PART I

Lacan and Psychological Theory

Kareen Ror Malone

A s Ian Parker suggests (chapter 19, this volume), psychological theory generally lacks a certain degree of self-reflexiveness. This deficiency reflects the cost of dispensing with investigations that do not pay off in the currency of "provable" ideas; it implicates the field's investment in experimental innovation at the expense of clarifying and refining the logic of its own conceptions. Theoretical eclecticism is all one could expect from the precarious objectivity of a discipline that anxiously hovers between "social science" and "natural science." The status of theory in psychology is complicated further by clinical psychology, a collection of knowledge-building practices that are not exactly tailored to experimental verification despite being institutionally allied to "the science of psychology."

Cognitive psychology is the only theory that might currently claim hegemony in current academic circles. Although the study of cognition typically operates under assumptions that would be antithetical to the Lacanian apprehension of subjectivity (i.e., rational and individualistic approaches to cognition), new disciplinary possibilities continually emerge that could easily move studies of memory, "the cognitive unconscious," language, and social cognition toward a more Lacanian apprehension (see Moscovici, 1993; Muller, chapter 2, this volume). This conjecture does not even begin to assess the future of "hot" and "wet" areas in cognition, those areas that might easily lend themselves to conceptions of subjectivity that account for nonrationality in an adequate manner.

Part I contains three significant contributions to issues regarding processes of cognition in psychological theory. John Muller ("*The Origins and Self-Serving Functions of the Ego*"), while introducing the reader to Lacan's Imaginary Order in terms of its effects on the ego, clearly implicates social cognition and more general issues in cognitive theory. Although the term *ego* always has that psychoanalytic ring, Muller spells out Lacan's idea that "the ego" is really none other than the presumed or posited "self." This self is a ghost (homunculus or other organizing principle, e.g., adaptation) postulated in almost all psychological theories of cognition and social action. According to Muller, psychologists have misconceived the true nature of this functional agency and its origins.

Slavoj Žižek ("The Cartesian Subject without the Cartesian Theater"), working with presuppositions from cognitive psychology, pushes this notion of the self or subject that underlies current models of cognition. By uncovering and deconstructing presuppositions about the self or subject common to most models of cognition, Žižek demonstrates that Dennett's understanding of subjectivity specifically overlooks the type of formative moment of which cognitive systems could be said to be "the symptom," namely, the impossibility of our self-conscious assent into our own subjectivity.

Suzanne Barnard ("Socializing Psycholinguistic Discourse: Language as Praxis in Lacan") follows Žižek's philosophical interrogation with a further critique of the Platonic assumptions that compromise Chomsky's work in psycholinguistics. While Žižek will talk of the impossibility of assuming certain moments in our own subjective genesis, Barnard will re-cast those moments in the terms of particularity in the praxis of everyday discourse (also see Patsalides and Malone, chapter 7, this volume). In the obsession with synchronic closed systems that can be "simulated" by computers, those in cognitive science as well as those within psycho-

linguistics shortchange the actual elusiveness of daily human speech. In discarding the messiness of particular exchanges for the formal beauty of grammatical or functional systems, they also foreclose any understanding of how lack and thus desire enter speech. Here we return to Žižek (and even to Muller). All three chapters point to the essential significance of considering human desire (lack, gap, impossibility) in understanding the processes of human cognition.

Religion has become a sort of a lost soul in psychology—a lost soul that cannot seem to find its rightful grave. We conflate the psyche, variously, with psychobiological entities, cultural constructs, or (purely "rational") cognition, but a bothersome question remains: What significance does "the psychological" have for whatever it is that we understand through religion? Contemporary mainstream psychology, uneasily yoked to religion, tends to ignore this question, ceding it by default to members of the transpersonal and humanistic wings of the community of psychologists. David Metzger ("Lacanian Psychoanalysis and the Neurotic Orientation of Religious Experience") pits psychoanalysis against religion in terms of the conflicting norms for articulating a relationship to the Other which he attributes to them. Metzger never recoils from the atheistic stance commonly imputed to psychoanalysis, and he poses some very uncomfortable questions to those who would rely on religious study and toil for aid in their quest for authentic being. However, despite his disparagement of religion, Metzger implicitly shows that psychoanalysis is no less dependent upon a hard-won understanding of the Other than the life of religion.

Valerie Walkerdine's chapter ("No Laughing Matter: Girls' Comics and the Preparation for Adolescent Femininity") leads us to the familiar terrain of developmental psychology by juxtaposing some of the latter's fundamental issues with Lacanian concepts. Hers is not a purely Lacanian piece, but she uses Lacanian theory to subvert the idea that development consists of moving through normative stages in a lock-step sequence. Walkerdine offers an alternative (non-)developmental picture, in which layers of fantasy mediate subjectivity at the interface between individual experience and particular sociocultural milieus (see also Walkerdine, 1996).

The final two chapters in this part examine psychological theory from an explicitly psychoanalytic point of view. Robert Samuels ("Homosexualities from Freud to Lacan") critiques Freud's theorization of homosexuality and some common misprisions of Freudian theory, which all too often inspire oppression of gay men and lesbians as well as alternative ideas and "identities" for gay men and lesbians (Merck, 1993). Some scholars impute a heteronormative

bias to Lacanian theory, but other readers of Lacan make the opposite point (e.g., Dean, 1997). Irrespective of the variety of interpretations that Lacan receives, the stakes of the debate on homosexuality go beyond political necessity. Lacanian ideas of sexuality and sexuation can contribute to an alternative conceptualization of the psychologist's stance in the clinical setting. As well, sexuation is conceived in relation to the formation of the Symbolic Order (the latter, of course, intersects questions of the political). Using Lacan, Samuels explains how "homosexualities" in Freud contribute directly to the formation of psychological structure.

