



1992

## Reconsidering psycholinguistics' project : language as praxis in Lacan and Kristeva

Suzanne Barnard  
*Loyola University Chicago*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss)



Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Barnard, Suzanne, "Reconsidering psycholinguistics' project : language as praxis in Lacan and Kristeva" (1992). *Dissertations*. 3021.

[https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss/3021](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/3021)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact [ecommons@luc.edu](mailto:ecommons@luc.edu).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](#).  
Copyright © 1992 Suzanne Barnard

RECONSIDERING PSYCHOLINGUISTICS' PROJECT:  
LANGUAGE AS *PRAIXIS* IN LACAN AND KRISTEVA

by

Suzanne Barnard, M. A.

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate  
School of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

September

1992

**Copyright by Suzanne Barnard, 1992**

**All Rights Reserved**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the many individuals who helped to make this dissertation possible. First, I would like to express my appreciation for the constructive criticisms and suggestions of committee members Drs. Jill N. Reich, John R. Shack, and Richard N. Williams. I would especially like to thank Father Daniel C. O'Connell, director of my dissertation, for his unending support and insightful guidance throughout all phases of this project. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my parents, Mary Sue Barnard and James A. Barnard, for the encouragement and support they have given me throughout all of my efforts.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. . . . .	iii
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION. . . . .	1
II. THE CARTESIAN BIAS IN PSYCHOLINGUISTICS . . . . .	7
Subjectivity and Knowledge in Cartesian Rationalism. . . . .	7
Cartesian Linguistics Across History. . . . .	11
Structuralism: Language as a System of Signs. . . . .	13
Functionalist Approaches: Language as a Tool. . . . .	14
Rationalism: Language as Logic. . . . .	15
Behaviorist Approaches: Language as Mechanism. . . . .	16
The Birth of Psycholinguistics. . . . .	17
Language as Logic: Generative Grammar and Cognitive Psycholinguistics. . . . .	18
Generative Grammar . . . . .	18
Cognitive Psycholinguistics. . . . .	26
III. LANGUAGE AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON . . . . .	37
Contextualist and Sociolinguistic Approaches to the Study of Language. . . . .	39
European Psycholinguistics: Language as a Tool. . . . .	44
IV. THE SYMBOLIC AND THE SEMIOTIC IN LACAN AND KRISTEVA. . . . .	48
Beyond the Subject-Object Division: Heidegger's Hermeneutic Phenomenology. . . . .	49
Cogit(o)ation versus Understanding. . . . .	52
Language as Revelation. . . . .	54
Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva: Language and Post-Structuralist Thought. . . . .	58
The Symbolic Order: Language as Structure. . . . .	61
Lévi-Strauss and the Symbolic Structure of Society. . . . .	62
Saussure and the Symbolic Order. . . . .	64
Signifier and Signified: Language as a System of Signs. . . . .	66
From Saussure's Linguistics to Lacan's Linguisterie. . . . .	71
The Cogito and the Unconscious Subject. . . . .	74
Deferred Action: Rhetoric and the Future Anterior. . . . .	84
The Semiotic: The Materiality of the Signifier. . . . .	88

The Semiotic and the Symbolic. . . . .	94
V. LANGUAGE AS PRAXIS. . . . .	101
Language as Praxis. . . . .	101
Psycholinguistics Reconsidered. . . . .	106
REFERENCES. . . . .	109
VITA. . . . .	115

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Although many have invoked language as a uniquely human accomplishment, the study of language in psychology has, for the most part, been characterized by a marked failure to capture language as a human, essentially social phenomenon. In particular, since the formation of psycholinguistics as a formal discipline almost half a century ago, accounts of language development and use have been framed almost exclusively using descriptive language and explanatory forms imported from the natural and physical sciences. Thus, psycholinguistic theorizing about language has been grounded in an amalgam of metaphors drawn from computer science, information theory, artificial intelligence, biology and other of the non-social sciences; the study of language as a social practice has only emerged in light of the inadequacy of existing theories to account for the everyday use of language, and remains relegated to the secondary areas of pragmatics, speech act theory, ethnomethodology, and conversation and discourse analysis.

American psycholinguists have been especially guilty of failing to account for language as fundamentally social. Most of the work on language in America has been grounded in the assumption of language as an abstract structure that is created either through an unfolding of innate processes (the nativist approach of, for example, Noam Chomsky) or through interaction with an environment whose atemporal organization is ultimately reflected in cognitive structures (or "states") and the words that represent them (the representational approach of most cognitively-based psycholinguistic theories). The assumptions underlying the nativist and representational approaches to language are a manifestation of philosophical biases that psycholinguistics inherited from psychology and linguistics--positivism and Cartesian rationalism, in particular (Faulconer & Williams, 1990; Sampson, 1977). The positivist influence has come to be manifest primarily in the methodologies deemed appropriate for the study of language, and the rationalist influence most salient in the understanding of subjectivity implicit in psycholinguistic literature. In

particular, Cartesian rationalism represents a bias towards understanding subjectivity as self-consciousness, self-containment, and rational certainty. Ultimately, the privileging of the Cartesian subject has promoted the implicit acceptance of assumptions which preclude an accounting of language as truly social.

In the past decade there have been a number of theorists who have criticized many of the basic constructs given wide acceptance in psychology, among them the notion of language as representational and the concept of the self. These theorists emphasize the social construction of "reality" through language practices, and demonstrate the radically social nature of various linguistic constructions. These critiques have originated, however, from the non-mainstream social constructionist (e. g., Gergen, 1985; Harré, 1977), hermeneutic (e. g., Packer, 1985; Faulconer & Williams, 1985), and phenomenological (Giorgi, 1970) movements in psychology, and their arguments have been largely ignored by the American psycholinguistic community. Strangely enough, from within psycholinguistics itself, relatively few voices advocating a shift towards examining the social foundations of language have made themselves heard. Although some of the vanguards of the status quo in American psycholinguistics have recently lamented the lack of attention paid to the social "aspects" of language (e. g., Clark, 1985), their calls to simply "add" explanations of the social dimension of language to existing accounts (through the study of pragmatics, discourse analysis, etc.) are misguided; this is so because they do not address the fundamental metaphysical problems that have prevented psycholinguistics from giving an account of language as social. In fact, this view reflects the whole of what we understand to be the problem with current mainstream approaches to language--that is, that the social (and thus, we would contend, the human) is understood merely as an aspect of language rather than as its fundamental ground. Even if an effort is made within mainstream approaches to address the social "aspect" of language, such approaches are rooted in a metaphysic which would preclude their accounting for language as uniquely human.



Psycholinguists from the European tradition have historically emphasized the importance of understanding language from within a social context much more than their American counterparts. Important historical examples of this emphasis include Vygotsky's work on language and thought and Bühler's *Organon* theory of language use. Many contemporary European psycholinguists, Rommetveit (1974) and Hörmann (1981) for example, have continued within this tradition. Although their views have not as yet been incorporated into the mainstream of American psycholinguistics, their work does provide an antidote to some of the problems of the American tradition. For example, Hörmann convincingly argues for the necessity of considering the speaker and hearer as forming a uniquely dialogic linguistic relationship; Hörmann, Rommetveit, and Linell all take the position that language is to be understood as a social tool, rather than as a reflection of innate linguistic knowledge or a representation of an external reality.

In the final analysis, however, this model of language can also be understood as falling victim to the Cartesian metaphysic of the self-contained subject. For example, Hörmann (1981) emphasizes that language is a tool employed by self-conscious subjects (speakers and listeners) in service of intended meanings. In his elaboration of what he calls *language-for-itself*, Hörmann asserts that it is the conscious ego as *Archimedean point* that grounds the position and process of speech in an essential way. Thus, the speaker is guided by the anticipated effect that his or her utterance will have on the hearer's understanding. Hörmann replaces what, in mainstream psycholinguistic theories of meaning, could be called the referential moment with the intentional moment. Although such an explanation is capable of quite meaningfully capturing one level of discourse, it fails to account for a form of linguistic knowledge that is essentially interpretive, performative, and *unconscious*.

There exists another perspective from which to critique the study of language in psycholinguistics--a perspective which does incorporate a dimension of performative and unconscious linguistic knowledge. Although theorists within this perspective make many

of the same criticisms as the European psycholinguists do, we feel that the addition of the dimension of unconscious linguistic knowledge allows for a more sophisticated account of the subject and, consequently, a more complete development of the complex relation between language, the speaker, and the interlocutor. This theory of language and the dialogic relationship is put forth primarily in the work of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (e. g., 1964; 1977), although it has been subsequently developed and supplemented by (among others) the French linguist and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva (e. g., 1984).

To begin with, both Lacan and Kristeva directly address the problems initiated by Cartesian dualism and the privileging of the rational *cogito* as locus of meaning and truth; through a recognition and deconstruction of the *cogito* in language philosophy, their work provides a viable account of subjectivity which enables it to go beyond the distinction of *language-in-itself* (the position held by Chomsky, as well as the cognitive and information processing theorists) versus *language-for-itself* (that held by Bühler and Hörmann, as well as some of the sociolinguists). In addition, like the critiques formulated by Hörmann and the hermeneutic and phenomenological traditions, Lacan deconstructs the understanding of language as representational, or referential. However, he goes beyond Hörmann's understanding of language by proposing a dimension of meaning which is both performative and "unconscious;" in other words, he posits an *effect of meaning* which does not occur in the "present" of *linear temporality*, and is *supplemental* to the conscious meaning intended by subjects in communicative discourse; the temporal dimension in which such an effect of meaning occurs is described by Lacan as the "future anterior" (Lacan, 1977, p. 26).

Finally, Lacan and Kristeva address the necessary relationship of affect and language--a relationship virtually ignored by the other positions. Both Lacan and Kristeva discuss affect, and its relation to language, in terms quite different from those used in either psychology or psycholinguistics. To begin with, since they both approach the notion

of affect from within models which operate outside the subject-world division inherent in Cartesian rationalism, they do not--in contrast to most psychological models--ground affect in either "subjective experience" or psychophysiology. In particular, both Lacan and Kristeva discuss affect in terms of the *materiality* of language. This materiality of language--although it is implicated in the production of "meaning" as a *process of signification*--is understood by them to be outside the thetic, representational meaning typically associated with linguistic production. As such, affect comes to be understood as essentially linguistic but, and at the same time, as that which escapes capture within a system of language as *reference*.

In the chapters that follow, we will proceed to make the case for the failure of psycholinguistics, both historically and presently, to give a meaningful account of language as an essentially human, social phenomenon. Thus, in Chapter II, we begin our critique with an examination of both the philosophical parentage and current status of American psycholinguistic theory, and then demonstrate how American psycholinguistics' reliance on Cartesian rationalism has led to its assumption of a subject defined by its transcendence from the world; psycholinguistics' reliance on Cartesian rationalism has also promoted the study of language as "logic," as we will demonstrate in our critique of the abstract structure of Chomsky's grammar and the representational approaches of cognitive psycholinguistics. The alternative approaches formulated by pragmatics, conversation and discourse analysis, as well as that offered by European psycholinguistics in response to the failings of American psycholinguistics are addressed in Chapter III, as are the shortcomings of these positions themselves. Although the sociolinguistic and European psycholinguistic traditions do emphasize the social aspects of language use, they too rely on the Cartesian notions of knowledge as abstract and ideal, and of the subject as self-contained and self-conscious; these assumptions are manifested in sociolinguistics' recourse to notions of *communicative competence*, and the European psycholinguists' reliance on the ego as the center of the utterance, respectively.

Finally, in Chapters IV and V, we propose an alternative position based on the work of Lacan and Kristeva; the relevant aspects of their work are introduced in Chapter IV, and the integration of these ideas into an alternative account of language is presented in Chapter V. In these Chapters, we will demonstrate how Lacan's and Kristeva's approach to language deconstructs the assumption of the Cartesian subject in language study, and provides an alternative approach which is capable of capturing language as a radically social, temporal and material practice. Chapter V concludes with a discussion of some of the theoretical and methodological implications of this alternative position for psycholinguistics as it is presently conceived.

## THE CARTESIAN BIAS IN PSYCHOLINGUISTICS

Psycholinguistics is itself a relatively young science. However, current mainstream psycholinguistic accounts of language have an extended and complex history, the development of which can be traced through psychology and linguistics to their beginnings in early philology and philosophy of language. As the history of the study of language both within and across these disciplines has been exhaustively treated elsewhere (e. g., Blumenthal, 1970; Kristeva, 1989), we will occupy ourselves here with highlighting only those trends which appear to have had the greatest impact on the development of modern psycholinguistics. In the following chapters, we will argue that the important problems manifest in present-day psycholinguistic accounts are, at least in part, the product of an implicit theory of knowledge and of the speaking subject--a theory which has its origins in the Cartesian conception of the *cogito*; thus, in our historical overview, we will pay particular attention to the influence of Cartesian thought across the history of language study. To begin with, however, we will briefly address the aspects of the Cartesian position which have been most influential.

Subjectivity and Knowledge in Cartesian Rationalism

Although Descartes' thought clearly reflects the influence of other Renaissance thinkers such as Galileo and Hobbes, his significant preoccupation with the mind and the process of knowing was unique among his contemporaries. For Descartes, mind and world were two unique "substances;" thus he defined the inner "world" (mind) and the outer world (that of "things," including other persons) as being dissociable and independent (Faulconer & Williams, 1990). The "substance" belonging to the mind is *thought*, with the essential character of *thinking*, and the substance belonging to the body or external world is *extension* (matter), with the essential quality of *extensiveness* (length, width and depth). Thus the mind (also the "soul" or self) is posited as identical with thinking:

The human mind . . . is a thinking (rational) thing, and not extended in length, width, and depth, nor participating in anything pertaining to body. (as quoted in Watson, 1988, p. 52)

Under this view, being is wholly separate from the body and other objects comprising the external world, and is essentially rationalistic.

One interesting consequence of his positing an irradicable division between world (matter) and mind (thinking) is the problematizing of the *materiality* of language. Descartes understood language as fundamentally abstract and conventional, that is, words and linguistic expressions were "attached" to ideas for the purpose of communication; thus, he ignored the fact that words--as acoustic materialities--have a *presence* and indeed, as we will argue later, a *meaning* which escapes capture within a system where language is understood as purely representational.

That Descartes would take such a position is also interesting given that, through the medieval period, the materiality of the word was an important aspect of both "academic" (theoretical) and "folk" understandings of language. Under this view, the link between language and corporeal and natural reality was not abstract and conventional, but real and material (Kristeva, 1989):

What first strikes 'modern' man. . . is that in societies that are 'primitive,' language is a *substance and material force*. While primitive man *speaks, symbolizes, and communicates*, [and thus] establishes a distance between himself (as subject) and the outside (the real) in order to signify it in a system of differences (language), he does not *know* this act to be an act of idealization or of abstraction, but knows it instead as *participation* in the surrounding universe. (Kristeva, 1989, p. 50)

For example, according to Frazer (1890), the Native North American considered her name not as a label, but as a distinct part of her body, like her eyes or her hands; thus, mistreating her name would wound her just like a physical wound. Consequently, many Native North American cultures built up a system of prohibitions and taboos surrounding

the proper name as a measure of protection against its misuse.

Freud also noted the centrality of language as material force in many religious and cultural initiation and healing rituals: "Originally the word was magic--*a magical act*; and it has retained much of its ancient power" (1926, p.188, italics mine). Claude Lévi-Strauss (1949), for his part, makes recourse to the word as material power in his interpretation of a Native South American shamanistic text, the purpose of which was to facilitate a difficult childbirth. He suggests that its "curative" effect is the result of making an affective situation explicit in words and, consequently, making acceptable to the mind pains that the body had refused to tolerate.

With the progressive institutionalization of knowledge that occurred during the medieval and (especially) the Renaissance periods, language was increasingly set up as a specific object of knowledge; with this move came increased speculation about the relationship between language and the subject, language and thought, and language and reality. With the ultimate development of the sciences of language, then, what had originally been an "unwitting" mode (among many) of *participation in the world* became objectified and understood as having a secondary, rather than a primary, or *constitutive*, relationship to the subject and to the world. Descartes' particular answer to the question of how language relates both to the subject and the world is ultimately conditioned by his understanding of the nature of knowledge and subjectivity.

Descartes believed that mind provided the ground for certain structuring principles which were *a priori*, and that it could function entirely independently of the body. When functioning in isolation from the body and other objects of the external world, the mind consists of *pure and innate ideas*, or pure activities as contents of thought which do not depend for their truth on the world of objects (Descartes, 1641/1911). Thus being, or consciousness, is for Descartes essentially self-contained and self-referential.

Because he believed that it is in thinking that the mind ex-ists, or stands out for what it is, Descartes held that there is nothing in the mind of which it is not conscious

(Watson, 1971). Awareness then becomes an awareness of consciousness, or self-consciousness. His assertion *cogito ergo sum* reveals the primacy of self-consciousness in his construction of mind. Indeed, he could not conceive of a mind which is unaware of itself.

In summary, then, Descartes characterizes the *cogito* as essentially rationalistic (being is "in thinking"), essentially isolated and self-contained (consciousness ex-ists within the individual mind or "self") and self-conscious. (To paraphrase, "it is in an awareness of myself as thinking being that I am.") Moreover, this characterization of subjectivity has important implications for the nature of knowledge possessed by the subject; these implications are clearly reflected in current nativist and representational theories of language. For example, thinking, being, and knowledge are defined in essentially *presentational* terms; they are conceived, not in terms of living, temporal, material experience, but in terms of the *idea*, a static, atemporal, immaterial presentness. Heidegger (1962) summarizes the Cartesian notion of the idea thus:

The essence of the idea lies in *appearance* and *visibility*. This brings to fulfillment the presence of the *what* that each being is. In the *what-being* of the being, it comes to presence. Being *present*, however, is as such seen to be the nature of being. (p. 35)

This means that knowledge and being can exist only in terms of the subject-object polarity of consciousness and the objects of consciousness. *What is known is seen as an object*, as something which the conscious subject presents to itself.

Given a philosophical heritage grounded in such assumptions about the nature of mind and knowledge, current psycholinguistics' significant preoccupation with explaining how language simultaneously relates to the inner world of the mind and the outer world of things is more easily understood. Within this model, as we will see, *language comes to be conceived of as a system of signs applied to an already known set of objects*. These Cartesian assumptions concerning language and the subject, as well as the problems to



which they ultimately lead, are manifest in both historical and current theories in a number of ways.

### Cartesian Linguistics Across History

Aspects of the metaphysical and epistemological rationalism embodied in the work of Descartes are, of course, manifest in pre-Rationalist philosophy and were taken up by philologists in various forms long before the 16th century. More than two hundred years before Descartes, for example, medieval philologists concerned with grammatical theory held a view of language as a system of signification which served to *reflect*, mirror-like, the natural world. Since, however, medieval (particularly Scholastic) philosophy was already grounded in an understanding of the world as composed of universals--as a manifestation of the ideal essence of God (and accessible only through reason)-- the modalities of linguistic reflection "discovered" by medieval philologists were predetermined to be rational and translinguistic (Robinson, 1981). It is in medieval works such as Villedieu's *Doctrinale puerorum* (circa 1200), then, that we can discern the beginnings of a trend towards the adaption of grammar--or the structure of language--to logical principles. This approach foreshadows the subsequent development, in the post-Renaissance grammar of Port-Royal, of the confounding of the study of language and the study of reason, or logic.

It is in the work of the 17th and 18th centuries, particularly in the grammar of Port-Royal, that we find the first approaches to language based explicitly on Cartesian principles. Philologists of this period, most notably Lancelot and Arnauld (*A General and Rational Grammar*, circa the mid-1600's), retrieved the medieval theory of language as a system of words which "clothed" ideas which, in their turn, referred back to objects. However, Port-Royal grammarians were additionally influenced by two distinctly Cartesian postulates: namely, the division of the world into "*things*" (material) and "*ideas*," (rational), and the belief that *certainty in knowledge* ("truth") was revealed through the *logical relations at work at the level of the idea*. As a result, the object of grammatical

theory (i. e., language) came to be understood as merely the *sign* of this *fundamental logical dimension*, and thus ultimately became *a study of the ways of reasoning* (Kristeva, 1989). Although 18th-century treatments of language were modified somewhat under the influence of empiricism and naturalism, the Cartesian bias remained, as evidenced in this excerpt from the influential *L'Encyclopedie*:

All languages have the same aim, which is *the enunciation of thoughts*. . . All human souls. . . are of the same type and nature; they have the same faculties to the same degree, the seed of the same talents, the same mind, the same genius, and between them are only numerical and individual differences. The differences between souls. . . are due to external causes. (Langage, *L'Encyclopedie*, 17th century)

With the 19th century came a number of significant changes in the study of language. To begin with, there occurred a general shift in focus from the study of the *a priori* logical relations reflected in language to the comparative and historical study of changes in languages across time. This shift was conditioned in large part by the particular metaphors of organismic and ideological development put forth during this period in the theories of Darwin and Hegel. Perhaps most importantly, beginning with the 19th century, we can discern four distinct theoretical trends in the study of language--the structuralist, the functionalist, the rationalist, and the mechanist- behaviorist--each of which have been significant in 20th century language study. Because of the importance of understanding the major theoretical forces influential in the immediate prehistory of psycholinguistics, we will diverge from highlighting only those positions manifesting a Cartesian bias, and briefly address in turn the structuralist, functionalist, rationalist, and mechanist-behaviorist trends. The Cartesian influence is, of course, clearly manifest in the rationalist trend and, to a lesser degree in the functionalist. The influence of Cartesian thought on the structuralist trend is less obvious, and will be addressed later; our treatment of structuralist thought here is justified by its influence on 20th century linguists,

Chomsky's work in particular, and as a propaedeutic to an understanding of its influence on Lacan. Finally, the mechanist-behaviorist trend represents a conscious rejection of the Cartesian notions of mind and of the idea--we include it here only because of its significant influence in the formation and early history of psycholinguistics, as well as its more subtle influence within current mainstream cognitive approaches to language.

### Structuralism: Language as a System of Signs

The birth of structural linguistics is most typically associated with Ferdinand de Saussure, who was one of the first to challenge the centrality of diachronic study in the work of the comparative philologists and linguists of his time. Saussure was also the first to articulate the concept of language as a formal structure or *system of signs*, and, under his influence linguistics became increasingly oriented to synchronic analysis. Under this view, language became an object--*a system studied for itself*--and not merely as a means of understanding the logical properties of the mind or the ways of reasoning (as with Port-Royal); following his influence, linguistics came to be almost exclusively understood as an analysis of the specific fabric of linguistic construction (Holdcroft, 1990).

Saussure also resurrected the notion--one that will be important for our critique of modern psycholinguistics--of the *arbitrary* relationship between the *signifier* (or sound image) and the *signified* (or concept). Roman Jakobson and N. S. Trubetskoi, contemporaries of Saussure and members of the structurally-influenced Prague Circle (1926-1928), dominated the structuralist scene for a period with their application of structuralist thought to research in phonology, particularly with Jakobson's (1956) emphasis on the two primary relationships between linguistic terms in poetic language that he labeled *metonymy* and *metaphor* (concepts which, as we will see, Lacan makes use of in his own approach to language).

The structuralist approach to linguistics instituted by Saussure has had a significant impact on contemporary linguistic and psycholinguistic theory, although this impact has been mediated by a superficial and distorted understanding of many of Saussure's central

theses. This influence is perhaps most apparent in Chomsky's understanding of the linguistic system as an independent, ideal, and innate one. In addition, his distinction between *la langue* and *la parole* can be interpreted as a prefiguring of both Chomsky's and cognitive psycholinguistics' reliance on the competence-performance distinction.

Saussure's structuralism also figured significantly in Lacan's development of the "laws" of language as they condition the dialogic relationship between the subject and the social world, and we will return to these aspects of Saussure's study of language in Chapter IV.

