

Vasse, Denis. "Chapitre V: La voix." *L'Ombilic et la voix*. Paris: Seuil, 1974. 177-212.

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THE VOICE

To listen to someone is to hear their voice.

To hear the voice of another is to listen in the silence of self to speech that comes from elsewhere.

In the silence of presence, to listen, to let resonate within the self the harmonics of the waves that strike the eardrum. The modulation printed on the surrounding air, by the minute play of the vocal cords under the pressure of the breath, transforms the silent body into a sound space. To hear someone is to gather in the silent depth of self the subtlest modification expressed in the air by the other's most intimate activity. To let the other's speech *resonate* necessarily implies the suspension of all *reasoning*.

The voice's modulation makes our body's sound box vibrate in a unique manner specific to each being encountered: we recognize people by *their* voice. It indicates, often without us knowing so, as in a short circuit of conscience, each person's manner of being. In the voice, as in a musical register, are manifested the harmonies and the dissonances, the ardor or the dreariness, the joy or the anguish of a presence that seeks to say itself and that is but presence to self in the "(f)act" [*dans le fait*] of saying oneself to another. These manifestations are always already entwined and veiled by language's plays of signification, in which the voice, as soon as it is issued, finds itself caught, although it is not reduced to it.

The voice, always already entangled in the signs of the discourse it articulates, betrays those who speak: it reveals *how* they speak when they speak of someone or of something. The voice also reveals *wherewithal* they speak, where it gathers and takes form. Many expressions in everyday language testify to this: does one not say of the voice that it is metallic, breaking, soft, bi-tonal, warm, cordial? Does not one speak of a falsetto voice, of a eunuch's voice...? The reference of the voice to a site (the body) can be even more explicit when one says of someone that they speak *through* the nose, that they have a head voice or that their voice *comes* from their guts, insofar as it grabs us by our

insides. Often our interlocutor's voice speaks more to us than their discourse, beyond the content of what they are saying.

There is in the "dialogue of the deaf," for example, which often represents a "discussion," a way of not listening, of not letting the other's voice resonate within us, in pretending to let ourselves fall for the sole coherence of discourse, of reasoning. Everyone knows, who has experienced it, that there is no subtler aggression than that which consists in shackling someone in their own words. Speech thus finds itself *cut off*, separated from the site whence the subject seeks to say itself.

But there is an inversed manner of imprisoning one's interlocutor, which is to not consider what they say, neither the coherence nor incoherence of their discourse, to close them in the site whence *we believe* they are talking. This is what goes on in "wild interpretation," which under the fallacious cover of intuition, has but for its disavowed goal to put one in the position of the dominator.

To listen to someone, to hear their voice, demands on the part of those who listen a given attention that does not close the interlocutor in their discourse nor in the site of their body; a "floating attention" as Freud says, which, open to the in-between of the body and discourse, does not clench to the impression of the voice nor to the expression of discourse. From then on, what is given to hear in such listening is, strictly speaking, what the subject who speaks does not say: the unconscious weft that associates their body as the site of their discourse: an active weft that re-actualizes in the subject's speech the totality of their history.

In the discourse it holds "on the outside," the voice expresses life in the very moment when life is felt as the proximity of the subject to itself "in" the body. The voice is *expression* of life felt as "im-pression." In the voice, silent life is given to be heard for another while the voice is collected in itself. This double movement constitutes the logical moment of the voice, a moment whose non-recognition forbids the thinking of the (founding) relation of the body and/or of discourse, of speech and/or of listening.

In the fullest sense of the words, to talk (to another) as well as to listen (to another) involves an act of gathering oneself. In the same act, the voice creates a *discourse* that detaches itself from the site where it gathers itself and which indicates its limits. The concepts of site and discourse are articulated with the concept of the voice.

The voice between the instances of site and knowledge

The voice is neither of the order of representation (knowledge) nor of the order of presence to self (site). It is only conceivable as the clearing that *founds the limit it crosses*. As the founding crossing of the limit, the voice specifies the limit that separates and counter-distinguishes the body and discourse, site and knowledge. The voice is manifestation of presence, outside the site (body), in the concept, which is a representation of the presence. Apart from the concept of which the voice is the operator, there is neither presence nor knowledge. *The voice is the original in-between of knowledge and site.*

Indeed, there is not on the one hand an entity – site, body or presence – and, on the other hand, another entity – knowledge, discourse, or representation; there is not an “inside” and an “outside” pre-existing the voice. It is not secondarily in charge of putting in relation or, as we too often say today, of putting in communication interior and exterior, presence and representation, unity of one and multiplicity of others.

Quite the contrary, to define it as founder of the limit it crosses is to say that there is no presence thinkable “on this side” nor representation thinkable “on that side” of the voice. If it were otherwise, it would be but what it already is in the mind of many: as presence, the indescribable realm delivered to the ineffable intuition of the “metaphysicians;” and as knowledge, the realm of the describable, delivered to the empty focus of the physicians’ discourse.

Clearing the limit of site as the condensation of knowledge for the other, the voice *founds and* is the site *and* the knowledge that cannot be conceived apart from the relation these concepts entertain with the voice.

Yet the voice is offered to the permanent risk of being immediately understood as site *or* knowledge, of *standing under* one *or* the other, *recuperated*. The *or* is here excluding: it is opposed to the simultaneity of the *and*. The *or* introduces the opposition of a radical contradiction. As support of clarifying understanding, the *or* manifests the incompatibility of contraries in the field of consciousness. It is the structure of knowledge’s domain and the agent of the contradiction principle, which governs its discourse. In the empty focus of representation, the *or* forbids that two concepts of different orders be thought of at the same time, such as, for example, presence and representation, the gathering of self in oneself and external self-expression.

Recuperated by representation, the voice no longer gives itself as the support of difference, the base of “and/or” [thinking], but becomes a *reified difference*. It then occupies the place of the *objet (a)*.

In the vibrations it strikes on the eardrum, the voice calls on the contrary to the limits of the site whence it comes, as well as the site whither it goes. At the same time, the voice is the support for the formal coherence of a knowledge that condensates representations. Let us say that in the voice are articulated the phoneme and the seme, the *resonance* and the *reasoning* and that, by it, presence becomes discourse *for* someone.