The final piece by André Patsalides and Kareen Malone ("Jouissance in the Cure") serves as a transition into the clinical section. This chapter dispels the idea that Lacan is all about ratiocination. Seeing Lacan as simply intellectualizing and conceptual arises from readers' impoverished understanding of "the signifier." The reign of the signifier also means that the body and our relationship to the body of another is irreversibly transformed. This transformation that refigures bodily enjoyment and that introduces what Freud called the Death Drive is conceptualized under the Lacanian rubric, *jouissance*. Jouissance marks the contradictions and particularities elaborated in the first three chapters of this section. It is that which brings the question of the body to bear on the question of the signifier; it is, if I may say so, the specific motivational matrix under which cognition labors.

REFERENCES

Dean, T. (1997, April). *Lacan meets queer theory*. Paper presented at the conference on Sexuation, New York.

Merck, M. (1993). *Perversions.* New York: Routledge

Moscovici, S. (1993). The return of the unconscious. *Social Research, 60,* 41–93.

Walkerdine, V. (1996). Working-class women: Psychological and social aspects of survival. In S. Wilkinson (Ed.), *Feminist Social Psychologies* (pp. 145–162). Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.

1

The Cartesian Subject
without the Cartesian Theatre

Slavoj Žižek

I n his attacks on bourgeois ideology, Lenin liked to emphasize the need for a thorough knowledge of one's enemies: in an ideological struggle, the enemy often perceives what is truly at stake in the struggle more accurately than those closer to us. Therein resides the interest, for those who endorse the Lacanian notion of subjectivity, of the emerging school of German and American followers of Dieter Henrich—the basic project of this school is to counteract the different versions of today's "decenterment" or "deconstruction" of the subject by way of a return to the notion of subjectivity in the sense of German Idealism (see, as a representative recent volume, Karl Ameriks and Dieter Sturma [Eds.], 1995). Their central endeavor is to demonstrate how the dimension of subjectivity is irreducible: the subject's self-acquaintance is always-already presupposed in all our acts, that is, the gap between the

subject's immediate self-experience and the mechanisms of its objective genesis is constitutive, which is why one cannot reduce the subject to an effect of some underlying objective process.

However, instead of engaging in a direct dialogue with Henrich's school, it seems more promising to confront it with another figure of the "enemy" of Lacanian psychoanalysis: the contemporary endeavors by cognitive sciences to provide an empirical/evolutionary account of the emergence of consciousness. The representative example here is Daniel Dennett's (1991) *Consciousness Explained,* a work that, precisely, wants to accomplish what Henrich's followers consider a priori impossible: the genesis of consciousness, of the self-conscious subject, out of the biological evolutionary process. Although Dennett's propositions regarding the dispersed multitude of narratives fighting for hegemony within the human mind and the lack of any Agent coordinating this pandemonium often sound close to deconstruction (Dennett himself approvingly quotes the ironic definition of "semiotic materialism" from David Lodge's *Nice Work*), the temptation to be avoided is precisely the hasty conclusion that Dennett is a kind of deconstructionist wolf in the sheep's clothing of empirical science. There is a gap that forever separates Dennett's scientific evolutionary explanation from the deconstructionist "meta-transcendental" probing into the conditions of (im)possibility of the philosophical discourse.

The basic premise of Dennett's "*hetero*phenomenology" is that subjective experience is *the theorist's* (interpreter's) *symbolic fiction,* his *supposition,* not the domain of phenomena 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. In a first approach, this seems innocent enough, self-evident even: of course we do not have direct access to another person's mind, so we have to reconstruct an individual's self-experience from his external gestures, expressions and, above all, words. However, Dennett's point here is much more radical. In a novel, the universe we reconstruct is full of "holes," not fully constituted: when Conan Doyle describes the flat of Sherlock Holmes, it is in a way meaningless to ask how many books there were exactly on the shelves—the writer simply did not have in his mind an exact idea of it. And, for Dennett, it is the same with another person's experience in "reality": what one should NOT do is to suppose that, deep in another's psyche, there is a full self-experience of which we only get fragments. *Even the appearances cannot be saved.*

This central point of Dennett (1991) can be nicely rendered if one contrasts it with two standard opposed theoretical stances that

are effectively solidary: first-person phenomenalism—even if my mind *is* merely a software in my brain, nobody can take from me the full first-person experience of reality—and third-person behavioral operationalism—in order to understand the mind, we should limit ourselves to third-person observations that can be objectively verified, and not accept any first-person accounts. Dennett undermines this opposition by what he calls "first-person operationalism": the gap is to be introduced into my very first-person experience, the gap between content and its registration, between represented time and the time of representation. A nice proto-Lacanian point made by Dennett (and the key to his heterophenomenology) is this insistence on the distinction, in homology with space, between *the time of representation* and the *representation of time:* they are not the same, that is, the loop of flashback is discernible even in our most immediate temporal experience. The succession of events ABCDEF . . . is represented in our consciousness so that it begins with E, then goes back to ABCD, and, finally, returns to F which in reality directly follows E. So even in our most direct temporal self-experience, a gap akin to that between signifier and signified is already at work: even here, one cannot "save the phenomena," since what we (mis)perceive as directly experienced representation of time (the phenomenal succession ABCDEF . . .) is already a "mediated" construct from a different time of representation (E/ABCD/F . . .). "First-person operationalism" thus emphasizes how, even in our direct (self-)experience, there is a gap between content (the narrative inscribed into our memory) and the "operational" level of how the subject constructed this content, where we always have a series of rewritings and tinkerings: "introspection provides us—the subject as well as the 'outside' experimenter—only with the content of representation, not with the features of the representational medium itself" (p. 354).