### Functionalist Approaches: Language as a Tool

The earliest and perhaps historically most significant figure in the development of the "functionalist" approach to language was Karl Bühler. A later member of the Prague Circle and also of the Wurzburg School, Bühler adopted the structuralists' understanding of language as inherently social and their preference for studying communicative discourse; however, he rejected the notion of language as an abstract system. Perhaps naturally, as a psychologist rather than a linguist, Bühler focused on the psychological aspects of language use. In his 1934 *Sprachtheorie*, he articulated a functionalist (*Organon*) theory of language as a *tool used in service of communication*. He characterized the communicative function of language along three basic dimensions--the expressive, the evocational, and the representational--and in so doing drew attention to the importance of context and of studying the speaker and hearer together as a dialogic pair (Blumenthal, 1970; Hörmann, 1981). Although his work was admired by many of the structuralists and garnered him a significant following in Germany during the 1930s and '40s, his work has been largely ignored in the United States. However, his modern interpreter Hans Hörmann has revived interest in his thought, and aspects of his functionalist approach are also reflected in recent work of Linell (1982), O'Connell (1988), and Rommetveit (1974; 1979), among others. We will examine the influence of the functionalist tradition in contemporary psycholinguistics in Chapter III.

### Rationalism: Language as Logic

The interest in meaning or *signification* manifest in both structuralist and functionalist theory can be traced back to the influence of the birth of psychology in the mid-1800s on the linguists of that period. The study of signification, although a preoccupation of Port-Royal grammarians, had been displaced during the early 1800s by comparative, evolutionary studies of changes in the *form* of language. However, through their comparative studies some linguists (e. g., Grote, 1871; Steinthal, 1881) became interested in the relationship between the language and the psychology of a given people (ethnopsychology). This ultimately led them to consider semantics as the bridge between an understanding of the language and of the "spirit" of a culture. Wilhelm Wundt, a prominent early figure in the history of psychology, was also interested in the study of semantics and its relationship with *Völkerpsychologie*. His approach was an extension of the linguistic tradition established by Humboldt, a philologist of the early 1800's, whose understanding of the mind as an entity existing wholly separate from "matter" and obeying a unique set of "laws" places him within the Cartesian rationalist tradition. (However, in contrast to the Cartesian privileging of "the idea," Humboldt asserted that language and thought were inseparable and that each language represented a different world view.)

Wundt's position echoed Humboldt's in that it posited a sort of dualism between "inner" (cognitive) and "outer" (sensory-motor) events, thus setting up the problem of how the two event-realms interact. (Wundt was not unaware of the problems created by Cartesian dualism; whether he transcended them, however, is a matter of debate.) Contrary to Humboldt, however, Wundt saw language merely as a means of expressing pre-formed thought--thus he characterized grammatical relations as tools to express precedent, holistic apperceptions in sequentially ordered speech (Blumenthal, 1970). Understood in this way, language becomes secondary to thought, and actually distorts--through its syntactic structure and production in real time--the instantaneous, apperceptive nature of thought. This Cartesian move of asserting the primacy of thought

over language is, as we will see later, manifest in a number of cognitive approaches to language study.

### Behaviorist Approaches: Language as Mechanism

The work of the comparative philologists Franz Bopp and August Schleicher perhaps best exemplifies the beginnings of the mechanistic approach to language study in the 19th century. Their position was the one most clearly influenced by Darwinian theory, as they held a view of language as an *organism* which developed and changed across time according to necessary laws, analogous to the "biological" laws proposed by Darwin. For example, Bopp (1826) described the phenomenon of linguistic change across time in languages which, originally identical, underwent modification prescribed by necessary laws:

We will recognize the progressive and gradual destruction of the simple linguistic organism and we will observe the tendency to replace it with mechanical groupings, which resulted in the appearance of a new organism when the elements of these groups were no longer recognized. (p. 52)

Following in this tradition, the neogrammarians--who were strongly influenced by the positivist philosophy of Comte--proposed a conception of languages as natural objects governed exclusively by physical science laws (Blumenthal, 1970). For example, two of the neogrammarians, Brugmann and Osthoff, sought to prove the thesis that the phonetic transformations observed in languages across time (a phenomenon with which many comparative linguists of that period were preoccupied) were manifestations of the action of necessary, mechanical laws. Franz Boas, with the establishment in 1917 of *The International Journal of American Linguistics*, introduced American linguists to the work of the neogrammarians; soon afterwards the emphasis on diachronic linguistic change driven by mechanical laws was filtered through the behaviorism of (among others) Watson (1924) and applied to the synchronic study of language by Bloomfield (1933). In his *Language* (1933), Bloomfield sketched out his project of explaining the discursive act in

terms of a series of *stimulus-response* chainings, a project which ultimately became a sort of logical calculus predicted to lead to the discovery of basic units of language and their formal arrangement (Kristeva, 1989). (Skinner's 1957 *Verbal Behavior* followed in this tradition.) At the time of the formation of psycholinguistics as a unique discipline, mediation theory--with its positioning of an intervening variable (the "concept") between the stimulus-response anchors of the speech event--was re-introducing the mentalist dimension of *meaning* that behaviorism had worked so hard to exorcise (cf. Osgood & Sebeok, 1954).

### The Birth of Psycholinguistics

As we have discussed, the neobehaviorists of the early 1950s were interested in the application of mediation theory to language study. Developments in information theory, particularly the application of probability and transitional probability to signals and response elements, were also appealing to behaviorally-oriented linguists as a means for identifying the basic units of language (Hörmann, 1981). Information theory, along with the impetus to provide quantifiable variables for computer modeling and analysis, ultimately promoted the development of an increasingly mathematically-oriented linguistics. It is within this context that, across a period spanning the years from 1951 to 1953, a number of neobehaviorist psychologists and linguists were engaged in discussing the relationship of linguistics to psychology. By 1954 these discussions--since termed "the Indiana conference"--were over and "psycholinguistics" as a discipline had been created (Brown, 1970; O'Connell, 1988).

For about a decade, psycholinguistics was dominated by the mechanically analytical post-Bloomfieldian and mediational approaches which, although they claimed increasing success in their search to identify the basic units of language and to explain how these units are "transmitted" between "senders" and "receivers," lacked the theoretical depth to address how basic language units were synthesized into whole utterances. The remediation of this lack would have required a theory of a subject of signification--some sort of

central mental agency which would carry out the synthetic function of stringing together linguistic units in such a way as to produce sense; with the arrival of Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* (1957), psycholinguistics was (re)introduced to the Cartesian subject of Port-Royal--this time under the guise of the "native speaker."

### Language as Logic: Generative Grammar and Cognitive Psycholinguistics

O'Connell (1988) has outlined two general approaches to the study of language within present-day psycholinguistics, both of which have encountered problems stemming (at least in part) from their privileging of the Cartesian subject. The first of these is the purely linguistic (or the *linguistic autonomy*) approach, and the second, the "language-as-representation" approach of cognitive psychology. In the first broad phase of its development, psycholinguistics was dominated by the purely linguistic approach, more specifically by attempts to prove the existence of the psychic structures and processes postulated by Chomsky's linguistic competence theory. Following psycholinguistics' eventual disillusionment with Chomsky's approach, however, theory and research in the discipline became increasingly influenced by mainstream cognitive psychology. In the paragraphs that follow, we will examine the assumptions behind each of these approaches to language, paying particular attention to their ability to account for language as social and uniquely human. Because of its pervasive influence in the field--indeed, interest in the role of linguistic structure in languagebehavior is currently undergoing a sort of renaissance in psycholinguistics (cf. Pinker, 1991)--we will take as our point of departure an examination of the assumptions underlying Noam Chomsky's linguistic competence theory.

#### Generative Grammar

Although the discipline had been formed almost a decade prior to its appearance, the introduction of Chomsky's linguistic competence theory in 1957 had a dramatic effect on theory and research in psycholinguistics. Understood within its particular historical context, Chomsky's theory can be seen as both "revolutionary" and as a perpetuation of the



theoretical status quo. One sense in which it was revolutionary was that it re-introduced a form of the subject into theorizing about language and posited language as a *uniquely human accomplishment*, a move which was, at least to begin with, appealing to psycholinguists interested in addressing the *psychological dimensions* of language that had been disallowed in behaviorist accounts. In addition, Chomsky's work was grounded in a synthetic rather than an analytic approach to language--a feature which held out promise for elucidating the *process* (this process came to be called *generation*) underlying the production of normatively "correct" and "meaningful" language. Chomsky did, however, manifest the behaviorists' reliance on abstract, formal descriptions of language, as well as their aversion for recourse to semantics in accounting for language phenomena. As we will see, it was primarily his unwillingness to integrate a theory of performance, which would have required him to apply his formalisms to the study of concrete discourse, as well as his rejection of semantics that led psycholinguists to discard linguistic competence theory in favor of cognitively-based explanations.

In a manner similar to Saussure, Chomsky proposed a theory founded on the assumption of language as a system (more specifically, in Chomsky's case, a *grammar*) which exists independent from its manifestation in speech. With Chomsky, this abstract language system is understood as *linguistic competence*, and is afforded theoretical privilege over its "imperfect realization" in speech, or *linguistic performance*. Although much has been made of the parallels between Saussure's separation of *la langue* (the language system studied by linguists) and *la parole* (individual speech) and Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance, the divergence in their understandings of the two dimensions is particularly revealing of Chomsky's understanding of subjectivity and the nature of linguistic knowledge.

To begin with, Chomsky and Saussure had very disparate understandings of the nature and scope of language in the broadest sense (Saussure's *le langage*), as well as the "language" (Saussure's *la langue*) that was the object of linguistic study. Saussure

understood language "taken as a whole" to be "many-sided and heterogeneous" and to "belong to *both* the individual and to society" (1922/1966, p. 9). Linguistics' object, *la langue*, is the "social side of language, outside the individual who can never create or modify it by himself; it exists only by virtue of a sort of contract signed by the members of a community. . . and exists perfectly only within a collectivity" (Ibid, p. 14). Chomsky, on the other hand, did not consider or recognize the relationship between the system of language studied by linguists and the heterogeneity of "languages" which were the objects of, for example, poetics, semiotics, and psychology; neither did he address the multiple functions of language manifest in communicative discourse itself. From the perspective of linguistic competence theory, language is an overarching, ideal, and unified system which "exists perfectly" only as the innate, tacit knowledge of the *ideal native speaker*, and the manifest diversity of linguistic functioning is subordinated to this one abstract system (Kristeva, 1989).

Perhaps because Saussure understood *la langue* as social and contractual, he included the study of semantics (or of the *sign*) as an integral part of linguistic research. As discussed previously, he described the relationship between the signifier and the signified ("meaning") as an arbitrary and conventional one, which was determined through social use. Although Chomsky was forced to address the question of semantics as early as 1957 (cf. Chomsky, 1957), it was not part of his original project and was ultimately always explained in terms of his fundamental syntactic theory.

In his initial presentation of generative grammar, Chomsky described the language system as one which represents a sentence at a number of different levels and has built into it a set of transformational rules for relating the representations (Chomsky, 1957). With his attempts to address relevant semantic questions, Chomsky's original syntactic theory underwent several significant transformations. For example, he initially asserted that an analysis of "families" of transformationally-related sentences could serve an *explicative* (semantic) function. Thus, a transformational analysis (for example, one that

would trace the grammatical transformations linking the derivative sentence *The war was begun by the aggressor* to its kernel sentence *The aggressor began the war*) was seen as capable of resolving a sentence's ambiguity without making recourse to semantic criteria. Under this view, an explanation of the semantic import of a sentence consists merely of an articulation of the transformational rules which led to its production (Kristeva, 1989). However, in moving from his original theory to his 1965 "trace grammar," he described transformation as converting deep structure to an abstract surface structure containing *traces* of the deep structure form; "meaning assignment" was described as occurring at the level of the abstract surface structure, allowing for utilization of semantic information derived from the original deep structure as well as "order" information manifest in the abstract surface structure. (Another form of transformation was ultimately required for conversion of abstract surface structure to spoken or written form.)

Finally, in his "extended standard theory," Chomsky described the basis of semantic interpretation as represented in the deep structure. By this time, he had again modified his concepts of deep structure and transformation to account for the "ungrammaticality" of sentences such as *The Michael sleeps the elaborate lunch*; he proposed to remedy this sort of problem through incorporating two additional rules, *strict subcategorization* and *selection restriction* rules. The subcategorization rules operated to divide the major parts of speech into classes on the basis of which grammatical categories they could combine with, and the selection restrictions dictated which words would be inserted into the final sentence structure--and this latter process was mediated by the semantic features of words. Ultimately, he even goes so far as to speak of lexical entries into deep structure, the insertion of which are determined by lexical categories. Thus, where his earlier linking of meaning to the logical relation embodied in his notion of deep structure had been merely implicit, he made this relation more explicit here:

Thus it seems to me that *deep structure* is a well-defined level which meets the phrase structure conditions of the base rules, defines the proper contexts for lexical

insertion, and provides the appropriate grammatical relations for interpretation in terms of semantic relations or 'conceptual structures.' (1972, p.198, italics mine)

In this way, then, Chomsky ultimately describes *semantic study* as reducible to a study of the *mechanics of deep structures*. Before stepping back to examine the implications of Chomsky's manner of accounting for semantics, we will turn briefly to an examination of his notion of linguistic competence. As we will see, his emphasis on the abstract and structural nature of the knowledge represented at the deep structure level follows his broader understanding of linguistic knowledge as abstract, ideal, and innate.

As we have mentioned earlier, and in line with his approach to semantics, Chomsky proposed that linguistic theory should concern itself with the native speaker's *tacit knowledge* of language (strictly speaking, of syntax), or linguistic *competence*. In support of his notion of competence, he argued that the child's experience with language was too circumscribed for him or her to learn language by the mapping of meanings onto linguistic forms; to explain the child's facility with language, he invoked a set of *linguistic universals* which limited the number of such hypotheses the child considered. An accounting of these linguistic universals, which amounts to a modeling of competence, requires one to *abstract away* from spoken discourse, or performance.

The fundamental aim in the linguistic analysis of a language L is to separate the *grammatical* sequences which are the sentences of L from the *ungrammatical* sequences which are not the sentences of L and to study the structure of the grammatical sequences. (1957, p. 13)

The synthetic process that leads to the recognition and production of "grammatical sequences" is ultimately grounded in the speaker's implicit linguistic intuition.

Chomsky postulated that the speaker's tacit linguistic knowledge originated in innate, universal language structures. Although these structures are inherent in individual consciousness, they are not (originally, at least) objects of knowledge but form instead a sort of implicit, *a priori* pre-understanding that guides the speaker-hearer in discerning

the grammatical from the ungrammatical. As Ingram (1968) has noted, the sort of "knowledge" embodied in this pre-understanding, or *competence*,

does not imply action or behavior of any sort; neither the ability to act on the knowledge, since the actual use of language is in the domain of performance; nor the awareness of ability to formulate the grammatical rules. The knowledge is "tacit" or "implicit;" in fact, it must be understood as knowledge in an epistemological rather than in any psychological sense. (p. 318)

Interrogated in this fashion, one can begin to see how the *linguistic intuition* of the native speaker-hearer is really *the structure of a logic* parading as "well-formedness" or grammaticality. With Chomsky's emphasis on the sentence as the "unit" of meaning, meaning is defined as an effect of the structural relationships between words. These structural relationships which mediate meaning are themselves the product of the implicit symbolic logic guiding Chomsky's approach. For instance, in the example we cited above, the derivative sentence *The war was won by the aggressor* (passive) and the kernel sentence *The aggressor won the war* (active) are understood as having the same meaning; this can only be so when a certain logic or priority of relations--in Chomsky's case the privileging of the N-V-N relation as basic--is taken for granted. The structure of this logic is then projected onto language, which is subsequently understood as mirroring (in its ideal form) the linguistic universals understood as part of the ideal speaker-hearer's native endowment.

Such an idealist position also justified a highly abstract theory which sought to provide a universal formalism valid for all languages, of which each language was understood to realize a specific variation. However, in this regard it is quite telling that Chomsky's model language is English, and that his account--with its claims of universality of linguistic structures--is centered upon the logical categories forged from Indo-European languages and from communicative discourse. Thus, Chomskyan linguistics can ultimately be understood, as can the 17th century grammar of Port-Royal, as

obscuring language underneath a *formal structure* that, in turn, creates a linguistic "cover" of logic. In this sense, as Hörmann (1981) has noted, Chomsky mimics the Cartesian move of taking an intuitive "faculty"--in Chomsky's case, the tacit knowledge of the ideal speaker-hearer--and retrospectively positing it as manifest in the structure of language itself.

Along these same lines, the introduction of the competence-performance distinction and the privileging of competence effected by Chomsky can be seen to parallel the Cartesian division between the subject and the world. At the broadest level, as we have seen, the "knowledge" possessed by both the Cartesian and Chomskyan subject is innate, ideal, and abstract. In addition, within both systems the relationship between the subject's implicit (ideal) knowledge and its imperfect realization in the world is problematic. For example, Chomsky's position vis-a-vis the primacy of competence echoes a certain mistrust of language (as performance) evidenced in Cartesian thought: with his division of the universe into "things" and "ideas," Descartes pre-empted any role for language in the construction of reality, and viewed it merely as a useless and superfluous intermediary:

And. . . because we *attach* all our conceptions to words for the *expression* of them by speech, and as we commit to memory our thought in connection with these words; and as we more easily recall to memory words than things, we can scarcely conceive of anything so distinctly as to be able to *separate completely* that which we conceive from the words chosen to express the same. . . . In this way most men apply their attention to words rather than things, and this is the cause of their frequently giving their assent to terms which they do not understand. (Descartes, 1955, p. 252, italics mine)

Clearly then, for Descartes, words serve merely as arbitrary intermediaries in the *expression* of more fundamental (and essentially non-linguistic) concepts. As such, language only gets in the way of a "purer" form of communication that would consist of the unmediated "exchange" of the ideas of which all humans have intuitive knowledge and

which form the basis of thought in the Cartesian system. Similarly, with his privileging of deep structure in linguistic explanations, Chomsky reveals his preference for the logic of the idea(l)--the intuitive, universal structural forms which constitute "deep structures"--over language itself. That the two are not coincident (in his theory, at least) Chomsky blames on the limitations of comprehension (e. g., understood as a function of attention and memory) and expression inherent in the workings of the body:

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener. . . who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying knowledge of the language in actual performance. (Chomsky, 1965, p. 3)

The "degenerate" and rule-violating aspects of actual language performance are attributed solely to the imperfections of the body. In this way, Chomsky's valuing of competence over performance can be seen as a perpetuation of the Cartesian division between the ideality of the mind and materiality of the body, and a reflection of the privileging of the innate logical structure of the idea over its expression in behavior or speech.

Not only is the innate knowledge fundamental to the Cartesian position paralleled in Chomsky's account of tacit knowledge, the Cartesian subject is explicitly employed by him as a model for the subject-bearer of syntactic synthesis.

Chomsky first rehabilitated the notion of the Cartesian *cogito* in his 1966 *Cartesian Linguistics*. In this work, Chomsky more explicitly aligns himself with the idealist Cartesian position of universal innate ideas, and in so doing secures for generative grammar the guarantee of the normality ( which manifests as "grammaticality") of the utterances of the ideal speaker-hearer. In the same way that the *cogito*--as self-contained, transcendental unity--possesses "truth" through certainty in knowledge, the Chomskyan subject--within which resides the coherent whole of language--possesses the "truth" about language as reflected in the subject's intuitive "certainty" about grammaticality and

"well-formedness."

As noted above, Chomsky clearly separates the tacitly-knowing subject of language from the subject of linguistic performance--the former being transcendent to the latter. Thus, the subject of generative grammar "withdraws" in language performance--it is transcendent to and thus unaffected by language as a temporal and material phenomenon. As such, the subject of speaking and understanding that Chomsky allegedly re-introduced into linguistics is ultimately revealed as an "uncommitted automatic device" without any resemblance to the language-experiencing human being (Hörmann, 1981). The subject and the subject's language are (dis)embodied in the form of the ideal speaker-hearer.

### Cognitive Psycholinguistics

By the middle of the 1970's, psycholinguistics had severed most of its ties with Chomsky's linguistic theory and turned to mainstream cognitive psychology for its inspiration. Psycholinguists' ultimate disappointment with transformational grammar can be traced to the latter's failure to provide a useful explanatory framework for either experimental or developmental psycholinguistics--particularly in light of experimental evidence that seemed to demonstrate the priority of semantics over syntax in memory and comprehension (e. g., Sachs, 1967; Bransford, 1979). Although Chomsky did make a number of theoretical revisions in response to experimental evidence indicating the importance of semantics, as we noted in the previous section the changes he made were essentially superficial ones.

Psycholinguists had also become disillusioned, in the wake of the "cognitive revolution," with Chomsky's failure to address the relationship between transformational grammar and developments in cognitive psychology relevant to language study. Although he claimed that transformational grammar was to be properly considered a branch of theoretical cognitive psychology, Chomsky understood the linguistic module which "housed" the tacit knowledge of competence to be an isolated and distinct cognitive subdomain. Thus, he understood the linguistic system as making contact with other



cognitive processes at the levels of input and output only; as a result he neglected to address how it might relate to other cognitive subdomains such as memory, attention, comprehension, and production. In light of this evidence, and despite his claims to the contrary, Chomsky's approach can only be considered pseudo-cognitive.

The research on language carried out in the decades that followed psycholinguistics' rejection of transformational grammar can be broadly characterized as adhering to one of two models: an associationist model descendant from early neobehaviorist study of language (e. g., Bloomfield, 1933; Osgood, 1971) and a formal, logico-semantic model with roots in the tradition of the Port-Royal grammarians as well as the rationalist approaches of Humboldt and Wundt. Although most mainstream cognitive accounts of language can be seen primarily as derivatives of the logico-semantic tradition, assumptions drawn from associationism have been implicitly and explicitly incorporated into a number of these accounts (e. g., Quillian, 1968). Other mainstream language models derived from information-processing theory and artificial intelligence--Wyer and Carlston (1979) and Rumelhart and McClelland (1986), for example--are more purely associationist in character; the "neurolinguistic" approaches, such as that of Churchland (1986), also fall in this general category of associationist models. Because the logico-semantic approaches have been much more influential than their associationist counterparts in determining current trends in cognitive psycholinguistics, we will focus primarily on the former tradition.

Within the logico-semantic tradition, language is understood fundamentally as representational. The mechanics of the representational process are typically discussed in terms of three "domains"--the domain to be represented, the domain that does the representing, and a domain of operations producing a correlation between the two. At the simplest level, then, language is seen to make present that which is absent--to re-present or "stand in" for objects, persons, concepts, or events. Under this view, language is understood merely as a means of exchanging or transmitting information based on

representations of external and derivative cognitive reality. Although the emphasis was shifted, under this model, from the formal structure of language itself to the architecture of the representational network, the semantic theories that were conceived as supplements or alternatives to Chomsky's syntactic theory actually manifest an affinity to the model form of transformational grammar. This similarity is most apparent in the implicit reliance--within both transformational grammar and cognitive approaches to language--on symbolic logic to support the theories of deep structure and representational meaning, respectively.

Ironically perhaps, the model of semantics most influential in determining the assumptions adopted by a majority of subsequent semantic theories was itself designed as a mere supplement to transformational grammar (Katz & Fodor, 1963). Katz' and Fodor's model, with its semantically-marked lexicon and list of projection rules, provided a basic framework for thinking about meaning which was uncritically incorporated into a number of the theories that followed. In particular, most theories of language deriving from this tradition account for meaning in terms of a sum total of specific category relations which are evoked from all potential relations existing within the cognitive symbol system.

Katz' and Fodor's semantic theory was developed for the express purpose of supplementing Chomsky's generative grammar; thus their intent was not to account for meaning in a comprehensive sense, but merely to pick up where transformational grammar left off in its account of "meaning" as embodied in deep structure relations. In particular, Katz and Fodor addressed themselves to the "problem" created by the generation of grammatically correct but semantically anomalous or ambiguous sentences. They posited that the native speaker-hearer possesses both a dictionary or "lexicon" and a set of projection rules which serve to systematically specify the way in which individual word meanings are to be integrated. Entries in the lexicon contain semantic markers which locate the given word on a semantic dimension with other words sharing particular features. Katz describes the semantic marker in the following terms:

Consider the idea each of us thinks of as part of the meaning of the words *chair, stone, man, building, planet, etc.*, but not part of the meaning of such words as *truth, togetherness, feeling, shadow. . .* the idea that we take to express what is common to the meaning of the words in the former group and that we use to conceptually distinguish them from the latter. Roughly, we might characterize what is common to our individual ideas as the notion of a spatial and continuous material thing. The semantic marker (Physical Object) is introduced to designate that notion. (1967, p. 129)

This conceptualization of meaning as "similarity" or shared features is the cornerstone on which the model rests.

