The Discourse of Modernism
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Emergence, Consolidation, and Dominance of a Discourse

In the third chamber, two books were found. One was black, and it set forth the properties of metals, the use of talismans, and the planetary laws of the days, as well as the preparation of poisons and antidotes. The other book was white, and although its letters were quite clear, no one could decipher its teaching.

—Jorge Luis Borges, “La cámara de las estatuas”

By the time a critique of discourse is no longer able to affect the premises or the functioning of that discourse, it seems safe to say the discourse in question has become dominant. Swift’s critique ‘makes use of’ the same occultations, the same (functionally necessary) closed logical space, and the same principle of exclusion of contrary instances that are essential to the very imposition of analysis and referential truth. By the time the Dean is writing, the discourse of patterning (or any other) has yielded completely to that of experimentalism—willful, possessive, authoritarian.

In this sense the results of the preceding analysis agree entirely with the general view expressed in a collective volume published for Swift’s tercentenary in 1967. The Dean there appears as fundamentally supportive of Church and State authority, albeit not uncritical of certain aspects of it. He is considered as holding an essentially Hobbesian opinion of humanity, conceived therefore as in constant need of correctives (this last being a view Rousseau will also maintain). He is basically critical of all extremes and of all that departs from a customary norm. Though he appears frequently to parody Bacon, he is not at all averse to approving him at other times. One could well argue that the “ambivalence” of Swift’s attitude toward the Chancellor, the mere fact that he has “covered his tracks so well,” as Brian Vickers puts it, referring to the Dean’s satire on Bacon, that the attack has barely even been noticed before in its
detail, is further evidence that the critique is in terms of the new discursive space itself.

Here too, then, the evidence tends to show that Swift is attacking less Baconianism per se than certain extreme opinions within it, and this position is entirely consonant with my own analysis of Gulliver’s Travels. That text and the views indicated above are expressions for a time of stability. The argument of the foregoing chapter has been, precisely, that the discourse of analysis and reference is by now confirmed in its dominance. It has overcome crisis and doubt. It is the stable discourse of order. It is the “Euclideanism” of a right discursive order already expressed, perhaps, in the angular layout of the capital city and chief model of Utopia: “Amaurotum... is almost four-square in outline. The breadth is about two miles” (p. 64).

Here is born a signal of mathematization, a kind of leitmotiv expressing the calculated mechanization of factual reality. From Dom Juan’s expression of faith (“I believe that two and two make four, Sganarelle, and that four and four make eight”) to the affirmation made by Turgenev’s materialist Bazarov (“What really matters is that two and two make four, the rest’s all fiddlesticks”), we find ourselves confronting a dominance of which Dickens’s Gradgrind is one of the most exemplary literary manifestations:

Now, what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of service to them.

Thomas Gradgrind, sir. A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing for anything over.

These are but shorthand versions of Laplace’s celebrated assertion that if he knew the present facts of the material universe in sufficient detail, he could predict its future to all eternity: such prediction being the exact equivalent of a mathematical projection.

It is not surprising, therefore, that, like Dickens in 1854, Lau-tréamont in 1869 uses the same motif both to represent and to reject


the dominant order of discourse. In the *Chants de Maldoror*, he writes:

> Two enormous towers could be seen in the valley; I said so at the outset. Multiplying them by two, the product was four . . . but I could not really make out the need for this arithmetical operation. I continued along my way, my face all feverish, and I shouted endlessly: "No . . . no . . . I cannot really make out the need for this arithmetical operation!" I had heard the clanking of chains and agonized groans. As he goes through this place, may no one be able to multiply the towers by two, so the product be four! Some suspect I love humanity as if I were its own mother and had borne it nine months in my sweet-scented womb. That's why I no longer go through the valley where the two unities of the multiplicand are raised!"

Others before had certainly entertained and expressed similar doubts. That is not the point. Dickens, Lautrêamont, Peirce, Marx, and others mentioned in this connection are all contemporaries. They are, I suggest, the mark of the limits *ad quem* of the truly efficacious functioning of the analytico-referential. Subsequently will follow a long period of crisis, similar to what obtained between Machiavelli and the third or fourth decade of the seventeenth century.

The euphoria of late Victorianism is likewise marked by increasingly widespread and savage wars, striking ever more closely home to their principal participants (instead of being fought out, though not exclusively, over others' land). This is not entirely dissimilar to what happened in the second half of the sixteenth century and in the early seventeenth. In 1648 the Thirty Years' War came to its official end with the Peace of Westphalia (1659 for France and Spain, with the Peace of the Pyrénées), and it is not coincidental that Brecht's perhaps best-known play, *Mother Courage*, written in the year of the outbreak of an equally savage war in our own time, should be set in that earlier war. I have suggested elsewhere that Renaissance and neoclassical tragedy was importantly instrumental in the performed creation of analytico-referential discourse, and that Brecht's theater may have participated in an analogous performance for our time—though that creation is not yet clearly consolidated. I am not, of course, trying to suggest a new instauration of analysis and reference, but an analogous elaboration of a movement toward a new discourse.

We may perhaps say that the discourse of patterning 'sought' only to place its user in a context, whether divine or human. It employed the 'images of things' not for the sake of knowledge and use of things in themselves, not to gain power over them or so that they might become the manipulated objects of the master of discourse, but simply to make possible the utterance of intrahuman relationships and a certain relation within a totality of which man himself was but a part. Such discourse sought what has been termed a “conjunctive” reality. In Kepler, Bruno, or Campanella, for example, the ‘human condition’ was a closed one of “heart and eyes, intellect and soul” (*anima*), tending toward a ‘unity’ of all knowledge and a ‘fullness of being,’ culminating ideally in some kind of quasi-mystical ‘absorption’ into the light proceeding from the Divinity—whether such culmination is conceived primarily in terms of knowledge (Kepler), or in those of Being (Bruno or Campanella).

The achievement of some kind of ‘wholeness of being’ seems to have been the principal role played by such discourse. The kind of conjunction in question may differ from what is expressed in a medieval discourse coming mainly out of St. Augustine, or what may be indicated through examples taken from Greek Antiquity. But however “disjunctive” Renaissance discourse may have become, its goal is to overcome such disjunction. Kepler demonstrates such a strain just as much as Thomas More. Yet where More can offer no solution but that of a passage out of this world (the *Dialogue of Comfort* being perhaps as much a response to a conceptual as a physical constraint), Kepler’s discursive explorations provide a passage of development.

An intention to ‘understand’ the world as external to the space of discourse would have been a later product of that discursive practice, destined to take on a life of its own and become dominant at a certain moment in history. This intention accompanies a new use of language, a new class of discourse, new forms of knowledge and society. For Galileo, Bacon, or Descartes, the human condition is not closed. It is the arena of an ongoing and ever-open dialectic between particulars, axioms, predictions, and “works” (the production of new facts and particulars), between knowing and doing, being and willing, that will enable an endless spiritual and material ‘improvement’ for all the individual members of the human race.

Through certain of the texts considered here, we can spot an interesting progression in a particular *topos* that both ‘summarizes’ these developments in some way and shows how the ‘meaning’ of specific discursive material (such as the motifs of ‘soul’ and ‘self,’ of the Prometheus myth or the Great Chain) changes according to the
discursive class in which it appears. The *topos* of the two Delphic sayings, “Know thyself” and “Nothing in excess,” has already been mentioned, but it merits discussing in slightly more detail. F. M. Cornford long ago suggested that these sayings are an early sign of the individual’s breaking away from his full participation and absorption in a divine order. He asserts that Apollo’s dicta reveal the full ambiguity of the human relation with the Divine, the uncertainty of the individual’s status in respect of the Olympians.⁴ Individuality is marked, but its standing remains indefinable. In view of what was said in Chapter 2 concerning the absence in any discourse ‘available’ to the ancient Greeks of such concepts as ‘will,’ ‘person,’ ‘subject,’ and so on, we may well be inclined to think the matter beyond ambiguity. And such would have been the situation predominant until certainly as late as the high Middle Ages.

In Chapter 3 I recalled Colin Morris’s reference to the Delphic “Know thyself” and to the passage in the *Song of Songs*: “If you do not know yourself, go forth.” Morris remarked that throughout the European twelfth century these were “the two foundation-texts of the movement for self-exploration.”⁵ What he emphasizes less is the clear fact that such ‘self-knowledge’ was primarily a mediatory passage to ‘organic’ union with and in the ‘divine whole.’ Society itself, in which the baptized *fideles* were largely unindividuated integral elements, was simply the earthly manifestation of such union. In a sense, I suppose one could say that the “Know thyself” permits the participant in totality to identify his ‘personal-ness,’ while the “Nothing in excess” insists that he is such a participant. The epigraph to Chapter 2 taken from Aquinas’s *Summa contra Gentiles* is a brief example of such a view.

