consciousness that they are linked back together' (Sartre 2004: 51). Lacan, however, ends 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function' with a critique of existentialism. For Lacan, negativity, a materialist concept, is what undermines a (phenomenological) theory of consciousness and he criticises Sartre for not perceiving it *a priori*: 'the fact is that they encountered that existential negativity whose reality is so vigorously proclaimed by the contemporary philosophy of being and nothingness. Unfortunately, this philosophy grasps that negativity within the limits of self-sufficiency of consciousness, which, being one of its premises, ties the illusion of autonomy in which it puts its faith to the ego's constitutive misrecognitions' (Lacan 2006: 80). As Lacan's theory progresses, he sees existentialism, and phenomenology in general, as presuming implicitly or explicitly the *a priori* existence of an unproblematic, rational philosophical subject.

Jameson, as a Marxist, sees Lacan, unsurprisingly, as a materialist and not an existentialist. He suggests that Lacan refuses the premises of a 'theory of consciousness' and that Freud does too: 'psychoanalysis as a science is predicated on the preliminary bracketing or suspension of the alleged problem of consciousness' (Jameson 2006: 381). He comments that Descartes puts material consciousness into brackets in order to redefine it as transcendental consciousness: 'in philosophical tradition ... the data of consciousness, its existential experience ... [was] appealed to in an effort to define the self or the subject: consciousness was felt to be the most immediate and readily available reality ... whereas it was the self, the thinking

subject, the ego or the I, which remained obscure and enigmatic ... the Cartesian *cogito* then assembles and concentrates the materials of consciousness in order to stage the appearance of the subject in its essence' (Jameson 2006: 381). It is, Jameson argues, Lacan who redefines, or "saves", the subject: 'the subject is perfectly tangible and readily available, it is simply the grammatical subject. The ego is meanwhile also quite distinct and far more accessible ... it is the product of the mirror stage ... something more like an object for consciousness than its support' (Jameson 2006: 381-382). However, I would argue that the notion of a subject is far from secure in Lacanian theory. We are never sure which subject Lacan refers to – psychoanalytical, grammatical, or philosophical. No certainty is derived from arguing that the Lacanian subject is the grammatical subject particularly in his early theory. Macey also comments that the phenomenological subject is not as unproblematic as Lacan suggests: 'whilst it may be true that Sartre and Merleau-Ponty do assert the primacy of consciousness and do cling to a central notion of the subject, the phenomenological subject is by no means as unproblematic as Lacan suggests here, or as received post-structuralist wisdom would have it. It is a subject which is constantly being constituted and re-constituted by a play between *en-soi* and *pour-soi*' (Macey 1988: 107). Indeed, the first person and the third person perspectives, the subjective *pour-soi* and the objective *en-soi*, are not so clearly demarcated in Husserl's and post-Husserlian phenomenology as we saw above with the difference between *Ideas I* and *Ideas II*.

I want to now suggest that Lacan's pro-materialist and anti-existentialist stance in 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function' anticipates analytic materialism. In this essay, consciousness is no longer understood in the arena of meaning but, rather,

in the arena of form, as a manifestation of unconscious formal processes. We can see connections between Lacan's the Mirror Stage and Dennett's intentional stance in Dennett's insistence that consciousness is not intentionality and that intentionality is a projection, virtuality not reality, a stance that we adopt whenever we encounter an entity, animate or inanimate. Although Dennett denies that intentionality is *a priori* (and has empiricism, rather than rationalism, as a reference point), he defines his theory as heterophenomenological which is a third person perspective that aims to account for a first person perspective: 'the heterophenomenological method neither challenges nor accepts as entirely true the assertions of subjects, but rather maintains a constructive and sympathetic neutrality in the hopes of compiling a definitive description of the world according to the subjects' (Dennett 1991: 73). Žižek noticed it in *Cogito and the Unconscious* (1998), and we can see that the heterophenomenological method is strikingly similar to psychoanalysis: 'extracting and purifying texts from (apparently) speaking subjects, and using those texts to generate a theorist's fiction, the subject's heterophenomenological world. The fictional world is populated with all the images, events, sounds, smells, hunches, presentiments and feelings that the subject (apparently) sincerely believes to exist in his or her (or its) stream of consciousness' (Dennett 1991: 98). So, for Dennett, consciousness is a fiction which is also Lacan's point of view post-Second World War.

Ultimately, the later Lacan favours a materialist reading of the unconscious but not, this thesis argues, in relation to a sceptical (and continental) materialism – *à la* Engels, Marx and Freud – but in relation to another kind of materialism – a digital (and analytic) materialism *à la* Turing, functionalism and Dennett. Lacan can be seen

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to be the connection between the two traditions. The Mirror Stage is a precursor to a more radical shift that occurs in Lacanian thought towards materialism in the 1950s. Both Lacan and Dennett see the basis of consciousness in misrecognition, arguing that consciousness is an ignorance of the conditions of its coming into being. Consciousness is seen as a hall of mirrors and as existing on the surface of things. What comes before, for them both, is not a location but a zone of signifiers, relational, delay, deferral which is Weissman's point who notices parallels between Lacanian thought and that of AI (Weissman 2007). Weissman is specifically interested in Lacan's Mirror Stage which he considers to have much in common with analytic theories of consciousness: 'Lacan … is saying that the "recognition" the child experiences when he looks in the mirror is actually a misrecognition … it recognizes a lack' (Weissman 2007). The parallels between Lacanian thought and analytic thought are quite significant in this respect as the unconscious can be seen as the artificial attempt to fill in the gap between the phenomenological and the heterophenomenological worlds. Lacan's understanding that our repetitive behaviour can be defined in terms of a program on a machine anticipates Dennett's theory of consciousness that consciousness is an unconscious mechanistic process which generates imagery and has no determining influence on these unconscious processes. Lacan also reduces consciousness from phenomena to epiphenomena and sees it as determined by what comes before and moves from a theory of the unconscious as first person description to a theory of the unconscious as third person analysis.

This chapter has argued that the unconscious in Lacan's pre-Second World War thought is part of the constitution of a phenomenological theory of consciousness. However, there is a discernible shift in the thought of early Lacan after the Second

World War. The Lacanian theory of the unconscious becomes a materialist theory of the unconscious. However, this can be seen to anticipate materialist theories of consciousness which will be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

MATERIALIST THEORIES OF CONSCIOUSNESS, AND THE UNCONSCIOUS, IN EARLY LACAN

This chapter argues that Lacan is always in danger of advocating a science of consciousness in his efforts to de-ontologise the unconscious. It deals with Lacan's early efforts to establish a foundation for his later "science" of the unconscious and formulate a materialist theory of the unconscious. On the one hand, Lacan's theory of the unconscious is seen to anticipate the thought of Dennett (digital materialism) as Lacan adopts an AI view of the unconscious which is influenced indirectly by Turing's 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence'. On the other hand, Lacan is seen to anticipate the thought of Dreyfus (ontological materialism) as, in the early 1950s, Lacan adopts a Heideggerian critique of technology that can be seen to anticipate Dreyfus' *What Computers Can't Do.*

Lacan with Heidegger

It is broadly acknowledged that there was a shift in Lacanian thought in the mid 1950s and, as discussed in the previous chapter, Lacan's theory of The Mirror Stage anticipates this shift. Lacan's protégé and son-in-law, Jacques Alain-Miller, locates a 'cut' in Lacan's intellectual development between 1952 and 1953 (Miller 1996a: 4). Miller has emphasised, for example, that Lacanian thought undergoes a transposition

from phenomenology to structuralism during this period.[24] According to him, Lacan was an existentialist up until 1953 (Miller 1996a: 7). Macey (1988: 103) and Jameson (2006: 381) have also emphasised the Sartrean influences in Lacan's early work, in particular.[25] In line with Sartre, Lacan argues that the ego is not consciousness and that it is rather an object in the world. For Sartre, consciousness is nothing, a transparent, transcendental emptiness that only becomes something when we interact with the world. The ego is formed in this process of interaction when we realise that we are objects in the world. As Miller concedes: 'the subject is not a fixed point: it is mobile. The ego, on the other hand, has a certain inertia and fixity ... the subject which upon entry into analysis is nothing – that's Sartre's nothingness – reaches him or herself through changing meanings and becoming something' (Miller 1996: 23). Lacan's critique of the ego, however, is influenced also by Heidegger who does not have a theory of consciousness and, instead, proposes a theory of being – that is a Being-in-the-world, Being-with-the-world and Being-towards-the-world which is always already there even though it may not be a part of our intentional experience: 'the perceiving of what is known is not a process of returning with one's booty to the cabinet of consciousness after one has gone out and grasped it; even in perceiving, retaining and preserving, the *Dasein* which knows remains outside and it does so as *Dasein*' (Heidegger 1962: 89). This being represents a know-how rather than a know-that and is present in our actions, our movements, our relationships with entities –

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[24] Roudinesco comments on the influence of Miller on Lacan's thought: 'whereas Lacan produced concepts open to a certain ambiguity, Miller tended to clarify or rationalise Lacanian conceptuality so as to make it more uniform and occasionally more coherent' (Roudinesco 1990: 403). However, this thesis argues that the result of this clarification is an emphasis upon the structuralist, rather than the phenomenological, implications of Lacanian theory.

[25] Roudinesco also makes a similar point that Lacan was not a structuralist at this time: 'When Lacan spoke in Rome of the signifier, what he was referring to was a conception of the "logos" and "utterance" as well as to a Lévi-Straussian conception of the symbol. But he had not yet elaborated on an authentic theory of signifying determination. In order to reach that point, between 1953 and 1963, he would have to reread Saussure from a Jakobsonian perspective while dreaming of a possible connection between the second topographical model and the Genevan discovery' (Roudinesco 1990: 297).

both animate and inanimate, human and, indeed, machine. Unlike the Husserl of *Ideas I*, Heidegger focuses upon a background of phenomenal experiences rather than a network of intentional contents which illustrate that 'man [is] always already an interpreting animal' (Simms 2007: 116). For Heidegger, this fundamental interrelatedness, that is prior to the notions of subject and object, is *Dasein* which is the essence of man as an originarily interpretive animal.

In the early 1950s, strongly influenced by Heidegger, Lacan opposes the mind as a computer metaphor that was pervasive from the 1950s onwards and impacted both continental and Anglo-American traditions. Heidegger is perhaps the critic of technology par excellence. He argues that as soon as we think of ourselves as subjects and the world as objects, parts of our experiences are closed-off from us.[26] For him, technology makes primary the present-at-hand rather than the ready-to-hand. For Lacan, the ego is sneaky because it presents itself as subject when it is actually object, present-at-hand when it is ready-to-hand, originary presence when it is a discursive inscription. Lacan's goal in psychoanalysis is to foreground how the technological gets inside the subject without its knowledge.[27] He wants to show how, as soon as we see ourselves as objects in the world, then we begin to think of ourselves as objects, as functions, made up of smaller parts.[28] Indeed, the trauma of The Mirror Stage is the

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[26] Brennan also comments that this represents a closing-off from the historical process: 'this privileging results in a repression of the historical process. [Heidegger] sees technology as a force which threatens to make this repression absolute. In part it does so because technology confines human experience within a rigid frame which closes off forms of connection with the world other than those based on a relation between the human as subject and the world as object' (Brennan 1993: 15).

[27] This is a point that Brennan makes: 'it is necessary to explain how the environment literally gets inside the subject who in turn acts in similar ways in reproducing it, in a spatial, technological dialectic of literal physical pressure and aggression' (Brennan 1993: 81).

[28] According to Heidegger, subjects become manufacturers and objects become instruments in service to the manufacturers or, rather, 'standing-reserve': 'whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as object' (Heidegger 1977: 17). Thus, the world becomes defined in relation to production. When we build a hydroelectric dam on the river Rhine then the meaning of the river changes: 'The hydroelectric plant is not built into the Rhine River as was the old wooden bridge

realisation that we are parts and not wholes, objects and not forms. In the last chapter, it was suggested that this view anticipates Dennett's but in the Heideggerian-influenced essay 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis', Lacan's interpretation of technology can be seen to prepare the way for Dreyfus who negates AI as a metaphor for human experience and sees it as an attempt to reduce rational thought to a digital materialism (Dreyfus 1997: xi). Dreyfus further suggests that Husserl's emphasis on intentionality as representation, in *Ideas I*, can be deemed to pave the way for AI and functionalism (Dreyfus 1987) which, according to him, mistakenly advocate the mechanisation of experience. His view is a sharp contrast to the view of behaviourism, functionalism and ego psychology which all suggest that, on the one hand, the body is a mechanism in that it can be scientifically observed; and, on the other, there is no ghostly substance such as mind or being, no identity between body and mind but, rather, an identity between body and disposition, body and function, body and world.

Ego psychology and functionalism

Ego psychology investigates only that which can be objectively verified, or rather, that which is evident in behaviour.[29] In Lacan's view, ego psychologists see ego

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that joined bank with bank for hundreds of years. Rather the river is dammed up into the power plant. What the river is now, namely, a water supplier, derives from out of the essence of the power station' (Heidegger 1977: 16). Of course, one could perhaps question Heidegger's logic, here, as his point is true of any dam – ancient or modern.

[29] Roudinesco gives a concise history of the movement: 'the partisans of ego psychology, Rudolph Loewenstein, Ernst Kris, David Rapaport, Erik Erikson, and above all Heinz Hartmann, maintained a position whose tendency was diametrically opposed to Freud's decentering. Instead of granting priority to the unconscious, they reconceived metapsychology on the model of psychology by according a preponderant role to the ego. In part because of her rivalry with Melanie Klein, Anna Freud supported the ego-psychological tendency within the IPA, where it also received the approbation of Jeanne Lampl de Groot, whose power was linked to the fact that she had been analyzed by Freud. The struggle for the preservation of the ego thus was to know its first surge in 1936, when Anna extended the notion of defence to the very principle of adaptative therapy' (Roudinesco 1990: 168).

functions as a kind of unfinished, or unformed, program on a machine. They argue that these functions need to be strengthened in order to ensure that reality testing, impulse control, affect regulation and thought processes (the buzzwords of ego psychology) displace and ultimately functionalise the instincts in the psyche. In 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis', Lacan presents ego psychology as a kind of rationalist materialism (akin to AI) which belongs, in the 1950s, to the growing Anglo-American trend that sees thought as functional and objective. Lacan's critique of his former psychoanalyst, and ego psychology convert, Loewenstein is well-known (Lacan 1990), and he opposes an Anglo-American behaviourist view with his own (Heideggerian, at this point) view: 'psychoanalysis in the United States has been inflected toward the adaptation of the individual to the social environment, the search for behaviour patterns, and all the objectification, implied in the notion of human relations' (Lacan 2006: 204). For the early Lacan, ego psychologists and behaviourists ignore the subjective element of consciousness, they ignore the existential body and replace psychological states with abstract states.[30] For him, they confuse rules with materials, thought with actions, the phenomenal with the functional and, ultimately, humans with machines: 'and the indigenous term "human engineering" strongly implies a privileged position of exclusion with respect to the human object' (Lacan 2006: 204). Thus, a Lacanian reading, in the early 1950s, sees ego psychology and behaviourism as part of a wider trend to eradicate intentionality, to view the human being as a program on a machine, appropriated by technology and digitalised.

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[30] Although they both came bitterly to oppose each other, Ricoeur expressed a sympathy with Lacan's early view of behaviourism: 'my criticism of the behaviourist "reformulations" of psychoanalysis is very close to the one that could be drawn from Lacan's article [*The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*]' (Ricoeur 1970: 367).

For Lacan, at this point, the ego is not a function or set of functions that are intrinsic to the internal workings of the psyche. The ego, instead, marks the boundary between embodiment and disembodiment, the living body and the corpse. For Lacan, it is always already under way or thrown: 'the expression *"ce-suis-je"* [it is I] of Villon's era has become inverted in the expression it is me [*c'est moi*] of modern man. The me [*moi*] of modern man has taken on its form in the dialectical impasse of the beautiful soul who does not recognise his very reason for being in the disorder he denounces in the world' (Lacan 2006: 233). Lacan presents the ego as caught between death and technology or thrown between the two. The modern me is a me captivated by a form. It is a subject in thrall to the form of an object which reminds it that it has always already been an object. Lacan describes what he considers to be the experience of the modern ego: 'communication can be validly established for him in science's collective undertaking and in the tasks science ordains in our universal civilisation, this communication will be effective within the enormous objectification constituted by this science and it will allow him to forget his subjectivity' (Lacan 2006: 233). So, according to Lacan, the purpose of functionalisation (which is the method of ego psychology) is to separate the subject from subjectivity. It is to "suture" the subject, to remove meaning so that all that is left is "pure" form. The result is that the modern ego has functions but it doesn't have experiences. It is a part not a whole. It has intentionality but not experience. Or rather, the experiences it has are merely classified as epiphenomenal illusions which make the machine accessible to the human and, in turn, help the human to function like a machine, as a part belonging to a whole:

> he will make an effective contribution to the collective undertaking of
> his daily work and will be able to occupy his leisure time with all the

pleasures of a profuse culture which – providing everything from detective novels to historical memoirs and from educational lectures to the orthopedics of group relations – will give him the wherewithal to forget his own existence and his death, as well as to misrecognise the particular meaning of his life in false communication (Lacan 2006: 233).

Lacan is critical of functionalism, here. For him, in the modern world, everything becomes functional. This is what happens when the machine gets inside the subject, when the human being becomes a modern machine that has functions which separate it from its experience. Speech becomes empty speech. Our lives become inauthentic, artificial, mechanised, inauthentically subjective and inauthentically mechanistic.

In 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis', Lacan also expresses an anti-functionalist Heideggerian view in his understanding of the relation between speech and language. In his understanding of the relation between speech and language, Heidegger diverges from Husserl in a number of crucial ways. He refers to the voice of the 'they' rather than the voice of the 'I' or the 'me' which is the voice of interrelatedness that precedes the voice of the 'I' or the 'me' (Heidegger 1962: 322). He also refers to talk, or '*Rede*', rather than speech.[31] According to Heidegger, our words give entities meaning but these entities already have meaning. He suggests that there is no *a priori* voice which guarantees meaning for me (*à la* Husserl) and that speech is not the expression of intentionality as it consists of silences, incompleteness, disfluency and ungrammatical utterances which all evade intentionality. This contrast between Husserlian and Heideggerian views is what underlies Lacan's contrast

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[31] For Heidegger, language escapes thought in that its foundations are outside, in everyday discourse: 'the existential or ontological foundation of language is talk' (Heidegger 1962: 203). He states that 'communication is never anything like a conveying of experiences, such as opinions or wishes, from the interior of one subject into the interior of another. *Dasein*-with is already essentially manifest in a co-state-of-mind and a co-understanding. In discourse Being-with becomes "explicitly" *shared*; that is to say, it *is* already, but it is unshared as something that has not been taken hold of and appropriated' (Heidegger 1962: 205).

between empty speech and full speech.[32] In *Seminar I*, Lacan distinguishes between them both by claiming that empty speech is the speech of mediation, whereas full speech is the speech of revelation (Lacan 1991a: 41-2). Empty speech is the speech which attempts to, but always fails to, *mediate* between inner voice and speech. Full speech is the speech which *reveals* a background of silences, gaps and other disfluency features. In his concept of revealing, Heidegger attempts to reveal the fundamental interrelatedness that exists prior to the forming of subject and object. According to him, words are 'present-at-hand' and word meanings can be described as the 'present-at-hand' in the 'present-at-hand'. Idle talk is talk which is present-at-hand but operates like the ready-to-hand: 'idle talk does not occur as a condition which is present-at-hand in something present-at-hand: idle talk has been uprooted existentially, and this uprooting is constant' (Heidegger 1962: 214). Words simply flow in idle talk. They are expressions of being towards the world that are divorced from the world: 'and because this discoursing has lost its primary relationship-of-Being towards the entity talked about ... it does not communicate in such a way as to let this entity be appropriated, in a primordial manner, but communicates rather by following the route of gossiping and passing the word along' (Heidegger 1962: 212). For Heidegger, this is what characterises the everyday talk of modern life. It is a kind of constant "perma-chatter" perhaps best characterised in modern life by the repetitive

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[32] Boothby has noted the similarity between Lacan and Heidegger. He argues that they both acknowledge the unconscious: 'From a phenomenological point of view, therefore, Heidegger recognises in a very general way something akin to the necessity of the unconscious. For Heidegger, human existence is inescapably submitted to light and darkness, presence and absence (Boothby 1991: 205). He also suggests that they both equate ego with inauthenticity: 'Along a number of significant points, it is possible to glimpse a broad homology between Heidegger's characterisation of inauthentic human existence and the imaginary order of the ego in psychoanalysis' (Boothby 1991: 209). He comments that they both share an understanding of the fundamental nature of language: 'Both Heidegger and Lacan accord a central role to language ... [and] ... share a remarkably similar view of its function. For Heidegger, it is in and through language that *Dasein* is brought into relation with Being' (Boothby 1991: 211). For Boothby idle talk equates with empty speech: 'The opposition drawn by Heidegger between idle talk and authentic speaking of language finds its reflection in Lacan's distinction between empty speech and full speech' (Boothby 1991: 213).

discourse of twenty four hour news channels, mobile phones and emails. Heidegger tells us that idle talk functions as closure rather than disclosure: 'it serves not so much to keep Being-in-the-world open for us in an articulated understanding, as rather to close it off and cover up the entities in the world' (Heidegger 1962: 213). Idle talk, as talk which is divorced from *Dasein*, is the talk of the ego, the talk of a modern machine – present-at-hand as ready-to-hand, functional, empty of phenomena and closed-off from history.

In the early 1950s, Lacan and Heidegger do share a belief that technology falsifies our understanding of experience. However, in the late 1950s, Lacan begins to see it more and more as a necessary tool to discuss the unconscious. Indeed, although its tone is Heideggerian, there are signs in 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis', of divergences between Lacanian and Heideggerian thought.[33] Like many theorists in the 1950s, Lacan is preoccupied with the machine and this underpins his view of the death drive.[34] Heidegger sees computation as a human invention – a way of evading death – but Lacan sees it *as* the death drive. Unlike Heideggerian thought, death is representable in Lacanian thought and can be represented as a computer program. In a way, he sees it as defining our lives, our

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[33] Both Ragland-Sullivan and Žižek argue that Lacan and Heidegger are opposed: 'Lacan's primary unconscious subject – the opposite of Heidegger's Being as becoming – is formed as a set of real, symbolic data by the impact of culture and language' (Ragland Sullivan 1986: 93). Žižek also comments that 'Heidegger takes as the starting-point the active immersion in its surrounding of a finite engaged agent who relates to objects around it as something ready-at-hand; the impassive perception of objects as present-at-hand arises gradually from this engagement when things 'malfunction' in different ways, and it is therefore a derivative mode of presence' (Žižek 2000: 15). The differences between Heidegger and Lacan are particularly marked in their views of language: for Heidegger, language is related to "becoming" even though it may "become" via error; for Lacan, however, language is imposed from outside.

[34] In her comparison of Warhol and Lacan, Liu comments on how technology has influenced their thought: 'gadget-lovers both, Warhol and Lacan understood that writing and speaking had been permanently transformed by technological advances in recording media' (Liu 2003: 263).

mortality. For him, computation imposes a temporality of anti-climax, of delay and deferral. As Soler comments:

> the temporality of the subject is neither clock time nor the temporality of living beings: it is the temporality of the signifier ... it is a twofold temporality between ... anticipation of the moment of conclusion ... and retroaction ... [when] all previous speech takes on new meaning. It is a time split between 'I don't know yet' and 'oh yes, I already knew that (Soler 1996c: 64).

Soler suggests that the relation between anticipation and retroaction defines the subject's relationship to death in Lacan's thought. For Lacan, death ceases to be "ownmost" and becomes a part of repetitive behaviour which mimics (and predicts) the repetitive mechanisms of a machine. Like the child in Freud's "Fort-Da" example in 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (Freud 1991: 284), our lives become marked by this desire to represent absence or, rather, the desire to represent death which is the drive not to be a corpse but to be a signifier, to be a mechanism – the self-destructive desire to have death in spite of life. Deleuze and Guattari are opposed to the whole notion of the death instinct, or the death drive as Lacan calls it, where our lives become simulation, repetition, tautology. In his understanding of death, Lacan links together the repetitive automatism of Freud's theory of the unconscious and contemporaneous views of AI to forge a new materialist theory of the unconscious. The next section investigates the shift away from phenomenology and towards (analytic) materialism that occurs in Lacanian thought in the mid 1950s and proposes a possible theory to more accurately mediate between the two.

Lacan with cognitive science

In the analytic tradition, Searle, Dreyfus and (to a lesser extent) Dennett are all critical of AI. Searle and Dreyfus's critiques of AI are perhaps the most well-known. Searle's critique in 'Minds, Brains and Programs' is particularly apposite:

> Because the formal symbols manipulated by themselves don't have any intentionality, they are quite meaningless, they aren't even symbol manipulations, since the symbols don't symbolise anything. In the linguistic jargon, they have only a syntax but no semantics. Such intentionality as computers appear to have is solely in the minds of those who program them and those who use them, those who send in the input and those who interpret the output (Searle 1980).

Here, Searle famously argues that machines cannot have consciousness because they lack intentionality. He acknowledges that we are machines (weak AI) but does not accept that consciousness can be a machine (strong AI). This is a view that Tallis also holds and who, unlike Searle, has written on Lacan in *Not Saussure* (1995). For him, Marxists, sociologists, psychoanalysts, structuralists and cognitivists have all attempted to transform a physical, phenomenological consciousness into a mechanistic unconscious process: 'they have contributed to a climate of opinion in which it is possible to hold, with the functionalists, that mental states are to be understood in terms of their functional roles and relations rather than their contents; that consciousness is effectively, empty' (Tallis 1991: 14). Tallis lists all those who attempt to undermine theories of consciousness by emphasising the primacy of unconscious mechanistic processes:

1. Political theorists, in particular Marxists, for whom consciousness, and conscious understanding of the world as expressed in political

opinions and ideologies, is shaped by unconscious attitudes determined by the individual's class or historical situation.

2. Social theorists, as exemplified by Durkheim, for whom voluntary behaviour, religious sentiments, the sense of self and even basic general concepts are the result of unconscious internalisation of social forces and collective representations.

3. Freud, for whom a large part of the mind was unconscious and much apparently rational behaviour was determined by the operation of unacknowledged and often irrational instincts.

4. Post-Saussurean thinkers for whom even verbal expression, apparently the most deliberate and self-aware form of behaviour, is determined by the structures of the system, so that it seems as if "language speaks us" rather than that we speak language. For such thinkers, the linguistic decentring of the speaking subject opens the way to a more radical displacement of the self.

5. Helmholtz and his descendants among cognitive psychologists who place great emphasis on unconscious inference and other unconscious processing in perception and other mental activities (Tallis 1991: 14-15).

All of the above are also materialist critiques of consciousness in one shape or another. Tallis argues that consciousness is simply 'making explicit' (Tallis 1991: 18-19) rather than 'number and logic crunching' (Tallis 1991: 136). His theory of consciousness sees it as a relation between universal and particular and is influenced by Husserl's phenomenology which equated it with intentionality. Tallis is, as he acknowledges, 'heavily influenced' by continental phenomenology (Tallis 1995: xvii). However, it is the objectivist strain (Husserl's *Ideas I*) rather than the subjectivist strain (Husserl's *Ideas II*) that appeals to Tallis. He argues that language aids rather than undermines consciousness: 'we make sense of what we experience through our sense by subsuming it under linguistic categories. Though sensations may be of particulars, perception involves classifying experiences under universal categories, the majority of which will be derived from or enshrined in language. Perception totally divorced from language is severely defective' (Tallis 1991: 50). Tallis sees

phenomenology, and post-phenomenology, as a 'lament for presence in the face of non-presence' (Tallis 1995: 226). For him, both Husserl and Heidegger's thought are symptomatic of this.

Like Searle and Tallis, Dreyfus is also critical of AI but his critique has its basis in pragmatics rather than semantics. Dreyfus refers to Madeleine, a wheelchair-bound woman blind from birth, who could not use her hands to use Braille but acquired understanding from books that were read to her (Dreyfus 1992: xx). Dreyfus asks 'why should we assume that the imagination and skills Madeleine brings to the task of learning and using commonsense can be finessed by giving a computer facts and rules for organising them' (Dreyfus 1992: xxi). He historicises computation:

> Man must be a device which calculates according to rules on data which take the form of atomic facts. Such a view is the tidal wave produced by the confluence of two powerful streams: first, the platonic reduction of all reasoning to explicit rules and the world of atomic facts to which alone such rules could be applied without the risks of interpretation: second, the invention of the digital computer, a general-purpose information processing device, which calculates according to explicit rules and takes in data in terms of atomic elements logically independent of one another (Dreyfus 1992: 231).

Dreyfus is not only critical of AI but is also critical of phenomenology, or the phenomenology associated with *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*, which emphasises the objectivity of perception: 'phenomenologists, not committed to breaking down the patterns so that it can be recognised by a digital computer, while less appalled are no less fascinated by the Gestalt character of perception' (Dreyfus 1992: 239). For Dreyfus, both phenomenology and AI lead to a view of human experience as a sequence of atomic facts. However, Dreyfus argues that even computers depend on context to operate: 'a computer model is [never] really purpose-free, even a model in

terms of information storage must somehow reflect the context, but such an analysis of context in terms of facts and rules is rigid and restricting' (Dreyfus 1992: 263-4). For him, there is a 'contextual regularity' in the world that is not symbolic: 'this contextual regularity, [is] never completely rule governed, but [is] always orderly as necessary' (Dreyfus 1992: 271).

Dreyfus' thought as ontological materialism is diametrically opposed to Dennett's digital materialism. The basis of Dennett's theory of consciousness is AI, or Turing and von Neumann, but he is opposed to the thought of classic AI because 'there is a big difference between a (standard) computer's serial architecture and the parallel architecture of the brain' (Dennett 1991: 215). The problem for Dennett with regard to AI is that it reaffirms Cartesian thought processes: 'if consciousness is a virtual machine, who is the user for whom the user illusion works? I grant that it looks suspiciously as if we are drifting inexorably back to an internal Cartesian self, sitting at the cortical workstation and reacting to the user illusion of the software running there, but there are, as we shall see, some ways of escaping that dreadful denouement' (Dennett 1991: 219). Dennett effectively negates AI *Mark I* and proposes AI *Mark II.*

A computable unconscious

Lacan's use of Freud can be understood, I would suggest, as a critique but also defence of the conceptual modelling that underlies AI. In *Seminar I*, he effectively turns Freud's triadic theory into a dyadic one, eliminating the id and seeing the unconscious as a relation between ego and super-ego, as the relation between binary elements which are the relationships that define machines, relations between 0 and 1.

Lacan returns to Freud's distinction between primary and secondary narcissism to emphasise this formulaic, rather than teleological, movement between ego and super-ego. Lacan sees primary narcissism as equable to a phenomenal consciousness which both humans and animals possess: 'first of all, there is, in fact, a narcissism connected with the corporeal image. This image is identical for the entirety of the subject's mechanisms and gives his *Umwelt* its form, in as much as he is man and not horse ... this initial narcissism is to be found, if you wish, on the level of the real image' (Lacan 1991a: 125). In the state of primary narcissism, according to Lacan, there is a perfect fit between the *Umwelt* and the *Innenwelt*, object and image (Lacan 1991a: 137). The second narcissism, however, is a self-consciousness – the development of thought processes and symbolic representations – and is only possessed by man: 'in man, by contrast, the reflection in the mirror indicates an original noetic possibility, and introduces a second narcissism. Its fundamental pattern is immediately the relation to the other ... narcissistic identification ... that of the second narcissism, is identification with the other which ... enables him to see in its place and to structure, as a function of his place and of his world, his being' (Lacan 1991a: 125).

The displacement of primary narcissism by secondary narcissism is depicted by Lacan as the subject's awareness of a division between objects in the world and their representations in the mind.[35] According to Lacan, it is in secondary narcissism that we find the unconscious. Secondary narcissism has two stages. The first stage is the forming of the ideal ego which is the recognition that we are an object in the world:

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[35] According to Brousse, human beings have two narcissisms: 'a supposed narcissism before language ... [and] "the mirror stage" ... the narcissism of speaking beings' (Brousse 1996: 121). There is 'an initial narcissism at the level of the real image' (Lacan 1991a: 125) Brousse comments that 'you can never find the first narcissism in speaking beings. You can only find it in the animal kingdom. This [noetic] possibility does not come from the imaginary but from the correlation with language' (Brousse 1996: 122).

'the ideal ego is now the target of the self-love which was enjoyed in childhood by the true ego. But he then says – he is not willing to forgo the narcissistic perfection of his childhood and [...] he seeks to recover it in the new form of an ego-ideal (Lacan 1991a: 133). The second stage is the forming of the ego-ideal which is an ideal beyond the ideal ego, beyond the world. The ideal ego is a transcendental inside, the viewing of the world from the ego. The ego-ideal, however, existing in a platonic space divested of content, is a transcendental outside. According to Lacan, the ego-ideal forms an alliance with the displaced object of primary narcissism and it is their union that creates the super-ego.[36]

Lacan sees these relations in terms of symbolic logic. Both the ego-ideal and the super-ego are representations outside the subject and it is in their relationship that the relations between binary elements is given a peculiarly Lacanian twist. This is, however, at odds with how Freud viewed the ego and the super-ego. In 'The Ego and The Id', the super-ego's function is to strengthen the ego. As Simms comments: 'for Freud, psychoanalysis aims at strengthening the ego in its fight against the id by enabling it to appropriate to itself matter from the super-ego. Put another way, the ego is to be strengthened against the unthinking forces of the subject's natural desires by taking unto itself suchlike as moral judgements' (Simms 2007: 18). Thus, Freud's ego merges with the super-ego to combat the id and form the basis of consciousness. *Seminar II* shows that Lacan is beginning to see the Freudian unconscious purely in

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[36] Feldstein summarises the arguments over the distinction between ideal ego, ego ideal and super-ego. In 'The Ego and the Id', Freud equated the ego ideal with the super-ego. Laplanche and Pontalis believed they were ultimately indistinguishable although acknowledged that the ego ideal is a template whereas the super-ego is a prohibition. Nunberg argued that they were separate. The ego ideal was formed on the model of loved objects whereas the super-ego was formed on the model of dreaded figures. For Lacan, the ideal ego and the ego ideal remain separate until the super-ego is grafted onto the model of the ego ideal (Feldstein 1996: 167). As Feldstein comments: 'the ego ideal induces an identification with the parent of the same sex via the image proffered as its ideal ... the structuration of the ego ideal (the *Ichideal* in German) implies an estrangement of the self from the other because the ego ideal seems to be imposed from without' (Feldstein 1996: 138).

terms of the symbolic. A mechanistic reflexivity is seen to govern the relations between egos which are defined in a symbolic relation to the primary object. We see the very beginnings of a Fregean logic, here, which will come to influence Lacan's later thought. In Lacan's thought, however, all this means that we are trapped in sequences of *Umwelts* and can never get to the *Innenwelt* or the *Lebenswelt* which, as Simms comments, makes Lacanianism even more auto-reflexive than Husserl's theories allegedly were (Simms 2007: 54). Ricoeur has made the point that Freud's move from ego to super-ego is akin to Husserl's move from *Ideas I* to *Ideas II*, from the individual to society. With this in mind, I would suggest that Lacan explores the relationship between the ego and the super-ego from the perspective of the solipsistic, and computational, *Ideas I*.