In looking closely at just how the meaning of a particular lexical entry is derived, we find Katz and Fodor describing the meaning of words as the sum total of a limited number of semantic dimensions (Hörmann, 1981). Katz and Fodor also assert that this semantic characterization of a word is undertaken in a manner which insures that the integration of individual word meanings (carried out under the syntactical imperatives of the deep sentence structure) ultimately produces the "meaning" of the sentence.

In the tradition of semantic marker theory, Clark and Clark (1968) carried out a number of studies designed to determine in greater detail the exact structure of the lexicon and the specific projection rules which govern its use. One line of investigation they pursued was based on the study of patterns of responses to word association tasks. These tasks were conceptualized as requiring the subject to make an analysis of the relevant features (or markers) of the word prior to making a response. Through analyzing probabilities of responses given to particular stimulus words, it was deduced that the word-specifying features of the lexicon were arranged in a specific hierarchical order. Furthermore, Clark and Clark derived several rules for predicting response frequencies based on this supposed lexical structure. For example, the *category preservation rule* "explains" why nouns are often responded to with noun, adjectives with adjectives, and so

on; the *feature deletion rule* accounts for the fact that stimulus words are often responded to with their superordinate category names. They also postulated that there occurred a processing of a specific number of features in a specific sequence in between the extraction of some feature from a stimulus word and the availability of a response.

Although the semantic marker and feature approaches--with their word-based lexicon and simple assumption that "meaning" is equivalent to an aggregation of shared features--seem primitive, the increasing sophistication of subsequent semantic models is more apparent than real; ultimately they can be seen merely as variations on the theme of the semantic marker approach. For example, Lakoff (1972, 1973)--although she challenged the feature theory assumption of rigid logical category definitions--failed to provide an account of how meaning might be otherwise understood. Lakoff begins by demonstrating that feature markers cannot be all or none; for example, although semantic marker theory would render the sentence *Coral is red and not red* as false, Lakoff suggests that most people would say it was sensible and "true" because there are degrees of redness and thus *red and not red* doesn't indicate a logical contradiction. Thus, such a sentence can be meaningful, despite the apparent contradiction embodied in the relation "X and not X" because category definitions have "fuzzy" boundaries. This is so, she asserts, because meaning can be produced within a range of degrees of truth values. As such, the truth value of an utterance is determined by summing the truth values for each feature and determining whether the sum is greater or less than some criterion. In effect, then, what Lakoff does is to explain away the logical contradiction embodied in, for example, "red and not red," rather than to provide an alternate approach capable of transcending the notion of meaning as shared similarity of features that meets a truth value criterion. Thus, she continues in the Chomsky-Katz-Fodor tradition of equating meaning with truth values as they are defined within a system of symbolic logic.

Another approach to semantics grounded in the model assumptions of transformational grammar is the generative semantics approach (cf. Lyons, 1970).

Consistent with Katz' and Fodor's preoccupation with the structure of the lexicon, generative semanticists have concerned themselves primarily with what sort of vocabulary knowledge the speaker-hearer must possess in order to mediate production and comprehension. Within their model sentence generation is driven by semantics (as opposed to syntax) and operates on "strings" of *meaning features* (lexical) and the relations between them, as well as supra-lexical information about performative intent and world knowledge. However, in a manner similar to Lakoff, they appeal to "truth values" (a logical concept which, by definition, disallows contextual determination of meaning) to determine if one sentence is a paraphrase of another--that is, to determine if they have the same meaning. Thus, although they give lip service to the importance of performative and contextual factors in the production of meaning, such phenomena are appropriated within a logico-semantic theory which serves only to explain away their significance for the production of sense. Seen in perspective, the generative semanticists did nothing more than borrow the formal structure of Chomsky's syntactic theory and superimpose it onto a theory of semantics. Indeed, Chomsky has even argued, fairly convincingly, that the generative semanticists have done nothing more than attach notational variations to the model of transformational grammar (Chomsky, 1968).

In contrast to the assumptions made in the approaches discussed above about the universality of the cognitive structures, Rosch (1975) locates the original determinants of category boundaries within the environment. Thus, she understands meaning as an effect of properties of natural objects (e. g., categories are formed by the recognition of correlations of perceived environmental features) rather than as resultant from any inherent logical organization of the mind. Also unique to her approach is the postulation of a basic level (or basic "object") within each category hierarchy; this basic level is the level containing the greatest information content that also best captures the feature correlations (that is, the most abstract level in the hierarchy that contains the maximum overlap of shared features) (Tartter, 1986). This basic level contains the primitives or

*prototypes* for cognitive representation; this also makes the words that refer to prototypes distinct from other words.

As we have seen, the various theories of language spawned within cognitive psychology all rely in a fundamental way on the notion of meaning as representation. These accounts differ primarily in where they locate the determinants of category boundaries (i. e., in the inherent cognitive structure or in the natural categories of objects in the world), and what form they understand representations to take. For example, in the models of Katz and Fodor (1963), Clark and Clark (1968), Jackendoff (1978), and Lakoff (1973), all assume that representations are stored as lexical "items" (or, at the simplest level, words); Rosch (1975) speaks of representations in terms of prototypes, which can be either lexical or imagistic (or both). Other approaches assume representations to be stored in terms of images only (cf. Kosslyn, 1980), sets of syllogistic-like propositions (cf. Johnson-Laird, 1983) or event schemata (cf. Schank & Abelson, 1977; Nelson, 1976). However, despite their disparate understandings of what form representations take, all these approaches assume an underlying structural model of semantics which derives its explanatory power from its reliance on symbolic logic.

The development of cognitive psycholinguistics was originally compelled by (among other things) dissatisfaction with the marginalization of semantics and language performance in Chomsky's transformational grammar. In response, most cognitive psycholinguists have taken the question of semantics as central to explanations of language, and have at least paid greater lip service to the importance of incorporating language performance data into their accounts. Despite this shift in emphasis, cognitive psycholinguistics has failed to transcend many of the model assumptions which ultimately prevented transformational grammar from addressing the questions of semantics and performance in a meaningful way. Thus, although cognitive theorists have given "semantics" a conspicuous place in their theoretical vocabulary, they have not effected the revolution in the forms of explanation necessary to account for semantics and performance

in a manner essentially different from the way Chomsky constructed syntax and competence. By remaining hostage to the same Cartesian metaphysics which Chomsky assumed, they have ended up perpetuating the same problems.

To begin with, their vision of why it was important to incorporate actual language data was fairly circumscribed. Because of their cognitive bias, most post-Chomskyan psycholinguists were not interested in developing theories of language use, but understood performance data as meaningful only in the sense that they could provide information about cognitive structures.

Rosch (1975) makes explicit in her theory another Cartesian assumption which remains implicit in most of the cognitive approaches to language we have discussed. She prefaces her approach by grounding it in the assumption that a *propensity to categorize is inherent in what it means to think and to be human*. In so doing, she is echoing almost verbatim the Cartesian assumption that what it means to think (and for both Descartes and Rosch, what it means to exist as subject) is to be in possession of the rational, purely immaterial idea.

Despite her claim that category boundaries and primitives are somehow properties of natural objects, we contend that the *notion of category is itself an idealized notion*. For example, Rosch makes the assumption that if we look at any set of objects belonging to a natural class, that we are immediately inspired by the *idea* (Cartesian) embodied in the prototype of that class. Katz and Fodor, Clark, Lakoff, and others make the same assumption, only they locate the "inspiration" which automatically leads to the definition of the category within a set of universal cognitive structures.

Because features or semantic markers are understood within cognitive approaches to identify the referential attributes of words, the acquisition of meaning is seen as effected via an aggregation of features. However, descriptions of the process leading up to the subject's intuiting of the unifying concept beneath the aggregation of features manifests a sort of circular logic. For example, the "discovery procedure" which Katz and Fodor

(1963) invoke to account for the specific hierarchical construction of the lexicon is clearly guided by an implicit pre-understanding of what the semantic components are beforehand. (This pre-understanding is itself determined by the particular context within which Katz and Fodor are operating.) Ultimately, the postulation of such a "discovery" process begs the question of how the semantic dimensions come into existence and *how they function* (perhaps a more instructive question). However, what Katz and Fodor evoke to define the meaning of a word--that is, its similarities with certain other meanings or categories--can't be determined with any precision without recourse to a concrete application of the word. For example, Clark and Clark (1968) were faced with a theoretical impasse when confronted with determining just how many features of a word are processed prior to determination of its category status; they also failed to articulate a procedure for determining which selection rules would apply under various conditions.

Thus, in a manner similar to the transformational grammarians, who projected their own intuitions about grammaticality onto the structure of language, the cognitive psycholinguists projected their intuitions about semantic categories onto the structure of the mind (or, in Rosch's case, the structure of the world). In this way, cognitive psycholinguistics fell prey to the same competence-performance problematic manifest in transformation grammar. The effect of this is readily apparent in their implicit recourse to symbolic logic as constitutive of the most appropriate framework for the representation of meaning--in this way, the whole of a person's semantic knowledge is mapped onto some logical (and, therefore, abstract and atemporal) "calculus" (Kristeva, 1989). As we have seen (e. g., in their inability to account for the contradiction embodied in *Coral is red and not red*, without explaining the contradiction away), the necessity to tolerate contradiction is fatal to the idea of a cognitive psycholinguistics which invokes standard formal logics as tools for representing linguistic processes or structures.

Ultimately then, the end result of the maintenance of the competence-performance distinction was an exchange of the idealized tacit knowledge of syntax for an idealized



semantic knowledge manifest in hierarchical categories and the logical relations between them. This is true whether or not the forms of meaning were understood as originating in universal cognitive structures or in the universal primitive features of objects in the world (both forms of the Cartesian separation of subject and world). Thus, cognitive psychology has also limited itself to accounting for meaning as something abstract, atemporal, and acontextual. As such, meaning has been broadly understood as something which exists independent of a speaker's engagement of it within a particular moment and context within time, and cognitive psychology has spent much effort in trying to reconnect meaning as an abstract structure with actual speech and action, with little success.

In a similar vein, cognitive approaches to language have presumed individualism, which grants primacy to the thinking and reasoning of an individual knower, and subjectivism, which grants primacy to the structures and processes of a knowing subject. They have continued in the tradition of transformational grammar by treating the speaker and listener as two independent, and essentially isomorphic units; as such, meaning is understood to reside in the self-contained subject. This practice reveals the assumption that meaning through language is fundamentally monologic--language as dialogue is secondary and incidental. This suggests that the speaker oversees the meaning of his or her utterance, and "understands" it prior to or at the time it is proffered. Thus, speech becomes nothing more than the act of making available to others a meaning that is already constituted in the self--silently and without any necessary recourse to language (Thompson, 1985). The ultimate task of the listener, then, is merely to decode this meaning.

Another consequence of this privileging of the self-contained subject is that the performative aspects of language are essentially ignored or, at best, seen not as fundamental but merely as another (secondary) level of language to be captured in a separate science of pragmatics or discourse analysis. Thus, the problems encountered by the various cognitive approaches discussed above in accounting for actual language use

have been construed as "extra-linguistic" and put off to another level of *competence*; for example, Wunderlich (1968) postulated the addition of a *communicative competence* which would ensure that the constructs of syntax and semantics were applied in proper correspondence to the given situation. Although this position appears progressive in its acknowledgement of the influence of context on meaning, its utility is seriously compromised by its grounding in an idealized form of discourse. The postulation of yet another competence doesn't bring us any closer to bridging the gulf between the ideal and the real.

CHAPTER III  
LANGUAGE AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

With the recognition of the importance of context in the structuring of meaning has come a proliferation of subdisciplines in psycholinguistics--among them conversation analysis, discourse analysis, and pragmatics--all of which purport to take the conversation, discourse, speech act, or other, "textual," units as the basic units of meaning. Although cognitive psycholinguistics has manifested an increasing awareness of the importance of context for meaning, the trend towards viewing "larger" units (such as the conversation) as legitimate meaning units was also influenced by earlier work in philosophy, sociology, and anthropology. For example, conversation analysis originally developed as a field of study from within the sociology of the 1960's (cf. Garfinkel, 1967) and aspects of the language philosophy known as speech act theory (cf. Austin, 1962/1970; Searle, 1969) have been important for the development of pragmatics.

The impetus for the development of the various approaches we have here categorized as *contextualist* and *sociolinguistic* has come from two distinct source traditions. To begin with, as we noted earlier, discourse analysis, pragmatics, and some approaches to conversation analysis (e. g., Schiffrin, 1988) developed in response to the inability of cognitive psycholinguistics to account for significant aspects of everyday language use. In particular, the identity of these subdisciplines has centered on their attempts to account for language performance in human interaction, as manifested more or less "naturally" as conversation or discourse. On the whole, however, such approaches have had difficulty transcending the very distinctions--for example, between competence and performance, and between the subject and the world--that necessitated their creation as subdisciplines. The second set of approaches that we have gathered under the contextualist/sociolinguistic heading--the approaches to conversation analysis associated with Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (e. g., 1977), Goodwin (1981), and Heritage

(1988)--all had their origins outside of psycholinguistics; in particular, these conversation analysis approaches developed out of anthropology, socio-linguistics, and sociology. These approaches have more clearly situated themselves outside the Cartesian metaphysical system of mainstream psycholinguistics, and have for this reason been more successful in rendering an account of language use as fundamentally social and temporal.

Ironically, the theory that has since come out of these discipline--initially designated as extra-linguistic "adjuncts" to cognitive psycholinguistics--has provided the basis for formulating an incisive critique of the cognitive psycholinguistic project itself. In particular, through the development of conversation analysis, pragmatics, and other sociolinguistic projects, three properties of language--all of which are typically marginalized in experimental cognitive psycholinguistics--have been brought to the fore (Harré, 1990): 1) that of the historicity of linguistic meaning, that is, the way in which meaning depends on an actual history of past uses and which is specific to the present moment of its production; 2) the contextuality of meaning, or the way in which meaning is made relatively determinate in the immediate social and conversational context of an utterance; and 3) linguistic indexicality, understood as the way meaning depends on the various identities of those engaged in the discourse, and the way in which the meaning of the interactional sequence is reciprocally modified across time. If we are to accept Harré's thesis--that there are no transhistorical, transsituational, or transindividual units of language, we must admit a radical shift in the understanding of what a psychology of language and language use could be.

In addition to the sociolinguistic approaches mentioned above, the general position we have referred to as the European psycholinguistic or functionalist tradition--articulated by Bühler (1934) and a number of contemporary theorists, including Hörmann (1981) and Rommetveit (1974)--has provided a critique of mainstream psycholinguistics as unable to account for the social nature of actual language use that parallels those made by the contextualists and sociolinguists in many ways.

In this Chapter, we will focus primarily on those positions that have escaped at least some of the theoretical dead-ends of the mainstream psycholinguistic approaches that they have offered themselves up as alternatives to. To this end, the following sections will be largely devoted to an examination of the European psycholinguistic approach, since it has provided the most coherent and comprehensive alternative. Our review of this position will be with an eye to the success of their alternative in accounting for language as fundamentally social and, therefore, human. However, we will also reflect on a certain Cartesian bias that remains unexamined in their work; in particular, this Cartesian residue shows itself in their assumption of the conscious ego as the privileged locus, or *origo*, of the utterance. Their adherence to the notion of the utterance as "ego-centered" (Hörmann, 1981, p. 240) reflects an underlying complicity with the Cartesian notions of the subject as self-contained, and of "knowledge" (or meaning, as we are speaking of it here) as coextensive with "awareness-of-self-in-thinking-and-acting."

#### Contextualist and Sociolinguistic Approaches to the Study of Language

The assumption common to the various positions we have noted above is that linguistic meaning is context-bound; in other words, meaning through language is mediated, not by any absolute relation between words and "the world," but rather by the context within which they are uttered. Although the idea that meaning is highly dependent on context is not revolutionary--indeed, theorists allied with both the transformational and cognitive psycholinguistic traditions have acknowledged as much and have attempted to account for context-mediated meaning--most such approaches remain committed, at some level, to the notions of "sentence-centered," "lexicon-centered," or "schema-centered" semantics. The contextualist approaches, on the other hand, begin with the assumption that "in the real world of interaction sentences are never treated as isolated, self-contained artifacts. . . sentences and utterances are understood as forms of action situated within specific contexts and designed with specific attention to these contexts" (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990, p. 287).

That researchers in conversation analysis, discourse analysis, and pragmatics have taken the importance of context for meaning more seriously is manifest in at least two ways. To begin with, they place a much greater value on the study of language in "actual" contexts of use; although their primary emphasis has been on the study of "ordinary" conversation (cf. Goodwin & Heritage, 1990), they have also examined a wide spectrum of other forms of "talk-in-interaction," including political speeches (cf. Atkinson, 1984) and courtroom and news interview interaction (cf. Clayman, 1988). The study of language in these more "natural" contexts of use is in sharp contrast to the highly artificial and circumscribed contexts within which most generative grammar and cognitive psycholinguistic research has been conducted. At a more fundamental level, however, these contextualist approaches are differentiated from generative grammar and cognitive psycholinguistics by their overriding interest in how speakers and hearers interact within the broader context of everyday language interaction, and by their subscription--in principle, at least--to the three theses outlined by Harré of contextuality, indexicality and historicity. Thus, the notion of meaning as "produced" through the use of language by speakers and hearers engaged in interaction is seen as basic, in contrast to the understanding of meaning as a by-product of combinations of "building-block" meanings contained in lexical items, sentences, etc., as discussed by cognitive psycholinguistics.

The purposes of conversation and discourse analysis as understood by their respective proponents manifest significant overlap, and include the following: 1) to study the discourse or conversation, rather than the isolated sentence, as the basic unit of language 2) to uncover the interactional rules that make certain sequences of utterances coherent and others not, and 3) to address the effect of context on the use and understanding of various kinds of linguistic expressions (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990; Grosz, Pollack, & Sidner, 1989). These approaches also share the notion of different context levels or "domains." For example, Levelt (1989) describes the "contexts" of conversation in the following terms:

There is, on the one hand, the participant context. A speaker will have to tune his talk to the turns and contributions of the other persons involved; his contribution should, in some way or another, be relevant to the ongoing interaction. There is, on the other hand, a spatio-temporal setting [the *deictic* context]. . . which serves as a source of mutual knowledge. By anchoring their contribution in this shared here and now, interlocutors can convey much more than what is literally said. (1989, p. 29)

Consistent with Levelt's position, most researchers in these subdisciplines agree that the three properties of conversational speech are its *interactional* character, its *deictic* character (its dependence on a spatio-temporal context), and its *intentional* character. The interactional character of a conversation is typically construed to be a function of speakers' and listeners' cooperation (or lack thereof) in the conversation; cooperation is, in turn, understood as manifest in participants' adherence to turn-taking, engagement and disengagement rules (cf. Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; but see O'Connell, Köwal, & Kaltenbacher, 1990) and other rules concerning the content of what is said or conveyed (for example, relevance) (cf. Grice, 1975). The deictic character of conversational speech is typically analyzed along a number of deictic dimensions, all of which are grounded in the spatial and temporal "present" of any given utterance, and manifest themselves as emergent from a background of shared world knowledge. (Of course, the "present" of deixis and the shared knowledge which is its background are constantly changed and renewed as the conversation progresses.) Thus, deixis is codified along the dimensions of person and social (e. g., age or status of speakers or hearer) deixis, and place, time, and discourse deixis (Levelt, 1989). We will return to the notion of deixis in our discussion of the European psycholinguistic tradition.

Although it takes the related aspects of interaction and deixis into account, pragmatics concerns itself more specifically with the intentional or *performative* dimension of speech. As we have noted, pragmatic theory in psycholinguistics has been significantly

influenced by speech act theory, including the work of Austin (1963), Grice (1975), and Searle (1969). Austin defines the performative utterance thus: "[The performative utterance] has its own special job, it is used to perform an action. To issue such an utterance *is* to perform the action . . . which one could scarcely perform, at least with so much precision, in any other way. . . . To say 'I promise to' just *is* the act of making a promise" (1963, pp. 22-23). In other words, the making of a promise is an act that can only be carried out through speaking the words "I promise. . ."

Other speech acts attempt to effect actions or communicate intentions that could, in principle be effected by other means. For example, a young child hears an ice cream truck go by and says to her sitter, "Every night I get an ice cream;" when she gets no response to this original statement, she asserts, "Yes, even when there's a babysitter, I get an ice cream" (after Reeder, 1981). (In this instance, the child could have taken her sitter by the hand and taken him out to the ice cream truck, and performed the "same" meaning-act.) As these two examples illustrate, the meaning of a given speech act, its *illocutionary force*, is a level of meaning which is only more or less separable from its propositional content. Thus, it follows that in performing a speech act every speaker has something in mind (an intention), the hearer typically infers that the speaker has a certain belief or expectation, and thus, that each speech act brings about a certain effect on the ongoing interaction, leading to its continual indexical modification (cf. Wunderlich, 1980). Austin (1965) also described another category of performative, *perlocution*, within his schema. A perlocutionary act creates the effects, intentional or unintentional, of having used a performative. For example, a speaker states, "I promise to return the money," and the hearer responds by lending the speaker the desired money. As this example illustrates, there is a significant sense in which a speech act is "complete" only when there is a reciprocal display of "uptake" (on the part of the hearer) to match the displayed intention of the speaker (Harré, 1990).

This notion of language as performance or action is an important one for the



European psycholinguists (as we will see momentarily) and also for Lacan (as we will discuss in the following chapter). (In particular, we will note an interesting parallel between perlocution as an "unintentional" effect of an utterance on the unfolding of performative discourse interaction, and Lacan's notion of the "effects of meaning" produced by the speech of the unconscious subject.) Before addressing the European psycholinguistic approach, however, let us present what we understand to be the difficulties that remain in the contextualist and sociolinguistic approaches.

As we have highlighted them, the contextualist and sociolinguistic approaches go a significant distance in addressing the inadequacies of generative grammar and cognitive psycholinguistics in accounting for meaning. In particular, their emphasis on context--including the importance of shared world knowledge, as well as the deictic and performative aspects of the interaction--and on the dialogic pair appear to adequately remedy the problems of the mainstream psycholinguistics. However, for the most part, contextualist and sociolinguistic approaches have not looked beyond the apparent problems, or symptoms, of generative grammar and cognitive psycholinguistics to the metaphysical and epistemological assumptions which ground them. As we have seen, it is the Cartesian separation of the subject and the world, as well as the construction of knowledge and meaning as rational and representational that led psycholinguistics to take for granted distinctions such as competence and performance, contextual versus propositional meaning, etc.

In failing to question generative grammar and cognitive psycholinguistics at a deeper level, many contextualist and sociolinguistic attempts to transcend them have failed. Ultimately, their assumption by default of the Cartesian model is manifested in two significant ways. First, despite their emphasis on the dialogue as the basic "unit of meaning," they fail to articulate a *dia-logical* account of the subject--as such, the dialogue they speak of can only be understood as "bi-mono-logical;" this model in its essence is really no improvement on the ideal subject of generative grammar and cognitive

psycholinguistics. (We will explore this criticism further in our treatment of European psycholinguistics.) The second important manifestation of their implicit Cartesian bias is in their recourse to the notion of communicative competence.

