CHAPTER 3

The Dialogical Context

In the last chapter we saw how the duplicitous theory of language is situated in the narrow context of the theory of signs. In this chapter we will see how the duplicitous theory of language is situated in the broad context of the human dialogue in general. In this chapter we will look down into the depths of the human dialogue in two different senses. We will look at what would conventionally be called the ancient historical roots of human dialogue and we will also look at what would conventionally be called the underlying psychic roots of the human dialogue. Or in other words, we will look into the diachronic and the synchronic depths of the human dialogue. In terms of linguistic theory these two dimensions of language are technically known as the syntagmatic dimension and the paradigmatic dimension.

Before we venture into the depths of the human dialogue, let us briefly review our position in the theory of signs. The basic tenant of the theory of signs is that there is a difference between a thing when it is regarded simply as it is and the same thing when it is taken as a sign of something else. The difference is not in the thing, but in the way the thing is framed in the mind of the observer. In the first case we frame our perception as if to say “A is A” and in the second case “A represents B.” In the first case we take A as it is but in the second case we take A as a representation of something else. So the crux of the difference is in the verb that describes how we take it: “is” vs. “represents.”

Now the verb “is” is a special type of verb. In grammatical terms it is not a predicate, but is rather the copula. That is, it does not set a situation in motion by relating two different things, but rather it links two aspects of the same thing together. And in this case, where the two are exactly the same thing, A is A, the copular function is tautological. Thus “A is A” does nothing at all. But when we predicate A of something else, as in “A represents B”, we divide between two aspects of the same thing, i.e., we cut it. And so, the first way of framing the situation is non-dualistic, the second way of framing the situation is dualistic.

As we have seen, the first situation, where the observer simply observes the thing as it is, has been called “mirror-like perception.” The idea is that the image of the thing is to the mind of the observer as the image of the thing would be to a mirror. That is, the appearance of the image is merely an epiphenomenal event. Nothing happens to the mirror and nothing happens to the observer. In short, nothing happens. The pragmatic vacuity of the non-dual situation has been the central theme of
Buddhist dialogue for more than two thousand years. For example, it was graphically expressed in an old Zen poem (from Suzuki 1974, p. 132) that fits particularly well with the imagery we have been using:

The bamboo-shadows move over the stone steps
as if to sweep them, but no dust is stirred;
The moon is reflected deep in the pool, but the
water shows no trace of its penetration.

In this situation, the image has no significance. The image is not taken as a sign. So the image of the thing is nothing more than an image. And as an image it is an epiphenomenon, a shadow, a mere play of light, or sound. As such, the image of the thing is an entirely dependent phenomenon, so when the thing goes away or when the light goes away or when the angle of perception changes, the image goes away, and there is no trace of it left behind in the mirror, or in the water, or in the mind. This aspect of the non-dual situation was graphically expressed in another old Japanese poem, attributed to the Buddhist nun, Chiyono. (Reps, p. 31)

In this way and that I tried to save the old pail.
Since the bamboo strip was weakening and about to break
Until at last the bottom fell out.
No more water in the pail!
No more moon in the water!

This is the sense in which this kind of perception has been likened to the reflection of an image in a mirror, or in the water, or in the mind. In other words, the image has no substance or value, so the image is neither good nor bad, so it does not set in motion a chain of implications. And so the image does not call for any response or reaction. In short, the image is not taken as significant. It is not a sign.

But if the image of the thing is taken as a sign, then “taking” sets in motion a chain of implications and subsequent reactions which lead to something else and away from the image of the thing and from the thing itself. It is in reference to this departure that Peirce characterized the logical operation of taking an image as a sign as a “cut.” To take something as a sign is to cut it apart from its own intrinsic being. The thing comes to take on a derivative value as a function of the other thing of which it is a sign, and it ceases to be valued for what it is. And thus the situation of the sign, which is derived as a function of the cut, is duplicitous as between the thing qua thing and the thing qua sign. In this way the cut engenders the duplicitous frame of reference in which the sign has its duplicitous being. Thus the realm of signs is duplicitous, which is to say that the very geometry of the space in which signs have their being is duplicitous. And, of course, all signs are duplicitous. And, since language is a system of signs, language is duplicitous. That is how the fact that language is duplicitous fits into the theory of signs.

Now let us turn to the larger dialogical context. I want to show how the idea that language is duplicitous is situated in the fabric of the ongoing human dialogue, which includes the historical dia-
logue, the scientific dialogue, the dialogue of the human science, and the linguistic dialogue. Obviously, it would be impossible to examine the whole of the fabric of the human dialogue, but for my purposes it is sufficient to show that the same basic pattern keeps showing up over and over again in different times, in different cultures, in different intellectual frames of reference.

There are two, confluent, purposes for showing how the present argument fits in the larger dialogical context. One purpose is to demonstrate that, as I have repeatedly asserted, the idea that language is duplicitous is not new. To this end I will discuss various kinds of evidence which shows that the three basic premises I have laid down - the premise that there is a generic human problem, the premise that language is the crux of the generic human problem, and the premise that language is problematic because it is duplicitous - have been discovered and described and explained over and over again independently in different ways in different intellectual frameworks in different languages and in different cultures at different times throughout history. I will cite a variety of texts, some ancient and some not quite so ancient, which speak to the point I am trying to make in this book. In some cases these texts speak to the point with the force of rational argument, in some cases they speak to the point with the force of ancient authority, but in all cases the texts speak to the point with the force of manifestation through the very fabric of the texts themselves.

Let me put it another way. The point of this book is that language is duplicitous. But another way of stating the same point is this: Human dialogue is duplicitous. Thus I am saying that all dialogue, small or large, old or new, playful or serious, is a fabric that is woven by the interplay of the conflict between the desire to sustain the symbolic facade and the inescapable fact that, in spite of the fact that language is duplicitous, all language, and all behavior, necessarily conveys truth. If you look at it right. On one hand, all dialogue takes place in language, so all dialogue manifests and thus testifies to the duplicity of language, explicitly or implicitly, whether it intends to or not. And on the other hand, in regard to the question of the duplicity of language, it is impossible not to speak the truth. And in general it is impossible not to speak the truth. A true statement conveys the truth, and a false statement conveys the truth, if you look at it right. Thus in a nutshell:

ALL DIALOGUE IS TRUE.

If you look at it right. And at the same time, all dialogue can be misunderstood. If you look at it right.

So the human problem, contra Diogenes, who you will recall searched for someone who spoke the truth by means of a lantern in broad daylight, is not to find someone who speaks the truth, as if truth were rare and difficult to find, but to figure out how to swim in the dialogical river of virtual truth in which we find ourselves being swept along. Diogenes’ ridiculous error is one of fundamental principle, which should be obvious to anyone: you cannot find the light in the light by means of the light. At least the principle was obvious to Mumon, one of the patriarchs of Chinese Buddhism, who expressed it in a lecture he gave in 1228 A.D. (Reps, p. 88) as follows. (p. 96)

It is too clear and so it is hard to see.
A dunce once searched for a fire with a lighted lantern.
Had he known what fire was,
He could have cooked his rice much sooner.

Or to put it in terms of the theory of signs, light cannot function as a sign of light in the medium of light. In the medium of light only non-light, i.e. darkness, can function as a sign of light. From this it
follows that, if we insist on trying to find the light in the medium of light by means of signs of light, then we must not look at the light itself, but at the shadows cast by the light. Therefore, while Diogenes might have ridiculed the Greeks for reading about the suffering of Odysseus while ignoring their own suffering, that is precisely what we are going to do in the first part of this chapter.

Thus the various pieces of dialogue that I will cite below speak to the most fundamental question being addressed here, which is this: Should language be framed, in accord with the conventional view, as a physical phenomenon that takes place in the chronological (old/new) paradigm? Or should language be framed, as I am arguing here, as a duplicitous epiphenomenon that takes place in the veridical (true/false) paradigm?

The other purpose for looking at how our argument fits in the larger dialogical context is to flesh out our understanding of language and of the duplicity of language. In as much as the texts I will discuss below manifest and/or explain the duplicity of language, they contribute to our understanding on the several different levels mentioned above.

The Syntagmatic Dimension of the Human Dialogue

I will begin with a discussion of a wonderful book entitled *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam* which was written by Barbra Tuchman. In this book, she argues as a historian on the basis of historical evidence that a perverse tendency to behave foolishly has been manifest in mankind throughout history. And we will pay particular attention to her explanation of this persistent problem, which she couched in terms of the ancient semi-mythological story of the Trojan horse. We will consider this ancient Greek story in some detail, as well as Plato’s allegory of the cave, in order to show that these ancient Greek texts take the same position in regard to language and the human situation as we are trying to establish here.

And then we will look in the same spirit at the Bible, not as a religious text, but as an ancient Hebrew text, more or less contemporaneous with the texts of the ancient Greek poets. We will see that this ancient text also takes the same basic position in regard to language and the human situation.

The March of Folly

Barbara Tuchman’s survey of *The March of Folly* through history and across cultures testifies to the validity of the basic premises of our point of view. She shows that history testifies in the affirmative to the question of whether there is a generic human problem. The whole point of *The March of Folly*, as well as much of her earlier work, is to assert and give evidence from various cultures and across the broad sweep of history that there is and has always been a chronic and universal human problem. She refers to the problem variously as “folly”, “perversity”, and “wooden-headedness”, or more explicitly, “the pursuit of policy contrary to self-interest”.

In regard to the question, “What is the root of human problem?”, her answer is not so explicit and not very satisfactory. She gives two kinds of answers, the one we will be most interested in is veiled in ancient Greek semi-mythological imagery. In these imaginary or metaphorical terms, her answer is that the Trojan Horse is the prototype of the human problem. Although this is not the kind of answer which we are conditioned to look for in this modern scientific era,¹ as it happens, though
The Syntagmatic Dimension of the Human Dialogue

not by coincidence, this ancient imagery still resonates with our unconscious awareness of the roots of the human problem. We realize that the story of the Trojan Horse has the ring of truth; it is this realization which has caused this ancient image to retain its vitality even in the modern mind, and it is this realization which caused Tuchman to choose this image as the prototype of the human problem. In as much as the resonance of the image of the Trojan Horse is a function of its underlying harmony with the deepest roots of the problem of human folly, it can be exploited as a vehicle by which we can metaphorically penetrate the veil of obscurity surrounding the human problem and get at the root of the human problem. In other words, although her answer is merely an image, it is an image that is deeply insightful, if you understand it properly. So when we have prepared our position sufficiently, we will return to use the image of Trojan horse as the strategic machine by which we will expose and attack the root of the human problem. In the meantime, let us consider Barbara Tuchman's testimony as to the historical dimension of The March of Folly.

There is “A phenomenon noticeable throughout history regardless of place or period,” she declares in her opening line, which “is the pursuit by governments of policies contrary to their own interests.” A little later (p. 6) she reiterates the theme in other words.

Folly's appearance is independent of era or locality; it is timeless and universal, although the habits and beliefs of a particular time and place determine the form it takes. It is unrelated to type of regime: monarchy, oligarchy and democracy produce it equally. Nor is it peculiar to nation or class.

We should point out that, although she focuses upon the governmental level of human behavior, she does not intend to imply that the persistent march of folly is only a function of government and is not found in individuals. The evidence that she does not hold this view is two-fold. First, in at least one place (p. 6) she presupposes that folly is an individual trait.

It may be asked why, since folly or perversity is inherent in individuals, should we expect anything else of governments? The reason for concern is that folly in government has more impact on more people than individual follies, and therefore governments have a greater duty to act according to reason.

Second, as we all know, in many cases there is no practical difference between the individual level of behavior and the governmental level of behavior, because in some cases an individual is the government, and Tuchman cites several such cases. And in other cases, such as the United States, the head of the government is an individual who can commit the whole body politic to foolish policies. She cites the folly of Charles XII of Sweden, Napoleon, and Hitler, all of whom committed the blunder of invading Russia “despite the disasters incurred by each predecessor”. She also cites the individual/governmental folly of Montezuma, Chaing Kai-shek, Mao Tse-tung, Rehoboam (the King of Israel who succeeded Solomon), among others. A notable example on a more personal level is the folly of Philip III, King of Spain,

who is said to have died of a fever he contracted from sitting too long near a hot brazier, helplessly overheating himself because the functionary whose duty it was to remove the brassier, when summoned, could not be found.

(p. 8)

1. In the physical sciences we think of cause and effect, but in the human sciences, or at least in the duplicitous human sciences, we think variously of type and token, or prototype and type, or precedent and subsequent. Thus in explaining some characteristic of a dialogue we do not say “A caused B”, but rather “B conformed to prototype A”, or “B was governed by precedent A.” The symbolic realm is a matter of form and not substance, so symbolic things are not caused, but rather things conform.
Thus, although she recognizes that there is human folly on the individual level, she chose to focus on folly at the government level because she considered it to be more egregious, and thus of greater dramatic force.

In the course of developing her argument, as we have mentioned, she cites examples from various corners of the world, but the main body of evidence is drawn from the history of the European cultural sphere beginning with the Trojan wars and ending with the American folly in Vietnam (hence the subtitle). I will not attempt to reiterate this evidence, for I could not do it justice. But I can say that in my view the depth and scope and persistence of the historical march of folly, as she lays it out, compels one to conclude that there is a chronic human problem. The folly of man as it has unfolded in the history of western civilization (not that it is limited to western civilization) could not be more concisely and forcefully expressed than this:

For 2,500 years, political philosophers from Plato and Aristotle through Thomas Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Jefferson, Madison and Hamilton, Nietzsche and Marx, have devoted their thinking to the major issues of ethics, sovereignty, the social contract, the rights of man, the corruption of power, the balance between freedom and order. Few, except Machiavelli, who was concerned with government as it is, not as it should be, bothered with mere folly, although folly has been a chronic and pervasive problem. (p. 8)

Here we see the greatest folly of all: that so little effort has been expended on most dominant and most tragic problem of the human situation, which is that “folly has been a chronic and pervasive problem”. And thus we have Barbara Tuchman's answer to our first question: Yes, there is a generic human problem.

Unfortunately, when it comes to the next question, the question of how to make sense of this generic human problem, and how to rectify it, her bold and forceful argument gets bogged down in the quagmire of conventional thinking. I remember vividly how disappointed I felt in first reading her book, after having been enthused by her sweeping survey of the march of folly throughout history, only to be disappointed by her obviously superficial explanations and by the depressing moral conclusion she came to. The only promising note in regard to explanation, as I have mentioned, was her suggestion that the Trojan Horse is the prototype of the human problem, but such an explanation, being symbolic, is so impractical as to be useless, unless of course one is able to appreciate the subversive implications that are hidden in that symbol.

Before we get to those hidden implications, let me first illustrate the superficiality of her intended explanation. In one place she says that

wooden-headedness...consists in assessing a situation in terms of preconceived fixed notions while ignoring or rejecting any contrary signs. It is acting according to wish while not allowing oneself to be deflected by the facts. (p. 7)

This analysis of the human problem is valid, but it does not get one very far in understanding the problem, because the question then becomes why do people use preconceived notions and why do they ignore or reject contrary signs and why do they prefer wish to fact. In the end she reverts to the standard conventional explanation of human folly.

If pursuing disadvantage after the disadvantage has become obvious is irrational, then rejection of reason is the prime characteristic of folly. (p. 380)

So then the question is why man persistently rejects reason? Her answer is because reason is more often than not overpowered by non-rational human frailties - ambition, anxiety, status-seeking, face-saving, illusions, self-delusions, fixed prejudices.
Thus she explains man's folly in terms of the simpleminded conventional conceptualization of a conflict between the forces of good and the forces of evil in man's nature: rationality and reason are the good side of man, the side that leads to right thinking and right behavior, whereas feelings, emotions, desires, etc., the bodily urges, are the evil side, the side that leads wrong thinking and wrong behavior. And in terms of this dynamic, she can explain man's inclination to folly as a consequence of the fact that the evil side of the conflict generally dominates. On one side, she says,

> Although the structure of human thought is based on logical procedure from premise to conclusion, it is not proof against the frailties and the passions.

And this is so, presumably, because the frail side of man, the sick side, the emotional side, is the stronger. Even Plato, she says, in spite of his desire to think otherwise, ultimately had to acknowledge that his fellow-beings were anchored in the life of feelings jerked like puppets by the strings of desires and fears that made them dance. When desire disagrees with the judgment of reason, he said, there is a disease of soul... (p. 381)

So her explanation not only does not bring us any closer to understanding the generic human problem which she so provocatively exposed, but it leads to the dismal conclusion that we cannot reasonably expect much improvement. We can only muddle on as we have done in those same three or four thousand years, through patches of brilliance and decline, great endeavor and shadow. (p. 387)

> In sum then, her conclusion is that there is a human problem, which is the problem of chronic and pervasive folly, but three thousand years of history prove that we can not do anything about it. This is tantamount to concluding that the question of what the human problem is is unanswerable. Thus she concludes, disappointingly, in agreement with the conventional view that, unlike the rest of the universe, the human problem is incoherent, lawless, unintelligible. Therefore, as unpleasant as it is, we must submit to the burden of our human nature, which is the chronic tendency to folly, wooden-headedness, and perversity. We are doomed to an endless river of suffering, striving, and failing.

**Socrates’ Allegory of the Shadows in the Cave**

But speaking of shadows, as she did in the above quote, I should like to mention, by way of transition to the more optimistic theory implicit in the story of the Trojan Horse, that the above dismal theory of man's situation, and the dismal conclusion which follows from it, seems to be inconsistent with the theory of man's situation as portrayed in the famous parable of the cave in Book VII of Plato's *Republic*. I repeat and incorporate the essence of this allegory here as a way of looking at man's situation which counterbalances the foregoing and provides a more satisfactory framework for making sense of the human problem. Plato has Socrates speaking in the following dialogue (quoted from *Plato* translated by Jowett and edited by Louis Loomis, Book VII beginning on page 398):

> And now let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened. Behold! human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.
I see.