A materialist theory of consciousness

Lacan's thought can be seen to be a kind of proto-analytic thought in a part of *Seminar II* entitled 'a materialist theory of consciousness'. Here, the mirror, rather than the computer, is seen as a metaphor for consciousness: 'once again, we're dealing with a mirror ... the rays which return on to the mirror make us locate in an imaginary space the object which moreover is somewhere in reality. The real object isn't the object that you see in the mirror. So here there's a phenomenon of consciousness as such' (Lacan 1991b: 46). Like analytic theorists, Lacan seeks to divide consciousness from intentionality. He asks whether consciousness can exist without an ego: 'Suppose all men to have disappeared from the world ... there are only waterfalls and springs left – lightning and thunder too. The image in the mirror, the image of the lake – do they still exist?' (Lacan 1991b: 46). He argues that they can

'despite all living beings having disappeared, the camera can nonetheless record the image of the mountain in the lake, or that of the *Café de Flore* crumbling away in total solitude' (Lacan 1991b: 46). For Lacan, consciousness is divorced from ego and intentionality: 'so then! This is what I want you to consider as being essentially a phenomenon of consciousness, which won't have been perceived by any ego, which won't have been reflected upon in any ego-like experience – any kind of ego and of consciousness of ego being absent at the time' (Lacan 1991b: 47). In *Seminar II*, consciousness is seen as experience and comes from the body: 'we do know that consciousness is linked to something entirely contingent, just as contingent as the surface of a lake in an uninhabited world – the existence of our eyes or of our ears' (Lacan 1991b: 48). In contrast to Husserl, however, Lacan sees consciousness not as content but as *qualia* which can be replicated by machines such as cameras: 'I hope you'll consider – for a certain time, during this introduction – consciousness to occur each time – and it occurs in the most unexpected and disparate places – there's a surface such that it can produce what is called an *image*. That is a materialist definition' (Lacan 1991b: 49). Lacan's thought on consciousness and the unconscious in *Seminar II* is perhaps the closest anticipation of the analytic philosophy of mind in Lacan's philosophy, resembling that of Dennett's who also views (phenomenological) consciousness as epiphenomena.

In his efforts to distance the unconscious from phenomenology (and intentionality), the Lacanian theory of the unconscious in *Seminar II* appears pure form, computation. There are a number of people in Lacan's *Seminar II*, however, who suggest that Lacan's theory of the unconscious can be viewed as a theory of consciousness. Lefèbvre-Pontalis, for example, comments that an image is always ultimately an

intentional object: 'when you went into your apologue about the disappearance of men, you forgot one thing, which is that men had to return in order to grasp the relation between the reflection and the thing reflected' (Lacan 1991b: 58). Leclaire takes Lefèbvre-Pontalis' point further and, playing devil's advocate, wonders whether Lacan's theory of the symbolic is a theory of consciousness and not the unconscious: 'this consciousness, it seems to me that after having badly maltreated it you bring it back in with this voice which reintroduces order, and which regulates the ballet of the machines' (Lacan 1991b: 55). Lacan responds to Leclaire's question by suggesting that a voice can have no intentionality: 'Isn't it rather the voice ... of no-one' (Lacan 1991b: 55). It seems, however, that Lacan is explaining the unconscious in terms derived from a philosophy of consciousness. Searle suggests that even referring to conscious phenomena is acknowledging consciousness (Searle 1997: 54). It appears that Lacan is guilty of this by referring to the concept of a voice which is a conscious phenomenon. Searle has noted that materialist theories of consciousness simply mirror transcendental theories of consciousness: 'we have no conception of a mental state except in terms derived from conscious mental states' (Searle 1999: 19). He argues that the unconscious possesses the same attributes as conscious states: 'Notice the features that unconscious mental states have to have *qua* mental states. First, they have to have aspectual shape; and second, in some sense they have to be "subjective", because they are *my* mental states' (Searle 1999: 169). According to Searle, Freud's unconscious forms are like fish in the deep sea (Searle 1997: 152) which have the same form as fish in shallow sea. We get a strong sense of this whenever Lacan attempts to define the unconscious.

The humanistic and the mechanistic

The notion that our minds are comprised of systems of rules and principles has been a familiar one since the seventeenth century. One could suggest, as Dreyfus and Searle do, that Husserl's Fregean-inspired distinction between consciousness as subjectivity and intentionality as objectivity is the beginning of computational thought as the mind becomes seen as a network of intentional contents. However, it was Turing who was the true source of this idea in his argument that both minds and machines are systematic networks. He applied it to the emerging digital era and crystallised it, materially, in the form of the Turing machine.[37] Turing introduced the notion that there is a logical supervenience between machine and mind, that the rational can be empirical. AI developed this idea and argued that because the mind is logically supervenient on the brain, we can forget about the physical aspects and focus upon that which is supervenient – the systematic network of rules and principles. Chomsky took this further, dispensing with dualism and the notion of logical supervenience and synthesised brain and network. Searle objects to the notion implicit in Turing, AI and Chomsky, that consciousness is the result of, or even *is*, computation. For him, machines cannot be minds because they lack intentionality which is material and organic. He acknowledges that there is a dualism within materialism but this is a natural, rather than logical, supervenience between mind and body. For Searle, consciousness is prior to computation.

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[37] Turing famously argued that if a computer could win in the imitation game, then we could say that a computer has consciousness: 'if one wants to make a machine mimic the behaviour of the human computer in some complex operation one has to ask him how it is done, and then translate the answer into the form of an instruction table ... to "programme a machine to carry out the operation A" means to put the appropriate instruction table into the machine so that it will do A" (Turing 1950: 435). According to Turing, there would then be an argument for saying that consciousness is, likewise, merely the manipulation of symbols.

In *Seminar II*, Lacan discusses the tendency to mechanise human experience that began with Galileo and Descartes: 'when it comes down to it, we always try to explain the living organism in terms of mechanism ... in what way actually are we, as men, parents of the machine?' (Lacan 1991b: 131). One would expect, perhaps, Lacan to side with Searle on the issue of the mind as a systematic network but in *Seminar II* we find Lacan siding more with Dennett:

> it would be very easy to prove to you that the machine is much freer than the animal. The animal is a jammed machine. It's a machine with certain parameters that are no longer capable of variation. And why? Because the external environment determines the animal and turns it into a fixed type. It is in as much as, compared to the animal, we are machines ... that we possess greater freedom, in the sense in which freedom means the multiplicity of possible choices (Lacan 1991b: 31).

This idea that we are machines is, in fact, what Lacan finds appealing about cybernetics: 'cybernetics is a science of syntax, and it is in a good position to help us perceive that the exact sciences do nothing other than tie the real to a syntax' (Lacan 1991b: 305). Indeed, from the mid 1950s onwards, it is, for Lacan, a way of seeing the unconscious as distinct from consciousness. Forrester comments upon Lacan's notion of the machine and sees a mechanistic streak in Lacan's view of human nature: '[for Lacan] humans are more like machines than they are animals' (Forrester 1990: 129).[38] He suggests that Lacan's theory changes, in between *Seminar I* and *Seminar II*, from a concern with meaning to a concern with form. Indeed, as Lacan's theory develops in the 1950s, he becomes more concerned with signifiers rather than meanings, the

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[38] Forrester describes how the relationship between human, animal and machine has developed in philosophy since the seventeenth century. He explains how seventeenth and eighteenth century materialism equated animals with machines. Humans were viewed as distinct from both. He then explains how nineteenth century naturalism equated humans with animals. Finally, twentieth century minds equate humans, animals and machines.

unconscious rather than consciousness.[39] Forrester comments that 'to many, Lacan with his emphasis on speech and language, involved with the philosophy of Hegel and Heidegger, would be expected to line up on the side of the humanistic, anti-biological, anti-mechanistic defenders of the autonomy of psychoanalysis. Instead, he is virulently anti-humanistic' (Forrester 1990: 129). He presents the Lacan of the late 1950s as a kind of AI sympathiser in that there is seen to be a systematic logic to unconscious behaviour: 'Lacan's conception of repetition in psychoanalysis thus renders it far more akin to information theory and to what is now called A.I. than to a quasi-biological property of the animate' (Forrester 1990: 132). He comments on the problems surrounding Lacan's usage of the word "machine" and he argues that it would have been much clearer if he had made use of the term 'Turing machine ... which was pretty much what he was talking about for much of *Seminar II*' (Forrester 1990: 133). Forrester's comparison essentially sees the later Lacanian theory of the unconscious as underpinned by a digital materialism. He implies that there is an equivalence between the Lacanian unconscious and the cognitive unconscious in that they are both systematic networks.

The idea that the unconscious is computable brings Lacanian thought into contact with Chomsky's. Lacan does appear, at times, to express an argument similar to Chomsky's. They both, for example, appear to see a line from Descartes to Port-Royal logic to the cognitive revolution of the twentieth century: 'it is only much later, in our thinking or that of our fathers, that mechanism took on its full, purified, naked

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[39] Smith comments on the trajectory of Lacanian thought from 1953 onwards: 'with the ascendancy of the symbolic in Lacan's thought from 1953 onward, the imaginary was reduced to a function of the ego as citadel of defence, with virtually all mode of identification taken as instances of such defence. The ego itself was then taken as that imaginary, false sense of unity achieved by identifying with the bodily unity reflected by the mother or the mirror during the mirror stage when the child is eighteen months old' (Smith 1991: 38).

meaning, a meaning exclusive of all other interpretive systems. That is an observation which allows us to grasp what it means to be a precursor' (Lacan 1991b: 32). It was, Lacan argues, Pascal who first discovered the notion of the machine as a network of symbolic representations: 'Everything which up until then had been the science of numbers becomes a combinatory science' (Lacan 1991b: 300). According to Lacan, Pascal, long before Turing, invented the principle of computation which governs the function of a machine: 'the entire movement of the theory converges on a binary symbol, on the fact that anything can be written in terms of 0 and 1' (Lacan 1991b: 300). Chomsky, also, aims to re-establish Descartes as the father of modern thought, after Ryle's critique, by arguing that 'there are certain fundamental properties of the mind' (Chomsky 1966: 59). He consequently develops a theory of thought as computation in which the mind is literally a network of symbolic representations. He argues that after Descartes a theory of the mind was secure. However, after Newton a theory of the body was undermined because Newton established a whole new theory of mechanics: 'Newton eliminated the problem of the ghost in the machine by exorcising the machine; the ghost was unaffected' (Chomsky 2005: 84). According to Chomsky, a Cartesian theory of the body disappears after Newton and La Mettrie is seen as a symptom of Newton's mechanics: 'the natural conclusion drawn by La Mettrie ... is that human thoughts and action are properties of organised matter' (Chomsky 2005: 84). Thus, for La Mettrie (as a post-Newtonian Cartesian) thought must literally be *in* the body because the body can only be seen as subject to the laws of matter defined by Newtonian science. Chomsky suggests that a theory of the body in terms of Cartesian mechanics is debunked by Newtonian mechanics and that La Mettrie cannot reconcile the two.

In *Seminar II*, Lacan argues something similar. He explains that since the eighteenth century, machines have been unhelpfully compared to human experience: 'People in the eighteenth century, the ones who introduced the idea of mechanism ... people like La Mettrie ... who wrote *L'Homme Machine*, you can't imagine the extent to which they were still all caught up in the categories of an earlier age, which truly dominated their thinking' (Lacan 1991b: 31-2).[40] For La Mettrie, the mind is a machine or, rather, an effect of bodily organisation and this, paradoxically, explains how we often behave amorally or immorally. Their view of La Mettrie, however, is not quite the same, as Chomsky sees La Mettrie's thought as a consequence of the theoretical shift from Descartes to Newton; whereas Lacan sees him as a consequence of the theoretical shift from Aristotle to Descartes. The difference between Chomsky and Lacan is that, for Chomsky, Newton makes Descartes a problematic figure; for Lacan, Descartes is an inherently problematic figure. Unlike Chomsky, Lacan sees the debunked Cartesian theory of the body as affecting the Cartesian theory of mind. Consequently, he locates the unconscious between Descartes' theory of the body and his theory of the mind, between a proto-materialism and a proto-phenomenology. He sees the Cartesian theory of the body as a ghost or, rather, a corpse in the Cartesian theory of mind post-Newton. The ownmost or phenomenological body is what haunts the Cartesian theory of the mind. However, Lacan complicates this further by seeing this relation between Cartesian mind and pre-Cartesian body as computable. In the next section, we discuss whether Lacan sees computation as functional or dysfunctional.

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[40] Božovič comments that La Mettrie believes that 'people are worthy of respect because they are machines' (Božovič 2006: 28). He further comments: 'If people were not machines – that is, if they had a spiritual soul which did not depend so closely on their bodily organization – we would find them repellent if they indulged in fornication, theft, and so forth despite the fact that they were able to wish what they wish more or less independently of their bodily organization – that is, despite the fact that for them, 'I wish' was not synonymous with 'this is how I am' (Božovič 2006: 29). In other words, people can be forgiven for succumbing to their passions.

Lacanian AI?

This section discusses the extent to which early Lacanian thought on the unconscious can be considered to be equivalent to early analytic thought on consciousness. Computation is a very simple operation. It is the marking of 0 as 1 or 1 as 0. Searle opposes this notion that desire is computation and, in particular, Dennett's notion that beliefs and desires are 'a certain manner of speaking' (Searle 1999: 20). Like Dennett, however, Lacan emphasises that desire can be thought of as computation, as an input-output mechanism. Simms comments that, for Lacan, desire is 'apperceptive desire' or 'desire of desire' which formalises desire (Simms 2007: 34), and we see this in the following example from *Seminar II*:

> if machines could embody what's at stake in this dialectic, I would offer you the following model ... take one of these small turtles or foxes ... which are the playthings of the scientists of our time ... let us suppose that this machine is constituted in such a way that it is incomplete, and will jam, will only be definitively structured as a mechanism once it perceives – by whatever means, a photoelectric cell, for instance, with relays – another machine identical to itself, with the sole difference being that it would have already perfected its unity through what we may call a prior experience – a machine can have experience. The movement of each machine is thus conditioned by the perception of a certain stage attained by another' (Lacan 1991b: 51).

Lacan is using the mind as machine metaphor to explain desire but it explains the logic of AI as much as psychoanalysis. Like AI, Lacan argues that, in order to function, a machine needs to have a system of representation. In Lacan's example, one machine functions at the level of meaning whereas the other functions at the level of form. We can say that one is a metaphor for the brain and the other is a metaphor

for the mind. In his example, Lacan is making a similar point to AI in that he argues that in order to communicate, in order to become a functional machine, both machines need software: 'for the first machine which is jammed on the image of the second to be able to come to an agreement, for them not to be forced to destroy themselves on account of the convergence of their desire ... it would be necessary for the little machine to inform the other, to say to it – *I desire that*. That's impossible. Admitting that there is an I would immediately turn it into *you desire that*. I desire that means – *You, the other, which is my unity, you desire that*' (Lacan 1991b: 51). In his machine metaphor, Lacan is arguing that, in order to function, humans also have to represent – to replace experience with a representation, to distinguish between self and other, image and symbol: 'for something to become established, it would require the presence of a third, placed inside the machine, the first one, for instance, pronouncing an I' (Lacan 1991b: 51). Lacan's machines, like human beings, need to move from the natural to the logical: 'this third party is what we find in the unconscious ... there where it must be located for the ballet of all the little machines to get going, namely above them, in this elsewhere in which Claude Lévi-Strauss told us the other day, the system of exchanges is to be found, the elementary structures. It is necessary for the symbolic system to intervene in the system conditioned by the image of the ego so that an exchange can take place, something which isn't knowledge [*connaissance*], but recognition [*reconnaissance*]' (Lacan 1991b: 52). Lacan suggests that humans and machines do not acquire knowledge of content but the recognition of patterns the latter of which is the basis of all theories of computation. The unconscious becomes the introduction of form in a system governed by meaning. Hansen comments that Lacan 'liberates technology from its narrow functions as support for conscious activities' (Hansen 2000: 182). Indeed, this seems Lacan's intention. For him,

consciousness is intimately connected to meaning, images and the imagination whereas the unconscious is connected to signification, symbols and understanding.

One reading of Lacanian thought on the unconscious, such as Forrester's, sees it as supporting AI. However, there is another way to read the unconscious as a critique of AI. This reading sees Lacan's machines as metaphorical illustrations rather than scientific examples. Alcorn makes this point but defends Lacan's contradictoriness: 'Lacan frequently contradicts himself. Typically, these contradictions reveal Lacan in the process of thinking, in the process of finding the best metaphors or terms of comparison useful for elucidating the substance of his thought. For example, in relation to his earlier insistence that human beings are like machines (found in *Book II* of the *Seminar* and quoted by Bannet), Lacan later points out that human beings are not like machines' (Alcorn 1994: 22). Machines may have language, which Lacan sees as a symbolic network, but they do not have speech, which is part of embodied experience and linked to intentionality. He comments: 'there is a third dimension of time which [machines] undeniably are not party to, which I'm trying to get you to picture via this element which is neither belatedness, nor being in advance, but haste, the relation to time peculiar to the human being ... that is where speech is to be found, and where language, which has all the time in the world, is not. That is why, furthermore, one gets nowhere with language' (Lacan 1991b: 291). Lacan appears to conclude that the *a priori* nature of speech prevents there being Lacanian AI.

In this sense, Lacan is closer to Searle who saves Husserlian thought from being appropriated by AI and functionalism. In *Minds, Brains and Programs*, Searle shows that although experience can be mechanised, intentionality cannot be (mechanised):

'no purely formal model will ever be sufficient by itself for intentionality because the formal properties are not by themselves constitutive of intentionality' (Searle 1980). Searle would argue along with Tallis that Lacan can make the unconscious appear computable precisely because computation is not intrinsic but observer-relative. He argues that the principle of computation is not that 0 is written as 1 but that *anything* can be written as either 0 or 1: 'To find out if an object is really a digital computer, it turns out that we do not actually have to look for 0's and 1's, etc.; rather we just have to look for something that we could *treat as* or *count as* or that *could be used to* function as a 0's and 1's' (Searle 1999: 206). Zero and one are thus *metaphors* for a digital reality not *proof* of a digital reality. Searle does not refer to Lacan, and there is a sense in which Lacan would be viewed by him as a disastrous consequence of the universalisation of computation. However, Lacan's views on computation have some commonality with Searle's in that they both suggest that computation is not intrinsic but assigned: 'there is something in the symbolic function of human discourse that cannot be eliminated, and that is the role played in it by the imaginary' (Lacan 1991b: 306). For Lacan, the symbols 0 and 1 correspond, on one level, with Freud's "Fort-Da" and, on another level, with Saussure's signifier and signified. He thus uses computation as illustration of the unconscious rather than model of the unconscious.

Early Lacan, however, does not debunk computation like Searle. Instead, he seeks to mediate between phenomenology and computation. He sees the relation between 0 and 1 as a metaphorical rather than a formal relation, imaginary rather than symbolic. According to him, the door is a Lacanian equivalent of the Turing machine as it also can conceivably be a mind: 'in its nature the door belongs to the symbolic order, and it opens up either on to the real, or the imaginary, we don't know quite which, but it is

either one or the other' (Lacan 1991b: 302). A door is either open or closed, 0 or 1: 'A door isn't either open or shut, it must be either open and then shut, and then opened and then shut' (Lacan 1991b: 302). In his machine metaphors, Lacan foreshadows Dreyfus. His machines are frequently those which are available to phenomenological description such as the camera in *Seminar II.* Lacan suggests that the body is not a machine but the mind is a machine and this conflict means that the human being, as a whole, cannot be a machine and this is, according to Lacan, the truth of all theories of computation which are metaphors for the unconscious rather than consciousness. Lacan creates a space where both can co-exist. We are ontological machines and not digital machines. Lacan's view of AI is even more of a radical critique than Searle's in this sense. He is on the side of Dreyfus in his argument that the unconscious is what happens when we try to say that consciousness is a computer program. He suggests that we are machines but intuition, rather than symbolic, machines.[41]

In this sense, Lacanian thought on the unconscious in the mid 1950s is closer to HAI than AI.[42] Dreyfus' description of embodied coping is reminiscent of Lacan's view of the drive which is the tracing of an outline, the feeling of one's way around a border.

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[41] Unlike Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari do not see the machine as a relation between the symbolic and the intuitional, or form and substance. They draw on fluid dynamics to present the machine as a purely physical relation between 'unstable particle-flows, metastable molecular or quasi-molecular units (*substances*) upon which it imposes a statistical order of connections and successions (*forms*)' (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 46). For Deleuze and Guattari, Lacan's view of the machine is too tied up with a view of the machine prevalent in Anglo-American philosophy.

[42] Dreyfus urges us to look beyond the present-at-hand and, instead, focus on the ready-to-hand. Dreyfus' approach is, like Heidegger's, anti-propositional. He argues that Heidegger sees the material world as a 'solicitation to act' and not an 'entity with a function feature' and that our relationship with the world is one of 'skilful coping'. In Dreyfus' view, instead of a Turing machine, we have to think of human experience as 'a dynamical physical system' (Dreyfus 2007: 262) and the notion of 'computational cognitivism' is replaced with the notion of 'coupled copers' (Dreyfus 2007: 265). Heideggerian AI is an alternative to AI in that it sees human beings as machines but machines that function contextually rather than conceptually. HAI is essentially a Heideggerian theory of consciousness.

The Heideggerian AI theory of embodied coping and the early Lacanian theory of the drive both see meaning determining form rather than vice versa. Dreyfus argues, however, that Heideggerian AI needs to become more Heideggerian than AI:

> to program Heideggerian AI, we would not only need a model of the brain functioning underlying coupled coping ... but we would also need—and here's the rub—a model of our particular way of being embedded and embodied such that what we experience is significant for us in the particular way that it is. That is, we would have to include in our program a model of a body very much like ours with our needs, desires, pleasures, pains, ways of moving, cultural background, etc. If we can't make our brain model responsive to the significance in the environment as it shows up specifically for human beings, the project of developing an embedded and embodied Heideggerian AI can't get off the ground (Dreyfus 2007: 265).

Dreyfus suggests that Heideggerian AI turns into AI. Both are, in effect, scientific narratives and theories of consciousness. Nevertheless, what Lacan and Heideggerian AI share is a view of the object as changing as well as fixed. The unconscious, at least in the mid 1950s, is the manifestation of a relationship between the worlds of contextuality and objectivity, an intuition machine rather than a symbolic machine.

For Lacan, there is never pure symbol because it always carries with it meaning. This is why Mannoni worries unnecessarily about the supposed eliminativism of Lacanian theory from the mid 1950s onwards: 'what bothers me is the feeling I have that this imaginary lining doesn't just grind up, but is the indispensable nourishment of the symbolic language and that language, if completely deprived of this nourishment, becomes the machine, that is to say something which is no longer human' (Lacan 1991b: 319). Mannoni sees the influence of the image on language as decoration whereas Lacan sees it as *decayoration*. It is the imaginary that makes the symbolic

dysfunctional and, for the early Lacan, computation is imaginary rather than symbolic. For him, the machine is inanimate whereas the human being is both animate and inanimate: 'the machine is simply the succession of little 0's and 1's, so that the question of whether it is human or not is obviously entirely settled – it isn't. Except, there's also the question of knowing whether the human, in the sense in which you understand it, is as human as all that' (Lacan 1991b: 319). Like Dreyfus, Lacan takes Heideggerian thought on technology a step further, he gives meaning form and situates the unconscious between the two.

Ultimately, for Lacan, symbols are merely images in masquerade: 'The issue is to know whether the symbolic exists as such, or whether the symbolic is simply the fantasy of the second degree of the imaginary coaptations' (Lacan 1991b: 306-7). Lacan provides an alternative critique of AI in which symbols are seen as death masks, or simply ways of dressing the stinking corpse of both the dead father and the Cartesian body. Lacan is arguing that we cannot replace lived experience with a formal structure or the animate image with an inanimate symbol because there is always something left over. Ryle argued that there is no ghost in the machine but Lacan argues that there is something which, depending upon the position of the subject, appears as either a corpse or a signifier. Lacan's view is beyond Ryle's and is a step towards Dreyfus but, ultimately, like La Mettrie, he is caught between substance and function, materialism and dualism. Lacan's work is a seemingly paradoxical critique and engagement with technology. On the one hand, meaning always already underpins form (Dreyfus). On the other hand, we get meaning from form (Dennett).

This chapter has argued that the theory of the unconscious in Lacan's early thought has some commonality with Heidegger's theory of *Dasein*. However, Lacanian thought moves away from Heidegger's as a materialist theory of consciousness develops alongside a materialist theory of the unconscious. Lacan's early materialist theory of the unconscious lies between continental and materialist views. A tension between the two views of the unconscious can be seen in early Lacan. He is concerned with depicting the unconscious as that which cannot be a machine but, at the same time, finds himself defining it as a machine. This tension between continental and analytic views is explored in the next chapter in relation to Lacan's so-called "structuralist" phase.

CHAPTER THREE

EXISTENTIALISM AND MATERIALISM IN LACAN'S EARLY (STRUCTURALIST) THEORY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

The early thought of Lacan is often considered to be structuralist. Structuralism was a movement in both the continental and analytic traditions that emphasised the determining role of language in human relations; and in the relations between human beings and their environments. Although it originated in the linguistics of Saussure, its origins have been questioned in recent years with some theorists arguing that its origins are actually in Locke. In the continental tradition, structuralism is a close relation of materialism in its emphasis upon mediation rather than intentionality or existence. This chapter, however, argues that Lacan's view of both materialism and structuralism *bears* existence. Lacan's early materialist theory of the unconscious is caught between an existentialist view that we are free to imagine and a materialist view that our images are determined. This is a problem for Lacan in establishing a coherent theory as well as a "science" of the unconscious. This chapter suggests that Lacan's early theory of the unconscious can never be a science. We can, however, see the very beginnings of a third view of materialism, neither continental or analytic, that is existential materialism. The chapter ends with a discussion of how Chomsky and Lacan (who both engage with structuralism from different traditions) perceive both consciousness and the unconscious. It is suggested that Lacan's early theory of the unconscious, unlike Chomsky's theory of consciousness which is not linguistic, is tied up with a view of consciousness increasingly prevalent in the analytic tradition.

Signification and meaning

A materialist theory of consciousness, in the analytic tradition, views consciousness in terms of logic, or the logic of language. Meaning is considered to come from the words, or the relations between words. Lacan suggests, via structuralism (which pre-dates his later interest in analytic logic), that we can understand a materialist theory of the unconscious in a similar way. Structuralism shares with analytic thought the view that meaning is in the relation between words – or, rather, in the relation between signifiers. In structuralism, in fact, meaning *is* signification. However, throughout the 1950s, I will be arguing, Lacan's view of meaning is caught between a materialist/structuralist one and an existentialist one.

French structuralism was a relatively short-lived cultural movement in which cultural phenomena were reduced to forms and relations between forms. It could be argued that the lifespan of it was so short because it was a theory of signification rather than a theory of meaning.[43] Lyotard is critical of Lacan, and structuralism, for advocating a theory of signification rather than a theory of meaning:

> it seems to me that ... in Lacan's thought there is a confusion between *signification* in the strict sense Saussure accorded the term by shifting it back to linguistic value, a sense which precisely, because it reduces signification entirely to the ensemble of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations surrounding a term, controlling its functioning in the statement and its place in the semantic field, robs that signification of all the depths of hiding/revealing and explains the enigmatic limpidity of words in use, a confusion, then, between signification thus isolated and *meaning (sens)*' (Lyotard 1989: 37).[44]

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[43] Dosse comments that the high point in structuralism (in France at least) was 1966 and the beginning of its demise in 1967 (Dosse 1998a: 280).
[44] Simms, following Lyotard, also comments that Lacan's theory of language 'collapses meaning into signification' (Simms 2007: 137).

Lyotard advocates a re-thinking of the structuralist enterprise: 'it is particularly the theory of signification as a value, and of a value as a syntagmatic and paradigmatic framework that must be, if not abandoned, at least complemented by a theory of meaning' (Lyotard 1989: 40). His distinction between signification and meaning is influenced by Frege's distinction between sense and reference. Signification explains the simple process of how words, sounds and images interrelate and form concepts. Meaning, however, is what happens to words after signification when they combine together to form phrases, sentences and discourses. Saussure's attitude to meaning was not as explicitly reductive as structuralists argued. Indeed, for Saussure, the mind plays a crucial role in limiting arbitrariness: 'the entire linguistic system is founded upon the irrational principle that the sign is arbitrary. Applied without restriction, this principle would lead to utter chaos. But the mind succeeds in introducing a principle of order and regularity into certain areas of the mass of signs' (Saussure 2000: 131). The mind perceives a world that contains a mass of signifiers which have an arbitrary, rather than natural, relationship to their signifieds. It is the mind which introduces a principle of order and regularity to the mass of signs in order to limit arbitrariness. For Saussure, then, consciousness structures language for a purpose – to enable communication to take place. The sign which, historically, and in Saussure, comprises both language and thought becomes in structuralism a mere signifier. The language system becomes a system of values where meaning is the result of signifier to signifier relations and the signified is an effect or displacement of these relations.

Tallis has famously questioned post-Saussurean theories of language in which language becomes reality and signification becomes meaning. According to him, although Saussure argues that the relationship between signifier and signified is intra-

linguistic (a relationship of values) this does not necessarily mean that reality is intra-linguistic (Tallis 1995: 55). He argues that Saussure's idea that thought is a vague, uncharted nebulus and that nothing is distinct before language is 'hardly a startling claim' (Tallis 1995: 55). Tallis criticises both structuralist and AI theories of mind in one fell swoop: 'does this really mean anything more than that outside of language consciousness is not propositional or sentential?' (Tallis 1995: 56-7). In effect, he attempts to give Saussure's theory the semantics that it lacks and argues that 'what Saussure probably means is that prior to language, consciousness is uncharted experience' (Tallis 1995: 56). He suggests that Saussure merely distinguishes between the 'vagueness of consciousness as unarticulated experience and the sharpness of consciousness as explicit and articulated thought' (Tallis 1995: 56). Tallis's critique does give us an insight into how post-Saussurean linguistics misinterpreted Saussure's views on the relation between thought and language. As structuralism does not have an explicit theory of reference, meaning becomes form. It is therefore symptomatic of the mid-twentieth century obsession with form in both continental and Anglo-American traditions. Lacan also attempts to give structuralism a theory of reference albeit the reference of psychoanalysis. This makes his theory of language akin to semantics (albeit the semantics of Freud) which, as we will see, is Derrida's argument.

Lacan comes to Saussure initially via Levi-Strauss' *Elementary Structures of Kinship* but his interpretation of the sign also intersects with Heidegger's notion that man is always already an interpreting animal. However, the sign in early Lacan appears to draw its inspiration more from existentialism than either structuralism or Heidegger. It is depicted by Lacan as follows:

$$\frac{\text{S}}{s}$$

Unlike Saussure, who presents a transparent relationship between signifier and signified in his theory of the sign, Lacan's theory of the sign gives predominance to the signifier: 'the notion of an incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier comes to the fore' (Lacan 2006: 419). This is, on the face of it, commensurate with a structuralist approach, as Lacan reverses the prominence given to the signified in Saussure's conception of the sign: 'we have jettisoned the illusion that the signifier [*répond a*] has the function of representing the signified, or better, that the signifier has to justify [*repondré de*] its existence in terms of any signification whatsoever' (Lacan 2006: 416). Lacan's theory of the sign, however, is distinct from structuralism in its emphasis upon meaning, or the disruptive powers of meaning. For Lacan, meaning is slippery, the signified is what represents the signifier to another signifier (Lacan 2006: 246). According to Simms, Lacan is describing metaphor rather than signification in his concept of the sign: 'the essential point is that for Lacan, the sliding of the signified under the signifier is, precisely, metaphor as such, in its most reduced and purest form' (Simms 2007: 70). In the classical view of metaphor, an original meaning is expressed in a form in which it becomes a different meaning. The signifier, for Lacan, is old meaning as new form. It lies between a scientific figure and a metaphorical illustration, dead metaphor and live metaphor.