In More’s *Utopia*, the two Delphic sayings are ‘replaced’ by two others that I believe mark Hythlodaeus’s “residence in the infinite”: “He who has no grave is covered by the sky,” and “From all places it is the same distance to heaven” (*Utopia*, p. 13). They indicate that the ambiguity of the Delphic sayings could have been overcome by the retrieval of something one might call an ‘integrated’ participation in the Divine, the rediscovery of a ‘unity’ in which the latent individual would disappear altogether, and where discourse of any kind would be superfluous. More relates that these two dicta “are constantly on [Raphael’s] lips,” as though this were the sum total of all knowledge.

that matters. This attempt, in *Utopia*, is rendered impossible by the very existence of the text itself, and by the time Gulliver appears on the scene the ‘total’ will have been torn to shreds.

The Enlightenment surgeon replaces the Apollonian sign of a search to situate the ‘individual’ in his relation to the Divine with the sign of his material situation in the order of nature: ambiguity and query are replaced by complete confidence in the certainty of his situation, even in his control over that situation despite apparent obstacles. The sign of the search for a difficult equilibrium between social man and man as participant in an order that surpasses all possible comprehension (“Nothing in excess”) gives way to a complete confidence in man’s technical ability to bend nature to his will and needs: “No Man could more verify the Truth of these two Maxims, *That, Nature is very easily satisfied; and, That, Necessity is the Mother of Invention*” (Gulliver’s Travels, p. 276). Gulliver’s certitude is, of course, just one place on the scale that runs from the practice of discourse in Europe to that of the same discourse in Houyhnhnm-land, and while it may be dominant the discourse of analytico-referentiality will never be entirely free of ambiguity.

Gulliver’s terms, however, correspond entirely to Rousseau’s similar claim to the effect that natural man lives in a state of minimal requirements, acceding to socialization only under the impulse of necessity. Such is the fundamental reason behind the social contract, as he observes at the outset of the chapter on the “social pact” in the first book of the *Contrat social*. For Rousseau it is in a sense these two maxims that permit the creation of human society to be conceptualized. In his earlier *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, he comments at one point that “a wise providence saw to it that the faculties potentially possessed by man should only develop when the occasion demanded their use, so that they should be neither superfluous nor burdensome ahead of time, neither late nor useless when needed.”

Gulliver’s scale is transformed into a different gamut, running from a kind of zero state of humanity in nature, the very equivalent of Condillac’s statue, through the gradual increase in felt needs that for Rousseau corresponds to the decadence of advancing socialization. The passage from isolated savage man, “alone, idle and always close to danger,” endowed only with the “passion” for self-preservation and the simplest of needs, to the actual realization of his socialized

potential in will, reason, thought, and language requires the intervention of necessity. To mere savage man “difficulties soon presented themselves,” and their solution is first of all through a diversity of techniques: war and venery, agriculture and metallurgy. For Rousseau as for Gulliver, for Emile’s tutor as for Crusoe, necessity (demand) and technique (supply) become the very essence of socialized humanity. The reasoning of the Discourse on Inequality explains the admiration for Crusoe expressed in Emile, not to mention the educational project we saw urged by Lord Macaulay, that grand later exponent of the Enlightenment and the so-called Whig interpretation of history.

In Rousseau, the ambiguities already seen as inherent in analyticoreferential discourse are clearly visible, but in a rather different and more concrete manner than in Gulliver’s Travels. I have twice referred to the fact that the works of such sixteenth-century writers as Fabri, Palsgrave, and Tory can be taken as indicative of a discourse in crisis: the multiplication of levels of signification suggests an attempt to resolve the contradictions inherent in theologico-feudal discourse. Like Thomas More’s, it was an attempt doomed to failure; and these writings, too, are exactly contemporary with Machiavelli’s. From Hobbes to Montesquieu to Rousseau, one can easily see an analogous multiplication of such levels of mediation. This time it takes the form of a historical linearity that matches the concept of progress (process) built into analyticoreferentiality (both as regards its description in the texts themselves, and as to the chronological passage from Hobbes to Rousseau).

For Hobbes there are but two levels of humanity: that of brutish and always warring natural man, and that of the socialized individual living under the monarchical state. Confronting certain obvious contradictions (for example, that the founding contractual covenant assumes, indeed demands, a legal system by definition absent from the state of nature), Montesquieu seeks to resolve them by installing a third level: the timid man of an original peaceful state of nature, the individual of the “first associations” characterized by inequality and strife, and the socialized member of advanced societies of diverse types (though the ideal is that of a kind of liberal monarchism). Unsatisfied with the many logical problems that still exist, Rousseau puts humanity through four levels: a happy state of nature, primitive egalitarian societies, gradually decaying societies based on the inequality of property and constant struggle, the eventually ideal

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7. Ibid., pp. 48, 67; more generally on the techniques, pp. 50, 67–68, 73–74.
egalitarian (and highly controlled) society of the contract that combines natural equality with “moral and legitimate equality.”

Rousseau, of course, constantly refers to the “immense gap” that lies between nature and any form of society whatsoever. He is well aware that that gap would ultimately demand an infinity of different mediatory levels in the familiar bad regression. For “nature” is at once the point of origin and the atemporal utopia in which process (here, “society”) cannot be inscribed that I discussed at the beginning of Chapter 3 on Utopia. It is Kepler’s contradiction, once again, between entropy and process. The leitmotiv of “two and two are four, and nothing over” marks a kind of desperate belief that such contradictions have been finally overcome.

The multiplication of mediatory levels seems indicative, then, of contradictions within analytico-referential discourse that will culminate in Hegel’s attempt to resolve them in a new dialectic. Aufhebung is not simply a ‘practice’ within that dialectic; it is the response to an entire discursive history. The contradictions that became ever more apparent in the theologico-feudal episteme met with the beginning of a response in the writings of Machiavelli, as forms of dominant practice within that episteme started to become tools of analysis. As I suggested before, it seems apparent that Marx performed a similar role after Hegel. In a sense Darwinism also ‘overcomes’ the divisive multiplication of levels by creating an unbroken set of developmental moments between the most primitive state of nature and the most advanced condition of culture imaginable. In another way, of course, one could argue that the notion of the “descent of man” is simply a more sophisticated means of overcoming the contradictions in question (an argument dramatized by the continuing belief in and search for the celebrated “missing links”). The advantage of Darwin’s ‘solution’ is that it overcomes the circular effect of the others, proposing an ever-open system. Its very clear disadvantage is that to do so it inscribes violence in society as a necessary and forever inevitable element. Freud’s arguments in the fourth essay of Totem and Taboo and in the third section of Moses and Monotheism are a direct (and avowed) result of that inscription: and there the violence is at once internalized and exorcized by a displacement into the realm of the symbolic (aufge-
hoben, as Hegel might have said, were it not for the symbolic nature of the displacement).

Still, though I will return later to the problem of Freudianism, that particular outcome of these ambiguities and contradictions remains some distance away, even if it is the direct consequence—indeed an aspect—of the various occultations, ruses, and traps of analytico-referential discourse that I will recall very shortly. For the present Crusoe, Gulliver, and the Houyhnhnms are triumphant. Discourse has established the status of an individual self out of the mere mark of enunciation, and it has established it as essential to denotative meaning. In its turn, such a form of meaningfulness (of the ascription of sense to practice) was essential to the kind of activity that henceforward was to be at once possible and necessary. The egalitarian individual is as essential a part of the kinds of perfect society indicated by the names just mentioned, as the willful self is to the forms of knowledge and action that accompany them. Though it is by no means the only, or even perhaps the most important, element of this class of discourse—as the preceding analyses have made clear—Roland Barthes has captured well the network of discursive relations that surround this element in particular:

Denotation would be a scientific myth; that of a “true” state of language, as though every sentence contained an etymon (origin and truth). Denotation/connotation: this dual concept has a value only in the domain of truth. Whenever I need to test a message (to demystify it), I subject it to some exterior instance . . . which forms its true substratum. The opposition is useful therefore only in the framework of a critical operation analogous to a chemical analysis: whenever I believe in truth, I need denotation.\footnote{Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes par lui-même (Paris, 1975), p. 71 (my italics).}

Two plus two equals four, and the facts add up.

This network of utterance, self, truth, denotation and reference, subjection of the exterior, and analysis are the discursively formed elements of analytico-referentiality. This status of the individual and its consequences was not to be created until some two thousand years after the heyday of Athens, and some three hundred or so years after the summit of Scholasticism.

Analytico-referential discourse was produced out of patternning as a kind of attempt to represent the contradiction between process and entropy in discourse, a contradiction proceeding from a concept of an eventually complete knowledge as the goal of a search for
truth that by definition would be ever ongoing: the discourse thus contained a radical contradiction within its own functioning. But it was itself a response to the contradiction of that earlier patterning discourse (as we saw in *Utopia*), and the difficulty was to find a way of ‘resolving’ such contradictions. The problems and its potential solution had been presented with particular acuity by Kepler. Bacon and his contemporaries were able to turn the contradiction of the potentially new discourse into a simple epistemological difficulty—which could then be viewed as resolvable.