And do you see men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall? Some of them talking, others silent.

You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.

Like ourselves, and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?

...To them the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images.

...And now look again, and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive someone saying to him that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision - what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them, - will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?

...And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take refuge in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?

...And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he is forced into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be pained and irritated? When he approaches the light his eyes will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all of what are not called realities.

He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. And first he will see the shadows best, next the reflections of men and other objects in the water, and then the objects themselves; then he will gaze upon the light of the moon and the stars and the spangled heaven; and he will see the sky and the stars by night better than the sun or the light of the sun by day?

...Last of all he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is.

... And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them?

...And if they were in the habit of conferring honors among themselves on those who were quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honors and glories, or envy the possessors of them?

...Imagine once more such a one coming suddenly out of the sun to be replaced in his old situation; would he not be certain to have his eyes full of darkness?

...And if there were a contest, and he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak, and before his eyes had become steady (and the time which would be needed to acquire this new habit of sight might be very considerable), would he not be ridiculous? Men would say of him that up he went and down he came without his eyes; and that it was better not even to think of ascending; and if any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would put him to death.

Without getting tangled up in the details of Socrates' allegory, let us try to briefly interpret it in terms of our basic framework. With regard to our first question, it is clear that Socrates agrees that there is a
human problem. And with regard to our second question, it is also clear that he disagrees with Tuchman and the conventional theory of man's folly: He does not think that the human problem is a function of a fundamental conflict in man's nature between good and evil, nor a conflict between rationality and emotion, nor a conflict between mind and body. Quite the contrary, Socrates would say that these conflicts are not the cause of man's erroneous thinking, but that they arise as the results of erroneous thinking. The root of man's problem as portrayed in Socrates' allegory is not conflict, but error: the error of preferring to look at images and at shadows of images, instead of looking at the real thing.

According to Socrates' allegory, man's chronic error does take place in the framework of a certain kind of conflict, but one must take great care in thinking about this conflict, because it is a very strange kind of conflict. What is at issue is the relationship between shadow and substance, between the image of something and the thing itself, or, in terminology that brings it into the framework of the theory of signs, between sign and referent. So one must bear in mind that these two different types of things could not possibly be in conflict in reality, for one is a real phenomenon while the other is merely an epi-phenomenon. In general the second is totally subordinate to the first i.e, the shadow is subordinate to the substance, the image to the thing itself, the sign to the referent. What makes it a relationship of conflict is that the two things struggle for dominance in the mind's eye, which can only have one of them in view at a time, because the mind's eye is monocular by nature, abhorring duality as vehemently as physical nature abhors a vacuum. And what makes this such a strange kind of conflict is that it is asymmetrical, whereas the normal kind of conflict is symmetrical. In the normal kind of conflict the same kinds of things struggle with each other on a more or less equal footing, as for example, two wrestlers or two boxers or two football teams or two armies or two goats or two lawyers, etc. In terms of the usual idea of conflict, it would make no sense to oppose two totally different kinds of things such as a lawyer and a goat. In the usual idea of opposition, tomorrow can be opposed to today, but tomorrow cannot be opposed to hunger. As Napoleon said, you cannot kill an idea with a cannon. But this sort of asymmetry is the essence of the kind of conflict which Plato posits as the root of man's folly; shadow and substance, image and object, sign and referent, are totally different kinds of things. So if we are to think of them in terms of opposition and conflict, they cannot be conceptualized as being opposed in the usual frame of reference.

It is impossible that these things could be opposed in nature; how can a shadow be in conflict with anything of substance? In what sense can a shadow struggle with substance? And if not in nature, then where are they opposed? Where does this conflict take place? It takes place in the mind's eye. The conflict is only possible because, in some sense or other, a person can take an image as reality. Then that image acquires at least a conditional kind of reality, and thus it can be in conflict with what is unconditionally real. Thus in the mind's eye an image can attain hypothetical reality or imaginary reality or virtual reality, all of which are, of course, not reality at all. Therefore, in order to make sense of this sort of opposition and conflict properly, we must develop a concept of opposition and conflict which is appropriate for this very strange kind of hypothetical, or imaginary, or false, reality. Of course we already have the perfect concept at hand, which is embodied in the word “duplicity”. And now that we have come to the concept of duplicity at the root of the problem of human folly as portrayed in Socrates' allegory, the stage is set for us to consider the story of the Trojan Horse as a symbol of the root of man’s folly.
The Trojan Horse

Not only does Socrates' allegory of the cave contradict Tuchman's explanation of the cause of human folly and her dismal conclusion as to the hopelessness of man's situation, but she also indirectly contradicts herself in the following sense. As I mentioned above, she gives two different kinds of explanations, the useless and dismal one outlined above comes at the end of her account of The March of Folly, and she has a completely different kind of explanation at the beginning. She begins her account of The March of Folly by recounting the ancient Greek story of the Wooden Horse, which she posits as the beginning of human folly, not as the cause of folly in the usual scientific sense, but as the prototype of folly.¹

Although this story is one of the most famous stories throughout the Western cultural sphere, for the benefit of those who have only a vague idea of the story, and for the benefit of those who have never heard the story, and because we want to be sure we all have the same idea in mind when we use the Wooden Horse as the typological explanation of human folly, we will recount the basic points of the story as told by Tuchman. This is all the more advisable because the idea that there is “a” story is something of a convenient fiction; As is always the case with traditional phenomena, such as folk tales, mythology, etc. there are always a seemingly endless collection of variants around a core idea, and we want to sort through the variants so that we can focus on the core idea.

The situation in which the Wooden Horse comes into play is as follows. In ancient times (or equivalently “Once upon a time...”, since it does not matter at all whether these things actually happened or not) there had been a long and bitter war between the Greeks and the Trojans. After ten years of indecisive fighting, the Greeks, who were laying siege to the city of Troy, lost their will to fight when Paris, the Prince of Troy, killed Achilles, who was the Greek’s greatest fighter. The Greeks wanted to give up and go home when

Odysseus proposes a last effort to take Troy by a stratagem - the building of a wooden horse large enough to hold twenty... armed men concealed inside. His plan is for the rest of the army to pretend to sail for home while in fact hiding their ships offshore behind the island of Tenedos. The Wooden Horse will carry and inscription dedicating it to Athena as the Greek’s offering in the hope of her aid in ensuring their safe return home. The figure is intended to excite the veneration of the Trojans, to whom the horse is a sacred animal and who may well be moved to conduct it to their own temple of Athena within the city. If so, the sacred veil said to surround and protect the city will be torn apart, the concealed Greeks will emerge, open the gates to their fellow, summoned by signal, and seize their final opportunity. (p. 38)

When the Trojans discovered one morning that the Greeks had departed and left this Wooden Horse behind, they were divided as to how to evaluate the situation. One party, the majority, taking the situation at face value, saw that the Greeks had gone, and thus assumed that they had given up. And taking the Wooden Horse and the inscription on the horse at face value, they believed the horse to have been constructed for the purpose declared in the inscription; they believed that it was a sacred image dedicated to Athena, and therefore, they felt obliged to bring the Horse to the temple of Athena in the city, even though it was so large that

¹. What is meant by “cause” in the usual scientific sense is physical cause. That is, the scientific idea of cause is as cause is conceptualized in the prototypical science, which is the science of physics. Hence scientific cause is conventionally equated with physical cause, the prototypical kind of cause. Nevertheless, there is nothing mysterious about this other kind of causality. The kind of “causality” that a prototype exercises is well known, since it is the meaning of the word “prototype”. It is also called “stereotype”, “preconceived idea”, “prejudice”, etc., or from a different point of view, “tradition”, “convention”, etc.
On the Duplicity of Language (Draft of 10/14/99)

The Syntagmatic Dimension of the Human Dialogue

the walls must be breached or, in another version, the lintel of the Scean Gate removed to allow it to enter. This is the first warning omen, for it has been prophesied that if ever the Scean lintel is taken down, Troy will fall.

And this superficial party persisted in this foolish view in spite of this portentous omen, and numerous other contrary indications, not least of which was the fact that in those days Greeks were famous as liars and bearers of false gifts.

Then comes the famous warning of Laocoon,

Either the Greeks are hiding in this monster,
Or it is some trick of war, a spy or engine,
To come down on the city. Tricky business
Is hiding in it. Do not trust it, Trojans;
Do not believe this horse. Whatever may be,
I fear the Greeks, even when bringing gifts.

Then he hurled his spear at the Horse, which caused those within to moan in fear. But just as Laocoon was on the verge of convincing the majority, the second layer of the Greek stratagem unfolded.

Guards drag in Sinon, an ostensibly terrified Greek who pretends he has been left behind through the enmity of Odysseus, but who has actually been planted by Odysseus as part of his plan. Asked by Priam to tell the truth about the Wooden Horse, Sinon swears it is a genuine offering to Athena which the Greeks deliberately made so huge so the Trojans would not take it into their city because that would signify an ultimate Trojan victory. (p. 40, italics in the original)

This doubly duplicitous framing of the situation undermined Laocoon's warning, and just as the crowd was wavering between the truth and the fraud, the most mysterious and decisive event took place. Just as Laocoon asserts that Sinon's story is just another part of the Greek trick,

two horrible serpents rise in gigantic black spirals out of the waves and advance across the sands...As the crowd watches paralyzed in terror, they make straight for Laocoon and his two young sons, “fastening their fangs in those poor bodies,” coiling around the father's waist and neck and arms and, as he utters strangled inhuman cries, crush him to death. The appalled watchers are now nearly all moved to believe that the ghastly event is Laocoon's punishment for sacrilege in striking what must indeed be a sacred offering.

By this the majority were persuaded to take the horse at face value and they set about to bring it into the city. But there were still more warnings.

Four times at the Gate's threshold, the Horse comes to a halt and four times from the interior the clang of arms sounds, yet though the halts are an omen, the Trojans press on, “heedless and blind with frenzy”. They breach the walls and the Gate, unconcerned at thus tearing the sacred veil because they believe its protection is no longer needed.

That night they celebrated their symbolic victory over the Greeks, which had been symbolically enacted by laying claim to ownership of and incorporating the foreign symbol by bringing it within their walls, by feasting and drinking wine.

The final warning of their folly was given by Cassandra that night.

“O miserable people,” she now cries, “poor fools, you do not understand at all your evil fate.” They are acting senselessly, she tells them, toward the very thing “that has your destruction within it.”

But they do not heed her warning, and they finally suffer the consequences of their gullibility.

Heavy with wine, the Trojans sleep. Sinon creeps from the hall and opens the trap door of the Horse to release Odysseus and his companions, some of whom, cooped up in the blackness, have been weeping under the tension.
and “trembling in their legs.” They spread through the city to open the remaining gates while Sinon signals to the ships with a flaming torch. In ferocious triumph when the forces are joined, the Greeks fall upon the sleeping foe, slaughtering right and left, burning houses, looting treasure, raping the women... The tragedy is total... Sacked and burned, Troy is left in ruins. Mount Ida groans, the river Zanthus weeps. (p. 42)

There we have the tragic story of the Wooden Horse, which is, in Tuchman's words, “the culminating instrumentality for the fall”, “the device that finally accomplished the fall of Troy”. And looking back over the whole story, looking at the beginning from the end, we can see that what makes it so bitterly tragic is not just that the Trojans suffered defeat, though, of course, that is lamentable. Nor is the most bitter part of the tragedy the fact that they brought on their own defeat by their own gullibility, though that is galling enough in itself. The cruelest ironic twist in the stupidity of the Trojans is that they had already won the war at the very beginning of the story, before the Wooden Horse came into play; but in their blind folly they betrayed the victory which was ready to fall into their hands. After ten years of war, the Greeks had been unable to penetrate the sacred veil that protected the city of Troy, they had been unable to breach the walls by dint of force, and they had suffered grievously trying, so the Greeks were ready to give up and go home; but then, with victory in hand, the Trojans subverted their invulnerable position by taking the enemy's gift at face value. They believed their enemy's signs and symbols. They believed their enemy's representations. They swallowed his story, and thus, in Lincoln's apt perversion of the traditional aphorism, they managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

And the final twist of the knife is they need not have done anything at all to have gained victory. In fact, doing nothing would have ensured victory, but then, as Sinon cleverly pointed out to them, there would not have been a symbolic representation of their victory. Thus the crux of their error is that they wanted so much to have a tangible, visible, symbolic display of their victory, that they were willing to sacrifice victory so that they could enact a display of victory. Thus in the final analysis, they exchanged the symbol of victory for the reality of victory. This is the crux of the prototype of human folly, as portrayed in the story of the Wooden Horse.

Now that we have the whole story laid out before us, the question is how shall we take this story? Shall we take it at face value, as the Trojans did? There is no question that it is a thundering good drama, full of violence and intrigue, but it also has “redeeming social value”, as the censors put it, the blood and treachery being tastefully played out in the context of subtle twists of irony and mystery, nobility and majesty, heroism and stupidity, etc. Thus, it would make a good movie, and it has. For this reason, we could take the story as being intended for our pleasure, as the Trojans took the Horse.

But that would be an error, because the point of the story of the Wooden Horse is, and has always been, not just to recount an ancient and/or mythological drama for the sake of entertainment. The point of the story is to convey a lesson in the form of a prototype of human folly, or in more explicit terms, to convey a prototype of the error which lies at the root of the chronic human tendency to pursue policy that is contrary to self-interest.

To take this story as entertainment, or, for that matter, as history, or as Greek mythology, or as a story about Trojans and Greeks, or as a story about the Wooden Horse, or about a real horse, or as a story about war, etc., would be to commit the Trojan error, which is the error of taking images and symbols at face value. It is, of course, true that this story touches upon all of these things, but it does so just as the Wooden Horse touches upon horses. That is, this story is not a historical object or a mythological object or a Greek object, but a symbolic object. The story is a symbolic object every bit as much as the Wooden Horse was a symbolic object, but it differs from the symbolic object offered
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The basic point of this story is that when dealing with signs and symbols, we must bear in mind that there are things going on at two levels: there is a superficial level and a deeper level. While the Wooden Horse does refer to horses, that is only its superficial function, which is technically known as “semantics”. To see the deepest function of signs and symbols, one must look at them at the level of strategic function, which is technically known as “pragmatics”, where the question is not, “What does a sign refer to?”, or “What does it mean?”, but “What does it do?”. At the pragmatic level, the Wooden Horse was intended to be an instrument by which the Greeks could breach the walls of the city with guile, where physical force had proven inadequate.

In conclusion, then, in the context of the story, the point of the Wooden Horse is that the Trojans were not aware of the fact that the Wooden Horse was both a symbol and a duplicitous stratagem, until it had already robbed them of victory and brought about their destruction. In the broader context of real life, the story about the Wooden Horse is itself a Wooden Horse, being both a symbol and a duplicitous stratagem, intended to surreptitiously convey the warning message within our gates that all symbols are duplicitous stratagems. Thus the following is the key point in the story of the Wooden Horse:

THE WOODEN HORSE IS A SYMBOL OF THE SYMBOL

Closing the circle of reasoning then, if the story of the Wooden Horse is a prototype of human folly, that is, a prototype of the human tendency to error by adopting policy contrary to self-interest, then the symbol is the device by which that error is implemented. Therefore, if we want to understand and rectify the human tendency to error, then we ought to heed the warning implications of the Wooden Horse, and acting contrary to conventional wisdom, we ought to look a gift horse in the mouth. We ought to look under the surface of the symbol by trying to figure out what the symbol is made of, trying to figure out what function it is intended to perform, and how it works. And we ought to frame our investigation with the presumption that the symbol is like the Wooden Horse in that there is something nefarious going under the surface. To put it in the technical terms I am trying to establish here, we ought to frame our investigation of the symbol with the assumption that the symbol is a duplicitous stratagem.

Before we quit the story of the Wooden Horse, we ought to make mention of the fact that there are numerous other elements in the story the pragmatic implications of which it would be interesting and instructive to explore by way of fleshing out our understanding of the story as the prototype of human folly, such as the snakes, the reverse psychology of Sinon, the “blind frenzy” with which the Trojans conveyed the Wooden Horse into their city, etc. Unfortunately, we cannot pursue all of the threads of the story here, but there is one element which is crucial to the understanding of any story, which I think therefore we ought to make clear, and that is the question of who the surreptitious warning message conveyed by the story of the Wooden Horse is aimed at. To whom is the story addressed?

As we saw in our discussion of the point of the Wooden Horse, it is an error to assume that Wooden Horses and other signs perform just one function. In the context of the story, the Wooden Horse is a representation of a horse, but at a deeper level it also is a representation of victory, and at a
yet deeper level it is a nefarious strategic instrument. In relation to our context some thousands of years after the events, the Wooden Horse is a representation of the symbol, but it is also a nefarious strategic instrument, in a different sense as we explained above.

So too, it is an error to assume that such a story has just one addressee. As with every facet of the sign, there are layers and layers of addressees. In the context of the story, the various warnings were addressed to the Trojans collectively. The horse was chosen as the shape of the symbolic offering in order to appeal to the Trojans because the horse was a sacred animal to them. And the Horse as a duplicitous stratagem was aimed at the defeat of the Trojans. Therefore, in the most narrow and literal interpretation, the story would appear to be directed at the people of the city of Troy. However, because the Trojans have been dead for thousands of years, such a narrow and literal interpretation is totally irrelevant today. Do we now recount the story for the benefit or the detriment of those who are dead? Of course not. But if the story is not of relevance to Trojans, then to whom is it relevant?