To better situate the voice in this original limit of the *inside* and the *outside* where the ear localizes it, between the seme and the phoneme, one must come back to the description of the psychic apparatus and understand the instances it calls upon.

Fantasy and the voice

Left to itself – which is to say forgetful of the *inter-diction* that founds it, of the in-between, of the rift that articulates knowledge and non-knowledge, the said to the non-said, the conscious to the unconscious – representation finishes by closing in on emptiness, on an *imaginary* presence taken for a real presence. In a quasi-hallucinatory process, representation imagines grasping the object at the very instant when it escapes and becomes once again foreign to it.

This imaginary incorporation – or introjection – which retains nothing in the conscious except the signified, represses the signifier out of the conscious into the unconscious and brings us back to the play of fantasmatic activity.

As an effect of repression, *fantasy* is in the psychic organization what remains as the articulation of consciousness to a radical heterogeneous instance, that is: to the unconscious – as radically heterogeneous as the Other, “just as unknown as the reality of the exterior world.” Apart from the relation to this instance that articulates psychic life to the foreign, to the Other, there is no consciousness – in its essential aim – open to the real. The unconscious is *inside* of the psychic organization, the *external* presenting instance of the Other.

It is essential to abandon the overvaluation of the property of being conscious before it becomes possible to form any correct view of the origin of what is mental. In Lipp’s words, the unconscious must be assumed to be the general basis of psychical life. The

unconscious is the larger sphere, which includes within it the smaller sphere of the conscious. Everything conscious has an unconscious preliminary stage; whereas what is conscious may remain at that stage and nevertheless claim to be regarded as having the full value of a psychical process. The unconscious is the true psychical reality; *in its innermost nature it is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world and it is as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communication of our sense organs.*¹

Since the Freudian discovery of the unconscious, one thus finds that the structure of psychic life can no longer be reducible to the organization of the conscience of self, yet alone to that of a little computation of conflicts between the “id” and the “super-ego,” which represents the “ego.” The fugitive character of consciousness depends on the censorship exerted for the ego to maintain its ideality; in which, the ego is given to be recognized by repressing the *outside* – which is still inside of the self – in the unconscious, what is not me, what is “other.” This conflictual instance of the ego finds its motor in *repression: generator at once of the formations of consciousness and the formations of the unconscious.*

Such a process accounts for the fact that, to substitute in its imaginary form, the ego *resists* the attacks from the psychic elements it has repressed, attacks sent forth from the unconscious but felt as coming from without. Any irruption through the organizing barriers of the ego, of the discourse that *holds it* [together], comes to disturb the discourse on which the ego believes it has a hold. Without this irruption, the ego is reflected in discourse’s effect of conscious signification as in a mirror.

The (conscious) signification is not produced except by the exclusion of that which is without signification for the ego: this exclusion (repression) separates the signifier from conscious signification and throws it back into a field of essential heterogeneity; a site where representation is not carried out but without which, however, it cannot be.²

¹ Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans. James Strachey. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, (hereafter abbreviated “SE”), vol. 5. London: Hogarth Press, p. 612-613.

² Lacan, Jacques. “Les formations de l’inconscient,” published by Pontalis in *Bulletin de psychologie*, 1957-1958, p. 6: “As soon as we introduce resistances to a signifying chain, they bring an essential heterogeneity.

“Until Freud, the intention of signification was confused with the dimension of conscience, and this is where objections against the theme of the Freudian unconscious always find their last resort: how can one speak of “dream thoughts” for example, namely thoughts that in current intuition present themselves as thoughts that are not thoughts?”

“And yet, what Freud brings is the idea that within us a subject thinks according to laws that are the very ones of the signifying chain’s organization. *What is called the unconscious is the signifier in action, separated from the play of tendency, situated on ‘another psychic scene’* – an expression borrowed from Fechner – and which marks the heterogeneity of laws

The effect of conscious signification always produces itself to the detriment of an effect of *meaning*. The signification of a word in a discourse always presupposes the repressions of the meanings this word could have in “another” discourse.

The effect of meaning of the psychoanalytic interpretation, on the contrary, is constantly provoked by the irruption of a word’s signification that the analysand’s discourse holds as non-pertinent, even impertinent. The effect of meaning is born from the clash of two or several effects of signification. “The word is not a sign but a knot of significations.”³

“For Freud – read by Lacan – the affirmation of the heterogeneity of the unconscious is but the theoretical answer to desire’s position of alterity in its simultaneous grounding connection to the Other’s desire and to the “site of the code,” a synchronic system of signifiers which command the access to the sought after satisfaction.”⁴ This position of exteriority in regards to conscious intentionality (signification) of discourse, which Freud analyzes in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*,⁵ is upheld and developed by Lacan: not only in terms of exteriority but also radical otherness. “Exterior to the sentence or discourse (speech) that one pronounces,”⁶ the unconscious idea is “structured like a language.” It obeys the laws that govern the signifiers in an autonomous signifying chain, without relation to the signified.⁷

The key that opens the conscious to the unconscious and thus opens the subject to his history is of a linguistic order, and the subject that springs up through this opening is always already

concerning the unconscious regarding everything that might bear a relation to the domain of the preconscious, the comprehensible, signification.” (my trans.)

³ Lacan, Jacques. “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis.” *Écrits*. Trans. B. Fink. Norton. p. 214.

⁴ Pontalis, Jean-Bertrand. *Après Freud*. Paris, Gallimard, 1968, p. 97, my trans.

⁵ Freud, Sigmund. *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. SE 6.

“Among the slips of the tongue that I have collected myself, I can find hardly one in which I should be obliged to trace the disturbance of speech simply and solely to what Wundt calls the ‘contact effect of sounds.’ I almost invariably discover a disturbing influence in addition which comes from something *outside* the intended utterance; and the disturbing element is either a single thought that has remained unconscious, which manifests itself in the slip of the tongue and which can often be brought to consciousness only by means of searching analysis, or it is a more general psychological motive force which is directed against the entire utterance.” (p. 61)

⁶ Ibid.