The means of achieving such a resolution was essentially to place the stasis of complete knowledge at a different level from the ongoing quest for truth. (It may be worth observing here that at the end of the period of analytico-referential dominance, Bertrand Russell was to use an identical technique to ‘solve’ the paradox of the so-called Cretan liar: by placing the general assertion of mendacity and this particular instance of it in two different ‘languages’ of a potentially infinite hierarchy of such languages—a discursive ‘repetition’ not perhaps dissimilar in its implications to Freud’s ‘internalization’ and hypostatizing of, among other elements, the telescope metaphor, as I will show in a moment.) For Bacon, the stasis of complete knowledge was to correspond to the order of facts in nature (reference). The ongoing search for truth was simply the *process* of human reasoning and discursivity, manifesting the limitations inescapably present in any human activity but potentially perfectible on the one hand by ‘method’ and on the other by the very ‘progressiveness’ inherent in such ‘forward’ movement (analysis). For such limitations were indeed only temporary. First, they could be provided with the counterproofs of “works.” Second, they could be terminated by the axiomatic exclusion of contrary instances. The exclusion of nonverifiable assertions or of assertions that negated or contradicted its own was the affirmation of the complete power of this discursive class. The Houyhnhnms’ discursive practice was not after all so extreme. What it cannot “know” does not exist.

The production of discourse, its objects, and its relations by the *I* of enunciation that originated it, in secret, in power, and with the complicity of a knowing elite, was gradually occulted: discourse became the common, transparent, and objective property of all, while the enunciating *I* was hypostatized as individual will. Discourse was infallible because it corresponded to “common sense,” while will could control it only with the assent of all potential users (it was said). A discursive contract was born through a series of occultations: discursive mastery (which was also a responsibility of enunciation),
the possessive intention and the acquisitive act (of knowledge, of power, and so on), the use and ordering of power and authority. These diverse occultations legitimized the individual’s presence in and use of a discourse for whose dominion he was no longer responsible.

By this series of ruses, by these occultations, that discourse was able to lay claim to referential meaning and truth. It was able to perform ‘objectively’ while allowing the individual power and authority to control ‘his’ discourse and possess ‘his’ knowledge, which, because it was objective, was also everyone else’s. This could be seen most clearly no doubt in Robinson Crusoe. But that text is only an end result of a complex development, and is perfectly representative of what can be seen not only in other literary texts but also in other types of discourse: science, philosophy, political and economic theory, law and juridical practice, criticism, and so on. The “possessive individual” (all users of analytico-referential discourse with a greater or lesser degree of success) was now able to put his stamp on the “other,” conceived as exterior to the space of discourse. He was able to put a value on that other, whether “person,” “object,” “concept,” “event,” or whatever. At the same time he could cede responsibility to the discourse itself as the institution of society.

Thus in Crusoe a ‘private’ practice is embedded within a societal one and succeeds because the one does not pose any threat to the other. How it succeeds is what I sought to show. The private and public prove essential to one another if the discourse is to function as a transparent mediator of true knowledge, of useful power. That is what I meant by the term “already formed social contract” of discourse. Recent discussions around Locke’s semantic theories suggest that a similar problematic is central to them. On the one hand words are signs for ideas, and both the signs and the ideas must be sufficiently institutionalized for mutually comprehensible communication to take place; on the other, at the moment of utterance signs can express only those particular ideas entertained by the user of language who is making the utterance. That is to say that what the words mean in a particular utterance can only be the result of an intention which is the speaker’s. Language in use must therefore provide the crossroads between the public and the private: discourse must be the social contract.11

11. Reference here is to the third book of Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), though it can clearly not be discussed in detail. Norman Kretzmann in particular has considered Locke’s theories from this standpoint in “The Main Thesis of Locke’s Semantic Theory,” now collected in I. C. Tipton, ed., Locke on Human
The same thing exactly applies to concepts as they are received through communication. And I think one could equally well show that a notion such as that of taste as it is elaborated in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory corresponds to the same function. (The government inspector of Hard Times will take the matter a step further, equating fact and taste: “you are not to see anywhere what you don’t see in fact; you are not to have anywhere what you don’t have in fact. What is called Taste is only another name for Fact.”) Certainly the concept of scientific language functions contractually as it is presented by a writer such as Lavoisier (out of Condillac) in the introduction of his Traité élémentaire de chimie. It is this consolidation that had been ‘finalized’ in a text like Robinson Crusoe, as both Rousseau and Macaulay recognized in their educational advice. But the need for its elaboration was clear from the very ‘beginning’ of the development of the analytico-referential. Human discourse had been inadequate to reality, merely an ordering of its diverse manifestations. Now it is the measure of reality. Out of need has come a means.

That particular discursive measure of reality, I have been suggesting, remains by and large our own, even though the limits of its efficacious functioning appear to have been revealed long since. Now, such revelation is at once the résumé of a discursive history and the indication of a new need. At this point the implications of a specific example merit some exploration, not only because it is one that our own time has endowed with quite exceptional weight, but because it has at the same time been taken as in fact responding to such need by a passage into a new discursive space—falsely, I believe. The case is exemplary, though for obvious reasons it cannot be dealt with here at the necessary length. I refer to Freudian psychoanalytical theory and practice, and its conceptual context.

I spoke earlier of the “euphoria of late Victorianism,” implying thereby its self-image of having arrived at some summit of human endeavor. One cannot but be aware at the same time that it was a period

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14. The following brief interpretation of psychoanalysis and of the human psyche, its ‘object,’ as the hypostatization of a particular discursive history will be explored at greater length in another writing.
of intense self-criticism in any number of domains: Dickens, Peirce, Marx, Frege, Maxwell, Lautréamont, Helmholtz, Mach, and others have already been mentioned as exemplary. In literature one might make the obvious addition of Mallarmé; in the physical sciences, the consequences of the Michelson-Morley experiment and its invalidating of certain aspects of classical mechanical theory, or the theorizing of Lorentz, Planck, and others, as it seemed to be leading toward some quite new ‘alternative’; in biology, the development of a scientific genetics; in mathematics, the development by Lobachevski and Riemann of non-Euclidian geometries. And so forth. These developments were accompanied by neo-Kantianism, social Darwinism (Peirce remarked of Darwinism that it was but the transference of “predatory capitalism” to the domain of nature, while Russell, less dramatically, speaks of laissez faire economics being thus applied to the animal and vegetable world), and other seemingly “conservative” reactions. These apparently contradictory movements—or, rather, the forms they take—are witness that some kind of discursive limits have indeed been reached. Freudianism is exemplary.

Little more than a year before the death of Queen Victoria, Freud published what has since come to be considered a “scientific classic” and a foundation-text of psychoanalysis, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899–1900). At the end of Chapter 4, I referred to an apparent similarity between his and Kepler’s approach to science, in seeming opposition to Galileo’s, though I suggested how he in fact ‘disagrees’ with both (for the limits his work reveals are not, of course, those performed by Kepler’s, and if it points the way to a new inception it cannot be Galileo’s). I also mentioned his particular use of the telescope metaphor. Just because psychoanalysis has become in many ways an exemplary scientific theory and practice for our time, it is useful—and even urgent—to show to how considerable a degree its founding texts repeat the specific history of analytico-referentiality and how its establishment is exemplary of the particular dominance with which we are by now familiar. At the same time, by its incorporation of discursive elements earlier occulted (remaining unidentified and unidentifiable, then), it reveals the limits of the analytico-referential.

In the *Interpretation* the telescope is used not only to explain the psychology of dreams but to set forth the relation obtaining between the mind and the world ‘outside’ it. Frege had ‘demystified’ and resuscitated the telescope as a metaphor of meaning in 1892. In 1900 Freud recomposes it as a representation of the real relation between mind and world, the former being a “reflex apparatus.”
The telescope is at least partly explanatory of a concrete reality, the human psyche itself (“concrete” not in the sense that it is fixed and singular, but that it can be understood as a real process, as an actual functioning of the mind):

Accordingly, we will picture the mental apparatus as a compound instrument, to the components of which we will give the name of “agencies” [Instanzen], or (for the sake of greater clarity) “systems” [Systeme]. It is to be anticipated, in the next place, that these systems may perhaps stand in a regular spatial relation to one another, in the same kind of way in which the various systems of lenses in a telescope are arranged behind one another [etwa wie die verschiedenen Linsensysteme des Fernrohres hintereinanderstehen]. Strictly speaking, there is no need for the hypothesis that the psychic systems are actually arranged in a spatial order. It would be sufficient if a fixed order were established by the fact that in a given psychic process the excitation passes through the systems in a particular temporal sequence.15

The mental apparatus in question starts with “perception” (stimuli), runs through systems where memory traces are deposited, and arrives at a motor stage where occurs a consequent mental action. The force of the telescope metaphor can readily be seen, though the presence of “memory traces” implies complications (explored especially by Jacques Derrida), which tie the image to the widespread metaphor of the mind as a camera. We will shortly see the enormous extent of the telescope ‘metaphor’ and its implications: they go very far indeed.