In this precise sense, the subject is his own fiction: the content of his own self-experience is a narrativization in which memory traces already intervene. So when Dennett makes " 'writing it down' in memory criterial for consciousness; that is *what it is* for the 'given' to be 'taken'—to be taken one way rather than another," and claims that "there is no reality of conscious experience independent of the effects of various vehicles of content on subsequent action (and, hence, on memory)," we should be careful not to miss the point: what counts for the concerned subject himself is the way an event is "written down," memorized—memory is constitutive of my "direct experience" itself, that is, "direct experience" is what I *memorize* as my direct experience (p. 132). Or, to put it in Hegelian

terms (which would undoubtedly appall Dennett): immediacy itself is mediated; it is a product of the mediation of traces.

One can also put this in terms of the relationship between direct experience and judgment on it: there is no "direct experience" prior to judgment; what I (re)construct (write down) as my experience is already supported by judgmental decisions. For this reason, the whole problem of "filling in the gaps" is a false one: there are no gaps to be filled in. Let us take the classic example of our reading a text that contains a lot of printing mistakes: most of the mistakes pass unnoticed, since, in our reading, we are guided by an active attitude of recognizing patterns, we, for the most part, simply read the text as if there were no mistakes. The usual phenomenological account of this would be that, due to my active attitude of recognizing ideal patterns, I "fill in the gaps" and automatically, even prior to my conscious perception, reconstitute the correct spelling, so that it appears to me that I read the correct text. What if, however, the actual procedure is different? Driven by the attitude of actively searching for known patterns, I quickly scan a text (our actual perception is much more discontinuous and fragmentary than it may appear), and this combination of an active attitude of searching and fragmented perception leads my mind directly to the conlcusion that the word I just read is "conclusion," not "conlcusion," as it was actually written? There are no gaps to be filled in here, since there is no moment of perceptual experience prior to the conclusion (i.e., judgment) that the word I've just read is "conclusion."

This (somewhat simplified) example also renders clear Dennett's (1991) point that the opposition between (what he calls) "Stalinesque" and "Orwellian" interpretation is irrelevant: it is wrong to ask if I first, for a brief moment, perceive the word the way it is actually written ("conlcusion") and then, after a brief lapse of time, under the pressure of my search for recognizable patterns, change it into "conclusion" (the "Orwellian" brainwashing, which convinces the subject who first sees five fingers, that he actually saw four fingers), or if there is no actual perception of the misspelled word, so that the corrective misreading occurs already prior to my act of (conscious) perception (the "Stalinesque" pre-perceptual manipulation in which there is no moment of adequate perception of "conlcusion," since all I am ever aware of are already falsified memory traces, so that the Theatre of Consciousness is like the courtroom stage in Stalinist show trials). There is no limit that separates what goes on "before" our direct "live experience" (the pre-perceptual, preconscious processes) from what goes on "after"

(the memory inscription, reporting, etc., on our experience), no It (a direct moment of experience) where the presubjective processes are magically transformed into the Event of Sense, into the subjective Experience of Sense, to which then refer later acts of reporting, memorizing it, etc. It is, on the contrary, the very act of judgment, the conclusion that "it is so," that makes us perceive the previous presubjective confusion as the consistent Experience: "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. . . . The higher-order state literally depends on—causally depends on—the expression of the speech act" (p. 315).

The perfect example of this point, of course, is a situation in which I become aware of a "deep" attitude of mine, when, in a totally unexpected way, without any premeditation, I simply blurt something out. Dennett quotes here the famous passage from one of Bertrand Russell's letters to Lady Ottoline, in which he recalls the circumstances of his declaration of love to her: "I did not know I loved you till I heard myself telling you so—for one instant I thought 'Good God, what have I said?' and then I knew it was the truth" (Clark, 1975, p. 176). Far from being an exceptional feature, this is the basic mechanism that generates meaning: a word or a phrase forces itself upon us, and thereby imposes a semblance of narrative order on our confused experience; there is no preexisting "deep awareness of it" expressed in this phrase—it is, on the contrary, this very phrase that *organizes* our experience into a "deep awareness."

In literature, an outstanding example is provided by the very last lines of Patricia Highsmith's *Strangers on a Train*: in contrast to Hitchcock's film version, Guy *does* also kill Bruno's wife, and, at the novel's end, police detectives who have been closely monitoring him for some time, finally approach him in order to take him in for questioning. Guy, who has been preparing for this moment for a long time and has memorized a detailed alibi, reacts with a confessionary gesture of surrender that takes even him by surprise: "Guy tried to speak, and said something entirely different from what he had intended. 'Take me'" (Highsmith, 1982, p. 256). It is wrong to "substantialize" the attitude expressed in Guy's last words, as if, "deep in himself," he was all the time aware of his guilt and nourished a desire to be arrested and punished for it. There was, of course, a confessional "disposition" in Guy, but it was competing with other dispositions, ambiguous, not clearly defined,

and it won over due to a concrete contingent constellation; not unlike Kieslowski's (1981) early *Blind Chance,* which deals with three different outcomes of a man running for a train: he catches it and becomes a communist official; he misses it and becomes a dissident; there is no train and he settles down to a mundane life.