“But if I still secretly cling to my expectation that even apparently simple slips of the tongue could be traced to inference by a half-suppressed idea that lies *outside* the intended context, I am tempted to do so by an observation of Meringer’s which is highly deserving attention. This author says that it is a curious fact that no one is ready to admit having made a slip of the tongue. There are some very sensible and honest people who are offended if they are told they have made one. I would not venture to put it so generally as does Meringer in saying ‘no one.’ But the trace of affect which follows the revelation of the slip, and which is clearly in the nature of shame, has a definite significance. It may be compared to the annoyance we feel when we cannot recall a forgotten name, and to our surprise at the tenacity of an apparently indifferent memory; and it invariably indicates that some motive has contributed to the occurrence of the interference.” (p. 83)

⁷ Lacan. “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis,” in *Écrits* (p. 230).

barred by this relation of the signifier to the signified, the former disappearing as soon as it appears as the signified it becomes: in an effect of language and speech addressed to them, this subject *listens to a voice*.

The effect of language is to introduce the cause into the subject. Through this effect, he is not the cause of himself; he bears within himself the worm of the cause that splits him. For his cause is the signifier, without which there would be no subject in the real. But this subject is what the signifier represents, and the latter cannot represent anything except to another signifier: to which the subject who listens is thus reduced.

One therefore does not speak to the subject. It speaks of him, and this is how he apprehends himself; he does so all the more necessarily in that, before he disappears as a subject beneath the signifier he becomes, due to the simple fact that it addresses him, he is absolutely nothing. But this nothing is sustained by his advent, now produced by the appeal made in the Other to the second signifier.⁸

That the unconscious may be given to be thought as but an enigma, a pure play of signifiers, which contains the key of [the subject's] discourse in its relation to the elusive subject, indicates well enough that the deciphering of the enigma allows to open onto the real, to the unique history of the individual, a discourse which, without this key, encloses itself in an imaginary immediately taken for the real. This rediscovered key is the metaphor for the original symbolic order, for the “opening of the path,”⁹ for this crossing, for “desire—bedding down in the signifying cut,”¹⁰ and that, in founding the exercise of perception and memory [*souvenir*] in their reciprocal relation, constitutes the psychical apparatus. The practice of psychoanalysis frequently spots – when the analytical work meets with very strong resistance – the fantasy in which the subject finds itself locked up, as in a prison cell whose key they have thrown out the window. Unless it takes the form of a parapraxis, which makes them close the door to his apartment while forgetting the keys inside.

In other words, the deciphering in the transference (which is not necessarily a conscious realization) grants the subject access to the symbolic order of the human, in the separation of the imaginary and the real.

However, this key of which J. Lacan says that it “is to introduce the cause into the subject,” that is not the cause of and in itself, calls to a listening of the *voice and* of the *id* (unconscious) *and* of the *Other*, if it is true – as we have shown throughout these pages – that the unconscious form of the

⁸ Lacan, “Position of the Unconscious,” in *Écrits*, p. 708.

⁹ Freud. “Project for a Scientific Psychology” (SE1, p. 315); *The Interpretation of Dreams* (SE5, p. 611).

¹⁰ Lacan, “Position of the Unconscious,” in *Écrits*, p. 709.

id has something to do with the signified presence of the Other. That the *id talks*, sends one back to the voice of the Other and to the listening of the subject. If no voice was making itself heard, then the *id* would not speak. What the *voice-in-actuality*, contrary to the voice *objet (a)*, gives to hear to the subject who speaks, is speech, insofar that it is scratched, numbered in and by the signifying chains of its history, in and by the unconscious qua site of the Other's discourse.

From then on, the voice is the support that actualizes this *concrete discourse, trans-individual*, which the subject is missing in order to reestablish the continuity of their conscious discourse and the discontinuity of their anchoring in a body, *historical*, in a body that articulates the subject, of which it is the site, to the Other, for which the body is not the site. It comes to no surprise henceforth that the unheard voice and the encysted speech in the *objet (a)* find themselves referred to the repression of forgotten shame or unbearable obligation. It comes to no surprise also that this shame has something to do with sex, and that this risk has something to do with death.

The unconscious [writes J. Lacan] is that part of concrete discourse qua transindividual, which is not at the subject's disposal in reestablishing the continuity of his conscious discourse. [...] The unconscious is the chapter of my *history* that is marked by a blank or occupied by a lie: it is the censored chapter.¹¹

And further in "Function and Field of Speech and Language":

What we teach the subject to recognize as his unconscious is his *history*—in other words, we help him complete the current historicization of the facts that have already determined a certain number of the historical 'turning points' in his existence. But if they have played this role, it is already as historical facts, that is, as recognized in a certain sense or censored in a certain order. Thus, every fixation at a supposed instinctual stage is above all a historical stigma: a page of shame that one forgets or undoes, or a page of glory that obliges. But what is forgotten is recalled in acts, and the undoing of what has been done contradicts what is said elsewhere, just as obligation perpetuates in symbols the very mirage in which the subject found himself trapped.¹²

This rapid review of what psychoanalysis teaches us about the structure of the psychic apparatus will allow us to put forward that it is the *unconscious that is the instance of site and conscience that of knowledge*.

¹¹ Lacan. *Écrits*, p. 214-15.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 217.

Between the unconscious and conscience

Instance of site: thus is the unconscious, in the sense that it anchors the subject in the world, demonstrating on the beat and off-beat that the subject was really there, in this or that situation (at the same time of that being-there's modality: the place of the subject is to be sought in that fantasy), and that they are there, now, depending on whether they were *there* in all the situations that form the fabric of their history (the motor of transference and of repetition). The unconscious is the instance of site since to the view of the conscious (in the topology of the individual's psychic apparatus) it ignores time and contradiction: thus, the play of metaphor and metonymy finds itself liberated, as well as the immediacy of substitutions this play authorizes, all the way to the confusion of the imaginary with the real.

As instance of site, non-determined in its relation to the ego, but wherefrom the ego determines itself and consciousness is developed, the unconscious takes on the characteristics “of the *original* spatiality of the being-there.” Its signification is *anterior* to all conscious significations. The unconscious is the instance of site, anterior to adverbial distinction of location and personal pronouns, if it is true that in the unconscious object and subject coincide. “The unconscious element is not only the literal form in its abstraction but also, furthermore, and at the same time, the object in its opacity and the subject in its oscillation.”¹³ In this respect, the discourse of psychotic children is illuminating. Personal pronouns are indiscriminately replaced by the phoneme “there” [lɑ̃]: “there made a house,” a non-accidental elision of the “I.”