The earliest use of the metaphor in Freud appears to be the one just quoted. But the notion of the “dream image” (Traumbild as a reflection of experience retained in the memory) that is the result of such an apparatus seems to have preceded the literal elaboration of the specific metaphor—though it implies the elaboration of some such. The telescope was itself preceded by the use of a more general mechanistic model to describe the same “mental” or “psychical” ap-

15. Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, vols. 4 and 5 of The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, ed. James Strachey, 24 vols. (1953–66; rpt. London, 1975) [SE], V.536–37; Die Traumdeutung, in Studienausgabe (Frankfurt, 1972), II.513. I am indebted to Chantal Saint-Jarre and Marielle Baillargeon for forcefully reminding me of this text. I am particularly grateful to the former, who also pointed out the significance for many contemporaries (though I think it is incorrect) of the ‘passage’ from the visual to the linguistic in Freud, and who brought to my attention certain writings concerning the matter. She has herself drawn conclusions from these texts (though quite different from mine) in her “Le concept d’inconscient chez Freud” (M.A. thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1981).
paratus (seelischer or psychischer Apparat). In the Project for a Scientific Psychology of 1895, Freud writes: “In the first place there is no question but that the external world is the origin of all major quantities of energy, since, according to the discoveries of physics, it consists of powerful masses which are in violent motion and which transmit their motion.” It goes without saying that the motion in question here is transmitted to the psychical receptor system: the telescope of 1900. This system itself then continues the transmission of energy, sometimes with interruptions (caused by the “contact barriers” corresponding to the lenses), sometimes more easily. Hobbes had also found a way to equate mass and movement in the material world both with the way in which the individual functions and with the organization of social man. This ‘similarity’ is very far from indifferent, as we will see.

Freud never dropped this optical manner of viewing his new science. The telescope is less a metaphor than an identification permitting “psychology to take its place as a natural science like any other.” This remark does not come from an early text but from what may well be the penultimate text of his life, the Outline of Psycho-analysis (1938). He asserts:

We know two kinds of things about what we call our psyche (or mental life): firstly, its bodily organ and scene of action, the brain (or nervous system) and, on the other hand, our acts of consciousness, which are immediate data and cannot be further explained by any sort of description. Everything that lies between is unknown to us, and the data do not include any direct relation between these two terminal points of our knowledge.

These sentences lead directly to Freud’s restatement of what he calls his two fundamental hypotheses. The first is that the psyche or mental life “is the function of an apparatus to which we ascribe the characteristics of being extended in space and of being made up of several portions—which we imagine, that is, as resembling a telescope or microscope or something of the kind.” Yet it is much more than a merely “imaginary” conceptual aid: “the consistent working-out of a conception such as this is a scientific novelty.”

16. Sigmund Freud, Project for a Scientific Psychology, SE, I:304. The passage from the Project to the Interpretation has been the subject of a useful discussion by André Green, “De l'Esquisse à l'Interprétation des rêves: Coupure et clôture,” Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse, 5 (Spring 1972), 155-86.
18. Ibid., pp. 144-45.
course: the working-out of precisely this model ("conception") is the very foundation of the analytic-referential.

Freud's second hypothesis is to the effect that it is just this apparatus and its functioning that is to be termed the "unconscious." It is indeed this view, he remarks, that enables psychology to become "a natural science like any other." For, he writes, consciousness could only be a matter of "broken sequences" (as it is experienced), whereas the psychology of the unconscious becomes a matter of identifying the logical "laws" "obeyed" by the processes of the apparatus itself. Such a psychology is enabled to follow the "mutual relations and interdependences [of unconscious processes] over long stretches—in short, to arrive at what is described as an 'understanding' of the field of natural phenomena in question." The only difficulty then is the fact that while "every science is based on observations and experiences arrived at through the medium of our psychical apparatus... our science has as its subject that apparatus itself." This does not prevent him from asserting in *The Future of an Illusion* that psychoanalysis is "an impartial instrument, like the infinitesimal calculus, as it were" (a rapprochement not entirely without interest, in the light of earlier remarks). An analogous problem was being dealt with almost simultaneously by quantum mechanical inquiry. Here Werner Heisenberg and Niels Bohr in particular were exploring the philosophical and scientific consequences of the input of the experimental instrument of knowledge into the observation, experiment, and knowledge it made possible. These researches appear today as similar marks of a discourse at its limits.19

One might well assert that the very concept of the psyche as principally the functioning of unconscious processes is itself derived from the telescope as used by Freud. From the first he affirms that it is a means to describe the mental apparatus in question while avoiding "the temptation to determine psychical locality in any anatomical fashion." In this regard, the identification of the optical instrument with mental processes is extremely precise, and, as for Galileo, provides a description of a (mental) "apparatus" as well as a metaphor for its processes. It provides a way, says Freud, of understanding "psychical locality" as corresponding "to a point inside the apparatus at which one of the preliminary stages of an image comes into being.

In the microscope or telescope, as we know, these occur in part at ideal points, regions in which no tangible component of the apparatus is situated." The unconscious is precisely a process apparently independent of such tangible components. The ideal points, of which the entire apparatus is composed so far as its functioning between the two "terminal points" is concerned, are the unconscious—likewise only indirectly accessible.

The precautions Freud takes against a too-literal understanding of the telescope ‘metaphor’ ("imperfections," “only intended to assist . . .," “it would be sufficient . . .”) are themselves suggestive of the very “defense mechanisms” he will also be exploring. Furthermore these precautions are in fact denied by the very detailed manner in which the ‘image’ will serve “to make the complications of mental functioning intelligible by dissecting the function and assigning its different constituents to different component parts of the apparatus.” One is tempted to say that rather than making mental functioning intelligible, it makes mental functioning.

Yet the precautions are not only denied by the detail. As I have suggested, they are denied by the structure Freud ascribes to all mental activity as its very foundation: “All our psychical activity starts from stimuli (whether internal or external) and ends in innervations.” Now, whether any given instance of the process be viewed as entirely external or as a combination of external/internal stimuli, it is clear enough that the mechanistic model first indicated in the Project of 1895 and the division world/‘subject’ (stimuli/innervations, perception/judgment) are both a priori. That is so even if the concept of ‘subject’ here needs some redefining. The dual hypotheses of unconscious mental functioning and of the mind as a telescopic apparatus themselves correspond to the division in question (that is, in so far as they are a means of conceptualizing the psyche, they correspond to the dualism of internal/external, process/stasis, and so on).

To such a degree is this a priori the case that it holds even though the process itself may on occasion be conceived as entirely ‘internal.’ The Project makes it quite clear that Freud is seeking the mechanism of identification: “The aim and end of all thought-processes is thus to bring about a state of identity.” In the case of cognition this is with the outside; in the case of “reproductive thought” it is with the psyche itself. Freud repeats here the analysis of the very problematic whose resolution was essential to the instauration of analytico-referentiality.

20. The Interpretation of Dreams, SE, V.536.
21. Ibid., pp. 536, 537.
—the necessity of ‘discovering’ and then explaining the adequacy of the internal/external relationship. The telescope, then, is not simply metaphorical. The psychical apparatus is identical with it: “Reflex processes remain the model [Vorbild] of every psychical function.” One might say that one starts with the Vorbild and ends with the Traumbild, as reality becomes concept or event-in-the-mind, or as the ‘fiction’ of the material telescope becomes the ‘reality’ of psychical process. The movement is identical to Descartes’s fabulous passage in Le monde, as he proceeds from his modeling “story” (fable) of the material world to its concrete reality. Vorbild is neither ‘model’ nor ‘reality.’ Like the Baconian writing examined in Chapter 6, it is taken as preceding in some sense and as enabling the discourse that can (then) make such a distinction. The same is the case for Descartes’s fable. Once the discourse has been created, however, it can redefine that Vorbild, as model or as reality in accordance with its need. In the first case it is simply an explanatory device whose arbitrary and conventional relation to “reality” is emphasized—a saving of the appearances. In the second, it involves the “illusion,” as Wittgenstein put it, of real identity between “the so-called laws of nature,” “natural phenomena,” and the functioning of the human mind. That is what I mean to imply when I suggest that psychoanalysis repeats in its elaboration a particular discursive history.

Inasmuch as this very process corresponds to the inception of the analytico-referential during the European Renaissance and neoclassicism, it is relevant to observe that when Freud is writing about how the blocking mechanisms, as which the “ideal points” of the apparatus also function, can lead to the forgetting of dreams, he chooses to refer to just that period. The reference is in the same chapter of the Interpretation of Dreams as the introduction of the telescope. In the previous section, Freud compares “the forgetting of dreams” (a consequence of a psychical “proscription” or “resistance”) to “the state of things . . . after some sweeping revolution in one of the republics of antiquity or the Renaissance.” The analogy is pursued at some length with regard to the Renaissance (and perhaps implicitly to Machiavelli, since it concerns in particular the proscription of nobles left over from the previously dominant state power structure).