Lacan's view of the sign does appear more metaphorical than scientific. For him, the sign becomes an algorithm even though nowhere does Saussure refer to it as such. He does acknowledge that it is 'not reduced to this exact form' in Saussure but as there is

no Saussurean ur-text, and thus Saussure's work is always an interpretation, his re-interpretation is felt to be justified. According to Lacan, Saussure's representation of the sign, signifier below signified, with the word tree (signifier) below an image of a tree (signified) is 'a faulty illusion' because the signifier is always already a meaning. To illustrate this, he suggests an alternative pictorial representation of the sign with the words *gentlemen* and *ladies* above two doors exact in appearance:

Gentlemen   Ladies
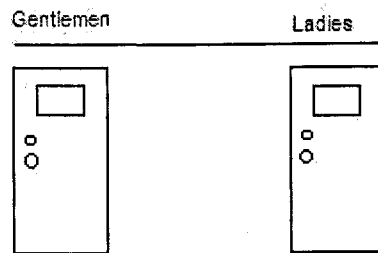
For Lacan, this graphically illustrates the primacy of the signifier which is always already a meaning: 'the precipitation of an unexpected meaning; the image of two twin doors that symbolize ... the imperative he seems to share with the vast majority of primitive communities that subjects his public life to the laws of urinary segregation' (Lacan 2006: 417). Thus, there is meaning in signification and what is above the signifying bar determines what is below: 'the point is not merely to silence the nominal debate with a low blow but to show how the signifier in fact enters the signified – namely in a form which, since it is not immaterial, raises the question of its place in reality' (Lacan 2006: 417). Lacan recalls the story of a train arriving at a station. A boy on the train says 'we're at ladies' and a girl responds with 'no, we're at gentlemen'. For Lacan, the rails in the story represent the bar in the Saussurean sign. However, they also emphasise how sexuality and signification are allegedly interrelated: 'gentlemen and ladies will henceforth be two homelands toward which each of their souls will take flight on divergent wings' (Lacan 2006: 417). For Lacan, the signifying bar represents the meaning of sexual differentiation (or, in

psychoanalytical terms, castration) which directly determines sexuality and indirectly all meaning. This meaning is that male and female relationships will always be asymmetrical. It is the basis of his later assertion, in *Seminar XX*, that *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* or "there is no sexual relationship" (Lacan 1999). However, in Lacan's analysis, signification appears the result of philosophical reflection. There is a strong sense that language is structured by us, and is an expression of our existence, our existence as essence.

Metaphor – form or meaning?

The argument, here, is that Lacan's existentialism – and, consequently, its theory of consciousness as for-itself – is still apparent in his supposedly structuralist theory of the unconscious. Indeed, his thought on metaphor illustrates the gap between existence and essence rather than signifier and signified. Lacan's theory of metaphor and metonymy is *ostensibly* based on Jakobson's theory of metaphor and metonymy which reduces both to signification: 'while a later part of analytic investigation, one concerning identification and symbolism, is on the side of metaphor, let's not neglect the other side, that of articulation and contiguity ... the rhetorical form that is the opposite of metaphor has a name – it's called metonymy' (Lacan 1997: 220). Jakobson sees metaphor and metonymy as merely relations between words and even signifiers. He argues that all meaning can be effectively reduced to a binary code. Language, pictures, sounds, 'the entire domain of the perceptible' (Simms 2007: 47) is considered to be governed by signification. In Jakobson's thought, metaphor is a synonym for paradigmatic relations whereas metonymy is a synonym for syntagmatic relations. For him, the relation between metaphor and metonymy is a binary relation:

metaphor involves selecting words, metonymy involves selecting and combining words. Whereas metaphor is concerned with words which refer to substances, actions or qualities such as nouns, verbs and adjectives, metonymy is concerned with these words but also words which refer to syntax and position such as prepositions. Like Jakobson, Lacan does appear to see metaphor in terms of signification rather than meaning. He takes an example from Hugo's *Booz Endormi* ('his sheaf was neither miserly nor hateful' Lacan 2006: 422) to illustrate how metaphor is dependent upon signification: 'if his sheaf refers back to Booz, as is clearly the case nevertheless, it is because it replaces him in the signifying chain ... once his sheaf has thus usurped his place, Booz cannot go back to it' (Lacan 2006: 422). In Lacan's Jakobsonian-influenced view, metaphor has metonymy as its foundation: 'the metaphor is placed in the position of subject, in Booz's place. It's a phenomenon of signifiers that is involved' (Lacan 1997: 225). Thus, metaphor is not the manifestation of a thought in language but it is rather in the mechanics of the expression itself. It is in words and between words rather than between ideas and words or words and ideas.

According to Jakobson, Freud's condensation and displacement belong to the order of metonymy and his figurability and secondary revision belong to the order of metaphor. However, Lyotard argues that Jakobson's, and Lacan's, linguisticisation of Freud is fatally flawed because condensation and displacement are of the order of images and not symbols, meaning and not signification: 'Freud assures us that [condensation] is a fundamentally non-linguistic operation ... condensation, for Freud, is a transformation dismissive of discourse' (Lyotard 1989: 38-9). Although Lacan is ostensibly closer to Jakobson than Freud in his view of condensation and displacement, he also differs from Jakobson in that he associates displacement with

metonymy and condensation with metaphor. There is a sense in which Lacan understands metaphor differently from Jakobson. Indeed, as Simms comments, there is a sense in which Lacan understands metaphor not only at the level of words but also at the level of sentences.[45] His example of metaphor: 'love is a pebble laughing in the sun' (Lacan 2006: 423) shows that the meaning of this metaphor is achieved not only by signification but by predication. Firstly, we can understand it at the level of words in that love is literally not a pebble. Secondly, we can understand it at the level of thoughts in that neither pebbles nor love laugh. The copula generates the metaphor in that it makes what was once animate inanimate. According to Jakobson, metaphor is formal substitution, but there is a sense in which Lacan does not wholly believe this. It is Jakobson who argues that metaphor is form or signification. However, there is not a clear distinction between form and meaning in Lacanian thought. In Lacan's examples, he undermines Jakobson's implicit dualism by showing how metaphor and metonymy are not so easily separated and how metonymy can be viewed as an element of metaphor rather than vice versa.

There is a tension between a view of metaphor that is transcendent and a view of it as determinist which prefigures the opposing later views of Ricoeur and Derrida. Ricoeur argues that language is an expression of thought. He sees a tension, rather than a dialectical conflict, between language and it is in this tension that metaphor arises: 'the "place" of metaphor, its most intimate and ultimate abode, is neither the name, nor the sentence, nor even discourse, but the copula of the verb *to be*. The

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[45] In Lacan's Booz metaphor, Simms comments that it is 'clear that a metaphor is present in the sentence' and that 'it is not literally the case that the sheaf is neither miserly nor spiteful; it is only metaphorically so' (Simms 2007: 63). For Simms, a metaphor may begin as metonymy but it ends up as metaphor. He comments that we can understand metaphor at the level of words, or signification, as well as the level of sentences, or meaning. For example, in the metaphor "night is falling", the fact that night literally does not fall is a metaphor at the level of words; the whole expression as a metaphor of Hitler's rise to power is a metaphor at the level of sentences (Simms 2007: 59).

metaphorical "is" at once signifies both "is not" and "is like". If this is really so, we are allowed to speak of a metaphorical truth, but in an equally "tensive" sense of the word "truth"' (Ricoeur 1997: 7). In what he considers to be the true spirit of metaphor, Ricoeur argues that the power of metaphor is in the notion of not being as being and being as not being. This tension, according to him, accounts for human creativity, *per se*, as metaphor has the power to redefine being and not being. Derrida, however, argues that metaphor is not about the creation of new meaning but rather the regurtitation of old meanings: 'the relation of metaphor to concept, and the process of metaphoricity in general would be understood under the concept of the scheme of *usure* (wear and tear) as a becoming-word or becoming worn-out' (Derrida 1978: 13). For Derrida, all metaphors are consequently dead metaphors and meaning is signification. In effect, Derrida reinforces structuralism's reductive view of metaphor and adds his own deconstructive critique by suggesting that metaphor is part of an ideology of presence that has afflicted Western thought since Descartes. In one sense, Lacan suggests that there is thought and language and that metaphor is *the* something that is created in the relationship between the two. However, on the other hand, this something is not a new meaning but a manifestation of an old one – a symptom. For Lacan, metaphor is at once coming into being and collapsing into symptom. His view of metaphor does reveal an anxiety over the extent to which metaphor can be described as either signification or meaning. How we view meaning and signification is crucial in our quest to define Lacan's theory of consciousness. Ostensibly, he expresses a materialist view of the relation between meaning and signification. However, there is always already an existentialist view of the relation. There is always already consciousness for-itself in Lacan's early materialist theory of the unconscious.

Phallus – prototype or signifier?

The contrast between the 'materiality of the signifier' and the existentialist notion that there is always already meaning is apparent in the central concept of the phallus in Lacan's early thought. According to Lacan, the phallus is a signifier which the child becomes aware of in the early years of its life. In Lacanian thought, the child's early life is marked by a search for meaning which is a desire to be in the place where the father is or once was. Lacan states that 'the mother contains the phallus and the child wants to be the phallus in order to satisfy her desire' (Lacan 2006: 581). In Lacanian thought, desire (for the child and the traumatised adult) is the desire to be the signifier of the father's desire. According to Lacan, the child engages in an imaginary game of being and having in order to get the mother's attention. Adult sexuality, for Lacan, is based upon this prototypical play between meaning and signification in which men *have* the phallus and women *are* the phallus. It is based on a seeming (to be and to have) motivated by the dialectic between the alleged nostalgia of being (female) or having (male) the phallus and the alleged threat of not being (male) or not having (female) the phallus. The child has to learn that the phallus is non-referential rather than referential. When the child learns that the mother does not have the phallus then the Oedipus Complex has come to a climax, so to speak. The child learns that the phallus has no specular image, that it is not of the body, not of the order of meaning. According to Lacan, our traumas derive from our unwillingness to accept that the phallus is of the order of the signifier and not of the order of meaning, that it is of the order of death not life.

The very word 'phallus' suggests a relationship to perception or meaning in that it indicates a reference to the penis but Lacan views it as a pure form. How we should view the phallus in Lacanian thought has been the topic of much post-Lacanian debate. Evans, for example, comments that the phallus has no specular image (Evans 2005: 190) but Leupnitz wonders why Lacan attempted to strip the phallus of its relation to the penis (Leupnitz 2003: 227). Macey comments that there is no reference to the phallic stage in Lacan's early writings and that the phallus is a regression to a biological organ (Macey 1988: 191). Johnson responds to Derrida's charge of phallogocentrism in Lacanian thought and comments that Lacan never uses the word phallus in his *Seminar on the Purloined Letter*: 'while criticising Lacan's notion of the phallus as being too referential, Derrida goes on to use referential logic against it' (Johnson 1982: 474). She argues that 'the phallus is a sign of sexuality as difference, and not as the presence or absence of this or that organ' (Johnson 1982: 243). For her, it is 'a knot in a structure where words, things and organs can neither be definably separated nor completely combined' (Johnson 1982: 498). In *The Signification of the Phallus*, Lacan does emphasise the non-referential nature of the phallus, stating that there is 'a relation between the subject and the phallus that forms without regard to the anatomical distinction between the sexes' (Lacan 2006: 376). Lacan is unequivocal that the phallus is non-referential: 'the phallus is not a fantasy, if we are to view fantasy as an imaginary effect. Nor is it such an object (part-, internal, good, bad, etc.). Still less is it like the organ-penis-that it symbolizes' (Lacan 2006: 579). Indeed, although the word phallus suggests prototypicality, Lacan presents it as a platonic rather than a prototypical category, a form rather than a meaning.

Lacan's theory of the phallus is paradoxical in that it appears both a meaningful object in our imagination and a meaningless form in our understanding. His theory of the phallus is subject to the same contradictions as his theory of metaphor – is it of the order of signification or of the order of meaning, language or thought? The argument here is that Lacan engages in prototypical thinking about the phallus but feels that he has to make structuralist conclusions.[46] His notion of the phallus essentially describes how our lives become guided by something peripheral which is also the logic of prototypes. A prototype is an oblique identification, determined by an often embodied peripheral meaning; whereas a signifier is an arbitrary identification, determined by a disembodied, abstract notion of differentiation.[47] It is in this sense that Lacan is not a structuralist because structuralism emphasises the arbitrariness of language whereas Lacan emphasises its non-arbitrariness. Lacan's argument that the phallus is a structuralist category might hold more sway if he had given a different name to his signifier. As Simms comments: 'we are driven to ask – why this signifier, rather than any other? Why should the phallus have the privilege of master signifier?' (Simms 2007: 77). Lang comments that the phallus is a fragmentation of the body: 'as long as the human being finds itself appropriate to language, his body exists only as fragmented and broken into the partiality of the erogenous zones' (Lang 1997: 168); and signifies an 'empty location – the phallus as a signifier of bodily annihilation'. He suggests that it is the mark 'of a radical finitude' (Lang 1997: 170). However, in his

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[46] Stich explains what a prototype is: 'concepts are weighted lists of features ... the list will generally include lots of features that are not necessary for category membership ... for example ... the concept underlying your use of 'dog' might include detailed descriptions of Lassie or Rin Tin Tin. In determining whether to categorise something as a dog ... you assess the similarity between the target and the various exemplars stored in a semantic memory' (Stich 1996: 173).

[47] Givon puts prototype theory in its philosophical context: 'categories of the understanding are discrete, absolute and pristine be they God-given as in Plato or Descartes ... neurogenetically wired as in Chomsky ... represent stable features of the Real world as in Russell ... or atomic units of perception ... as in classical empiricists' (Givon 1986: 77). The prototype position, in contrast, is an alternative position to these points of view in that it 'allows for a non-discrete continuum space within as well as between categories ... categories within the continuum space are formed at intersections of a number of characteristic or typical features/properties' (Givon 1986: 79).

later thought, *jouissance* appears a more effective metaphor for the unconscious than the phallus as it is not so enmeshed in essences as the concept of the phallus. We will return to this in chapter six.

Ultimately, the phallus cannot be reduced to an empty signifier because it always already has content. It is a metaphor, not a signifier, for the penis. Lacan ultimately does not answer the question of what the phallus is in his own thought. One feels that Lacan wishes to have his cake and eat it by suggesting that the phallus is both arbitrary and non-arbitrary. His approach to the phallus is indicative of his approach to scientific figures in general. His understanding of the signifier is always injected with meaning which makes it merely a metaphorical illustration. As Dor comments: '[Lacan's] symbolic representations of models are only concrete attempts to "imagine" a network of abstract relations' (Dor 1996: 115). Cutrefello, however, suggests he enables us to see the truth of science: 'it is not a question of substituting "one picture" of the world for another but of substituting mathematical equations for pictures. It is thus the truth of beings ... that modern science reveals. This means that there is a radical disjunction between the order of the mathematical and the order of perception' (Cutrefello 2002: 157). The mathematical is always infused with the perceptual, signifier with subject, signification with meaning. One could suggest that the signifier, metaphor and phallus anticipate a view of HAI, an understanding of scientific categories contextually but the early Lacan's sympathies with existentialism always underlie his materialist ambitions. We see this tension between meaning and form in his understanding of the letter.

The Letter – between metaphor and science

Lacan's interest in "the letter" in the mid 1950s coincides with his interest in establishing a science of the unconscious. As Burgoyne comments, science presupposes, rather than applies itself to, letters (Burgoyne 2003: 73). We could further suggest that letters are analytic in science. However, Lacan's letters occupy the borders between analytic and synthetic. In Lacanian thought, the letter is between the metaphorical and the scientific and yet, like the phallus, Lacan insists that we should think of it in terms of the latter. A letter is an orthographic representation of a sound and a figure in the alphabet. A letter is also an epistle – a written communication between two persons. Lacan argues that like the characters in Poe's *The Purloined Letter*, we define ourselves in relation to the letter which he urges us to see as analytic rather than synthetic. In this text, it is most notably the queen, the minister and Dupin who endow the letter with meaning. In the story, we are never aware of the contents of the letter: 'the story tells us nothing' and 'must the letter then of all objects, have been endowed with the property of nullibiety?' (Lacan 2006: 16). Lacan suggests that the letter is a nothing that we make something and yet this nothing is always already something. Forrester comments that symbols are vestiges of a time when sex and language were identical (Forrester 1980: 114), when name and thing matched perfectly (Forrester 1980: 129). This is what Lacan means when he suggests that the letter is a whole but not a *Gestalt*: 'cut a letter into small pieces, and it remains the letter that it is – and this is in a completely different sense than *Gestalt* theory can account for with the latent vitalism in its notion of the whole' (Lacan 2006: 16). Lacan is suggesting that it is we who give letters, or signifiers, meaning. As the subject is what represents the signifier to another signifier, the letter is what represents

the unconscious for each of the characters and for us: 'for each of them the letter is his unconscious ... at each point in the symbolic circuit, each of them becomes something else' (Lacan 1991b: 196-7). Lacan is attempting to redefine phenomenological consciousness as the unconscious which, once again, appears to anticipate Dennett. He argues that our relationship to the letter entirely depends on where we stand in relation to the signifying bar, or the law. On one side of the bar, it is an image. On the other side of the signifying bar, it is a concept.

Lacan, however, urges us, or rather the psychoanalyst, to view the letter as a symbol and not an image:

> I ... am aware of the importance of imaginary impregnations (*Prägung*) in the partializations of the symbolic alternative that give the signifying chain its appearance. Nevertheless, I posit that it is the law specific to this chain which governs the psychoanalytic effects that are determinant for the subject ... and I add that these effects follow the displacement (*Estellung*) of the signifier so faithfully that imaginary factors, despite their inertia, figure only as shadows and reflections therein (Lacan 2006: 6).

By suggesting that the letter is a form and that it is we who give it meaning, Lacan attempts to tie the letter to a Cartesian rather than a Sartrean frame of reference. In *Seminar II*, however, Mannoni draws attention to the idea that the letter is a drawing and thus occupies the imaginary rather than the symbolic: 'you assimilate drawing, the graphic, to the imaginary' (Lacan 1991b: 191). Lacan, however, corrects Mannoni and suggests that it is not a drawing because 'a drawing is already a symbol' (Lacan 1991b: 191). Nevertheless, Mannoni is aware that it can be both – image and symbol, conscious and unconscious: 'but not quite, which is what intrigues me' (Lacan 1991b: 191). Lacan wrestles with this symbiosis between the imaginary and the symbolic

throughout his early and later thought. Ostensibly, for him, the letter should not be an extension, or tool, of the subject: 'it will intrigue you so long as we haven't taken a drawing as the object' (Lacan 1991b: 191). He argues that the letter should not be viewed as meaning and is suspicious of any notion that perceives symbols or objects as substitutions for presence and yet, in practice, this is how the letter appears.

There is a contradiction, here, which is interesting for us in our search for Lacan's theory of consciousness. On the one hand, the letter is essence not existence: 'but as for the letter itself, whether we take it in the sense of a typographical element, of an epistle, or of what constitutes a man of letters, we commonly say that what people say must be understood *à la lettre* (to the letter or literally), that a letter is being held for you at the post office, or even that you are well versed in letters – never that there is (some amount of) letter [*de la lettre*] anywhere, whatever the context, even to designate late mail' (Lacan 2006: 17). On the other hand, the paradox of the letter is that it is signification *and* meaning, essence *and* existence. It is linguistic and paralinguistic, materialist and dualist, which brings Lacanian thought on the letter closer to pragmatics. However, there is only ever one meaning in Lacanian thought, the meaning of the original disembodiment – castration. Lacan's emphasis on the form rather than the meaning of the letter is to emphasise its alleged certainty. On its journey through us, we may give it marks or images, invert it, or anthropomorphise it. We try to give it meaning but the signified cannot be stopped from slipping under the signifier. We may even divert it but we cannot stop it: 'this is why what the "purloined letter", nay, the "letter *en souffrance*", means is that a letter always arrives at its destination' (Lacan 2006: 38). Lacan is advocating an *epoché* of the letter in which it is stripped of its status as vessel for content and becomes pure form, a

structuralist category. However, like his view of the phallus, a metaphysical logic can be detected in Lacan's view of the letter. It is closer to phenomenology than structuralism. This is the source of Derrida's critique which objects to Lacan's dualism and hence idealism of the letter.

Forrester states that Derrida's critique represents the 'ruination of the Lacanian system' (Forrester 1990: 223). Derrida comments that 'from the outset we recognise the classical landscape of applied psychoanalysis' (Derrida 1987: 425). For Derrida, Lacan's analysis is 'an analysis fascinated by content' (Derrida 1987: 428) and the analysis of Poe's text is 'an operation of the semanticist psychoanalyst' (Derrida 1987: 433). He argues that Lacan suggests that the place of the letter is semantic: 'the letter has a place of emission and of destination. This is not a subject, but a hole, the lack of the basis of which the subject is constituted' (Derrida 1987: 437). It is 'the place of castration' (Derrida 1987: 439). Indeed, 'the letter is found in the place where Dupin and the psychoanalyst expect to find it: on the immense body of a woman, between the "legs of the fireplace"' (Derrida 1987: 440). Derrida draws attention to the semanticism of Lacan's assertion that a letter always arrives at its destination: 'a letter can always not arrive at its destination ... it belongs to the structure of the letter to be capable, always, of not arriving' (Derrida 1987: 444). For Derrida, Lacan's approach is the standard approach of the psychoanalyst: 'why then does the seminar refind ... the same meaning and the same topos as did Marie Bonaparte?' (Derrida 1987: 444). And 'for Bonaparte, too, the castration of the woman (of the mother) is the final sense' (Derrida 1987: 444). He argues that Lacan's emphasis on the materiality of the letter 'corresponds to an idealization' (Derrida 1987: 444). For Derrida, the phallus is a transcendental signified rather than a transcendental signifier:

'this transcendental signifier ... is also the signified of all signifieds, and this is what finds itself sheltered within the indivisibility of the (graphic or oral) letter' (Derrida 1987: 465). The phallus cannot be separated from what it is which is a reference to the penis and this represents *a priori* content.[48] Lacan is judged to be even more of a semanticist than Husserl and his theory of the unconscious is regarded as part of a post-Kantian philosophical tradition. An *a priori* semantics also underlies a phenomenological theory of consciousness (intentionality/pure ego) and an existentialist theory of consciousness (existence/consciousness for-itself).

Diachrony in synchrony

Lacan's early thought on the unconscious vacillates between a phenomenological theory of consciousness and an existentialist theory of consciousness. However, a materialist theory of the unconscious (which is compatible with a materialist theory of consciousness) begins to displace the reference points of both phenomenology and existentialism as his thought develops. We see a pattern in the forming of Lacan's concepts in the 1950s – essence rather than existence becomes *a priori*. In *The Freudian Thing*, however, Lacan's understanding of 'the thing' is influenced by his reading of Heidegger. It is particularly influenced by his understanding of Heidegger's theory of language which Heidegger communicates in the following passage: 'what we first hear is never noises or complexes of sounds, but the creaking

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[48] Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe argue that Lacanian thought is foundational; 'the autonomy of the signifier is real but not primordial – what is primordial (and foundational) is in fact the bar' (Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe 1992: 36). The signifier and the signified are defined, and define themselves in relation to the signifying bar: '[the signifier] is an order of spacing, according to which the law is inscribed and marked as difference' (Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe 1992: 46). Thus, we have not the primacy of the signifier but the primacy of the law which gives certainty to the Lacanian view of the mind.

wagon, the motor-cycle. We hear the column on the march, the north wind, the woodpecker tapping, the fire crackling. It requires a very artificial and complicated frame of mind to "hear" a pure "noise"' (Heidegger 1962: 207). So, for Heidegger, we hear the thing rather than a sequence of phonemes, we experience the thing before we see the letter. In *The Freudian Thing*, Lacan uses a discourse which attempts to reveal this interconnectedness *in* language: 'in order to try and explain these mysteries in a coherent discourse, I am, in spite of myself, using words that re-establish in that discourse the very duality that sustains them' (Lacan 2006: 335). In this essay, we are reminded of Heidegger's famous line: 'to signification, words accrue' (Heidegger 1962: 204). Lacan aims to reconnect with an older discourse which connects thoughts and words pre-predicatively. He refers to the Bondy forest to the north east of Paris which was a haunt of bandits and robbers in the middle ages to evoke this idea: 'but what I deplore is not that one cannot see the forest of the theory for the trees of the technique employed but rather that it would take so little to believe that one is in the Bondy forest, precisely because of the following notion, which is hiding behind each tree – namely, that there must be some trees that are truer than others, or, if you prefer, that not all trees are bandits' (Lacan 2006: 335). Lacan's metaphor, here, is a critique of a theory of reference. There is no objective truth behind phenomena, he argues, signified behind each signifier. He refers obliquely, here, to Saussure's tree diagram which illustrates how the signified determines the signifier. 'The thing' is the signified that always slips under the signifier and, here, he dramatises it in his own discourse. Kant argued that it was impossible to know the thing in itself – how the thing *is* is always how the thing *appears* to me. In Kant's thought, there is a contrast between appearances and things in themselves, phenomena and noumena, the knowable and the not knowable. We see this in Lacan's thing which is an

unsymbolisable real at the centre of experience. It is only at the borders of the thing that it can become meaning.

There is an attempted synthesis of Heidegger and Saussure in Lacan's theory of language in the 1950s. As has been suggested throughout this chapter, Lacan's reading of Saussure is never merely Saussurean. Saussure famously distinguished between signifier and signified using the metaphor of a sheet of paper. One one side (the recto) is the signified and, on the other (the verso) is the signifier. Synchrony is described as a horizontal axis whereas diachrony is a vertical axis. Lacan, however, thinks of it as two networks – one horizontal and one vertical, a synchronic and a diachronic network. Meaning is produced by the crossing of these networks. The synchronic network emphasises differentiation between signifiers:

> the first network, that of the signifier, is the synchronic network of the material of language insofar as each element takes on its precise usage therein by being different from the others, this is the principle of distribution that alone regulates the function of the elements of language [*langue*] at its different levels, from the phonemic pair of oppositions to compound expressions, the task of the most modern research being to isolate the stable forms of the latter (Lacan 2006: 346).

Saussure's reading of the language system is dualist as there is a dichotomy between signification and meaning. Lacan, however, argues that there is meaning in signification, or diachrony in synchrony. The diachronic network emphasises deferral or displacement:

> the second network, that of the signified, is the diachronic set of concretely pronounced discourses, which historically affects the first network, just as the structure of the first governs the pathways of the second. What dominates here is the unity of signification, which turns out to never come down to a pure indication of reality [*reel*] but always

refers to another signification. In other words, signification comes about only on the basis of taking things as a whole [*d'ensemble*] (Lacan 2006: 345).

Lacan sees the diachronic network as metonymic in that the only reference is reference to another signification whereas the meeting of the diachronic and synchronic networks is metaphoric as it replaces meaning with form. We could also say that, for Lacan, his synchrony is a network of parts and his diachrony is a background of wholes. For example, he refers to synchrony as 'the material of language' and 'stable forms'. He refers to diachrony as 'the unity of signification' and 'taking things as a whole'. Thus, for Lacan and unlike structuralists, language is not simply a binary system.

In *The Freudian Thing*, Lacan refers to the lectern as a synchronic network, separate from its immediate background: 'for this lectern, no less than the ego, is dependent on the signifier, namely on the word ... which ... is responsible for the fact that it is not merely a tree that has been felled, cut down to size and glued back together by a cabinet maker' (Lacan 2006: 351). Like all signifiers, though, according to Lacan, it is a displaced signifier occupying the meeting place between synchrony and diachrony, form and meaning: 'an operational function, no doubt, that will allow the said semblable to display within himself all the possible values of this lectern as a thing: from the hefty rent charged for its use that kept and still keeps the standing of the little hunchback of the rue Quincampox above both the vicissitudes and the very memory of the first great speculative crash of modern times, through all the purposes of everyday convenience of furnishing a room, of transfer, for cash or assignment of interest, to its use – and why not? It has happened before – as firewood' (Lacan 2006: 351). The lectern signifies a wooden object, the authority of speech and, in Lacan's

discourse, the exchange and substitution of market economics: 'it is essentially on sexual relations ... that the first combinatory for exchanges of women between family lines relies, developing the fundamental commerce and concrete discourse on which human societies are based in an exchange of gratuitous goods and magic words' (Lacan 2006: 359). Lacan's use of the lectern as a metaphor reveals how his interpretation of structuralism is as much premised on a theory of meaning as it is a theory of signification.

We can see some parallels, in Lacan's approach, with the approach of Lakoff and Johnson. As materialists, Lakoff and Johnson are sceptical of propositional logic which argues that 'meaning is right there in the words' (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 200). For them, meaning is prior to words. Frege famously argued that the expressions 'morning star' and 'evening star' refer to Venus. He argued that the planet Venus is an object about which expressions may be formed (Frege 1991: 156). Thus, for Frege, there are objects that anchor language which Frege sees as an imperfect vehicle for meaning and not meaning in and of itself. This is why Frege is not a structuralist or cannot be a proto-structuralist as the later Lacan and Miller imply. It is also why Frege invents logical notation, as a "pure" language. We will return to this in chapter six. In contrast to Frege, the early Lacan argues that language persistently and consistently escapes anchorage because the truth is incompatible with language. The truth is something which isn't language in language: 'it is via this thing that is by its very nature senseless that the real enters the world of man' (Lacan 1990: 41). According to Lacan, language kills the thing, disembodying it but also giving it life, another kind of life, life as linguistic play.

If Lacan's view of language is transcendental for the first part of 'The Freudian Thing' with its emphasis upon *a priori* meaning, he concludes it as a materialist. Lacan imagines Freud as an Actaeon (punished for striving to see the thing in itself) who cannot get Diana's dogs to follow his scent: 'in Freud an Actaeon perpetually set upon by dogs that are thrown off the scent right from the outset, dogs that he strives to get back on his tail, without being able to slow the race in which only his passion for the goddess leads him on' (Lacan 2006: 343). If Actaeon represents Freud, then the dogs represent ego psychologists who are, according to Lacan, following the wrong scent. They identify instincts with functions. They are following the scent of semantics, towards truth as signified, towards object as thought, meaning as form whereas, according to Lacan, Freud is perpetually trying to get them to follow the scent of structuralism, towards truth as signifier, towards form rather than meaning. Freud's destination, in Lacan's narrative, is Plato's cave. Outside the cave resides the pre-Olympian Diana: 'he reaches the cave ... the chthonian Diana ... offers to his thirst the quasi-mystical limit of the most rational discourse the world has ever heard, so that we might recognise there the locus in which the symbol substitutes for death in order to take possession of the first buddings of life' (Lacan 2006: 343). The chthonian Diana is the pre-Olympian goddess of the earth, fertility and the soil. She is in between the inside and the outside of the cave, the world of the senses and the world of forms, between pre-Socratic and Socratic thought, existence and essence. She ultimately validates a theory of the unconscious as a pure discourse which looks forward to Lacan's later hyperlogical, and computational, theory of the unconscious.

Chomsky and Lacan

As discussed in the previous chapter, Lacan's theory of consciousness is materialist and this thesis is concerned with the extent to which his materialist theory of the unconscious validates a materialist theory of consciousness. Unlike Lacan, Chomsky does not have a materialist theory of consciousness. Chomsky can be called a mysterian when it comes to consciousness: 'Despite much important progress [researchers in the analytic philosophy of mind], and justified excitement about the prospects opened by newer technologies, I think that a degree of skepticism is warranted, and that it is wise to be cautious in assessing what we know and what we might realistically hope to learn [about consciousness]' (Chomsky 2000: 13). He states: 'as far as I am aware, the neural basis for the remarkable behavior of bees also remains a mystery. This behavior includes what appear to be impressive cognitive feats and also some of the few known analogues to distinctive properties of human language, notably the regular reliance on ``displaced reference'' – communication about objects not in the sensory field' (Griffin 1994). The prospects for vastly more complex organisms seem considerably more remote' (Chomsky 2000: 14). Chomsky is more in line with Descartes and McGinn in his views on consciousness. He argues that we can never solve the hard problem of consciousness. Materialists, however, argue that the hard problem of consciousness can be solved. In his materialist theory of the unconscious, we have been suggesting that Lacan is also attempting to solve the hard problem of consciousness which will be explored further in chapter five. Chomsky is suggesting that we can never know the *a priori* conditions of consciousness. Lacan is suggesting that we can – it is the unconscious.

It is interesting that post-Lacanian thought has sought connections between Chomsky and Lacan. Lemaire argues that 'the innovations introduced by Chomsky are perfectly reconcilable with Lacanian psychoanalysis' (Lemaire 1970: 29). This is because, according to her, for both 'language serves above all as an organ of thought, consciousness and reflection' (Lemaire 1970: 51). Smith also argues that Lacan and Chomsky have much in common: 'for Chomsky, the unconscious is structured like a language ... rules that generate sentences are unconscious' (Smith 1991: 1). He argues that they both share a belief that the unconscious thinks: 'Chomsky, like Freud, has no hesitancy in inferring unconscious thinking. It thinks' (Smith 1991: 16). They are both perceived to share a philosophical lineage not only in structuralism but also in Freud who is seen as the father of both Lacan and Chomsky (Smith 1991: 20). In truth, Lacan and Chomsky's relationship veered from genuine interest to intense hostility.[49] At the Baltimore conference in 1968, Chomsky thought that Lacan was mad when Lacan responded to his question on thought with 'I think with my feet' (Roudinesco 1999: 378) and one wonders whether Lacan's seemingly crass comment reveals something about his view of consciousness and the unconscious. We do have to disagree with Lemaire and Smith and conclude that Lacan and Chomsky's view of language are in opposition. Whereas Lacan sees language as a set, Chomsky sees it as a system. Simms explains the differences: 'Lacanian psychoanalysis works with the fixed stock of the symbolic order, whereas Chomskian grammar works with the infinite possibilities opened up by human creativity in language (this is why Chomskian "deep structure" cannot be equated with the unconscious, as some have claimed)' (Simms 2007: 83-4). Chomsky's universal grammar is not hermetically sealed, neither is it intuitive or empirical. For him, meaning *is* form and this is not

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[49] Roudinesco, for example, comments: 'Lacan reproached Chomskian formalisation with forgetting being and its rift for the sake of confining the subject in grammar' (Roudinesco 1990: 401).

considered contradictory, or dialectic, but isomorphic. Language is, in effect, an organ which provides the physical framework for linguistic performance. As a result, there are no restrictions to human creativity because we always have a physical structure from which we can be creative. It is in this sense, Chomsky implies, that we can solve the problem of Kant, we can empiricise rationalism.