The analysis of this instance or of this concept of site, anterior to any activity of the ego considering its localization in time and space, does not refer to the constitution of the ego nor to its determination, but to a non-time time, the original time of the being-there. What this refers to, in Heidegger's language, is that the determination of being-there – whose instance is, for us, the unconscious – has an existential sense, non-categorical: it is not a category of conscience.¹⁴

¹³ Leclaire, Serge. *Psychoanalyse*, Paris: Seuil, 1986, p. 135, my trans.

¹⁴ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson. New York: Harper Collins, 1962.

“And even when Dasein explicitly addresses itself as ‘I here,’ this locative personal designation must be understood in terms of Dasein's existential spatiality. In interpreting this we have already intimated that this ‘I-here’ does not mean a certain privilege point—that of an I-Thing—but is to be understood as Being-in in terms of the ‘yonder’ of the world that is ready-to-hand—the ‘yonder which is the dwelling place of Dasein as *concern*.”

W. von Humboldt has alluded to certain languages which express the ‘I’ by ‘here’, the ‘thou’ by ‘there’, the ‘he’ by ‘yonder’, thus rendering the personal pronouns by locative adverbs, to put it grammatically. It is controversial whether indeed the primordial signification of locative expressions is adverbial or pronominal. But this dispute loses its basis if

The unconscious is thus an instance of site (of being-there) to which all conscious representations refer *because* of where *they* come from. In this sense, the unconscious has something to do with the body and the question of its origin in a site.

Instance of knowledge: the conscious is thus, in the sense that it elaborates a system of abstract representations, separated, off-site, articulated in *time* according to the rhythm and the caesura of a discourse. Instance of time – as the unconscious is instance of site – the conscious testifies to the identity of site through different historical situations: it perceives the qualities of the being-there at different moments. As a discourse, it is the fruit of the relation of signifiers in a site (synchrony) while also the relation of the signifiers of this site to successive moments (diachrony). As an expressive instance, the conscious is submitted to the play of signifiers (metaphor, metonymy) and to its avatars. *It is a consequence, off-site, of what happens on site.* The key and the source of knowledge it pretends to elaborate are found on the site it ignores. This ignorance of site is constitutive of the conscious, which tends by definition to ignore its ignorance in an alleged mastery of knowledge. The conscious is the instance open to the unconscious, like the sense organs are opened onto the world; however, it is as unskilled in informing us on the unconscious as the sense organs are in informing us about the world.

In chapter VII of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud asks himself:

But what part is there left to be played in our scheme by consciousness, which was once so *omnipotent* and hid all else from view? *Only that of a sense-organ for the perception of psychological qualities.* In accordance with the ideas underlying our attempt at a schematic picture, we can only regard conscious perception as the function proper to a particular system [and for this the abbreviation *Cs.* seems appropriate]. In its mechanical properties we regard this system as resembling the perceptual systems *Pcpt.:* as being susceptible to excitation by qualities but incapable of retaining traces of alterations—that is to say, as having no

one notes that locative adverbs have a relationship to the 'I' *qua* Dasein. The 'here' and the 'there' and the 'yonder' are primarily not mere ways of designating the location of entities present-at-hand within-the-world at positions in space; they are rather characteristics of Dasein's primordial spatiality. These supposedly locative adverbs are Dasein-designations; they have a signification which is primarily existential, not categorical. But they are not pronouns either; their signification is prior to the differentiation of locative adverbs and personal pronouns: these expressions have a Dasein-signification which is authentically spatial, and which serves as evidence that when we interpret Dasein without any theoretical distortions we can see it immediately as 'Being-alongside' the world with which it concerns itself, and as Being-alongside it spatially—that is to say, as deserving and giving directionality. In the 'here', the Dasein which is absorbed in its world speaks not towards itself but away from itself towards the 'yonder' of something circumspectively ready-to-hand; yet it still has *itself* in view in its existential spatiality." (p. 155-156)

memory. The psychical apparatus, which is turned towards the external world with its sense-organ of the *Pcpt.* systems, is itself the external world in relation to the sense-organ of the *Cs.*, whose teleological justification resides in this circumstance. Here we once more meet the principle of the hierarchy of agencies, which seems to govern the structure of the apparatus. Excitatory material flows into the *Cs.* sense-organ from two directions: from the *Pcpt.* system, whose excitation, determined by qualities, is probably submitted to a fresh revision before it becomes a conscious sensation, and from the interior of the apparatus itself, whose quantitative processes are felt qualitatively in the pleasure-unpleasure series when, subject to certain modifications, they make their way to consciousness.¹⁵

That the conscious is the sense organ ordered to the perception of psychic qualities authorizes us in asking about the functioning of the sense organs ordered to the perception of the exterior world, to better understand what this is about. It is, as we have seen, the activity of opening-and-closing that constitutes the sense organs. The possibility offered to our sense organs of offering themselves to excitement or of interrupting it – the rhythm that imposes the opening-and-closing of the eyes, the mouth, the sphincters, the reversal of air in the inhaling-exhaling of breathing, the possibility to provoke or avoid contact by the movement of our limbs – allows us to establish a relation between representations at different moments. The implementation of different perceptions born of the activity of our senses is foundational for our notion of *time*, from the difference of perceptions to the successive moments, to their non-identity. A difference and non-identity which the unconscious reduces through its negation of time: *the perception identity* that the primary process of the unconscious endeavors to re-establish demonstrates how the unconscious functions by referring to a same site, to an *unconscious image of the body*, in a non-time time, in original time, in all the times of [the subject's] history.

On the contrary, the identity of thought that the conscious endeavors to establish in the memory itself of this difference demonstrates that the secondary process of the conscious refers to the unraveling of time, to a same duration, to this history of a subject, the series of representations that affects the conscious.