The political analogy had been pursued earlier, when Freud was discussing dream distortion and the systematic interpretation of it—a phenomenon closely associated with the forgetting of dreams. He used the analogy of political censorship. Again, as in the case of the

22. Project, SE, I.332–33; Interpretation, SE, V.538; Traumdeutung, p. 514.
23. Interpretation, SE, V.516.
telescope, it is rather a matter of identity than mere analogy: "The fact that the phenomena of [political] censorship and of dream-distortion correspond down to their smallest details justifies us in presuming that they are similarly determined."\textsuperscript{24} The implications of such later texts as \textit{Civilization and Its Discontents} are similar. Once again: the discussions of Bacon and later writers have already shown us just to what extent the political reference was an essential means of consolidating and developing the analytico-referential. Indeed, referring to Machiavelli, I suggested that it may well have been his analysis of a particular political practice that provided essential elements leading into the development of that discourse. I have already had occasion to mention Hobbes in relation to Freud. So it is significant, too, that in 1914 Freud should have added a footnote to his definition of the dream process as a regression (a kind of traveling backward up the telescope), referring not only to Albertus Magnus but, more to my purpose, to Hobbes's discussion of dream regression in \textit{Leviathan}.\textsuperscript{25}

Taken together these diverse elements suggest the argument (I can do little more here) that not only the psychical processes as a whole, but also such of their particular functionings as regression, forgetting, resistance, association, and so on are hypostatizations of the discursive history the present volume has been following. Thus, for example, the "work of displacement" and the "work of condensation," which permit "representation" in dreams, seem to take up rather exactly Tesauro's \textit{versabilità} and \textit{perspicacia}, respectively. They are now processes internalized as unconscious functionings, the inverse of conscious ones. Thus hypostatized they can be reincorporated in a history that had had to occult them as processes of reason. Freud's 'purpose' here is not dissimilar to Galileo's (or that of Kepler's notes to the \textit{Somnium}): to reduce overdetermination and multiplicity to an identifiable (not necessarily singular) meaning.\textsuperscript{26}

These things are all aspects of the \textit{way in which} dreams function. Even more revealing is the \textit{purpose} ascribed to dreams. Dreams,

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., IV.142–43.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., V.542. The \textit{Leviathan} reference is to pt. I, ch. 2. I will be exploring the political theoretical establishment of discourse in the writing already referred to several times (see above, note 9). It is worth noting here that when speaking of the absence of civilization in \textit{The Future of an Illusion}, Freud affirms that the individual would find himself in a "natural" state exactly like what Hobbes pictures (\textit{SE}, XXI.15). \textit{Totem and Taboo} had somewhat complicated a view similar however in its main lines, and the matter is taken up again at length in \textit{Moses and Monotheism}. The Hobbes/Freud relation is, of course, rather a commonplace: see, e.g., Jean Roy, \textit{Hobbes et Freud} (Halifax, N.S., 1976), for a detailed discussion, and Philip Rieff, \textit{Freud: The Mind of the Moralist} (1959; rpt. New York, 1961), passim.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Interpretation}, \textit{SE}, IV.277–338.
writes Freud, are wish-fulfillments. Their manner of functioning is by regression: “In regression the fabric of the dream-thoughts is resolved into its raw material.” 27 Both Bacon and Galileo had rejected “raw material” as unusable for knowledge. In their view such raw material (“brute experience,” said Galileo) was useless. Only already ordered experience (experiment, or even perhaps Vorbild) was of any epistemological use. Nonetheless, the ideal of analytico-referential discourse was eventually direct access to such immediate concrete reality. The fulfillment of its most ardent wish would have been immediate knowledge of the raw material of nature. Again, a major problem confronting the inception and progress of the discourse of analysis and reference is absorbed into the psychical mechanism. The use of raw material in dreams corresponds perhaps to the wish for scientific knowledge of such material (for utility and knowledge are one, said Bacon). Such “a wish from the unconscious,” remarks Freud, is “invariably and indisputably” the “capitalist” providing the “outlay” that a dream may occur to satisfy it. 28 Once again, one is constrained to affirm, this analogy is surely not indifferent and certainly corresponds to the fact that this telescope, the unconscious, is completely at the service of the I that corresponds to that “capitalist” wish: “Dreams are completely egoistic.” 29

We have already seen that this hypostatization holds for the case of the unconscious itself. But the centrality of the concept (to understate the case) makes it bear repeating. The unconscious corresponds precisely, Freud suggests, to the intangible system of places within the optical apparatus. Cremonini refused to look up the telescope because he claimed (so it is said) that his acceptance of what he would see depended on his prior acceptance of an extrapolation from the functioning of the whole instrument. It depended, that is to say, upon an acceptance of the implications of Baconian “writing,” of Galilean “mathematical language,” of Cartesian “method”—or of Freudian “Vorbild.” For in a similar way, “access” to the unconscious is the consequence of an extrapolation from what is taken as the functioning of the entire apparatus. It may be that Freud’s assimilation of ontogenesis to phylogensis, of individual development and functioning to that of “the human race,” 30 would better be seen as the theoretical hypostatization of a historically situtatable discursive

27. Ibid., V.543.
28. Ibid., p. 561.
29. Ibid., IV.322. This view will be somewhat modified in 1925.
30. Ibid., V.548. Totem and Taboo is doubtless the most exemplary text in this respect.
‘birth’ into the form of permanent human mental processes, just as the psychoanalytical theory that contains it may be viewed as the hypostatization of that discursive history itself.

It goes without saying that the telescope is not an entirely accurate or self-sufficient model. For at each ideal stage of the apparatus, as we saw, is left an imprint that may be described ‘as a ‘memory-trace’ [Erinnerungsspur].’ This aspect of the matter was also destined to a great future, not only in the work of Freud himself but also in that of many of his most recent successors. It involves the question of psychical processes as writing, or at least as the production of signification in a manner strictly analogous to the functioning of natural languages. Some contemporary writers have sought to ascribe a special importance to a passage in Freud’s own writings from the ‘optical’ to the ‘linguistic.’ These writers can then play down the ‘positivistic’ side of psychoanalytic theory and practice, just so as to be able to offer that science as a form of ‘knowledge’ (or ‘praxis,’ or ‘athesis’) of a quite different order from that of the ‘traditional’ experimentalist form—as though, far from being a mark of discursive limits, it was already in a new space of discourse. Thus Jacques Derrida can assert that the metaphor of text precedes that of machine, though in fact shows the former as developing between the time of the Project and that of The Interpretation of Dreams (in the correspondence with Fliess). Similarly, he affirms that “the mechanical models will be tested and discarded,” though the telescope is still essential in 1938. And he tries to underplay the kind of significance I am here drawing from the optical ‘metaphor’ by asserting that in any case the telescope in Freud is not to be understood as “a simple, homogeneous structure”—a fact that is indicated, he says, by the diverse refractions of light (excitations) as it passes through the lens systems (ideal points), and by the changes in medium contained in the system. This last point is undoubtedly correct. But it had never been otherwise from the first. That is precisely why Galileo (for example) remarked that to change the length of the telescope was to change both the ‘object’ and the observation involved. Perhaps that was why Cremonini refused to look up it.

Such writers as Jacques Lacan, Derrida, and others (whatever their

31. Interpretation, SE, V.538; Traumdeutung, p. 514.
manifest differences) have thus sought to emphasize the ‘linguistic’ side of things, by picking up on Freud’s other favorite ‘metaphor.' Here the very concept of interpretation becomes more important than what is to be interpreted. A different kind of reading of the *Traumdeutung* is emphasized, along with such texts as *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, *The Uncanny,* and the “Note Upon the ‘Mystic Writing Pad.’” The view that such an interpretation of psychoanalysis is a discursive way to the future is quite widespread—however diverse may be the interpretation involved. But as we saw in the earlier quotation from the *Traumdeutung*, the optical metaphor and that of the *trace* were in fact simultaneous, a part of the very same description. They are simultaneous here as they had been at the inception of analytic-referential discourse. We saw in Chapter 6 that the identification of a capacity for knowing and doing, and the characterization of coherent social being in terms of writing and ordered use of language, was essential to the Baconian instauration—just as the telescope was to the Galilean version of the same instauration. John Wallis was quite correct, we would say, to name the two as co-founders of the modern science and the new knowledge. Derrida refers to these metaphors as “apparently contradictory”; if they are, then it is a contradiction from the very outset of this discursive history.33

It is just when he speaks in the *Traumdeutung* both of the optical instrument and of the “written” trace that Freud starts speaking of “association.” It is surely not simply a play on words to point out that such association is made possible by the simultaneous functioning of the telescopic perceptual apparatus and the ‘writing’ that accompanies it: “Our perceptions are linked with one another in our memory.”34 The association of the two is thus just as essential to Freud’s analysis as it had been to the inception of the particular discursive history leading toward it. Freud himself never dropped either schema, though he seems to insist upon the visual one. Even so, we may recall that Frege (not to mention Galileo and Tesauro) has shown how that visuality is also a particular elaboration of the signifying process, at the same time as it is that process. Both are hypos tatizations from the same singular discursive history. Derrida appears to

33. Derrida, “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” p. 216. We should observe here that Derrida has viewed Lacan’s reading of Freud (through Poe in this case) as a ‘rediscovery’ of singularizable truth and a ‘misuse’ (my term) of both Freud and Poe. See “Le Facteur de vérité,” in *La carte postale*, pp. 441–524.