Searle does argue that the Freudian view of the mind and the Chomskian view of the mind are ultimately very different: 'the Freudian notion of the unconscious is quite unlike the cognitive science notion in the crucial respect that Freudian unconscious mental states are potentially conscious' (Searle 1999: 173). Searle implies that the unconscious is phenomenological and thus quite distinct from Chomsky's cognitivism. It could be that Lacan's theory of language infused as it is with semantics (which is sometimes the semantics of a phenomenological theory of consciousness; and, at other times, the semantics of an existentialist theory of consciousness) is more plausible than Chomsky's. Critics of Chomsky, for example, complain that his theory is a kind of hyper-science completely removed from language as it occurs day to day. Searle, for example, complains of this: 'cognitive science promised a break with the behaviourist tradition in psychology because it claimed to enter the black box of the mind and examine its inner workings ... but repeated the worst mistakes of behaviourism ... [as it] insisted on studying only objective observable phenomena' (Searle 1999: xiii). Stich also comments on the implausibility of some of the conclusions made by cognitive science: 'if Chomsky and his followers are even close to being right about the tacit knowledge that subserves a speaker's ability to judge whether or not a given sentence is grammatical, then most people would require a crash course in generative linguistics before they could begin to understand an explicit

statement of what they tacitly know' (Stich 1996: 127). Indeed, some Chomskian theorists wrestle with the relationship between the phenomenal and the computational, which is the topic of the next section, suggesting that the mind and the body cannot be so easily synthesised. However, Chomskian theorists see a natural progression from cognitive science to phenomenology but the early and later Lacan sees an incompatibility between existentialism and materialism.

Chomsky and Lacan on consciousness

On the one hand, Lacan's early (post-Second World War) materialist theory of the unconscious supports a materialist theory of consciousness. On the other hand, this materialist theory of the unconscious can be seen to be infused with an existentialist (and, sometimes, phenomenological) theory of consciousness. He is against the mysterian view that Chomsky promotes. However, Chomsky's mysterianism appears compatible with his computational thought. In Lacanian thought, by contrast, existence haunts essence so it has to be exorcised. Whereas Lacanian thought seeks alliances between a materialist theory of consciousness, Chomskian thought seeks alliances with phenomenology. Like Chomsky, Fodor argues that we are Cartesian rather than Newtonian creatures precisely because we can represent: 'what distinguishes what organisms do from what the planets do is that a representation of the rules they follow constitutes one of the causal determinants of their behaviour' (Fodor 1976: 74). However, Fodor argues for the integration of the computational and the phenomenal in 'a theory which postulates internal representations whose vocabulary is comparable in richness to that of the surface sentences of a natural language' (Fodor 1976: 148). The language of thought, he suggests, may be like a

natural language which is 'why natural languages are so easy to learn and why sentences are so easy to understand' (Fodor 1976: 136). In contrast to Chomsky, Fodor suggests that we don't always need internal rules: 'the hearer can by-pass the computation of syntactic relations in cases where the speaker's intended message can be plausibly inferred from a) the lexical content of his utterance and b) background information about what messages speakers are likely to intend to convey' (Fodor 1976: 170). He states that 'there is no reason to believe that the kinds of mental phenomena which are therefore excluded from the domain of theories of information flow are restricted to the occasional detritus of the mental life' (Fodor 1976: 201). Fodor is a computationalist who acknowledges intentionality and sees no contradiction between the two.[50]

Jackendoff, also, argues for a middle way between the phenomenal and the computational. He suggests that we must separate the cognitive notion of the unconscious with the Freudian notion of the unconscious – the not conscious with the potentially conscious: 'Freud takes the unconscious mind to be just like the conscious mind except that we aren't aware of it ... the notion of the unconscious is then often taken to be as far as one can go in describing phenomena as "mental". From there on down, it's all "body"''. He advocates 'a new domain of description in between the Freudian unconscious and the physical meat' (Jackendoff 2004: 36). By emphasising the notion of the f-mind, Jackendoff attempts to save the notion of modular thought

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[50] Pinker, however, is diametrically opposed to Fodor in this respect: 'the principle underlying grammar is unusual in the natural world ... a grammar is a discrete combinatorial system ...most of the complicated systems we see in the world, in contrast are blending systems, like geology, paint mixing, cooking, sound, light, weather ... in a blending system, the properties of the combination lie between the properties of the elements are lost in the average or mixture e.g. combining red paint and white paint makes pink' (Pinker 1994: 84). Pinker is an anti-empirical, and anti-cognitive, linguist: 'grammar offers a clear refutation of the empiricist doctrine that there is nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses' (Pinker 1994: 84). For Pinker, the organism thinks but, it does not think badly, as Lacan suggests – it thinks very well. Pinker's anti-materialist, and classically Chomskian, viewpoint has been judged to be overly cold and rational by cognitive linguists.

which Fodor is seen to undermine. This f-mind is not 'syntacto-centric' and operates not on serial but parallel processes (Jackendoff 2004: 56). It is characterised by a priming between syntax and semantics: 'the phonology processor sends out a call to the lexicon – does anyone out there mean this? And various candidates raise their hands ... Me! And thereby become activated' (Jackendoff 2004: 201). He argues that this theory is compatible with Frege: '[for Frege] ... language is out in the world and it refers to objects in the world but people use language by virtue of their 'grasp' of it ... grasp is a transparent metaphor for the mind holding/understanding/making contact with something in the world' (Jackendoff 2004: 298). According to Jackendoff: 'generative linguistics is the study of what is in the mind when it grasps a language' (Jackendoff 2004: 298). The notion of "grasping" symbolic logic is, I argue, central to Fregean thought and quite different from some interpretations of his thought that we find in analytic philosophy. This (anti-formalist) view of Frege is explored further in chapter six. Fodor and Jackendoff show that Chomskian thought is not as opposed to the phenomenal as it might appear. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Lacan's theory of the unconscious also proposes a middle way between the phenomenal and the computational but he finds himself stuck between the two as two theories of the unconscious begin to develop – one ontological and one computational.

This chapter has discussed the role of language in Lacan's early materialist theory of the unconscious. A distinction was made between structuralist, and analytic, theories which emphasise language as form and phenomenology, and existential, theories which emphasise *a priori* meaning. Lacan's early theory of the unconscious is caught between the two. The different attitudes to the determining factor of language in the thought of Chomsky and Lacan were discussed at the end of the chapter. It was

suggested that Lacan's thought is opposed to Chomskian thought which seeks to account for intentionality whereas Lacan seeks to reduce it. Chomskian thought on computation always remains separate from a theory of consciousness even when it seeks to complement it (*à la* Fodor) with notions of intentionality. In early Lacanian thought, however, consciousness and the unconscious become synonymic as both are premised on a theory of computation, or a theory of consciousness and the unconscious that is *a priori* linguistic. It seems that Lacan must invoke terms derived from consciousness to define the unconscious. The next chapter advocates a way of reading the unconscious as distinct from consciousness. It presents a different materialism, other than continental and analytic, than has thus far been presented to propose a different way of reading Lacan's theory of the unconscious in his later thought. It advocates a reading of Lacan that can account for both the existentialist and materialist influences of his work and distance his thought from analytic materialism.

CHAPTER FOUR

TWO MATERIALIST INTERPRETATIONS OF KANT IN LACAN'S LATER THEORY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

In the previous chapters, it was suggested that Lacan's early theory of the unconscious anticipates two materialisms in the analytic tradition – Dennett's and Dreyfus's, or digital and ontological materialism. This chapter suggests that an alternative view of the unconscious can be detected in later Lacanian thought – one that references Kant rather than phenomenology or materialism. Central to Kant's thought are the notion of transcendental ideas which may have a basis in intuition but cannot be thought of as objects in the sense that empiricists, or later materialists, think of them. This is because of the *a priori* nature of transcendental idealism which ultimately, for Kant, is a theory for our perception and conceptualisation of the world. Indeed, although Husserl and Sartre ostensibly opposed Kant's philosophy, the very notion of transcendental thought – which Kant initiated – can be seen to be the progenitor of Husserl's concept of intentionality and Sartre's concept of existence. Kant's attempted synthesis of rationalism and empiricism was rejected by phenomenologists and embraced by materialists. Lacan, it is argued, can be seen to mediate between a phenomenological critique and a materialist appropriation of Kant.

One Lacanian reading of Kant sees a gap between ethical person and moral subject. In this reading, Lacan claims that Sade's philosophy proves the truth of Kant's Categorical Imperative. However, there is a determinism underlying Lacan's attempt to attribute the unconscious to Kant which, furthermore, appears to be akin to

functionalist interpretations of Kant that strip his thought of its transcendental meaning. The unconscious becomes merely the computational process that underlies consciousness. This chapter suggests that, in their emphasis upon *a priori* conceptual modelling, both Lacan's late "science" of the unconscious and functionalist and AI theories of consciousness are paralogistic. There is, however, another materialist way of reading Lacan's theory of the unconscious. We recall that Lacan is opposed to both the 'ordinary organicism' of so-called "vulgar" materialism and the transcendental thought of existentialism. However, there are materialist and existential tensions in Lacan's early thought and he is concerned with reconciling these tensions in his later thought which he attempts to do via Kant. I propose a reading of Lacan's reading of Kant in a way that takes inspiration from the way in which materialist feminists read him. In my reading, Kant actually helps us to see Lacanian thought as existential, rather than digital, materialism. Existential materialism views the subject as free but also determined. Two concepts in Lacanian thought illustrate this – *das Ding* and the lamella. The graph of desire also depicts the synthetic relation between freedom and determinism. This chapter proposes a way of reading Lacan's thought on Kant that can account for both materialist and transcendental arguments in Lacan and provide a theory of the unconscious that does not merely underpin a materialist theory of consciousness. In a world dominated by materialism, the unconscious becomes the possibility of something other than determinism.

Kant's *First* and *Second Critiques*

Kant is the father of modern transcendental thought. This thought seeks to engage with both rationalism and empiricism. His three *Critiques* represent a transcendental

engagement with the world of ideas and the world of things in order to account for the nature of mind, ethics and transcendence itself. His *First Critique* is concerned with the world as it appears to us and, refuting Hume, he presents a top-down view of the mind in which sensibility is governed by understanding which is, in turn, governed by reason. In his doctrine of transcendental idealism, he asserts that pure reason cannot be objectified and, furthermore, generates illusions which are subjective and synthetic, as well as concepts that are objective and analytic. Kant is opposed to both Leibniz's idealism as well as Hume's empiricism. For him, there are things *and* ideas, sensibility *and* reason. The statement "I am thirsty", for example, is a feeling but also an idea. As water takes shape in the cup which I drink to satisfy my thirst, so things are shaped by ideas to form concepts.

Kant famously distinguished between the world as it is (noumenal) and the world as we see it (phenomenal). The noumenal is both the thing in-itself and also noumena – an object of reason rather than sensory experience. Reason is the very essence of transcendental thought. It connects sensibility to understanding to forge concepts which is the basis of science (natural philosophy) for Kant. However, it can also reduce transcendental ideas to the status of illusion. As Kant comments: '[transcendental illusions] are sophistries not of human beings but of pure reason itself, and even the wisest of all human beings cannot get free of them' (Kant 1998a: A305/B362). This relation between transcendental ideas and transcendental illusions within reason itself forms the basis of Kant's critique of Descartes' epistemological argument where Kant argues that the taking of the subjective condition of thinking for the cognition of an object is a transcendental illusion. As Sandford comments, the *cogito*, according to Kant, is a substance only in the idea: 'this object in the idea is

really only a schema for which no object is given' (Sandford 2010: 161). Sandford comments that Kant's objects of reason, including the *cogito*, are only analogues of real things and not real things themselves. We will return to Sandford's view of Kant later in the chapter. The notion that images are fundamental to transcendental thought distinguishes Kantian thought from Fregean thought and, in some ways, foreshadows existentialism in the sense that they both, for example, share an antipathy to the *cogito* as *a priori* and objective. Both Kant and Sartre agree that the *cogito* is not a substance.

Kant's *Second Critique*, along with the earlier *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, is concerned with practical reason, or how the world is. In the first *Critique*, the gap between reason and sensibility is considered to be a subjective gap and not objective. In practical reason, however, the gap becomes more of an objective rather than a subjective one. Practical reason is concerned with the relation between the world and ethics rather than the world and ideas. Here, Kant is concerned with how we act rather than how we think. He sees faith as the link between (practical) reason and sensibility. According to him, we follow an objective rule which is an Enlightenment version of the biblical golden rule. This rule is the Categorical Imperative which must be universal (ends) not particular (means). It is an objective rule that governs our relationship with the world and guides us on our journey from beings to subjects. The Categorical Imperative comprises three symbiotic rules: firstly, that the universal governs all particulars: 'act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law' (Kant 1998b: 4:421); secondly, that ends determine means: 'so act only in accordance that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other,

always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means' (Kant 1998b: 4:429); and, thirdly, that we are free precisely because of the first two rules. We can see a paradox, here. On the one hand, Kant suggests that the universal cannot be read particularly as an object; on the other hand, he suggests that it can be read particularly as a rule. He suggests that the universal is made particular by making his maxims 'a universal law of nature'. Kant seems to argue that practical reason, like pure reason, cannot be objectified but, in practice, transcendental ideas tend to look like transcendental objects, understanding tends to determine reason when reason should determine understanding. In this sense, Kant's view of reason does start to look like functionalism in twentieth century thought. In practical reason, transcendental idealism becomes an idealism objectified, or formalised. This is what concerns Lacan in his (materialist) critique of Kant who argues that when the Categorical Imperative is turned into a formula, the reverse can be said to be true – particulars can be seen to govern universals, means can be seen to determine ends, we can be seen to be determined as much as we are free.

Kant – a proto-functionalist?

The argument of this section is that it is a mistake to view Kant in the way that the later Lacan and many Anglo-American philosophers view him. Dreyfus, for example, suggests that both Kant and Husserl are the progenitors of cognitive science in that they see 'mental activity as a hierarchy of rules' or a 'rule-governed ordering of elements' (Dreyfus 1982: 8). Thought is a 'notion of mental activity so broadened that it doesn't need consciousness at all'. For Dreyfus, Kant and Husserl 'are precursors of

cognitivism because their rules operate like programs' (Dreyfus 1982: 11).[51] The notion that there are parts of our minds that we cannot know and yet determine our thought processes has led to divergent interpretations of Kant. On the one hand, there is Meerbote's and Brook's arguments that he is the progenitor of functionalism.[52] On the other hand, there is Lacan's argument that Sade can prove the truth of Kant. According to Brook, Kant argues that we cannot know the empirical brain rationally but we can know the rational mind empirically:

> one of [Kant's] most deeply held general convictions was that we know nothing of anything as it is. We know things only as they appear to us – including the mind, even our own mind. But things he said imply that we do know things about the mind – that it must apply concepts, synthesize, and so on. He never addressed the tension squarely but a natural way out for him would have been to distinguish the mind's functions from its composition, what makes it up, and then maintain that what we can know are its functions and what we lack all knowledge of are its composition and makeup' (Brook 2004: 6).

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[51] Van Gulick also reads Kant as an influence on analytic thought. He reminds us that Kant introduced us to the notion that phenomenal experience has structure. He advocates an empirical reading of Kant: 'the more one can articulate structure within the phenomenal realm the greater the chances for physical explanation ... there is indeed a residue that continues to escape explanation, but the more we can explain relationally about the phenomenal realm, the more the leftover residue shrinks towards zero ... we are as yet a long way from that' (Van Gulick 1994: 145). He attempts to rescue Kant from Husserl's critique: 'conscious experience involves more than just being in states that represent or refer to objects and their properties ... it involves there being a world of objects inherent in the presentation ... conscious phenomenal experience involves the construction of the model of the world that in some sense itself is a world, but it is so only from the subjective perspective of the self, which in turn only exists as a feature of the organisation of experience ... the problem is to give some account of the objectivity and concreteness of phenomenal objects' (Van Gulick 1994: 150).

[52] Kant has been depicted as a proto-functionalist: 'Kant held a functionalist view of the mind almost 200 years before functionalism was officially articulated in the 1960s by Hilary Puttnam and others. Kant even shared functionalists' lack of enthusiasm for introspection, as we have seen, and their belief that we can model cognitive function without knowing anything very much about underlying structure, as we have also seen' (Brook 2004: 6). However, Brook does comment that Kant is also incompatible with functionalism: 'Of course, Kant did not even articulate, let alone advocate, many key features of contemporary functionalism. For example, he never explicitly mentioned anything like multiple realizability. Equally, given his personal hostility to materialisms about the mind, he would have found the naturalizing tendencies of much contemporary functionalism repugnant. However, because the unknowability of things as they are in themselves entails that one must be utterly neutral about what the underlying composition of the mind might be like, he would have had to allow that multiple realizability and even naturalism are open intellectual possibilities, however repugnant they might be to him or dangerous to things of the deepest importance to him, namely, that we have free will and that personal immortality is possible' (Brook 2004: 6-7).

For Brook, the implication – that we can use empiricism to represent the mind even though we cannot know the brain rationally – is proto-functionalist. He comments: 'this thought was what led many cognitive scientists until about fifteen years ago to believe that you could study cognitive function without knowing anything about the neural structures that implemented these functions. Kant's view that we know nothing of the structure and computation of the mind is just a radical version of this idea. At any rate, in his model, cognitive functions are central' (Brook 2005: 6). Kant is thus seen to prepare the way for the functionalist and AI view that the mind is a detached network that functions according to computational logic. Indeed, both AI and functionalism argue that we cannot know but we do not need to know how the mind relates to the body because computation provides us with all the answers. Like Brook's Kant, they implicitly acknowledge that the empirical is the truth and that the rational can be thought of as empirical.

Seeming to predict Brook, Lacan argues that it was 'Newtonian physics [that] forced Kant to revise radically the function of reason in its pure form' (Lacan 1992: 76). Like Brook, Lacan suggests that Kant's Categorical Imperative reformulates the relation between body and mind into a relation between forms of mind. According to Lacan, Kant saw morality as 'a precise structure [which] detaches itself purposefully from all reference to any object of affection, from all reference to what Kant called the *pathologisches* object, a pathological object, which simply means the object of any passion whatsoever' (Lacan 1992: 76). For Lacan, Kant argues that we should act in accordance to transcendental rules and not material impulses which, for Lacan, means that morality becomes a formula: 'the only definition of moral action possible is that which is expressed in Kant's well-known formula: 'act in such a way that the maxim

of your action may be accepted as a universal maxim' (Lacan 1992: 76). Seeming to anticipate Meerbote and Brook, Lacan sees the beginnings of the modern cognitive notion that the mind is a program on the body/machine in Kantian thought: 'henceforth, given the point we have reached in the light of our science, a renewal or updating of the Kantian imperative might be expressed in the following way, with the help of the language of electronics and automation: 'never act except in such a way that your action may be programmed"' (Lacan 1992: 77).

In Lacan's argument, we can see a line from Kant to functionalism and AI, a line which emphasises that our actions are governed by an *a priori* formal system of rules and principles. In *Seminar VII*, he appears to show sympathy with a materialist reading of Kant. He argues that the object cannot be removed or, as Miller later puts it, sutured: 'Kant managed to reduce the essence of the moral field to something pure; nevertheless, there remains at its center the need for a space where accounts are kept' (Lacan 1992: 317). According to Lacan, objects are always already present even in Kant's description: 'I agree that this object slips away throughout the *Critique*. But it can be surmised in the trace left by the implacable suit Kant provides to demonstrate its slipping away' (Lacan 2006: 647). Kant famously argued that if we really had access to the noumenal realm then we would truly become machines deprived of reason and the ability to transcend, but the Kantian suggestion that transcendental thought is, paradoxically, both deontological and ontological appeals to functionalists. We can detect this argument in the links Lacan makes between Kant and Sade which is the topic of the next section.

Kant with Sade

We have been arguing that Lacan's theory of the unconscious, particularly in his later thought, has resonance with analytic theories of consciousness. This can also be true of his ostensible reading of Kant in 'Kant with Sade'. In his controversial essay, Lacan claims that it is Sade who proves the alleged truth of Kant that the non-reciprocity between self and law, the rational and the empirical, is at the heart of any rule. Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom* came eight years after Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, but Lacan argues that the former completes the latter. From Kant's first *Critique* to Sade's *Philosophy*, Lacan argues that there is a shift from it feels good to do good to it feels good to do evil: 'the shift involved in the notion that it feels good to do evil was made on the basis of a philological remark: namely, that the idea that had been accepted up until then, which is that it feels good to do good [*qu'on est bien dans le bien*]' (Lacan 2006: 646). This may be a shift in meaning but Lacan argues that it is not a shift in form. According to Lacan, it feels good to do good and it feels good to do evil can both be viewed as a simple computational formula.

Kant, Lacan argues, suggests that there is a reciprocity between the first and the second formulations of the Categorical Imperative. Lacan defines reciprocity as 'a relation that is reversible since it is established along a simple line that unites two subjects who, due to their "reciprocal" position, consider this relation to be equivalent' (Lacan 2006: 649). The rule of reciprocity – an identity between ends and means, transcendental subjects and material objects – underlies Kant's maxim, but Lacan argues that Kant's maxim 'excludes reciprocity' (Lacan 2006: 649) and this lack of reciprocity can equally be defined as a universal rule. He suggests that if ends

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can determine means, then means can determine ends; or, if universals can determine particulars, then particulars can determine universals: 'the crux of the diatribe is, let us say, found in the maxim that proposes a rule for *jouissance*, which is odd in that it defers to Kant's mode in being laid down as a universal rule' (Lacan 2006: 648). In other words, Lacan is arguing that pleasure can be justified according to a universal rule as much as reason. For Lacan and Sade, I have the right to be happy can become I have the right to enjoy your body: 'I have the right to enjoy your body anyone can say to me and I will exercise this right without any limit to the capriciousness of the exactions I may wish to satiate with your body' (Lacan 2006: 648). Lacan calls this *jouissance* – the experience of pleasure as pain and vice versa – which he defines as a universal rule. According to him, this is what happens when the transcendental subject and material objects are allowed to co-exist – bad maxims can be universalisable as much as good maxims.[53]

We see the late twentieth century concern with defining both consciousness, and the unconscious, in terms of computation, here. According to Lacan, if the relation between the moral and the ethical can be seen as a straightforwardly rule-based one, so can the non-relation between the two. In other words, if consciousness is computable, so is the unconscious. Lacan takes the Categorical Imperative, the determining of reason by understanding, even further and sees in it a philosophy of desire. He argues that all laws are based on a non-reciprocity between matter and non-matter, or presence and absence, which Lacan sees as the logic of fantasy: 'fantasy is defined by ... the formula ($\lozenge$a), in which the lozenge is to be read as "desire for", being read right to left in the same way, introducing an identity that is based on

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[53] cf. Simms (2007: 101-2)

absolute non-reciprocity' (Lacan 2006: 653). According to Lacan, Kant gives desire, rather than consciousness, a logic: 'when desires line up in a chain ... [like Breughel's blind men] each one, no doubt, has his hand in the hand of the one in front of him, but no one knows where they are all going ... in retracing their steps, they all clearly experience a universal rule' (Lacan 2006: 662). For Lacan, fantasy is the hidden truth of computation, as was discussed in chapter two, in that the formula for desire $◊a – absence made presence – is also seen as a universal rule.

For Zupančič, the consequence of Lacan's philosophy of desire is that 'virtually any maxim ... can be made to pass the universalisability test' (Zupančič 1998: 55). She suggests that there is a gap between the universal and the particular and the subject is constituted in this gap: 'the subject is nothing other than this moment of universalisation, of the constitution or determination of the law' (Zupančič 1998: 52). Furthermore, in Lacan's interpretation of Kant, a theory of the *a priori* universal can equally be displaced by a theory of the *a priori* particular. Simms, however, suggests that Lacan finds both Kant and Sade, idealism and materialism, morally repugnant:

> Lacan is equally dismissive of both Kantian and Sadian ethics: each, in historical reality, has had "no social consequence at all" (because no-one actually, explicitly performs the mental "gymnastics" of the categorical imperative, and society has not, in fact, become a Sadian free-for-all). Lacan's own response, meanwhile, to the truth that he has discovered, namely that Sade demonstrates Kant, is a return to a pre-Kantian ethics of sentiment, although Lacan does not elaborate as to what this would consist of' (Simms 2007: 105).

I would extend this and suggest that Lacan is caught between two readings of Kant – one that follows a materialist reading and the other that follows a transcendental reading. His attitude to Kant is contradictory. On the one hand, he dismisses Kant's

Categorical Imperative as empty form. However, he also sympathises with Kant's efforts to embrace science, or rather, natural philosophy. On the one hand, as we saw in chapter two, Lacan suggests that both desire and computation are assigned. On the other hand, he suggests that they are ascribed.

For the materialist Lacan, Kant is trapped in the age of science, between transcendental subject and material object, and he suggests that we are too. The problem with the reading of Kant's law in both the continental and analytic traditions is that it is read as *a priori* objective and not *a priori* subjective. The whole principle of the transcendental, which underpins Kantian thought, appears discounted. According to Valente, Althusser misreads Lacan's Symbolic in a similar way: 'the key to Lacan's Symbolic, which Althusser misses, is that it does not constitute a law in the positive sense, i.e. a specifiable injunction or norm, however sweeping, but is a law in the transcendental sense, a constitutive negation which brings forth the very possibility of "acceptance, rejection, yes or no", of meaning and valuation: in short, all the diacritical features of social existence' (Valente 2003: 167). Post-Lacanian thought also tends to view the symbolic as a constitutive set rather than an ongoing transaction. In the next section, I want to consider the extent to which Lacan posits a reference point for the unconscious, and consciousness, that is not so much a pre-Kantian ethics of sentiment but, rather, transcendental reason itself. I want to consider whether we can think of the unconscious, and consciousness (which are materialist in Lacanian thought) as illusions of reason.

The unconscious – between materialism and existentialism

It is the perspective of this chapter that the unconscious has been read too much from the perspective of materialism rather than transcendental thought. I wish to read later Lacanian thought as thought which engages with the presuppositions of the categories of unconscious and consciousness. In this section, I want to suggest that Lacan's theory of the unconscious is quite different from the way in which the unconscious has been read by both his pupils and his followers who have read it from the point of view of materialism or idealism. I want to show that readings of the Lacanian theory of the unconscious have followed too much a Cartesian rather than a Kantian model which leads to a theory of consciousness as either materialist or phenomenological.

An argument about how to define the unconscious raged at the Bonneval conference in 1960 between two of Lacan's students – Leclaire and Laplanche – over the nature of the unconscious. Both were responsible for writing one of the most important essays on the unconscious: 'The Unconscious: a Psychoanalytical Study' (1972) which establishes the framework for the way in which the unconscious has been interpreted since Lacan. The essay comprises five chapters and, although it appears a collaboration, Laplanche was responsible for writing chapters one, two and four; and Leclaire was responsible for writing chapters three and five. Laplanche begins the essay with a critique of Politzer's famous view that the unconscious is contradictory in its emphasis on both idealism and realism (Laplanche & Leclaire 1972: 119-120). Laplanche also claims that Sartre was wrong about the unconscious as he made it marginal (Laplanche & Leclaire 1972: 129). The unconscious, he argues is composed of two systems in which there is a radical division between consciousness and the

unconscious (Laplanche & Leclaire 1972: 130). He suggests that we need to think of the relationship between consciousness and the unconscious in terms of a 'double inscription' (Laplanche & Leclaire 1972: 131) as the unconscious treats words as things and not words whereas consciousness is vice versa (Laplanche & Leclaire 1972: 151). Alternatively, Leclaire is interested in the unconscious as a text (Laplanche & Leclaire 1972: 139). He refers to the 'double force' of a dream, which he reads as a text that is manifested in the gap between 'need' and 'wish' (Laplanche & Leclaire 1972: 139). Laplanche is correct that Freud is a dualist. However, Lacan is not a dualist. Leclaire is closer to an understanding of Lacan but he emphasises *a priori* text rather than *a priori* being, form rather than meaning. Leclaire advocated a theory of the unconscious in the structuralist sense, whereas Laplanche advocated a theory of the unconscious that is *a priori* and ontological and not dissimilar from existentialist views of consciousness for-itself. Freud, however, was not a conventional materialist, as discussed in chapter one. Throughout his theory, Freud maintained that there were two different approaches to the psyche – descriptive and dynamic. His theory of the unconscious – as Politzer and, later, Ricoeur noted – is marked by both description and dynamism, or idealism and realism. The question of whether the unconscious was ideal or real was a question Freud returned to again and again.

Leclaire offers a structuralist unconscious where the unconscious manifests itself in differential relations between signifiers; whereas Laplanche offers a view which seeks to re-establish a dualist view that the unconscious is ontological and consciousness is

de-ontological.[54] Attempting a clearer synthesis between Freud and Lacan, Laplanche argues that there is conscious language and unconscious language and sees the 'unconscious as a language distinct from but founding conscious language'. While Leclaire seeks to develop Lacan's structuralist theory of the unconscious, Laplanche seeks to steer a theory of the unconscious towards meaning rather than form. Ricoeur also argues that Lacan and Freud were opposed: 'it is not without reason that Freud does not take language into account when he treats of the unconscious but restricts its role to preconscious and conscious' (Ricoeur 1970: 395). For Ricoeur, there is an 'irreducibilty of the energy aspect' and 'the mechanisms of the unconscious are not so much particular linguistic phenomena as they are paralinguistic distortions of ordinary language' (Ricoeur 1970: 404). Interestingly, Riceour also equates Lacanian thought with existential phenomenology: 'isn't this linguistic conception of the unconscious indistinguishable from the interpretation of language presented by Merleau-Ponty and De Waelhens?' (Riceour 1970: 395). In Leclaire's theory, the unconscious is a consequence of language whereas in Laplanche's the unconscious causes language. Part of the problem Laplanche had with Lacanian thought was that, for Lacan, consciousness and the unconscious were two sides of the same coin. Lemaire, parroting Lacan more than either Leclaire or Laplanche, argues that we can only know the unconscious via conscious language: 'it is impossible to know exactly how language functions at the level of the unconscious ... we can know unconscious language only through its returns into consciousness' (Lemaire 1970: 123). Unlike his

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[54] Roudinesco comments: 'if Leclaire remained within what could be directly deduced from Lacan's hypothesis, Laplanche quite plainly took his distance from them ... language in the unconscious ... Laplanche read Lacan in the light of Freud ... delved into the difference between the Freudian conception of language and its reformulation by Lacan ... paying homage to Politzer, Laplanche raise the question of determining whether the unconscious is in the order of a meaning or of a letter' (Roudinesco 1990: 312). Laplanche drew 'on Freud's distinctions between thing-presentations and word-presentations, and primary and secondary processes ... [and] ... emphasised that Freud did not have a modern or semiological conception of language ... [and] ... retained the old division between verbal and pre-verbal ... Lacan rejected such a division in order to interpret all forms of symbolic thought in semiological terms' (Roudinesco 1990: 313).

pupils, Lacan was interested in the unconscious as 'the other side of conscious discourse' (Archard 1984: 99) and he refused to see them as separate and Lemaire is correct to suggest that language is a field in which consciousness and the unconscious manifest themselves at one and the same time. However, the proximity between consciousness and the unconscious does become a problem in Lacanian thought when it attempts to establish itself as a coherent theory as we have been arguing.

In much post-Lacanian thought, the unconscious is read *à la* Leclaire – as form rather than meaning. Recent post-Lacanian theory does appear to interpret the Lacanian theory of the unconscious as a kind of hyper-materialism – as a de-ontological, logical construct. Leader, for example, argues that the Lacanian theory of the unconscious is a cognitive mechanism: 'the unconscious is alien to mental images as the stomach to the foods which pass through it. As the organ of a specific function, the unconscious merely imposes structural laws upon inarticulated elements which originate elsewhere – impulses, emotions, representations and memories' (Leader 2003: 37). Thus, for Leader, the unconscious is a mechanism for organising, categorising and representing the body and experience. The unconscious is seen as empty of content and is, instead, a system of rules which does seem equable with a functionalist view in this sense. Leader argues that Lacan inherited the notion of the empty (as in non-biological) unconscious from Levi-Strauss: 'Levi-Strauss' article [*The Effectiveness of Symbols*] was important to Lacan ... introducing the idea of an empty unconscious ... [which] ... elaborated a subtle comparison of the work of the psychoanalyst and shaman' (Leader 2003: 37). What is interesting about much post-Lacanian thought is the extent to which the unconscious is viewed, explicitly or implicitly, as a support for conscious thought.

Nobus goes further and argues that Lacan reads Saussure through Levi-Strauss 'whose own reading had passed through the critical filter of Roman Jakobson' (Nobus 2003: 54). He describes 'a critical re-interpretation of Saussure's ideas' in Levi-Strauss' thought which itself synthesises the ideas of Saussure and Freud. The structural unconscious becomes a 'mental system akin to how Freud had defined it in his first topography of unconscious, preconscious and conscious' (Nobus 2003: 55). For both Levi-Strauss and Lacan, according to Nobus, the unconscious is therefore 'synonymous with the symbolic function' (Nobus 2003: 58). Tallis comments that, in functionalism, 'consciousness is voided of inwardness' (Tallis 1991: 141) and the post-Lacanian unconscious is similarly voided of inwardness. Leader and Nobus emphasise the unconscious as mechanism rather than the unconscious as phenomenon and we see parallels to analytic thought.

In contrast to Leader and Nobus, Lang emphasises the unconscious as meaning rather than form. He suggests that Lacan opposes Levi-Strauss and shares with Heidegger and Gadamer the notion of 'a linguistically all-embracing human experience' which is hermeneutic and 'against the universalization of Mathematics' (Lang 1997: 113).[55] However, he acknowledges that Lacan is also a structuralist and that the 'mathematical viewpoint is not rejected ... as it is in existentialism' (Lang 1997: 114). Lang sees the existentialist and structuralist tendencies in Lacanian thought as a paradox rather than a contradiction: 'Lacan is right in the middle of structuralism ...