Some have taken the story as a generalized warning about Greeks, which one might paraphrase as follows: “Beware of Greeks bearing gifts”. But this is not the thrust of the story; at the pragmatic level of analysis it is not really directed at or referring to either Trojans or Greeks. They are just the actors who happen to play the role of the gullible victim and duplicitous assailant. But these same roles are more or less continuously played out all over the world in all sorts of interactive situations. The same story could be played out with totally different dramatis personae; it could as well be played by Greeks and Macedonians, or Chinese and Koreans, etc. So it would be an error to take the story at face value as being about Trojans and Greeks.

Likewise, the symbol of the City of Troy does not refer either to Troy in particular nor to any other city, nor any other collective political entity. (Although the word for “city” in Greek is “polis”, which is the root of the word “political”.) In other words, the story is literally about a political entity, but that is only the imagery the story is clothed in. That is its superficial camouflage. The story is about a city, just as it is about a horse. As a duplicitous stratagem, the story is surreptitiously addressed to and is about the individual human being. Therefore, to get the point of the story the individual must look at the story at the level of analysis where he places himself in the story, not just as one of the individual Trojans, but as the City of Troy. To understand the story, one must look at it from a point of view that is framed by the premise, “I am the City of Troy”.

Of course, this way of looking at the story is unconventional. It is even ungrammatical, because “I am the City of Troy” is an ungrammatical sentence. And so when we look beneath the surface of the story we come to the realization that the conflict in the context of the story between the Trojans and the Greeks is paralleled by the conflict of points of view in present reality in the mind of the hearer of the story between the superficial conventional point of view and the deeper pragmatic, or strategic point of view. And we also realize that there are powerful conventional sanctions against taking this anticonventional point of view. Nevertheless, we must also realize that there are countervailing forces, which make this broader and deeper point of view preferable, namely that it is the more correct, the more natural, the more comprehensive, the more dominant, and thus the strategically more advantageous point of view.

I do not want to justify this assertion by arguing directly in its support, but prefer to let the advantage of this point of view become evident by the fruit that it will bear in insight and understanding as we proceed to explore the human situation from this point of view. As an expository expedient, by way of preliminary justification, however, I will briefly sketch some of the ways one could argue in support of this point of view. For example, one could argue on the grounds of the story of the Wooden Horse, that people would not find this story so interesting and entertaining thousands of years after the events, unless they felt way down deep that it has relevance to their individual lives in
and, how else could you explain our feeling that it is relevant to our vital interests unless you assume that we unconsciously equate the folly of the City of Troy with our own personal folly?

Or one could argue on more general grounds, in accord with the biblical theory of symbolism, which is reiterated in different forms throughout the Bible, that “the letter kills, whereas the spirit gives life”. The point of this assertion is the same as that of the Wooden Horse, namely, that one should not take symbols at their literal value, which is their face value, because taking that point of view kills, as the experience of the Trojans teaches us. And this is not just what the Bible preaches, but it is also what the Bible practices. That is, it is a plain and obvious fact that the text of the Bible is wildly incoherent, when seen from the literal point of view; and thinking that the literal point of view is the correct point of view, many people conclude that the Bible is nothing more than a jumble of primitive myths and tales stuck together with the glue of imagination and wishful thinking. But this way of thinking not only fails to appreciate the coherence which is in the text at a deeper level of analysis, but it also fails to appreciate what the textual style of the Bible is doing on the strategic level, and it is this latter point upon which we want to focus here.

In general, the pragmatic force of the textual style of the Bible induces the reader to move from the literal point of view to the deeper point of view. It works in two ways at the same time. On the negative side, it is not an accident that the text of the bible is incoherent from the literal point of view accident, but rather the text is intentionally anti-literal. And it is not surreptitiously anti-literal, hidden under a facade of coherence, like the Wooden Horse, but rather it is openly and ruthlessly anti-literal right on the surface. In this way, the text forces a conflict in the reader’s mind between the literal point of view and the deeper point of view, and thus, if one’s desire to make sense of the text is stronger than one’s allegiance to the conventional literal point of view, it forces one to abandon the conventional literal point of view as inadequate. Then, at the deeper level of analysis on finds that there is coherence in the text of the Bible.

This deep kind of coherence is not like that of a scientific text, or a legal text, but like that of a joke in that the point is not to explain something in the abstract, but to cause something to happen in reality. What is going on is not at the level of semantics or grammar or letters, but at the level of pragmatics. The end is an actual experience, and thus it cannot take place at the literal point of view, because it is not merely a symbolic phenomenon. And, because the vital experience which the text is intended to induce is not at the literal level, if one takes the literal point of view, it prevents one from experiencing the point of the text, and in this way the literal point of view kills the vitality of the text. Therefore, the point of the assertion that the letter kills is that if one wants to understand what is really going on in the Bible, or a joke, or the story of the Wooden Horse, or any other text, or any other symbol, the literal point of view is the wrong point of view.

Now, assuming that this argument is correct, if we reverse our field, and ask, if the literal point of view is wrong, what is the right point of view? Or in other words, if we ask, what is the point of view being taken when one says, “I am the City of Troy”, the answer that springs immediately to mind is that this sentence is metaphorical, so the point of view must be a metaphorical point of view, or in more general terms, a figurative point of view, or in other words, a symbolic point of view. And, of course, from the conventional point of view, the metaphorical is disdained as being “merely” symbolic, in comparison with the literal, as if the literal were somehow less symbolic than the metaphorical. However, the fact is that the literal and the metaphorical are equally symbolic; they are different, but their difference is merely symbolic. It is like the relationship between a ten dollar bill and a check for ten dollars: even though the former is conceptually prior to the latter, it would be a mistake (a very common one, though) to think of one as being real and the other as being merely symbolic; the fact is that they both represent symbolic value, as distinct from having intrinsic natural value, like an apple.
does, because they both depend for their value on the conventions of a particular society, and if that society were to collapse, so would the value of its symbols. Thus it can be seen that when one moves from the literal to the metaphorical, or from cash into check, or vice versa, one does not cross the boundary of the realm of the symbolic. Therefore it is perfectly logical to agree that the metaphorical is merely symbolic, but to also hold that the literal is also merely symbolic, and at the same time to hold the that the symbolic point of view is the correct point of view to take in trying to understand all symbols.

Therefore, the relevant question is not whether to take a symbolic point of view in trying to understand symbols, for one cannot understand symbols at all without taking a symbolic point of view. The question is whether to limit oneself to taking the literal symbolic point of view and to prohibit the metaphorical symbolic point of view. This is what the conventional literal point of view prescribes. And the answer is no, we must not limit ourselves to the literal point of view, for that is precisely the error which the Trojans committed. For this reason, if we want to understand what is going on symbolically, we must take the deepest and most comprehensive symbolic point of view.

But we must also take care that we do not commit the inverse of the conventional error by excluding the literal point of view, which in any event would be impossible, because the metaphorical message is conveyed by the literal message. That is, the underlying surreptitious metaphorical message is conveyed in the superficial literal message, although that does not necessarily mean that the metaphorical message is secondary in importance; indeed, as with the Wooden Horse, the contrary is always the case. In terms of the Wooden Horse, its function and value as a sacred symbol is the literal message; and its function as a duplicitous stratagem is the metaphorical message. And one could not understand either without being aware of the other. Likewise, the City of Troy taken as an ancient city on the Bosphorous is the literal victim of the stratagem of the Wooden Horse in the context of the story; and you (the hearer of the story), as symbolically represented by the City of Troy, are the metaphorical victim of the story in the context of reality. That is, since there is no City of Troy any longer, the point of the story, the real and present rhetorical force of the story, could not possibly be aimed at the City of Troy.

Therefore, as a general principle, in order to understand any symbol one must take both points of view at the same time in the duplicitous frame of reference. In fact, when we transact in the realm of the symbolic, we actually do take such a duplicitous point of view, whether we are aware of it or not. The basic purpose of this book is to point out that the bifocal perspective of the symbolic realm is precisely embodied in the word “duplicity”. Or, in other words, the basic point of this book is to point out that the realm of the symbolic is a duplicitous realm, so that if one wants to make sense of the symbolic, one must look at it in the framework of duplicity.

Moving from the general to the specific, in concluding this section, I would like to make a point about the phenomenological status of the metaphors we are considering by looking at the specific metaphor, “I am the City of Troy”. First, although it might seem to be an unlikely equation, in fact it is surprisingly common, occurring not just in ancient Greek literature, but in a wide variety of disparate contexts. This idea was quite common in ancient China, as seen for example in the eighth century teachings of Hui-neng, the seventh patriarch of the Ch’an sect of Buddhism, as compiled in the text of the Tun-huang manuscript and translated into English by Philip Yampolsky (1967, p. 158).

The physical body of a man in this world is itself a city. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body are the gates to the city. Outside there are five gates; inside there is the gate of consciousness. Mind is the ground; self-nature is the king.
While there are some apparent differences in focus, revolving around the question of how “I” is related to “my physical body”, the two entities being equated are the same. And note that Hui-neng is not saying that a city is a metaphor of the physical body, but that the physical body is a city.\(^1\) And also note that there is no reason to suppose that Hui-neng borrowed the idea from the ancient Greek story.

The same equation is woven throughout the textual fabric of the Bible. One of the most basic themes of the Bible is manifest through the practice of calling the geopolitical entity which developed among the descendants of the individual whose name was “Israel” by the name of that individual. Thus the political entity is referred to variously in accord with conventional naming practices as “the nation of Israel”, “the children of Israel”, “the people of Israel”, etc., but this same political entity is also referred to as just “Israel”, and the political entity is even addressed directly as an individual. To cite just one of hundreds of examples,

\[
\text{O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. (Hos 14:1)}
\]

Nor is this ungrammatical referential practice limited to the political entity of Israel, for other political entities are also addressed as if they were individuals, including Babylon, Assyria, Rome, Jerusalem, etc.\(^2\) For example, the latter is the subject of the following personalization.

\[
\text{How doth the city sit lonely, that was full of people; how is she become a widow! She that was great among the nations, a princess among the provinces; how is she become a vassal. (Lamentations 1:1)}
\]

(The reverse is common in our own language: “Washington says....”, meaning metonymically “The government of the political entity whose capital is in the city of Washington says ....”) And the collective corporate perspective versus the individual perspective is often mixed up in the same sentence, for example,

\[
\text{Behold, I have engraved thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me (Is. 49:16)}
\]

The implication of violating conventional categorization in this way is that such categorization is incorrect. Thus, although the Bible does not explicitly assert “You are Jerusalem”, “You are Israel”, “You are Babylon”, etc., in addressing these political entity as individual persons, it conveys that assertion surreptitiously by implication (i.e. by Trojan Horse). And, once again, there is no reason to think that the fact that the same idea occurs in the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Chinese languages can be explained by borrowing.

As a final example, though arguably not independent of Biblical influence, I would like to call attention to the fact that Sigmund Freud frequently made use of the idea of the city as a metaphorical image of the individual mind in order to try to conceptualize various mental phenomena. In one place he developed the idea at some length in order to try to explain how historically prior structures of the mind can be preserved and still function under the surface to determine the shape of contemporary behavior, just as the ancient structures of Rome still determine the overall shape of the city as well as specific roadways, etc. (Civilization and its Discontents, p. 69ff) But taken generally, there is a metaphorical thread running through Freud’s text where he conceptualizes the individual mind in terms of the physical and political structure of a city, such that an individual has walls much the same as a city, for the protection of which he marshals his defenses, etc. And the individual has a complex and elab-

\(^{1}\) This is that same ambiguity which Lacan cited in support of the claim that the human situation can only be understood in terms of a “two body psychology.”

\(^{2}\) The word “political” is from Greek polis meaning “city.”
orate bureaucracy of mind much the same as the bureaucracy of the government of a city, with inter-departmental conflicts, with overseers and onlookers and bystanders, etc. And, of course, every city must have its lower classes, crude brutes, driven by mere animal urges, which must be properly governed and kept under control by the politically dominant class, etc.

Finally, as we mentioned at the beginning of our discussion of Barbara Tuchman’s view of man’s folly, there are certain forms of government, monarchy, dictatorship, etc., where the head of government is considered to be the embodiment of the state, and where in practical fact the head’s individual folly is equivalent to the folly of the state. Recall, for example, that Louis XIV actually said, “I am the state”.

In conclusion then, although the idea that “I am the City of Troy” might seem to be a wildly deviant idea from the conventional point of view, the sort of idea that is only grudgingly tolerated by the conventional authorities under the rubric of poetic license, or insanity, which is to say that it is tolerated only as flight of fancy, which is to say that it is tolerated only if it has “false and trivial” plainly stamped on its forehead, in view of the fact that it is actually a fairly common idea, and not only among the insane, but among some reputable witnesses to the human situation, one can only doubt the veracity of the conventional authorities. Further, the fact that this same wild idea has come into being independently in disparate cultural settings wants explanation. If the same idea occurs to people in totally different conventional frames of reference again and again, according to the principles of science it cannot be a random deviant phenomena, nor can it be a coincidence. One must conclude that this conventionally deviant idea is motivated by universal natural factors. One must conclude that it is a natural idea. Just as, for example, in cultures throughout the world, people independently come to have the idea that dark clouds are an indexical sign of rain, because there is a natural physical relation of causality between clouds and rain, so too have disparate peoples come to have the idea that “city” is a sign of “I”, because there is a natural symbolic relation between “city” and “I”. Therefore, the idea the “I am the City of Troy” is not just an amusing poetic deviance from the conventional, nor is it false and trivial, but it is a deep fact about the human situation. It is a natural fact about the conventionalized symbolization of the human situation, for the city is a symbolic representation of the ego of the people who live there.

This is a fact of a phenomenological order that the conventional conceptualization of the world precludes. In the conventional conceptualization of the world, there are only two kinds of facts - natural facts, and conventional facts, which are considered to not really be facts, but merely arbitrary agreements. The fact that there is an association between clouds and rain is considered to be a natural fact, but since language is considered to be a conventional phenomena, the fact that there is an association between the words “I” and “city” would have to be a conventional fact. But this would imply that it is an arbitrary association, and we have seen that it is not. This leads us to the realization that the conventional conceptualization of facts incorrectly precludes certain phenomenological categories, namely, the category of phenomena which are both natural and conventional.

This conventionally forbidden category of phenomena is where the fact that the city is a symbol of “I” belongs. And, this is also the phenomenological category in which the fact that the Wooden Horse is a symbol of the duplicity of the symbol belongs. And, in general, this is the phenomenological category which we want to take as our point of view in trying to explore the roots of human folly in the realm of language, for this is the category in which the lawful aspects of language are found.
The Theory of Language and Human Folly in the Hebrew Bible

Let us turn now to consider how our argument relates to the way the human situation is framed in another ancient text, the Bible. Let us consider the question, “Does the Bible take the view that there is a human type of human problem?” Indeed it does. This is the central theme of the Bible, on which it constantly drums from beginning to end. Well not exactly from the beginning, but from the point in the evolution of the human situation where the human type of error first appears. The overarching theme of the Bible is that the world view of all normal human beings is contaminated and distorted by a primitive error, which leads human beings to hold erroneous views and consequently to systematically misguided and destructive behavior.

What does the Bible say about the origin of this human type of error? As I said, according to the story of the Bible the error was not there from the beginning. In the beginning, even before the sun and the moon and the stars, the first thing God created was the light. By fiat. That is, by saying “Let there be light.” And then he made the sun and the moon and the stars, etc. The process took six days, and at the end of each day He looked at what he had made and “saw that it was good”. On the sixth day he made man and woman, in his own image, and He “blessed them” and He “saw everything that he had made, and, behold it was very good.” Thus according to the story of the Bible the human problem was not there from the beginning, because in the beginning human beings were very good, so the human problem is not literally generic. That is, the human problem came into the situation after the genesis.

As the Bible has it, the beginning of the human problem is reenacted over and over again in different ways through history. The first account of the genesis of the human type of error is veiled in dense imagery. The error is described as the function of a dialogue between man and woman, and it involved a third party, cast here as a serpent. And, of course, that dialogue was framed in a prior dialogue in which God had granted man and woman free reign of the garden of Eden,1 which he had prepared especially for them, with only one restriction, which was that they were forbidden to partake of the fruit of one particular tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Naturally, this prohibition aroused in them the desire to partake of that which was prohibited, and this desire generates the dramatic tension which gives birth to the human type of error. In the playing out of this drama, the woman played a subversive role in relation to the man, and in turn the serpent played a subversive role in relation to the woman. In the end the man and the woman did submit to this perverse desire and partake of the knowledge of good and evil, as do we all. And that is the way the genesis of the human type of error is described the first time. While some of the general features of the genesis of human error might be clear from this rendition, it leaves much veiled in dreamlike imagery. But fortunately this is only the first telling.

Another version of the origin of the human problem is the story of the tower of Babel. In this story language plays the central role. This story begins at the stage in the development of the human situation where “the whole earth was of one language and one speech” (Genesis 11:1). Because the people were able to communicate with each other in their one language, the people conspired together saying,

lets build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven... and this they begin to do: now nothing will be withheld from them, which they have imagined to do... So the Lord scattered them abroad from there upon the

1. It is important to bear in mind that Eden means “pleasure, delight.”
face of all the earth... Therefore is the name of it called Babel\(^1\), because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth.

Here the misuse of language is the root cause of human confusion.