As we discussed, an important part of "context" as it is defined within contextualist and sociolinguistic traditions is the assumption of shared world knowledge; this "background" knowledge can be understood in the broadest sense as the shared cultural practices and knowledge of social roles or in a more circumscribed sense of the deictic frame of a dialogue. Although contextualist and sociolinguistic positions obtain significant theoretical mileage from this notion, their attempts to account for this knowledge often end with what should be the now familiar "grand gesture" of positing a *competence*--in this case, a *communicative competence*. For example, Schiffrin (1988) defines communicative competence as the individual's *tacit knowledge of abstract rules* of a language, and Wunderlich (1968) identifies "pragmatic" competence with "speakers' and hearers' ability to make themselves intelligible or to understand utterances in (idealized) discourse" (p. 19). In this same vein, Schmidt (1973) posits a communicative competence that includes "the factors that make language communication possible in the first place: knowledge of a natural language (its lexicon, its grammar) and knowledge of the rules ensuring the success of the process of communication (p. 106). With this notion we have come back full circle to generative grammar, except this time linguistic competence is subsumed by an even "larger," more comprehensive communicative competence. This move reinstates at the very heart of purportedly "social" approaches to language the whole problematic of the competence-performance distinction, with its attendant assumption of knowledge as ideal, abstract, and self-contained.

#### European Psycholinguistics: Language as a Tool

Although the criticisms leveled at American psycholinguistics by the European theorists such as Bühler (1934), Hörmann (1981), and Rommetveit (1974) echo the ones discussed above, they focus more explicitly on language as a tool for communication.

Consistent with this emphasis, they also stress the importance of considering both the speaker and hearer in any account of language. The European psycholinguists are, however, more successful in avoiding the postulation of a competence-performance gulf than their contextualist and sociolinguistic counterparts. They effect this move beyond the competence-performance problematic by their account of language as a *continuation of action with other means* (Hörmann, 1981). As regards this notion, Hörmann remarks:

Human language is language because it is used by people for a purpose, namely, to live with other people. The purposeful use of language is embodied in acts of meaning and understanding; in these acts the essence of language is integrated with the condition of man. (p. 303)

Some of the dynamic forces at work between two people in any situation, while originating from an intention and guided by knowledge and reality, are effected through the medium of language as embodied in signs. Whether or not one thing stands for another, what exactly it does stand for and what it means *to stand for*, cannot be decided in isolation from the particular situation in which signs are used in a dialogue. (p. 7)

Thus, Hörmann (1981) produces an account of language as a tool used by both speakers and hearers to effect certain ends; he assumes that the prototype of the sort of activity that language is used to perpetuate is *cooperative* (cf. p. 5), and that the conscious manipulation of signs by speakers and hearers reflects an *intentionality* on the part of both that allows them to "become aware--right through the medium of language--of what is meant or referred to" (p. 4). As such, language is understood to be a *transparent medium*, the social use of which allows for the manifestation of *intended meanings*.

In taking this position, Hörmann (1981) and Rommetveit (1974) are relying in part on a notion of language articulated by Wittgenstein (1953) under the rubric of "language game." Wittgenstein avoids the traditional mistake of reifying meaning by asking, not what a word or sentence "means," but how the meaning of a word or sentence might be

accounted for. As a starting point, he observed the function of meaning in cooperative activity, taking the "game" as the prototype of such activity. Despite our ability to elaborate some of the rules that games share, we find that we can't draw a boundary around or define precisely just what a game is. The conventional notion of what a game is is continually being redefined within the flux of interpersonal and sociocultural change. The European psycholinguists assert that cooperative activity is also at the root of language as a communication system, and that the best approach to understanding the "meaning" of a sign is to study the social conventions--the systems of "rules" surrounding its use--and the material practices it is bound up with. These social systems become "visible" (and thus subject to attempts to conceptualize them in static terms) as soon as the guidelines of action have been elevated to the level of signification. Another significant feature of the European psycholinguistic approach is the notion that the intentionalities of the speaker and, in turn, the hearer together are the primary mediators of sense. Under this view, an utterance is understood as *a specifying instruction issued by the speaker for the benefit of the hearer, with the intention of effecting a modification in the consciousness of the latter* (Hörmann, 1981, p. 305). A corollary to this thesis is that the locus of the utterance, its "Archimedean point" (p. 242) or *origo* (Bühler, 1934) is the conscious ego. This ego is understood to be (and this will be important for our discussion of Lacan and Kristeva) much more than the subject of enunciation, the "I" that is manifest in an instance of discourse, but is understood to be the "I" of physical space, the cognitive space of memory and imagination, and of the "self-consciousness [that] is an integrating agency for all our experiences" (Hörmann, 1981, p. 246). We find this positing of the self-conscious ego as the center of the utterance problematic for several reasons.

To begin with, it is difficult to understand how the conscious ego described as the "center" of the utterance differs from the self-conscious subject that is the Cartesian *cogito*; granted, the European psycholinguists articulate an approach to language which escapes both the representationalist and competence-performance problematics, but they

manifest an implicit acceptance of the Cartesian notion of the self-aware, transparent subject that is "at all points coincident with himself" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 277). As Hörmann remarks, "The *intentional act* by which the self-conscious mind establishes a relationship with the world around it. . . [is] a principle beyond which there is no sensible inquiry" (p. 115). In addition, their position appears to reflect the stance that the subject is the "master of language," an assumption with which we will take issue in the following chapter. Thus, although we understand their approach to be capable of quite meaningfully capturing the level of discourse which does correspond to the coincidence of a speaker's and a hearer's exchange of consciously-intended meanings, the epistemology in which it is grounded prevents it from accounting for a form of knowledge or understanding that is essentially interpretive, performative, and *unconscious*. Rommetveit (1974) makes an implicit reference to what we will later refer to as "the other scene" of dialogue--the "locus" which is manifested as the interruption of the exchange of consciously intended meanings:

Ellipsis, we may claim, appears to be the prototype of verbal communication under ideal conditions of complete complementarity in an intersubjectively established, temporarily shared social world. (p. 29)

However, neither he nor any of the other psycholinguists in the European tradition broach an account of language and subjectivity which is compatible with this notion of "semantic ellipsis" as the norm of and, indeed, the driving force behind language as the spoken or written word.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SYMBOLIC AND SEMIOTIC IN LACAN AND KRISTEVA

As we have seen, at the foundation of the various psycholinguistic approaches to language are a number of assumptions concerning knowledge and subjectivity descendant from Cartesian metaphysics. This is especially true of the approaches to language based on transformational grammar and the subsequent models developed within cognitive psycholinguistics. The approaches which grew out of sociolinguistics and language philosophy, such as conversation analysis and pragmatics, as well as those deriving from European psycholinguistics have, as we have argued, managed to escape a number of the problems posed by Cartesian rationalism; however, even a majority of these positions revert to the Cartesian model at some point, primarily because they lack an alternative to the rationalist formulation of subjectivity as self-conscious, transcendent ego. That this is so is perhaps not surprising, given that the entire Western metaphysical tradition accounts for both being and knowledge in terms of static, atemporal universals. However, psycholinguistics has been unable to move beyond the Cartesian problematic even with the growing realization of the importance of the social, contextual, and temporal "dimensions" of language. This entrenchment in the Cartesian model is additionally perplexing given the trends in other social and natural science disciplines to move beyond the rationalist paradigm.

Although the seeds of an alternative approach to understanding the relationship between language, subjectivity, and knowledge can be found as far back as Greek philosophy (e. g., Plato, Heraclitus), it has only been since the advent of hermeneutic phenomenology put forth in Heidegger's *Being and Time* that the social sciences have had a model capable of capturing human action in essentially human terms at their disposal. Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology--often described as marking "the end of (Cartesian) metaphysics"--provides a ground from which language can be understood as radically

social and temporal, instead of derivatively or secondarily so. Heidegger's articulation of the relationships between language, subjectivity, and knowledge have been profoundly influential, not only in philosophy, but in both the human and natural sciences, and its impact on the work of Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva is no exception. Although their work manifests the influence of a diversity of thinkers and traditions, including Freud, Hegel, and Saussure, both Lacan and Kristeva are clearly indebted to Heidegger's account of language and the subject. Because of their reliance on Heideggerian theory in their own attempts to move beyond Cartesian rationalism, we will begin by focussing on how language and subjectivity are understood in Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology.

### Beyond the Subject-Object Division: Heidegger's Hermeneutic Phenomenology

As we have seen within the Cartesian system, the mind and the world (including the body) are first articulated as two wholly separate realms; prior to Descartes the distinction between a "spiritual," essentially rational mind and a mechanistic body had not been ascribed such an absolute and oppositional status. In addition to setting up the subject and the world as opposing entities, Descartes significantly influenced subsequent approaches to understanding the relationship between the two by accounting for a subject's apprehension of the world in terms of the rational, logic-driven process of "thinking." Within his system, knowledge begins as intuitions about the world originating with the "pure ideas," and then becomes supplemented through rational deduction from the "first principles" embodied in the ideas (Benjamin, 1988). Thus, the knowledge which is possessed by and which determines the subject's being is abstract, atemporal, and conceptual; it also "counts" as knowledge only to the extent that it is present to consciousness--thus, for the first time with Descartes, knowledge becomes firmly anchored in human subjectivity and self-consciousness, resulting in a "world" which is fundamentally conscious-centered (Palmer, 1969). This notion of knowledge and truth as subjective or self-conscious certainty Heidegger calls "subjectism" (1962).

Lacan begins his own critique of the subjectism reflected in Descartes' dictum

*cogito ergo sum*, which we will develop more fully later, with the following:

Of course this [Cartesian formulation] limits me to being there in my being only insofar as I think that I am in my thought . . . The real question is this: Is the place which I occupy as subject of a signifier con-centric or ex-centric, in relation to the place I occupy as subject of the signified. . .? It is not a question of knowing whether I speak about myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but rather of knowing whether I am the same as that of which I speak. . . What one ought to say is: I am not wherever I am the plaything of my thought; I think of what I am where I do not think to think (Lacan, 1977, pp. 165-166).

In these remarks, we can see--and we will discuss his position in greater detail below--that Lacan is positing subjectivity as *elsewhere* than consciousness. The question that Lacan asks rhetorically--is the "I" that the thinking *cogito* represents to itself (in the "I think") coextensive with subjectivity or being (the "I am")--is meant to be answered in the negative; indeed, Lacan asserts the impossibility that these two "centers" of the individual be coincident. In addition (and also in contrast to Descartes), Lacan is suggesting here that there exists *no self* or *subjective essence* (particularly one of a *rational nature*) that awareness as manifest through language could correspond to.

In his questioning of the privilege of the *cogito*, Lacan is echoing the critique of Cartesian metaphysics articulated by Heidegger, who also questioned the understanding of the subject as separate from, and in a transcendent relation to, the world understood as populated with "objects" for consciousness. In contrast to Descartes, Heidegger begins with the project of articulating the subject, or being, as radically temporal and "existential;" in so doing he proposes an understanding of the subject and world as inextricably intertwined, and world as prior to any separation of subject and object in the sense that they are typically understood.

For Heidegger, as well as for Lacan, the subject is not an entity or ego which would exist apart from the world and in a relationship of transcendence to the world of "things."



Although both Heidegger and Lacan allow for a mode or dimension of experience which is characterized by the ego acting as a "third-person observer" of either the world or of "itself" as an object in the world, both consider this mode of experience as secondary or derivative. Instead of existing primarily as an observing ego, Heidegger describes the subject as an embedded participant, as *always already involved* in the world and, as such, the subject does not exist apart from his or her engagement in the world. In contrast, then, to the Cartesian understanding of consciousness as a receptacle for holding representations, Heidegger maintains that consciousness can be nothing in itself, particularly not a space which "contains" ideas nor any collection of such ideas or representations; for Heidegger, "consciousness" relies upon the world for its constitution and, through its living in the world, "realizes" its experience only secondarily through the objects it encounters (Thompson, 1985). As such, the subject is not understood to be co-extensive with or the source of consciousness (as in Descartes), for "subjectivity" and "consciousness" are *dis-covered* only in the world of experiences. Thus, consciousness and the "objects" of consciousness are given with one stroke, and being as it discloses itself in lived experience escapes the conceptualizing, spatializing, and atemporal categories of idea-centered thinking (Palmer, 1969).

Not only is the notion of *subjectivity* differently understood in Heidegger and Lacan, the notion of *world* as used by them is not the same as the Cartesian notion of world, or its derivative notion of "environment" as used in psycholinguistics today. As we have seen, Descartes sets up the world as essentially material, as something which always exists over and against the subject and which consists of objects of consciousness for the subject. In contrast, the Heideggerian *world*, although it is not something which exists in absence of the subject or being, is that horizon or context within which the subject is always inscribed. This view differs radically from a sort of naive realism or empiricism, however; the Heideggerian world is not such that it could be described by enumerating the objects within it, and in fact represents the presuppositional context within which

"entities" as such can even be identified. To make these notions of subjectivity and world more clear, let us turn to Heidegger's account of practical activity.

### Cogit(o)ation versus Understanding

For Heidegger, the primary origin (or *ground*) of knowledge is practical activity, or our immediate, direct, everyday practical involvement in our world. This sort of "activity" exists prior to any act of reflection that would lead to an "objectified" awareness of world, and thus involves no context-free elements definable in the absence of interpretation (Packer, 1985). Sartre (1957), for example, describes practical activity thus:

When I run after a streetcar, when I look at the time, when I am absorbed in contemplating a portrait, there is no *I*. There is [only] consciousness *of the streetcar-having-to-be-overtaken* [etc.] . . . In fact, I am then plunged into the world of objects; it is *they* which constitute the unity of my consciousness; it is *they* which present themselves with values, with attractive and repellent qualities--but *me*--I have disappeared; I have annihilated myself (pp. 48-49).

The sort of consciousness Sartre is describing here is clearly different from the Cartesian consciousness, which is characterized by its awareness of itself in the act of thinking (and therefore is both reflective and transcendental). The "consciousness" or subjectivity evoked by Sartre is one which is coextensive with an experience of the world in terms of a *pro-ject*, an intentionality--a world defined by my preoccupation with trying to catch the last streetcar home, for example. Heidegger, speaking more abstractly, accounts for the context-bound nature of practical activity in the following way:

The context. . . can be taken formally in the sense of a system of relations. But. . . [t]he phenomenal content of these 'relations' and 'relata'. . . is such that they resist any sort of mathematical functionalization; nor are they merely something thought, first posited in an 'act of thinking.' They are rather relationships in which concernful circumspection as such already dwells. (1927/1962, pp. 121-122)

Thus for Heidegger what is "known" always presents itself within a set of already

understood relationships; this set of relationships is not such that it could be dissected into a number of distinct logical propositions or relations (as with Chomsky's deep structure)--rather it is a relational, mutually-defining whole which provides what Heidegger calls a *horizon* or context within which meaning can occur. So, rather than an understanding of knowledge as fundamentally ideal and atemporal, the Heideggerian sort of knowledge "represented" by objects in the world is always situated, always contextual and always temporal. In other words, things do not present themselves to us in terms of some ideal essence--we understand the world only as we turn to things *as* something, in relation to the context of a project. Objects, then, do not have significance or meaning outside of a temporally-situated relationship to someone or something, and it is that relationship which determines the significance (Palmer, 1969).

In Heideggerian theory this mode of practical understanding is contrasted with the mode of reflective understanding, the form privileged by Cartesian metaphysics. In describing the moment of *reflective* understanding, Heidegger states that "the 'world' which has *already been understood* comes to be interpreted"(1927/1962, p. 189, italics mine). What he means here is that the reflective understanding which Cartesian metaphysics takes to be fundamental is itself grounded in a more original understanding which shapes and conditions the sort of interpretation privileged by Descartes. This "originary" understanding is implicit in any subsequent interpretation, since there is an interpretation that occurs even in the way one turns toward an "object." Thus ready-to-hand, or practical understanding is ontologically fundamental, prior to, and distinct from the propositional knowledge of the Cartesian *cogito*.

By implication, then, understanding is conceived not as something to be possessed, but rather as a mode of being-in-the-world. The "nature" of understanding is, therefore, not determined by any essential qualities of objects in the world, or by innate ideas or predispositions for understanding the world grounded in cognitive structures, but through modes of existence in the world. In this sense, Heidegger effects a reversal of the

Cartesian position by asserting that *existence precedes essence* or, in other words, that meaning and knowledge are always temporal and situated, and not mediated by any essential and therefore static qualities of the subject or the world. As Heidegger states: "The 'essence' of this entity [*Dasein*] lies in its 'to-be'. . . *The essence of Dasein lies in its existence. . . In each case Dasein is its possibility*" (Heidegger, pp. 67-68). A further development of Heidegger's approach--that the process of knowing involved in revealing reality as meaningful is essentially linguistic--is particularly relevant for our argument, and will perhaps clarify his understanding of meaning and knowledge as temporal and situated.

### Language as Revelation

In the formulation of his hermeneutic phenomenology--a significant aspect of which included a rethinking of the way in which language is related to being and the world--Heidegger effects a re-reading of several early Greek attempts to describe language and being (cf., Heidegger 1962; 1975). In tracing the etymology of the word *phenomenology* back to its Greek roots, he found it to be a derivative of the Greek *phainomenon* and *logos*; *phainomenon* is itself derived from the roots *pha-* - meaning *light* or *brightness*, that medium or space in which something can become manifest--and *-noumenon*, which refers to the *real* or *that which is* (Palmer, 1969). *Phenomenon*, then, can be taken to mean *that which shows itself, is manifested or revealed*. The other Greek root of phenomenology, *logos*, can also be understood as that which allows for the manifestation of the real--in this case, however, it is language (or more specifically, speaking) which effects the revelation of the real. Thus the sense of *phenomenology* as uncovered by Heidegger can be translated as "to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very *way in which* it shows itself *from* itself" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 58, italics mine). Since our interest here is in how Heidegger understands language as integral to the "revelation" of the world as meaningful, we will examine his invocation of the Greek *logos* in more detail. Heidegger's essay on the meaning of *Logos* in Heraclitus (Fragment B50)

sheds greater light on this.

In the *Logos* essay, Heidegger (1975) describes that embedded in the Heraclitan account of the "One and the Many" is an implicit reference to the functioning of *Logos* as the primal power (the "One") which serves to continuously reveal the world in its various manifestations (the "Many"). In addition, he describes that for Heraclitus, *Logos* was necessarily understood in relation to its verb form *legein*--which is the process of "laying out" or "laying side by side," a process which allows for that which has been gathered "to lie forth as what it is" (Richardson, 1983). *Logos* is the primal power from which this process proceeds, that allows for things in the world to be manifest in a web of relations (Heidegger, 1975). In another context, Heidegger likens *Logos* to a "lightning bolt" that "lights up" or provides the illuminated space within which the world can be revealed. Thus, it is the *Logos* as "illumination" that reveals the world, or "lifts the veil," (as the literal translation from Greek suggests) under which the world would remain otherwise hidden from us. But, what has all this to do with language?

Interestingly, the sense of *legein* as a "laying out in collectedness" is equivalent to the Greek meaning of *to speak* or *call forth*. It is this notion of language as fundamentally a "speaking" or "calling forth" that establishes the difference between Heidegger's and Lacan's understanding of language on the one hand, and the representational theories of language we discussed earlier. To begin with, if speaking--or, as Heidegger says, "the concrete act(s) of proclamation"-- is understood as the foundation of language, we must recognize the implications of both the temporality and materiality of language for our understanding of meaning and knowledge. These points will be addressed more directly in our account of language as a *praxis* in Chapter V. We can, however, begin to clarify this distinction between the post-Cartesian and Cartesian positions by drawing out the different functions of evocation and denomination privileged in the two, respectively.

The representational theories of language addressed in the preceding chapters rely primarily on the notion of language as denomination. As such, language is understood to

stand for, or denote, things and relations which have an existence independent of language; consequently, language can only be understood as the secondary manifestation of a more "originary world" possessed of an inherent, pre-linguistic ordering. A further implication of such a view is that language is the "currency" for the exchange of ideas. Implicit in the representational approach is an assumption of equivalency between the *thing* and its linguistic re-presentation-- language denotes an essentially non-linguistic reality. Heidegger rejects this notion of language as "commerce" for an understanding of language as revelatory:

Words and language are not wrappings in which things are packed for the commerce of those who write and speak. It is in words and language that things first come into being and are. (1959, p. 13)

Understood in this way, as the original manifestation of the world as it is, language becomes existentially primordial with state-of-mind and understanding. It does not serve as the medium for the exchange of "ideas" or the sharing of an "interiority," but is the participating in and sharing of a world. Thus, Heidegger is positing a complete identification between *legein* as bringing into language or words--"naming"--and letting things show themselves:

To name means to call forward. That which is gathered and laid down in the name, by means of such a laying, comes to light and comes to lie before us. . . The naming. . . is not the expression of a word-meaning but rather a letting-lie-forth in such a way that it has a name (1954, p. 73).

And again in another context he suggests that if our essence did not include the power of language, the world--including our own subjectivity--would be closed to us (1954).

In place of the denominative function of language--naming understood as expression--Heidegger speaks of language as a "calling forth," as *evocation*. The action of naming, then, serves to evoke or bring forth to presence meaning which would otherwise remain closed to us, or covered over. As such, the sort of "knowledge" manifest in and

through language is not something we "have" first and then communicate, but rather language reveals things to us as they are for the first time. That which is evoked is not some static or apodictic meaning, but a revelation of meaning which opens up to the future and allows for things to be known in terms of their possibilities. Lacan echoes Heidegger's position when he states that "the end of the symbolic process is that non-Being come to be and this is because it has come into words" (1978, p. 354).

In contrast to the Cartesian understanding of language as a superfluous intermediary attached to the ideas of the subject for the purpose of their communication, Heidegger and Lacan suggest that the world itself (our subjectivity included) would not "be" for us without the re-velatory power of language.

Thus, both the subject and the world are understood as ultimately dependent on language for the realization of their possibility(ies) for meaning. For example, Heidegger states:

Man behaves as if he were the creator and master of language, whereas on the contrary, it is language which is and remains his sovereign. . . For in the proper sense of these terms, it is language which speaks. Man speaks insofar as he replies to language by listening to what it says to him. . . Language makes us a sign and it is language which, first and last, conducts us in this way towards the being of a thing. (Heidegger, 1957, p. 1060)

Heidegger makes several points here concerning the relationship of the human subject to language and knowledge which resonate with Lacan, and to which we shall devote our attention in the following sections. First, along with Heidegger, Lacan views the subject as "subordinate" to language; although we will explore Lacan's development of this thesis in greater detail in what follows, let us note that understanding the subject as *subject to* language problematizes the distinction between the "inner" world of subjectivity and the "outer" world of objects (and "objectivity") upon which the Cartesian position is founded. Thus, both Heidegger and Lacan propose to deconstruct the Cartesian division between "interpersonal" and "intrapersonal" relations by accounting for the latter as a function of a

fundamental *social* relation--which is itself inextricably bound up with language.

In addition, Lacan echoes Heidegger's emphasis on the revelatory power of language. This point is, in a sense, the "other side" of the thesis of the subject's subordination to language; that, despite the fact that language "makes us a sign," it is in and through this same language that the both the world and our own subjectivity become intelligible for us. We will return to this point in our discussion of Lacan's account of the efficacy of the psychoanalytic relation.

The approach to language we have introduced here offers up a perspective quite foreign to a mainstream psycholinguistic tradition steeped in the assumptions of Western (Cartesian) metaphysics. Not only is the perspective foreign, but--and this is consistent with the notion of the simultaneously structuring and revelatory power of language--it is couched in a language unfamiliar to those in the Western metaphysical tradition. What Heidegger means when he says, for example, "language makes us a sign" is probably not immediately apparent. We will attempt, through its use, to provide a context from which to make sense of this different language in subsequent sections. But first, let us begin by situating Lacan's and Kristeva's work in its particular sociohistorical context.

#### Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva: Language and Post-Structuralist Thought

Jacques-Marie Emile Lacan (1901-1982) was born in Paris and spent the greater part of his life there engaged as a practicing analyst, lecturer and figurehead of several successive psychoanalytic training institutions. His reputation and broad-ranging influence within the arts and academe were, however, primarily the result of the bimonthly seminars on psychoanalytic theory that he delivered over a period of forty years. In fact, the majority of his published works are transcriptions of these seminars. The public forum provided by his seminars as well as his extensive application of Continental philosophy, linguistics, literary theory and structural anthropology in service of his celebrated "return to Freud" guaranteed him a diverse audience and a vital role in the development of the French structuralist and post-structuralist intellectual scene.