The primary process endeavors to bring about a discharge of excitation in order that, with the help of the amount of excitation thus accumulated, it may establish a 'perceptual identity' [with the experience of satisfaction]. The secondary process,

¹⁵ Freud, SE5, p. 615-616.

however, has abandoned this intention and taken on another in its place—the establishment of a ‘*thought* identity’ [with that experience]. All thinking is no more than a circuitous path from the memory of a satisfaction (a memory which has been adopted as a purposive idea) to an identical cathexis of the same memory which it is hoped to attain once more through an intermediate stage of motor experience.¹⁶

If such is the case, we see that the unconscious and the conscious are not two separate entities but rather two instances that are born out of their own separation, of their relation. They cannot be conceptualized, in their structural heterogeneity, except in reference to the operations of “making way,” of “resistances,” of “censorships,” and of “repression” that form but one operation, and which Freud puts into place as of 1895 in the “Project for A Scientific Psychology.” Freud refers to this original in-between in *The Interpretation of Dreams*:

I consider it expedient and justifiable to continue to make use of the figurative image of the two systems. We can avoid any possible abuse of this method of representation by recollecting that ideas, thoughts and psychical structures in general must never be regarded as localized in organic elements of the nervous system but rather, as one might say, *between* them, where resistances and facilitations provide the corresponding correlates. Everything that can be an object of our internal perception is *virtual*, like the image produced in a telescope by the passage of light-rays. But we are justified in assuming the existence of the systems (which are not in any way psychical perception) like the lenses of the telescope, which cast the image. And, if we pursue this analogy, we may compare the censorship between two systems to the refraction which takes place when a ray of light passes into a new medium.¹⁷

This original in-between of the unconscious and of the conscious is – as we have seen – fanstamatic activity itself, inasmuch as the unconscious fantasy clears a path through censorship and appears – modified according to the laws of language, “refracted,” to consciousness. The place this activity occupies in the psychic apparatus is at the same time that where the voice articulates itself between two subjects, and, in a more general manner, the place occupied by the *objet (a)* in Lacanian theory insofar that it falls, shatters, or disappears. Shattering, it lets the speech it imprisoned break through. This speech is given to be heard to the subject who listens to the voice that speaks. It is but in the appearance of the *objet (a)*, which is at the same time its vanishing, that the voice can be

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 602.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 611.

spotted in its foundational crossing, that the alterity of persons in the order of perception is felt, and that the alterity of instances in the order of psychic activity is given to be thought.

It is so true that the fantasmatic activity of the psychotic – whose perception and imagination coincide – are (immediately) given in vocal activity. The psychotic hears voices. Let us say that when the vocal sonority – the *objet (a)* – does not vanish, does not fall in the crossing of listening, there is a confusion between the two activities – fantasmatic and vocal –; the instance of site and the instance of knowledge are no longer differentiated. Where repression no longer fills in its function of “cutting in acts” between the subject and the Other, the play of the structure is jammed. There is left but the in-differentiation of the “one.”

No human (symbolic) reality whatsoever can be thought outside of the relation to the voice and the scar it leaves in the crossing where it vanishes, in becoming writing on the tables of the body. Listening to someone is not analytic except in the opening of this relation and in the spotting of the glimmering of the *objet (a)*; such listening remains open to its object, the unconscious, only insofar as it renounces any objectifying and refers to the truth of the subject’s desire.

But if this is so, the site of such listening cannot be defined except in the relation that founds in us the silent heterogeneity of the unconscious and the conscious. It is in silence that the voice is given to be heard. It is in silence that the voice of the other “speaks” and “writes” in us a presence that gives itself in the other and ourselves, through the representations of knowledge, in speech.

To listen to someone is – *ipso facto* – to invite them to the incessant traveling that brings them out of themselves to lodge in what they believe they are for the other (his knowledge), before having them come back in themselves, to lodge once again in the site whence they speak, relentless source of their knowledge.

In the analytic position, the non-answering of the demand of recognition of the analysand in knowledge or in site digs the question of the destination and the origin of the subject. Where can they be? Where are they located? In what cannot be said or in what is said? Solely in the limits of their site or solely in those of their knowledge? Neither here nor there. The subject cannot anymore be brought down to abstract knowledge that inscribes them in a system of representations than they can be reduced to their body, which circumscribes them in the insurmountable fortification of their site. Human reality does not let itself be heard except in the voice that speaks or in the silence that listens.

The lost voice, madness and death

It can happen – and such is the stake of every human life – that the relation between knowledge and site dissolves and that the voice loses itself, fails to *cross the limit*, and by that very fact, fails in founding its symbolic reality.

To say that the voice breaks is to say that the limit that separates the site from knowledge collapses: the body qua representative of site and discourse qua representative of knowledge no longer counter-distinguish themselves, being no longer founded upon the crossing which originally constitutes and differentiates them. The tension of the relation between both [sides] erases itself and the “subject” (although it is no longer possible to speak of a subject) finds itself engulfed, lost, alienated in knowledge for the other which has become knowledge of the other: this is *madness*. Or, then again, they find themselves imprisoned, locked up, bound to a site without markers: this is *death*.

More precisely, it should be said that the non-reference to the voice, to the original in-between, implies a dissociation of the subject in which knowledge gives itself as non-knowledge, madness, and site as non-site, death. Yet, non-knowledge, as we have seen, is the structural characteristic of site and non-site the characteristic of knowledge, which entails an immediate identity between site and knowledge, or as we often say, a breakdown.

If the voice no longer is, or is not the crossing that founds the limit of site and knowledge, the realm of madness lets itself be glimpsed: knowledge without limits, where representations only refer to other representations *without relation* with the site where this knowledge comes from: a storm-tossed boat, in distress, which no moorings can ever hold to the port, which will never link it to the body since the body can no longer thus be lived except as a non-site of pure knowledge. *The madman is like a man imprisoned in his knowledge*, in his imaginary knowledge without references, an enclosure all the more insurmountable that it does not know that it is a non-enclosure since, there, a limit was never founded by a voice that resonates in a site. There, the voice is hallucinated in the immediacy of an anxious certainty: there, the voice is no longer listened to in silence. The voice no longer comes from an “Other,” it comes from “elsewhere.” It is a separated voice, unknown, a voice that has the opacity of a thing.¹⁸

When the voice is lost, the limit between *knowledge* and *site* (human reality) thus vanishes in madness. The discourse and the body coincide.