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[55] Lang describes structuralism as a neopositivism (Lang 1997: 110). Levi-Strauss is held to be the typical exponent of this neopositivism: 'the goal of philosophical logic is to build a logical system of sentences which are so determined by formal rules within the system that they result in expressions of mathematical exactitude ... Levi-Straussian structuralism strives for precisely such a precision' (Lang 1997: 111). Lang explains structuralism and the notion of the unconscious: 'behind the individual actualisation of language as a collective system of relations is visible, a system wherein every element is conditioned by its context and placement' (Lang 1997: 98).

but also the philosopher of lack ... how can such a philosophy be unified with probability and calculation?' (Lang 1997: 115). Lang, rather than Nobus and Leader, is more sensitive to the notion of the Lacanian theory of the unconscious as occupying a space between phenomenology and materialism. According to him, Lacan presents the place where existentialism and structuralism meet or, rather, the gap where they do not meet. The development of the Lacanian theory of the unconscious is from the phenomenological to the scientific, from existentialism to materialism. Its point of reference moves from the signifier to the letter, from a structuralist to a hyper-materialist theory of the unconscious. Laplanche saw the unconscious as meaning, Leclaire saw it as form. It should, however, be seen from a perspective between meaning and form, between phenomenology and materialism. I want to now consider the unconscious from a different place, from a place outside both phenomenology and materialism.

Towards a new materialism of the unconscious

There is a way of reading Lacan's theory of the unconscious, and the accompanying materialist theory of consciousness, as manifestations of reason. This involves locating Lacanian thought between existentialism and materialism which is viewed afresh from the perspective of Kant. Kant's whole philosophy is an engagement with the world of things and the world of ideas. However, functionalists read him too much as a philosopher of things and existentialists read him too much as a philosopher of ideas. Sandford's reading, however, accounts for Kant as a philosopher of things and a philosopher of ideas. I want to suggest that there are parallels between what Sandford is saying about sex difference and what I am saying about Lacan and

consciousness. She refers to the notion of sex difference as hypostatization, a concept highlighted by Kant, where 'the formal, transcendental unity of apperception (the purely logical subject of thought) is taken for the "real subject of inherence" (substance understood ontologically)'. She connects this to our modern understanding of sex difference: 'so, too, the formal principle of the exclusive division into male and female (the prescriptive or, in Kant's terminology, regulative, principle) is taken for the cognition of an objectively real object (for Kant, an object given in intuition)' (Sandford 2010: 164). In this sense, sex (in terms of biological sex difference) can be understood as merely the essence derived from a priori transcendental ideas: 'in the same way, we may say, the "transcendental doctrine of sex", taking the idea of sex for a real object, claims to be able to derive from the idea of sex alone the essential attributes of men and women' (Sandford 2010: 164). Sandford considers whether sex difference, in Kant, is a transcendental illusion but concludes that it is not: 'the idea of sex, like all ideas of reason according to Kant, is "merely a creature of reason". But the ideas "nonetheless have their reality and are by no means merely figments of the brain"; "we will by no means regard them as superfluous and nugatory"'. She concludes that sex difference is an 'objective historical illusion' (Sandford 2010: 164). In other words, it is real because its 'effects are real' but this is all.

I suggest using Sandford's model to read Lacan in a new way. In this reading, Lacanian thought shows that materialist theories of consciousness (both continental and analytic) are mistaken attempts to derive the essential attributes (of consciousness) from transcendental ideas. My view is that consciousness is essentially an anti-materialist concept and perhaps Lacan's theory of the unconscious can actually show the folly of an attempt to view consciousness as (digitally) materialist.

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In this view, Lacanian thought can be used to understand the unconscious not as misrecognition (as, in effect, a materialist theory of consciousness) but as the paralogism of hypostatization – the error of making abstract concrete. Existential materialism, in my view, enables us to see a materialist theory of consciousness, and a materialist theory of the unconscious, as objective illusions which are real only because their effects are real. They are objects in ideas only.

Lacan's *Seminar VII*, unlike *Seminar I* and *II*, can be seen to read the unconscious in terms of existential materialism. This seminar represents a shift from early to later Lacan. Here, he is concerned with the very nature of transcendence and how it manifests in the world. He explains the relationship between existence and the world via anamorphosis which he describes as 'a certain form that wasn't visible at first sight [that] transforms itself into a readable image' (Lacan 1997: 135). In *Seminar XI*, he crystallises this in the presentation of the effect of Holbein's *The Ambassadors* which expresses the very existentialist idea that our essences are tainted by existence. For Lacan, both ethics and morality depend upon the perspective and the position of the embodied subject. He talks about the appearance of anamorphosis in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and how 'a work of art always involves encircling the Thing'. According to Lacan, unlike Plato who 'condemned art to mere imitation', Cézanne was the first to understand that the world can define art and 'make [...] the object appear purified' (Lacan 1992: 141). This notion that subjectivity is outside is existentialist rather than Kantian but Lacan also seeks to account for objectivity outside. For Kant, the transcendental is an engagement with both the outside and the inside, the objective and the illusory. Materialists, phenomenologists and existentialists might seek to expose the contradictoriness of this but Kant sees no

contradiction because he firmly believes in the *a priori* anchor of transcendental idealism. I want to consider Lacanian thought on the unconscious as neither a subjective outside (existentialism) nor an objective outside (materialism) but, rather, the denial of a synthetic relation between the two. I want to look at two concepts in late Lacanian thought that illustrate a synthetic way to read the unconscious via existential materialism (a fusion of what is transcendental and what is material) – *das Ding* and the lamella.

Das Ding

In *Seminar VII*, in order to define the unconscious, Lacan steps outside it. He adopts the position of Kant to do this. For Kant, there is universal and particular – the subject who thinks is also the person who intuits. Some materialists (both continental and analytic) see a gap between the two – the particular can be universal as much as the universal can be particular. So they conclude that bad ethics can be universalised. Materialists (continental and analytic) opened a Pandora's box when they engaged with Kant. Kant can acknowledge both the subject and the person because, ultimately, for him, nothing is objectified. Even though we may give an idea status as an object, and take it seriously as an object, it remains transcendental. This is why Kant can acknowledge both rationalism and empiricism. Recent materialists are increasingly aware of the fusion between what is transcendental and what is material. I suggest that Lacanian thought can be seen to anticipate this fusion if we focus upon the concepts of *das Ding* and the lamella rather than the signifier and the phallus.

Das Ding is essentially the noumenal in Kantian thought – that which cannot be known. It is, paradoxically, that which is beyond transcendence and that which can only be known by transcendence – existence and essence. Previous intepretations of Lacan's theory of the unconscious have emphasised the unconscious in opposition to consciousness, as either materialist or idealist. In effect, as essence. Lacan, however, states that Freud, in *The Unconscious*, appeals to Kant's *das Ding* 'because there are "certain ambiguities" in the relationship between the reality principle and the pleasure principle' (Lacan 1992: 43). He sees something beyond consciousness and the unconscious in Freud, commenting that there is a distinction between *das Ding* and *die Sache* in German which, according to Lacan, is apparent in Freud's essay where *die Sache* can be divided further into *Sachvorstellung* (representation of things) and *Wortvorstellung* (representation of words) (Lacan 1992: 44). He argues that *sache* and *wort* are synonymic rather than antonymic: 'there is a relationship between thing and word'. The *sache* (thing) and the word are conscious phenomena' (Lacan 1992: 45). For Lacan, *sache* and *wort* are representational and thus bear intentionality: '*sache* and *wort* are, therefore, closely linked; they form a couple' but '*das Ding* is found somewhere else' (Lacan 1992: 45). For him, *sache* represents the imaginary and *wort* represents the symbolic, they represent the building blocks of consciousness. *Das Ding*, however, is outside this relationship: 'This *Ding* is not in the relationship ... that causes man to question his words as referring to things which they have moreover created. There is something different in das *Ding*' (Lacan 1997: 46). Whereas *sache* and *wort* represent reality, *das Ding* represents the Real. According to Lacan, *das Ding* is the dark secret which causes the unconscious to manifest itself in consciousness as a gap or a hole: 'what one finds in *das Ding* is the true secret. For the reality principle has a secret that, as Lefèbvre-Pontalis pointed out last time, is

paradoxical. If Freud speaks of the reality principle, it is in order to reveal to us that from a certain point of view it is always defeated; it only manages to affirm itself at the margin' (Lacan 1992: 46). According to him, it is the proof that our psyches can never be known objectively. *Das Ding* is the beyond of representation – what is lost when we adopt Cartesian frames of reference, when existence becomes essence, when *das Ding* becomes thing and word.

Lacan suggests that our forms come from *das Ding* rather than *sache/wort*. The existentialist connotations, here, are clear but so are the materialist ones: 'the real ... is that which is always in the same place ... it is there that morality becomes, on the one hand, a pure and simple application of the universal maxim and, on the other, a pure and simple object' (Lacan 1992: 20). For Lacan, *das Ding* is an *a priori* particular *and* an *a priori* universal, essence *and* existence. For him, *das Ding* is the trace of the first object: 'the whole progress of the subject is then oriented around the *Ding* as *fremde*, strange and even hostile on occasion or in any case the first outside. It is clearly a probing form of progress that seeks points of reference, but with relation to what? With the world of desires' (Lacan 1992: 52). Ultimately, however, Lacan does not read *das Ding* as a universal but as a particular in the form of the female sexual organ: 'it is insofar as the female sexual organ or, more precisely, the form of an opening and an emptiness, is at the centre of all the metaphors concerned' (Lacan 1992: 169). In other words, Lacan is suggesting that there are certain facts which determine our existence but also elements of our existence that determine our facts. This is *das Ding* – the real in the imaginary, existence in essence. In psychoanalysis, viewing *das Ding* in two ways means viewing the mother in two different ways, pure and impure, non-material and material, ego-ideal and primary object: 'the step taken

by Freud at the level of the pleasure principle is to show us that there is no sovereign good – that the sovereign good, which is *das Ding*, which is the mother, is also the object of incest, is a forbidden good, and that there is no other good' (Lacan 1992: 70). For Lacan, this is the meaning that underlies our forms.

Lamella

The concept of the lamella is an alternative metaphor for the unconscious to the phallus. Unlike the phallus, we get a sense that it comes from the Real rather than the Symbolic. It occupies a space between myth and materialism. On the one hand, it is literally the after-birth. It is something real that remains after birth and determines our conceptual categories. It is something specific, or particular, on the edge, something that forms the lining of our experience, something always already lurking in the background. On the other hand, its origins are in myth rather than science. In ancient cultures, a lamella was a gold plate or foil buried with a corpse that contained instructions for use in the next world (Leader 2003: 46). Lacan refers to Aristophanes' talk in *The Symposium* on the primitive and androgynous third sex to discuss this notion of a fusion between myth and materialism: 'in considering the sphericity of primordial man as much as his division, it is the egg that comes to mind and that has thus perhaps been repressed since Plato, given the pre-eminence granted for centuries to the sphere in a hierarchy of forms sanctioned by the natural sciences' (Lacan 2006: 717). For Lacan, the sphere is described as an egg which is a metaphor for the oneness that exists prior to birth: 'consider the egg in a viviparous womb where it has no need for a shell, and recall that, whenever the membranes burst, a part of the egg is harmed' (Lacan 2006: 717). He suggests that there is something that is left over when the child

and the mother become separate entities: 'consequently, upon cutting the cord, what the newborn loses is not, as analysts think, its mother, but rather its anatomical complement – midwives call it the 'after-birth'' (Lacan 2006: 717). The after-birth is supposed to be the remnant of that pre-birth oneness which determines our subsequent thought processes. It is the unconscious as metaphor. In a particularly humorous passage, Lacan describes how the breaking of the egg creates the *h'ommelette*: 'man [*l'homme*] is made by breaking an egg, but so is the "manlet" [*l'homme lette*]' (Lacan 2006: 717). Lacan imagines the unconscious as 'a large crepe that moves like an amoeba, so utterly flat that it can slip under doors, omniscient as it is guided by the pure life instinct, and immortal as it is fissiparous' (Lacan 2006: 717). The lamella cannot be computational, it is purely somatic.

Lacan persistently uses biological references to refer to the unconscious. He suggests, for example, that ectopic relationships, relationships out of place or not in the place they should be, characterise our early life: 'mammalian organisation places the young from the embryo right up to the new born, in a parasitical relationship to the mother's body, the breast appears as the same kind of organ – to be understood as the ectopia of one individual onto another – as that constituted by the placenta at the beginning of the growth of a certain type of organism which remains specified by this intersection' (Lacan 2006: 719). Sandford argues that the references to biology in Lacanian thought ultimately have the function of myth: 'to the extent that subjectivation is sexuation, in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, the biological concept of sex difference functions as the mythic representation of sexual difference, a symbolization or a biological metaphor' (Sandford 2010: 65). She considers the reference to biological difference between men and women not as empirical but as metaphysical or, rather, as myth: 'the

myth of the origin does not symbolise the non-mythic fact of the division into male and female; the division into male and female functions mythically to symbolise the subject constituted through lack' (Sandford 2010: 65). The lamella is actually a 'biological metaphor' and Lacan's depiction of it resonates with pre-Socratic thought.[56] Lacan's materialism is infused with myth and, indeed, there is no clear relation between sex difference and sexual difference, material or transcendental in Lacanian thought. This is not highlighted in the materialist emphasis of much post-Lacanian thought, as Sandford comments: '[Žižek] in glossing the passage in this way avoids the question of the relation of the biological concept of sex and the (symbolically regulated) regime of sexual difference' (Sandford 2010: 66). Sandford suggests that there is an implicitly heteronormative relation between biological sex difference and the Symbolic in post-Lacanian thought. Extending Sandford, I suggest that we take myth seriously as a source of psychoanalysis, or, rather, the Imaginary rather than the Symbolic as a source of the unconscious.

Graph of desire and existential materialism

Existential materialism is neither a materialist approach to existentialism nor an existentialist approach to materialism but the (im)possible unity of subjectivity and materialism. The graph of desire depicts this (im)possibility. It is perhaps the most famous emblem of Lacan's theory. In the movie *The Life of David Gale* (2003), the central character, played by Kevin Spacey, uses it as the basis for a lecture on desire. The graph of desire was originally presented in *Seminar IV* on the structure of jokes

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[56] Badiou has aligned Lacanian thought with pre-Socratic thought. He comments that 'the pre-socratics differentiate identity' while Plato 'identifies difference' (Badiou 2006: 12). According to Badiou: 'Lacan intends to inscribe psychoanalysis within a destiny of thought that is determined by oppositions and divisions originally informed by the pre-Socratics' (Badiou 2006: 15).

(Lacan 2006: 671). In four parts, it is a representation of how we "acquire" the unconscious. Later Lacanian thought is often considered to be a negative mirror image of Descartes. However, on first sight, it seems that Lacan is satirising Cartesian analytic geometry in the graph of desire where objects become points on a line by showing that the relations between mother, father and child can be represented by points and lines. The starting point for the graph is the metaphor of the *points de capiton* or button tie. This is a button, or clasp, which holds a quilt or mattress together. It is a metaphor for signification. It stops the so-called endless sliding of signified under signifier. We see this dialectical relationship between existence and essence throughout the graph of desire, and Lacan insinuates, throughout our lives.

Lacan's graph of desire is comprised of four separate levels. Graph one illustrates what happens when body is confronted with language, when need meets demand, or when existence is required to be essence:
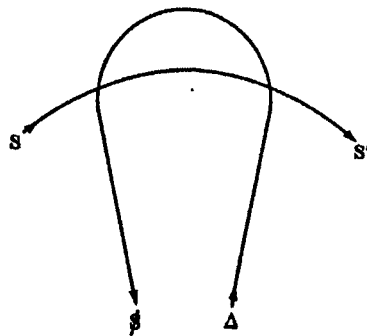
In this graph, Lacan shows that the subject has a dialectical relation to its objects because of the cutting action of language which makes the subject at once formalised and alienated. Unlike structuralists, Lacan's emphasis is upon diachrony rather than synchrony, the subject rather than structure. Fink – sensitive to Lacan's attention to both synchrony and diachrony – comments that we can think of the horizontal lines,

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the synchrony, the signifying chain, as the fabric; and we can think of the vertical lines, the diachrony, the meaning, as the thread which he calls 'the retroactive movement of meaning-making' (Fink 2004: 114). The horizontal line represents signification where there is no progression from signifier to signified but, rather, a link to another signifier. The starting point of the vertical line is the body or Δ which 'stands for the human being as a living organism (*le vivant*), a physical, biological or animal being: it represents our prelinguistic, presubjective, vegetative, so to speak' (Fink 2004: 114-5). The $ is the endpoint of the diachronic line and represents 'the human subject split by her use of language' (Fink 2004: 115). Thus, when the line of synchrony intersects with the line of diachrony, we move from biology to subjectivity and the human being becomes conceptualised as a formal subject. The *points de capiton* becomes a metaphor for this process as 'the subject as so determined is fixed, tied down, or pinned down in the process' (Fink 2004: 115). Language (S S') defines and cuts through the relationship between the pre-linguistic (Δ) and the linguistic self ($). Graph one depicts how we become essences, how ideas become objects, how we become machines.

If graph one depicts how we are defined by the Symbolic, graph two depicts how we can only ever know the Symbolic via the Imaginary:

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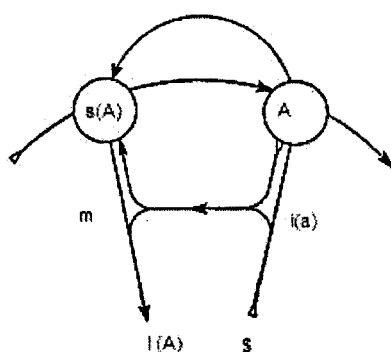
In this graph, there is an imaginary relation between two organisms i and m in the shadow of the relations between signifiers. Once again, Lacan infuses his supposedly structuralist symbols with philosophical references: 'the imaginary process, which goes from the specular image to the constitution of the ego along the path of subjectification by the signifier is signified in my graph by the *i(a)m* vector' (Lacan 2006: 685). Lacan infuses this graph with Freudian, structuralist and philosophical allusions and the resulting effect is that we are imprisoned in a metaphysical view of the world. In the graph, both *i* and *m* are substitutes for *a*. The *i* represents the "image" of the child in The Mirror Stage, the *m* represents the "me" (*le moi*) and the *a* is the object cause of desire. Fink comments that graph two 'essentially maps the mirror stage' (Fink 2004: 116). The alienated subject, caught between the I and the me, projects onto a form outside themselves: 'the terminus I (A) is the ego-ideal, the Other's ideal that the subject internalizes' (Fink 2004: 116). As Fink comments, the matheme I(A) can be read 'as the ideal given by (or received from) the Other' (Fink 2004: 116). It is 'a point outside of the ego from which one observes and evaluates one's own ego' (Fink 2004: 117). On one level, this graph is an allegory of Plato's theory of resemblance showing that language always already passes through the imaginary and that our categories are imaginary. On another level, graph two tells us that all is synthetic – what we think are objects are actually illusions. Substances are substances only in ideas.

Graph one suggests that the outside determines us. Graph two suggests that this can only ever be an illusion for us. For Lacan, however, our lives are not dominated by

illusions but, rather, by *one* illusion – the illusion of desire. Graph three depicts the place of desire which manifests itself in fantasy whose form is $a:
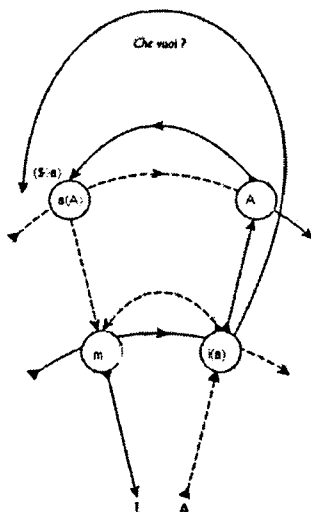
According to Lacan's very Freudian interpretation, desire is the focus of our lives as adults and it has its basis in a childhood demand to know. According to him, the child wonders why its needs cannot be met and the parent wonders what the child's needs are. This gap results in anxiety which is the desire to know what the Other wants. A desire to know is a demand that is articulated by both parent and child: '"Chè voui?" "what do you want" is the question that best leads the subject to the path of his own desire, assuming that thanks to the know-how of a partner known as a psychoanalyst, he takes up that question, even without knowing it, in the following form: "what does he want from me?"' (Lacan 2006: 690). Desire, for Lacan, is the desire of the subject not the person. It is abstracted desire. It is a conceptual model in which desire is the desire to have or to be the Other's desire or to be in the place of the Other's desire. According to Lacan, we want to have or to be the Other because there there is no anxiety. As Fink comments: 'I try to figure out what the Other wants so I can try to be it and thereby be wanted' (Fink 2004: 118). The argument of desire is that essence

displaces existence. Our lives become dominated by fantasy, by an image, by an essence or one essence – *objet petit a.*

Graph one shows us that our lives are determined by the outside. Graph two shows us that this outside can only be illusory. Graph three shows us that one illusion dominates our lives which we mistakenly view as an object. The complete graph, however, shows us that there is something beyond objects and illusions. It shows the structure of the drive as well as desire:
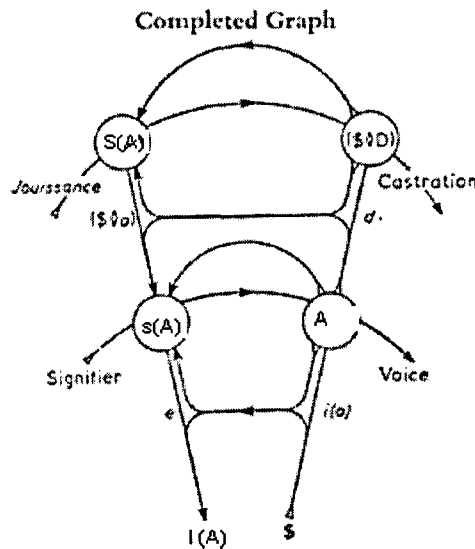
Completed Graph

The complete graph tells us that there is nothing outside language, underlying our essences. Drive has no essence but, rather, it is the very edge of essence, the meaning which form cannot eradicate, the unconscious that can never be consciousness. It is only knowable as a curved line which we interpret as a cut: 'but while my complete graph allows us to situate the drive as the treasure trove of signifiers, its notation ($\lozenge$D), maintains its structure by linking it to diachrony. The drive is what becomes of demand when the subject vanishes from it. It goes without saying that demand also

disappears, except that the cut remains, for the latter remains present in what distinguishes the drive from the organic function it inhabits' (Lacan 2006: 692). Drive is essence tainted by existence – why we can never be a machine, why consciousness can never rid itself of the unconscious. For Lacan, what is beyond language is drive and the experience of drive – *jouissance*. Fink comments: 'if language is what makes us different from animals, *jouissance* is what makes us different from machines' (Fink 2004: 124). *Jouissance* shows us the limits of our existence as illusion. There is an outside that is not illusory – that cannot be known but can be felt.

However, as Fink comments: 'Lacan is always attempting to figure out how to write or graph or topologize what there is that goes beyond structure in human beings' (Fink 2004: 124). And yet, *jouissance* becomes mechanistic in Lacanian thought as I will suggest in chapter six. Drive also has a symbol: $S(\cancel{A})$ which is both symbol and symptom – a symbol of resistance to discourse, to the machine, the symbolic and a symptom of only being able to experience the world as form and not meaning. Lacan said that 'drive is not a substance but a vector' (Burgoyne 2003: 81). For the late Lacan, drive is the negation of what is transcendental, or rather is governed by a transcendental outside (in the Fregean sense) rather than a transcendental inside. It is movement backwards rather than movement forwards. Drive is regress not progress, the very antithesis of transcendental thought. Ultimately, the graph of desire shows that our categories are illusory but also objective. Our categories, and consciousness and the unconscious, are objective historical illusions – they have a time and a place of origin, a socio-political and historical context. There is an existential argument at the heart of the graph of desire – everything becomes illusory; but also a materialism

– everything becomes programmable. We are caught between the two opposing ideas that either our categories are illusory or they are objects.

To conclude, two materialist interpetations of Kant in relation to Lacan's theory of the unconscious have been discussed in this chapter. The former is functionalist and supports a materialist theory of consciousness. The latter is a new kind of materialism and sees the unconscious as the other side of (a materialist theory of) consciousness. The unconscious has been interpreted as either materialist or idealist by Lacan's pupils and followers but these readings emphasise essences rather than existence. This new reading of the unconscious emphasises the links between context and object, between existentialism and materialism. I have been suggesting that there are two ways to read the unconscious – either in terms of the phallus or the lamella. In the former reading, the unconscious is imposed upon us by the Symbolic which is underpinned by a computational logic. In the latter reading, it is the leftover of the Real (*das Ding*) which is not underpinned by computational logic. The advantage of the latter reading over the former is that there is a clearer distinction between consciousness and the unconscious in Lacanian thought. Furthermore, this reading suggests that the feminine may be made to give way to the masculine (as the graph of desire implies) but it need not always be so. In this reading, there is potential for transcendence in the face of determinism. There are different ways to read a theory of the unconscious – some see it as science and others more as myth. Unfortunately, later Lacanian thought tends to validate the former rather than the latter and this is the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARDS A "SCIENCE" OF THE UNCONSCIOUS; OR, SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN LATE LACAN?

This chapter suggests that Lacan's efforts to establish psychoanalysis as a science always runs the risk of supporting analytic philosophy. Since the mid-twentieth century, philosophers in the analytic philosophy of mind have sought to solve the alleged problem of consciousness. One would think that the very notion of the unconscious proves that this "problem" is unsolvable. However, it is argued, here, that post-Lacanian thought suggests that a science of the unconscious can be used to support a science of consciousness. A Kantian might see the attempt to solve the problem of consciousness as paralogistic. One would think that the later Lacan would read a materialist theory of consciousness in this Kantian way but he doesn't. Lacan is living during what Fauconnier and Turner referred to as 'the age of the triumph of form' (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 3) but it could equally be called "the age of materialism". He is not an 'ordinary organicist', as he maintains in *Seminar II*, and neither is he a behaviourist. The emphasis upon symbolic logic, however, shows Lacan's sympathies with a new kind of materialism – a digital materialism.

In analysing Lacan's "science" of the unconscious, this chapter specifically investigates his reading of Descartes in *Seminar XI* and Žižek's subsequent reading of

Lacanian thought as the other side of Cartesian thought. It suggests that Lacan's reading of Descartes can be seen to support Dreyfus' theory of consciousness rather than, as Žižek suggests, Dennett's. My point is that Žižek, firstly, misapplies Kant to both Lacanian and Dennettian thought; and, secondly, misreads Lacan as a proto-Dennettian when he should read him as proto-Dreyfus. This chapter ends with an alternative reading of the unconscious to Žižek's. It sees, in Lacan's late theory of discourse, two materialisms – existential and digital – in a dialectical relation. It is suggested that this relation illustrates the rise of a materialist theory of consciousness but, also, it's opaque Other: the financial meltdown of the early twenty-first century. In this late theory of discourse, discourses of digital materialism and existential materialism are seen to contraindicate each other. However, Lacan ultimately sides with the former rather than the latter.

The easy and hard problems of consciousness

Analytic thought refers to the easy and the hard problems of consciousness which were first defined by Chalmers. The hard problem of consciousness is concerned with how to account for subjective experiences. It is distinguishable from the easy problem of consciousness which accounts for objective functions such as discriminating, reporting and focussing:

> Why are the easy problems easy, and why is the hard problem hard? The easy problems are easy precisely because they concern the explanation of cognitive *abilities* and *functions*. To explain a cognitive function, we need only specify a mechanism that can perform the function. The methods of cognitive science are well-suited for this sort of explanation, and so are well-suited to the easy problems of consciousness. By contrast, the hard problem is hard precisely because it is not a problem about the performance of functions. The problem

persists even when the performance of all the relevant functions is explained' (Chalmers 1995: 201).

Chalmers advocates property dualism which is different from the neo-mysterianism of Nagel and McGinn but distinct from the substance dualism of Descartes. In his famous essay 'What is it like to be a bat?' (1972), Nagel implies that it will never be possible to have a science of consciousness. McGinn also argues that it is likely that we will never be able to have an objective account of consciousness. Dennett, however, takes the extremely opposite view, arguing that we solve the hard problem by answering easy problems, always implying that *a priori* mechanical factors determine consciousness and that consciousness, as subjectivity, is illusory.

Although Dreyfus is not ostensibly concerned with consciousness, his thought implies that there is a hard problem and that Heideggerian AI might be a way to solve the hard problem of consciousness. Dreyfus suggests that AI develops from a Cartesian emphasis on representation. For example:

> GOFAI (Good Old Fashioned AI) is based on the Cartesian idea that all understanding consists in forming and using appropriate symbolic representations. For Descartes, these representations were complex descriptions built up out of primitive ideas or elements. Kant added the important idea that all concepts are rules for relating such elements, and Frege showed that rules could be formalized so that they could be manipulated without intuition or interpretation. Given the nature of computers as possible formal symbol processors, AI turned this rationalist vision into a research program and took up the search for primitives and formal rules that captured everyday knowledge. Commonsense understanding had to be represented as a huge data structure comprised of facts plus rules for relating and applying these facts. As it turned out, though, it was much harder than anyone expected to formulate, let alone formalize, the required theory of common sense' (Dreyfus 1997: xi)

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Dreyfus suggests that Turing's 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence' is the beginning of a theory of the mind governed by symbolic logic. According to him, in AI, thoughts become objects and occupy a place in a vast mental database. AI, likewise, urges us to forget the subjective experience and focus upon the mental state and implies, albeit controversially, that we can have a mental state (of pain) without having the subjective experience (of pain). It sees subjective experience as a mental state or, rather, mental states as logically supervenient on, and therefore outside of, bodily experiences. If Descartes can be seen to be the origin of the hard problem of consciousness, AI sidesteps it and attempts to discount it. In contrast to Descartes, it sees mind as materialism, or rather digital materialism. It is interesting that Lacan does not read Descartes as a dualist, famously stating that dualism, in Descartes, is a dualism of extension and thought rather than mind and body (Lacan 2006: 128). Lacan suggests that Descartes not only attempts to separate the thinking being from the living being but that the thinking being can be viewed exclusively in terms of thought. He suggests that Descartes, like AI, discounts the body in favour of a view of the mind as symbolic process.

Dreyfus sees Descartes as the father of AI and it could be argued that Lacan does too. Dennett, however, sees Descartes as the father of mysterian and phenomenological theories of consciousness. They read Descartes very differently and oppose him for different reasons. Dennett opposes Descartes because of the links between Cartesianism and phenomenology; and Dreyfus opposes Descartes because of the links between Cartesianism and classic AI. The stark differences between the two can be detected in a debate they had in 1997 over the nature of Artificial Intelligence and the possibility of creating a thinking and feeling computer. Dennett comments that

'when we say we do something "by intuition" we are saying we don't know how we do it' (Dennett & Dreyfus 1997). Dreyfus responds that emotions are ontological and non-computational, they 'depend upon ... chemical changes in the brain. These changes are due to hormones, adrenaline, and the like' (Dennett & Dreyfus 1997). Dennett opposes this view by referring to 'Donald Knuth's elegant idea (in Tex) of virtual glue for use in formatting text for fine printing' and 'Doug Hofstadter's JUMBO program, with all those codelets floating around like enzymes, latching onto this and that, snipping here, joining there' (Dennett & Dreyfus 1997). In response, Dreyfus refers to the Turing test: 'it is not sufficient that [a thinking and feeling computer] respond with appropriate emotional behaviour (for example, send back angry messages when I insult it); [a thinking and feeling computer] must be able to answer questions about its emotional life' (Dennett & Dreyfus 1997). For Dreyfus, a key factor in deciding whether a machine has mental states is that it must report on its inner life and transform experiences into knowledge which only, according to him, ontological beings can do.

Lacan with Dreyfus

Dreyfus effectively attempts to solve the hard problem of consciousness via Heidegger. In effect, he proposes a Heideggerian theory of consciousness. He sees Descartes as the origin of a (digitally) materialist theory of consciousness and, rather perversely, Heidegger as the origin of an (ontologically) materialist theory of consciousness. This section considers the extent to which Lacan's views on Descartes can be considered a precursor of Dreyfus' views on Descartes if not Heidegger. In the mid-twentieth century, there were two notable approaches to Descartes on either side

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of the Atlantic – Husserl's (*Cartesian Meditations*) and Chomsky's (*Cartesian Linguistics*). There are two equally notable acknowledgements and oppositions to these ideas in Anglo-American thought – Dreyfus' and Dennett's. Dreyfus agrees with Chomsky that Descartes was a proto-computationalist but opposes this idea. Dennett agrees with Husserl that Descartes was a proto-phenomenologist but opposes this idea. In *Seminar XI*, I would suggest, Lacan's burgeoning "science" of the unconscious anticipates the former. Lacan does this by first suggesting that Descartes' thought is not premised upon certainty but, rather, uncertainty: 'Descartes tells us – by virtue of the fact that I doubt, I am sure that I think, and ... by virtue of thinking, I am' (Lacan 1998: 35). He interprets this relation between an *a priori* uncertainty and an *a posteriori* certainty in terms of articulation rather than thought, language rather than ideas: 'there are thoughts in this field of the beyond of consciousness and it is impossible to represent these thoughts other than in the same homology of determination in which the subject of the I think find himself in relation to the articulation of the I doubt' (Lacan 1998: 44). For Lacan, Descartes reveals that the subject of enunciation precedes the subject of the enunciated: 'Descartes apprehends his I think in the enunciation of the I doubt, not in its statement, which still bears all of this knowledge to be put in doubt'. In Lacan's view, the I in the "I think" is a grammatical I rather than a philosophical I: 'the *Ich* is the complete, total locus of the network of signifiers' (Lacan 1998: 44). He expresses the familiar, and structuralist, view that the subject emerges through language, through a system of logical relations. According to Lacan, we emerge from this system as subjects, grammatical rather than philosophical, a subject of space rather than time.