As I said, the genesis of the human type of error is reenacted over and over again in the Bible. But the place where the problem of human error is addressed most directly and most explicitly is in the Ten Commandments, which God wrote down and gave directly to Moses. The Ten Commandments do not say “This is what the human type of error is,” but from the Ten Commandments we can infer what the human type of error is reasoning as follows. If you are forbidden to do a certain thing by a benevolent authority, such as your own father for example, then you can reasonably conclude that what is forbidden is error.

Of course, the problem of error is more complicated than this seems to suggest, because in the nature of things, there are too many errors to forbid. Indeed, there is no end to the possibility of error, so there is an infinity of errors, even an infinity of infinities of errors, so even the best of fathers could not possibly admonish his child against every one of the infinite number of errors, and even the best of children could not possibly obey an infinity of admonitions. But it is also in the nature of things that errors are, like everything else in the universe, governed by law. Errors are not just random and chaotic, but are organized, systematic, and predictable. For example, it is obvious that it is a more serious error to stand in the way of an oncoming train than it is to break an egg on the way home from the market. And a moment’s reflection makes it clear that this is not a random fact, but rather that there is a general principle here, which one might state as follows: An error that kills you is worse than an error that does not kill you. Thus it is clear that there is a hierarchy of errors in regard to the way in which and the extent to which errors are harmful to me. And further reflection would discover a number of other organizing principles.

Now one of the pivotal principles of the theory of human error that is put forth in the Bible is that error is not only hierarchical but it is also generated like a family in the sense that error gives birth to error, so error divides and multiplies. That is, one becomes two, and two becomes three, and the third is the type of human error. As Chuang Tzu said in a totally unrelated text, at another time, and in another place (Watson, 1964, p. 39):

The one and what I said about it make two, and two and the original one make three. If we go on this way, then even the cleverest mathematician can’t tell where we’ll end

This is the logic of the Bible, where, just as the first man, Adam, generated the family of human being, so too does the first error, the father of error, generate the family of error. If this principle is valid, then, strategically speaking, whereas it would be impossible to address the infinity of specific errors, the natural way to eradicate error, the only possible way to eradicate error, would be to cut the root of error, the father of error, the generator of error, i.e., to circumcise the foreskins of our hearts. And thus the whole tree would wither and die of its own accord, and thus the myriad branches and leaves of error would naturally come to an end without having to address them one at a time. This is the theory of human error that is assumed as the framework of the Ten Commandments. So let us consider the first three of the Ten Commandments in this context to see what light they shed on our understanding of the generation of the human type of error. (Exodus 20)

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1. The word Babel is supposed to be a play in Hebrew on “balal” which means “to confuse”. Note also “babble” in English.
1. I am the Lord thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them...

3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain...

The first law frames the problem of the human type of error in the context of an opposition, in particular the opposition between the one and the many — God vs. gods. And note also that in a veiled allusion to the same theme, the word which is misleadingly rendered as “Egypt” in the English version of the Bible is mitsrayim in Hebrew, which is the dual form of mâtsôwr, and literally means “the dual land.” Given this meaning and given the parallelism of the last two clauses of the first sentence, it conveys the proposition that “the double land” is “the house of bondage”, or in other words, the realm of manyness is the realm of bondage, and by implication, oneness is the realm of freedom.

We must acknowledge that there is another explanation for the use of the dual in the name of this country. The traditional explanation is that the name is dual because the land of Egypt is geographically differentiated as between the Nile delta in the north and the highlands to the south and it was sometimes politically divided into two corresponding parts, upper Egypt and lower Egypt. However, as we have seen throughout this book, symbols always have two or more levels of reference, so there is no reason to assume that one of these readings precludes the other. Hence I read this law as associating the manyness of gods with the doubleness of the political entity known as Egypt, which is in both senses the state of bondage. And this state of doubleness is opposed in turn to the state of oneness, which is the state of freedom. And thus the first commandment is to seek the one, and to avoid the many. The human type of error, then, is to dwell in the land of duality, or manyness.

The second law speaks of images and likenesses, which might appear on the face of it to be a new topic. But the second law simply repeats the first with greater specificity. The second law specifies that the “other gods” of the first law are man-made images or likenesses, which we will interpret in the context of the theory of signs to mean “signs.” It is crucial to note that it does not refer to all signs, but only to manufactured signs, which, in the literal sense of “manufactured signs”, means “signs that are made by hand.” And it is in allusion to this specific characteristic of the “bad” type of signs, that the Bible speaks elsewhere of the “good” sign as follows:

Daniel 2:34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

Dan 2:45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Given this characteristic, we can frame this distinction with great precision in the theory of signs: the second commandment says that the “other gods” are symbolic signs, as distinct from iconic or indexical signs. So I read this law as saying that the fundamental human error is to worship symbolic signs. Normally we do not think of ourselves as “worshiping” symbolic signs, for the simple reason that we think of ourselves in terms of symbolic signs. That is, we have constructed our identity
in symbolic images, instead of in the image of God, so we do not think of ourselves as worshiping alien signs, because we think of ourselves as being those alien signs. And that is precisely why this is crux of the human error, for it says in the story of genesis that God created us in his image. We are created in the image of God, but we have conceptualized ourselves in the symbolic images of our language. Thus there is a disparity between what we are and what we think we are, and this is the root of the human type of error.

Parenthetically, you may recall from the story of the Ten Commandments that while Moses was up in the mountain receiving these laws from God, the other Hebrews were busy manufacturing an image of a calf in the medium of gold, which they intended to worship. It would seem that this golden calf of the Hebrew tradition is the central symbolic representation of the folly of believing in symbolic signs. Thus the Golden Calf in the Hebrew story is the equivalent of the Wooden Horse in the Greek story. In other words, the golden calf is the symbol of the symbol.

The third law focuses upon the name of God, which, contrary to what the English rendering of the Bible would have us believe, is not “God”. The distortions of the name of God is one of the many ways in which the various English versions of the Bible have thoroughly “cooked” the story by means of artful translation. One of the results of this “cooking” of the story is the drastic distortion of this third law such that it is interpreted in English at least to mean that one should not say the word “God”. (See the discussion of examples of the operation of this misinterpreted form of the law in conventional phonology in “The Euphemistic Mutilation of Phonological Form” beginning on page 251.) The history of this cooking process as the story of the Bible made its way from the Hebrew through Greek and Latin into English is interesting, but here we will just point out that when Moses asked what God’s name is (Exodus 2:13), God said

Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

So if the name of God is really “I AM”, then the third commandment says, not that you should not say “God”, but that you should not say “I AM” when referring to your self. In other words, since there is one, this law goes to the question of how many I’s there are, and which of the many things called “I” has the right to say I AM. If I use the name “I” to designate something that is merely a symbolic or imaginary conceptualization in the realm of duplicitous signs, then I am using the name to designate something which does not exist, hence I would be using it “in vain”.

Taking these three first laws together, I read them as saying that the error which plagues man is the error of substituting an image for reality, and, though we have not discussed it yet, sacrificing thereby the real for the imaginary. In sum, the error is to exchange what is for what is not. And language is the conventional institutionalization of this species of erroneous exchange. Therefore language is the institutionalization of the human type of error.

This view of language as being at the crux of the generic human error is, as mentioned above the point of the story of the tower of Babble, the this view is most explicitly stated in James 3.

Behold, if we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole body. And behold, ships, even though so large and driven by powerful winds, are guided by a very small rudder wherever the impulse of the pilot decides. So also the tongue is a small member and boasts of great things.

Behold how great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire. And the tongue is a fire; the cosmos of unrighteousness, the tongue is the member of the body that stains the whole body and sets on fire the wheel of birth, and is set on fire by ghenna.
In this view, it is the tongue, which, as we have seen is a figurative name for language (which means “tongue” in Latin), which generates human error. It is from this point of view that the following is said.

Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man...(because)...those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart

And it is only from this point of view that the following remedy makes sense.

Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart (Deuteronomy 10:16)

And the following passage

Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so we will render the calves of our lips. (Hosea 14:3)

takes us back to the symbol of the Golden Calf, the symbol of the symbol, the symbol of the word.

So in conclusion, it seems to me that the Bible takes exactly the same position in regard to the role of language in the human situation as we are trying to establish here as the foundation of the science of linguistics:

1. There is a generic human problem.
2. The problem is in language.
3. Language is problematic because it is duplicitous.

We could go on and on in elaboration of the argument in the text of the Bible. And there are many other ancient texts and myth cycles from many other cultures in which we find the same theme. We already touched upon some of them in the beginning of this chapter and we will touch on some of them in other ways below. But we could not possibly survey all of the evidence. And it is not necessary. Once is an accident, twice is already a significant coincidence, and three times is a law. So we have provided sufficient evidence to establish that the new point of view we are trying to develop is not new, but rather that it constitutes the framework of the most ancient level, the archeological level of human dialogue.

Language, Wild Language and the Gap

Jumping over a couple thousand years to the modern dialogue, the modern scientific dialogue of the twentieth century, there have been many astute observers of the human situation who have come to the realization more or less independently that in order to make sense of human interaction one must analyze it in terms of two different levels. So these scientists have tried to develop theories of human language and human thought and human behavior on the basis of a two-level, or dualistic frame of reference. And since these scientists came to this realization more or less independently, and since they approached the matter from different points of view, and since they focused upon different aspects of human interaction, these various scientists developed theories on the basis of correspondingly different dualisms.

For example, as I will discuss in detail in later chapters, the discovery of the [phonetic \ phonemic] dualism was the seminal insight which gave birth to the discipline of linguistics. Subse-
quently, Kenneth Pike generalized this specifically phonological dualism into a general dualism, which he called the [etic \ emic] dualism, on the basis of his understanding of the [phonetic \ phonemic] dualism, and he used this dualism as the paradigm of his tagmemic theory, which attempts to be a "unified theory of human behavior." Subsequently, Noam Chomsky developed the generative theory of language, and of the human mind, on the basis of the [surface form \ underlying form] dualism, which is another kind of generalization of the original [phonetic \ phonemic] dualism. Roman Jakobson developed his theory of language on the basis of the [similarity \ contiguity] dualism, which is totally different from the [phonetic \ phonemic] dualism.

In anthropology, Levi- Strauss, much influenced by Jakobson, tried to make sense of cultural phenomena in terms of the [savage thought \ civilized thought] dualism, and then later he used the [raw \ cooked] dualism. Also in anthropology, Clifford Geertz has analyzed cultural phenomena in terms of the [thin description \ thick description] dualism. From a psychological perspective, Michael Polanyi came up with the idea that the human situation ought to be analyzed in terms of the dualism [tacit knowledge \ spoken knowledge]. And one of the most famous analysts of the human situation was Freud, who held that the human psyche is a hierarchical system of dualistic oppositions, a branching treelike structure, the most fundamental dualism of which is the distinction between the two basic types of thought processes, the [primary process \ secondary process] dualism. And there are many others that I could mention, but I will end with the [imaginary \ symbolic] dualism in terms of which Jacques Lacan reframed Freud’s theory of the human psyche.

On the surface these various dualisms seem to be different, because they are expressed using different words, but as I read the works of these various scholars it seems to me that they are all seeing the same thing, namely the essential dualism of the human psyche, and they are all trying to find a way of talking about the same thing. If I am right in holding the view that they are all trying to get at the same phenomena, then obviously it would be good to try to bring their observations and their insights and their theories together into one comprehensive frame of reference. In this section I will try to show how these various points of view can be reconciled with each other and brought together in the framework of the theory of signs.

But instead of using the terminology of any of these dualisms as our basic frame of reference, and thereby adopting the prejudices and presumptions, and the antagonisms and resentments, and the confusions and the misrepresentations, that go along with that terminology, I will begin with a new dualism, a fresh new clean concept that still is untrammeled by confusion and the scars of battle. The basic term of the dualism I have chosen to use, “wild”, was suggested to me by the realization that this word has been used many times in a purely metaphorical way to describe the dualism we want to get at. It happens that the deeper level of the duality has often been described in terms of the metaphor of “wild language,” or as “bewildering”, or some similar notion, such as “savage thought.” So I will take the word “wild” as the starting point, and I will suggest that this is not just a metaphor, that there is really an underlying level of interaction, that this underlying level of interaction really is “wild language”, and therefore we ought to take this metaphor literally, and we ought to take the concept of “wild language” as a theoretical concept in the framework of the theory of signs, and we ought to use it to construct a paradigm in terms of which we can organize the dualisms, the empirical observations, and the insights of these various scholars, and as paradigm in which we can frame and explore the dualisms of language and the human psyche. So that is what I propose to do in the following pages.
An Example of the Problem

Before we go on to develop this paradigm, I would like to cite a simple concrete example of the sort of dialogue which makes it necessary to develop a dualistic theoretical paradigm. Jakobson (1979, p. 159) cites the following example of a dialog, which is so irrational that it might be thought to be an aberration, and yet anyone who is familiar with child language acquisition knows that this sort of dialogue it is perfectly normal and very common. And what is more, I am suggesting that it is a simple childish prototype of what goes on in a more subtle way in adult dialogue.

MacKay (1970b:320) cites the dialogue of a mother with her child, who months earlier had been able to produce [f] and [p] in his babbling and now asked her to “give me my pork” (meaning fork); when she handed him his fork, saying in his style “Here is your pork,” she received the answer: “No, no! Pork! Pork!

Here is a child who learns the word “fork”: he knows what it means, and he knows how to use it, and he hears it correctly, and he pronounces it correctly. And then at a later point in time he seems to have unlearned the word in certain ways. He still knows what it means, and he still uses the word correctly, but he becomes incapable of pronouncing it correctly in that he erroneously substitutes [p] for [f], saying “pork.” And when his mother pronounces the word the same way he does, he corrects her, saying that it should be “pork” instead of “pork.” But there is something very strange about the child’s speech act because the wrong way of saying it and the right way of saying it are the same. That is, the first “pork” and the second “pork” are the same. But he does not seem to be aware of that fact. He seems to think that he is saying the second “pork” correctly as “fork.” So apparently at this stage the child can correctly hear the difference between [f] and [p] in the speech of his mother, but he cannot hear the difference in his own speech. And he cannot pronounce the difference, even though he used to be able to when he was younger. And he erroneously thinks he is pronouncing the word correctly, when in fact he is not.

An adequate theory of language must be able to make sense of this sort of childish dialogue, not to mention the even more complex fabric of adult dialogue. It is my contention that it is possible to make sense of such facts in terms of the duplicitous theory of signs. So in the following pages we will develop our understanding of the situation of language in terms of that theory. Then we will return to the above cited dialogue (on page 148) and show how we can make sense of it and other similarly perplexing linguistic phenomena in the frame of reference that we will have developed.

The “Wild” Paradigm

In order to develop the wild paradigm we must begin by setting up a dualistic paradigm centered on the word “wild” and then we must locate this dualistic paradigm in the framework of the theory of signs. The first step in doing so is to flesh out the paradigm of the word “wild.” We can begin with the dictionary definition of “wild”, which is as follows:

Occurring, growing, or living in a natural state; not domesticated, cultivated, or tamed; Uncivilized or barbarous; savage; Lacking restraint; unruly:
From this we can construct a preliminary paradigm of the word “wild” such as the following, where the vertical dimension is a function of the relation of similarity and the horizontal dimension is a function of the relation of opposition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. The Wild / Tame Paradigm in a Tabular Framework</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>wild</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undomesticated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>savage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unrestrained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unruly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let me interject a parenthetic note by way of explaining what sort of thing this paradigm is and what I intend to do with it. We must bear in mind that this is just a partial representation of the paradigm of this word. First, as to the partiality of this representation, the whole paradigm of the word “wild” would include all of the words to which the word “wild” is related, and that would be the whole of the English language. These are just the words that the dictionary lists as being in the most immediate association with the word “wild.” One of the ways in which we will explore this paradigm is by adding more words that are associated with “wild.” Second, as to the fact that this is just a representation of the paradigm, it must be noted that the relationships among these words in English is not fixed in the way represented here. What is definitive is relations of similarity and opposition that are represented here, not the particular vertical ordering, and not the particular horizontal pairing. This is just one of many possible ways one might represent the paradigm of this word because all of these relationships are dynamic and fluid in several different ways, which is what allows the vast network of associations of which language consists.

Let me put this point another way. The symbolic value of words, like the symbolic value of money, is fungible. So one can transform this representation of the semantic paradigm of the word “wild” in many different ways without significantly changing the significance of the word “wild,” so long as any such changes are in conformity with the principles of similarity and opposition. It is something like mathematical or algebraic commutations: If \( a + b = c \) then \( c - b = a \). These two different representations are mathematically equivalent. So in the realm of symbolic signs there are many different ways to represent the same value. Consider money for example: suppose someone gives me a check for one hundred dollars, and I change it into a hundred dollar bill, and then I change the hundred dollar bill into five twenty dollar bills, and then I change one of the twenties into a ten and a five and five ones, and then I buy two movie tickets for ten dollars, and then I sell one of them to a friend for five dollars, and then I sell the other ticket for twenty quarters. The symbolic value of my money has been transformed into different representations, but the symbolic value of my money has not changed. So it is with words.

Thus one could change the order of the rows of the above paradigm, or one could add new words to the paradigm, or one could shift the words around in various ways, or one could change the valence of words in various ways, and so long as any changes obey the principles of similarity and opposition, the symbolic significance of the representation would not change. For example, since
“tame” and “civilized” are more or less equivalent in meaning, it would not materially change the paradigm as a whole if one were to exchange “tame” and “civilized,” so that “tame” opposed “savage” and “civilized” opposed “wild.” Or one could replace “savage” with “uncivilized.” Or one could replace “unrestrained” with “free.” Or one could add a new row of “unconventional” and “conventional.” Etc. These are not mutually exclusive choices, but rather are just different ways of representing the same thing. Such changes would not invalidate the above representation of the paradigm of the word “wild”, they would just amplify it and shed a new light on it and flesh it out. And I intend to exploit these modes of fungibility, these operations of commutation and transformation, as a way of exploring the idea of “wild language.”