34. *Interpretation*, S.E., V. 539.
view the two as opposed, contradictory. He argues that the conflict would finally have been erased by (in) the writing machine of 1924. One wonders, however, whether such ‘oppositions’ as unconscious process/memory trace (in the form of a fixed imprint) or telescope/writing, which are so constant and permanent in Freud, and such ‘contraries’ as the ‘readable’ trace/‘deferral’ combination in Derrida are not once again efforts to overcome the process/stasis contradiction we have seen as endemic to analytico-referential discourse, and which a Bacon (for example) had already ‘resolved’ in his own way. The very notion of the psyche as both an “apparatus” and a “process” is exemplary of the same opposition.

The same duality is played out and provided with a certain stability in a more significant way in diverse writings of Freud dating from the early 1920’s. We can see it in such texts as Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920), with the introduction of two fundamental instinctual urges: not simply the familiar sexual impulses (an urge to life and conservation), but also the new urge toward death (the “death-wish,” the tendency toward dissolution and inertia). In this case, life itself, and not simply the organization of the unconscious, becomes the place where the process/stasis conflict is played out. In The Ego and the Id of 1923, Freud appears to make this quite explicit: “The emergence of life would thus be the cause of the continuance of life and also at the same time of the striving towards death; and life itself would be a conflict and compromise between these two trends. The problem of the origin of life would remain a cosmological one; and the problem of the goal and purpose of life would be answered dualistically.”

Here the central conflict of a particular discursive history is with a vengeance hypostatized into the principle of all human life, whenever and wherever it be found. The discursive elaboration is analogous to what has already been seen, though we are here concerned with later texts, more or less contemporaneous with that of the writing machine—of which too much should surely not be made. The life/death duality is not yet to be found, for example, in the Metapsychology of 1917 (where only the urges to life are conceived). The ongoing discursive elaboration is therefore precisely in the terms set for it by a particular discursive history: it does not change fundamentally.

Furthermore, speaking of the combination of the impulse to death and the urge to life, we might also wish to take a cue from Pope’s Essay on Man (1733–34):

35. The Ego and the Id, SE, XIX.40–41.
As Man, perhaps, the moment of his breath,
Receives the lurking principle of death;
The young disease, that must subdue at length,
Grows with his growth, and strengthens with his strength:
So, cast and mingled with his very frame,
The Mind’s disease, its ruling Passion came. [II.133–38]

No doubt, Pope’s concepts are not Freud’s. Nonetheless I urge that such as these are not simply thematic resemblances, that Pope’s debt to Locke is also Freud’s, and that though the terms may indeed differ what is indicated here is a common conceptual framework.

Freudian psychoanalysis may thus be seen as an entertaining translation of the discourse and discursive history of a particular moment in the West: a version of Cyrano’s “Promethean analysis,” translating the course of analytico-referential discourse, hypostatizing it into a universal human “psyche.” We have seen that such functions as displacement and condensation, regression, forgetting and association, such factors as the I of the unconscious, such purposes as wish-fulfillment, such processes as the unconscious itself and indeed the very concept of life provide us with a complete repetition of the discursive means by which analytico-referentiality was installed. Small wonder that it is often translated into experimentalist, possessive economic, or individualist political terms by Freud himself. Indeed, these very terms may provide access to another set of complex relationships, which again can only be briefly indicated here.

Locke’s assertion that man may suspend action until his desires are elevated above baseness, “till he hungers or thirsts after righteousness,”36 is perhaps not so very far structurally from the Freudian concept of sublimation—though the process is obviously a conscious one for Locke. Nonetheless, human freedom (here, to elevate or sublimate base desire) as the manifestation of some absolute notion of moral inclination is close to the operational function ascribed to the Superego: in Locke, of course, it could not be presented as a constraint (since it is “human freedom”), though it is given as an avoidance of “unpleasantness.” Now, if we look closely at this notion, we see immediately that we are not at a very great distance from the Hobbesian argument concerning the free cession of individual power (possessed in the state of nature) to the singular authority of the state. Both in Hobbes and in Locke society functions as a con-

sequence of the individual’s urge to find the best way to do good for himself in a context of others’ requirement to do good for themselves. Both assert that individual freedom implies the individual's self-restraint on behalf of himself and his good: self-restraint and social authority are in fact at one. The economics of laissez faire depends on no other assumption.

Freud inverts the very same process, arguing that this urge is in fact an internalization of restraints imposed by society—society of a certain form, one could add. It is indeed just such a mechanism as this that allows a theoretical assumption of individual equality to conceal a practice of inequality. At one level, Freud’s analysis shows how it does so. The association of rational and moral freedom with a particular concept of social constraint (called “civil liberty” by the liberal philosophers, and made into a form taken by the mind’s functioning by Freud) was available from the outset. In 1707, Shaftesbury could write that what essentially elevates man above the beasts are “Freedom of Reason in the Learned World, and good Government and Liberty in the Civil World.”37 The eighteenth century could argue that rational and moral freedom in the individual coincide with the concept of civil liberty as a certain kind of socialized order and constraint, and that the combination was the essential characteristic of the human. Freud demystifies this conception by reversing it: the liberal concept of individual freedom is the consequence of a particular order of society. The limits of a particular class of discourse may have been reached and shown to have been reached, but the process that does the showing is just the same: we are still, though more radically, with Swift.

Derrida asserts that “the Freudian concept of trace must be radicalized and extracted from the metaphysics of presence.”38 In view of what has been argued here, one wonders whether that is possible, whether the attempt is not bound to end up in just the same discursive space. Both of our central images, the optical instrument and writing, had been important in Locke’s analysis of human understanding. The mind may be supposed, writes the English philosopher, “a white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas.” Experience will write on that paper, through observation of “external sensible objects” and through consideration of the mind’s “internal operations.” Freud was to remark that all “major quantities of

37. Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, Several Letters Written by a Noble Lord to a Young Man at the University (London, 1716), p. 8 (letter of May 10, 1707).
energy" proceed from "the external world" into the mind. At the same time, psychoanalysis itself is engaged in understanding the mind's internal operations, that mind being obscure and unconscious in its functioning. Just thus had Locke viewed it as a kind of camera obscura, illumined only by "external and internal sensation":

These alone, as far as I can discover, are the windows by which light is let into this dark room. For, methinks, the understanding is not much unlike a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external visible resemblances, or ideas of things without: would the pictures coming into such a dark room but stay there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion, it would very much resemble the understanding of a man, in reference to all objects of sight, and the ideas of them.39

On the appearance of the Essay, John Norris had taken Locke to task for refusing to admit the possibility of unconscious elements in the mind, an idea that Locke had indeed rejected outright. In his view, individual will and judgment order ideas in a perfectly comprehensible manner, however complex it may sometimes be. Nothing in the mind is hidden. Freud simultaneously brings back, or creates, the occulted 'subject' and thrusts it even deeper beyond reach of inspection: its functioning can be known only through such manifestations as analysis may bring to the 'surface.' Nonetheless, it is now there. As such, it is a revelation of limits.

I have mentioned the question of psychoanalytic discourse at some length here, though only indicatively, because of its exemplary character for us. But it is important, as we explore a discursive inception, to become cognizant at the same time of its present ramifications for us and of the potential consequences of ignoring discursive history. Of course, psychoanalysis would affirm that this partial analysis has merely indicated the world-historical validity of its scheme, at least for the past three hundred years. I am affirming the reverse: that it is 'merely' the hypostatization of that history. That achievement and its internalization cannot but be seen as an ideological effort at maintaining the discourse in question, an effort quite similar to that of logical atomism, for example, to provide a new and more 'acceptable' foundation for an empirical science in logical and epistemological trouble. As here, Bacon had already explored that foundation in detail, if less formalistically than Whitehead, Russell, or Wittgenstein would do three centuries later. Russell's solution to the "Cretan liar"

39. Locke, Essay, 1.121–22, 211–12 (bk.II.i.2; xi.17).
paradox had been provided in essence from the very beginning; so, too, had the elements of psychoanalytic theory. Ignoring the history in question may well lead only into further traps: such as a repetition of the same process, mistaking a given discourse for something quite new and unfamiliar, deluding ourselves that we hear the voice of the lion. As Freud himself put it at the beginning of *The Future of an Illusion* (1927): “the less a man knows about the past and the present the more insecure must prove his judgement of the future.”