Although he is sometimes classed among the French structuralists, Lacan had actually begun to move beyond the medical model of his psychiatric training and towards the development of an intersubjective model of "personality" well before the inception of contemporary structuralism in the late 1930's. For example, in his doctoral thesis, *On Paranoia and its Relationship to Personality* (1932), Lacan rejected the typical focus on organic determinants of psychopathology in favor of an exploration of the interaction between what he loosely referred to as "personality" and the social milieu.

As Lacan's thought developed subsequent to his doctoral work, he became increasingly preoccupied with questions concerning the relationship between the subject and the social world. He was critical of the understanding of the subject as a transcendental "unity" or ego--a position adopted by most neo-Freudian approaches of his time. Ultimately, much of his work can be understood as an attempt to demonstrate the relevance of the Freudian discovery of the relationship between language and the unconscious for post-structuralist thought. He found in his reading of Freud's texts--particularly Freud's early emphasis on the function of dialogue in the "bringing to light" of unconscious material and in the construction of intersubjectivity--the seeds of just such a post-structuralist project.

As he became integrated into the intellectual scene of pre-World War II France, however, Lacan encountered a number of artistic and philosophic approaches to answering the questions of interest to him. Understood within this context, we can hypothesize that the original significant appeal for Lacan of the structural linguistics of Saussure and Jakobson and the structural anthropology of Levi-Strauss was their provision of a radically new way (at the time, at least) to address the relationship between the subject and the social world (Muller & Richardson, 1982). In addition, Lacan found much in the structuralist approach which resonated with his own reading of Freud, particularly Freud's emphasis on the relationship between the unconscious and language.

Lacan was also introduced to Hegel as a member of the audience of Alexandre

Kojève's famous lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes in Paris from 1933-1939. Although the influence of Hegel on Lacan will not be of particular importance for us here, Lacan drew heavily on Hegel's notions of negation and the master-slave dialectic in accounting for aspects of the psychoanalytic relation. Finally, as we have noted above and will broach again in what follows, Lacan was also significantly influenced by the hermeneutic phenomenologies of Heidegger and, to a lesser extent, of Merleau-Ponty. In particular, Lacan's understanding of temporality and its relationship to both language and the subject manifests a significant debt to Heidegger.

Julia Kristeva (1941- present), a professor of linguistics at the University of Paris VII and a visiting professor of French at Columbia University, has also become a major figure in the evolution of French poststructuralist thought. Although her doctoral work was in linguistics, she received psychoanalytic training under Lacan and is currently also a practicing analyst. Like Lacan, her own work incorporates and transforms an impressive range of philosophic, literary and psychoanalytic thought, and she has published in the areas of psychoanalysis, literary criticism, feminist theory and linguistics. In her dissertation, an attenuated version of which was published as *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1989), she sought to lay the foundation for what has been her significant continuing work of articulating how the relationship between language and the subject can be thought of in the wake of postmodern and poststructuralist critiques.

Although her work manifests a significant reliance on Lacanian theory, she further develops several key aspects of his account of the subject. In particular, she further develops the Lacanian construction of the relationship between language and subjectivity through her explorations of what she calls *le sujet en procès* (the subject in process/on trial) (Kristeva, 1984). She also articulates a distinction between the dimensions of language she calls the *semiotic* and the *symbolic*, "dispositions" manifest within language that suggest the two distinct forces at play in the subject's discourse. Kristeva defines the symbolic in a manner similar to Lacan, as the dimension of language as a system of signs,

understood most generally as the set of social structures or prescription of a given culture and, more specifically, as the rules governing "rational," thetic discourse within which meaning "proper" is produced. The semiotic, while inextricably related to the symbolic, is according to Kristeva "heterogeneous . . . to [doxic] meaning and signification" (1980, p. 133). The semiotic is related to what Kristeva refers to as affect--the pre- and extra-linguistic movement and regulation of energy which escapes capture within the predicative relationships of the symbolic order.

### The Symbolic Order: Language as Structure

Although Lacan is perhaps best known for his radical "return to Freud"--that is, his contemporary reading of the Freudian unconscious and of the structure of the psychoanalytic relation--Lacan's project must also be more broadly understood as reflecting the post-structuralist preoccupation of articulating "otherness" or difference without recourse to an "outside," or transcendental referent. Indeed, despite his early reliance on structuralist theory, the modifications to which he subjected structuralist arguments have led to what is clearly a post-structuralist account of language and subjectivity. In particular, his account of the *Symbolic order* (as well as its relationship to the dimensions of the *Imaginary* and the *Real*, which we will not address here) parallels the directions taken by a number of other contemporary thinkers who have concerned themselves with language and subjectivity, most notably Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas. Unique to Lacan's project, however, is the fact that it was continually informed and re-formed by his practice--both through his everyday encounters with analysands in his psychoanalytic practice and through the pedagogical practice of his seminars. As such, Lacan's theoretical understanding of language as a *praxis* is itself "acted out" in his continual revision of his theory through the knowledge "revealed" by his *use* of language. Although Lacan's formulation of what he terms the *Symbolic order* (cf., Lacan, 1977) has a unique meaning and function in his theory, he does, as we have mentioned, draw from Heidegger, Hegel, Lévi-Strauss and Saussure (among others) in developing his own

position. Two of the most important influences on his construction of the symbolic order are Claude Lévi-Strauss and Ferdinand de Saussure. Let us begin, then, by addressing their influence on Lacan's own development and usage of the term.

### Lévi-Strauss and the Symbolic Structure of Society

The aspects of Lévi-Strauss' work that had the most apparent impact on Lacan's thought are to be found in two of his essays: *The Effectiveness of Symbols* (1949) and *Language and the Analysis of Social Laws* (1951). In these essays, Lévi-Strauss introduced the thesis that linguistics was the appropriate paradigm of analysis for all of the social sciences. Employing a logic which Lacan found compelling, Lévi-Strauss arrived at this position based on his analysis of social relations among members of several Native South American tribes. It was through his work within these cultures that he first recognized what he later asserted to be universal "symbolic structures" discernible in the construction of all cultures--these structures being variously complex patterns of relationships among individuals designed to lend symbolic meaning to and thus regulate human interchange: "Any culture may be looked upon as an ensemble of symbolic systems, in the front rank of which are to be found language, marriage laws, economic relations, art, science, religion" (1969, p. 33).

Although Lévi-Strauss described these systems of exchange as operating at an unconscious level, he nevertheless understood them to serve important communicative functions. For example, the various rules and prohibitions developed around marriage and kinship relations (most notably, the incest taboo) came to unconsciously structure the meaning of "family" and the communicative import of actions of individuals occupying different positions within the family structure. Thus, when Lévi-Strauss speaks of "the unconscious," he is referring to something both social and structural in its law-like functioning: "It [the unconscious] is reducible to a function--the symbolic function, which no doubt is specifically human, and which is carried out according to the same laws among all men, and actually corresponds to the aggregate of these laws" (1949, pp. 202-203).

Ultimately, Lévi-Strauss pushes his analogy between the communicative function of language and that of other symbolic structures to the point of declaring that not only do linguists, anthropologists, and sociologists employ the same methods, but that they study the same object (Lévi-Strauss, 1969). In this vein, he quotes favorably a remark by Thomas (1937) suggesting that exogamy and language have the same basic functions: "communication with others and the integration of the group" (p. 182). As we will see, Lévi-Strauss' development of the symbolic order does share a number of features with the synchronic structure of *la langue* put forth by Saussure, including this notion of language as serving a communicative rather than an expressive function. In addition, they both reject the understanding of language (and for Lévi-Strauss, other symbolic structures) as a reflection of an underlying primordial reality (as in, for example, the typical understanding of "symbols" as having an "iso-morphic" relation to that which they represent). Rather, they both describe language as lacking a "center" or, as Lacan will call it, a transcendental referent; as such, the structure which is language is characterized by a sort of internal *freeplay* (cf., Derrida, 1967):

In fact, what appears most fascinating in this critical search for a new status of the discourse is the stated abandonment of all reference to a *center*, to a *subject*, to a *privileged referent*, to an *origin*, or to an absolute *archia*. (Lévi-Strauss, 1964, p. 419)

As for Lacan's view of the significance of Lévi-Strauss' account of the symbolic order, he remarks:

Isn't it striking that Lévi-Strauss, in suggesting the implication of the structures of language with that part of social laws which regulate marriage ties and kinship, is already conquering the very terrain in which Freud situates the unconscious?  
(1977, p. 73)

It is the symbolic order as *unconscious structure*, combine with aspects of *la langue* as described by Saussure that Lacan appropriates and reinterprets within his own discourse on

language and subjectivity.

### Saussure and the Symbolic Order

Like Lévi-Strauss, Lacan demonstrates a reliance on the structural linguistics of Saussure and Jakobson for the preliminary model of what he later referred to as the Symbolic order. In the paragraphs that follow, we will turn our attention first to the basic aspects of Saussurian linguistics that figure significantly in Lacan's approach; following this, we will examine the influence of structural linguistics in greater detail, with particular attention to Lacan's emendations of Saussure and the implications of these for his own account of the Symbolic order.

As noted earlier, one thing that distinguished Saussurian linguistics from the linguistic approaches which preceded it was Saussure's focus on the synchronic study of language. Indeed, this focus on synchronic "sets" or systems was the distinguishing feature of the cross-disciplinary structuralist revolution which began in France during the late 1930's and early 1940's, and of which Lévi-Strauss was a part. In linguistics, this resulted in a move towards the study of language as a synchronic system alongside what had been the historically-privileged study of the changes in language across time; thus, elements of a given language were studied in relation to their position and function in the synchronic set, and not in relation to earlier states assumed to be causes (as had, for example, been characteristic of the mechanistic approaches of Bopp and Schleicher).

Structuralists such as Saussure and Jakobson were primarily interested in examining the interrelationships within a particular language system, a system "created" by making an arbitrary "timeless" cut across a language at a given stage of its development. Saussure designated this synchronic system as *la langue*, or the social and collective institution of language as a system of signs possessing certain values and beyond the conscious control of the individual (Saussure, 1922/1966). He distinguished *la langue* from *la parole*, the latter being characterized as the individual act of combination and substitution of elements of *langue* actualized in speech, and thus representing an essentially conscious use of the

unconsciously determined structures of *langue*. As such, Saussure reserved the term speech to refer to the individual psychomotor act of speaking, and used language to refer to the system of signs that makes speech possible through providing a concrete set of sounds tied to meanings in the contexts of conventional use. Saussure understood the effects of *parole*, or speech, as manifest in the diachronic change of languages across time. However, he did realize that language and speech could only be separated in a formal and not an existential sense, and understood *langue* (language as a system) and *parole* to be in a constant dialectical interaction.

Perhaps an example of the difference and interaction between *langue* and *parole*--one often used by Lacan (cf., 1978, p. 204)--would serve to clarify our use of these terms here. To wit: the human infant ("in-fans" literally means "without speech") is born into a world which has predated her in a number of significant ways, not the least of which is the fact that its participants share a common set of language practices. In fact, the child has already become what Lacan calls a "signifier" in the familial and larger community discourse long before her birth; in other words, the infant--who is born with the incipient power of speech but is not yet able to take up and use language "proper"--comes into a world which has already appropriated her as an object in a complex network of (structural) social relations, such as gender role relations, birth order, generational position, etc.:

This form of identification is symbolic identification, it is the process whereby one is identified by a symbol, and in fact is designated as "one" only through the use of a signifier [e. g., through use of the proper name]. Such symbolic identification is also operative when one's identity is unconsciously constellated by other signifiers, bestowed by parents in specifically designated ways. We are all subjected to these words in childhood and they structure a kind of unconscious symbolic map . . .

(Muller, 1990, p. 9)

The process through which the infant "takes up" language occurs in two stages.

Initially, the infant's inchoate sounds are learnt meaning, or interpreted, by her caretakers--for example, cries of different pitches and intensities are differentially interpreted as hunger, a desire to be held, pleasure, or frustration. However, with the acquisition of "true" speech (understood in the Saussurian sense of the individual use and manipulation of conventional linguistic signs) which typically occurs between the ages of 10 months and two years, the infant moves from the idiosyncratic language of babbles and cries and into the domain of language as a larger social institution and into a pluralized relationship with society as a whole. In other words, the infant is born into a pre-existing, pre-ordered structure of human interchange through language to which she must ultimately accede in order to be a "participant" in that society. It is through the perpetual process that begins at this point--when the child assumes her place in the language community and begins to transform the extant language through *use*, that *langue* is continually produced and re-produced through its use in *parole*. The question of the process of this dialectical interaction between *langue* and *parole* is one to which we will have need to return, for it sets up a problematic that we have so far only superficially addressed--that of an interaction between a hypothetical structure which "exists" in omnidirectional, reversible time and a practice of speech which is assumed to be linear and unidirectional. For now, it will suffice to say that Saussure, despite his recognition of the problems inherent in positing language as a "structure," did consider the study of what he called "structural properties" of language to be of value in revealing those general linguistic characteristics operant across time and across languages. And although Lacan's understanding of language as a "Symbolic order" ultimately represents a significant modification of Saussure's own views, Lacan's formulation does remain closely allied with Saussure's structuralist account of meaning as "value."

#### Signifier and Signified: Language as a System of Signs

With his notion of *langue*, Saussure was one of the first to conceive of language as a form of communication rather than as the substance of expression (Ragland-Sullivan,



1986). To begin with, he understood the linguistic sign as uniting "not a thing and a name [as in the denotative account of the sign], but a concept and a sound-image" (1916, p. 66); he also emphasized that the relation between the two components of the linguistic sign--the signifier and the signified--was, in principle, arbitrary. Saussure described the signifier as the phonetic, acoustic image--the concrete utterance of a linguistic unit--and the signified as a "mental concept." In asserting that the relationship between them was arbitrary, he was contrasting his position with those assuming an intrinsic or "natural" connection between the two, or between signs and the world. For example, there is no necessary connection between the word "cat" and our idea of "cat"--*chat, gato*, etc. will do just as well. Saussure did recognize, however, that although the union between signifier and signified in the sign is clearly arbitrary in principle, it is also--and at the same time--both necessary and indissoluble for each user of any given language at a given moment in time. What was revolutionary about Saussure's account of the arbitrary nature of the signifier-signified relationship, was that it represented a definitive step beyond the Cartesian rationalist and the behaviorist explanations which minimized the role of the signifier--understood either as a superfluous intermediary between reality and its mental representation or as a "meaningless" collection of reinforced patterns of sound, respectively. In contrast, he articulated a position able to account for the signifier (the literal, spoken word) as "meaningful" in absence of its relation to an "objective," external material reality presumed to be atemporal and to exist independent of the human subject.

Although Saussure's development of the arbitrary nature of the relation between signifier and signified does represent a move beyond the logico-semantic and behaviorist approaches to language which preceded it, there is a sense in which it, too, retains the residue of a representationalist problematic of the sign. For example, even though he posits the relationship as arbitrary, he still suggests that the signifier serves to represent the signified, however evanescent and conventionally-determined this representational relationship. In a similar vein, his insistence on the unity of the relationship between the

signifier and signified in the sign (which he had described as like "two sides of a page") also perpetuates the Cartesian notion that there is a signified which exists independent from the signifier that represents it. Thus, Saussure's thesis concerning the arbitrary relation between signifier and signified eventually leads to an impasse regarding the status of that to which the signified refers. To the extent that it refers to a precedent, transcendent "reality," Saussure is himself invoking the *cogito* (Ragland-Sullivan, 1986).

Saussure does, however, put forth an alternative hypothesis concerning the relation between signifier and signified which more clearly marks a decisive break with the representationalist model--this is his articulation of the *value* relation between signs. As mentioned, Saussure understood *langue* to be composed of elements, or signs, each of which possessed a certain "value" in relation to the other elements in the system. As such, each sign is what it "is" by virtue of its difference from all the other signs that it is not; the signification (or "meaning") of a term, then, is only the summary of its value--that is, of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations it establishes with the other signifiers in its entourage. In other words, each signifier is in itself without positive substance but consists, rather, solely in its difference from the other signifiers in the linguistic system (Borch-Jacobsen, 1989). As Saussure explains:

In language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences without positive terms . . . Putting it another way, language is a form and not a substance. . . This truth could not be overstressed, for all the mistakes in our terminology, all our incorrect ways of naming things that pertain to language, stem from the involuntary supposition that the linguistic phenomena must have substance. (Saussure, 1916, pp. 120;122)

With the value theory of signification, Saussure allows for a way of thinking about language that can escape both the representationalist notion of the sign and the assumption of the *cogito* which sustains it. It is based on this value theory of signification, then, that

Saussure defined the network of the signifier as a synchronic structure in which each element is defined purely in terms of the difference between it and every other element.

For the purpose of clarity, let us note that Saussure was relying on an account of difference (i. e., between linguistic units in a system) first described by his contemporary Roman Jakobson. In particular, he drew from Jakobson's and Halle's research (translated, 1956) which classified all possible linguistic sounds (phonemes) according to a system of bipolar opposition into 12 complementary pairs. Thus the Saussurian signifier--the acoustic manifestation of the linguistic unit--is composed of various combinations of this "closed set" of ultimate distinctive features. At the same time, this structuralist notion of difference, and thus of linguistic meaning, also assumes the separating, punctuating effect of silence; in the most concrete sense, the phonetic elements--of which the more complex acoustic images that we associate with words are formed--rely on the silent "time" between them for perception of them as distinct.

The account of linguistic difference on which Saussure's value theory rests could perhaps best be understood by way of an analogy. An example of this notion of a substance-less signifier--one defined by identity-in-difference--is a musical note in a score. Of course, musical sounds do have different absolute tonal frequencies and thus, have some positive "value" in isolation; musical notes, on the other hand, have no value or "meaning" in and of themselves. Middle *C* has a different value and thus "meanings" in Beethoven's piano sonatas #3 and #9--because it exists in a different relation to the other notes from which it takes its value. We can extend the analogy by pointing out that music rests on the silences between the notes--for example, it is the silent time between notes that distinguishes an arpeggio from a chord (Muller, 1990). In the same way, then, the value of a signifier is derived solely from its difference from other signifiers in "its" system. As such, the expressive value of an utterance is not the sum of each "value" belonging to the verbal chain (such an absolute, isolated value does not exist); rather, elements become a synchronic "order" in the sense that each one of them signifies only its

difference in relation to the others. Ultimately, however, since this is true of all of them, we can say that in any language there are *only differences of signification*; when considered one by one, each element alludes to a signification forever in suspense; in combination, these values "point toward" this signification but do not ever "contain" it (Wilden, 1968). This phenomenon is what, as we will see later, Lacan refers to as an *effect of meaning*.

A final structuralist distinction important for our discussion of Lacan is that of *metaphor* and *metonymy*. When considering the specific "types" of relationships manifest among signifiers in a system, Saussure and Jakobson noted the conventional relationships prescribed by rules of, for example, vocabulary and grammar. However, at a more fundamental level, Saussure made a distinction between two fundamental "axes" along which meanings are related--the axis of combination and the axis of selection or substitution (Saussure, 1916). Along the axis of combination, linguistic units are related to each other by their co-presence in space and/or time (such as words in a written or spoken sentence); Saussure calls this relation *syntagmatic* (1916, p. 123). Along the axis of selection or substitution, linguistic units are linked to one another through a "relationship" of complementary non-presence or mutual exclusion, for example when we choose to refer to Saussure as a "linguist" instead of a "social scientist" given a particular context of use, or to refer to him as a "structural linguist" to imply his difference in approach from other linguists (such as the "behavioral linguists" who preceded him). Saussure refers to this relationship--where linguistic units are related by virtue of one being substituted for another or are used to imply exclusion of another--as *paradigmatic*. Jakobson (1956) in his turn, took the distinction outlined by Saussure between the axes of combination and substitution and demonstrated their coincidence with the rhetorical tropes of metonymy (the "meaning" of a signifier produced by its relation to another signifier in a signifying chain) and metaphor (the substitution of one signifier for another that produces a "new" sense), respectively. Lacan appropriates this interpretation, and ultimately relates

metaphor to Freud's notion of condensation as manifest in dream images, and metonymy to Freud's notion of displacement. Of primary relevance for us, however, are both Lacan's understanding of metaphor and metonymy as the two fundamental "laws" of language, as well as their effects in the structuring of subjectivity. His use of these two concepts will become more apparent in what follows.

### From Saussure's Linguistics to Lacan's *Linguisterie*

Lacan, while retaining important parts of the Saussurian model, simultaneously brings several important modifications to it. Lacan begins by rejecting the "arbitrariness" hypothesis concerning the relationship between signifier and signified in favor of the more fertile hypothesis put forth by Saussure concerning the "value" of the linguistic sign. Thus, Lacan's account of the Symbolic order assumes that the signifier serves to create effects of meaning only through its interdependent, differential relationship to other signifiers in a "chain." This eventually leads Lacan to a radical dissociation of what Saussure had understood to be the unity of signifier and signified in the linguistic sign, and the development of what Borch-Jakobson (1989) calls an entirely *sui* (self)-referential model of language (p. 90). Finally, Lacan extends the Saussurian "laws" which regulate *langue* --metaphor and metonymy--to the domain of *parole* or discourse.

Although Saussure had gone a long way in spelling out the implications of language as a system of differences, that he ultimately retained some notion of the existence of an independent signified is evidenced by his thesis of the unity of the signifier and signified in the sign. As we have seen, the sign is, for Saussure, a psychological reality with two "sides," the concept and the sound image (e. g., the idea of "cat" and the acoustic impression of "c-a-t" ); as such, the sign is a convenient "envelope" that retains what is common to the thousands of different representations we have made of "cat" over a lifetime. We can see here that, despite his postulation of the value hypothesis, Saussure reverts to a representationalist relationship between signifier and signified; although he does exclude the real-world "object" (what he designates as the *referent*) from this relation,

he does imply a one-to-one correspondence between signifier and signified which would be the distillation of the prototypical features of the various representations.

Lacan radicalized Saussure's conceptualization by describing it as an algorithm with the signifier as the numerator of a fraction and the signified as its denominator-- where the two are separated by a "bar" or barrier to any one-to-one correspondence. By capitalizing the Signifier and placing it "above" the signified, Lacan means to suggest the ascendance or primacy of the signifier in the production of sense. Defined as such, any given signifier refers, not to a signified ("a" meaning, or "mental concept," as in Saussure), but ultimately to another signifier in a "chain" of signifiers (Lacan, 1977, p.153). Consequently, then, the "signifier does not depend on signification. . . but *is its source*" (Lacan, 1981, p. 282). Although Lacan's strategy of emphasizing the bar between the signifier and signified has been read by some as a re-institution of the representationalist problematic, Lacan appears, on the contrary to be underscoring the fleeting, evanescent status of any "deep" signification whatsoever. To the extent that we can speak of a signified at all, then, it is only as an effect of a process of signification--the source of which lies in the relationships among signifiers-- and that it "slips" and "flows" perpetually under the signifier (1977, p. 153). Thus sense (or "meaning"), for Lacan is differential--perpetually disappearing because it is always-already deferred and deferring (Borch-Jacobsen, 1989). As Lacan states, "We can say that it is in the chain of signifiers that the meaning 'insists' but that none of its elements 'consists' in the signification of which it is at the moment capable. We are forced, then, to accept the notion of an incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier" (1977, pp. 153-154). And it is this sense of meaning as deferred, as profoundly metonymical, that Lacan ultimately applies to the domain of discourse.