Moving on, the next step in framing the “wild” paradigm in the theory of signs is to determine which of the two opposites is first. In this case it is obvious: wild is prior to tame, natural is prior to unnatural, savage is prior to civilized, etc. Given this ordering we can represent the paradigm in the framework of the logic of duplicity as in Figure 5 below. This representation implies, as we have made clear above, that the tame situation is not just chronologically subsequent to the wild situation, like four o’clock is subsequent to three o’clock, but that the latter evolves from the former, and that the latter is somehow false in relation to the former. We will amplify these implications below.

Given the foregoing representation we are in a position to locate the wild paradigm in the larger framework of the tripartite typology of signs, as represented in Figure 3, “The Typology of Signs,” on page 75: The boundary between wild language and tame language is the boundary between iconic and indexical signs on one hand and symbolic signs on the other. In other words, tame language is the realm of symbolic sign functions and wild language is the realm of iconic and/or indexical sign functions.

Now for convenience we will transform the representation of the three sign types from the vertically layered format of Figure 3 to the left-to-right format of Table 2.

**TABLE 2. The Three Types Of Signs in a Tabular Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type 1</th>
<th>Type 2</th>
<th>Type 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iconic</td>
<td>Indexical</td>
<td>Symbolic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now we can graft Table 1 into the framework of Table 2 to get Table 3.

<table>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>wild</td>
<td>tame</td>
<td>unnatural</td>
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<tr>
<td>natural</td>
<td></td>
<td>domesticated</td>
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<tr>
<td>undomesticated</td>
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<td>civilized</td>
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<tr>
<td>savage</td>
<td></td>
<td>restrained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unrestrained</td>
<td></td>
<td>ruly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that I have added another column between Type 1 and Type 2 on one hand and Type 3 on the other, and I have shaded it to represent the fact that this is a different type of column. This column is different because it does not represent a type of sign, but rather it represents the radical boundary between the two radically different types of signs — wild and natural signs on one side, tame and unnatural signs on the other. Thus this shaded column is intended to represent the fact that there is an evolutionary jump, an actual gap that occurs between wild and tame signs, which we will explain more fully below.

Now I would like to expand this paradigm to include logic. The orthodox idea of logic is that there is one and only kind of logic, which is commonly known as rational logic. Whatever is not rational, is not logic. So in the orthodox frame of reference, which is the rational frame of reference, it would be absurd to entertain the idea that there might be another system of logic. But it is obvious to any ordinary person that there are two systems of logic. It is a matter of common knowledge that people commonly think in another way, a non-rational way. Of course, from the conventional point of view, this other way of thinking is not considered to be logical, because it is not rational. This other way of thinking is disparaged from the orthodox point of view as irrational, and illogical, and therefore, as a wrong way of thinking. But there is good reason to believe that this other way of thinking cannot be wholly dismissed as wrong. The fact is that this other way of thinking, this irrational way of thinking, is not just manifest negatively as breaches of rationality, as error, as failure; it is also manifest positively in flashes of insight, in humor, in play, in art, etc. Therefore, while this other mode of thought is certainly irrational, it would be an error to dismiss it as wrong. Indeed in many ways this other mode of thought is more right than rational thought. This other mode of thought often leads to deeper understandings. It is the mode of thought which leads to invention. It is the mode of beauty, and joy. So while it might be irrational, it is also fun, and it is often more effective. In short, it satisfies.

Furthermore, if you consider this other mode of thought from an objective scientific point of view, rather than prejudging by conventional standards, one can see that it is not really unlawful. The other mode of thought is not unlawful, it is just that it is a different system of law. And in the present context the notion that there are two types of logic makes perfectly good sense. In fact, we would expect two different types of logic.¹ So in the present context we can make sense of the notion that there are two different types of thought, two types of logic, as follows. What is commonly known as “rational” logic is the logic of the symbolic type of signs, which is in keeping with the fact that this
kind of logic is known as “symbolic” logic in the technical parlance of philosophical logicians. And the other kind of logic is the logic of iconic and indexical signs. In the terminology of the wild paradigm we can think of these two types of logic variously as wild logic vs. civilized logic, or as natural logic vs. unnatural logic, or, the terminology which I think is most telling, as natural logic vs. symbolic logic, as in Table 4 below.

Now that we have expanded our dualistic paradigm to the realm of logic, we have a place to put Sigmund Freud’s two types of logic, which he called “primary processes” and “secondary processes.” Let me briefly frame Freud’s logical dualism in the context of his theory of the human mind. Freud argued that the human mind is a hierarchical system of binary divisions, a branching treelike structure, much like a government bureaucracy, or a phonological system. And this logical dualism is the first and most fundamental dualism in the bureaucracy of mind, for it is the prototype of the dualism of the human mind. Freud came to the realization that the human mind is organized as a function of a fundamental logical dualism as follows.

The study of symptom-formation and the analysis of dreams led Freud to recognize a type of mental functioning that was very different from the thought processes which had been the object of traditional psychological observation. This method of functioning [primary processes], which had its own mechanisms and which was regulated by specific laws, was particularly well illustrated by dreaming (Laplanche and Pontalis, p. 339)

Because the interplay of the two types of logic is easier to see in dreams, Freud’s fullest and most explicit explanation of the system of two logics is found in Chapter VII of *On the Interpretation of Dreams*.

Although the realm of dreams is notoriously complex and confusing, the general line of argument is quite simple. The conventional attitude toward dreams, and not coincidentally, the prevailing scientific attitude toward dreams, in Freud’s time and now, is that they are not worth considering. It is not that they have been examined and found to be of no value, but that they are simply not permitted to become the focus of attention in the center stage of the conventional mind. Dreams are conventionally insignificant. Contrary to the conventional point of view, Freud’s basic premise is that dreams are significant. He held that a dream is a communicative event and that the dream itself is a linguistic object.

Obviously a dream is a special dream-type of linguistic object, but it is the same type of thing as any other linguistic object, and consequently it is similar in many ways to other types of linguistic objects. So Freud holds that a dream event is a kind of speech act, but it is different from ordinary speech acts in several ways. One of the main differences is that a dream is an intrapsychic communication, whereas ordinary speech acts are interpsychic phenomena, at least in the ideal. Of course, dreams are not the only kind of intrapsychic linguistic phenomena, for we all carry on intrapsychic dialogues more or less continually, when we are not talking out loud, and when we are not sleeping. And this brings us to another difference: Dreams take place during sleep. And there is also a radical difference in the position of the first person: in an ordinary speech act, the first person is the speaker of the speech act, but in a dream, the first person is the addressee of the speech act. That is, in ordinary speech act, I speak, but in a dream speech act, it speaks to me, or they speak to me. In keeping

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1. Actually, we would expect three types of logic, but Rome was not built in a day, so we cannot expect to deconstruct Rome in a day.
with these differences, Freud’s theory is that a dream is a speech act that is performed on behalf of all of the competing agencies in the hierarchical bureaucracy of mind. It is a speech act that is spoken, as it were, by the unconscious part of the mind and addressed to the conscious part of the mind. Spoken by “it” and addressed to “I.” A dream is analogous to a public statement issued by a complex government bureaucracy formulated by a committee of representatives who do not want the addressee to know what is really going on on the inside, and thus contrives a communication which is designed to be unintelligible, and which is finally read by some anonymous press secretary to the public at large, i.e., to the dreamer. In both cases, the linguistic object that is “spoken”, which results from the interplay amongst the various competing interests, is a highly condensed and distorted compromise that represents the interests of all of the various agencies involved, and this is why dreams, and governmental communications, are so complex and confusing. So in keeping with this theory of dreams, Freud analyzed dreams as a kind of dialogical process through which one or more underlying intentions, some of which may be in harmony, some of which may be in conflict, and some of which may be unrelated, are transformed into a single surface representation.

So Freud’s theory of dreams is very similar to the generative theory of language, which tries to make sense of language as a function of the relationship between underlying forms and surface forms. Freud called the two levels of representation in dreams “the latent content” and “the manifest content”, but it seems to me that this is a trivial difference. So informally, according to Freud,

‘interpreting’ a dream implies assigning a ‘meaning’ to it (p. 96)

But technically, in the theoretical context he set up, what he means by the meaning of a dream is the underlying form, or latent content, and so technically, interpreting a dream is a process of assigning an underlying form, or a set of underlying forms, to a surface form. This is exactly how Chomsky characterized the purpose of a grammar in generative linguistics theory. So if we begin with a given surface form then, interpreting a dream is a process of undoing the chain of substitutions and displacements and condensations that derived the surface form from the underlying form(s). This is the chain of derivation which Freud called “the dream work.” More generally, he held that “all thinking is no more than a circuitous path from the memory of a satisfaction”, satisfaction here being an image retained from the past, to a desired reenactment of that satisfaction, which is an image in the present. In other words, thinking is “the connecting path between ideas” (p. 602). And since an idea is a symbolic representation, we can restate Freud’s theory in terms identical to those of generative linguistic theory thus: a dream is a derivational relation between an underlying form and a surface form.

In On the Interpretation of Dreams, Freud shows how this theory applies to many dreams and he demonstrates that in order to make sense of the relationship between surface forms and underlying forms one must think of the derivational process, the dream work, as a dialogical interplay between two radically different types of logic, “primary process thinking” and “secondary process thinking” (for an explanation of which see especially p. 588-609).

1. A nice example of dreamlike obfuscation has become institutionalized in the psychoanalytic literature in English where Freud’s “es” in German, which means simply “it” in English, when used to talk about an agency of the mind is translated into English using the corresponding Latin term “id”. Similarly, “ich,” which means “I”, when so used is translated using the corresponding Latin term “ego.” As far as I know there is no rational motivation for this sleight of hand.

2. By the way, these three operations - substitution, displacement, and condensation- by which surface representations are derived from underlying representations are the functions of the symbolic, indexical, and iconic sign relations respectively.
we are driven to conclude that two fundamentally different kinds of psychical processes are concerned in the formation of dreams. One of these produces perfectly rational dream-thoughts, of no less validity than normal thinking; while the other treats these thoughts in a manner which is in the highest degree bewildering and irrational. (p. 597, emphasis added)

And in subsequent publications he argued that this same primitive logical duality underlies and governs many different types of linguistic and behavioral phenomena such as jokes, puns, slips of the tongue and other mistakes, artistic works, mythology, etc., as well as what passes for normal speech, and of course pathological symptoms. In sum, then, Freud’s entire body of work argues that this logical duality is the very framework of the human psyche.

When it comes to correlating Freud’s dualism with ours, it is obvious from the fact that he called one type “primary” and the other “secondary” that the former is prior to the latter, and thus primary logic is the same as wild logic and secondary logic is the same as symbolic logic. Freud explicitly explains the relation of priority thus:

the primary processes are present in the mental apparatus from the first, while it is only during the course of life that the secondary processes unfold, and come to inhibit and overlay the primary ones; it may even be that their complete domination is not attained until the prime of life. (p. 603)

The fact that the primary processes are wild is also indexically signified, not coincidentally, because an indexical sign is a primary process, in the form of the word “bewildering” which Freud used to describe the primary processes in the above quote. That is, it stands to reason that if something is “bewildering” then it must be “wild.”

I do not want to get into a formal discussion of the difference between the laws of wild logic and the laws of symbolic logic,¹ but I will mention the following points in passing. Freud never explicitly and systematically worked out the laws of wild logic, but he illustrated and explained the laws of wild logic in various places throughout his publications, especially in The Psychopathology of Everyday Life and Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious. He pointed out that wild logic is distinct from symbolic logic in the following ways. First, there is no negative in wild logic, the negative being the seminal operator of the symbolic type of logic, a point which we will return to below. And there are no other quantifiers in wild logic so it is impossible to distinguish between “A” and “not A” and “this A” and “all A” and “some A”. Further, “or” = “and”, so “A or B” is the same as “A and B.” (see e.g. On Dreams SE vol V, p. 661). As to the operators that are in wild logic, Freud distinguished two wild relations, which he called “condensation” and “displacement.” I will add that these two relations are what we have been calling iconic and indexical sign relations respectively in the framework of the theory of signs. So I have added the terms Freud used to describe his two basic dualisms in the appropriate columns in Table 4 below.

Roman Jakobson’s theory of language also posits a basic dualism, which he usually talks about in terms of the relations of similarity and contiguity. In various works he explicitly identified these two relationships as the same as Peirce’s iconic and indexical relations respectively. Jakobson also asserted the these are the same as Freud’s condensation and displacement (e.g., Jakobson, 1956, p. 81 and see also Laplanche and Pontalis p. 123). And he also connected this distinction with Saussure’s earlier distinction between what Saussure called the “unifying force” and the “particularist spirit.” I have added these distinctions to Table 4 also.

¹. I have written a draft of a book about logic and markedness which speaks to these matters in more detail.
Jacques Lacan derived his theory of psychoanalysis of course from that of Freud. Freud couched his theory of psychoanalysis in the metaphors that were current in the physical sciences of his day, pressures, energies, etc. Lacan translated and transformed Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis from the framework of such physical metaphors into the framework of the theory of language as put forth by Saussure. His thinking was subsequently influenced by Jakobson. And blending these various influences together Lacan distinguished two types of logic which he called “imaginary” and “symbolic” logic.1

And finally, I would like to point out that Claude Lévi Strauss, beginning in The Savage Mind, distinguished between savage logic and civilized logic. I have added these terms to Table 4 as well.

| TABLE 4. Some Logical Distinctions in Relation to the Wild \ Tame Paradigm |
|---|---|
| **Type 1** | **Type 2** |
| Iconic | Indexical |
| WILD | TAME |
| natural | unnatural |
| undomesticated | domesticated |
| savage | civilized |
| unrestrained | restrained |
| unruly | ruly = conventional |
| **Natural Logic** | **Symbolic Logic** |
| | |
| Freud | Rational Logic |
| Primary Processes | Secondary Processes |
| Condensation | Separatist spirit |
| Displacement | Unifying force |
| Jakobson | Contiguity |
| Similarity | Unifying force |
| Lévi-Strauss | Separatist spirit |
| Imaginary Logic | Symbolic Logic |
| Savage Logic | Civilized Logic |

One part of the usefulness of this paradigm now is clear: It provides a general theoretical framework which is capable of incorporating and comprehending the seemingly disparate theoretical perspectives of the most profound observers of language and human nature. In this framework we can freely shift from one scholar’s system of terminology to another, from scholar’s one perspective to another, harvesting the insights of all of these scholars, and thus gaining a deeper and fuller and broader understanding of language and human nature. In the present context it would be inappropriate to systematically explore the vast store of insights thus made available to us, but I will mention

1. Lacan distinguished a third category, which he called “the real”, but as is always the case with the real, there is no place for it in this tabular representation of the realm of signs, or for that matter, in any representation of anything. The real cannot be represented. The real is what it is. Thus in terms of Table 4, the real is the paper on which it is printed and the ink of which it consists.
points of particular relevance in the works of these various scholars as we come upon them. In the rest of this section, I will flesh out our understanding of the wild / tame paradigm.

Roman Jakobson on Wild Language and the Gap

I first began to think about language in terms of the distinction between “wild language” and “tame language” when I came across the term “wild sounds” in Jakobson’s *Child Language, Aphasia, and Phonological Universals*. He meant it metaphorically, as indicated by the fact that he put it in quotation marks, but I wondered why one shouldn’t take it literally. I will cite that quote in a moment.

But first, I must make it clear that I want to shift the focus of attention, as always, from the subsequent to the prior. Attention has usually been focused upon Jakobson’s explanation of the stratification of the phonological system of the adult language as manifest in the step by step process the child goes through in mastering the phonological system of the adult language. For example, the child can only learn /k/ after he masters /p/ and /t/, he can only learn /e/ after /i/, /S/ after /s/, etc. But I want to focus upon Jakobson’s characterization of the child’s vocal behavior prior to the development of language proper, prior to the child’s attainment of the ability to transact in the medium of symbolic signs.

In this regard it is interesting to note that, although it is usually ignored, Jakobson spent 45 pages, nearly half of the book, trying to separate the pre-linguistic stage from the linguistic stage, before he began to talk about the stratified development of the child’s competence in the adult language. The general point he was trying to make is that in order to make sense of anything in language, and in order to make sense in particular of child language acquisition, one must distinguish between the two radically different types of language that correspond to these two stages of development. He said,

There are two varieties of language for the child, one might almost say two styles - one he controls actively, the other, the language of the adult, only passively... (p. 22)

Speaking narrowly in terms of phonology, Jakobson is saying that there are two totally different types of sound systems at play in language, two totally different systems for using vocal sounds and for evaluating vocal sounds - the pre-phonemic system and the phonemic system. Therefore,

If all of the sound productions of the child are tossed into the same heap, it is understandable that the laws of development cannot be disclosed. By careful delimitation, however, the regular succession of acquired phonemic oppositions clearly emerges. (p. 31)

On the basis of this distinction then, Jakobson then goes on in the next section of his book, entitled “Stratification of the phonological system”, to describe the sequential process by which the child masters the system of phonemic oppositions in the adult language.

The sequential mastery of the phonemic system in the course of child language acquisition fits into his general argument as follows. He argued that the child’s mastery of the phonemic system follows the same principles in all languages, hence the hypothesis of universal principles. And he argued that the same universal principles are manifest in the sequential regeneration of language capability in the recovering aphasic in all languages. And he argued that the same universal principles are manifest in the historical development of all language. And he argued that the same universal principles are
manifest in the stratified synchronic structure and in the semantics and in the pragmatics of all languages.