Furthermore, according to Lacan, Freud (and, we recall, that Lacan views Freud as a linguist) completes Descartes: 'I am not saying that Freud introduces the subject into the world ... since it was Descartes who did this. But I am saying that Freud addresses the subject in order to say to him the following, which is new – here, in the field of the dream, you are at home. *Wo es war, soll Ich werden*'. The later Lacan sees the dreamwork as a locus of signifiers rather than imagos and this notion that the unconscious is the establishment of formal relations and the reduction of meaning relations reveals Lacan to be more Fregean than Freudian: 'but the status of the I think is as reduced, as minimal, as punctual ... as that of the I am lying referred to earlier' (Lacan 1998: 140). So, in Lacan's hyper-formal interpretation, "I am thinking" has the same form as "I am lying". For him, the subject indicates an empty position, a position which is marked by a symbol, and 'I think' is understood in terms of form rather than meaning. Lacan rather anachronistically equates Cartesian scepticism with the birth of symbolic logic: 'scepticism does not mean the successive doubting, item by item of all opinions or of all the pathways that accede to knowledge. It is holding the subjective position that one can know nothing' (Lacan 1998 223). According to Lacan, scepticism is effectively the formalisation of experience without interpretation or intuition. He further suggests that this logic of scepticism is also a philosophy of desire: 'scepticism is a mode of sustaining man in life, which implies a position so difficult, so heroic that we can no longer even imagine it ... the way of desire' (Lacan 1998: 224). Lacan seems to re-invent Descartes as a proto-functionalist as certainty (the foundation and goal of Cartesian thought) is seen as a program on a machine: 'Certainty, for Descartes, is not a moment that one may regard as acquired, once it has been crossed. Each time and by each person it has to be repeated ... it is a point of orientation that is particularly difficult to sustain in the incisiveness that makes its

value. It is, strictly speaking, the establishment of something separate'. Certainty is the certainty of a rule, a repetitive symbolic process, untainted by intuition or interpretation, untainted by metaphysics.

In *Seminar XI*, however, Lacan also expresses the view that Descartes is in two minds about the view that I is a mechanism and, furthermore, in order to avoid the notion (or the accusation) that the mind is a machine, Descartes appeals to the notion of God: 'not to make of the I think a mere point of fading ... [Descartes] has done something quite different, which concerns the field, which he does not name, in which all knowledge wanders about – all this knowledge which he had said should be placed in radical suspension'. So, according to Lacan, although he argues for a suspension of a metaphysical understanding of the world and the adoption of a scientific understanding of the world, Descartes actually endorses metaphysics: 'he puts the field of this knowledge at the level of this vaster subject, the subject who is supposed to know, God' (Lacan 1998: 224). There thus appears to be no difference between Cartesian and medieval thought: 'does Descartes, then, remain caught as everyone up to him did, on the need to guarantee all scientific research on the fact that actual science exists somewhere in an existing being called God? – that is to say, on the fact that God is supposed to know'. Lacan suggests that, on the verge of proposing a proto-computational view of the mind, Descartes retreats from the precipice over which lies a godless universe comprised of matter alone and understood only by science. This is why, for Dennett, Cartesian thought cannot be considered to be AI as, for him, Descartes suggests that only God knows the spatial location of the mind.

However, Lacan maintains that the appeal to God actually contradicts what Descartes is saying and that there is an implicit justification for the notion that the mind can be thought of spatially, even mechanically: 'when Descartes speaks to us of his process, of his method, of clear ideas and confused ideas, simple ideas and complex ideas, he places the order to be followed between these two terms of his method' (Lacan 1998: 225). In computational theories, order not number matters, process not content. Although Lacan paradoxically locates both the metaphysical and the computational in Cartesian thought, he suggests the latter has primacy: 'in order to reach four, what matters is not the cardinal but the ordinal. There is a first mental operation to be carried out – first then a second, then a third, then a fourth. If you do not do them in the right order, you fail. To know whether in the last resort, it makes three or four, or two, is of secondary importance. That's God's business'. Lacan effectively suggests that algebra is the beginning of AI, the beginning of computation: 'the difference between Descartes' small letters and the capital letters is that Descartes' small letters do not have a number – they are interchangable and only the order of the commutations will define their process'. In Lacan's analysis, there is an implicit suggestion that the relation between the Cardinal and the Ordinal, content and process, meaning and form is not antonymic. It is a relation which can be interpreted, at another level, in terms of pure form.

Lacan's suggestion that a computational and an ontotheological view support each other in Cartesian thought, is not unlike a Berkeleyean view: 'To show you that the presence of the Other is already implied in number, I need only point out to you that the series of numbers can only be figured by introducing the zero, in a more or less masked way. Now, the zero is the presence of the subject who, at this level, totalizes'

(Lacan 1998: 226). Berkeley's idea that God is a particular, and can be understood scientifically, was used by empiricists to undermine accusations of atheism. The search for God as a particular continues today most recently with the search for the God particle, or the Higgs Boson. In terms of analytic thought, God as a particular means that God is seen as an atomic fact, a form. Lacan like Descartes, however, is not entirely comfortable with the notion that everything can be computable. His famous definition of the unconscious in *Seminar XI*: 'the unconscious is structured like a language' (Lacan 1998: 20), reveals him to be caught between two views of the unconscious – the unconscious is and is not like a language. On the one hand, we can equate Lacan's reading of Descartes with Dennett's who does not see Descartes as a progenitor of computation. However, like Dreyfus, he sees Descartes as the very beginning of the path towards the search for formal rules to define experience. It is, however, a very crooked path which gives rise to both consciousness and the unconscious.

Dolar explains that Lacan's reading of Descartes is an attempt to connect the world of ethics with the world of science. He comments that Lacan's attitude to the *cogito* changes as his thought develops. According to him, there are three phases of Lacan's relation with the *cogito*. Firstly, there is the imaginary where 'the *cogito* is rejected as opposite to the mirror phase'. Secondly, there is the symbolic where the *cogito* is seen as 'the best way to conceive the subject of the signifier'. Finally, there is the real where 'drives and fantasy [are seen] as opposite to symbolic logic and desire' (Dolar 1998: 37). Dolar questions the first two readings by asking: 'are we forced to choose between the two versions of the Lacanian *cogito* and then the further theory centred on symptom ... when faced with our hypothetical villain shouting "your thought or

your being" should one cling to thought or to being, or else explain "I give up both

only leave me my symptom"?' (Dolar 1998: 36). He suggests that there is a circular

movement in Lacanian thought from meaning to form and back to meaning again and

that the *cogito* is representative of this circular and tautological process: 'the *cogito*

itself is that symptomatic nodal point around which three dimensions turn ... the

impossible coupling thought and being' (Dolar 1998: 37). It is the final theory that

shows the tension between continental and Anglo-American analytic thought in

Lacanian thought as Lacan brings the philosophy of ethics into the arena of science.

This theory emphasises the notion of a forced choice and how we are forced to choose

thought over being.[57] Dolar inteprets this as 'a choice at gunpoint'. It is a choice

between 'a being devoid of thought' and 'thought without being' (Dolar 1998: 27). In

Seminar XI, Dolar states that this forced choice is the truth of science: 'the forced

choice of sum, ergo, *cogito* is the invisible truth of the Cartesian gesture' (Dolar 1998:

29). He suggests that there is a constant tension between an Aristotelian and a

Cartesian view within the *cogito* itself. According to him, Descartes' error was

attempting to identify 'I think' with 'I am': 'Descartes indigenous error was to deduce

"the thinking being" from what was but a void but the things have to be read in

reverse: there is a "stain of being" that foregoes the pure void of the subject, the stain

of the sum prior to the *cogito*' (Dolar 1998: 35). This stain is the stain of ethics on the

machine of science. Symbols become meanings, primitives become stains. And, yet,

like Descartes, the language Lacan uses to discuss the gap between metaphysics and

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[57] Dolar, however, comments that, in today's world, we have to choose being. In *Seminar XI*, the choice is 'either to think or to be ... we choose thought because it makes sense ... years later ... Lacan ...[argues for] the opposite view ... one is forced to opt for being at the expense of thought ...if I choose I think, I lose my being by entrusting myself ... to the tricky logic of the signifier' (Dolar 1998: 18). Here, Dolar describes the difference between the earlier Lacanian emphasis on the signifier (the symbolic) and the later emphasis on *jouissance* (being).

science tends to validate the latter rather than the former. He attempts to use symbolic logic which tends to validate thought over being, essence over existence.

Seminar XI is notable not only for its (very analytic) interpretation of Descartes but for its attempted, and rather perverse, synthesis of Hegel and formal logic in Lacan's concept of 'the vel of alienation' (Lacan 1998: 210). In classical logic, there is a distinction between two meanings of "or" which it refers to as *vel* and *aut. Vel* is inclusive, it is either/or and both, for example: "send me an email or a letter (or both)". *Aut*, however, is exclusive, it is either/or or neither, for example: "Jennifer is either in the bedroom or in the kitchen (or neither)". In formal logic, *vel* can be represented by the logical form 0111 whereas *aut* can be represented by the logical form 0110.

Lacan misreads formal logic in two ways. Firstly, he interprets *vel* as both inclusive and exclusive:

> You know, from your earliest lessons in logic, that there is the exclusive *vel* – I go either there or there – if if go there, I do not go there, I have to choose. There is another way of using the *vel* – I go to one side or the other, I don't care, one's as good as the other. These two vels are not alike. Well, there is a third, and in order not to mislead you, I will tell you straight away what it is intended for (Lacan 1998: 210).

This view of the vel as both inclusive and exclusive is, as Simms comments, incorrect.[58] Lacan makes a further error in his infusion of logic with meaning – the meaning of Hegel's theory of the dialectic:

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[58] 'There is no such thing as an 'exclusive *vel*', since the exclusive meaning of 'or' is covered by '*aut*' And the second meaning of *vel* that Lacan identifies ... is ... still an *aut*, since an exclusive choice is still made' (Simms 2007: 73).

> It is in Hegel that I have found a legitimate justification for the term alienating vel. What does Hegel mean by it? To cut a long story short, it concerns the production of the primary alienation, that by which man enters into the way of slavery. *Your freedom or your life!* If he chooses freedom, he loses both immediately – if he chooses life, his life is deprived of freedom (Lacan 1998: 212).

This formula is neither a *vel* (either one or the other or both) nor an *aut* (either one or the other or neither). It is neither one nor the other nor both. As Simms comments, it is a 'Hegelian formula' (Simms 2007: 75). As Dreyfus attempts to infuse the western history of symbolic representation with Heideggerian meaning, so, in *Seminar XI*, Lacan attempts to do the same with Hegel. I would suggest that both Dreyfus (in his critique of AI) and Lacan (in his attempt to establish a "science" of the unconscious) can be seen to critique digital materialism and advocate, instead, an ontological materialism. This is a materialism which infuses logic with a universal rather than a particular meaning. Of course, it is not formal logic. It is something else – imaginary rather than symbolic, phenomenal rather than noumenal. It is interesting, however, that post-Lacanians continue to (inaccurately) claim that Lacan is a logician (in the formal sense). This is the topic of the next section.

Post-Lacanian materialism – Lacan with Dennett

Although there has been no connection between the thought of Dreyfus and the thought of Lacan until this thesis, a connection between Lacanian thought and Dennett has been made by Žižek. Dennett's science of consciousness and Lacan's science of the unconscious share a similar philosophical heritage. They are both influenced by Wittgenstein: 'Several philosophers have seen what I am doing as a kind of redoing of

Wittgenstein's attack on the "objects" of conscious experience. Indeed it is. As 308 makes clear, if we are to avoid the conjuring trick, we have to figure out the "nature" of mental states and processes first' (Dennett 1991: 462). Lacan's (early) Wittgensteinian influences are explored in the next chapter. Lacan and Dennett also share similar attitudes to phenomenology accounting for it by depicting it as a philosophy of illusions. Dennett plays devil's advocate in his assertion that he knows nothing about phenomenology which, to him, is a view based on the notion of a Cartesian Theatre:

> The Cartesian Theater may be a comforting image because it preserves the reality/appearance distinction at the heart of human subjectivity, but as well as being scientifically unmotivated, this is metaphysically dubious, because it creates the bizarre category of the objectively subjective – the way things actually, objectively seem to you even if they don't seem that way to you' (Dennett 1991: 132).

Dennett depicts the *cogito* as a playwright in a theatre. For him, the phenomenological pure ego of intentionality is merely an image that is generated by the intentional stance which is somatic: 'treating a complex, moving entity as a single-minded agent is a magnificent way of seeing pattern in all the activity' (Dennett 1991: 458). In Dennett's view, phenomenology is merely epiphenomena: 'pictures found in illustrated editions of novels ... perfectly real but they are just more text ... nothing more to phenomenology than that ... consciousness is not a plenum even though it seems to be ... [it is a] hall of mirrors' (Dennett 1991: 366). The reference to consciousness as a 'hall of mirrors', here, does recall Lacan's anti-phenomenological stance in The Mirror Stage. Dennett, however, is concerned with redefining consciousness scientifically. According to him, we think in language and not images and he advocates a view of the mind as a virtual machine on the serial hardware of the

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brain. Part of being conscious is not being aware of the mechanics of consciousness, or even misrecognising consciousness as image when it is logic.

Dennett's view that computation is the truth of consciousness contrasts with Dreyfus who implies that all computation is imaginary. Dennett does concede that the classic AI notion of the mind as logically supervenient on (and separated from) the brain is another kind of misrecognition. He acknowledges Dreyfus by suggesting that the problem of classic AI is that we 'end up right back in the Cartesian Theater' (Dennett 1991: 312) because of its implicit acknowledgement of a gap between mind and body which is filled with yet another (pseudo-scientific) illusion. For Dennett, what Dreyfus refers to as GOFAI may be imaginary but computation *per se* is not imaginary. Classic AI reduces the significance of computation which, Dennett argues, is biological and not merely abstract. A new understanding of computation is proposed by Dennett in the form of the Multiple Drafts Model in which 'the central witness has been replaced by coalitions of specialists whose particular epistemic hungers cannot be immediately adopted by other agents if they are expunged or on holiday' (Dennett 1991: 358). Dennett's theory of consciousness is an ultra AI, ultra functionalist view that seeks to explain away phenomenology. It is at once a continuation and a deconstruction of AI. For him, there is no logical supervenience, no implicit dualism, mirroring or copying. There is, instead, a kind of computational plasticity in which the brain's activities are shaped by evolved computational mental processes that are biological.

In *Cogito and the Unconscious,* although Žižek defines the unconscious according to Dennett's model, he begins with a cautionary comment on the connection between

continental and analytic thought: 'there is a gap that forever separates Dennett's scientific evolutionary explanation, which combines cognitive science, neurology, and artificial intelligence research, from the deconstructionist "metatranscendental" probing into the conditions of (im)possibility of the philosophical discourse'. And, yet, he proceeds to do just that conflating analytic thought on consciousness and Lacanian thought on the unconscious. Žižek highlights Dennett's point that the way we see the world is fiction, misrecognition: 'the basic premise of Dennett's "heterophenomenology" is that subjective experience is the theorist's (interpreter's) symbolic fiction, his supposition, not the domain of phenomenon directly accessible to the subject: the universe of subjective experience is reconstructed in exactly the same way we reconstruct the universe of a novel from reading its text'. Žižek appears to sympathise with Dennett's ultra AI in which the relationship between form and meaning is much more fluid, not diametrically opposed as in classic AI: 'we don't first apprehend our experience in the Cartesian theatre and then, on the basis of that acquired knowledge, have the ability to frame reports to express ... the emergence of the expression is precisely what creates or fixes the content of the higher order thought expressed' (Žižek 1998: 252). According to Žižek, we see this in Lacan's concept of the efficiency of the signifier: 'it is not only that, among the multitude of contenders, the best expression wins, but some expression might impose itself that changes more or less considerably the very intention-to-signify ... is this not what Lacan referred to as "the efficiency of the signifier"?' The parallels Žižek makes between Dennett and Lacan, in terms of their shared view that language generates its own meaning, are persuasive in this respect.

Of course, unlike analytic philosophy, the subject is central to continental philosophy as is the notion of transcendence. Žižek is aware of this radical difference between the two traditions: 'the problem that Dennett does not resolve is that of the very form of the narrative – where does the subject's capacity to organize its contingent experience into the form of narrative (or to recognize in a series of events in the form of narrative) come from?' (Žižek 1998: 253). He believes that he has found in Kant a mediator between the worlds of Dennett and Lacan. For Kant, transcendental thought is the connection between the world of things and the world of ideas. However, Žižek interprets *a priori* transcendental thought as *a priori* form. He sees it as an in between which effectively reduces the concept of transcendental thought to form: 'the unexplained presupposition of the narrative form in Dennett bears witness to the fact that this passage is not direct, that one cannot account for it within a continuous evolutionary narrative: something has to intervene between the two, a kind of vanishing mediator which is neither Nature nor Culture – this in-between is silently presupposed and jumped over by Dennett' (Žižek 1998: 256). Žižek is correct that Dennett evades the notion of the *a priori* but is wrong to suggest it is purely form. This is a materialist view and, in effect, supports Dennett's thought. This *a priori* form is, according to Žižek, the *cogito*: 'it is on account of this in-between that the subject cannot be reduced to the self as a "center of narrative gravity". Where, then, do we find traces of this in-between in philosophy? In the Cartesian *cogito*' (Žižek 1998: 257). Žižek's view of the *cogito* is very different from Kant's. He proceeds to "save" the *cogito* because he considers it to be valuable to psychoanalysis: 'the ontological necessity of "madness" resides in the fact that it is not possible to pass directly from the purely "animal soul", immersed in its natural environments, to "normal" subjectivity, dwelling in its symbolic virtual environments – the "vanishing

mediator" between the two is the "mad" gesture of radical withdrawal from reality, which opens up the space for its symbolic (re) construction' (Žižek 1998 258-59). Like Dennett, Žižek agrees that it is an illusion but it is an illusion which belies a deeper substance. The AI notion of logical supervenience is implicit in Žižek's analysis.

Žižek's reference point is an analytic materialist theory of consciousness rather than a Lacanian theory of the unconscious. Lacan – as well as Descartes (who becomes proto-Kantian) and Kant (who becomes proto-Dennettian) – is made to fit Dennett's model rather than vice versa. He takes Lacan to a whole new level and sees the *cogito* not as a playwright (i.e. mere epiphenomenon) but the rational subject which he interprets as a rule i.e. in the way Kant sees the Categorical Imperative: 'Perhaps the best example is that of "spontaneously" following a rule (as when one engages in speech activity): when I speak a language, I am, of course, not actively conscious of the rules I follow – my active focusing on these rules would prevent me from fluently speaking this language; but, I am nonetheless implicitly aware that I am speaking a language, and thus, following rules' (Žižek 1998: 260). The mistakenly conflated *cogito*/transcendental subject is seen as a subject of pure logic: 'Self-consciousness is thus, in a way, even less than a software program, it is a pure logical function, even symbolic fiction or presupposition' (Žižek 1998: 261). According to Žižek, we need to 'take Lacan's subject of the signifier literally ... I is a purely performative entity. When I say I, I merely designate myself. "I" am not directly my body or even the content of my mind; I am rather that X which has all those features as its properties' (Žižek 1998: 264). Žižek conflates the philosophical subject and the grammatical subject and makes the conclusion that the subject of consciousness is the subject of

the unconscious: 'Cartesian *cogito* (or, rather, the Kantian self-consciousness) is the very subject of the unconscious'. In reality, however, this subject of pure logic appears not dissimilar from the desubjectivised logic of analytic thought. Self-consciousness actually appears a software program, a symbolic mechanism, even though Žižek claims it is not: 'for Kant, self-conciousness is not only not hindered by the absence of the Cartesian Theater – quite on the contrary, it emerges as an empty logical function because there is no Cartesian Theater, no direct phenomenal self-acquaintance of the subject ... [the subject] cannot ever know what I am in my noumenal dimension as the "thing that thinks" (Žižek 1998: 263). Žižek effectively makes Lacan even more of a functionalist than Dennett suggesting that we can forget about the noumenal and re-think the phenomenal as symbolic. Everything becomes programmable in this view – Descartes, Kant, *cogito*, transcendental subject. Analytic theorists seek to reduce continental thought to symbolic logic and Žižek does too.

In Žižek's thought, the unconscious is a result of the denial that everything is governed by symbolic logic. It becomes the way things objectively seem to you even if they don't seem that way to you. In his view that the subject is not directly accessible to him or herself, Žižek proposes a new philosophical line: Descartes, Kant, Lacan and Dennett and, consequently, appears to solve the hard problem of consciousness – it's the objectively subjective. Dennett, however, questions the existence of the objectively subjective. To him, it is merely phenomenology under another name. He discounts the objectively subjective but Žižek seizes upon it. It accounts for a materialist theory of the unconscious and completes an analytic materialist theory of consciousness according to him: 'the complicity between the pure subject of the signifier ($) and the "objectively subjective" unconscious allows

us to save both the unconscious as well as the *cogito*, by proving that, far from excluding each other, they effectively presuppose each other'. In suggesting that the truth of consciousness may be heterophenomenological but the truth of the unconscious is the objectively subjective (which is the wrongly conflated *cogito*/transcendental subject), Žižek thus attempts to justify a theory of the unconscious from an analytic, rather than a continental, point of view. However, we have to question Žižek's approach not least because Dennett doesn't take the objectively subjective seriously. In Žižek's reading, we cannot think of Lacan as a mediator between Dreyfus and Dennett. Also, Descartes and Kant are, in fact, opposed – the *cogito* and the transcendental subject are not the same and Žižek's error is to attempt to synthesise the two. Furthermore, Kant is not a proto-functionalist. Žižek skirts too closely to analytic thought in his desire to view the unconscious as a transcendental outside rather than a transcendental Other, as symbolic logic rather than as existence. In his analysis, the unconscious effectively becomes consciousness.

Post-Lacanian materialists have either complained that Lacan is not (dialectically) materialist enough or attempted to functionalise him. In the "not (dialectically) materialist enough" camp, Krauss, for example, argues that Lacan's broadly cultural studies approach reinforces, rather than resists, consumerist culture; and that it is neglectful of historical materialism and depoliticises consumers (Liu 2003: 259). In the other camp, Žižek is seen to partake in 'functional analysis' (Valente 2003: 153) of Lacanian thought. In his analyses, Žižek does appear to claim that we are imprisoned by the imaginary and laments the decline of the symbolic; and, in *Cogito and the Unconscious*, he reads the symbolic in terms of symbolic logic, as suggested above. As Valente comments: 'we have to take into account the crucial fact that this

outside [for Žižek] is never simply a "mask" we wear in public but is rather the symbolic order itself' (Valente 2003: 265). The essential problem with materialist readings of Lacan, post-Lacan, is that they either won't accept subjectivity (Krauss) or seek to functionalise it (Žižek). There is a third way, however, which I have been arguing for and to which I now wish to turn.

The discourses of digital materialism and existential materialism

Lacan is a materialist but his materialism is highly complex. On the one hand, his science of the unconscious can be used to support a science of consciousness in the analytic tradition. On the other hand, the late Lacan suggests that a materialist theory of consciousness is a fantasy and not a reality, it is the viewing of illusions as objects. The trajectory of Lacanian thought is from the existential to the material. However, I am proposing a view of the unconscious between existentialism and materialism. In my reading, the unconscious shows the synthesis that underlies a materialist theory of consciousness. It can show the socio-political context of a materialist theory of consciousness. In this (Kantian) reading, the unconscious is created when we attempt to define consciousness as a singular essence, when it is actually composed of a unified multiplicity of behavioural and other characteristics such as socio-political, cultural, economic, and so on – consciousness is 'heterotopic at every level', Lacan says (Lacan 2007: 705). Lacan's theory of discourse reveals these two materialisms (digital and existential) to be in a dialectical relation and can reveal, I argue, how discourses on consciousness are socio-politically and historically determined. In my reading, Lacan's theory of discourse, as a theory of the unconscious, can be seen to forge connections between the rise of discourses of materialist theories of

consciousness in the late twentieth-century and the discourses of the financial crisis in the early twenty-first century.

According to Lacan, our lives are managed by four discourses (master, university, hysteric and analyst), each with four signifiers (S1,S2,$,a)[59]:

$$
\begin{array}{cc}
\mathbf{M} & \mathbf{U} \\[4pt]
\dfrac{S_1 \rightarrow S_2}{\$ \quad a} & \dfrac{S_2 \rightarrow a}{S_1 \quad \$} \\[12pt]
\dfrac{\$ \rightarrow S_1}{a \quad S_2} & \dfrac{a \rightarrow \$}{S_2 \quad S_1} \\[4pt]
\mathbf{H} & \mathbf{A}
\end{array}
$$

Each discourse is represented as two algorithms facing each other. Each one has a position in the discourse which determines the effect of the discourse as a whole. The top left position is the position of knowledge or the subject. The top right position is the position of the object or the Other. The bottom left position is the (repressed) truth or meaning for the subject. The bottom right position is the (repressed) meaning for the Other. In his re-imagining of the Saussurean sign, Lacan said that the signified slips under the signifier which, in his theory of four discourses, means that true meaning is repressed. However, this true meaning doesn't disappear as it manifests itself as surplus, or, rather, as a signifier.

The relation between the master and the university discourses can show how materialist theories of consciousness are formed. The master's discourse explains how the master signifier (S1) derives from the slave's know-how (S2), particular from universal:

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[59] As Hoens comments: 'there is an old and waning master's discourse (some of us are masters), a recent bureaucratic university discourse (all of us are slaves), the hysteric's discourse (I am the master of a master become impotent) and the analyst's discourse' (Hoens 2006: 93-4).

$$\frac{S_1}{\cancel{S}} \longrightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}$$

The master and slave represent two aspects of knowledge or signs of surplus: 'the articulate aspect and this know-how that is so akin to animal knowledge' (Lacan 2007 21-22), or existence and essence. According to Lacan, to create knowledge, we appropriate know-how, we take what is left over, or surplus, from the meeting between the universal discourse of the master and the particular discourse of the slave.[60] We then redefine or repackage it, transform it into another, different, analytic, particular: 'it is all about finding the position that makes it possible for knowledge to become the master's knowledge. The entire function of the episteme ... is always borrowed from the techniques of craftsmen' (Lacan 2007: 22). For Lacan, the master's discourse is analytic. As a consequence, however, discourse becomes flat, two-dimensional and lacking both third and fourth dimensions. It becomes purely the manipulation of symbols. It becomes the language of computation, the language of the machine. This is the discourse that underpins materialist, and analytic, theories of consciousness.

The university discourse is the discourse of science in which the world becomes form, existence becomes essence. In the university discourse, S2 takes the position of S1, the signified of the slave becomes a signifier for the master:

$$\frac{S_2}{S_1} \longrightarrow \frac{a}{\$}$$

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[60] According to Lacan, Hegel called the master's discourse philosophy: 'philosophy in its historical function is this extraction, I would almost say this betrayal, of the slave's knowledge, in order to obtain its transmutation into the master's knowledge' (Lacan 2007: 22).

Lacan tells us that the slave is 'the one who is the support of knowledge ... the one who has the know-how' (Lacan 2007: 21). The slave's know-how is really a substitute for the lost object (*a* – which represents the mother or the phallus). In terms of the upper level, Lacan sees the exchange between the master and the university discourses as a simple computational process. He suggests that digital materialism and dialectical materialism are all underpinned by computation. The master appropriates the slave's know-how to create knowledge and the slave is recompensed in the form of a signifier for the object that has been appropriated. However, after the exchange between know-how and knowledge has taken place, the slave feels his know-how has been stolen and seeks to reacquire it. In the midst of the 1968 *évenements*, Lacan explains to a revolutionary student the relevance of the relationship between the master and the university discourses: 'you are the product of the university ... you come here to get credit points for yourselves. You leave here stamped "credit points"' (Lacan 2007: 203). According to Lacan, the master wants to have what the university student has and the university student wants to be in the place of the master. Together, the master and university discourses function like a machine. Lacan sees this machine of discourse as the foundation of science but, also, the foundation of capitalism. Discourse becomes ahistorical and acontextual, governed by symbolic logic.

If a discourse of consciousness is deprived of historicity and contextuality, then a discourse of the unconscious is the history and the context that cannot be eliminated. In the hysteric's discourse, we see the flaws of a world defined by essences. The hysteric sees the world from the perspective of the alienated subject ($). Its object, its Other, is the master (S1) to whom it is fiercely opposed. The truth of the subjectivity of the hysteric is its obsession with the lost or stolen object (*a*):

$$\frac{\text{\$}}{a} \longrightarrow \frac{S_1}{S_2}$$

What is an object of desire in the university discourse becomes an object of revulsion in the hysteric's discourse. For Lacan, the hysteric's discourse is 'divided into, on the one hand, the castration of the idealized father, who yields the master's secret and, on the other hand, privation, the assumption by the subject, whether feminine or not, of the *jouissance* of being deprived' (Lacan 2007: 99). We can explain this further by referring to relatively recent socio-economic events. In the midst of the financial crisis in 2009 in the UK, for example, the details of politicians' expenses – which had been paid for by us – were revealed to us. Many politicians were exposed as rule breakers rather than rule makers. The expenses and second home allowances system was deeply flawed and vulnerable to corruption but the media and the public reaction to it was the reaction of the hysteric. The hysteric cries that there are double standards and hypocrites everywhere. The hysteric's discourse can be summarised as follows: "I think that you are having enjoyment and I resent this. Furthermore, this enjoyment should be mine and not only should it be mine but it is mine and you have stolen it from me!" The response to the global financial crisis has resulted in the universalisation of the hysteric's discourse. Instead of becoming conscious of an obsession with objects that has so afflicted our lives under capitalism, we orbit them hysterically and thus continue to give them life. Indeed, while we are preoccupied with things we are not thinking of a revolution. We are merely engaged in "revolutions" around objects of desire or revulsion. In Lacan's theory of discourse, a revolution is not the overthrow of a dictatorship but merely the encircling of an object and the changing of position. Revolution is depicted as a circular movement, an operation of form rather than meaning. Thus, the hysteric's discourse simply turns

into the master's discourse, subjectivity turns into objectivity, Marxism turns into capitalism, experience into science, existence into essence, the unconscious into consciousness.

The analyst's discourse suggests a way out of the unconscious. It is diametrically opposed to the conscious discourses of the master and the university. In the analyst's discourse, the symbols of the repressed are at the top of each algorithm. It is a complete reversal of the master's discourse – what is latent in the master's discourse is manifest in the analyst's discourse:

$$\frac{a}{S_2} \longrightarrow \frac{\$}{S_1}$$

It is only, Lacan suggests, via the pure discourse of the analyst that we can see the illusory nature of objects in the master and University discourses, and the context that underpins these discourses. According to Lacan, our conscious discourses depend upon the *meconnaissance* of surplus, or material, that has been the pattern of our lives, our discourse, under capitalism. During the financial crisis in 2009 in the UK, for example, signifiers became of crucial importance to us – credit ratings, house prices, FTSE indexes and so on but, also, the obverse of all these ostensibly "pure" signifiers – duck ponds, Kit-Kats and adult movies which, in the hysteric's discourse, are the signifieds that cannot slip under the signifier and which haunt the signifiers. Unlike the master and the university discourses which are concerned with form and the hysteric's discourse which is concerned with meaning, the analyst sees both meaning and form. He or she represents the transcendental and his or her discourse the transcendent, the guide between existence and essence, the light, the path which

navigates between the Scylla of existence and the Charybdis of essence.[61] The analyst

is free to create his or her own illusions and adopts the position of *a* or the lost object

in opposition to the barred or alienated subjectivity of the psychoanalytical patient ($)

in order to draw out repressed and unconscious behaviour from the patient. Thus, the

analyst sees the patient as an alienated subject ($) and not a master (S1) or a slave

(S2). He or she strips him or herself of content or knowledge which is put into

brackets in order for him or her to be the object of desire and anxiety for the patient.

The analyst thus effectively stands outside the phenomenal and helps us to become

aware that we see how our discourses have been dominated by illusions not objects.

In Lacan's theory, however, there is a sense in which the analyst's discourse always

falls or turns into the master's. Žižek acknowledges that the analyst's discourse (as

both symbolic and real) is ultimately not achievable as the symbolic always regresses

to the imaginary. For him, this is illustrated by the 'neo-Nazi skinhead who suddenly

starts to talk like social workers' (Žižek 2006: 113).[62] Indeed, the analyst frequently

appears caught between a rock and a hard place as he or she is both a symbolic

'subject who is supposed to know' and a real thing – the object of the patient's

anxieties and desires. The analyst's discourse thus always becomes the master's

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[61] According to Lacan, Marx should have been more sensitive to the connection between ways of communicating and ways of exploiting, between form and meaning: 'it is odd that a doctrine such as Marx's whose articulation onto the function of struggle, the class struggle, which he instituted has not prevented him from giving birth to what for the moment is, indeed, the same problem that confronts us all, namely the persistence of the Master's Discourse' (Lacan 2007: 31).

[62]Žižek comments: 'today the master's discourse is no longer the obverse of the analyst's discourse. Today, on the contrary, our "civilisation" itself ... fits the formula of the analyst's discourse ... a is the agent, surplus enjoyment, superego injunction to enjoy that permeates our discourse ... $ is put to work in order to live up to this injunction ... S2 is the truth, scientific ... expert knowledge ... S1 is the self-mastery of the subject, to enable the subject to cope with the stress of the call to enjoyment (through self-help manuals etc.)' (Žižek 2006: 110). He states that the 'unfortunate result of this global reflexivization of interpretation (everything becomes interpretation, the unconscious interprets itself) is that the analyst's interpretation loses its performative synthetic efficiency ... early in 1950s ... the analyst is the big Other ...[and] frustrates the subject's imaginary misrecognitions ... later ... the analyst stands for the symbolic order's inability to guarantee the subject's symbolic identity' (Žižek 2006: 116).

discourse and we perpetuate the "revolution" of discourse. For Lacan, we always return to conceptual, closed and computational discourses. These are the discourses of the master and the university, or the discourses of repeatability. Once discourses are reduced to pure logic then they can become universalisable and this is true of a discourse of consciousness and a discourse of the unconscious. The distinction between consciousness and the unconscious seems to be eliminated because a similar logic underpins them. The unconscious and consciousness thus revolve into each other and are allowed to do so because they are stripped of meaning and viewed as operations of form in a mechanistic discourse.

This chapter has suggested that Lacan's late "science" of the unconscious can be seen to support a materialist (and analytic) theory of consciousness. Lacan's reading of Descartes as the origin of computational thought can be seen to anticipate Dreyfus. Žižek's reading of Lacan's theory of the unconscious as underpinning Dennett's actually supports an (analytic) materialist theory of consciousness rather than a Lacanian (continental) theory of the unconscious. There are two ways to read consciousness in Lacanian thought as materialist, however – one as digital materialism and the other as existential materialism, one defined by concepts, the other by context. In the former, ideas are objects. In the latter, ideas are objects and illusions. The transformation of consciousness into an object creates the unconscious. This can be seen in Lacan's theory of discourse which can suggest that theories of consciousness are socio-politically and contextually determined. This is what a Lacanian theory of the unconscious can show. The analyst's discourse has the potential to show this, also, but his or her discourse is, like all discourses according to Lacan, underpinned by the repeatability of computational logic.