This notion of a mere chance that can determine the outcome of a man's life was unacceptable to communists as well as to their opposition (it deprives dissident attitude of its deep moral foundation). The point is that in each of the three cases, the contingency that gave the "spin" to his life would be "repressed," that is, the hero would construct his life story as a narrative leading to its final result (a dissident, an ordinary man, a communist apparatchik) with a "deep necessity." Is this not what Lacan referred to as the *futur anterieur* of the Unconscious which "will have been"?

The title of chapter 8 of *Consciousness Explained* ("How Words Do Things with Us") makes the point clear by means of a reversal of Austin's "How to Do Things with Words": our symbolic uiniverse is a pandemonium of competing forces (words, phrases, syntactic figures . . .), a universe of tinkering and opportunistic enlisting, of the exploitation of contingent opportunities. Lincoln's famous quip "You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all of the time" is logically ambiguous: does it mean that there are some people who can always be fooled, or that, on every occasion, someone or other is bound to be fooled? It is wrong to ask "What did Lincoln really mean?" Probably, unaware of the ambiguity, he simply wanted to make a witty point, and the phrase "imposed itself on him" because "it sounded good" (Dennett, 1991, p. 244). Here we have an exemplary case of how, when the subject has a vague intention to signify and is "looking for the right expression" (as we usually put it), the influence goes both ways: 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"?

Dennett thus conceives of the human mind as a multitude of vaguely coordinated "software": programs created by evolution to solve some particular problem, and which, later, take over other functions. The structure of the human mind is that of over-determination: in it, we find neither isolated particular organs with clearly defined functions, nor a universal Master-Self coordinating between them, but a permanently shifting "improvised" coordination—some particular program (not always the same) can tempo-

rarily assume the coordinating function, that is, some specialists can be temporarily recruited as generalists. The human mind is a pandemonium of competing forces: words impose themselves, want to be spoken, so that we often say something without knowing in advance what we wanted to say. The function of language is thus ultimately *parasitic*: not only do words and phrases seem to impose themselves on us, trying to gain the upper hand, fighting for hegemony, but the very fundamental relationship between language and human beings who use it can be reversed—it could be argued that not only do human beings use language to reproduce themselves, multiply their power and knowledge, etc., but also, at perhaps a more fundamental level, language itself uses human beings to replicate and expand itself, to gain new wealth of meanings, etc. (here, Dennett refers to Dawkins's notion of "meme" as the smallest unit of the symbolic reproduction). What really happens when, for example, a man sacrifices his material well-being, his life even, for some Cause, that is, for "an Idea" (say, for his religious belief)? One cannot reduce this "Idea" to a shorthand for the well-being of other human beings: this man literally sacrificed himself for an "Idea," he gave precedence to the strengthening of this "meme" over his own life. So it is not sufficient to say that men use Ideas as means of communication among themselves, as mental patterns to better organize their lives and cope with dangerous situations, etc. In a way, Ideas themselves use men as the expendable means of their proliferation.

The first, obvious result of this account is that it allows no place for the philosophical subject, the Cartesian *cogito* or transcendental Self-Consciousness, nor for (what appears to be) its opposite, the Freudian Unconscious as the hidden agency that effectively "pulls the strings" of our psychic life: what they both presuppose is a unified agent (the Subject, the Unconscious) which controls and directs the course of events, and Dennett's point is, precisely, that there is *no* such agent. (Incidentally, with regard to this precise point, Lacan fully agrees with Dennett: the Freudian Unconscious is not another, hidden Controller, the Ego's puppet-master, a shadowy double of the Ego who effectively pulls its strings, but a pandemonium of inconsistent tendencies that endeavor to exploit contingent opportunities in order to articulate themselves.)

Dennett's (1991) account of the spontaneous, "mechanistic" emergence of a narrative out of the encounter between the subject's attitude (interest, "thrust") and a series of ultimately contingent responses/signals from the real (pp. 10–16), intends to get rid of the Unconscious as the hidden Narrative Master staging and controlling everything behind the scenes, and to show how a narrative can

emerge out of opportunistic tinkering. His example is that of a party game in which the dupe is told that while he is out of the room, one member of the assembled party will relate to all others a recent dream. When the dupe returns to the room, he can ask anyone in the room questions, the answers to which have to be a simple "Yes!" or "No!" The point of the game is for the dupe to guess from the contours of the dream the identity of the dreamer. However, once the dupe is out of the room, the rest of the party agrees that there will simply be no dream: they will answer the dupe's questions following some simple rule unrelated to their content— say, if the last letter is from the first half of the alphabet, the answer should be Yes!, otherwise No!—with the proviso of noncontradiction. What thus often emerges is a ludicrous and obscene narrative to which *there is no author*: the closest to the author is the dupe himself, who provides the general thrust by means of the direction implied by his questions, while the rest is the result of a pure contingency. Dennett's point is that not only dreams, but even the narratives that form the cobweb of our daily existence, emerge in this way, by means of opportunistic tinkering and contingent encounters.