The internalization of a particular history, so apparent in psychoanalytic theory, was put in a different and more concrete way by Theodor Adorno, but with similar implications:

> Perhaps from very early on in the bourgeois era the experiment became a surrogate for authentic experience. . . . The cruelty, shrinking back from nothing, not even cruelty against oneself, is intimately connected with it—seeing how a person handles himself under such and such conditions, for example, when he is castrated or murdered, or how one himself reacts. The new anthropological type has become internally what earlier was true only of the method: the subject of natural science—of course also the object.40

Despite Adorno's own adoption of aspects of Freudian thought, and despite the extreme nature of the Nazi practices referred to here, the quotation takes us very precisely from Galileo's and Bacon's rejection of raw (“authentic”) experience, through the hypostatization of Method into objective Fact, to the internalization in psychoanalytic theory (for example) of the discursive history in which the original rejection was an essential element.

The retreat of patterning discourse is evidently not immediate. A hint of a lack or of an excess of meaning remains to vex the consolidation of the new discourse. As patterning fades before the elaboration of the analytico-referential, as it is occulted there together with the very elements that make the latter discourse possible, there still remain indications of a 'sense' that would escape the (intentional) meaningfulness of this new discourse. Kepler's dream can never be adequately circumscribed by the marginal analyses; there is always some excess. Cyrano is unable to conclude except with a complementarity of discourse, experiment, and reality that always remains am-

biguous. Bacon never ceases to emphasize the threat of the ‘old’ to the ‘new.’ The transparent discourse recorded in the second of Borges’s two books of this chapter’s epigraph poses a problem of decipherment: it is at worst impossible, or made possible at best by the imposition of an entirely arbitrary logic.

Within the functioning of the dominant discourse of analysis and reference, some such indication must necessarily persist. It is the consequence of such contradictions as that between stasis and process. That indication will be a kind of permanent ghost in the machine, posing a latent question to the signifying, denoting intentions of that discourse. It is the mark of a potential meaninglessness of discourse because it would be the contradiction of the logic of the dominant discourse in which it lies more or less hidden. That is not to say, of course, that a discourse of patterning could ever function again as such for us. The indication in question does not refer to any particular other discursive class. It is simply the index of the limits of discursive space: Wittgenstein’s lion. Indeed, it is not impossible that texts such as Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations, Derrida’s Dis­semination, or Joyce’s Finnegans Wake are the uncovering of such an index and the consequent attempt to expand or even go beyond the limits in some way: the result so far has been a ‘marginal’ discourse problematizing into a kind of regressive infinity the function of signs and the production of meaning.

To discover limits is not to go beyond them. It is significant in this regard that the principle ‘elements’ of Derridian discourse (again, for example), “margin,” “supplement,” “différance,” “deferral,” “ath­esis,” and so on can all be subsumed under a paradigm of “between” (entre). This is avowedly the case, of course. It is as though this discourse wished to expand the ‘space’ of the limits themselves, to enlarge indefinitely those “ideal points” in Freud that are also the “contact barriers” simultaneously preventing and allowing the operation of the ‘discourse of the unconscious’: preventing, because they obstruct, proscribe, censor; allowing, because it can function only by the differentiation that refraction and the change of medium make possible. ‘Space’ is of course the wrong term. “Between” is a better indication of the attempt.

The marginality is owing to the fact that while such texts may uncover the limits of discourse, they do not go beyond such uncovering (“deconstruction,” as Derrida has it)—indeed they claim that it is impossible to go beyond or to escape our habitual discursive space, because we are necessarily limited to questioning such ‘space’ in its own terms. Logic and history appear to be in some disagreement on
that point. Bacon, Descartes, Galileo, and their contemporaries had no hesitation in ascribing what they understood as a profound crisis in all spheres of human activity to a discursive enigma, to a problem of sense and meaningfulness. And they succeeded in creating, in what they understood as a new “logic” (or “method,” or “reason”), the conceptual space of the modern West. That was a momentous achievement, entirely justifying the exultation of its creators. If it has now arrived at the apparent limits of its efficacy, it is a problem for our time not at all dissimilar in its implications to those of the early seventeenth century. This is why we need to understand what made possible the foundation of what still remains the dominant discursive class. That conceptual sphere should be neither a cause for shame nor an object of scorn. While it worked, it did so superlatively. That it should have given rise to misuse was inevitable and is obviously endemic to any such system. That it should have reached the limits of its useful and progressive action should only encourage us to undertake a work parallel to that of its founders.

The development of analytico-referential discourse meant that it gradually came to oppose the discourse of patterning. It could not simply occlude it, because the discourse of experimentalism functions by the Law of the Excluded Middle, and whatever could not be accommodated to the ‘true’ was necessarily ‘false,’ and must be shown to be so: Bacon’s law of the exclusion of contrary instances. By that time patterning was no longer a practice but an ‘object’ classified as a ‘form of thought’: “ancient,” “primitive,” “mythical,” or later even, as we saw, “pathological.” Thus hypostatized it is no longer what was to be found in Kepler and his predecessors: it has become an object fit for analysis. Kepler’s ‘attempt’ to maintain the simultaneous functioning of both (the one now already partly resid­ual, the other already visibly developing) was doomed to failure, because the one puts the practice of the other fundamentally in question: what analysis cannot understand it must exclude. Pattern­ing, for it, is the voice of the lion. Patterning could accept, indeed precariously absorb, experimentalism—as Kepler’s attempt suggests. Experimentalism could not reciprocate. To adopt a metaphor whose prevalence we have seen: the father can accept the son, but the son quite rejects his progenitor.

Patterning itself becomes distanced as “mythical,” “primitive,” or “prescientific” thought. But some other indication of insufficiency in the visible dominant discourse model responds to the hegemony of the analytico-referential: perhaps what I referred to in Chapter 2 as the occulted dominant discourse practice. As a mark in discourse it is
the potential destruction of analysis. Like the residual mark of patterning, it was perhaps also present in Kepler’s excess, in Cyrano’s (and to some extent, Defoe’s) ambiguity, in Bacon’s threat. In our time it has become increasingly apparent. The simple imposition of dichotomy by which the analytico-referential eclipsed the discourse of patterning, naming it as an object of abuse, is increasingly impossible in our modernity—or post-modernity as some would have it, with something just like that impossibility in mind. Nor is it indifferent that the analytico-referential itself has increasingly become a similar object of abuse. Tesuaro’s critique has come into its own again, and the immanent questioning of the very possibility of making (any) sense (not of intending a particular meaning), which is the mark of the fallible limits of all discourse, has become a problem whose urgency has increased as the premises of experimentalism itself have been cast into doubt—and first of all in the very discourse of science from which the model was supposed to have been taken.

When Freud asks the question, at the beginning of chapter 7 of The Future of an Illusion, whether most if not all our cultural activities may not be “illusions” (beliefs motivated by wish-fulfillment), we have genuinely come full circle. We might well say that the question was hinted at but avoided three hundred years earlier (“occulted,” as I have been calling it): to the effect that all knowledge and belief, all human activity and social functioning may be but the creation of a discursive “space” providing, as Bacon put it, “a new face of things.” To pose the question clearly, as to incorporate the very occultations essential to the discursive inception, is to reveal the limits of that discourse—if the question can be answered (as it is by Freud) in the affirmative. Whether or not the “illusions” may be ‘correct,’ may correspond to a ‘reality,’ is both indifferent and unanswerable, because from within that discourse there would be no way of ‘knowing’ it, while from within some other discourse the concept of reality would be different. Whether or not the incorporation of occultations already proposes a passage into another discursive domain, only history will show. Freud may be right when he asserts at the end of the text just mentioned that the rule of “Logos” (a kind of science of which psychoanalysis would be exemplary) will indeed be “for a new generation of men” and foreseeable. The time is not yet that we could know it. But it is most certainly time to recognize the development of and a vital need for a new instauration—a matter the present volume has several times asserted. As Noam Chomsky has put it, perhaps with more vivacity and assuredly more contentiously:
Predatory capitalism created a complex industrial system and an advanced technology; it permitted a considerable extension of democratic practice and fostered certain liberal values, but within limits that are now being pressed and must be overcome. It is not a fit system for the mid-twentieth century. It is incapable of meeting human needs that can be expressed only in collective terms, and its concept of competitive man who seeks only to maximize wealth and power, who subjects himself to market relationships, to exploitation and external authority, is antihuman and intolerable in the deepest sense.41

We cannot yet know whether a new instauration has occurred or is in the process of occurring. That is indeed for history to show. Still, it is of some interest to note that at the same time as Lewis Carroll was basing much of the nonsense of Alice on games with the law tertium non datur, C. S. Peirce was seeking to constitute a semiotics on the basis of a tertiary relationship replacing the stasis of the true/false dichotomy with a continuous process of the production of sense. Nor is it an accident that both Peirce and Carroll use the paradox of Achilles and the Tortoise in order to argue process over discontinuity, the latter performing an infinite regression of sense that concludes with the deconstruction of the very property of the name according to which it is in a relation of denotation with the thing. We saw that this matter had had to be questioned during the very development of a discourse whose terms were supposed to be made meaningful by their denotation of objects all of whose properties were taken as independent of the names applied to them. We saw the “amazement” of Cyrano’s narrator when confronted with the idea that this might not be the case, and the use to which it was put by Crusoe. The question becomes crucial in Locke’s discussion of identity and his analysis of the functioning of words and concepts. Humpty Dumpty pours scorn on Alice for her belief in such denotation: “When I use a word . . . it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.” It is, as he puts it, merely a question of mastery: “They’ve a temper, some of them—particularly verbs: they’re the proudest—adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs—however, I can manage the whole lot of them! Impenetrability! That’s what I say!”42

Like others already mentioned, Peirce and Carroll represent a moment when the analytico-referential is itself being put in question. In 1898, the former made an analysis of mechanistic causal relations that undermines the accepted order of cause-effect much as quantum-mechanical principles were to do some thirty years later. In this regard it is a matter of some interest that the same passage in _Through the Looking-Glass_, where Alice is unable to fix the position of the “large bright thing” as it ascends from shelf to shelf in the Sheep’s shop to pass finally through the ceiling, should have been used to speak both of the fleeting frontier of discursive sense and of the impossibility in quantum mechanics “of pinning down the precise location of an electron in its path around the nucleus of an atom.”  