¹⁸ Pankov, Gisela. “La dynamique de l’espace et le temps vécu.” *Critique*, Feb. 1972, p. 176-179.

A young man comes for a consultation. After a moment of hesitation, he says: “Well, I can’t do anything anymore and I think (he hesitates as if to listen to an interior discourse) that I have a mission. After my ordination, I started to think that there was no reason that I couldn’t be a canon, or a bishop, or even a cardinal... or even pope... and even Jesus-Christ. They treated me at the hospital and, well, I tell myself now that it isn’t true but during my crisis, I was convinced of the contrary... (he stops, taken over again by the irresistible incantation of “the” voice that evokes his divine mission and finally tells me): and now, still, I am not sure that it isn’t true...”

Thus, the “madman” takes himself for what he says he is, for what he “knows” he is: this is why he is lost in the words that have, for him, more truth than his body and his skin’s experience. He is no longer in his skin. He is “in” the words. As soon as they are uttered, they take on the force of the real and become the unique reference, with any reference possible to anything else. They have absolute value. Absolute, which is to say unmoored from a particular site, an abstract value, radically separated from his body and his history. The madman is delivered to the imaginary, which develops in him but that he does not recognize as his own: he mistakes dream for reality, as we always do when we are dreaming.

We say of a man lost in his discourse that he is *a madman fit to be bound*. It has always been felt as dangerous indeed to deliver oneself to the all-powerful might of words. And whoever is thus alienated is unmoored from the particular site of his experience, is without ties. He arouses, from then on, in his surroundings, the desire and the necessity, benevolent or hostile, to bring him back by force or by persuasion to *a* site. No longer in *the* symbolic site whence the voice comes and whither it returns in the silence of self-presence, but in *a* site that is an exterior *localization*, arbitrary, imposed by others: the psychiatric hospital, the prison, sometimes the convent – the first two institutions not without historical connections to the third.

Madness gives itself up then as *knowledge accomplished in [and for] itself*. It demonstrates the off-site of knowledge that loses itself and that as no effective limit to cross in the act of its accomplishment.

The idea no longer revitalizes itself in the “f/act” and, as it leaves, “no longer passes through the f/act”: this last passage constituting *the event*, which is to say the *f/act as signifier* in the chain of new knowledge signifiers, anchoring point of their chains. With the event, the f/act passes through knowledge, it is “passed,” inscribed to memory, and knowledge passes into f/act, which is to say that the accomplishment of knowledge requires of knowledge that it dies, at its own hands, of its universal possibility in order to realize itself in the particularity of a site.

One might as well say that madness is a voice without a site. And what is intolerable in madness is precisely that a voice cannot be conceived without a site, without a site whence it comes and whither it goes back. Without a site, the voice is inconceivable, mad, aberrant: a voice always strange and foreign that does not halt nor rest anywhere, unreal.¹⁹

A voice that can no longer gather itself in a site in which it is characterized and specified is literally the voice of everyone and nobody, failing to gather itself in the silence of the body.

What madness manifests, in its very failure – the attempt of emancipation in relation to contingency, to limit – is inherent to all knowledge. The movement of knowledge comes necessarily at the risk of man outside of himself and the madman is the man who, indefinitely projected outside of himself, in representation, attempts to make of universal knowledge his particular site and thereby loses the way back to himself. Madness lies at the heart of reason as its source and its limit.

The epistemological drive, like all drives, has a goal defined by the relations to its object. The goal of the epistemological drive is the pleasure of knowledge, and the inscription in the representations of knowledge of what distinguishes one object from another, and from all other objects, in relation to the subject.

The madman loses his bearings. The drives that agitate him have lost their direction, since the source and the object of his activity coincide. He errs in the multiplicity and generality of a discourse that addresses itself to no one and that does not come from himself, in a discourse without voice.

In a certain way, the madman's voice is estranged from him. It carries him so far in expression of self, outside of self, that there is no longer any return possible to the truth of his own limits. The voice that made him leave his self leads him in this other [voice] without depth that he affirms and which he does not recognize as his own, but as that of the character that he "knows" he is. Flight forward haste in which he attempts desperately to identify with the character, with the object (in the analytic sense of the term) that he projects, pure imaginary, pure appearance that gives itself as reality – as in a hallucination or a dream. This frenzied work of denial of the body as representing the site of the subject, brings him to see in the mirror where he gazes at himself his

¹⁹ Foucault, Michel. (1954) *Maladie mentale et psychologie*. Presses universitaires de France. Trans. Alan Sheridan. *Mental Illness and Psychology*. Berkeley, University of California Press: 1987.

"Regression is not a natural falling back into the past; it is an intentional flight from the present. A recourse rather than a return. But one can escape the present only by putting something else in its place; and the past that breaks through in pathological behavior is not the native ground to which one returns as to a lost country, but the factitious, imaginary past of substitutions. [...] This whole interplay of transformations and repetitions shows that, for the mentally ill, the past is invoked only as a substitute for the present situation and that it is realized only to the extent that it involves a de-realization of the present." (p. 33)

own image merging with the very thing he looks at. This crossing of the looking glass – that denies the mirror as reflecting – is accompanied by a massive, total, and extraordinary anxiety: sign and symptom of the ruptured link between the thing that is seen that the subject that sees himself.

The psychotic drowns themselves in a discourse-object, as they drown themselves in the reflection of a mirror that does not “reflect” the image of their body under the unity of their name: they cross the looking-glass and loses themselves in the reflection of the thing. The psychotic child in front of a mirror does not name themselves: they say that “they say a nose, a mouth, a sweater.” They do not see themselves.