Although this explanation involves a model materialist procedure, accounting for the appearance of a coherent and purposeful Totality of Sense from contingent encounters between two heterogeneous levels (the subject's cognitive thrust; signals from reality), one is nonetheless tempted to counter it with an argument homologous to Kant's rejection of the empiricist claim that the entire content of our mind comes from sensual experience: the problem Dennett does not resolve is that of the very *form* of 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 the form of narrative) come from? Everything can be explained this way except the narrative form itself, which, in a way, *must already be here.* One is tempted to say that this silently presupposed form is Dennett's Unconscious, an invisible structure he is unaware of, operative in the phenomena he describes.

Are we then back at the Kantian idealist position of a formal a priori as the condition of possibility for the organization of our contingent experiences into a coherent narrative? At this point, it is crucial to take into account one of the fundamental lessons of psychoanalytic theory: a form that precedes content is always an index of some traumatic "primordially repressed" content. This lesson holds especially for the formalism encountered in art: as it was emphasized by Fredric Jameson, the desperate formalist at-

tempt to distinguish the formal structure from any positive content is the unfailing index of the violent repression of some traumatic content—the last trace of this content is the frozen form itself. The notion of autonomous form as the index of some repressed traumatic content applies specifically to the narrative form.

This brings us to Jameson's other thesis, according to which, *narrative as such* is ideological, the elementary form of ideology: it is not only that some narratives are "false," based upon the exclusion of traumatic events and patching up the gaps left over by these exclusions—the answer to the question "Why do we tell stories?" is that the *narrative as such* emerges in order to resolve some fundamental antagonism by way of rearranging its terms into a temporal succession. It is thus the very *form* of narrative that bears witness to some repressed antagonism.

So, back to Dennett: the fact that "we are all storytellers" has to be grounded in an act of "primordial repression." Where, in Dennett, do we find traces of the absence of this repression (to use the somewhat outdated jargon)? Dennett (1991) draws a convincing and insightful parallel between an animal's physical environs and human environs, not only artifacts (clothes, houses, tools), but also the "virtual" environs of the discursive cobweb: "Stripped of the 'web of discourses,' an individual human being is as incomplete as a bird without feathers, a turtle without its shell" (p. 416). A naked man is the same nonsense as a shaved bird: without language (and tools and . . .), man is a crippled animal. It is this lack that is supplemented by symbolic institutions and tools, so that the point made obvious today, in popular culture figures such as Robocop (man is simultaneously super-animal and crippled), holds from the very beginning. The problem here is: how do we pass from "natural" to "symbolic" environs? 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.

Again, we are not idealists: this In-between is not the spark of *logos* magically conferred on *homo sapiens*, enabling him to form his supplementary virtual symbolic environs, but precisely something that, although it is also no longer nature, is not yet logos, and has to be "repressed" by *logos*. The Freudian name for this In-between, of course, is *death drive*. With regard to this In-between, it is interesting to note how philosophical narratives of the "birth

of man" are always compelled to presuppose a moment in human (pre)history when (what will become) man is no longer a mere animal and simultaneously not yet a "being of language," bound by symbolic Law; a moment of thoroughly "perverted," "denaturalized," "derailed" nature that is not yet culture. In his anthropological writings, Kant emphasized that the human animal needs disciplinary pressure in order to tame an uncanny "unruliness" that seems to be inherent to human nature—a wild, unconstrained propensity to insist stubbornly on one's own will, cost what it may. It is on account of this "unruliness" that the human animal needs a Master to discipline him: discipline targets this "unruliness," not the animal nature in man. *This in-between is the "repressed" of the narrative form:* not nature as such, but the very break with nature, which is (later) supplemented by the virtual universe of narratives.

This premonition of Kant's was further developed by F. W. J. Schelling, one of his main followers within German Idealism. The basic insight of Schelling, whereby, prior to its assertion as the medium of the rational Word, the subject is the "infinite lack of being *unendliche Mangel an Sein,*" the violent gesture of contraction that negates every being outside itself, also forms the core of Hegel's notion of madness. When Hegel determines madness to be a withdrawal from the actual world, the closing of the soul into itself, its "contraction," the cutting-off of its links with external reality, he all too quickly conceives of this withdrawal as a "regression" to the level of the "animal soul" still embedded in its natural environs and determined by the rhythm of nature (night and day, etc.).

Does this withdrawal, on the contrary, not designate the severing of the links with the *Umwelt*, the end of the subject's immersion into its immediate natural environs, and is it, as such, not the founding gesture of "humanization"? Was this withdrawal-into-self not accomplished by Descartes in his universal doubt and reduction to *cogito*, which, as Derrida (1978) pointed out in his "Cogito and the history of madness," also involves a passage through the moment of radical madness? Are we thus not back at the well-known and often-quoted passage from *Jenaer Realphilosophie*, where Hegel characterizes the experience of pure Self, of the contraction-into-self of the subject, as the "night of the world," the eclipse of (constituted) reality?