So the focus of interest in his argument is on the development of language capability in the child. That is, on the development of adult language capability. And from this point of view, there is language and pre-language, where “pre-language” is just something that precedes “real” language. But now I want to shift attention to this pre-type of language and focus on it, not just as something that is pre-something-else, but as something in its own being. I want to focus on child language *per se* and on what happens to the child’s child language capability in the course of the child’s development of adult language capability.

Now, given that there are two types of language - the language of the child and the language of the adult - it is obvious how they align with our wild/tame paradigm, since the child is prior to the adult. And Jakobson gives us an explicit index in the following quote.

In place of the phonetic abundance of babbling, the phonemic poverty of the first linguistic stages appears, a kind of deflation which transforms the so-called “wild sounds” of the babbling period into entities of linguistic value. (p. 25, emphasis added)

I have emphasized “wild sounds” in this quote to draw attention to it because this is the expression which suggested to me that child language is not just an amorphous precursor to language but that it is in some sense a “wild” type of language, and thus that adult language must be in some sense a “tame” type of language. Intuitively this idea seemed to make sense, so I tried to dig down into the implications of this idea reasoning along the lines being laid out here. Let us continue to dig out the implications of this metaphor further.

Before we go on however, we should consolidate our position by incorporating the words that Jakobson has put on the table into the framework of the wild / tame paradigm. His words fit into the paradigm as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type 1</th>
<th>Type 2</th>
<th>Type 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WILD</strong></td>
<td><strong>TAME</strong></td>
<td>Learning²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Logic</td>
<td>Symbolic Logic</td>
<td>deflation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wild language</td>
<td>civilized language</td>
<td>poverty of sounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child language</td>
<td>adult language</td>
<td>talking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>babbling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abundance of sounds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I would like to discuss five salient points of interest here. First let me suggest that, although the authorities (e.g. the OED) say that the word “adult” is not etymologically related to “adulterate,” one cannot help but feel that the phonological similarity is more than mere coincidence. Recall that I mentioned above that the relationship between the wild types of signs and the tame types of signs is like that between pure water and dirty water, i.e., dirty water is just pure water with something else mixed in it. And so, while there is such a thing as absolutely pure water, there is no such thing as absolutely dirty water. And similarly, while there is such a thing as absolutely natural language, there
is no such thing as absolutely symbolic language. A symbol imposes arbitrary, unnatural sign functions upon an underlying matrix of motivated, natural sign functions. A symbol is basically a matrix of natural signs with some symbolic sign functions mixed in. And since “adulterated” means “mixed” there is a semantic similarity that is parallel to the formal similarity, which is set forth in the following paradigm:

Child language is natural, but  
Adult language is adulterated.

or equivalently,

Child language is to adult language as  
natural is to adulterated.

This is an example of the sort of wild associations of similarity and opposition that surreptitiously play under the surface of adult language in spite of the fact that such free flowing play is illegal and strictly forbidden in the adult, or rational, or scientific, universe of discourse. Thus it is possible to regard wild language as illegal, but it is impossible to actually eradicate it from civilized language.

Second, note that when one uses wild language one is not “talking,” one is “babbling.” And it is only natural that the name for the more natural type of language should be a childish, or natural, word. So here too we see a surreptitious correlation between the childishness, or naturalness, of the form of the word “babble” and the childishness, or naturalness, of the meaning. Of course, from the adult point of view such language is considered to be deviant, meaningless, and of no value because it is childish. But from the more comprehensive and more objective point of view we are taking here, one must assume that the reverse is the case, i.e. that wild language is more primitive, and therefore it is the opposite of deviant, it is heavily freighted with meaning, and it is more valuable, precisely because it is childish.

Third, our paradigm claims that the word “wild” is synonymous with “natural”, and in this sense the word has good implications: a wild thing is free and unfettered and spontaneous, simple and straightforward and true to its own being, wholesome and healthy and exuberant, etc. But the word “wild” is also used in another sense where it has bad implications: a “wild shot”, or “wild hair”, or “wild passions”, or a “wild storm.” In this other sense, a wild thing is “chaotic”, “deviant”, “disorderly”, “violent”, and “dangerous.” The general idea is that a “wild thing” is something that is unlawful or, or to put it in more anthropomorphic terms, something that does not obey the law. But there is a paradox in this second sense of the word “wild” because a storm, for example, is a wholly natural phenomenon, and thus it necessarily obeys the laws of nature. So in terms of the laws of nature the idea of a “wild storm” is a paradox. Indeed, the fundamental premise of the scientific world view is that everything is lawful, even shots, hair, and passions. So from the scientific point of view “wild shot”, “wild hair”, “wild passions”, etc. are all paradoxical. So how can we sort out these two mean-
ings of the word “wild”? How can we make sense of the fact that the same word has opposite meanings? And how can we reconcile the paradox in the second meaning of the word?

Having laid out this problem in detail I suppose it is obvious that the key to its solution is the realization that the two senses of the word “wild” look at phenomena from two different points of view and that the two different points of view are defined as a function of two different types of law. In other words, the two different senses of the word “wild” differ as to the standard of law in relation to which they judge deviation. So if I make a “wild shot”, it is not a shot which fails to obey the laws of nature, but one which fails to obey my desires and intentions. It is a shot that didn’t go where I wanted it to go. Thus the law that it fails to obey is the law of my desire. And if someone has “wild hair”, it is not hair that fails to obey the laws of nature, but hair that fails to obey some personal or collective standard of neatness. And if someone has “wild passions”, those passions do not violate the laws of nature, but some personal or collective standard of propriety. Thus we can see that this is a secondary usage of the word “wild”, derived by substituting a secondary type of law for natural law as the standard of measure. And this secondary type of law is at bottom the law of personal desire or intent, or the law of collective desire or intent as codified in the body of conventional law, the body of law commonly known as “the civil code,” the code which is also known as “language.” In short, the first sense of “wild” is a function of natural law, the second sense of “wild” is a function of symbolic law. Thus we can sort out the two meanings of the word “wild” in the framework of duplicity as represented in Figure 6 below.

And so we come to the point where we can see that, while wild language may not obey civil law, it is nevertheless governed by law, a prior type of law, a more fundamental type of law, namely, natural law, which includes not only the laws of physics and chemistry and biology, but also the laws of natural signs and the corresponding laws of natural logic. Thus in order to make sense of language in particular and of our worldview in general we must distinguish between two types of law - natural law (e.g. You cannot walk on the water) and civil law (e.g. You cannot walk on the grass). And note that the fact that there are two distinct types of law explains why the two corresponding different types of language are of radically different natures, e.g. it explains why there are many different and mutually unintelligible adult languages, and yet there is only one universal wild child language.

The fourth point I want to discuss in regard to the above quotes is this. Recall that Jakobson characterizes the gap between the abundance of wild language and the poverty of civilized language as one of “deflation,” which I put in the appropriate column in the last row of Table 4. This characterization of the transition from child language to adult language is at odds with the conventional view,
which considers this to be a process of learning. But the point Jakobson is trying to make in this section of his study of language acquisition is that, while this transition is certainly a process of learning, it is different from the conventional idea of learning. For one thing, learning is normally thought of as an additive process whereby one gains knowledge, comprehension, or mastery. And while it is true that the child gains mastery of the adult language of his society, in doing so he loses knowledge, comprehension, and mastery in regard to his natural capabilities. So the child becomes civilized at the expense of his natural capabilities. He learns to substitute symbolic competence for natural competence, and thus he learns to function by means of the symbolic sacrifice his natural competence. We can thus distinguish between natural learning (e.g. learning to walk or learning to ride a bicycle or learning to swim) and symbolic learning (preeminently learning to speak an adult language, or learning how to add, or learning the names of the capitol cities of the states), or to put it another way, between learning¹ and learning². The former is a matter of learning to function in relation to the laws of nature, the latter is learning to function in the realm of civil law, which consists preeminently of language.

Fifth, and last, if it is not obvious, it should be made clear that the relationship between wild language and civilized language is not symmetrical. In other words, they are different types of things. In particular, the relationship is not like the relationship between two different adult languages, such as English and Chinese. Rather, it is, as I discussed in Chapter 1, like the relationship between nakedness and clothing. Chinese and English are like two different kinds of clothing, but nakedness is prior to all clothing both diachronically and synchronically: We all come into the world naked and we go out of the world naked and we are always naked under our clothing. In fact we wear clothing precisely to transform our nakedness into a civilized form, so nakedness is prior to clothing. Thus we put on clothes in order to transact in civil society, but we take off our clothes in order to do the wild thing. And the wild thing is always there under the facade of civil intercourse. So in the final analysis we are always doing the wild thing; sometimes, however, we do it symbolically.

Or to put it another way, the relationship between wild language and civilized language is like the relationship between the ground and a city: a city not only stands on the ground but it consists of materials that come from the ground, such as clay, wood, stone, cement, iron, etc.¹ So the kind of loss that takes place in the “learning” of adult language is not really a loss, but rather it is a matter of taking the wild things and transforming them into civilized forms and using them in civilized ways for civilized ends. As Jakobson said in the above quote, the process child language learning transforms the so-called “wild sounds” of the babbling period into entities of linguistic value.

Thus the child’s learning of language is not a process of learning in the ordinary sense, nor is it a process of loss in the ordinary sense, but rather it is a process of civilization, or citification, or colonization of the natural capabilities of the child. In short, in terms of the theory of signs, it is a process of symbolization.

¹. Note the presuppositions which govern the grammar of determiners here. Without prior specification one must say “A city is built on the ground” because the natural presupposition is that the ground is one and cities are many.
The Symbolic Gap

Now that we have the three phases of the linguistic situation laid out before us, I would like to go back to consider them in more detail. To begin, let us consider a more detailed characterization by Jakobson of the phonetic richness of the wild, or babbling stage.

The actual beginning stages of language, as is known, are preceded by the so-called babbling period, which brings to light in many children an astonishing quantity and diversity of sound productions. A child, during his babbling period, can accumulate articulations which are never found within a single language or even a group of languages - consonants of any place of articulation, palatalized and rounded consonants, sibilants, affricates, clicks, complex vowels, diphthongs, etc. According to the findings of phonetically trained observers and to the summarizing statement of Grégoire (1968, p. 21, emphasis added), the child at the height of his babbling period “is capable of producing all conceivable sounds.”

So in the beginning the child is not just phonetically competent, but he is a phonetic virtuoso. The child has a greater mastery of his phonetic capabilities than the typical adult.

Then comes the gap, the strange deflation of capability that marks the beginning of the transition from infantile babbling to adult language.

As all observers acknowledge with great surprise, the child then loses nearly all of his ability to produce sounds in passing over from the pre-language stage to the first acquisition of words, i.e., to the first genuine stage of language. (p. 21, emphasis added)

And Jakobson described the “opulence” of wild language and the characteristics of the subsequent gap in another place as follows.

A. N. Gvozdev, the observant pioneer of a systematic inquiry into children’s language, noted that in their babbling children pronounce “sounds that bring to mind snapping, dripping, splottering, and the twitter of birds, sounds which are not only lacking in adults but which adults are sometimes even unable to produce. Later, during the acquisition of his native language, the child himself loses the ability to emit such sounds and clusters” (1961:120). Those commentators who are inclined to derive the first verbal utterances of a child at the end of his infancy from his babbling activities disregard the relevant fact that babbling and the beginnings of verbal activities are as a rule clearly separated in children’s behavior either as two concurrent yet quite distinct forms of activity or rather as two temporally delimited stages—a shorter or longer interval of reticence or even silence often detaches the new, speech era from the earlier, babbling phase—and that the variety and opulence of the babbled sounds yield to a rigorous sparseness of speech sounds. (1979, p. 62)

Now the point I want to make here is that this gap is of profound significance because it is, in the technical terminology of sign theory, the manifestation of the symbolic cut. Recall from Chapter 2 that all signs are derived by a cut in the prior, and here we see the effects of the symbolic type of cut. This cut is the beginning of the boundary between natural signs and symbolic signs. This is the cut whereby vocal sounds are cut off from their natural sign value, which they have by virtue of their own being, as the first step in the process of transforming them into symbolic signs. First they are taken to be symbolic signs, and then they must go through the process of being reframed and revalued as symbolic signs. And in the middle of this process, after a sound or a class of sounds has been taken to be used as symbolic signs, but before they have been reframed and integrated into the logic of the symbolic realm, there is a gap. In the meantime, they are in a state of suspended animation such that they cannot be used in wild language and they cannot yet be used properly in civil society. So this gap is of profound and systemic significance throughout the whole fabric of language because it constitutes the foundation of linguistic significance. It is this cutting off of the prior natural value of sounds which...
Language, Wild Language and the Gap

provides the very ground and substance from which the structures of symbolic significance are constructed.

And this gap is also of profound significance for the theory of language because it proves that the development of the ability to talk is radically different from the development of the ability to walk, and thus it proves that language is not essentially a biological thing. Just imagine how strange it would be if the normal child were able to run around with the grace and dexterity of a cat at one year of age, and then suddenly was stricken with a radical loss of capability, for no discernible physical cause, such that he was barely able to crawl around on all fours for a period of time, and then he gradually developed the ability to walk in a formal civilized way, but was never able to recover the virtuosity he had at one year of age. Of course we must bear in mind that there is some variability in this scenario, but subject to the clarifications discussed below, every normal child goes through this sequence of “development” in the course of “learning” to speak language.

In as much as this gap is of such profound significance, it is well worth digging a little deeper into it. And the first point that must be made is that we must not be lured into taking the words that have been used to describe this gap literally. One must not think of the “loss” or “deflation” as a matter of reduction in size or quantity or value, like the deflation of a balloon, or the deflation of money. Indeed, all physical metaphors are inappropriate and misleading because this is not a physical phenomenon. It is a symbolic phenomenon. It is not a loss of physical capability; rather, the capability to produce sounds, the means of production, is taken over by the symbolic system. What happens is this: when the child begins to think of the sounds he produces as the bearers of symbolic significance, they cease to be wild sounds, they become civilized sounds, and as such they must be produced in accord with the standards established by language, and thus the child is precluded from producing those sounds freely. Thus the child’s mastery of adult language begins with the symbolic captivation and repression of the child’s natural capacity to produce sounds naturally. In order to transact with adults in the medium of adult language, the child must sacrifice his ability to express himself freely, spontaneously, and naturally in the medium of sound. In sum, adult language begins with the symbolic take over of wild language, which is manifest as a loss of the ability to produce sounds freely. But this is not a physical loss, it is a symbolic loss.

And the second point that must be made about this gap is that one must not think of it as an empty space. It is not simply an absence, as one might imagine in thinking of a physical gap, like the gap between the earth and the moon, but rather it is a symbolic absence. In other words, it is a duplicitous absence. In other words, it is not really an absence at all. A certain capability might be absent on some subsequent level, but it is still present at a deeper level. So the physical capability is never really lost; it is always there under the surface even if the child, or the adult, is inhibited from using it. Thus looking at it from a comprehensive perspective it would be more accurate to say that the capability is repressed, as Freud did, rather than lost.

And the loss of capability is not a gross homogenous loss, like the draining of water from a lake, but rather it is a hierarchically stratified system of loss, or rather, repression. In fact, the negative stratification of the repression of the capability to produce wild sounds is precisely the complement of the positive stratification of the adult phonological system. To put it another way, if the entities of linguistic value are derived by the transformation of wild sounds, as Jakobson said in the above quote, then the gain of a linguistic entity entails the loss of a wild entity. So the same universal principles, the universal principles of markedness, govern both the stratificational development of the pho-
nological system and the stratificational loss of wild sounds, because these “developments” are two sides of the same coin.

And it is worth noting that this metaphor of the symbolic entity as a coin is not just appropriate as a metaphor, but is also appropriate at a deeper level of analysis. It is not that the linguistic entity is similar to a coin, as a person who can run fast is similar to a gazelle, but that a linguistic entity is a coin. Every linguistic entity is the same type of entity as a two-sided coin and every two-sided coin is the same type of entity as a linguistic entity. Or to put it another way, every symbolic entity is a two-sided coin, and vice versa. Every element of the symbolic system is derived by the substitution of symbolic value for natural value, and thereby becomes a coin of exchange in the realm of symbolic exchange. Thus we have the ordinary expression in English “to coin an expression.” But I am suggesting that it is perfectly general: All elements of symbolic value are “coined” by the process of symbolic exchange.¹ And thus, all systems of symbolic value, and all elements of symbolic value, consist of two facets, and those two facets, the natural and the symbolic, are divided, or joined, by the gap.

The Synchronic and Diachronic Dimensions of the Symbolic Gap

Up to this point I have allowed a misrepresentation of the gap to stand. The tables above represent this gap, or rather misrepresent this gap, as an empty space. And consistent with this misrepresentation, I have only cited quotes from Jakobson that speak of the gap in general categorial terms as if it were a general categorial loss of capability. I have done so for ease of exposition, but now we are at a point in the development of our understanding of the gap where we must begin to deal with the fact that this gap is actually a very complex structured and that this structure is manifest in systematic patterns.

Let us begin by looking at the general shape or pattern of the gap. We have already seen the general pattern of the symbolic gap as it unfolds in the dimension of time in the process of child language acquisition: first there is wild language, then the gap, then civilized language. So the various tables above can be taken as representations of the general pattern of the chronological manifestation of this pattern where the prior-subsequent relation in time is represented by the left-right relation on the page.