CHAPTER SIX

BETWEEN KANT AND FREGE – LACAN'S LATE THEORY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS AS A MATERIALIST THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

This chapter investigates Lacan's Millerian-influenced effort to incorporate Fregean and early Wittgensteinian thought on logic into his theory of the unconscious. In this chapter, the unconscious is understood as the gap between the philosophies of Kant and Frege. It begins by contrasting these two philosophies in terms of their understanding of logic and mathematics both of which we see in Lacan's late "science" of the unconscious. Both Kant and Frege are concerned with logic – 'the study of norms for thinking' (MacFarlane 2002: 47). For Frege, logic has content and can 'say something about the world' (MacFarlane 2002: 32) but, for Kant, logic cannot have an ontology – it cannot make existence claims. Whereas Kant says that content is subjective, Frege argues that there is objective content and that logical laws are intrinsically meaningful: 'I must also contradict the generality of Kant's claim that without sensibility no object would be given to us. Zero and one are objects that cannot be given to us through the senses' (Frege 1889: 89). It is this principle of Frege's thought that was taken up by analytic philosophers of mind to forge a materialist theory of consciousness.

Frege's theory is normative and this chapter investigates the extent to which Lacan's can equally be considered to be normative. The notion that Lacan's thought is

normative is not new. Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, for example, have also argued this. They remind us of Lacan's desire to "formalise", which means 'to algorithmize the sign', to strip it of meaning and 'prevent it from functioning as a sign' (Nancy & Lacoue-Labarthe 1992: 34). According to Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, Lacan suggests that we see only algorithms, and he illustrates this via his famous 'gentlemen and ladies' example which, for Lacan (according to them), proves that everything perceptual can be reduced to differential marks: 'the short-sighted person thus deciphers neither the signification of the facade, nor the rest room, nor the signified of the inscribed signifier (Men, Women) but rather the difference as such between the places' (Nancy & Lacoue-Labarthe 1992: 43). They argue that discourse is also seen as a sequence of algorithms: 'absence of meaning is due to the autonomous functioning of the algorithmic chain insofar as it is conceived as a chain of differential marks which mark nothing by themselves except their reciprocal positions and the relations (or combinations) through which a "meaning" is fabricated' (Nancy & Lacoue-Labarthe 1992: 47). They imply that the whole of Lacanian thought (not just later Lacanian thought) supports formal logic rather than existentialism. According to them, Lacan's attempt to re-cast psychoanalysis in terms of formal logic leaves him with a paradox ('how does one destroy a science while nonetheless maintaining all its concepts' Nancy & Lacoue-Labarthe 1992: 36) and thus stranded between two disciplines. The extent to which the unconscious is a pure discourse is central to our question "does Lacan have a theory of consciousness?" Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe question Lacan's efforts to see desire as logic: 'desire is truth in this sense ... can we deduce essence from position? Concept from structure?' (Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe 1992: 139). This chapter considers whether the Millerian and Žižekian readings

actually take Lacan closer to an analytic materialist view which undermines the unconscious as Lacan initially realised it.

Mathematics and logic

We need to make an excursion into Fregean thought in order to assess the extent to which Lacan is a Fregean. Considered to be the father of analytic philosophy, Frege was influenced by Plato and Kant and was specifically writing against Locke and Mill, and, particularly, Mill's *System of Logic* and *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* where mathematics was considered to be a tool for understanding the world: 'applied mathematics is not the measurement of extension and number. It is the measurement by means of extension and number, of other quantities which extension and number are marks of; and the ascertainment by means of quantities of all sorts, of those qualities of things which quantities are marks of' (Mill 1979: 477). In *System of Logic* and *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, Mill specifically rejects a Platonic understanding of mathematics: 'we should have heard less about Concepts and more about Things, less about Forms of Thought, and more about grounds of knowledge' (Mill 1979: 481). The consequence of Mill's theory is that, according to him, mathematics is not, and can never be, rule governed as each number refers to an empirical thing in the world. Mathematics thus becomes merely a system for numbering and ordering items in the world.[63] Whereas the proof of Mill's mathematics lies in its relation to the world, Frege's mathematics is based on proofs that we find in abstract, logical relations of identity and difference.

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[63] Dummett gives a useful commentary upon the differences between Frege and Mill: 'Frege urges that [Mill] would have no escape from having to maintain that we observe facts relating to every individual number that we mention for no suitable general principle covering all of them, and obtained by empirical induction can be framed' (Dummett 1995: 58-9).

In his theory of mathematics, number is a thing but an abstract and not a concrete thing:

> if we ask what the number is, or what the symbol 1 means, we are more often than not given the answer: a thing. And if we then point out that the proposition "the number one is a thing" is not a definition, since it has the definite article on one side and the indefinite on the other, and that it only says that the number one belongs to the class of things, but not which thing it is, then we may well be invited to choose whatever we like to call the number one. But if everyone was allowed to understand by this name whatever he liked, then the same proposition about the number one would mean different things to different people; such propositions would have no common content (Frege 1997: 84).

Frege suggests that patterning, and identifying these patterns symbolically, is something that cannot happen if mathematics is seen as particulars rather than universals.

According to Frege, an intuitive mathematics sees numbers inaccurately as representations of concrete things: 'arithmetic has nothing at all to do with sensations. Just as little has it to do with mental images, compounded from the traces of earlier sense impressions' (Frege 1997: 87). For him, mathematics is based upon a sharp distinction between object and concept and an intuitive mathematics wrongly confuses the two: 'there must be a sharp separation of the psychological from the logical, the subjective from the objective; the meaning of a word must be asked for in the context of a proposition, not in isolation; the distinction between concept and object must be kept in mind' (Frege 1997: 90). For Frege, the essence of logic lies in propositions: 'the aim of proof is not only to place the truth of a proposition beyond all doubt, but also to afford insight into the dependence of truth on one another' (Frege 1997: 92). He argues that there is truth at the heart of all propositions but it is

analytic and not synthetic, *a posteriori* and not *a priori*; or, rather, outside the human subject: 'if a proposition is called *a posteriori* or analytic ... then this is a judgement ... about the ultimate ground on which the justification for holding it to be true rests' (Frege 1997: 93). Frege argues that a mathematics whose proofs lie in the concrete, empirical world rather than in abstract, logical relations is a synthetic and not an analytic mathematics: 'if it is not possible to provide a proof, however, without using truths that are not of a general logical nature, but belong instead to the domain of a particular science, then the proposition is synthetic' (Frege 1997: 93). According to Frege, Kant mistakenly sees all of mathematics as synthetic. However, he also acknowledges that Kant was right that geometry is synthetic: 'I see Kant as having performed a great service in drawing the distinction between synthetic and analytic judgements. In calling geometrical truths synthetic and *a priori*, he revealed their true nature' (Frege 1997: 123). For Frege, it is arithmetic that is analytic.[64]

Frege's justification for the view that numbers illustrate differences between concepts and objects, rather than numbers and things, is that not all numbers have representations: 'if I say "Venus has 0 moons", then there is no moon or aggregate of moons to assert anything if at all; but instead it is the concept "moon of Venus" to which a property is ascribed; namely that of including nothing under it' (Frege 1997:

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[64]Frege used set theory to define number and relations between numbers via logic. As Dummett comments: geometry apart, mathematics ... simply is logic: no distinction can be drawn ... it is apparent from the account how misguided it is to criticise Frege for reducing one mathematical theory, arithmetic, to another, set theory. He would have had no objection to considering the notion of class as a mathematical one, but would not have seen that as in any way conflicting with or characterising it as a logical one ... his reasons for regarding it as a logical notion, namely that a class cannot be considered as a whole made up out of its members, but must be explained as the extension of a concept, were indeed sound: given his assumption that every concept has an extension (and every function a value-range), they were cogent (Dummett 1995: 308-9). Venn founded set theory a generation before Frege but Frege was the first to use it as a way of defining number.

99). According to Frege, we always have to conceptualise zero because we can never have no thing: 'the number 0 belongs to a concept if, whatever *a* may be, the proposition holds universally that *a* does not fall under that concept' (Frege 1997: 103). In this distinction that Frege makes between one and unit, and concept and extension of concept (object), we can see the very beginnings of the modern notion that number is subject to logical laws which is entirely in opposition to Mill's view.

In his synthesis of mathematics and logic, Frege appears to appeal to formalism to combat intuitionism. However, he maintains that his theory is not formalist:

> [formalist theory] behaves like a God, who can create by his mere word whatever he needs ... formalist theory is thus in danger of lapsing back into an *a posteriori* or at least synthetic theory, however much it may give the appearance of soaring on the heights of abstraction ... now our earlier account of the positive whole numbers shows us the possibility of avoiding the confusion with external things and geometrical intuitions, yet without making the mistake of the formalist theory. As there, it depends on fixing the content of a recognition judgement' (Frege 1997: 129).

Frege is opposed to the kind of intuitiveness that Mill advocates but he is not opposed to the kind of intuitiveness associated with Platonic thought. Dreyfus illuminates this fact about Plato: 'Plato was looking for semantic rather than syntactic criteria ... Plato admits his instructions cannot be completely formalized' (Dreyfus 1992: 68). Dummett also emphasises that meaning is always already implicit in Fregean thought. Analytic philosophy post-Frege, however, struggled to reconcile meaning with form. For early Wittgenstein, and – subsequently – AI, meaning becomes form which is different from Frege's view that meaning always already is form. The early Wittgenstein emphasised a formalist view of the world as did Anglo-American

analytic thought. It was their use of Frege that led to a mistaken view of him as a

formalist. This is also how Miller interprets Frege. For him, the appeal of Frege is the

perception of human experience, the relation between subject and Other, as governed

by a proto-computational logic in which the relationship between presence and

absence is viewed in terms of 1 and 0.[65] As Roudinesco comments: 'Miller articulated

Frege's conception of zero and its successors with the Lacanian theory of the

signifier. He called the subject's relation to the chain one of suture, adding that the

subject figures in it in place of zero as the mark replacing a lack. In passing, he

observed that the concept of suture was not present as such in Lacanian doctrine. But

he affirmed immediately thereafter that Lacan, like Frege, excluded consciousness

from any definition of the subject' (Roudinesco 1990: 402). Roudinesco is correct to

say that it is the notion that we are following rules rather than experiences that Lacan

and Miller find appealing about Frege or the Frege of analytic philosophy.[66]

Lacan's understanding of mathematics, however, is *a priori* rather than *a posteriori*,

synthetic rather than analytic because he suggests that zero *does* represent subjective

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[65] According to Roudinesco, Miller initiated two hyperlogical re-elaborations of Lacanian thought: 'the hyperlogical re-elaboration of 1965 was born of Lacan's discovery of Frege's work and of a confrontation with the theses of *Cahiers pour l'analyse*. It turned on the problematic of the subject of science, of the "suture" and of Godel's theorem. The re-elaboration beginning in November 1969 was its logical consequence' (Roudinesco 1990: 559). In 1969, a further hyperlogical re-elaboration was influenced by the early Wittgenstein: 'Wittgenstein did not appear in *Ecrits* ... but the discovery of *Tractatus* was crucial for Lacan in the articulation of his second hyperlogical re-elaboration ... For Wittgenstein ... the two domains are incompatible ... what can be said ... what can be shown ... with that incompatibility, philosophy would come to acknowledge the obligation of silence and a kind of "pas-tout" or "non-whole" escaping formalisation ... the incompatibility between saying and showing interested Lacan (who had drawn on Frege and Gödel) in order to elaborate a notion of the subject of science refractory to the totality of formalisation' (Roudinesco 1990: 560).

[66] Heath comments upon Miller's introduction of principles of logic to define the Lacanian unconscious. The unconscious is 'a ceaseless position of exchange from absent one to some one' (Heath 1977: 58). Heath suggests that the relation between the symbolic and the imaginary is akin to the relation between concept and object. The unconscious is defined by 'the problem of the relations of the subject in the symbolic and the holding of these relations in the imaginary' (Heath 1977: 68). Thus, Heath suggests that suture and Fregean logic reflect each other.

as opposed to objective content. Lacan sees the view that zero represents infinite value as a metaphor for the subject: 'everyone knows that if zero appears in the denominator, the value of the fraction no longer has meaning but assumes by convention what mathematicians call an infinite value. In a way, this is one of the stages in the constitution of the subject in so far as the primacy of the signifier is pure nonsense, it becomes the bearer of the infinitization of the value of the subject, not open to all meanings, but abolishing them all, which is different' (Lacan 1998: 252). In this sense, Lacan is closer to Kant than Frege as, for him, number is infused with meaning, subjective rather than objective meaning. He refers to Kant's negative quantities to articulate this sense of completeness with incompleteness, or finity with infinity: 'the mediation of this infinity of the subject with the finiteness of desire may occur only through the intervention of what Kant ... introduced with so much freshness in the term negative quantities' (Lacan 1998: 252). Kant wished to introduce the mathematical notion of negative quantity into philosophy. Negative quantity is that which is required to be subtracted. In the profits of a trade, for example, gain is positive, loss is negative so the loss must be subtracted from the gain to get a net profit. Kant describes two oppositions – logical and real. A logical opposition is where in, say, the subtraction of pain from pleasure or vice from virtue, the former does not remain in the latter. This is an analytic, or Fregean, view in that there is identity between meaning and form. However, a real opposition is where the subtraction of pain from pleasure leads to negative pleasure and the subtraction of vice from virtue leads to negative virtue (Guyer 1992: 41). Lacan advocates real oppositions rather than logical oppositions: 'negative quantity ... one of the supports of which is called the castration complex ... the negative effecting which the phallus object enters into it' (Lacan 1998: 253). Mathematics is reduced to a metaphor for the

mind, or the subject, rather than as a real, platonic place beyond metaphor. His advocacy of real oppositions rather than logical ones leads to a view of mathematics as synthetic *a priori* in contradistinction to Frege.

Language and logic

Frege's philosophy of mathematics (the union of Plato and logic) underpins his philosophy of language. For him, language is made up of signs each of which has a 'sense' (*Sinn*), a common meaning expressed through language, and a 'reference' (*Bedeutung*), an absolute meaning beyond language. Frege does not see the reference as an empirical thing:

> the sentence "Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep" obviously has a sense. But since it is doubtful whether the name "Odysseus" occuring therein, has a *Bedeutung*, it is also doubtful whether the whole sentence does. Yet it is certain, nevertheless, that anyone who seriously took the sentence to be true or false would ascribe to the name "Odysseus" a *Bedeutung*, not merely a sense, for it is of the *Bedeutung* of the name that the predicate is affirmed or denied' (Frege 1997: 157).

In other words, reference does not have to be present and can be absent. Unlike reference, sense can change: 'the regular connection between a sign, its sense and its *Bedeutung* is of such a kind that to the sign there corresponds a definite sense and to that in turn a definite *Bedeutung*, while to a given *Bedeutung* (an object) there does not belong only a single sign. The same sense has different expressions in different languages or even in the same language' (Frege 1997: 153). For Frege, however,

reference remains constant even when it is absent: 'if we replace one word of the sentence by another having the same *Bedeutung*, but a different sense, this can have no effect upon the *Bedeutung* of the sentence. Yet we can see that in such a case the thought changes; since e.g., the thought in the sentence "The Morning Star is a body illuminated by the Sun" differs from that in the sentence "The Evening Star is a body illuminated by the Sun"' (Frege 1997: 156). Frege refers to reference as truth-value which we could call implied reference: 'we are therefore driven into accepting the truth-value of a sentence as constituting its *Bedeutung*. By the truth-value of a sentence I understand the circumstance that it is true or false' (Frege 1997: 161). It is the position of reference in sense, or the mark of reference in sense: 'a truth-value is the *Bedeutung* of a sentence that has a thought as its sense' (Frege 1997: 171). According to Frege, on one level, sentences may differ in sense. On another level, they will be either true or false. Thus, every sentence has truth-value which grounds the relationship between difference and identity at the heart of logic.

According to Dummett, this relationship between sense and reference, differentiation and identity, is the foundation for analytic philosophy: 'Frege calls the sense which it expresses a thought. This notion of a thought fulfils for Frege the role which the notion of a proposition fulfills in British philosophy, especially in the hands of Russell and Moore, in the first part of the twentieth century' (Dummett 1973: 153). It could be argued that the reduction of reference to value is the basis of the formalism that underpins AI theories of consciousness but Dummett argues otherwise. He distinguishes Frege from analytic philosophy by referring to semantic value rather than formal value: 'the reference of a sentence is its truth-value, and that of a name-

bearer (if any) ... the semantic value of an expression is its contribution to determining any sentence in which it occurs as true or false; the theory of reference is an attempt to give an account of the way in which a sentence is determined as true or otherwise in accordance with its composition' (Dummett 1991: 84). According to Dummett, when we grasp the sense of a sentence, what we grasp is the Platonic truth of a sense which is a meaning and not simply a value: 'Frege took sense to be immaterial, and to exist independently of our grasping it ... in grasping the sense of a sentence, what we grasp is the condition for that sentence to be true' (Dummett 1991: 240-41). In other words, we grasp the truth-value which is the deep truth beyond the surface differentiation, the particular meaning, the reference at the heart of all proposition, all sense. For Frege, we always grasp reference implicitly or explicitly: 'logic is not concerned with how thoughts, regardless of truth-value, follow from thoughts, that the step through and to truth-value – more generally, the step from sense to *Bedeutung* – has to be taken' (Frege 1997: 178). For him, truth is certainty, the certainty of the notion that there is an object out there which is unequivocally meaningful for a subject who grasps the meaning. This is why Frege can never be viewed as a formalist.[67]

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[67] Dummett suggests that Frege's theory was always in danger of being categorised as formalist because, in Frege's drive towards objectivity, everything can be viewed as analytic rather than synthetic. For him, Frege's problem was making sense objective and not subjective: 'Sense, for Frege, is not a mental content ... Frege should not have said, that senses are the objects of mental acts of grasping. He should have said that they are ways in which we refer to something (not exclusively, of course, to an object): in particular, on his account, a thought should be explained as a way of referring to a truth-value' (Dummett 1991: 256-7). For Dummett, sense should not be a form of representation but a way of representation. He almost suggests that it should be pragmatic rather than semantic. Dummett also comments that Frege believed that thought was and was not language: 'Frege believed [languageless thought] to be possible, but also believed human beings to be incapable of it' (Dummett 1991: 262).

Like Frege, Lacan does not forsake meaning. However, he sees meaning differently from Frege. Frege views meaning in terms of universal rather than particular. However, Tallis suggests that Frege's universal is a particularised universal which is reference. He comments, for example, that there is a difference between meaning and reference:

> the idea that reference is internal to language depends upon treating meaning and reference as if they were the same. But meaning and reference are not identical; so that even if meaning were internal to language, it would not follow that reference was. An expression may secure a reference through its meaning but the two must be kept distinct. Ultimately, reference is to particulars, whereas meaning is inevitably general (Tallis 1995: 83).

Both Frege and Lacan ask what is the source of mathematical truth – for Frege, it is reference (a particularised universal); for Lacan, it is being (a universalised particular). This is why Lacan and Frege are ultimately opposed. For Lacan, meaning is pragmatic rather than semantic; and, like existentialists, he considers the object as always changing rather than fixed. He argues that there is a mismatch between reference and sense because reference, for him, is a universalised particular rather than a particularised universal, being and not concept. This is why, for Lacan, science produces non sense rather than sense: 'sense, if I may say so, is responsible for being. It does not even have any other sense. The only thing is that it was observed some time ago that this is insufficient for carrying the weight – the weight, precisely, of existence. A curious thing that non-sense carries the weight. It grabs you by the stomach. And the discovery that Freud made is to have shown that this is what is exemplary about a witticism (*mot d'esprit*), a word neither tip nor tail' (Lacan 2007: 57). The notion that we get form from meaning is existentialist rather than Fregean. For Lacan, slips, jokes, puns, dreams are all examples of "falling" into sense which

creates non sense. He sees sense as made up of an inner dialectic between being and sense (universal and particular), or rather a missed encounter between being and sense (universal and particular): 'Senz and then sans – aren't we dealing with a *puissance*, a "power"? ... it is rather what of being there is in sense, which is to be taken otherwise than being full sense, which is rather what escapes being, as happens in so-called witticisms' (Lacan 2007: 58). Jokes, dreams, the unconscious are the result of a mismatch between sense and being rather than an identity between sense and being. Meaning happens *à la derive*, as he would comment in 'Of Structure as an Inmixing of Otherness' (1972). Thus, Lacan appears to inject propositional logic with meaning and does that of which Frege accused the very early Husserl – psychologises number.

Lacan with analytic philosophy

Although Frege did not live to see his influence, it grew by being appropriated by the early Wittgenstein who brought together the philosophy of Frege and Russell to found analytic philosophy. Frege is the father of analytic philosophy in the sense that he is responsible for the logical notation, such as p>q, that underpins it. However, as mentioned above, Frege always retains a theory of reference, a theory of the object, so his work cannot be a simple formalism. In *Seminar XVII*, however, Lacan views Frege through the prism of early Wittgenstein and considers thought and language formally rather than semantically.[68] Like the early Wittgenstein, Lacan, or at least the

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[68] Dummett emphasises the distinction between Frege and early Wittgenstein and sees their views as quite different because Frege speaks of objects, whereas Wittgenstein speaks of facts. Dummett is critical of Wittgenstein's picture theory of language for its advocacy of formalism over semantics: 'a

Millerian-influenced Lacan, sees Frege as a formalist in that the truth of a statement is via its signifiers, its language, or rather its propositions regardless of the reference:

> what is it that is true? My God, it is what was said. What is it that was said? A sentence. But the only way of having a sentence supported is by signifiers in so far as they do not involve objects. Unless, like a logician whose extremist views I will come to shortly, you claim that there are no objects, only pseudo-objects. As for us, we hold that signifiers are not concerned with objects but with sense (Lacan 2007: 56).

In *Seminar XVII*, Lacan makes specific reference to Wittgenstein to articulate the unconscious: 'there I will make a little leap and move to the author who has given the most forceful formulation to what results from the enterprise of proposing that the only truth there is is inscribed in a proposition, and from articulating that which, in knowledge as such – knowledge being constituted on the basis of propositions – can in all strictness function as truth' (Lacan 2007: 59). Of course, this view of propositions is quite different from the way Frege interpreted it. Frege refers to the sense which expresses a thought. Sense and proposition are not synonymic. Frege retains a sense that we have *a priori* ideas as opposed to *a posteriori* ideas.

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sentence cannot be a fact because it states just one thing; and the hearer, if he understand the language, must know just what it is that it states. A diagram is not a fact, it is an object; and there are many facts about the diagram' (Dummett 1991: 251). He comments on Wittgenstein's understanding of the difference between sense and reference: 'Wittgenstein notoriously used "Sinn" ("sense") and *Bedeutung* ("reference") in the *Tractatus* quite differently from Frege. For Wittgenstein, a proper name has *Bedeutung*, but not *Sinn*, while a sentence has *Sinn* but not *Bedeutung*. This difference was inevitable, since Wittgenstein does not want any notion to play the role which sense played in Frege's theory of meaning, that role being, on Wittgenstein's puritanical view, psychological rather than logical' (Dummett 1973: 680). According to Dummett, the picture theory and the division of reference from sense led later Anglo-American thought to interpret Frege as a formalist: 'Wittgenstein hankered after a view of mathematical formulas as not expressing propositions, true or false, but as encoding instructions for computation, although he did not attempt to show how such an interpretation could be carried through; if it could, the existence of pure mathematicians would indeed be hard to explain. Indeed, Wittgenstein's view closely resembles a bad, outmoded method of teaching mathematics in school, which drilled the pupils in computation without explaining to them why they worked, far less proving that they did or even indicating that such proofs were possible. Frege, by contrast, ascribed to mathematical sentences a sense, which we grasp by apprehending what will determine them as true or false' (Dummett 1995: 294).

According to Lacan, Wittgenstein expresses the belief that the world is a system of propositions, the world is language: 'for this author grammatical structure constitutes what he identifies with the world. Grammatical structure is the world. And all that is true is, in short, a composite proposition comprising the totality of facts that constitute the world' (Lacan 2007: 59). The tautological notion that the world is form is seen as the hidden message of Wittgenstein: 'one cannot say anything that is not a tautology ... everything that can be said is only nonsense' (Lacan 2007: 59). According to Lacan, Wittgenstein argues that the world is comprised of facts which are true or false: 'for Wittgenstein the world is supported only by facts. No things unless supported by a web of facts. No things, moreover, but that are inaccessible. Facts alone are articulable. This fact, that it is day, is only a fact by virtue of that, its being said' (Lacan 2007: 60). Facts are intrinsically semantic but Lacan, and early Wittgenstein, reduce them to forms divorced from their reference to meanings. Under the influence of Miller, Lacan is using early Wittgenstein to argue against the phenomenological return to meaning. He uses the thought of early Wittgenstein to synthesise his thought with Wittgenstein's: 'how then can one avoid Wittgenstein's conclusions other than by following him exactly where he is led, namely toward the elementary proposition, whose notation as true or false is what must, in every case whether it be true or false, assure the truth of the composite proposition comprising the totality of facts that constitute the world' (Lacan 2007: 59). Propositions are based on abstract relations between binary oppositions which is how Lacan views desire: 'there is no other metalanguage than all the forms of knavery, if we thereby designate these curious operations derivable from the fact that man's desire is the Other's desire. All acts of bastardry are based on the fact of wishing to be someone's big

Other, in which the figures by which his desire will be captivated are drawn' (Lacan 2007: 61). Early Wittgenstein is used to equate reference with sense, meaning with form, and articulate a theory of desire based on symbolic logic: 'the only sense is the sense of desire. This is what one can say after having read Wittgenstein. The only truth is the truth of what the said desire for its lack hides, so as to make light of what he does find' (Lacan 2007: 61). The early Wittgenstein provides a framework for the formal treatment of consciousness in the Anglo-American tradition. Similarly, Lacan accepts early Wittgenstein as a framework for the formal treatment of the unconscious in Lacanian tradition.

Jouissance – Seminar VII and Seminar XVII

According to my reading, the late Lacanian "science" of the unconscious supports the view, prevalent in analytic materialism, that everything (even consciousness) becomes materialist in the end. A materialist theory of consciousness in this tradition uses symbolic logic, à la Frege, to support it. The use of symbolic logic is, however, a real concern for the late Lacan and he appears caught between a continental and analytic view, between transcendence (as existentialists see it) and materiality (as analytic theorists see it). For the late Lacan, I would argue, the unconscious is the paradox of subjectivity in a world dominated by a state of affairs described by a theory – (analytic) materialism. Existentialists claim that there is a gap between the subjective for-itself and the objective in-itself and, consequently, they imply that consciousness involves suffering. Lacan's later thought takes this further – consciousness *is* suffering and the consequence of this is the unconscious. He takes existentialism closer to materialism in his argument that suffering is an experience that is pleasurable

and that we collectivise ourselves in relation to this experience. Lacan calls this *jouissance* and, to understand it, we need to understand pleasure in Freud's thought. Freud refers to the pleasure principle as the principle of least tension, what is needed for life to exist. According to him, the body can only experience a finite amount of pleasure but our desire for pleasure is infinite. For Lacan, *jouissance* is the pain felt when pleasure is elsewhere. It is the gap between pain and pleasure that creates painful pleasure. Dean describes *jouissance* succinctly as 'having lost something, I imagine the other as enjoying it'; and the feeling that 'somebody somewhere has it better than me' (Dean 2003: 249). Our lives become determined by the dialectic between the possibility of unlimited *jouissance* and the determinism of constrained pleasures. Thus, according to Dean, homophobia and racism derive from the infinitude of *jouissance* that the other is perceived to be experiencing in spite of us (Dean 2003: 251). However, Lacan's late thought on *jouissance* depicts it as a conceptualisation as well as an experience; and, once again, we see Lacan attempting to align his later thought with a Fregean model.

Lacan's theory of *jouissance* develops in three stages – *Seminar VII, Seminar XVII* and *Seminar XX*. In *Seminar VII, jouissance* is forbidden enjoyment – the experience of *jouissance* (or the pain derived from pleasure) from the inside or the subject. However, in *Seminar XVII*, it is impossible enjoyment (Verhaeghe 2006: 29) – the experience of *jouissance* (or the pleasure derived from pain) from the outside, or the Other. Verhaeghe comments upon the difference: 'in his seminar on ethics, *jouissance* was conceived as real and therefore diametrically opposed to the symbolic. Enjoyment could be reached only through transgression of the law. In *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis … jouissance* is the order of an invasion' (Verhaeghe 2006: 29).

The difference between the *jouissance* of *Seminar VII* and the *jouissance* of *Seminar XVII* is the difference between I am not having the pleasure I want (*Seminar VII*) and somebody else is having the pleasure I want and not only are they having pleasure but they are having pleasure at my expense (*Seminar XVII*). This is felt most severely in the hysteric's discourse where 'knowledge occupies the place of *jouissance*' (Lacan 2007: 94) which begets feelings of anger, jealousy and resentment. In the latter theory of *jouissance*, the slave does not simply desire to be in the master's position but resents the master and is frustrated by the notion that his or her *jouissance* is now knowledge. The slave is not satisfied with what he or she receives by way of compensation, and *jouissance* is now 'the theft of enjoyment by the master ... [and] not the slave easily obtaining enjoyment' (Dolar 2006: 133). According to Lacan, we are marked with the pleasure that has been stolen from us and which is now impossible to recover. We are branded with the mark of loss, or rather, theft which becomes the source of all prejudice, jealousy, racism, and so on. Thus, the difference between the *jouissance* of *Seminar VII* and *Seminar XVII* is the difference between the painful pleasure of the master-university discourses and the stolen pleasure of the hysteric-analyst discourses.

Lacan's first theory of *jouissance* is defined in terms of loss. His second theory of *jouissance* is defined in terms of gain. In short, the first theory describes the loss of the Imaginary and the second theory describes the gain of the Symbolic. As Verhaeghe comments: '[in] the paper on the Mirror Stage and *Seminar II* ... [*jouissance* is] loss in terms of nature ... but in *Seminar XVII* it is the introduction of the signifier that causes the loss of *jouissance* ... the loss caused by the signifier comes on top of the loss caused by the introduction of the sexed life' (Verhaeghe

2006: 33). Thus, in both theories, we have two losses and two gains – if the first loss gives us the experience of shock and grief, then the second loss gives us the experience of anger and resentment. Lacan presents these gains as signifiers. The signifier of the first loss/gain is $ – the mark, or the signifier, of barred pleasure. The signifier of the second loss/gain is *a* – the mark or signifier of stolen pleasure: 'there is a loss of *jouissance*. And it is in the place of this loss introduced by repetition that we see the function of the lost object emerge, of what I am calling the *a*' (Lacan 2007: 49). According to Lacan, the little *a* is the compensation which defuses our grief and anger but ultimately marks us as victims. He believes that all discourses follow the movements of *a* which 'itself already conducts pleasure' (Lacan 2007: 49). He refers to 'the glory of the mark' (Lacan 2007: 49) to refer to this idea that the mark causes pleasure but also pain. The little *a*, which we are rewarded with, both satisfies and frustrates us: 'at the level of the university discourse, it's a different gap ... and that's the one that torments you' (Lacan 2007: 203). Even in his theory of *jouissance*, Lacan appears to be caught himself in a double-bind regarding a coherent theory of *jouissance*. On the one hand, *jouissance* is the result of an opposition between the Real and the Symbolic; on the other, *jouissance* is Symbolic – defined as a pure discourse itself, symbolic logic.[69]

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[69] According to Lacan, *a* is what marks and links together Kant's first *Critique*, Hegel's *Phenomenology* and Marx's *Capital*. According to him, all discourses are marked with *a*: 'the *Critique of Practical Reason* is manifestly a book of eroticism that is extraordinarily more amusing than what Eric Losfeld has published, and it has had nothing of effect, and that if I say to you that *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is hysterically funny, well then, this won't fare any better' (Lacan 2007: 170). According to Lacan, the university discourse is a structure based on the little *a* – on surplus *jouissance* which is that which we try to but fail to formalise. Dolar comments that 'Hegel is the sublime representation of university knowledge'. And 'Hegel universalizes the university ... turns the whole of the world, all regions of existence, logic, nature and culture alike, all philosophical attitudes and theories, all subject positions ... into a single, progressive path of knowledge, the self development of a universal system of knowledge, the most massive university imaginable'. Thus, we are 'always studying for exams ... until [we get the] ultimate grade ... absolute knowledge, the PhD to finish all PhD's ... agent of master and university' (Dolar 2006: 134). For him, Hegel is at 'the juncture of the modern university ... capitalism is its twin and double' (Dolar 2006: 136).

Lacan's adoption of Frege, in his later thought – or, rather Miller's *meconnaissance* of Frege – underpins both his thought on *jouissance* and capitalism: 'something changed in the master's discourse at a certain point in history … on a certain day surplus *jouissance* became calculable, could be counted, totalized. This is where the accumulation of capital begins' (Lacan 2007: 177). Lacan, and Žižek following him, aim to show that materialist discourses can be viewed logically. Zupančič explains how *jouissance* and capitalism are interdependent and are based on a dialectic between pleasure and non-pleasure: 'capitalism founds the means of making waste count … surplus enjoyment starts to be counted … sweets without sugar, fat-free pork roasts, coffee without caffeine … imitation surplus enjoyment' (Zupančič 2006: 170). According to Zupančič, the new green economy is the latest manifestation of capitalism. Green discourses tell us that although all derivates, all cholesterol, all signs of capitalism are bad, we can still obtain pleasure from them. Indeed, the four discourses illustrate how, in our discourses – in the suffix "free" in "fat-free", "sugar-free" and the prefix "low" as in "low carbon", "low cholesterol", for example – pleasure is the mimicking of surplus, the production of artificial surplus, the talk about artificial surplus. In his second theory of *jouissance*, Lacan tells us that our lives, our experiences become merely formal exchanges which actually *are* the experience of enjoyment and indeed pain. This is a new master-university discourse where signifiers rather than signifieds are the source of enjoyment and enjoyment itself becomes programmable and predictable.