The human being is this night, this empty nothing, that contains everything in its simplicity—an unending wealth of many representations, images, of which none belongs to him—or

which are not present. This night, the inner of nature, that exists here—pure self—in phantasmagorical representations, is night all around it, in which here shoots a bloody head— there another white ghastly apparition, suddenly here before it, and just so disappears. One catches sight of this night when one looks human beings in the eye—into a night that becomes awful. (Verene, 1985, pp. 7–8)

So, back to Dennett again: we may seem to have erred far from his evolutionary-scientific problematic, and well into the murky waters of metaphysical speculation. Here, however, a reference to *psychoanalytic* experience becomes crucial. Does Hegel's brief description—"here shoots a bloody head, there another white ghastly apparition"—not fit perfectly with Lacan's notion of the "dismembered body" *(le corps morcelé)*? What Hegel calls the "night of the world" (the fantasmatic, presymbolic domain of partial drives), is an undeniable component of the subject's most radical self-experience, exemplified, among others, by Hieronymous Bosch's celebrated paintings.

In a way, the entire psychoanalytic cure focuses on the traces of the traumatic passage from this "night of the world" into our "daily" universe of *logos.* The tension between the narrative form and the "death drive," as the withdrawal-into-self constitutive of the subject, is thus the missing link, the moment that has to be presupposed if we are to account for the passage from "natural" to "symbolic" environs. Within the symbolic space itself, this vanishing point of the "withdrawal-into-self" is operative in the guise of what Lacan calls the "subject of the enunciation," as opposed to the "subject of the enunciated" (the subject's symbolic and/or imaginary identifications). The moment Descartes interprets *cogito* as *res cogitans,* he, of course, conflates the two. The reduction of the subject to what Dennett calls the "Cartesian Theatre" (the stage of self-awareness in which we immediately experience phenomena, the place where the objective neuronal, etc., bodily mechanisms "magically" produce the effect of phenomenal [self-]experience) is another version of this conflation, of the reduction of the subject of enunciation to the subject of the enunciated.

However, what about the Kantian rereading of *cogito* as the pure point of self-consciousness, which does not designate any actual self-awareness, but rather functions as a kind of logical fiction, as the point of virtual self-awareness that is as such already actual, that is, operative? I could have become self-conscious of each

of my mental acts if I had chosen to probe into them, and the awareness of this possibility already determines the way I actually behave. For Kant, consciousness is always-already self-consciousness, but *not* in the sense that, whenever I am aware of the content of my thoughts, I am simultaneously aware of myself being aware of this content. This is not only patently untrue, but also, if this were the case, we would be caught in the vicious cycle of infinite regression: am I also conscious of my being conscious of my object-directed consciousness?, etc.

In his concise account of the status of Kantian Self-Consciousness, Robert Pippin (1989) emphasized how Kantian Self-Consciousness points toward the fact that our consciousness of objects is "implicitly reflexive" (Pippin also speaks of "implicit awareness" or "potential awareness"). When I assert (or desire or imagine or reject . . .) X, I always-already implicitly "take myself" as the one who is asserting (or desiring or . . .) X (pp. 19–24). 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.

Self-consciousness is not an additional reflexive turn of the gaze from the object one is conscious of upon oneself, but is consti-tutive of "direct" consciousness itself: "to be conscious of X" *means that* I "take myself" to be related to X, that is, that my relation toward X is minimally reflective. This minimal reflexivity is not to be opposed to prereflexive spontaneity in the standard sense of the contrast between being directly immersed into an activity and maintaining a reflexive distance toward it. In the ethical domain, for example, the contrast between spontaneously doing one's duty, since "it is part of my nature, I cannot do it otherwise," and doing my duty after a tortuous self-examination—the two are strictly synonymous. The Kantian notion of "spontaneity" means precisely that I, the subject, am not directly determined by (external or internal) causes: causes motivate me only insofar as I reflexively accept them as motifs, that is, insofar as I accept to be determined by them. In this sense, Self-Consciousness means that every imme-diacy is always-already mediated: when I directly immerse myself into an activity, this immersion is always grounded in an implicit act of immersing oneself; when I follow my most brutal instincts and "behave as an animal," I still remain the one who *decided* to behave in that way, however deeply repressed this decision may be.

Self-Consciousness is thus, in a way, even less than a software-program; it is a pure logical function, even symbolic fiction or presupposition (the point conceded to Dennett), which is nonetheless necessary for the functioning of the subject in "reality": there is no subject who, in the full presence of self-awareness, reflects and decides—it is just that, in the way I effectively act, a reflective attitude of deciding is always-already presupposed.

We encounter here again the difference between subject and Self: the Self, of course, is a mere "Center of Narrative Gravity," while the subject is the void itself filled in by the ever-changing Centers of Narrative Gravity. Kant thus wholly endorses the famous Humean rejection of the notion of substantial Self, that is, his claim that, no matter how attentively he probes introspectively into the content of his mind, he always encounters some particular, determinate idea, never his Self as such: of course, there is no Self in the sense of a particular substantial representation above and beyond other such representations. No stable substantial content guarantees the unity of the subject; any such content would involve an infinite regress, since it would mean that the Self is in a way "a part of himself," as if the subject can encounter, within himself, a part that is "his Self." Consequently, Kant also accepts the claim that the subject is not directly accessible to himself: the introspective perceptions of my inner life are no closer to the noumenal dimension than the perceptions of external reality, so that, for Kant, it is not legitimate to posit the direct coincidence of the observer and the observed. This coincidence is *not* what Kantian Self-Consciousness ("transcendental apperception") is about: To postulate such an identity would mean, precisely, to commit the "paralogism of pure reason."