But, as Jakobson argued in many of his works, the characteristic pattern of the symbolic gap² is also manifest synchronically in innumerable ways, some of which we will illustrate in the next section. Jakobson has argued that this characteristic pattern is something like the atomic element of language and that it is manifest throughout the entire fabric of language, in the formal structure of language, in the semantics of language, and in the pragmatics of language. In other words, what Jakobson tried to establish is that the same pattern is manifest in both the synchronic and the diachro-

¹. As I said above, the stratification of the adult phonological system was explained in detail by Jakobson in the second section of his study of child language, entitled “Stratification of the phonological system”, and has, of course, subsequently been voluminously amplified by him and by others. The vast literature on markedness speaks to this issue. For a recent review of the literature see Battistella, 1990.

². See “Language as Medium of Substitution” beginning on page 194 for a discussion of symbolic exchange.
nic dimension. So it would seem that there is an underlying principle at work in language that causes a similarity of pattern akin to the biological phenomenon where ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. The relations of equivalence by which the general diachronic pattern of the gap can be mapped onto the general synchronic pattern of the gap, or vice versa, are represented in Figure 7. Obviously, the

FIGURE 7. The Paradigm of the Symbolic Gap Including Both the Diachronic and Synchronic Dimensions

The Synchronic Structure of the Gap

The Diachronic Sequence of the Gap

synchronic structure of the gap as I have represented it here is nothing other than the structure of duplicity, and of course, that it the point I am trying to make: The situation of language, and the gap, is a function of the logic of duplicity which governs the realm of signs.

Of course, in considering Figure 7 we must bear in mind that this representation, like all representations, is necessarily misleading in a number of different ways. One way in which this representation is misleading is that it is an oversimplification of the reality: it omits many aspects of the situation of the gap. Some of the complexities of the symbolic gap that have been omitted here will be brought to light as we explore the duplicity of language further in the following pages, especially in the exploration of phonology in Chapter 6.

2. Jakobson did not talk about this pattern in terms of the concept of the gap however. He talked about it in terms of the implicational relations that are manifest in the stratification of the phonological system, and language in general. And he also talked about it in terms of the universal principles of solidarity, or later principles of markedness, that govern the stratification of language. But underlying all of the various ways of talking about this relationship the general principle is one of implication or priority, depending on how you look at it. For example, one of the markedness principles is this: the presence of /k/ implies the presence of /p/ and /t/. As I pointed out in Chapter 2, in accord with Peirce’s principles of diagrammatic logic (see Roberts, 1973), the relationship between the two levels of duplicity as I have been representing them is an implicational relation such that “If Universe\(^2\) then Universe\(^1\).”
And in addition to misleading by omission, there are several ways in which this representation is positively misleading because of the inadequacy of the means of representation. For now I would just like to clarify two points that are positively misleading.

First, looking at the representation of the synchronic structure of the gap, this representation is misleading in that it looks like the gap is just a shadow that language casts on the surface of wild language. But the gap is actually a hole in the realm of wild language, an empty space that has been cut out of the realm of wild language. It is the empty space left in the realm of wild language by the wild sounds that are cut out, and taken to be used as symbolic signs, and eventually transformed into elements of civilized language. And at the same time the gap is also the no-man’s land between the prior realm of wild language and the subsequent realm of symbolic language, the space of possibilities that are already not wild language and are not yet civilized language, the in-between space that is neither the one nor the other, the space of suspended animation, the space of frozen inhibition, the space where the child is struck dumb. It is the gap of the special human type of alienated being, whence the special human type of existential anxiety.

The second point with respect to which this representation is misleading is this. Figure 7 might be taken to imply that the diachronic dimension underlies and is prior to the synchronic dimension. This is not true. Recall from the explanation of the natural logic of categories and the theory of signs in Chapter 2 that the first type of relation is sameness and the second type of relation is difference. From this it follows that synchronic relations (where “synchronous” means “at the same time”) are prior to diachronic relations (where “diachronic” means “at different times”). In other words, the duplicitous logic of signs is prior to the playing out of that logic in the sequence of events which unfold in the child’s learning process. Thus it is wrong to suppose that the similarity between the synchronic structure of language and the sequence of events in time is a function of history. Rather chronological sequence and hierarchical structure are the same because they are both a function of the same logic, the logic of duplicity, which is prior to both time and structure. So the gap in the underpinnings of language, whether viewed synchronically or diachronically, is a function of the duplicitous logic of symbolic signs, and not the function of a biological process unfolding in time.

Finally, as a way of illustrating the fact that this gap is not essentially a chronological phenomenon, I would like to suggest that this gap is also manifest in various ways as a function of the difference in situational frame of reference. For example, I would suggest that the phenomenon commonly known as “stage fright” is a manifestation of the symbolic gap. When we consider ourselves to be “on stage” we are all struck to a greater or lesser degree by this mysterious inhibiting force, but it does not apply when we consider ourselves to be “off stage.” And it is crucial to note that this inhibition is not a function of any physical characteristics of the situation; it is a function of the way we frame the situation ourselves. Thus we might be struck with stage fright on stage, or in the front of a class room, or when passing through customs when we are asked an unexpected question by a customs agent, or in any other situation when we have doubts about our ability to perform. There is no stage fright when we feel that we are free to act spontaneously, but rather when we feel that we must perform in accord with some external standard of correctness, and we aren’t sure what that standard is. This is the situation of the child when he first tries to speak the adult language.

A similar non-chronological manifestation of the gap is the phenomenon of stuttering. Stuttering is an intermittent form of the gap. There are certain chronological parameters in stuttering. For example, there is no stuttering in the babbling stage. It is much more common in children than in adults. And it occurs sporadically in the speech of all adults. But it is not essentially a chronological
phenomenon because, even in those for whom it is a persistent problem, it comes and goes at least in part as function of the way they frame their situation. A famous example that illustrates the point well is the country singer Mell Tillis. His stuttering was often so severe that he could not speak at all. But he discovered that if he sang what he wanted to say, the inhibition disappeared completely and he could “speak” fluently. I saw him in an interview on television and he would talk for a while until he got stuck stuttering something and then he would change into the singing mode for a sentence or so and then he would switch back to normal talking and so on. I take this to be evidence that the inhibition and repression of the symbolic gap is not a function of chronology or of biology, but rather a function of the gap between the natural and the symbolic frame of mind.

The General Shape of the Symbolic Gap

When we try to observe the concrete manifestations of the symbolic gap in either the process of child language development or in the structure of language we must not expect to be able to see every detail of the structure of the gap displayed overtly on the surface. One cannot expect this because, in the first place, the gap is an absence, and therefore cannot be seen directly at all. Secondly, one cannot expect to see the entire structure of the gap displayed even indirectly on the surface because language has depth. In this regard language is like a biological organism: most of what goes on in the development and functioning of an organism is hidden below the surface. So one can only see those developments and those structures which happen to appear on the surface of language as it develops, as it changes, and as it moves, and as it decays. That is why Jakobson brought together in one book observations from the disparate realms of Child Language, Aphasia, and Phonological Universals. We can only expect to find fleeting and fragmentary manifestations of the gap appearing on the surface of language.

Furthermore, we should not expect all of the manifestations of the gap to be similar in any superficial way. The logic of the gap is very basic and very general, and so it is manifest in a wide variety of different functional and structural ways. In this regard language is like a tree: some manifestations of the gap are trunk-like, some are branch-like, some are twig-like, and some are leaflike. In other words, some manifestations of the gap are general and some are specific. The more general manifestations are more basic and the more specific manifestations grow out of the prior ones. And the more general manifestations of the gap are clear and striking, while the more specific manifestations of the gap, taken one at a time, are evanescent and may seem trivial. As Jakobson said (quoting Jaensch),

Development proceeds, “from an undifferentiated original condition to a greater and greater differentiation and separation.” (p. 65)

But underlying all of the many different kinds of fragmentary manifestations of the symbolic gap one can see the same general logic at work, i.e. the logic of duplicity.

Let us turn now to consider some of the ways in which the gap is manifest, beginning with the most basic and most general. Although there is much variability even at the most general level, as we will discuss in a moment, there are children who manifest the completely general form of the gap exactly as described by Jakobson above and exactly as represented in the tables above. In other words, there are some children who vocalize freely in the wild stage, and then they are suddenly struck totally dumb. And so for a period of time these children produce neither wild sounds nor civilized sounds. We might represent this situation as in Figure 8 which I derived, literally, from Figure 7
by deleting the level of adult language and expanding the shadowy level of the gap to cover the entire ream of wild language. (As you can see, I actually let a little of the underlying level show around the edges of the gap just to represent the fact that the child’s natural capability to produce sounds is still there, to represent the fact that this is not really a loss of capability, but rather a repression of ability.)

We must hasten to point out that a total gap such as this is a highly unnatural and unstable situation, because children are naturally exuberant and cannot be easily repressed. In other words, children seem to have a strong drive to play with everything within their reach, including their capabilities for producing vocal sounds. For this reason, this state of total repression of verbal expression is unusual, and even when it does occur it rarely lasts long. Jakobson, citing several references, including Meumann’s *Die Sprache Des Kindes*, described the rarity and brevity of this state thus:

> a short period may sometimes intervene between the stage of spontaneous babbling and that of true language development, in which children are completely mute. For the most part, however, one stage merges unobtrusively into the other, so that the acquisition of vocabulary and the disappearance of the prelanguage inventory occur concurrently. (p. 29)

We will explore the phenomena referred to in the second sentence in a moment, but for now the point I want to focus on is the fact that this state of total repression does happen, but it is rare and usually brief. It is much more common for the repression of wild language to be only partial. And even a child who begins with a total repression of wild language will, in most cases, soon reduce the scope of repression to conform with that of the normal child. It should be noted that there are reputed to be rare instances of children who maintain a total repression of verbal expression for a very long time, and then abruptly break out speaking the adult language with an advanced degree of capability, which demonstrates that the child had been learning the adult language passively under the cover of this wall of silence.

Before we consider the more normal pattern of partial repression, I would like to parenthetically frame the discussion in terms of the basic question that these facts pose for the theory of language. To begin with it should be noted that, although these facts are clear enough, and are not at all obscure or arcane, being more on the order of common knowledge, and are certainly a matter of linguistic knowledge, as is evident from the numerous citations given by Jakobson, these facts have been almost entirely ignored by linguists. And the reason these facts have been ignored, I would suggest, is because they are inconsistent with the conventional point of view, and consequently, with the mainstream theories of language and language learning. Nevertheless, the time honored tradition of ignoring inconvenient facts notwithstanding, an adequate theory of language must explain these facts. And I suggest that Peirce’s theory of signs explains the symbolic gap as the manifestation of the sym-
bolic cut. Or to put it in a nutshell, the symbolic gap is the symbolic cut. I will elaborate this explanation below, but what is clear at this preliminary stage of the discussion is that there is a law at work here. And, I would suggest that the child who is struck totally dumb is making an error of overgeneralizing this law as is commonly seen throughout the process of child language acquisition. For example, when a child first learns the law of pluralization in English i.e., informally, add an “s”, it is not unusual for him to apply it too generally so that a word to which it does not apply such as “sheep” is incorrectly pluralized by the child as “sheeps.” So in regard to the situation of the child who is struck totally dumb the question is this: What is the law that the child is overgeneralizing? It would stand to reason, since the effect of the law is that the child ceases to do something, that the force of the law must be some sort of “thou shalt not.” So we can formulate the basic theoretical question in regard to the law that governs the symbolic gap as follows:

**THOU SHALT NOT WHAT?**

We can formulate the question, but we are not yet in a position to answer the question because we have thus far attained only the most rudimentary understanding of the gap produced by this law. But we will bear this question in mind as we go on to follow the evolution of the gap from the general to the more specific, from the trunk to the branches to the twigs.

Now returning to consider the general patterns of the gap, the next logical step is that the scope of the repression of wild language is reduced from total to partial. And as mentioned above, this form of the gap is far more normal. We can represent this development from the foregoing by simply reducing the size of the gap as in Figure 9. As always, we must emphasize that this representation, like all representations, is also a misrepresentation. It is not misleading, if understood as intended, but any representation is liable to be misunderstood in any number of different ways in accord with the saying, “Where there is a will there is a way.” So it can be misunderstood. We will add some of the subsequent complexities of the situation to this representation in a moment, but before it gets any more complex, I would like to transform Figure 9 into a three dimensional representation and change our perspective so that we can more directly represent the fact that the gap is a hole in the realm of wild language, rather than a mere shadow on the surface, as it appears in Figure 9. We can represent the hole-like character of the gap in wild language as in Figure 10.

From this angle we can see that the gap is a hole in the realm of wild sounds. This hole is the category of sounds with respect to which the child is struck dumb. But, as we know, while these
sounds might disappear from the child’s repertoire for a time in some cases, in all normal children these sounds will sooner or later reappear as symbolic signs in the phonological framework of the adult language. So these sounds do not simply disappear. They are first taken out of the realm of wild language in order to be used as bearers of symbolic meaning (leaving the gap as represented in the above figures) and then, as Jakobson said in the above quote, these sounds are eventually transformed from “wild sounds” into the “civilized sounds” of language. If we change our perspective once again, we can represent this latter development - the reappearance of these repressed sounds as the phonological space of language proper - so that we can show the general relationship between language, wild language, and the gap in one representation as in Figure 11.

It should be emphasized that this does not represent a new situation. It is just another way of representing the same paradigm that was represented in two other ways in Figure 7 on page 127. The three representations are pictures of the situation of language in relation to wild language and the gap as seen from three different perspectives. The first representation (in Figure 7) is intended to convey the fact that the three elements are manifest as hierarchical structure in the synchronic dimension of language. The second representation (in Figure 7) is intended to convey the fact that the three elements are manifest as sequential stages in the diachronic dimension of language. And the third repre-
sentation (in Figure 11) is intended to convey the fact that language is parasitic upon wild language in the sense that it is derived from wild language by the usurpation and transformation of wild sounds, which leaves a corresponding gap in the natural capabilities of the human being, a kind of incompetence, a kind of phonetic lameness, which at the general level we are looking at is the mark of a being who has attained symbolic competence, or the mark of a symbolic person, e.g. Oedipus.

Before we go on, I would like to state in verbal terms some of the general characteristics of the situation that I have tried to represent in terms of Pierce’s diagrammatic logic above.

1. As is obvious, the relationship between wild language and language is mediated by the gap. In other words, the gap is not only the boundary between these two types of language, but it is also the bridge between them. As sounds go from wild language into language they pass through the gap. Thus every symbolic sign is marked as such by its passage through the gap.

2. The relationship between language and wild language is asymmetric in many different ways. First, as we have seen, wild language is prior to language, not only chronologically, but also in terms of the typology of signs. Second, the sounds of language are a proper subset of the sounds of wild language. In other words, the symbolic universe of discourse is a proper subset of the natural universe of discourse.

3. Third, there is a relation of exclusion between the sounds of language and the sound of wild language, i.e., if sound $X$ is used in language, then it is not available for wild language. And if a certain sound is not used in language, then it is available to be used in wild language. This is a consequence of the fact that symbolic phenomena, or rather, symbolic epiphenomena only exist vicariously through the incorporation, or cannibalization, of natural phenomena.\(^1\)

Now that we have a general picture of the shape of the relationship between language, wild language, and the gap, we can go on to consider some of the complexities that have been omitted, and soon we will be in a position to consider some specific and concrete examples of the gap.

The Relationship between Speaking and Hearing in Relation to the Symbolic Gap

Up to this point, following Jakobson’s analysis of the process of child language acquisition, we have been ignoring, as Jakobson did, a very important dimension of the linguistic situation, namely, hearing. Thus far we have been focusing upon the development of the child’s ability to speak, to the exclusion of the entire dimension of hearing. So let us broaden our scope to include the dimension of hearing in our conceptualization of the linguistic situation.

There is, of course, a well developed and deeply entrenched conventional conceptualization of the relationship between speaking and hearing, but as usual, the conventional conceptualization is not just simplistic, but is naively partisan. So we must reconsider the conventional conceptualization of the relationship between speaking and hearing, and we must reassess the situation in the present frame of reference.

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1. I am reminded of some rituals in ancient central American cultures in which the priest empowered himself as agent of the Other by putting on the skin of the sacrificial victim like clothing over his own natural skin. More commonly such substitutive sacrifice is enacted using distinctive marks of the victim such as blood, heart, head, ears, horn, feet, etc.
In the conventional worldview which is currently prevailing, which is the worldview of the science of physics, speech and hearing are thought of as two parts of the same thing, two mutually interdependent aspects of the same organic whole, like the front and the back of a horse. But in this case, the thing of which the two are considered to be parts, the communicative situation, is not an organic thing, like a horse. Indeed, it is not really a thing at all. The conventional idea, which is based on a physical conceptualization of the communicative situation, is that a communication consists of two parts, a sending and a receiving, a speaking and a hearing, and the hearing is the natural continuation of the speaking, just as effect follows cause. Or, to put it in more concrete terms, it is like throwing a ball: If you throw a ball up, it will come down, and the coming down is just the natural continuation of the going up. And if you imagine two people playing catch with this ball, where A throws it to B and B catches it, then B throws it back to A and A catches it, you have the conventional conceptualization of the relationship between speaking and hearing in the communicative situation. And in as much as this is the conventional conceptualization of the situation, this is the frame of reference, the universe of discourse, in the context of which the mainstream linguistic dialogue takes place. So most discussions of communication, of language, and of the relation between speaking and hearing take place in this universe of discourse, which can be represented as in Figure 12. This particular representation is from Saussure’s *Course in General Linguistics* (p. 11), but a similar representation can be found in almost every introductory textbook on communication or linguistics. And, as I will show in “Language as Means of Communication” beginning on page 163, this conceptualization underlies and frames almost all discussion of these matters in every field from physics, to engineering, to biology, to psychology, to anthropology, to linguistics. And I will argue at length in that section that this conceptualization is profoundly wrong. First, I will argue that it is an error to assume that language is essentially a means of communication. Or to put it the other way, I will show that language is not essentially a means of communication. And secondly, I will show that the prevailing conventional assumptions as to what sort of thing communication is are wrong. That is, I will argue that the theory of information and communication systems that has evolved from the point of view of the science of physics might be relevant and useful for the understanding and the management of physical systems such as a telephone system or a radar systems, but it is misleading and useless when it comes to the understanding and the management of animate systems, and it is especially useless when it comes to human communication and language.