Consistent with his account of the sign as a unity, Saussure postulated two "planes" of language--a plane of sounds (corresponding to the signifier) and a plane of ideas (corresponding to the signified); he represented the points of correspondence between the

two planes by vertical lines, by which he meant to indicate segments of their correspondence. However, as Lacan (1977) remarks:

The linearity that Saussure holds to be constitutive of the chain of discourse, in conformity with its emission by a *single voice* and with its horizontal position in our writing--if this linearity is necessary, it is not sufficient. . . one has only to listen to poetry. . . for a polyphony to be heard, for it to become clear that *all discourse is aligned along several staves of a score*. (p. 154)

And,

All our experience runs counter to this linearity. . . [as we are witness to] the dominance of the letter in the dramatic transformation that *dialogue* can effect in the subject. (p. 154)

Thus Lacan asserts that Saussure's vision of the correspondence between the two planes of the signifier and signified is a simplification, or a reduction to a *single voice* that which Lacan implies is dialogic, even polyphonic. Although Lacan finds much of value in Saussure's notion of *langue*, as a system within which meaning is differential and metonymically deferred, he diverges most radically from Saussure when drawing out the implications of this model for *discourse*. Lacan's understanding of the "metonymical" structure of discourse--more specifically, the psychoanalytic dialogue--is bound up with his account of subjectivity (which we address in the following section). Suffice it to say here that Lacan understands the subject's "message" to be radically dependent on an *other* (even, an *Other*, as Lacan will say) for its meaning; in addition, he subordinates the notion of dialogue as sharing of information or communication (an exchange of "signifieds") to dialogue as a relationship of *call* and *response* (Lacan, 1977). This dialogue, although ostensibly occurring between two "voices" and actualized in the real time of linear temporality, is understood by Lacan to exceed both these boundaries--implicating a "polyphony" and an "other" sort of temporality. It is to an explication of this understanding of the subject and time in dialogue that we now turn.

### The *Cogito* and the Unconscious Subject

As we have seen, the approaches to understanding language examined in detail in Chapters Two and Three--the logico-semantic theories of Chomsky and the cognitive psycholinguists, as well as the social, contextualist accounts of the sociolinguists and the European psycholinguists--have been unable to produce an account of language as essentially human because of their reliance (explicit or implicit, the latter being true of the European and sociolinguistic models) on the Cartesian *cogito* as the model of the human subject. Thus, even though the sociolinguistic and functionalist approaches do demonstrate that the production of meaning in human discourse cannot be adequately accounted for within a representationalist paradigm, their own accounts manifest a privileging of the *cogito* which is incompatible with their attempts to account for language as social and dialogic.

The challenge of articulating a non-Cartesian approach to understanding the subject is central in the work of both Lacan and Kristeva. As presented above, Lacan derives from Lévi-Strauss and Saussure an account of language that both deconstructs the privilege of the signified, as manifest in representationalist accounts, and that addresses the theoretical lacunae in contextualist and functionalist accounts. However, in its striving to be a "proper" science, structural linguistics methodically excluded any reference to a "subject" beyond an account of how formal linguistic markers such as personal pronouns and verb tenses act as pivotal points in the production of sense (cf. Benveniste, 1971). This barring of the subject had several significant consequences. As we have already seen, Saussure's equivocation about the nature of the signifier-signified relationship led to an impasse concerning the status of the signified. This inability to provide an account of how meaning is produced within the autonomous, "floating" structure of *langue*, given that it is not the result of its relation to an extra-linguistic signified, can be seen as a result of the banishment of the subject. In addition, as we have alluded to previously, the structuralists' neglect of the subject leads to their difficulty in accounting for how *langue*



as synchronic structure interacts with the radically temporal *parole*. We will turn to these questions as a matter of course; however, let us begin with the account of subjectivity that Lacan introduces into his own development of the Symbolic order.

Lacan's inspiration for a theory of subjectivity and its relationship to language can be located in a number of sources; as we have mentioned, these include Hegel, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, among others. However, another primary source of his thinking on language and subjectivity was the work of Sigmund Freud. Central to his famous "return to Freud" is his "re-reading" of the theory of subjectivity put forth by Freud under the guise of the unconscious.

Although the notion of the unconscious is often heralded as the single most important contribution of Freudian theory to psychology, it has also been perhaps the most misunderstood of all his theoretical constructs. In particular, the fatal mistake made by most neo-Freudian interpretations of the unconscious is to grant it a primordial instinctual, ontological status, thus setting it up in opposition to consciousness and what have been understood as the "adaptive," integrative functions of the conscious ego (Felman, 1987). As such, the typical metaphor used to describe the Freudian unconscious is that of a location in the psyche, a container or receptacle, which "holds" or is "filled" with contents. These contents are usually understood to be representations of instinctual wishes and repressed, unwanted thoughts or ideas. This view of the unconscious is consistent with what has been called Freud's "depth model" of the psyche; it is also congruent, though perhaps less obviously so, with the unconscious as psychic "agency."

One significant consequence of this neo-Freudian reading of the unconscious is that the process of an analysis is seen as analogous to an *archeology*. The analogy is this: in an archeological dig, one seeks to discover representations or "vestiges" of chronologically-prior cultures through literally unearthing their remains; in the

archeology that psychoanalysis becomes under this interpretation of the unconscious, it is the primitive contents of the "container" at the "bottom" of the psyche that are "uncovered" and brought to the "light" of conscious awareness. Under this model, then, the analysand is seen as suffering from a sort of ignorance that would be a simple lack of information at the level of consciousness. Psychoanalytic cure, as such, would represent the dissolution of this state of ignorance by giving the analysand information, for example, about the causal connection of his illness with his life, with experiences in childhood, etc. (Felman, 1989). In other words, "cure" is effected when the excavation of the unconscious is complete.

Although Freud does often speak about the unconscious in ways that lend themselves to the sort of interpretation outlined above, a careful reading of Freud reveals a complex account of the unconscious which renders problematic the picture of it as ontological repository of repressed contents. It is in reaction to just such a reading that Lacan asserts:

The Freudian unconscious has nothing to do with the so-called forms of the unconscious that precede it. . .and which still surround it today. . . forms of the unconscious which will tell nobody anything that he did not already know, and which simply designate the *non-conscious*, the more or less conscious, etc. . . Freud's unconscious is not at all the romantic unconscious of imaginative creation. . .is not the locus of divinities of the night. . .[but] is introducing something other. . . To all these forms of the unconscious, ever more or less linked to some obscure will regarded as primordial, to something pre-conscious, what Freud opposes is the revelation that at the level of the unconscious there is something at all points homologous with what occurs at the level of the subject--*this thing speaks* and functions in a way quite as elaborate as at the level of the conscious, which thus loses what seemed to be its privilege. (1978, p. 24)

And again,

The unconscious is neither primordial nor instinctual; what it knows about the elementary is no more than the elements of the signifier. (Lacan, 1977, p. 170)

In contrast, then, to the unconscious understood as something "primordial," ontologically "other," Lacan introduces here the unconscious as a "speaking thing" which, if it can even be said to possess "knowledge," knows nothing more than the "elements of the signifier." Although we will address Lacan's understanding of the unconscious momentarily, let us review some of the evidence he finds in Freud to support such a position.

To begin with, Freud explicitly characterizes psychoanalysis as the "talking cure;" and in *The Question of Lay Analysis* (1926), Freud defends this position thus:

*Nothing* takes place between [the analyst and analysand] *except* that they *talk* to each other. . . The Impartial Person's features now show signs of unmistakable relief and relaxation, but they also clearly betray some contempt. It is as though he were thinking "Nothing more than that? 'Words, words, words,' as Prince Hamlet says." . . . So it is a kind of magic,' he comments: 'you talk, and blow away his ailments.' Quite true. It *would* be magic if it worked rather quicker. . . And incidentally, do not let us despise the *word*. After all it is a powerful instrument. . . Words can do unspeakable good and cause terrible wounds. . . Originally the word was magic--a magical act; and it has retained much of its ancient power. (pp. 187-188)

Further support for Lacan's reading comes from the fact that Freud ultimately chose the discursive method of free association over the use of hypnosis in analysis. Indeed, it was during his early attempts at applying the method of free association with hysterics that he first "discovered" the unconscious. As Lacan remarks:

[Freud] spent a lot of time listening, and while he was listening, there resulted something paradoxical, a reading. It was while listening to hysterics that he read that there was an unconscious. That is, something he could only construct, and in which he himself was implicated (Lacan, 1975, p.7).

Freud's recognition of the unconscious as revealed through this discourse suggests that from the outset, he recognized the unconscious as ultimately tied up with language and speech. Thus, in some of Freud's early letters to his colleague Wilhelm Fliess (in Masson, 1985), he

states:

I am working on the assumption that our psychic mechanism has come into being by a process of stratification; the material present in the form of memory traces being subjected from time to time to a *rearrangement* in accordance with fresh circumstances--to a *retranscription* . . . *A failure of translation*--this is what is known clinically as 'repression.' (pp. 207-208, italics mine)

In addition, in his *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901), Freud gives numerous examples of how the unconscious "speaks," or is manifest in, for example, slips of the tongue, misactions, jokes, "gaps" in dream narratives, and psychosomatic symptoms. In every instance, he understands the unconscious to "show itself" through some sort of linguistic anomaly, through an interruption in the linear flow of sense, through a gap in the discourse that "calls for interpretation."

This sampling of "Lacan's" Freud has shown us that not only did Freud privilege the spoken word as the medium of psychoanalysis, but that he understood the unconscious to be both implicated in the production of and manifest through this discourse. It is in this understanding of the unconscious as "structured like a language" (Lacan, 1977, p. 234) that Lacan situates his own account of the divided subject, a "subject" that is constitutively social, linguistic, and temporal.

An instructive point at which to broach Lacan's argument concerning the subject are his remarks on the relation between the Cartesian *cogito* and the "other" subject "dis-covered" by Freud. We have already alluded to Lacan's critique of the *cogito* in the context of Heidegger's deconstruction of subjectism in psychology and philosophy:

Of course this [Cartesian formulation of the *cogito*] limits me to being there in my being only insofar as I think that I am in my thought . . . The real question is this: Is the place which I occupy as subject of a signifier con-centric or ex-centric, in relation to the place I occupy as subject of the signified. . .? It is not a question of knowing whether I speak about myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but

rather of knowing whether I am the same as that of which I speak. . . . What one ought to say is: I am not wherever I am the plaything of my thought; I think of what I am where I do not think to think. (Lacan, 1977, pp. 165-166)

Several integral aspects of Lacan's account of subjectivity present themselves in this passage. First, Lacan throws into question the Cartesian assumption of the subject as "thinking being;" he then poses a question concerning the coincidence of what we will call, following Benveniste (1971), the subject of the *enunciation* (or utterance) and the subject of the *énoncé* (or statement). To paraphrase Lacan, then, we could ask: Is the speaking subject who says "I" the same as the subject to whom the *I* refers? This latter *I*--which we will call the subject of the *signified*--is meant here to refer to the conscious ego, or the sense I have of myself as a "self," a fixed identity or unity possessing a personal history and sense of continuity across time; the former *I*--which we will call the subject of the *signifier*--is meant to refer to the unconscious subject. Within the Cartesian paradigm, these two "centers"--the conscious ego and unconscious subject--are assumed to be one and the same; in other words, in asserting "I think thus I am," Descartes is assuming the identity of the "I" of "I think" and the "I" of "I am." Lacan suggests otherwise, however, and answers his own rhetorical question in the negative: "I am not wherever I am the plaything of my thought; I think of what I am where I do not think to think." In other words, the subject's "being"--what Lacan calls the "true" subject--is *elsewhere* than consciousness, at least consciousness understood as Descartes' "awareness-of-self-as-thinking-being."

Ultimately, however, Lacan is suggesting much more than just that the unconscious, speaking subject and the conscious, spoken-of subject/ego are not the same; he is asserting that they are *differently centered* (or "ex-centric"), and thus are radically irreducible:

But if we ignore the self's radical ex-centricity to itself with which man is confronted, in other words, the truth discovered by Freud, we shall falsify both the order and methods of psychoanalytic mediation. . . . The radical heteronomy that Freud's discovery shows gaping within man can never again be covered over without whatever

is used to hide it being profoundly dishonest. (1977, pp. 171-172)

Lacan is here setting up the distinction between--indeed, the "radical heteronomy" of--the conscious ego as Cartesian *cogito* and what he refers to as the *subject* (the unconscious subject). And, as we have suggested, Lacan accounts for their heteronomy in "how" each is manifest in language. In his critique of the Cartesian *cogito*, we saw that Lacan understands the unconscious subject as the "articulating I," the subject associated with the process of the utterance; the conscious ego, on the other hand, he associates with the subject--static and objectified--of the statement.

As Jakobson (1973) and other structural linguists have noted, the personal pronoun *I* is one of a more general category of linguistic terms called shifters. Shifters are differentiated from other parts of the linguistic code by their obligatory reference to the utterance and thus, to the "sender." Jakobson suggests that the *I* is unique among shifters in that it does not refer to any concept nor even to the individual discourse in which it is pronounced and appears to designate the speaker; instead, it can only be "identified" with an *instance* of discourse and has no other reference than an "actual"--momentary and evanescent--one. Benveniste (1971) captures the implication of Lacan's equation of the articulating *I* and the unconscious subject: "It is in the instance in which 'I' designates the speaker that the latter is articulated as a subject. It is, then, literally true that the *foundation of subjectivity is in the exercise of language*" (Benveniste, 1971, p. 33).

Lacan concurs with Benveniste's position, asserting that the "true" subject is manifest, not as any signified, as an object or totality which could be represented by a signifier, but as the fleeting moment of the articulating "I." This articulating "I" disappears as soon as it makes its appearance; thus, the *speaking subject as such is sustained only by the discourse as such* (Borch-Jacobsen, 1989). That Lacan understands the speaking/unconscious subject as existing only in and through the discourse has several significant implications. To begin with, and in contrast to the Cartesian account, the human subject is not simply a self-conscious, ego-oriented one, but a speaking one. As a speaking subject, the unconscious subject must

speak itself *through* an *other* language--what Lacan refers to as the language of the *Other* (Lacan, 1977). It is at this point that Lacan's theory of subjectivity intersects his theory of the Symbolic order, as based on his reading and modification of Saussure.

For Lacan, as we have seen, the Symbolic order is both the language of the "others" (the particular linguistic system into which the subject is born) and of the Other (more abstractly, the "laws" of metaphor and metonymy which are common to all languages). As Lacan (1977) remarks: "Let us set out from the conception of the Other as the locus of the signifier. Any statement of authority has no other guarantee than its very enunciation, and it is pointless for it to seek it in another signifier which could not appear outside this locus anyway" (p. 310). As "locus of the signifier" this Other is not any individual person (although it can be projected onto another person) nor is it a kind of universal, like G. H. Mead's "the generalized Other" (Muller, 1990, p. 2). For Lacan (as for Saussure) the Other is a field or a "third position," which is the very "foundation of intersubjectivity" (1965, p. 35). Lacan cites a famous joke of Freud's to illustrate how the field of the other represents the place from which meaning (as truth rather than representation) becomes possible: "'Why are you lying to me?' one character exclaims. 'Yes, why do you lie to me saying you're going to Cracow so I should believe you're going to Lemberg, when in reality you are going to Cracow?'" (Freud, 1960, p. 115). As Muller (1990) suggests, the only way this joke--that is, the possibility of lying while telling "the truth"-- makes sense is to look beyond the literal meaning of the words, and even beyond the two speakers, to the position of the Other; this third position is the structural locus that gives perspective on any dual relation. The very fact that it is possible to lie is an affirmation of this third position, for to tell a lie requires that the speaker take into account the perspective of the truth, the perspective afforded by the Other. For this reason, Lacan refers to the Other as "the guarantor of Good Faith" (1977, p. 173) and "witness to the Truth" (1977, p. 305). As such, the Other is an opaque locus that "knows" but can't be "known," "sees" but can't be "seen."

Lacan understands the joke to be especially illustrative of a general feature of the

"intersubjective" structure (which would of necessity include the third position discussed above) of language and subjectivity. This is so because a joke necessarily involves some-one to whom it must be told--without this other, it may be comical, but it cannot be a joke (Lacan, 1977). Lacan asserts that, just as a joke "needs" an other, so too does all speech presuppose an other. Lacan's remark "Speech is what *calls for a reply*" (1977, p. 247), embodies what is perhaps the most significant transformation Lacan makes of the Saussurian conception of language, for it situates the (unconscious) subject at the very heart of language itself. Thus for Lacan, before speech signifies something (a representation or, as in Saussure, even an "effect of meaning"), it signifies for someone. This is so because to speak presupposes an "intention to signify" (Lacan, 1966, p. 83). For example, even a speech that is "fantastic" with no reference to "reality" whatsoever--like that encountered by the analyst--signifies, in that a subject manifests itself for the benefit of another. Thus, the analytic dialogue unveils the essence of language, which is not to represent reality but to represent a subject. Lacan's understanding of this relationship between the speaking subject and the other is best illustrated by his application of it to the psychoanalytic dialogue.

As we have discussed, Lacan sketches the paradoxical relationship of the subject to "itself" as simultaneously ex-centric and "inmixed" and "complicitous." Thus, the two "pseudo-centers" of the human subject are not polar opposites and cannot be separated; at the same time, however, neither can be subsumed or appropriated by the other. Because he insists that the division between the unconscious subject and conscious ego cannot be erased, Lacan rejects the traditional two-person model of psychoanalysis:

This is the field that our experience polarizes in a relation that is only *apparently* two-way, for any positing of its structure in merely dual terms is as inadequate to it in theory as it is ruinous for its technique. (1977, p. 56)

Instead of a two-way relation, then, Lacan conceives of the psychoanalytic dialogue as structured in terms of a four-way "relation," which includes the conscious ego and unconscious subject of both analyst and analysand. Lacan describes the various relations that



can manifest within this structure by means of his famous "Schema L," the details of which are not relevant for us here. However, Lacan comments more broadly on the efficacy of the psychoanalytic dialogue as constructed in this manner:

What I seek in speech is the response--the reply-- of the other. What constitutes me as subject is my question. (1977, p. 299)

[The psychoanalytic dialogue is a] communication in which the sender [i. e., the analysand] receives his own message back from the receiver [i. e., the analyst] in an inverted form. (1977, p. 85)

The unconscious is that part of the concrete discourse, in so far as it is transindividual, that is not at the disposal of the subject in re-establishing the continuity of his conscious discourse. (1977, p. 49)

Lacan's discussion of the function of the psychoanalytic dialogue includes several points of relevance for our account of language as *praxis*. To begin with, Lacan suggests that the primary function of language in the dialogue is not a sharing of information, even in the sense of uncovering repressed or unconscious images or memories, but rather to recognize (or "refuse") the subject. And, Lacan means this in a radical sense; this is so because, if you will remember, Lacan understands the subject as such (the unconscious subject) to be sustained only as the "speaking" subject of enunciation, and thus the subject is dependent on the discourse for his very "existence." Secondly, Lacan asserts--in a manner that might seem to contradict the previous point--that the speech of the subject already includes its own reply. This notion is radically tied up with Lacan's understanding of the analyst, not as defined by a superior knowledge, but by her occupying a discursive position from which to hear and reflect the speech of the unconscious. As we have seen, this speech manifests as the "gaps in sense," the lacunae among the words of the conscious discourse. These gaps are not arbitrary, but reveal that the unconscious subject has already *proceeded by way of interpretation* (Felman, 1987). Thus, it is the "subject's own message, not that of the analyst, that is received back from him. . . (1977, p. 86). In addition, the speech of the subject reveals a dimension

of knowing that, in contrast to the representational speech of the ego, is performative or, as we will describe it in the following section, *rhetorical*. Suffice it to say here that both these points--that language functions fundamentally to recognize or refuse the subject, and that the unconscious subject speaks in and through a non-representational language--suggest that the primary function of language is evocative rather than communicative or expressive.

### Deferred Action: Rhetoric and the Future Anterior

The dialogic relationship within which (if we can speak of an "essence") the essence of language lies, is, as we have seen, not in the simple two-way relationship supposed by most linguistic accounts of dialogue. Manifest in the Lacanian account of the dialogic relation within which meaning and the subject are produced and re-produced is an understanding of this process as radically temporal:

Impediment, failure, split. In a spoken or written sentence, something stumbles. Freud is attracted by these phenomena and it is there that he seeks the unconscious. There, something *other* demands to be realized--which appears as intentional, of course, but [partakes] of a strange temporality. (Lacan, 1978, p. 25)

In speaking of temporality here, we are referring to time understood in a very different sense than that assumed in Cartesian metaphysics. The metaphors used to speak of time within this paradigm reveal that its essence is understood as abstract and ideal and, more particularly, as spatial. Thus, in the Western philosophical tradition--consistent with its assumption of the subject as essentially ideal and abstract--time has been understood as a series of contentless moments which exist "outside of" the subject and the world; under this view, time is such that it could (in principle, at least) be made objective--separated out from experience and studied independently. Time then becomes something like a series of "envelopes" which are "filled up" with "contents" (cf. Faulconer and Williams, 1985).

However, consistent with its rejection of the subject-world division, Continental philosophy articulates a very different notion of time. As we have noted, Heidegger does not posit the subject as existing separate from or in opposition to the world, but rather as

*always-already involved* in the world. In a similar manner, Heidegger does not consider time as something which exists outside of the subject, but essentially as *activity*. Thus, time is not a linear succession of events which "march before" the subject, nor a succession of empty instances of "now" waiting to be filled, but is, rather, something "living" which comes from an individual's relation to the world.

The notion of time as "living" or "lived" is often discussed in terms of Heidegger's three temporal *ecstases*, and his emphasis on the "pro-jective" nature of time and subjectivity. Although we will not develop these notions in any detail here, several general explanatory remarks are in order. Under this model, the "being" of time is understood as the process of a subject's constitution of his past in terms of his present experience which is, in turn, always experienced in relation to his anticipation of a future. As such, future and past are in a sort of eternal state of pre-existence and "survival," and thus constitute the horizon of the subject's presence to time. As Thompson (1985) has remarked, "The passage of time is not something which I merely see as an onlooker, since I am time. Time is not outside of me: It abides in my presence to the world" (pp. 122-123).

It is this understanding of time, then, as inextricably linked to--to the point of being co-extensive with--subjectivity that Lacan brings to his theorizing about the structuring effect(s) of the psychoanalytic dialogue. And, ultimately, Lacan's and Heidegger's account of time resonate with each other at many points. However, Lacan articulates temporality in a vocabulary which differs from Heidegger's, primarily as it reflects Lacan's preoccupation with time and its relation to the unconscious as manifest in the psychoanalytic dialogue.

Lacan begins his account with a concept often used by Freud to describe psychic temporality and causality--*Nachträglich*, usually translated as "deferred action" (cf. Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, pp. 111-114). In contrast to the superficial neo-Freudian interpretation of psychoanalysis as an archeology, which reduces the subject's history to a linear determinism of past acting on present, Freud pointed out from the very beginning that the subject revises ("re-transcribes") past events at later points in time, and that it is this revision that lends them

significance and power--whether it is curative or pathogenic. One way of reading Freud on this point would be in terms of the existential view sketched above--of the past and present as continually re-interpreted through the subject's projection of herself into a future. However, in addition to introducing a notion of the subject's relation to time that is compatible with the existential view, Freud can be read as suggesting something more specific here.

To begin with, when Freud speaks of deferred action, it is most often in the context of a discussion of the "pathogenic" effects of (childhood ) "trauma" (cf. Freud, 1900, p. 238). For Freud, the prototypic childhood trauma was, of course, the *primal scene*, or the child's observation of his parent's engaged in sexual intercourse. Freud (1900) explains: "It is, I may say, a matter of daily experience that sexual intercourse between adults strikes any children who may observe it as something *uncanny*. . . [because it is something] with which their understanding is unable to cope" (p. 624). It is interesting to note here that the German word translated as "uncanny" (*unheimlich*) can be more literally translated as "un-home-like." Thus, the child's experience upon observing the primal scene is of "otherness"--something unfamiliar, something which cannot be made sense of within her current paradigm for understanding the world. As we have seen, this *failure of translation*--this discontinuity or "gap" in understanding--is the essence of repression and the essential form in which the unconscious appears a "phenomenon" (Lacan, 1977, p. 25).

Thus, one can make the case that , in Freud at least, it is not lived experience in general that undergoes this retroactive revision, but only what Felman (1987) describes as "traumas of interpretation" (p. 56), or whatever it has been impossible for the subject to incorporate into a meaningful context in the "first place." The "traumatic" events described by Freud are particularly powerful examples of such unassimilated, uninterpreted experience; however, Lacan uses the notion of the trauma of interpretation in a somewhat broader sense, and ultimately incorporates it into his understanding of knowledge itself as constitutively traversed by the sort of "ignorance" that the trauma of interpretation represents. For Lacan, this

ignorance is not the result of a simple lack of information, but is a result of the irradicable division between the speaking (unconscious) subject and the "spoken-of" (conscious) ego.