If some unfamiliar kind of discursive class is emerging here, it has yet to do so with any clarity. Perhaps it would involve the movement of what one might call a processive communicational network, where fixity, discrete denoted objects of knowledge, analytical knowledge itself, discursive transparency, objective grasp, absence of the ‘subject’ would all be strangers. How that could be translated into political and social terms remains to be seen. Be that as it may, the future of any such practice is itself problematical and, as in Freudianism and its avatars, the attempt must be in the nature of a wager with (and in) history.

The indication within discourse of an unfamiliar discursive class may be thought of as a ‘potentiality,’ not as anything like ‘an entity in its own right,’ even if it were only a conceptual one. It would be a mark of ‘displacement’ within the discourse where it occurs, and therefore not a ‘sign’ at all for that discourse. It is non-sensical because what it would signify (were it able to do so) could never ‘fit’ the other signifieds of the discourse, or how it would signify could not do

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44. I think here especially of certain of Michel Serres’s essays, in _Hermès_ (5 vols., Paris, 1968–80); _La naissance de la physique dans le texte de Lucrece_ (Paris, 1977); _Le parasite_ (Paris, 1979). Even if it eventually ‘fails,’ the attempt itself, with all the risks it entails (of becoming, for example, but an _effet de style_, a new mysticism or a kind of escapism), is admirable.
so. It thus becomes excessive. It can never be more than the possibility of meanings beyond the exclusive limits of the space of analyticoreferential discourse. It would break the logical space that constitutes the class of discourse within which it occurs. It is just the mark of a potentiality of sense that escapes particular utterance in discourse. But while it may be able to develop 'on its own' into some other discourse, it can be nothing more within analyticoreferential discourse, and those who dwell on it there will remain within the marginality of carnival questioners of the authority on which they depend. In the nature of the case the disappearance of the discourse of order will entail that of the carnival.

For we should not allow such marks to baffle us, as though we were thus placed before some irremediable complexity. Such a reaction is to ignore history. The process is not unique, even if its ongoing outcome may be. Worse still, to dwell in such bafflement may result in erasing history entirely. 'Literature,' for example, may come to be read as an eternal questioning of dominant discursive structures (a process that simply reinscribes the permanence of the human at the level of the questioning instead of at that of the dominance—whereas the deconstruction of which I am speaking wishes to make a more radical critique). In our own time much literary criticism has argued itself into such a position, so that from Plato to Dante, from Ariosto to Milton, from Sterne to Diderot and Rousseau, from Hegel to Flaubert and Mallarmé, from Lautréamont to Nietzsche and Joyce, from Stevens to Genet, not to mention Athenian tragedy and the Homeric epics, the great literary texts (it is said) are those that put in question the dominant structures of order at the very level of their signifying practice: literature undoes or deconstructs the self-sufficient security of authority.45

The detail of one example is enough, and I use it out of respect, not scorn, for its source. But I also use it because this particular case does indeed seem ambiguous, the author in question having occupied a historical position perhaps analogous to our own. Donald

45. One could mention here writings by such critics as Paul de Man, Stanley Fish, Geoffrey Hartman, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, J. Hillis Miller, Jeffrey Mehlman, Jean-Luc Nancy, Patricia Parker, Pietro Pucci, and others (not to mention Derrida himself). Despite their manifold differences and disagreements, I would suggest that as a whole this critical enterprise has taken the logic of carnival, so to speak, "au bout de son calepin," as Montaigne wrote in a not-altogether different context. I have discussed both the status of literature and the position of such critics in "The Environment of Literature and the Imperatives of Criticism," *Europa*, 4 (1981), 29–64. Among other things, I suggest such critics are in fact caught up in the same discursive space as the traditional critics whose practice they seek to "deconstruct." They are playing Gulliver to Crusoe.
Bouchard suggests that the final writings of Milton (Samson Agonistes and Paradise Regained) can be viewed as going beyond the progression suggested at the end of my Chapter 6. He sees them as overcoming a particular idea “of man as dreamed by Renaissance humanism,” and as a recognition that what has been thus overcome was but “the product of a particular aesthetic and historical compulsion.” He argues that in these late works Milton is not aggressively seeking to impose yet another version of man—his own—but rather to offer something else: “the undefined and the suspension of old beliefs and ways, and it is characterized by a waiting action in a space where God’s ways replace images of human desire.” Milton as a seventeenth-century Derrida. The poet would offer a space of possible choice. He would even have composed a ‘passing place’ taut with expectation, himself unable to make the passage, and seeking to ‘resolve’ indefinition, indecision, and suspension through an appeal to millenarist urges: a temptation not unfamiliar to us in own time (and Thomas More’s urge in the Dialogue of Comfort). Historically Milton may well have played such a role—the reading of history presented through the present work would suggest that someone is at least likely to have done so. But the role should not be ascribed indiscriminately to all so-called creative writers.

An understanding of the details of complexity is essential. Its achievement may require a momentary drawing back, a tensing and a collecting, but one cannot dwell in suspension, and such a gathering can only be so as to go beyond, with greater clarity and more usefully. The mark of its limits is of course fundamental in analyticoreferential discourse. But the limits thus marked and their diverse consequences are now to a degree familiar. To dwell in them is to turn in circles. Once that is understood, we must look elsewhere: not so much, or only, in the contradictions of the dominant model, perhaps, as in the previously occulted dominant discourse practice.

I would suggest that just as Machiavelli had made a particular conflictual and contractual political practice into a meaningful and inescapable class of analysis, so, too, did Marx make an entirely analogous gesture. The practice that became meaningful analysis has been called the “socioeconomic fact of relations of production,” but it is more than that; it is a particular interrelation of human productivity whose ramifications tend to have been placed so far at the service of a hegemony whose premises they actually put into serious

question. This is hardly the place to explore that question, but it is
worth noting that just as it was impossible after Machiavelli not to
take his kind of analysis into account (whether one agreed or dis­
agreed with what seemed to be its implications), so too after Marx.
What is in question, that is to say, is not a specific analysis or a
specific proposition, but a particular order of conceptualization, a
particular way of ascribing meaningfulness to human relations, and
a particular way in which, in turn, those relations produce meaning­
fulness. What is also in question, of course, is a new order of society.

We thus find ourselves in a situation akin to what faced Machiavel­
li’s successors, who, a century later, felt themselves confronted with a
crisis in all forms of discursive practice. The immediate reaction had
been the verbal outpouring of the humanist writers, the mixture of
“magic” and “science” of the humanist philosophers, the political
unbalance of civil and international war, the economic violence of
extreme inflation and widespread poverty and ‘unemployment.’
This time of disequilibrium was resolved during the following cen­
tury, by what Hiram Haydn and others have termed the “counter-
Renaissance,” by the imposition of what I am calling analytico-
referential discourse. Once that situation of crisis had been ‘identi­
fied’ (sufficiently widely experienced), the achievement of consolida­
tion and new dominance took another half-century. That is what we
have been following in a particular type of discourse (the literary
one of science fictions and utopias) that is perfectly characteristic of
the analytico-referential. I would suggest that we now find ourselves
in a moment precisely analogous to that occupied by Bacon and
Descartes, Galileo, Milton, and Hobbes. They were preceded by the
humanists. We are preceded perhaps by their analogue: from Peirce
to Freud, from the existentialists to the “new philosophers,” from
Heidegger to Derrida. The response of the seventeenth-century sci­
entists was not a marginalization, nor was it an attempt to take up
questions the humanists had been unable to decide. The critical
problems were not solved—‘answered,’ that is to say—but were sim­
ply rendered irrelevant by first understanding and then leaving be­
hind the discourse that had earlier been dominant but whose internal
contradictions and inescapable limits had now become insufficient to
the development of human relations. A new class of discourse was
already becoming available, one which was both productive of and
produced by such development.