For an adult, this imaginary crossing of the mirror provokes massive anxiety inasmuch as it does not allow them to inhabit the limits of their body. Endlessly invited to identify with the object they see, the subject could not know how to structure themselves in the “I” that sees. This structuring only operates “in the symbolic assumption” in which the body-object falls at the appearance of the subject’s name. This subject recognizes itself in the effect of the voice that crosses, as it signifies, the limits of his body and makes them dwell in the symbolic site of their name, of the voice. In the movement of this recognition and in the jubilation it leads to, the child turns towards the other with which it can identify in its very difference. Of what we call the object-body, the *object (a)* is the representative that the voice shatters while founding the symbolic passage of which it is the agent. This passage leads to the definitive repression of the body’s image that will come to signify itself in the symbolic network under the ultimate signifier of the *given name*. “I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it as an object.”²⁰ This is where one must recognize the “signifying cut” that originally articulates the structure, which is to say the play of the imaginary and the real. This cut could not be made without the voice that calls and names.

It is the naming and the reference to the other’s desire, as well as the law it implies, that assign the subject the symbolic limits of its site and of its time. To name someone is to lean it against death.

Delirium, or the imaginary crossing of the limit, denies the effective limit and, at the outset, the “re-flection” and the symbolic assumption. Whomever escapes from the ordeal of the limit (which articulates itself necessarily, everywhere it encounters itself, to the anxiety of castration and of death) cannot rise in the realm of alterity, whose seal is the *given name*. Beyond this connection of the body’s image with the name or, which comes to the same thing, of the unconscious to the

²⁰ J. Lacan, “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis,” in *Écrits*, p. 247.

conscious, beyond the splitting of the subject, a person does not have access to that which organizes the space and time in which they live. Fantasmatically, they are not born to the world or in the world. And their “knowledge” is, in its term, denial of death, impossibility to know death since they are *not born*, lost as they are in the chaotic and pre-original confusion of words and things, blank of any principal of differentiation in a world without voice, without speech, and without name, a world non-world or anti-world.

Psychoanalysis casts a bright light on the always already barred subject, in its very appearance, by way of this *nominal* signifier that represents the subject for another signifier. (Lacan) This should not hide the fact of what this is about: the inaugural confrontation of the death drive and the life drive. Inaugural, not in a chronological sense, but inasmuch as, as of that moment, a “structure” is given to be read. The experience of the mirror there conjoins the mortiferous identification to the object and the vivifying identification to the other, as well as the anxiety of death and the joy of birth, in recognition. The voice that calls and names delivers the child from its object-body, of its dead man’s body. Without the voice, the child finds themselves in the impossibility of finding themselves again, as they are lost in the multiplicity of objects or alienated in a part taken for a whole:²¹ dissociation of the object delivered to the anarchy of untangled drives from which no “symbolic assumption” appears possible.

It is only in the symbolic order that the entanglement of the death drives and the life drives can take place. *The alterity in the familiarity of the name assumes the alteration of the body’s image in the strangeness of the object.* In psychotics, where the structure in its heterogeneity does not play, where alterity is not given to be thought in the ordeal of the limit, all alterity is experienced as alteration. Delirious episodes are always accompanied by massive anxiety, correlative to this “impossibility” of inhabiting one’s body, of situating oneself in space and in time. These episodes testify to the impossibility of conceiving of oneself as *mortal*, to *know oneself mortal*. It often happens to them who have left or are leaving a delirious phase to confess that they believed themselves immortal and that

²¹ Pankov. *L’homme et sa psychose*. Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1969.

“Resolutely situated on the descriptive level, we cannot say for the moment if there exists or no a psychogenesis of the observed phenomena. Let us only say that during a phenomenon that appears as specific to psychosis, the lived body is not felt as an entity. This destruction of the body’s image can bring about different reactions. Either the totality of the body’s image is replaced by a part, either a confusion specific to psychosis takes place through the confusion of exterior and of interior. It is following such an *alteration* that one can see reappear certain parts of the body’s image in the external world. Sometimes, these parts are still recognized as the debris of a body primitively whole, but often they reappear under the form of visual or aural hallucinations.

With the term *dissociation*, I thus identify a destruction of the body’s image as the parts losing their link with the whole in order to thereby reappear in the exterior world. We try to grasp this process of dissociation in the verbal communication of the patient.” (p. 275, my trans.)

they felt it as a terrible anxiety. It is this anxiety that, in certain circumstances, uncontrollably pushes the psychotic to commit suicide. They thereby attempt to find or recover rest within the limit, a space—unimaginable for them and that cannot be symbolized—and that is always marked, in their discourse, as a black hole, the hole of death precisely, but not perceived as “death,” which is to say in its relation to life. The fascination with death, and the precipitation within it, are for them the ultimate attempt to finally inhabit a space, in other words to live! It is in precipitating themselves toward death that the psychotic testifies to the desire of being *a* living and no longer *the* living.

Indeed, it is in this relation to death, in this contact with the mortifying thing-object that life symbolizes itself within its limit: the body. As “pure” site, or pure fact, death is the constitutive stop of the subject. Knowledge of death is never but knowledge that “there is non-knowledge” and this “castration” sends us back to the limits of a subject, in the articulation of knowledge with what is not theirs. This articulation of knowledge and of site takes place in and by the voice, insofar as the voice leaves the site and comes back to it: *the voice is the speech of discourse and the silence of site*.

The relation of the subject to death, which is present in all objective knowledge, anchors the human being in the real of their history and constrains their imaginary to compose with the desire of the Other. Without the voice, witness of desire and operator of this structure, there is neither real, nor imaginary: two heterogeneous orders that cannot give themselves to be thought but by the voice, in the access to the symbolic order. Without the voice, there is confusion, magma, properly unimaginable chaos, non-structure. One could thus schematize what we have just said:

[Consult figures in original publication, p. 203]

Figure 1. structure: the elements are only given to be thought in their relation: (Venn diagram)

Figure 2. non-structure: the elements are not given to be thought, because there is no relation between them: (Shadow of dislocated usually conjoining elements of a Venn diagram)

If one of the elements, in fact, would come to disappear, which is to say to lose its relation to the three other elements, the structure’s game would no longer function. The *knowledge that is no longer articulated in the site of death is madness*. The voice that ex-ports madness does not refer to any site where it might be heard in silence. Indeed, silence is not conceivable outside of a concept of site, of gathering, of welcome. And there is no possible listening outside of silence: the voice remains without effect, this effect that we have seen is, in the silence of listening, the separation of site and knowledge.