Lacan, as we have noted, rejects any notion of the unconscious as primordial in favor of an understanding of the unconscious as an effect of the constitution of the subject through language, more specifically through dialogue. It is important to note that what is manifested as the unconscious subject (the speaking subject) and its "knowledge" is, however, not of the order of representation, but of absence, void, interruption. The unconscious, speaking subject signals its presence through this mode of "knowing" that can best be defined as *performative*. The unconscious speaks through the symptom--the performative aspect of the discourse *par excellence*--but also through slips of the tongue, misactions, jokes, etc.; these phenomena are first experienced as "nonsensical," and any continuity in the discourse is momentarily "arrested" by them. For example, the telling of a joke is often followed by a moment of confusion prior to the "insight" which is manifested as laughter. This is so because many jokes contain a stylistic or performative aspect that can only be "cognized," made sense of in the context of "logical," rational discourse after the fact.

Ultimately, then, Lacan transposes the notion of the trauma of interpretation onto language--language as a practice--and speaks of the strange temporality of deferred action as constitutive of the very production of meaning in the radical intersubjectivity of the dialogue. And it is in drawing out this line of argument that Lacan speaks of the unconscious subject as a *rhetorician*. Now a rhetorician is what we might call a "language performer." Although they are attentive to the content of their speech, the hallmark of accomplished rhetoricians is a certain success in the practice of a "style," to which the structure of speech, the cadence or rhythm, and intonation all contribute. In addition, the rhetorician seeks primarily to evoke rather than to inform.

Lacan understands the rhetorical "mode" to be one of *non-self-presence*, at least with respect to the conscious ego. The conscious, representational discourse of the *cogito* is traversed by what manifests itself as a performance--an act or doing--which is a form of

"knowledge," but an unconscious and radically intersubjective, and practical one. Ultimately, then, the unconscious and its knowledge (or the "ignorance" of the conscious discourse, as it were) is a function of the fact that the speaking subject's way of proceeding is only apparent after the fact--*nachträglich*. The "conscious," logical insight to which interpretation of the gaps produced by the performative dimension can lead is itself radically temporal; as soon as it becomes present to itself, it becomes a "re-discovery" which is continually transformed and re-discovered within the temporality of the discourse.

The temporal dialectic of the subject in the dialogue is thus at once anticipatory and retroactive. The speaking subject, as rhetorician, is always in the mode of "anticipation," speaking ahead of his knowledge of himself as "spoken;" Lacan calls this mode of temporality which constitutes the time of the subject and of the discourse, the *future anterior* or future perfect: "What realizes myself in my history is not the past definite of what was since it is no longer, nor even the present perfect of what has been in what I am, but the future perfect of what I will have been for what I am in the process of becoming (1977, p. 86). Thus, not only is the "knowledge" or meaning of the subject radically linguistic and temporal, so is subjectivity itself.

### The Semiotic: The Materiality of the Signifier

Up to this point, we have talked about the relationship between the subject and language in two ways--the Cartesian rationalist approach and the alternative approach generated by Lacan. To begin with, we have attempted to demonstrate the inadequacy of approaches grounded in Cartesian rationalism to give a uniquely human account of how the subject and language come together in discourse and in the production of meaning; in light of the inadequacies of these models, we have attempted to demonstrate the relevance of Lacan's work on language and subjectivity for a consideration of language as uniquely human. However, in our presentation of Lacan, we have spoken of the unconscious subject and the performative "meaning" which he associates with it primarily in terms of a "negativity," an absence or void that only possesses "substance" after the fact when it becomes appropriated

in the representational, "object-ive" discourse of the conscious ego. This notion of meaning as negativity is also suggested by his description of meaning as always deferred, deferring, and differential--as produced within a system of differences without positive terms. Although Lacan does address--in the form of the *objet a*--the notion of meaning as something "substantial," as a *positivity*, his account of its genealogy and functioning is fairly obscure. Kristeva, on the other hand, has devoted a significantly greater amount of attention to a "positive" account of non-representational meaning, while retaining the central features of Lacan's own argument. For this reason, we will focus primarily on Kristeva's account of this positivity as *affect*, or what she terms the *semiotic*.

As we will see, both she and Lacan assert that--in a truly human account, at least--language and affect can't be thought one without the other; this is so because, as we have discussed in relation to subjectivity, language as the Symbolic order is constitutive, that is, it permeates and structures the essence of our human reality. In their treatment of affect, Lacan and Kristeva understand the constitutive effect of language as operating at two "levels." To begin with, they take for granted that affect, or more correctly "emotion," as it is manifest and interpreted by a subject in the world is "socially constructed;" as such, being "sad" or feeling "exuberant" is not a reflection of a primordial state but, rather, a mode of *being-with-others* that is inextricably bound up with shared language practices (cf. our discussion of the Wittgensteinian *language game*).

Lacan and Kristeva are, however, most concerned with interrogating the relationship between language and affect at a more basic level. Although we will discuss this relationship in greater detail below, let us here introduce Lacan's notion of the *objet a* and Kristeva's notion of the *semiotic* as a material particularity--produced in and through language--which is, nevertheless, *heterogeneous* to the thetic, representational discourse of the *cogito*. In this sense, their notion of affect is tied to the "other" subject, the unconscious subject of the enunciation; thus, when they speak of affect in this second, more basic way, it is meant to signify something which escapes even "emotions" as they are variously constituted and

represented through the multiplicity of social practices within which the subject is embedded.

To begin, let us introduce a few remarks of Lacan's concerning the *objet a*: "The signifier enters the signified, namely in a form which, *not being immaterial*, raises the question of its place in reality" (Lacan, 1977, p.151). And elsewhere he asserts, "Speech is in effect a gift of language, and language is *not immaterial*. It is a *subtle body*, but body it is (Lacan, 1977, p. 301). After his radical deconstruction of the notion that language refers to anything "outside" itself (as a system of differential signifiers), especially of the notion that language serves to represent a material reality that is defined in opposition to the *cogito*, what are we to make of Lacan's talk of "materiality," "reality," and the "body?" Jacques-Alain Miller attempts to shed some light on this question:

[For Lacan] language not only has effects of meaning, it also *produces*. And the secret of psychoanalysis is precisely how to get to this new kind of reference which Lacan called "object," object *a*, which is a new kind of reference that analysis clarifies. And it is in this that we are at the same time in the vacuousness of reference, but as a condition for the emergence of a reference unheard of until now. It is a kind of reference which is precisely something, not nothing, and which we cannot get to, which we cannot take as a member of the set of signifiers. Let us say that it is a *remainder*. Freud spoke of the quantum of affect, that quantum of affect that does not find a place. There are some. . . who believe that Lacan does not speak of affect.

Yet, that is the central point of Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis. (1986, p.34)

So, for Lacan, affect as manifest in and through the *objet a*, is first of all linguistic, but is a "new kind of reference"--something which is not representational, or even differential in the manner of signifiers. It is, instead, something material that is in excess of the effects of meaning (which are "negative" in that they are always deferred and deferring, "slipping out from under" any positive meaning or representation) created within the metonymical play of signifiers in discourse--a remainder. (Or, as Lacan [1978, p. 217] puts it somewhat less eloquently, "The affect. . . goes off somewhere else, as best it can.") We will return to this



notion of the *objet a* in our discussion of Kristeva's semiotic. Let us begin our treatment of the semiotic by briefly introducing, by way of contrast, the way in which affect has typically been understood in psychology and psycholinguistics.

It should be apparent from the outset that when Lacan (and, as we will see, Kristeva) speak of affect, they understand it in a very different way than the received view in psychology in general, and psycholinguistics in particular. In the broadest sense, psychology has traditionally considered affect, or emotion, as one-third of the classical tripartite breakdown of cognition, affect, and motivation. And, in line with this view, affect has received the most theoretical attention in psychology as one pole in the classical debate concerning the nature of the causal relationship between cognition and affect (cf. Lazarus, 1984).

Perhaps reflective of the disagreement about the status of affect in relation to cognition, there is no real consensus manifest in psychology concerning how affect should be defined. Some theorists (e. g., Zajonc, 1984) define affect quite broadly, including most physiological and behavioral signs of arousal; theorists of a cognitive bent typically define affect in a more circumscribed fashion, often including only the "higher order" emotions corresponding to subjective reports of sadness, joy, etc. (cf. Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1984). Generally, however, definitions of affect tend to emphasize at least one among the following: physiological responses, subjective reports of "feelings" (variously defined), facial and other body "language." Frijda (1988) offers the following definition:

Emotions are responses to events that are important to the individual. . . [and] are subjective experiences. Their core is the experience of pleasure or pain. That core is embedded in the outcome of appraisal, the awareness of situational meaning structure. . . . All emotions. . . involve some change in action readiness [which includes programs for innate behavioral responses, physiological changes, and facial changes]. (p. 351)

Although there is still considerable disagreement among psychologists about what affect "is"

and how it is manifest in behavior, research on emotion has increased dramatically over the past decade. This trend has not, however, marked the pattern of theoretical or research interest in psycholinguistics. When affect has been addressed at all in psycholinguistics, it has typically been understood as something with only "paralinguistic" significance and, as such has been relegated to the subdisciplines of pragmatics, kinesics, and speech act theory, to name several. For example, the "language" of gestures has been a subject of investigation for some psycholinguists in pragmatics and a number of semioticians. While it is clear that gestural systems as "languages" are difficult to clarify. Indicative gestures, on the one hand (often understood as the "beginnings of language"), like the shifter *I*, serve to situate an utterance, and to emphasize the concrete and the "present." However, it is generally true that, although some gestures become "signs" and thus convey conventional meaning, gestures are polysemic and can't meaningfully be partitioned into syntactic or other logical structures.

Closer to the approach of interest to us, the linguistics of enunciation broached (albeit incompletely) by Benveniste (1971) and others (e. g., Austin, 1963) has been attentive to the enunciative phenomena manifest in *prosody*. Although, as we have mentioned, prosodic features such as stress and intonation have traditionally been considered secondary in the description of both the utterance and the message (or *statement*), linguists have found they are far more than "carriers of summons" (e. g., imperatives) or emotional expressivity; rather, they are also (and at the same time) *archaic components* (i. e., in language acquisition) of *syntax*. In addition, prosodic features are always essential in removing the (semantic) ambiguity of any communicative utterance. For example, Austin notes that, the simple word "dog," uttered in the "same" context but with different intonational features, can convey radically different "meanings" (1963, p. 25).

The fact that prosodic features such as intonation contribute to both syntactic and semantic identity poses problems for psycholinguistics, forcing it either to posit between "primary" (semantic) and "secondary" (phonological) articulations a third or *prosodical*

articulation (which integrates morphemes and sentences) or else revamp completely the stages it envisages between "form" and "meaning". This first solution, that of positing a third "level" which is composed of operations that mediate grammatical and semantic "encoding" with phonological "encoding" is the tack taken by most in mainstream linguistics and psycholinguistics. Levelt (1989), for example, locates the "markers" for these operations at the level of the surface structure of a sentence--*mood* (i. e., declarative, imperative, or interrogative) and *prominence* (focus or "news value") markers at the level of surface structure are understood to mediate between grammatical/semantic and phonological levels. However, it is telling that attempts to pursue the second solution--that is, to seriously rethink the relationship between *form* (e. g., phonological, syntactical) and *meaning* and, in turn their relationship to the speaking subject, the *subject of enunciation*--have not been forthcoming from psycholinguistics.

As Kristeva (1989) notes, one reason for the failure of linguistics and psycholinguistics to rethink the relationship between prosodics and meaning, and more broadly between affect and language, is their capture within the Cartesian conflation of reason, or logic, and language. Although, as she remarks,

We cannot enunciate anything that does not stumble up against this transcendental horizon of meaning and form; however, these are precisely stumbling blocks through which, [and] against which, there operates an irreducible heterogeneity, ever elusive and divisive, but *other*. *Libido, instinctual drive, affect*: it goes by various names according to the conceptual framework of the theory that posits it. But the name always designates something *outside the transcendental enclosure*. (p. 40)

However, although Kristeva acknowledges that the propositional, rationalist discourse produced by the *cogito* cannot simply be done away with, she does assert that the privileging of this discourse in philosophy, linguistics, and some forms of psychoanalysis has blinded these disciplines to the disruptive and productive force of the semiotic at work in language and, consequently, to the dynamic, temporal nature of meaning and the subject.

### The Semiotic and the Symbolic

Kristeva's overall project can be understood, at least in part, as an attempt to give status to affect and to the *heterogeneity* it introduces into the discursive order. She suggests that the language of the subject be considered as a *process of signifiante* in which two separate modes--the *semiotic* and the *symbolic*--should be distinguished. (Here Kristeva is using the term *signifiante* in contrast to the term *signification*, which she uses to refer to the meaning produced within any conventional system of signs; she understands *signifiante* as the underlying process of generation--most apparent in poetic language, as we will discuss below--in which conventional social communication is continually undercut and renewed.) As both a linguist and a psychoanalyst, Kristeva develops her notion of the *semiotic* through two seemingly disparate routes of access: an exploration of the functioning of poetic language and of the relationship between language and the development of the subject. We will begin with her treatment of affect and language as manifest in poetic language.

In her *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), Kristeva makes the distinction between poetry and poetics (as a genre and its corresponding discipline), on the one hand, and the *poetic function*, on the other. In so doing, she echoes Jakobson's position concerning the poetic function:

It [the poetic function] cannot be productively studied out of touch with the general problems of language, and, on the other hand, the scrutiny of language requires a thorough consideration of its poetic function. . . . Poetic function is not the sole function of verbal art, but only its dominant, determining function, whereas in all other verbal activities it acts as a subsidiary, accessory constituent. This function. . . . *promotes the palpability of signs.* (1972, p. 93, italics mine)

Thus, Kristeva (1989) rejects the notion that the poetic function is contained within only one "kind" of discourse. Instead, she asserts that poetic "features"-- similar sounds, rhymes, intonation, the rhythmicity of language, etc.--function, to a greater or lesser extent in all spoken language, as "vehicle[s] of. . . new signified[s] that are superimposed on the explicit

signified[s]" (p. 289). This is especially apparent to anyone who has attempted the "impossible" exercise of translating poetic texts--an exercise that illustrates very concretely how they destroy the language of habitual communication (the "natural" or given language of the consensus) in order to construct on it *another language*.

Although she understands the poetic function to be operative within language more or less at all times, Kristeva makes reference to the two "extremes" of language, "purely" symbolic and "purely" semiotic (which she labels as genotext and phenotext, respectively), in order to clarify the distinction. For example, a mathematical demonstration--exclusively composed as it is of logical relations--is perhaps "pure" phenotext. Examples of genotext include some of Antonin Artaud's writings, in which language serves almost nothetic function of "making sense," but is rather an unmediated physical presence; in addition, the German poet Urstoff has produced a series of recorded "sound poems," which abandon conventional combinations of phonemes altogether in favor of strings of "inarticulate" sounds. These latter examples of genotext are suggestive of Kristeva's description of the form in which the "supplementary" meaning of the semiotic is manifest as *materiality* and *physical presence*. Kristeva suggests that most often the two modalities are inseparable within the signifying process, the dialectic between them determining the particular type of discourse produced--e. g., narrative, poetry, theory, etc. However, within each of these language practices, it is the material aspect of language--e. g., certain combinations of letters that produce certain sounds, articulatory rhythms (which also depend on silence for their manifestation), even the spatial layout of words on a page--regardless of the conventional meaning of the signifiers themselves that signals the presence of the semiotic. This "new" language traverses the given language and its structure; it "decenters" the apparent structure of communication and *produces supplementary meaning*. As she suggests, these supplementary meanings "slip into the verbal message, tear its opaque cloth, and rearrange *another signifying scene* (Kristeva, 1989, p. 293).

This notion of "another signifying scene" sounds very much like Lacan's notion of the

unconscious subject's "speaking meaning" that traverses the "spoken-of," representational meaning of the conscious ego. Indeed, Kristeva acknowledges a significant amount of overlap between the mode she posits as *semiotic* and the mode of the *symbolic* (and thus, of the unconscious subject) as described by structural linguistics and modified by Lacan:

The semiotic is thus a modality of the signifying process with an eye to the subject posited (but posited as absent) by the symbolic. In our view, structuralist linguistic theories come closer to the semiotic than to what we shall call the symbolic, which, dependent as it is on a punctual ego, appears in proposition. Structural linguistics, operating on phonological oppositions or on the two axes of metaphor and metonymy, accounts for some (though not all) of the articulations operating in what we have called the semiotic. (Kristeva, 1984, p. 41)

So, whereas Lacan describes the Symbolic as other to the propositional discourse of the conscious ego, Kristeva chooses to refer to the ego's language as symbolic, and to posit what Lacan outlines as the *modus operandi* of the Symbolic as coextensive with her notion of the semiotic. As she notes, however, the Symbolic as it functions in Lacan does not account for the entire range of semiotic articulations. We will now turn to her understanding of the "origin" of the semiotic mode, in an effort to address what she understands as supplementary in her own account to Lacan's. (As we will see, Kristeva understands the semiotic and symbolic as related in a way such that positing one as a logical or chronological "origin" makes no ultimate sense; we use the term "origin" here only for its temporary heuristic value.)

In her approach to understanding the "origins" of language in the child, Kristeva embraces Lacan's account of the child's accession to the Symbolic order (cf. our earlier discussion of the child's "coming into language"). However, she gives greater attention to the significance of the pre-Symbolic phase than does Lacan. And it is here, in the pre-Symbolic (or *pre-thetic*) that Kristeva locates the "beginnings" of language in the semiotic.

For Kristeva (1980), then, the semiotic is *pre-subjective*, prior to the Symbolic (and the birth of the subject) in the Lacanian sense. (She also differentiates her view of the

semiotic "pre-verbal" mode from Piaget's account of the structuring of pre-verbal space in terms of the logical categories of concrete operations, which he understands as preceding and transcending language.) In contrast, Kristeva defines the semiotic thus: "the semiotic is a modality of *signifiante* in which the linguistic sign is *not yet articulated as absence of an object*. . . . [It is] heard in echolalias, intonation, irrecoverable ellipses, asyntactical and alogical constructions. . . but also in gestures, laughter, and tears. . ." (p. 133). This situates the semiotic prior to the infant's use of language to make that which is absent "present"--prior to, as both Lacan and Kristeva refer to it, "the murder of the thing" effected by language. By this, they are referring to the fact that the word destroys the immediacy of objects (indeed, it is through language that they are even constituted *as* objects), and gives us distance from them by making them present in speech, by transforming what is physically at hand or physically absent into what is symbolically present. Freud expressed this in his example of the *Fort! Da!* game his grandson would play following separation from his mother; in this game, the child would throw a spool tied to a string over the side of his crib and reel it back in again, the movement synchronized in conjunction with the phonemes *o-o-o!* ("gone") and *da!* ("here"). For Lacan, this moment represents the subject's "birth" into language; the subject is "born" when he takes up the (normative) language of his culture, that uses certain phonological groupings to stand for certain "objects" and that sets up in advance the sorts of relationships that obtain among things in the world (cf. our previous discussion of the functioning of the symbolic order in Lévi-Strauss). Notably, both Lacan (as we have seen) and Kristeva understand this process as founding the signifier on an absence, a "lack," and the "word" as such is manifested as "a presence made of absence" (Lacan, 1977, p. 65).

Prior to the accession to language, the infant's language is idiosyncratic--that is, although his language is certainly lent signification by others around him, it does not yet signify for himself. Kristeva characterizes this preverbal semiotic state as a "kinetic functional" stage (1984, p. 27); during this stage, the infant is involved in the process of constituting itself as a "body," and of mapping the relations between it as "body" and the

world. Although "embodied," the infant has yet to take on the language that would "object-ify" him into a body proper, a closed Gestalt, a self or ego; as such, the body is experienced primarily in the immediate and partial contacts it has with the world--fundamentally in terms of movement and its stases, but more particularly through an ordering of the partial acoustic, tactile, olfactory, etc. connections it has with the world. As the infant has yet to engage in the symbolic operations involving the manipulation of signs--through which she can represent herself and others, and thus posit movement and relationships between them in the abstract space of representational thought--the semiotic stage is characterized by an immediacy of *material presence*; Kristeva emphasizes the kinetic nature of this mapping between body and the world to contrast it to the distanced, visual representational relationships between subject and object characteristic of the symbolic mode (as she understands it). It is this notion of the semiotic--as *movement*, particularly as it manifests itself in language as *intonation, stress, cadence, etc.*---that later manifests itself as the heterogeneity that traverses--operating through, despite, and in excess of--the signification of the symbolic.

This language of the semiotic is, thus, not one of communication. Instead, it manifests and is characterized by what Kristeva calls "essentially particular" language effects. This does not mean that it is void of "meaning;" this meaning, however, is never one that could be definitively posited, or given any sort of axiomatic form. Perhaps an example will serve to illustrate more concretely Kristeva's understanding of the particularity and materiality that is semiotic "meaning;" this example rests on her understanding of clinical depression as a breakdown in the subject's signifying process, resulting from the "splitting off" of affect from its "outlet" in symbolic signification:

Nevertheless, if depressive speech avoids sentential *signification*, its *meaning* has not completely run dry. It occasionally hides. . . in the tone of the voice, which one must learn to understand in order to decipher the *meaning* of affect. . . In the analytic cure, the importance of speech's suprasegmental level (intonation, rhythm) should lead



the analyst, on the one hand, to *interpret the voice*, and on the other, to disarticulate the signifying sequence that has become banal and lifeless--the purpose being to extract the infrasignifying meaning of depressive discourse that is hidden in fragments of lexical items, in syllables, or in phonic groups yet strangely semantized. (1989, p. 55)

Understood as such, the *meaning of affect*, although it may produce symbolic signification, itself eludes the definition of meaning as *meaning some-other-thing*, rather, it is an *energy* behind the production of meaning. Put somewhat differently, the *materiality* (e. g., the tone of the voice, the rhythm of strings of syllables) *is the meaning*--as such, it has a *use* value (which, with the establishment of the symbolic, will result in the production of a new "sense") but no representational, or even conventional, social exchange value.

As we have suggested, however, until there is a symbolic dimension there is no semiotic as such, for it is by definition a sublimated, imperfectly superseded modality. Until the appearance of the organizingthetic, the semiotic does not *ex-ist* (stand out). Or, differently put, we might say that it is only by first moving into and then *through* the Symbolic, that one can even posit the semiotic.

All these various processes and relations [of the semiotic], anterior to sign and syntax, have just been identified from a genetic perspective as previous and necessary to the acquisition of language, but not identical to language. Theory can situate such processes and relations diachronically within the process of the constitution of the subject precisely because they function synchronically within the signifying process of the subject himself. (p. 29)

Just as an infant who never progressed beyond the stage of crying, babbling, cooing would not be said to possess language, a drive-related sound production does not become semiotic until its defining, organizing "other," the Symbolic emerges (Graybeal, 1991).

With Kristeva's account of the implication of semiotic and symbolic within each other, she is laying the foundation, along with Lacan, for an understanding of language that escapes

the Cartesian problematic of the gulf between the subject and the world, and thus between ideality and materiality. As we have seen, this problematic has led most approaches to the study of language to the ultimate postulation of some form of *metalanguage*, or ideal substrate of which language as manifest in performance would be an imperfect realization. Instead, Lacan and Kristeva--as we will develop more fully in the following Chapter--posit language as a *praxis*, a radically dialogic, intersubjective practice in which meaning and the subject are perpetually produced and re-produced.

CHAPTER V  
LANGUAGE AS *PRAXIS*

We began our inquiry here with the reflection that mainstream psycholinguistics had failed at what would seem like at least a relevant project for the study of language in a social science discipline: an accounting of language as essentially social and uniquely human. What we have discovered instead is a "fetish," a fascination with language as an abstract, ideal object, which is merely the remains of what is a *radically discursive process*. Thus, the approaches to language manifest in mainstream psycholinguistics, for the most part, persist in looking for the "truth" of language by "formalizing utterances that hang in midair" and the "truth" of the subject by "listening to the narrative of a sleeping body" (Kristeva, 1984, p. 1).