Lacan argues that we always end up with the master's discourse: 'the revolutionary aspiration has only a single possible outcome – of ending up as the master's discourse' (Lacan 2007: 207). According to Lacan, even revolution becomes

formalised – revolution-ary rather than revolutionary. One student in Lacan's seminar argues that discourse can, and has to, be literally revolutionary. In other words, meaning can influence form: 'interv: if the university is to be overthrown, it will be from the outside, with others who are on the outside' (Lacan 2007: 205). Lacan, however, responds that it cannot: 'to get them to leave, you enter' (Lacan 2007: 205). This is, according to Lacan, what happens to everybody who engages with structures – we all become forms. Indeed, in today's society, we are marked with credit ratings, house prices, FTSE indexes. We are reduced to symbols. The discourse of the post-financial crisis is the discourse of the hysteric-analyst which is also the discourse of the master-university. We talk about our exploitation rather than experience our exploitation, we have discourses of exploitation rather than real exploitation. As our discourses become greener and leaner, the exploitation of the thing turns into the exploitation of the imitation thing. We thus have a new master-university discourse – a new and formal relationship based on imitation surplus rather than actual surplus. We see the meaning of form, the edges or the lining of form. We give the meaning of the stolen object form. Lacanian thought, however, ultimately does not sit well with Fregean thought and we see this in his third theory of *jouissance* in which it is viewed as meaning *and* form or, rather, as feminine *jouissance* and phallic *jouissance*.

Jouissance – Seminar XX

There does seem to be a distinction in later Lacanian thought between a theory of the unconscious based on symbolic logic and one not based on symbolic logic. The theory of the unconscious can be seen to be either a critique or a validation of post-Cartesian thought. Lacan's theory of *jouissance* is caught between this critique and a validation.

In Lacan's third theory of *jouissance*, he distinguishes between two theories of *jouissance* – phallic and feminine and proposes a theory of *jouissance* that can be seen to support existential materialism rather than digital materialism.

Lacan famously stated that 'woman does not exist'.[70] He defines femininity not in essentialist (i.e. positive) terms but in negative terms, in relation to *jouissance*. He describes feminine *jouissance* as a *jouissance* that is other than phallic *jouissance*. It is 'a *jouissance* beyond the phallus' (Lacan 1999: 74) or a Real beyond the Symbolic. Lacan describes this *jouissance* in a famous passage: 'there is a *jouissance* ... that belongs to that "she" (*elle*) that doesn't exist and doesn't signify anything. There is a *jouissance* that is hers about which she herself perhaps knows nothing if not that she experiences it – that much she knows. She knows it, of course, when it comes (*arrive*)' (Lacan 1999: 74). Lacan tells us that phallic *jouissance* is an experience felt via discourse and, indeed, it *is* discourse but feminine *jouissance* is something else: 'a man seeks out a woman *qua* ... that which can only be situated through discourse, since, if what I claim is true, namely, that woman is not-whole – there is always something in her that escapes discourse' (Lacan 1999: 33). In Lacanian thought, there is a sense that part of a woman is not and cannot be symbolised or reduced to a logical discourse.[71] According to him, women are in the privileged position of experiencing

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[70] Rabinovich comments that women, in the face of this alleged non-existence, choose *faire l'homme*: 'to play the part of man and to "make" a man' (Rabinovich 2003: 219). In other words, women choose to become wives and mothers and, according to her, become enthralled to the phallus as much as men. Although there is no "woman", according to Lacan, there is femininity, as Shepherdson comments (Shepherdson 2003: 140).

[71] Homer comments on male and female attitudes to the phallus in Lacanian thought: 'boys can pretend to have the phallus while girls must "be" the phallus ... through the Oedipus complex boys recognise the mother's desire and lack. They then identify her object of desire with the father, assuming that he has the phallus. In short, the boy shifts from the mother as a lacking other to the father as possessor of the phallus ... boys "pretend" to have the object of desire for the Other (women). Women, on the other hand ... [undergo a] more complex procedure ...of giving up on the notion of "having" the phallus before they can identify with the mother and thus become the object of desire for other (men)' (Homer 2005: 99). Feminine *jouissance* 'is precisely something that one can experience but say nothing about

both feminine and phallic *jouissance*: 'Woman cannot be said (*se dire*). Nothing can be said of woman. Woman has a relation with $S(\cancel{A})$, and it is already in that respect that she is doubled, that she is not-whole, since she can also have a relation with Φ' (Lacan 1999: 81). Women can apparently, according to Lacan, experience an external subjectivity as well as an internal subjectivity. In other words, women have access to the Real. Lacan refers to St. Teresa to illustrate this meaning in which women 'experience [*jouissance*], but know nothing about it' (Lacan 1999: 76). Lacan appears to suggest that woman has a more liberated relationship with the symbolic. As Gurewich comments: 'the real always looms just beyond the symbolic ... the symbolic order can only tame the real, it can never describe it as it is ... a woman remains in part on the side of the unspeakable ... [women's] more precarious relation to the symbolic castration, their potential resistance to recognising the law of the father, affords them a greater potential for questioning the "truth" of phallic signification' (Gurewich: 159). By suggesting that woman can access meaning beyond form, feminine *jouissance* opposes the view that Lacan's later thought is a movement towards formalisation. Lacan suggests that feminine *jouissance* is an experience beyond science and a meaning beyond representation. It is an outside but is neither scientific knowledge nor symbolic logic. Feminine *jouissance* is the pleasure someone else is having that I am not. It is the presence where there is absence, or a thick absence beyond our presence. The extent to which this is possible preoccupies much post-Lacanian thought.

Some post-Lacanian feminists are sensitive to the Kantian nature of Lacanian thought in terms of it acknowledging the transcendental. Salecl, for example, argues that the

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and thus it is impossible to define ... Other *jouissance* is "more than" phallic *jouissance*. Therefore it is beyond the symbolic and the subject and "outside the unconscious"' (Homer 2005: 102).

sirens' song in *The Odyssey* is in between a thing that cannot be expressed and a thing that can be expressed: 'this empty point is another name for the real, the unsymbolizable kernel around which the symbolic forms itself ... not simply something prior to symbolization, it is also what remains: the leftover, or better, the failure of symbolization. The sirens' song is the real that has to be left out for the story of the *Odyssey* to achieve form' (Salecl 1998: 177). Salecl sees the sirens' song as something real that evades symbolisation, a song from the Real that puts 'the listeners in touch with what Lacan calls knowledge in the real, that knowledge that the listeners do not want to know anything about ... the past in the sirens' song has not been symbolized yet, and has not become a memory; such unsymbolized past is traumatic for the listener, since it evokes something primordial, something that is between nature and culture' (Salecl 1998: 178-9).[72] The sirens call seems the very antithesis of symbolic logic. It is, according to Salecl, an example of a feminine *jouissance* that is Real in opposition to the Symbolic: 'what the sirens' silence offers is an exemplary case of subjectivization without accepting symbolic castration' (Salecl 1998: 194). For Salecl, women can recognise that symbols are simply that:

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[72] She argues that there are two different ways of seeing feminine *jouissance* – as a form of phallic *jouissance*, an agent of the super-ego: 'man acts as relay whereby woman becomes Other to herself (the Lacan of the 1960s)'; or as something other than phallic *jouissance*: 'woman is self-sufficient in her *jouissance* (the Lacan of *Seminar XX*)' (Salecl 1998: 190). According to Salecl, it is man, and not woman, who is obsessed with signifiers: 'after being barred by language, a man will endlessly deal with two questions. First, what is my symbolic identity ... and second, which is the object that can complement me?' Salecl argues that man wants the woman to recognise the ideal in him: 'a man's concern is whether the woman recognizes his symbolic role ... social status, wealth, public importance ... man wants to be loved for what is in him more than himself' (Salecl 1998: 188). A man has access only to phallic *jouissance* but has aspirations to the Other *jouissance* which, Salecl acknowledges, is caused by the super-ego which both invites and prohibits: 'the superego ... commands the subject to go beyond the phallic order and to experience a non-phallic *jouissance*, but this agency also prohibits the subject access to this *jouissance*'. According to Salecl, the super-ego is heard rather than seen. It is heard as both a sanction and an invitation. It is 'the laughing voice of the father' which says 'now you have killed me, go and finally enjoy women ... but you won't be able to ... it's better that you don't even try'. Because of the primacy of the symbolic, a man always fails 'to find out what feminine *jouissance* is' (Salecl 1998: 189). Although, for Salecl, the symbolic dominates, there is still a sense that, for women, the symbolic is not *a priori* but is, rather, assigned, that *jouissance*, for women, is a thing and not a form.

'the tendency in men to repress the drama of castration is more pronounced than in women because men have more at stake ... women's ambiguous relation to the law gives them the unique opportunity to recognise that their privation is merely a symbol, a signifier of the human condition as a whole ... [and are in a] better position to see through the illusory dimension of the phallic system of signification'. In Salecl's reading of feminine *jouissance*, we can think of it in terms of voice, transcendence, the in-itself; and phallic *jouissance* in terms of language, materialism, the for-itself.

Sandford, on the other hand, concludes that Lacanian thought is ultimately normative rather than idealist: 'but if the logical conclusion of this account of sexual positions is ... that female speaking beings can be men and male speaking beings can be women this is, nevertheless, not a conclusion that Lacan ever seriously entertains'. She comments that Lacan's view is actually an endorsement of the view he appears to be criticising: 'Lacan does not just describe or explain a normative function ('the Oedipus Complex has a normative function, not just in the moral structure of the subject, nor only in its relations to reality, but as regards the assumption of his sex'). Lacan's psychoanalytical theory is normative on this point. This normativity – which becomes an undisguised moralism in much contemporary Lacanian theory – is perhaps most evident in the pathologization of homosexuality, which rests on the presumption that the instance of the feminine male is the result of a failure, a short circuit, in the assumption "*de son propre sexe*"' (Sandford 2010: 67). Sandford is sensitive to the normative assumptions of Lacanian (and post-Lacanian) thought. For her, there is an implicit assumption that the socio-political categories of man and woman are ultimately reducible to differences in terms of biological sex. Biological

sex difference is thus the implicit, and normative, reference point for Lacan's theory of the Symbolic.

Žižek also sees the symbolic as determinant of sexuality. It is, for him, tied to the emergence of science. For example, he discusses the difference between sexuality in philosophy and in psychoanalysis: 'in philosophy sexuality only occurs at an empirical level ... in psychoanalysis ... sexuation ... is a formal, *a priori* condition of the emergence of the subject' (Žižek 1998: 80-1). For Žižek, there is always already an *a priori*, formal and Oedipal aspect to sexuality. Indeed, he wonders whether feminine *jouissance* is merely fantasy, or imaginary: 'what if ...[feminine *jouissance* is] purely fantasmatic? What if she evokes this secret in order to fascinate his (her husband's male) gaze?' Like Žižek, Verhaeghe is suspicious of this notion of the *jouissance* of the Other as real rather than symbolic: 'on the one hand, there is *jouissance* through the signifier (ie. through the pleasure principle – phallic pleasure). On the other hand, there is something 'not whole within the Other, part of the Other that is Other, that is not completely covered by the Other of the signifier ... [it is] very tempting to situate woman at this place' (Verhaeghe 2002: 112). Indeed, he also argues that there is no real feminine *jouissance*: 'the post-Lacanian hype about "feminine *jouissance*" is nothing more than a hysterical attempt to recuperate something that cannot be recuperated' (Verhaeghe 2002: 113). Verhaeghe argues that Lacan's theory of feminine *jouissance* is as dependent upon classical models as his theory of phallic *jouissance*. Indeed, Feher Gurewich argues that women like men are always 'subjected to the symbolic order' as they 'speak, work, get married, have children' (Feher Gurewich 1996: 165). In Žižek and Verhaeghe's thought, sexuality becomes symbolic but the reduction to form continues to problematise Lacan's theory

of the unconscious. For Žižek, as we argued in the last chapter, the unconscious is the other side of a materialist theory of consciousness.

Mathematisation or formalisation?

This chapter, and this thesis, asks whether Lacan's late theory of the unconscious is a materialist theory of consciousness. The answer, I have been arguing, lies in the manner in which Lacan apprehends numbers in his late thought. Frege's theory of mathematics has objective content. This is why analytic philosophy of mind can use Frege to support a (digitally) materialist theory of consciousness. Kant's theory of mathematics is that it has no objective content and is, instead, purely formal. It needs subjective content in order for it to be applied to real world situations. Alternatively, Mill's view is that mathematics needs empirical content in order for it to be applicable to our lives. Frege, of course, dismissed both although acknowledges Kant's interpretation of geometry as synthetic *a priori*. This chapter concludes with a discussion on the extent to which Lacan's theory of mathematics can be considered Kantian or Fregean. This will illuminate our concern as to whether Lacan has a (digitally) materialist theory of consciousness in his late theory of the unconscious.

Earlier, it was suggested that Frege does not necessarily presuppose analytic thought (or – more specifically – thought on AI and functionalism) because logic always already involves meaning – a particularised universal, rather than a universalised particular, meaning. Fink makes a useful distinction between mathematisation and formalisation in Lacanian thought. Mathematisation has intuition, or meaning, at its heart. So, Frege and Newton's theories are both mathematical theories as their

theories refer to reference and mass, respectively. Meaning is intrinsic to their mathematics. Formalisation, however, is merely symbolic play whereby forms rather than things define consciousness and the unconscious. In 'Of Structure as an Inmixing of Otherness', Lacan, like AI, argues that the relation between numbers is formulaic, or rule-governed, symbolic: 'to count, of course, is not difficult. It is only necessary to have, for instance, a certain number of sets and a one-to-one correspondence. It is true, for example, that there are exactly as many people sitting in this room as there are seats. But it is necessary to have a collection of imposed integers to constitute an integer, or what is called a natural number' (Lacan 1972: 190-1). Here, Lacan is using set theory to talk about logic *à la* Frege.

Lacan persistently argues that his view of mathematics is a Fregean one in which numbers are real objects: 'this torus really exists ... it is not an analogon; it is not even an abstraction, because an abstraction is some sort of diminution of reality, and I think it is reality itself' (Lacan 1972: 195-6). This essay is based on a paper delivered at the Baltimore conference in 1967 and Lacan's seemingly Fregean point of view, here, was questioned by Macksey: 'I'm concerned about the extreme realist position which your mathematical example would seem to imply – since it's not the mark which particular numbers possess, but the interrelated, abstract structure (rather than the constituent objects) which gives the properties of the system. This attacks any realist position that equates numbers with entities or objects and proposes a kind of conceptualist or nominalist structuralism' (Lacan 1972: 200). Macksey highlights the implicit Platonism which underpins Lacanian thought. In doing so, he implicitly equates Lacanian thought with analytic philosophy.

Although Lacan aims to be Fregean, however, there remains an anti-Fregean view in Lacan's understanding of mathematics, as I have been suggesting. Woolf, for example, wonders whether Lacan's mathematics is 'at best an analogy for an explanation of the life of the mind?' (Lacan 1972: 195). Lacan himself acknowledges that his view of mathematics depends on meaning rather than form:

> From Frege I only recalled that it is the class with characteristic numbers zero, which is the foundation of the one. If I have chosen two for psychoanalytical reference, it is because the two is an important scheme of the Eros in Freud. The Eros is that power which in life is unifying, and it is the basis on which too many psychoanalysts found the concept of the genital maturity as a possibility of the so-called perfect marriage, which is a sort of mystical ideal end, which is provided so imprudently ...the 1 in relation with the two can, in the first approach, play the same role as 0 in relation to the one' (Lacan 1972: 198).

In some ways, Lacan is acknowledging Mill rather than Frege as he sees number as a label of some thing in the world – for him, a Freudian concept. He sees counting from the perspective of two rather than zero which is at odds with Frege: 'when you try to read theories of mathematicians regarding numbers you find the formula "n plus one" $(n + 1)$ that is the key to the genesis of numbers and instead of this unifying unity that constitutes two in the first case I propose that you consider the real numerical genesis of two' (Lacan 1972: 191). This is an anti-real rather than real view of mathematics, to use Dummett's terms.

For Lacan, the matheme is an attempt to link the world of forms with the world of objects.[73] It is an attempt to establish a new kind of real mathematical object for real

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[73] According to Barnard, the matheme is the confluence of real and symbolic: 'the feminine subject's ex-sistent relation to the symbolic allies her *jouissance*, not with the signifier as signifying, but instead with the signifier's ex-sistence. Thus she has a (potential) relation to the real face of the Other that he elaborates on in *Seminar XX* as the signifierness of the signifier, or "being" of the letter. Here, he

objects which are changing rather than fixed. Lacan tells us that his mathemes 'are not latent, my little letters on the blackboard, they are manifest' (Lacan 2007: 113). The term 'matheme' derives from Levi-Strauss' 'mytheme' and Lacan sees it is a mathematical concept which can represent phenomena scientifically without stripping them of their meaning.[74] He suggests that his mathematics is not merely formalisation, symbolic play, but is intrinsically meaningful:

> mathematical formalization is our goal, our ideal. Why? Because it alone is matheme, in other words, it alone is capable of being integrally transmitted. Mathematical formalization consists of what is written, but it only subsists if I employ, in presenting it, the language (*langue*) I make use of. Therein lies the objection: no formalization of language is transmissible without the use of language itself. It is in the very act of speaking that I make this formalization, this ideal of metalanguage, ex-sist (Lacan 1999: 119).

For Lacan, the difference between science and phenomenology is the difference between language, a structure divided from subjectivity, and speech, the manifestation of subjectivity in a structure. Mathematics can acknowledge structure but not subjectivity but Lacan wishes to show that a matheme can do both. However, he contradicts himself by acknowledging that symbols cannot exist without the spoken

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attempts to transmit something of this being of the letter via the letter of mathematical formalization, or the matheme' (Barnard 2002: 181).

[74] According to Burgoyne, a move from phenomenology to mathematics was necessary in the development of psychoanalysis: 'making such a transition – from literary text to mathematics and its proofs – may seem at first glance to be beyond the power of psychoanalysis. But both these analysts – Lacan and Freud – held that the notion of the unconscious turned the spanning of this divide into a requirement' (Burgoyne 2003: 69). For Burgoyne, psychoanalysis *is*, inherently, mathematical. He disagrees with Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's critique of Lacan: 'Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy assume that Lacan's aim is to order [mathematical symbols] through subordinating them to philosophy. Nothing could be wider off the mark. Lacan's strategy is very clear: he gives priority to psychoanalysis. It remains to analyze what that means' (Burgoyne 2003: 71). According to Burgoyne, the matheme demonstrates the possibility and the impossibility of formalisation: 'in his text *L'Etourdit*, he attempted to formulate how the real can be formulated as an impasse within proofs of limitation or impossibility. In this, says Lacan, there is being grasped something of what is in his account of the movement through the symbolic towards the real. This approach to the real presupposes the pathways in terms of which it is expressed: it cannot therefore be expressed independently of the apparatus of language' (Burgoyne 2003: 82).

word: 'nothing I could write on the blackboard for you based on the general formulas that relate energy and matter, at the present point in time - Frege's last formulas, for example – none of it would stand up if I didn't prop it up with an act of speaking that involves language (*langue*)' (Lacan 1999: 122). Lacan's suggestion that mathematical formulas cannot become reality for us without speech shows that there is always recourse to the synthetic, rather then the analytic, in later Lacanian thought.

As with his earlier concepts of the phallus and the letter, the late Lacan is continually searching for a concept that can unify the synthetic and the analytic – a concept that will simply present the unconscious. If the matheme always collapses into the anti-real because of speech, then topology is, for the later Lacan, a way of representing the Real uncontaminated by speech, a less problematic way of connecting the changing world of intuitions with the fixed world of concepts. Topology is of interest to the late Lacan because it allows him to present the object mathematically as fluid and changing, rather than fixed and static.[75] Lacan suggests that whereas the matheme represents, the Borromean knot presents. It is, for Lacan, a scientific image but also manifest, platonic but also prototypical. It is a whole whose parts are extensions rather than points in space: 'with the Borromean Knot, we are dealing with something that cannot be found anywhere, namely, a true ring of string' (Lacan 1999: 123). This string has a structure – it reveals a chain that is made up of one-dimensional knots rather than zero-dimensional parts: 'the Borromean Knot is the best metaphor of the

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[75] According to Nobus, Lacan's interest in topology replaces his interest in structuralism: 'Lacan's departure from structural linguistics and his concurrent divergence from the Structuralist paradigm in general, fostered the ascendancy of topological investigations in his work' (Nobus 2003: 63). He explains how topology came to prominence at the end of the nineteenth century by emphasising extension rather than dualism: '[topology] deals with those aspects of geometrical figures that remain invariant when they are being transformed. As such, a circle and an ellipse are considered topologically equivalent because the former can be transformed into the latter through a process of continuous deformation – that is, a process which does not involve cutting and/or pasting' (Nobus 2003: 63).

fact that we proceed only on the basis of the One' (Lacan 1999: 128). In other words, the lines in a Borromean knot are all topologically equivalent as different dimensions flow into each other. Lacan tells us that 'the knot is the structure of the language: language when it is written is based simply on knots of One' (Lacan 1999: 129). For him, whereas mathemes inevitably acknowledge a dualism between science and experience, the Borromean knot presents a continuous One: 'the other cannot be added to the One' (Lacan 1999: 129). A knot is a one-dimensional line that wraps around itself to form a closed loop. In a knot, a one-dimensional object (a line of string) is embedded in three-dimensional space to create a two-dimensional shape (a circle). In Lacan's Borromean knot, he is attempting to mathematise the Real beyond the Symbolic, to mathematise things rather than forms, and sees the world as continuous loops in space. Lacan is attempting to view the unconscious in between a transcendental outside of Fregean thought and a transcendental inside of Kantian thought.

For Frege, mathematics constitutes normative truths. For Kant, it constitutes formal rules. Cutrefello argues that the basis of mathematics is to establish something Other. For him, Lacan sees Descartes as the originator of this view: 'when Lacan says that Descartes paves the way for the algebraization of geometry, the development of set theory, and so on, he is pointing out that post-Cartesian mathematics is freed from the constraints of *aisthesis*' (Cutrefello 2002: 156). As with other post-Lacanians, Cutrefello interprets Lacan as a Cartesian or, rather, attempts to recruit Descartes to psychoanalysis: 'there we see why Lacan requires that a mathematical formalism be written: it is not because he reinstates a metaphysics of signs, as the Derridean suggests, but because he thereby marks the advent of modern science as something

other than a metaphysics of presence' (Cutrefello 2002: 156). According to Cutrefello, there is a gap between modern science and Aristotelian science which Lacan, and Descartes, illuminate: 'for Lacan, the gap is completely radical, since it is not a question of substituting "one picture" of the world for another but of substituting mathematical equations for pictures. It is thus the truth of beings – not necessarily the being of beings revealed in *aisthesis* – that modern science reveals. This means that there is a radical disjunction between the order of the mathematical and the order of perception' (Cutrefello 2002: 157). Thus, Cutrefello suggests that the very essence of science is based on a division between meaning and form and Lacan is seen to make explicit what is implicit in Descartes. Cutrefello further argues that Lacan is not Heideggerian because Lacan's approach is scientific rather then phenomenological, analytic rather than synthetic. Thus, the difference between Heidegger and Lacan is the difference between a philosophy in which the the very notion of transcendental thought is present and a philosophy in which this transcendental thought is absent: 'it is the difference between a discourse that sees in anxiety the mark of the subject's being-in-the-world and a discourse that sees in anxiety the mark of the subject's not being-in-the-world' (Cutrefello 2002: 157). According to Cutrefello, Lacan departs from Heidegger in his focus upon the outside as science rather than the outside as being. Cutrefello sees Lacan as a scientist, a scientist of 'the one-missing'. Once again, however, the very notion of loss represents a synthetic rather than an analytic view of mathematics. In Lacan's understanding of mathematics, there is an *a priori* synthetic view of mathematics as based upon a collection of formal rules rather than normative truths, of requiring interpretation, of needing supplementary subjective content rather than having objective content in and of itself.

Nobus opposes Cutrefello's argument, stating that 'topology is equally at risk of functioning as a mere metaphor for the mechanism of speech and language in the unconscious' (Nobus 2003: 65). He comments that Lacan's Borromean knot is metaphoric because topology, like his matheme, is still subject to meaning: 'Lacan continued to step up his campaign for the acknowledgement of writing, mathematical formalization, and topology until the end of his 1976-7 seminar, when he admitted that the entire project was likely to fail in light of the inevitable interference of meaning' (Nobus 2003: 65). We have found that whenever Lacan attempts to theorise psychoanalysis, or philosophy, from a Fregean point of view, he finds himself collapsing into an anti-Fregean view which psychologises number. Frege's theory of mathematics, like his theory of language, is dependent upon the distinction between concept and object. Lacan's matheme and Borromean knot, however, are ultimately conceptualisations even though they claim not to be. Like Woolf, Dor also questions whether Lacan's mathematics is imaginary or symbolic. He asks whether Lacan's mathematical symbols represent scientific figures or metaphorical illustrations: 'scientific projects always seek to disclose structures ... Lacan's ... symbolic representations of models are only concrete attempts to "imagine" a network of abstract relations' (Dor 1996: 115). Indeed, he argues that, in spite of what Lacan says, the matheme is closer to the metaphor than the symbol: 'Lacan never presented the matheme as a mathematical, that is, formal object. It is an abstract vehicle suited for a complete transmission of something germane to psychoanalysis' (Dor 1996: 117). Dor argues that Lacan's signifiers (unlike Frege's sense) can never really be identified with the real as they set out to do and are always merely concerned with reality. Mathematics is, for Lacan, like Kant, *a priori* synthesis.

This chapter has investigated the extent to which the late Lacanian theory of the unconscious can be considered to be Kantian or Fregean. This is a crucial distinction in our efforts to discover whether Lacan has a theory of consciousness. The emphasis on Frege validates a view of the late Lacanian theory of the unconscious as an analytic materialist theory of consciousness whereas the emphasis on Kant invalidates a view of the late Lacanian theory of the unconscious as an analytic materialist theory of consciousness.

CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to discover whether Lacan has a theory of consciousness. It proceeded to investigate the continental and analytic influences on his thought. Throughout this thesis, it has been suggested that there are links between a materialist theory of consciousness in continental thought and a materialist theory of consciousness in analytic thought. It has also been suggested that early and later Lacanian thought can be seen to strengthen these links. The research did not simply find parallels between theories of consciousness in the analytic tradition and Lacan's late theory of the unconscious. It found that the late Lacanian theory of the unconscious actually *completes* an analytic materialist theory of consciousness. My conclusion is that Lacan has a materialist theory of consciousness and the late Lacan has a (digitally) materialist theory of consciousness. I want to now briefly review how this conclusion was made

This thesis has viewed the pre-Second World War Lacan as a phenomenologist; the early Lacan as an ontological materialist; and the later Lacan as a digital materialist. In chapter one, it was explained how, in Lacan's pre-Second World War thought, the unconscious is viewed as a mode of intentionality and thus an extension of consciousness as phenomenologists see it. In chapter two, it was explained how, in Lacan's early thought, a distinction emerges between consciousness as a surface phenomenon, as epiphenomena; and the unconscious as a machine which, I suggested, should be viewed as an ontological (Dreyfus) rather than a digital (Dennett) machine. In chapter three, it was explained how there is a continued reduction of consciousness to surface phenomena, or the imaginary, in Lacanian thought. It showed that Lacan's

most prominent symbols and forms – the signifier, the phallus, the letter – are infused

with meaning. In chapter four, it was shown how Lacan's references to Kant can lead

to two different theories of the unconscious – one which is premised on digital

materialism and the other which is premised on existential materialism. In chapter

five, it was explained how there is a radical shift in later Lacanian thought which

moves from materialism to hyper-materialism. A theory of the unconscious becomes a

science and, in fact, completes a materialist theory of consciousness. In chapter six, it

was explained how there are two approaches in Lacan's later thought – analytic and

synthetic; and two philosophers – Frege and Kant. It was suggested that Lacan

ultimately sides with Fregean rather than a Kantian view.

It is Frege who casts a great shadow over Lacan's later theory (and also analytic

philosophy). The turn to Frege (in both analytic philosophy and Lacanian

psychoanalysis) sought to turn a theory of consciousness into a science but it also

sought to turn a theory of the unconscious into a science. Theorists of consciousness

and the Lacanian theory of the unconscious all orbit Frege who is the most influential

figure on both theories of consciousness in twentieth century philosophy and the later

Lacanian theory of the unconscious. We come full circle in Lacanian thought from

pre-Second World War Lacan to late Lacan. A Lacanian theory of the unconscious

begins as the other side of a phenomenological theory of consciousness. It ends as the

other side of a (digitally) materialist theory of consciousness. In my reading, the

Lacanian theory of the unconscious, firstly, *is* phenomenology; and, secondly, *is*

analytic philosophy of mind. An analytic materialist theory of consciousness could be

described as the summit of science and it could be suggested that Lacan plays a part in

this trek towards the summit. However, Kant, as well as Frege, is an influence on the late Lacan.

I have suggested that it is more appropriate to see Lacan's theory of the unconscious as completing an existentialist theory of consciousness rather than an analytic materialist theory of consciousness. I have proposed an alternative reading of a Lacanian theory of the unconscious in which his early thought is seen as a fusion of existentialism and materialism and his later thought as the manifestation of existential materialism. Lacan considers consciousness to be illusory as Dennett and Žižek do. However, what lies beneath this consciousness, the unconscious, I suggest, should not be seen as digital materialism (*à la* Dennett) but as existential materialism. It was suggested that this relationship manifests itself as *jouissance*. I have argued that *jouissance* is a more effective metaphor for the unconscious than the phallus as it emphasises experience over conceptualisation, freedom over determinism. The unconscious is what happens when experience is conceptualised, when freedom meets determinism. Lacan suggests that as our lives become more and more mechanised, more and more digitalised, *jouissance* becomes more and more prevalent. This thesis has asked whether feminine *jouissance*, in Lacanian thought, can be thought of as pure reason, existence, consciousness for-itself, as the (*a priori*) possibility that defies determinism. The answer is no because of the relation between the master and university discourses which objectifies all that is pure, essentialises all that is existence, makes phallic all that is feminine. In Lacan's late thought, however, even *jouissance* becomes attributable to binary relations. A re-interpretation of Lacanian thought does need to take this into account.

This thesis has also asked whether we should read Lacan's reading of Kant in the way functionalist/analytic theorists do or whether we should read it in the way materialist feminists do. Žižek, it has been argued, reads Kant as analytic theorists read him in his interpretation of the late Lacanian theory of the unconscious as the other side of an (analytic) materialist theory of consciousness. However, it was argued that reading Kant this way is to grotesquely distort Kant's philosophy which has transcendental idealism at its very heart. I conclude that Kant should be read in the way that materialist feminists, rather than functionalists, read him. Although both Husserl and Sartre reject the Kantian notion of an *a priori* universal rule, Kant's theory of transcendental thought enabled phenomenology and existentialism to come into being. Lacan's thought also, it is argued, belongs to this tradition but he is also a materialist. As Kant sees the noumenal in two different ways (thing in-itself and noumena, negative and positive), Lacan sees the outside in two different ways – digital and existential. In the latter, there is seen to be agency outside.

Lacan shares with Kant the desire for a transcendental philosophy but one which seeks to account for context as well as concepts. I see Lacanian thought as a transcendental engagement into the presuppositions of knowledge and the nature of what is consciousness and what is unconscious. In my view, the unconscious becomes not a materialist theory of the unconscious (and thus a support for an analytic materialist theory of consciousness) nor an extension of a phenomenological theory of consciousness but a ruse of reason. This reading rejects the notion, implicit in Žižek, that the objectively subjective unconscious helps to solve the problem of consciousness. Rather, it shows, via *jouissance*, that the so-called problem of consciousness is unsolvable. My reading suggests that we view an analytic materialist

theory of consciousness as the master-university discourse to the Lacanian theory of the unconscious as the hysteric-analyst discourse. This reading can show how materialist theories of consciousness are contextually, as opposed to conceptually, bound. Finally, we can take Lacan far too seriously and read him as a scientist when perhaps we should read him more as a satirist. Reading him as a scientist neglects the extent to which his writings and seminars are works of the imagination and are often playfully infused with humour.

In this thesis, I have questioned why materialists (in the analytic tradition) are so interested in consciousness, a phenomenon, after all, of subjectivity. Phenomenologists say consciousness is subjective but its effects are objective. Materialists say consciousness is objective but its effects are subjective. My view is, rather, in between the two. The extent to which theories of consciousness (and, particularly, an analytic materialist theory of consciousness), and theories of the unconscious, are transcendental ideas, or illusions, has been the concern of this thesis. For Sartre, consciousness is a transcendental idea rather than a transcendental ego. However, in both analytic and continental traditions, there are facts about consciousness, if not the unconscious, which indicate it may be more than a transcendental idea and certainly more than a transcendental illusion. The thesis suggests that, in some senses, existentialists are right about consciousness; and, in other senses, materialists are right about consciousness. Analytic materialist theories of consciousness, and a theory of the unconscious, may be transcendental illusions. However, a materialist theory of consciousness *per se*, is not simply a transcendental illusion. It has real effects.

In this thesis, I have attempted to re-locate Lacan in the tradition of Kant and Husserl even though his later thought ostensibly appeals to Frege and early Wittgenstein. On the one hand, this re-positioning means that the idea of the unconscious is merely a creature of reason, a subjective illusion, and a materialist theory of consciousness is an objective illusion. It is the view of this thesis that consciousness is not based upon a conceptual model. On the other hand, it means that the unconscious is seen as the consequence of the paralogism of a (digitally) materialist theory of consciousness. In this view, seeing consciousness as (digitally) materialist is hypostatization. My final point is that we need to question not the future of a theory of the unconscious, nor a theory of consciousness, but the future of a *materialist* theory of consciousness and, in particular, the materialist theory of consciousness that we find in the analytic tradition. Lacanian thought on the unconscious, if it can be stripped of its aspiration to scientificity, can help to do this.

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