Madness is a knowledge where life can no longer think of itself as “alive,” since madness cannot rest on a knowledge of death. Knowledge of life without death is a pure knowledge, an abstract knowledge of eternal life, or more exactly of life undefined, with its resulting anxiety. His discourse does not come up against any impossibility, any limit that would authenticate the possibility of his say. A discourse without site, which paradoxically encloses they who hold it and alienates them in a non-site of words, outside of as well as inside their body—for there is neither inside nor inside—in a site where they cannot be, for there is no “thinkable” site in the void. They are not part of life because they are nowhere.

The same is true of the madman and the alpinist who plunges into the void because they do not have a hold on which to hold on, they no longer grip to the face of which they have not found the rift and, for lack of falling back onto their body’s balance, are given up to the vertigo—which they say is euphoric—of an unending fall. Of the delirious, like the alpinist, we say that they are unscrewed or that they are unhinged.

In other words, *knowledge*—which is ex-pression and pro-gression—is distinguished from madness—which is a suppression of the limit—by this: knowledge is *subversion* of the law of death, while *madness* is its *transgression*.

Subversion and transgression conjure here the concept of law and its essential articulation to the concept of death. From afar or near, the transgression of the law has always something to do with the risk of death.

Subversive activity requires, to attain its ends, the exact and intimate knowledge of the state of things one intends to modify. This activity does not make use of any force exterior to this state of things, but on the contrary composes with all the forces that organize the system and plays them in such a manner that ultimately the system is overwhelmed by the game of its own laws. This results in the accusation of the legislator himself and of their power.

This holds well for the subversion of the State, in politics: the process of subversion is always directed against a force represented by a person or a class who solely profits from the laws of the entire society. This force takes the figure of the tyrant who disposes of the lives of others. The specter of death is outlined behind the figure of the tyrant, and it is to make manifest this power of death, which means to make the law, that subversive activity employs itself by taking arms if need be. In unmasking the reality of the power *of/from* death, subversive activity opens the way to a power *of/from* life. The life of all only manifests itself as the life of each in the attempt to subvert death. Our desire to live is inevitably conjured in the knowledge of the law of death.

The vertigo of the knowledge of the object—which is always, definitively the body-object—holds by the fact that in identifying the object that they see, the subject discovers in themselves the laws that regulate the world. And the *law* of laws is indeed death. All objects disappear, die.

But, at the same time, it's as a living mortal—*mortal* not dead—that the subject recognizes themselves in the symbolic assumption of the *name* that calls them and that makes them exist in someone other than themselves and to whom they identify in the mode of re-cognition. By the re-cognition of the name that *they hear* and designates them as something other than the thing *that they see*, they escape for a while the vertigo of death in the site of the living body. [Consult figures in original publication, p. 205]

Death, in the flash of lightning where it recognizes itself as the ultimate instance of the real, anchors the subject in his body, where it is at work against the forces of life that, for a while, subvert it.

If we have often employed expressions like “knowledge and awareness of death” it is not without the acute consciousness of their antinomy. Let us say that knowledge of death is what is at work in the knowledge of the object. Yet knowledge of death, which underpins all knowledge, is knowledge of *nothing*, a non-knowledge that characterizes and founds, as its buttress [*butée*], the ultimate term of all awareness and its “return” to the site. Human beings are only aware of death in knowing that they misunderstand it and that it is this misunderstanding which orders and organizes their knowledge of objects. They do not know death: they only know that *they* will die. This return to the mortal *subject* that differentiates them from the *dead object*, in the mirror game for example, this return to the shelter of the site where death leads them back, inexorably pierces the human being's knowledge. To elude death, human beings inhabit mortality in the knowledge of death in general, which protects them from the non-knowledge of their particular, effective death.

In this relation between the seen thing that can disappear and the heard name—which eludes the disappearance to which the visible is submitted, between life and death—is born a fragile but constant vacillation of the subject. In discovering themselves mortal, “in being capable of death” – and we have seen that this discovery is always tied to the identification to the object, to the thing, to the sex – the human being discovers *conflictively* that they are also subject, non-thing, a site where life manifests and transmits itself in embodied speech; which is not without a relation to the sex. In other words, in the sex are knotted and played out the confrontation of life and death. It would be best to say in the body, insofar as it is sexual. The sexual body is never reducible to the pure sex, to which, nevertheless, it attempts to identify itself in the imaginary nudity of the mirror's

omnipotence. But death's vertigo, at the same time, at least manifests that they are not really "that." [ca] The being of the subject is never reducible to the "existence" of the thing, since when they are reduced to it, they die.

Writes M. Heidegger,

The mortals are human beings. They are called mortals because they can die. To die means to be capable of death as death. Only man dies. The animal perishes. It has death neither ahead of itself nor behind it. Death is the shrine of Nothing, *that is, of that which in every respect is never something that merely exists*, but which nevertheless presences, even as the mystery of Being itself (*das Wesen des Seins*). As the shrine of Nothing, death harbors within itself the presence of Being. As the shrine of Nothing, death is the shelter of Being. We now call mortals mortals—not only because their earthly life comes to an end, but because they are capable of death as death. Mortals are who they are as mortals, present in the shelter of Being. They are the presencing relation to Being as Being.²²

The body is the site of a double movement of subversion: subversion of the object that is lost in the proximity of the thing that can be seen and disappear, and subversion of the subject who knows himself in the proximity to the voice they hear. It is in this reciprocal game of subversion, in this "rupturing effect" of dissolution and resumption even, marking the heterogeneity of the two orders, that desire is born.²³

²² Heidegger. "Building Dwelling Thinking." In *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans. A. Hofstadter. New York : Harper Collins, 1975, p. 148.

²³ Leclair, S. *Démasquer le réel*, Paris: Seuil, 1971. S. Leclair comes to the same conclusion, but in different terms: "Thus is the *body*: a set of sites where order reveals its conflict. The *site* reveals itself for what it is, *the encounter or the coincidence of forceful antinomies*, and one easily perceives that in relation to this rigorous conception of site, the representation of a surface (even if it were immediately considered double-sided) on which points and figures would come and inscribe and order themselves does not constitute a compromise that could flatter the exercises of intuition." (p. 62, my trans.)