Dennett is at his best when he viciously demolishes the standard philosophical game of "let us imagine that . . ."—let us imagine a zombie who acts and speaks exactly like a human, that is, whose behavior is indistinguishable from a human, and who is nonetheless not a human, but merely a mindless machine following a built-in program—and of drawing conclusions from such counterfactual mental experiments (about the a priori impossibility of artificial intelligence, of a biological foundation of mind, etc.): his counter-question is simply, "Can you *really* imagine it?" The Kantian Self-Consciousness involves a similar gap: although one can imagine self-consciousness accompanying all the acts of our mind, for structural reasons, this potentiality can never be fully actualized, and it is this very intermediate status that defines Self-Consciousness. For that reason, one should counter the mystique of "self-acquaintance"

as the primordial, unsurpassable fact, with the claim that Self-Consciousness emerges precisely because there is no direct "self-awareness" or "self-acquaintance" of the subject: The Kantian Self-Consciousness is an empty logical presupposition that fills in the gap of the impossibility of direct "self-awareness" Henrich (1982) himself makes this point in his own way: the "person" is the psycho-physical individual, a living being with a place among all mundane things, part of the common life-world; while the "subject" is the point of self-consciousness that does not coincide with any specific feature of the world—it is rather the void of the One, to which every think-able and experienceable content should be related, insofar as it is thinkable and experienceable.

What one should do in order to accomplish the crucial passage from the subject of self-acquaintance to the subject of the Unconscious, is simply "de-psychologize" the former, erase all traces of "actual self-experience" and purify it into a pure logical function (or, rather, presupposition) of an X, to whom attitudes are attributed. The Lacanian "subject of the Unconscious" is thus not the prediscursive reservoir of affects and drives, but its exact opposite: a pure logical construct, devoid of any experiential content and as such beyond reach for our self-experience.

Lacan's term "subject of the signifier" literally means that there is no substantial signified content that guarantees the unity of the I; at this level, the subject is multiple, dispersed, etc. The subject's unity is guaranteed only by the self-referential symbolic act: "I" is a purely performative entity; it is the one who *says* "I." Therein resides the mystery of the subject's "self-positing," rendered thematic by Fichte: when I say "I," I do not create any new content; I merely designate myself, the person who is uttering the phrase. This self-designation nonetheless gives rise to ("posits") an X that is *not* the "real" flesh-and-blood person uttering it, but, precisely and merely, the pure void of self-referential designation (the Lacanian "subject of the enunciation"): "I" am not directly my body or even the content of my mind; "I" am rather that X that *has* all these features as its properties. The Lacanian subject is the "subject of the signifier," not in the sense of being reducible to one of the signifiers in the signi-fying chain, but in a much more precise sense: when I say "I," that is, designate "myself" as "I," this very act of signifying adds some-thing to the "real flesh-and-blood entity" thus designated, and the subject is that empty X that is added to the designated content by means of the act of its self-referential designation.

Let us recall the typical attitude of a hysterical subject who complains how he is exploited, manipulated, victimized by others,

reduced to an object of exchange. The subjective position of being a passive victim of circumstances is never simply imposed from outside; it has to be at least minimally endorsed by the subject. He, of course, is not aware of active participation in his own victimization—this unawareness, precisely, is the "unconscious" truth of the subject's conscious experience of being a mere passive victim of circumstances. The (Lacanian) subject of the Unconscious is thus neither the standard subject of self-awareness, nor the dispersed multitude of fluxes that explode the subject's unity: this opposition between the "unified" subject of self-awareness and the dispersed presubjective multitude is false because it relies on the exclusion of the "empty" subject as the "vanishing mediator" between the two. Therein resides the gap that separates Lacan (who is here much closer to Kant and Hegel) from the immediacy of the subjective "self-awareness" or "self-acquaintance" on which Henrich and his followers (especially Manfred Frank) insist: for Lacan, to designate this "implicit reflexivity," which constitutes the core of subjectivity, as "self-acquaintance," already goes too far in the direction of phenomenology, and thus obfuscates the radically nonphenomenological status of the subject as a pure logical presupposition, a priori inaccessible to any direct introspective insight.

In order for me to recognize myself in an other (say, my mirror image), I must already be minimally acquainted with who I am. To be able to exclaim in front of a mirror "That's me!" I must have an idea of who this "me" is. Lacan's answer to this is that two levels are to be distinguished here. The identification with a mirror image is the identification with an object that effectively cannot ground the dimension of subjectivity; for that reason, this identification is alienating and performative: in the very act of recognizing myself as that image, I performatively posit that image as "me"—prior to it, I was nothing, I simply had no content. Who, then, is the "me" that recognizes itself as that image? The point is that this "nothing," previous to imaginary recognition is not a pure absence but the subject itself, that is, the void of self-relating negativity, the substanceless X to which attitudes, desires, and the like are attributed. I cannot be acquainted with it precisely because its status is thoroughly nonphenomenological. Any act of "self-acquaintance" already relies on a combination (or overlapping) of two radically heterogeneous levels, the pure subject of the signifier and an object of imaginary identification.