Language as *Praxis*

At the heart of psycholinguistics' inability to account for language as dynamic--that is, as radically social and temporal--is its embeddedness in the Western metaphysical tradition and, more particularly, its uncritical substitution of the Cartesian *cogito* for the speaking subject. Thus, the subject has been understood not only as separate from but transcendent to the world which, in turn, has been characterized as constituted of *objects for* this transcendental consciousness.

The implications of founding the study of language within the Cartesian tradition are profound and, as we have seen, have been played out within generative grammar and cognitive psycholinguistics in a fairly predictable and increasingly repetitive fashion. To begin with, Descartes' *cogito* is distinguished by its ideality (in opposition to the materiality of the world and of its "own" body) and by its innate knowledge; thus, the essence of the *cogito* is its distance from the world. As such, the original state of the subject is one of isolation and self-containment, and the project of articulating the relationship between the subject and its world (including other subjects) becomes the

*raison d'être* of psychology.

For its part, psycholinguistics has perpetuated this obsession by embracing the derivative notion that it is language that serves as the intermediary between these two domains of subjectivity and "reality." Add to this view the Cartesian positing of knowledge as rational and of truth in knowledge as subjective certainty, and the centuries' old preoccupation with language as a reflection of reason, or logic,--as, for example, we saw manifest in the grammar of Port-Royale and in *L'Encyclopedie*---is more easily understood. Even those who have rejected the nativist theses concerning innate language structures and knowledge (e. g., Rosch, 1975) have not questioned the more fundamental Cartesian assumption that knowledge and meaning, of which language serves as a mirror, is categorical in its essence. In the end, then, despite minor variations in theoretical themes, language has been understood merely as the means for representing or referring to objects in the world.

Understood as referential, language is spoken of as if its function was to facilitate the bridging of the gulf between ourselves and the world of others through providing the conduit for the exchange of information between our inner and the "other," outer world. In our critique of generative grammar's and cognitive psycholinguistics' reliance on this model, we have demonstrated its inadequacy as an account of actual *language use*. Clearly, when this notion is scrutinized in any detail--even on its own logical terms--we see that it breaks down the moment it is applied to a real world situation. For example, I say to you "Bring me that," where "that" stands for the book lying on the shelf next to where you are sitting. The underlying mechanics of such an imperative are assumed to be: I select out the object in the world that I want, "represent" it to you through calling it by its "name," so you can bring it to me without ambiguity. However, as Jacques-Alain Miller (1989) notes, given an understanding that language "refers" in this situation, the unambiguous use of the imperative would rest on the very object in question already being targeted in a way that disambiguates the use of its name as, for example, when the game

show host says "And behind Door Number Three. . ."

Language seen as a tool for reference rests on the assumption that if we "employ" language "correctly," the result will be an "accurate" reflection of the world as it is. However, one has only to open the pages of a text dedicated to such a logical analysis of language to find that such a view quickly deteriorates into a science of errors of reference. As such, the study of language becomes reduced to the study of problems like the following: Suppose someone at a party glances across the room and then remarks, "That man over there drinking champagne is happy tonight." Where are we left if, however, the man to whom she is referring is actually a teetotaler and is drinking sparkling water instead of champagne. . . ? Or again, imagine the difficulty such a science of language would have with the sort of reference to nonentities effected by Lewis Carroll's (1963) *Jabberwocky*: "Twas brillig and the slithy toves. . ." (p. 1).

So it is, as we have seen in generative grammar and cognitive psycholinguistics, that language, which is supposedly meant to refer to things, generally fails to. In fact, as we discussed in Chapter IV, there is a sense in which language actually *destroys* the referent and, for example, turns teetotalers into champagne drinkers, etc. Psycholinguistics' response to this failure of the representationalist model has been twofold--with Chomsky, we have seen that any breakdowns in the realization of the innate knowledge of syntax are attributed to defects in other cognitive functions such as memory, attention, etc.; cognitive psycholinguistics has consistently put off such problems by positing a "social" or performative dimension to language, hence the current methodological trend towards analyzing linguistic units (i. e., the discourse or conversation) which are dialogic and inherently social. Although this appears to be a step in the right direction, these approaches suffer (as we have seen) from the lack of an alternative to the Cartesian account of the subject. Merely positing the social and temporal nature of meaning through language and asserting that the discourse is the fundamental "unit" of meaning is not enough; it is also necessary to provide an account of how this can be so, which presupposes

an articulation of the implications of such a view for the nature of subjectivity.

The absence of an alternative account of the subject is perhaps most glaring in the European psycholinguistic tradition as represented here by Bühler, Hörmann, and Rommetveit, since they manage to provide an account of language which has much else to recommend it. To begin with, they successfully avoid the representationalist trap to which generative grammar and cognitive psycholinguistics have fallen prey by *beginning with language use*; thus, although they would agree that there exists a facet of language which is representational (so to speak, at least), and that it is a derivative of, and thus arises out of, the more fundamental use of language as a mode of activity or engagement with others in the world. In addition, their emphasis on language as a *tool* has rendered the competence–performance distinction meaningless. In sum, their position does offer a useful account of language use as social and of meaning as situated and temporal. However, a pivotal point in their argument--that it is the subject as conscious ego who subordinates language in the service of conveying intended meanings to others--manifests a continued reliance on the Cartesian construction of the subject. As we have argued, the *cogito* is by definition "outside" of the world, and thus essentially asocial; its transcendence also suggests that it is the "master" of language. As such, the European psycholinguists are still wanting for a theory of the subject which would be more consistent with their account of language as fundamentally social.

In contrast, we have presented an approach that we believe succeeds in giving a fundamentally human account of language. Thus, in contrast to the Cartesian position, we have suggested that the kind of explicit awareness regarded as consciousness (the *cogito*) is in the fullest sense constituted by our articulations, as they are actualized in the practice of language. In making the Lacanian move of looking at how language *works*, how it acts to structure us as subjects-in-the-world, we have posited that language effects a radical division in the subject which, in turn, determines a dialectic structure of meaning through language that is at once both the representational meaning of the thetic consciousness and

the *performative*, practical meaning of the unconscious subject.

The division of the subject into conscious ego and unconscious subject moves beyond the Cartesian formulation of the subject as self-aware and self-contained, because, as we have accounted for it, the unconscious is *transindividual*; in other words, understood as the *speaking subject*, the unconscious is revealed as both an *effect of language* and as the simultaneous *negativity* (or "no-thing") and *motive force* (Kristeva would, perhaps, say *movement* or *drive*) which sustains the signifiers in relation to each other within a fundamentally dialogic relationship to an other.

In a reversal, then, of the accepted view--which has understood language as an "object" amenable to dissection through "scientific" study, we contend that language is above all a *practice*. It is, in fact, a very "ordinary" practice that invades the entire field of human activity, and that fills every minute of our lives--our speaking, listening, writing, teaching, even our dreaming. It is, moreover, only across its fundamentally social function in its various "practic-al" manifestations that we can conceive of language as such. In other words, language is manifested and known *only through its exercise*. Thus, the dialogic is understood as the prototypical linguistic and subjective relationship; this notion, combines with that of language as an *act*, or a *doing--a temporal speech that seeks its own meaning in the response of the other*. When *dialogue* is accounted for in this manner, we can understand that language is not merely a tool for us to employ in the service of our conscious intentionality, but that its opacity allows for us to--indeed determines that we--*speak beyond our means* by projecting ourselves into the radically intersubjective space of the Other. It is only *after the fact*, that this essentially linguistic and performative, or *rhetorical*, knowledge is returned to us as the "understanding" of the *cogito*. As Kristeva remarks,

Psychoanalysis renders impossible the habit commonly accepted by... linguistics of considering language outside its *realization in discourse*, that is, by forgetting that language does not exist outside the *discourse of a subject*, or by considering this

subject. . . as equal to himself. . . The subject *is* not; he makes and unmakes himself in a complex typology where the other and his discourse are included. (1989, pp. 274-275)

### Psycholinguistics Reconsidered

As we have shown, psycholinguistics as a discipline, both historically and presently, has developed under the assumption of language as a monolithic object--static, atemporal, and asocial. With Chomsky, the monolith was the "well-formed" language of the ideal speaker-hearer, and with cognitive psycholinguistics it was (and continues to be) the cognitive structures which language reflects and to which it is subject; behind both of these positions, we have discovered a system of "knowing" and meaning construed as essentially rational--a system of logic.

The approach to language as *praxis* articulated here through Lacan and Kristeva undercuts all of the ontological distinctions between language, the subject, and the world on which mainstream psycholinguistics has constructed its project. At a very basic level, then, language understood as *praxis* necessitates that psycholinguistics cease in its attempts to codify the various attributes and qualities of language as recumbent body, and turn its attention to a study of the process of the becoming of meaning through language. We feel that the account that we have given here of the "inmixing" of and the dialectic between the thetic and performative dimensions of language as discursive order provides a place from which psycholinguists could begin to deconstruct their "Language" into its "languages" and its varied social and temporal manifestations.

To embrace a position such would necessitate several important shifts in the perspective and purpose of psycholinguistic inquiry. In the first place, psycholinguistics would have to relinquish its project of accounting for language in terms of its correspondence to an ideal realm of "meaning," and in its stead accept the complexity, polysemy, and contradiction inherent in the pursuit of "situated" knowledge. As Lacan (1978) suggests:



Until further notice, we can say that *the elements do not answer in the place they are interrogated*. Or more exactly, as soon as they are interrogated somewhere, it is impossible to grasp them in their totality. (p. 281)

In Lacan's assertion is the declaration of a *loss of a metalanguage*---which has up until now been the elusive object of scientific discourse--and with it, the loss of a transcendental, privileged perspective from which to approach language study. In return, however, he and Kristeva have articulated another position which, although not transcendental, allows for a "self-subversive self-reflexivity" unavailable to the *cogito*, or the subject of understanding as such.

More concretely, the loss of a metalanguage also implies that there is no one "best" method of knowing--thus, an "empirical" approach to the study of language would be understood merely as one among many access routes to knowledge of the functioning of language. More appropriately, each such project would be approached on its own terms, forcing us to step back and reflect on the unique nature of the signifying practices we are attempting to engage, as well as the sort of discourse we ourselves are implicated in as we undertake each project. In other words, we need to ask ourselves about the form of language (i. e., what linguistic genre or practice) we are attempting to interpret, as well as about our purpose in undertaking such a project. For example, we should ask whether we are considering "ordinary" (e. g., conversation), oratorical (e. g., political, theoretical), or literary (e. g., prose, poetry, song) practice, and assess whether or not the study of such a genre is appropriate for the sorts of questions we are asking or for the sort of understanding we are seeking. Additionally, under this model, knowledge of the practical functioning of language could not be judged against a criterion of "correspondence," as this would be a regression to the notion of a static ideal to which such a correspondence could appeal; in the absence of such an ideal, understanding can only be "qualified" as more or less instructive, and knowledge understood, not as an upward, progressive ascent towards "completion," but as a self-renewing process of "re-volution" and maturation.

Ultimately, perhaps, through the notion of language as the practice within which both the subject and meaning are produced and re-produced, psycholinguistics can come to re-discover the profound significance and fecundity of what Althusser (1970) has called the 'simplest' acts of our existence: listening, speaking, reading, writing.

## References

- Althusser, L. (1970). *Lire le Capital*. Paris: FM Petite Collection Maspero.
- Atkinson, J. M. (1984). *Our masters' voices: The language and body language of politics*. London: Methuen.
- Austin, J. L. (1962/1970). *How to do things with words*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Austin, J. L. (1963). Performative–Constative. In C. E. Caton (Ed.), *Philosophy and ordinary language*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Benjamin, L. T. (1988). *A history of psychology: Original sources and contemporary research*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Benveniste, E. (1971). *Problems in general linguistics*. Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press.
- Bloomfield, L. (1933). *Language*. New York: Holt.
- Blumenthal, A. L. (1970). *Language and psychology: Historical aspects of psycholinguistics*. New York: Wiley.
- Borch-Jacobsen, M. (1989). What is called subject? A note on Lacan's *linguisterie*. *L'Esprit Createur*, 29, 83-96.
- Bransford, J. D. (1979). *Human cognition: Learning, understanding and remembering*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Brown, R. W. (1970). *Psycholinguistics*. New York: The Free Press.
- Brugmann, K. (1888). *Elements of the comparative grammar of the Indo-Germanic languages*. New York: Westerman and Company.
- Bühler, K. (1934). *Sprachtheorie: Die Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache*. Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer.
- Carroll, L. (1963). *Jabberwocky*. (S. Marx, Trans.). New York: Typographic Designs.
- Chomsky, N. (1957). *Syntactic structures*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of a theory of syntax*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, N. (1968). *Language and mind*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Jovanovich.
- Clark, H. H. (1985). Language use and language users. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology*, (3rd ed., Vol. 2, pp. 179-213). New York: Random House.
- Clark, H. H., & Clark, E. V. (1968). Semantic distinctions and memory for sentences. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 19, 96-109.

- Clayman, S. E. (1988). Displaying neutrality in television new interviews. *Social Problems*, 35, 474-492.
- Derrida, J. (1976). *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Descartes, R. (1641/1911). *The philosophical works of Descartes*. (E. Haldane & G. R. T. Ross, Trans.). Cambridge: University Press.
- Faulconer, J., & Williams, R. N. (Eds.) (1990). *Reconsidering psychology: Perspectives from Continental philosophy*. (Title article from edited collection of the same name.) Pittsburgh: Dusquesne University Press.
- Faulconer, J. E., & Williams, R. N. (1985). Temporality in human action: An alternative to positivism and historicism. *American Psychologist*, 40, 1179-1188.
- Felman, S. (1985). *Writing and madness: Literature/Philosophy/Psychoanalysis*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Felman, S. (1987). *Jacques Lacan and the adventure of insight: Psychoanalysis and contemporary culture*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Frazer, J. G. (1890/1981). *The golden bough*. New York: Avenel.
- Freud, S. (1926/1947). The question of lay analysis. In J. Strachey (Ed.) *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (Standard Edition XX)*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1985). *The complete letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess* (J. Masson, Trans.). Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Frijda, N. H. (1988). The laws of emotion. *American Psychologist*, 28, 349-358.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Gergen, K. J. (1985). The social constructionist movement in modern psychology. *American Psychologist*, 40, 266-275.
- Giorgi, A. (1970). *Psychology as a human science: A phenomenologically based approach*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Goodwin, C. (1981). *Conversational organization: Interaction between speakers and hearers*. New York: Academic Press.
- Goodwin, C. & Heritage, J. (1990). Conversation analysis. In B. Siegel, A. Beals, & S. Tyler (Eds.), *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 19, 283-307.
- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & N. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics*, Vol. 3: *Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press.
- Grosz, B. J., Pollack, M. E., & Sidner, C. L. (1989). Discourse. In M. Posner (Ed.), *Foundations of Cognitive Science*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Harré, R. (1984). *Personal being: A theory for individual psychology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Harré, R. (1990). Language and the science of psychology. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 4, 165-188.
- Heidegger, M. (1959). *Introduction to metaphysics*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time* (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). New York: Harper & Row. (Original work published 1927).
- Heidegger, M. (1975). Logos (Heraklit, Fg. 50). In *Early Greek thinking* (D. F. Krell & F. A. Capuzzi, Trans. ). New York: Harper & Row. (Original work published 1951)
- Heidegger, M. (1978). *Metaphysische Anfangsgrunde der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann.
- Heritage, J. (1988). Explanations as accounts: A conversation analytic perspective. In C. Antaki (Ed.), *Understanding everyday explanation: A casebook of methods*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Holdcroft, D. (1991). *Saussure: Signs, system, and arbitrariness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hörmann, H. (1981). *To mean, to understand: Problems of psychological semantics* (B. Jankowski, Trans.). New York: Springer-Verlag. (Original work published 1976)
- Jackendoff, R. (1978). Grammar as evidence for conceptual structure. In M. Halle, J. Bresnan, & G. A. Miller (Eds.). *Linguistic Theory and Psychological Reality*. (pp. 201-228). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Jakobson, R. (1956). Two aspects of language and two types of aphasic disturbances. In R. Jakobson & M. Halle (Eds.), *Fundamentals of Language*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Jakobson, R. (1973). *Main trends in the science of language*. New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- Jakobson, R., & Halle, M. (1956). *Fundamentals of language*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Johnson-Laird, P. N. (1983). *Mental models: Towards a cognitive science of language, inference, and consciousness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Katz, J., & Fodor, J. (1963). The structure of a semantic theory. *Language*, 39, 170-210.
- Kristeva, J. (1984). *Revolution in poetic language* (M. Waller, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press. (Original work published 1974)
- Kristeva, J. (1989). *Language: The unknown*. (A. Menke, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press. (Original work published 1981)

- Kristeva, J. (1989). *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*. (L. Roudiez, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press. (Original work published 1987)
- Lacan, J. (1932/1980). *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité*. Paris: Seuil.
- Lacan, J. (1978). *The four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis*. (J.-A. Miller, Ed.; A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Norton. (Original work published 1973)
- Lacan, J. (1977). *Écrits: A selection* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Norton. (Original work published 1966)
- Lacan, J. (1978). *Le Séminaire: Livre II. Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse (1954-55)*. Paris: Seuil.
- Laplanche, J., & Pontalis, J.-B. (1973). *The language of psychoanalysis*. (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). New York: Norton. (Original work published 1967)
- Lazarus, R. S. (1984). On the primacy of cognition. *American Psychologist*, 39, 124-129.
- Levelt, W. (1989). *Speaking: From intention to articulation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1949). The effectiveness of symbols. In *Structural Anthropology* (C. Jacobson & B. Schoepf, Trans.). New York: Basic Books.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1951). Language and the analysis of social laws. In *Structural Anthropology* (C. Jacobson & B. Schoepf, Trans.). New York: Basic Books.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1969). *The elementary structures of kinship*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Linell, P. (1982). *The written language bias in psycholinguistics*. Linköping, Sweden: University of Linköping.
- Miller, J.-A. (1986). Language: Much ado about nothing. In M. Bracher and E. Ragland-Sullivan (Eds.), *Lacan and the subject of language*. New York: Routledge.
- Muller, J. P., & Richardson, W. J. (1982). *Lacan and language: A reader's guide to Écrits*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Muller, J. P. (1990). Lacan and Kohut: From Imaginary to Symbolic identification. In D. Detrick & S. Detrick (Eds.), *Self psychology: Comparison and contrast*. Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.
- O'Connell, D. C. (1988). *Critical essays on language use and psychology*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- O'Connell, D. C. (1990). Turn-taking: A critical analysis of the research tradition. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 19, 345-373.

- Osgood, C. E. (1971). Where do sentences come from? In D. Steinberg & L. Jakobowitz (Eds.), *Semantics: An interdisciplinary reader in philosophy, linguistics, and psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Osgood, C. E., & Sebeok, T. A. (Eds.). (1954). Psycholinguistics: A survey of theory and research problems. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 49, Supplement.
- Packer, M. (1985). Hermeneutic inquiry in the study of human conduct. *American Psychologist*, 40, 1081-1093.
- Palmer, R. E. (1969) *Hermeneutics: Interpretation theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Quillian, M. R. (1968). Semantic memory. In M. Minsky (Ed.), *Semantic information processing*, (pp.227-270). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Ragland-Sullivan, E. (1986). *Jacques Lacan and the philosophy of psychoanalysis*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Reeder, K. (1981). How young children learn to do things with words. In P. S. Dale & D. Ingram (Eds.), *Child language: An international perspective*. Baltimore: University Park Press.
- Richardson, W. (1983). Psychoanalysis and the being-question. In J. Smith & W. Kerrigan, Eds. *Interpreting Lacan*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Robinson, D. N. (1981). *An intellectual history of psychology*. New York: Macmillan.
- Rommetveit, R. (1974). *On message structure*. New York: Wiley.
- Rommetveit, R. (1979). Deep structure of sentences versus message structure: Some critical remarks on current paradigms, and suggestions for an alternative approach. In R. Rommetveit & R. M. Blaker (Eds.), *Studies of language, thought, and verbal communication* (pp.17-34). London: Academic Press.
- Rosch, E. H. (1975). Cognitive representations of semantic categories. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 104, 192-223.
- Rumelhart, D. E., & McClelland, J. (1986). *Explorations in the study of microcognition: Part 1: fundamentals*. Cambridge, MA: Bradford Books.
- Sachs, J. S. (1967). Recognition memory for syntactic and semantic aspects of connected discourse. *Perception and Psychophysics*, 2, 437-442.
- Sampson, E. (1977). Psychology and the American ideal. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 35, 767-782.
- Sartre, J. P. (1957). *The transcendence of the ego*. New York: Noonday Press.
- Saussure, F. de (1966). *Course in General Linguistics*. (C. Bally & A. Sechechaye, Eds.; W. Baskin, Trans.). New York: McGraw-Hill. (Original work published 1916)

- Schank, R. C., & Abelson, R. P. (1977). *Scripts, plans, goals, and understanding: An inquiry into human knowledge structures*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Schiffrin, D. (1988). Conversation analysis. In F. J. Newmeyer (Ed.), *Linguistics: The Cambridge survey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schegloff, E. A., Jefferson, G., & Sacks, H. (1977). The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation. *Language*, 53, 361-382.
- Schmidt, S. J. (1973). *Texttheorie*. Munich: Fink.
- Searle, J. J. R. (1969). *Speech acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sheehan, T. (1981). On movement and the deconstruction of ontology. *The Monist*, 64, 534-542.
- Skinner, B. F. (1957). *Verbal behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Tartter, V. C. (1986). *Language processes*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Thomas, W. I. (1937). *Primitive behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Thompson, M. G. (1985). *The death of desire: A study in psychopathology*. New York: New York University Press.
- Watson, J. B. (1924). *Behaviorism*. New York: Norton.
- Watson, R. I. (1971). A prescriptive analysis of Descartes' psychological views. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 7, 223-248.
- Wilden, A. (1968). *The language of the self*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical investigations*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wunderlich, D. (1980). Methodological remarks on speech act theory. In J. R. Searle, F. Kiefer, & M. Bierwisch (Eds.), *Speech act theory and pragmatics*. Riedel Publishing.
- Wyer, R. S., & Carlston, D. E. (1979). *Social cognition, inference, and attribution*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Zajonc, R. B. (1984). On the primacy of affect. *American Psychologist*, 39, 117-123.



## VITA

Ms. Barnard received the degree of Bachelor of Science in psychology from Baylor University in 1985. In 1984, while attending Baylor University, she was elected to Psi Chi National Honor Society in Psychology, and was also presented with the Chi Omega Outstanding Scholarship Award. In 1985, she was selected as an Outstanding Senior Psychology Major and chosen for Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges.

In September, 1986, Ms. Barnard began her graduate career in psychology at Loyola University of Chicago. She was granted an assistantship for the years 1986 - 1989, allowing her to complete the Master of Arts in 1989. In March of 1987, she was awarded second place in the student paper competition of Division 24 of the American Psychological Association, and presented her paper at the national convention in August of that year. She also had two articles published in 1988, as follows:

Rychlak, J. F., Barnard, S., Williams, R., & Wollman, N. (1988). The recognition and cognitive utilization of oppositionality. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research, 18*, 181-199.

Slife, B. D., & Barnard, S. (1988). Existential and cognitive psychology: Contrasting views of consciousness. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 28*, 119-136.

During the summer of 1987, she completed a clinical externship at Alexian Brothers Medical Center in Elk Grove Village, Illinois. She spent the subsequent summer as a psychology extern at the Katharine Wright Clinic and Illinois Masonic Medical Center in Chicago, Illinois. During the 1990 - 1991 academic year, she was employed as a psychology extern in the Counseling and Development Center at Brigham Young University. The following year, she completed an APA-approved predoctoral internship at the University Counseling Center of the University of Utah.

During the Spring semester of 1991, Ms. Barnard was a co-instructor for an honors undergraduate course on Freud and Nietzsche at Brigham Young University. She also taught three courses while an intern at the University of Utah, including two courses on career and life planning and a course on gender roles.