Dennett is thus right in emphasizing how our conscious awareness is fragmentary, partial, discontinuous: one never encounters "Self" as a determinate representation in and of our mind. However,

is not the conclusion to be drawn from this that the unity of the subject, that which makes him a One, is unconscious? Again, this subject is not some positive content, inaccessible to our conscious awareness, but a pure logical function: when the subject conceives himself as One—as that One, to which acts, attitudes, etc. are attributed (or, rather, imputed)—this One has no positive content that would guarantee its consistency. Its unity is purely logical and performative: the only content of this One is the operation of assuming as "mine" a multitude of acts, attitudes, and so on. One is thus tempted to claim that, while Dennett may well succeed in "explaining" consciousness, what he does not explain, what awaits to be explained, is the Unconscious, the Freudian Unconscious which is neither the presubjective ("objective") neuronal apparatus, the material vehicle of my mind, nor the subject's fragmentary self-awareness.

Where, then, is the Freudian Unconscious? Again, Dennett is right in undermining the phenomenological attempt to "save the phenomena"; he is right in demonstrating how what we take to be our direct phenomenal (self-)experience is a later construct, based on a mixture of discontinuous perceptions, judgments, and the like. In short, Dennett demonstrates the reflective status of our phenomenal self-awareness: it is not only that phenomena point toward a hidden transphenomenal essence; phenomena themselves are mediated, i.e., the phenomenal experience itself appears (is materialized-operationalized) in a multitude of its particular phenomenal vehicles, gestures, and so forth. A multitude of actual phenomena (fragmentary phenomenal experiences) point toward the Phenomenon itself, the construct of a continuous "stream of consciousness," a Theatre, a screen in our mind in which the mind directly perceives itself.

Once we have demonstrated how direct (self-)experience never effectively occurs in our consciousness, one can only "save the phenomena" by way of introducing 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, p. 132). Our actual phenomenal (self-)experience is a fragmentary and inconsistent mixture of perceptions, judgments, and such, while Phenomenal Self-Experience is precisely what is never given to us in direct experience. While Dennett evokes this hypothesis of the "objectively subjective" only to reject it as a senseless, self-defeating paradox, one is tempted to conceive this level of the "objectively subjective" as the very locus of the Unconscious: does the Freudian Unconscious not designate precisely the way things appear to us

without our ever being directly aware of them? In this sense, as Lacan points out, the subject of the Unconscious is not a given but an ethical supposition, that is, there *has to be* an X to whom the "objectively subjective" unconscious phenomena are attributed. 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: As Lacan put it, the Cartesian *cogito* is the subject of the Unconscious.

There is, however, a final misunderstanding to be dispelled here: the attribution of the "objectively subjective" fantasy to the *cogito* does not mean that, beneath the everyday subject that we are in our conscious lives, one has to presuppose another, "deeper" subject who is able to experience directly the unconscious fantasies inaccessible to our conscious Self. What one should insist on, in contrast to such a misreading, is the insurmountable gap between the empty subject ($, in Lacan's "mathemes") and the wealth of fantasies: for a priori topological reasons, they can never directly meet, since they are located at the opposite surfaces of the Moebius band. The dimension of fantasy is constitutive of the subject, which is to say there is no subject without fantasy. This constitutive link between subject and fantasy, however, does *not* mean that we are dealing with a subject the moment an entity displays signs of "inner life," that is, of a fantasmatic self-experience that cannot be reduced to external behavior. What characterizes human subjectivity proper is rather the gap that separates the two. Fantasy, at its most elementary, is inaccessible to the subject, and it is this inaccessibility that makes the subject "empty." The ultimate meaning of Lacan's assertion of the subject's constitutive "decenterment" is not that my subjective experience is regulated by objective unconscious mechanisms that are "decentered" with regard to my self-experience and, as such, beyond my control (a point asserted by every materialist), but rather something much more unsettling. I am deprived of even my most intimate "subjective" experience, the way things "really seem to me" (the fundamental fantasy that constitutes and guarantees the kernel of my being), since I can never consciously experience it and assume it.

According to the standard view, the dimension that is constitutive of subjectivity is that of the phenomenal (self-)experience—I am a subject the moment I can say to myself: "No matter what unknown mechanism governs my acts, perceptions and thoughts, nobody can take from me what I see and feel now." Lacan turns this standard view around, saying that the "subject of the signifier"

emerges only when a key aspect of the subject's *phenomenal* (self-)experience (his "fundamental fantasy") becomes *inaccessible* to him, or "primordially repressed." The Unconscious is the *inaccessible phenomenon*, not the objective mechanism that regulates my phenomenal experience. We thus obtain a relationship that totally subverts the standard notion of phenomenal (self-)experience, that is, of the subject who directly experiences himself, his "inner states": an "impossible" relationship between the *empty, nonphenomenal subject and the phenomenon that remains inaccessible to the subject*—the very relation registered by Lacan's formula of fantasy, $—a.

REFERENCES

Ameriks, K., & Sturma, D. (Eds.) (1995). *The modern subject: Conceptions of the self in classical German philosophy*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Clark, R. W. (1975). *The life of Bertrand Russell*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Dennett, D. C. (1991). *Consciousness explained*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.

Derrida, J. (1978). Cogito and the history of madness. In A. Bass (Trans.), *Writing and difference,* (pp. 31–63). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Henrich, D. (1982). *Fluchtlinien*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

Highsmith, P. (1982). *Strangers on a train*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Kieslowski, K., (Director) & Boguslaw, L. (1981). *Blind Chance*. [Videocassette] (Available from Contal International, Inc., New York).

Pippin, R. (1989). *Hegel's idealism: The satisfactions of self-consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Verene, D. P. (1985). *Hegel's recollection*. Albany: State University of New York Press.