So the first thing we must do in considering the relationship between speaking and hearing is to reframe the issue. And the first point we must insist on in reframing this question is that we are not concerned here with the physics of speech or hearing. And we are not concerned with the chemistry
of speech or hearing. And we are not concerned with the biology of speech or hearing. We are concerned with the semiology of speech and hearing. That is, we are concerned with the function of speech and hearing in the realm of signs, and especially in the realm of symbolic signs, that is, language. And, while there are certain to be aspects of the physics and biology of speech and hearing that are relevant to the way speech and hearing function in systems of signs, we must frame our basic conceptualization of systems of signs in terms of the theory of signs, and then we can begin to consider the question of how systems of signs relate to physics and biology. Recall that, as I pointed out in Chapter 1, the theory of physics is a symbolic object, but the theory of signs is not a physical object. Thus we should not begin an inquiry into the nature of language on the basis of the theoretical premises of the science of physics, or of biology, but on the basis of the premises of the theory of signs. Conceptually, the theory of signs is upstream from the theory of physics.

So, contrary to the conventional view, which is the physics point of view, we must begin by abandoning the premise that speech and hearing are related as cause and effect in the realm of signs. I concede that sign and effect may be very strongly related in some cases, such as in those phenomena known to ethologists as “imprinting”, (which is a suggestive metaphor in itself), but even in such cases the cause-like relation is quite different from the cause/effect relation in the physical sense, because the sign relation is necessarily mediated by perception and judgement. And, of course, not all signs have such an automatic effect as imprinting.

Retreating from the extreme physicalist position, one might want to take the view that, while speech and hearing might not be related as cause and effect in the physical sense, there is nevertheless a relation of dependence between the two modes of behavior that is similar. There is no question that in some cases speech and hearing do seem to be linked together as elements in the chain of causation. For example, if I say, “Please pass the potatoes,” under the right circumstances there is a good chance that my addressee will pass the potatoes. In such a case my speaking caused the other to do something that he would not otherwise have done, and therefore in some sense or other my speaking caused the other to hear and to do something. Of course, this is true, but this is not the only function of speech. In fact this use of speech is quite rare. The assumption underlying the above reasoning is that we only speak in order to be heard, so that we can get something, and therefore speaking is dependent upon hearing in the sense that the possibility of being heard is a condition of speaking. But this assumption is not true. There are modes of speech that are not intended to be heard and are not intended to cause someone else to do something. So speech is sometimes completely unrelated to hearing. And even when speech is related to hearing, it is not always related to hearing in the same way. That is, if we say that in some frames of reference speech has a cause-like relation to hearing, then we have to say that there are two different types of cause-like relationships between speaking and hearing.

Before we develop this view further, we must clear up some ambiguities in the word “speech.” First, we must distinguish between literal usage and metaphorical usage. In the metaphorical sense anything at all can be characterized as speech, and in a sense everything is a type of speech for the following reason. If the universe is lawful, as the scientific worldview assumes, then everything is related to everything else. Indeed the interconnectedness of things is implicit in the very concept of “uni-verse.” And if everything is connected to everything else, then anything can be taken as a sign, and can be read as a sign that conveys information about the things with which it is connected. I would say that this is the quest of the scientific enterprise—to read the signs and to understand what they mean. So in this sense anything can be said to “speak.” It is in this sense that Psalm 19, for example, says,
The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

And it is in this sense that “Able’s blood speaks” (Genesis 4:11):

the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

And it is in this sense that “eyes speak” in the old love song:

Speak to me only with thine eyes

Putting the metaphorical sense of “speech” aside, we are left with the literal sense. And in the literal sense the word is used at two levels of generality. In the most general sense, “speech” refers to the production of vocal sounds, as opposed to nonvocal behavior, such as pointing, winking, smiling, walking, sleeping, etc. In a more narrow sense the word is used to refer only to the production of vocal sounds that are intended to convey words and other elements in the medium of language proper. So in this narrow sense, “speech” only refers to the production of language. If one takes the word in this narrow sense, what one does on the level of wild language could not be called “speech.” In this case, depending on the character of the wild sounds produced and their functions they might be called “babbling”, “cooing”, “gurgling”, “groaning”, “sighing”, etc., or perhaps there might not be an appropriate name for them in language, in which case they would remain in the realm of the nameless and outside of the realm of language. So to distinguish these two senses of the word, the general and the more narrow, we might designate them, in keeping with the logic of duplicity, speech1 and speech2 respectively, the latter referring only to language proper, and the former referring to the whole sphere of language including both wild language and language proper.

Which sense of the word “speech” we choose to use has no bearing on the issue, so long as we are consistent. But there are two extraneous reasons to prefer to use the broad literal sense in the present discussion. First, it will be easier because we want to talk about both wild language and language, and it is easier to use the single word “speech” than the phrase “the production of vocal sounds.” Second, there are certain instances of wild language that I think deserve to be called “speech.” I will discuss some examples of this type of wild speech below, but let me mention an example. At six months of age one of my own children would frequently point to hot things, such as a hot air register or hot food, and say “Hot!” with every appearance of intending to communicate the fact that it was hot, just as an adult might do in language. And yet there is good reason, which I will explain below, to believe that this was an act on the level of wild language. It seems to me that this act has every right to be called a “speech act” and yet it is an act on the level of wild language. For this reason, I think it is preferable, especially in the present discussion, to use the word “speech” in the broader sense so as to include the possibility of wild speech acts.

Now with this clarification of the word “speech”, let us return to our inquiry into the relationship between speech and hearing. The following proposition is commonly considered to be a truism:1

we speak in order to be heard

1. I cite no less an authority for my assertion than Jakobson himself who explicitly characterized this proposition as a “truism” (1979, p. 95). The same premise is subscribed to by both Jakobson and Morris Halle in their influential Fundamentals of Language (1956, p. 34).
Being regarded as a truism this is commonly taken, by scientist and layman, by communication engineer and linguist, to be the principle which governs the relationship between speech and hearing. But unfortunately it is only a truism, and not the plain truth. The truth is that sometimes we speak in order to be heard, but at other times we do not speak in order to be heard. In other words, sometimes we just speak, without intending to be heard. Indeed, sometimes we speak without any intent whatever. And if this is true, then the relationship between speech and hearing is quite different from what it is commonly assumed to be. So let us put this truism aside and reconsider the relationship between speech and hearing anew.

I suggest that in order to make sense of the relationship between speech and hearing, as well as many other things in language, one must distinguish three different levels of speech function. At the most primitive level, human beings produce sounds independently of the intent that they should be heard, even independently of the possibility that they might be heard. There many different modes at this most primitive level of speech. For example, children frequently play with themselves verbally cooing, gurgling, crooning, or playing sound games, or imitating animals or machines, etc., without any intent that they should be heard. They are not doing it in relation to anyone else. It is speech for its own intrinsic pleasure. Another example of this primitive type of speech: under the influence of shock, or overwhelming pain, or pleasure, etc. a child (or an adult, for that matter) sometimes emits sounds that are spontaneous expressions of his feelings. This type of speech does not assume a hearer and it is not intended to cause an effect in another. Then there is a second level of speech function where the speaker produces sounds, not necessarily language sounds, but such sounds as crying, groaning, sighing, etc., that are intended to influence another person. Obviously this type of speech is intended to be heard, and it is intended to produce an effect. Then there is a third level, which is the level of language proper, where the speaker produces sounds which represent a word or other symbolic sign to another person. This third type of speech is also intended to be heard, and it is intended to produce an effect, but the means by which it produces an effect is different: on the second level the sound itself causes the effect, but on the third level the effect is brought about by the symbolic sign that is represented by the sound. In other words, on the third level the effect is symbolic.

I hasten to point out that this is not by any means a new way of looking at the functions of speech. Trubetzkoy posited this tripartite categorization of speech functions as the foundation of the theory of phonology in his classic *Principles of Phonology* (the original German edition was published in 1939). He took this categorization as being self-evident, reasoning along the following lines:

Since the prerequisites for human speech are always a speaker, one or several hearers, and a topic to be discussed, each linguistic utterance has three aspects: it is at once a manifestation (or expression) of the speaker, an appeal to the hearer or hearers, and a representation of the topic. (p. 14, italics in original)

Obviously, there is a natural relation of priority amongst these three elements: the speaker is first, the hearer is second, and the topic is third. And Trubetzkoy incorporated this natural relationship into his conceptualization of the functions of speech such that the manifestation of the speaker is prior to the appeal to the hearer, and the appeal to the hearer is prior to the representation of the topic. Thus we can represent Trubetzkoy’s conceptualization of the functions of speech as in Figure 10.

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1. By the way this is a nice example of the principle that a marked variant is less true than the original form, i.e. a “truism” is less than true because it is “true” + “-ism.”

2. I think this most wild level of language is what Sapir had in mind when he wrote in regard to the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins of “his wild joy in the sheer sound of words.” (*Selected Writings*, p. 501, emphasis added.)
Trubetzkoy pointed out that this self-evident typology of speech functions had been previously noticed by Karl Bühler, who had also taken it as the basis of the theory of language (in his Sprachtheorie, which had been published in 1933).

And Trubetzkoy asserted that it follows from the fact that there are three types of speech function that there must be three corresponding types of phonology - the phonology of expression, the phonology of appeal, and the phonology of representation.

Since phonology, in contrast with phonetics, must deal with the functions of the phonic aspect of human speech, it cannot be limited to the representative function....What seems to follow from this argument...is that now two new subdivisions of phonology are to be created, namely, a phonology of expression and a phonology of appeal. (p. 15)

Of course, if follows from this conceptualization of the functions of speech together with the theory of signs that the function of representation, which is the symbolic function, is built up on the foundation of and consists of the underlying functions of manifestation and appeal. So any speech act in the linguistic universe of discourse must consist of a mixture of all three functions.¹

Now in the linguistic dialogue the functions of speech have commonly been divided along similar lines into two components, a relationship component and a message component. And some linguistic analysts have naively assumed that the two different functions of speech would be conveyed in physically different parts of the actual speech signal itself, e.g., the message in the segmental phonemes and the relational stuff in the supersegmental features. However, Trubetzkoy did not make this naive assumption, and it cannot be long sustained in the face of the facts. His idea was that the same physical signal is freighted with different sign values on the three different levels simultaneously.

In reality only one single acoustic impression is given. But we divide it into its components. (p. 14)

And he further clarified what he meant by “dividing it into its components” at a later point.

the individual properties of the sound impressions are simultaneously projected onto three different planes, namely, the plane of expression, the plane of appeal, and the plane of representation. (p. 27)

¹. We will explore this tripartite system of phonological value further in the section entitled “A Brief Introduction to the Semantics and Pragmatics of Phonology” beginning on page 346
So Trubetzkoy’s idea of how to conceptualize the functions of speech is that the exact same chunk of physical sound is significant on three different planes more or less independently at the same time. Thus every spoken sign must necessarily manifest the speaker. And it may also be intended to exercise some appeal to a hearer. And it may also embody some symbolic representation.¹

Trubetzkoy’s tripartite categorization of speech functions aligns with the wild paradigm as in Table 6. And in terms of correlating Trubetzkoy’s typology of speech functions with Peirce’s typology of sign functions, clearly the level of representation corresponds to the symbolic sign function. And clearly the levels of expression and appeal correspond to the level of wild language. One is tempted to hypothesize further that the level of expression corresponds to the iconic type of sign and the level of appeal corresponds to the indexical type of sign, but it is not clear to me at the moment whether this hypothesis is valid or not. So for present purposes we will leave that relation unspecified, as I have done in the above table.

Now given this amplification of the paradigm we can get to the main point of this section. One of the general implications of this paradigm is that from the beginning, by virtue of the inherent logic of the phenomena themselves, manifestation is prior to appeal, and thus speech is prior to hearing. So this is the first fact that I want to establish about the relationship between speech and hearing:

1. **SPEECH IS PRIOR TO HEARING.**

But when we come to the level of civilized language, as is commonly known, or should be commonly known as I will show in a moment, this relationship is inverted. So the second fact that I want to establish about the relation between speech and hearing is this:

2. **ON THE LEVEL OF CIVILIZED LANGUAGE, HEARING IS PRIOR TO SPEECH.**

And third, obviously:

3. **THERE IS AN INVERSION OF PRIORITY BETWEEN SPEECH AND HEARING.**

Leaving aside for the moment the fact that there is a reversal of priority when we go from wild language to civilized language, let us focus upon the level of civilized language. Obviously, the principle that we speak in order to be heard holds for the realm of language proper, and thus speech is prior to hearing. So this priority is obvious in terms of common sense. A child is

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¹ There is another layer of complexity that I am not going to deal with here. Just as symbolic signs, e.g., words, have a secondary value on the metaphorical level (by virtue of a secondary use of the relation of similarity) and on the metonymic level (by virtue of a secondary use of the relation of contiguity), so too do words, and other symbolic signs, manifest the speaker and appeal to the hearer in a secondary sense on the symbolic level. For example, whether the speaker chooses to talk about politics, or science, or sex and whether he chooses to say “the male organ” or “penis” or “cock” is a manifestation of the persona of the speaker and appeals to, or imposes, a certain persona in the hearer.
in the position of a foreigner in relation to his parents’ language. If I want to learn to speak a foreign language, obviously I must hear it before I can even begin to try to speak it. So a child obviously must hear the adult language before he can even begin to try to speak it. Thus as a matter of principle and common sense, on the level of language hearing is prior to speech.

And there is an abundance of empirical evidence in support of this claim. Jakobson argued insistently and forcefully at least since *Fundamentals of Language* that all analysis of language must be based on the realization that hearing is prior to speech. For example, he touches upon this crucial point in many places in *The Sound Shape of Language*, but he discusses it directly on p. 60-63 where he cites many different kinds of evidence from many authorities in many different languages. He cited one particularly succinct quote from D. B. Fry who said in regard to child language acquisition:

“perception precedes production”

Jakobson spelled this point out more fully as follows:

In the early stages of a child’s active acquisition of language, significant distinctions in adult speech are recognized by the child not yet able to produce these distinctions himself. The particularly salient trait of this period is the youngster’s objections to attempts by adults to imitate his way of speaking by omitting those distinctions which he has not yet developed in his own performance. (p. 61)

I will discuss some specific examples of what Jakobson calls “The particularly salient trait” of this asymmetric relation between hearing and speaking in the next section. But let me cite another quote where he insists on

the primacy of the perceptual stage, the sensory goal, of the speech event over its antecedent, motor stage. (p. 63)

Now, given the priority of hearing over speech in language, let us step back to consider the inversion of priority that takes place in the transition from wild language to civilized language. First, it should be pointed out that this inversion of function is not limited to the relationship between speech and hearing, but is quite general. Note, for example, that we have already seen testimony as to the corresponding inversion of the child’s role in relation to language in passing from wild language to civilized language. To put it in other words, as the child passes from the realm of wild language into the realm of civilized language the position of the child changes in regard to what grammarians call “the voice of the verb.” i.e., active vs. passive. Recall Jakobson’s quote to this effect, which I cited above, and which I reproduce here for convenience.

There are two varieties of language for the child, one might almost say two styles - one he controls actively, the other, the language of the adult, only passively... (p. 22).

In the discussion above, I was focusing on the fact that there are two types of language, but here I want to focus on the fact that the child controls wild language actively, but he only controls adult language passively.

In regard to the generality of this inversion, it would be appropriate at this stage of our exploration of the linguistic situation to point out that this inversion is symbolic and it is another manifestation of the symbolic gap. This brings us to the fourth main point I want to make in this section.

**4. THIS INVERSION IS A FUNCTION OF THE SYMBOLIC GAP.**

As we saw above, the gap is manifest as repression on the level of wild language, but now we can see that it is also manifest as inversion on the level of language proper. It might be helpful to think of the gap as something like a magnetic field, like a zone of negativity, so that when something passes
through the gap its valence is inverted. That is, when something is transformed from the natural state into the civilized state it is not only symbolically removed from the state of nature, but it is also symbolically marked as civilized in various negative ways as a function of the negativity of the symbolic gap. And one of the ways of marking something as civilized is by inversion. Thus the passive voice is more civilized than the active voice precisely because it is an inversion of the wild voice. Or, in other words, the passive voice is not the natural voice. Or to attach the negative where it belongs, the passive voice is the not-natural voice.

In this last way of formulating the inversion we can see the negative operator that is at the root of the logic of the inversion. The passive is the not-active, just as the false is the not-true, the bad is the not-good, etc. So the word “passive” is a kind of lexicalization of the concept “not-active” and the passive form of a sentence is the grammatification of the logic of the “not-active” on the sentential level. And the object is promoted to the position of the subject, while the real subject is demoted to the position of the object, or even eliminated entirely. Thus “I speak” becomes “It is spoken by me” or even “It is spoken.” These are among the myriad ways the “Thou shalt not” of the gap is manifest in the form of civilized language. Thus at bottom the gap is a function of negation. Or to put it the other way around, marks of the symbolic gap are functions of the symbol of negation, which is the first symbol, the seminal symbol, the prototypical symbol.

I will return to the negativity of the gap below, but it might be helpful to point out here that the pivotal role of negation in the evolution of the symbolic realm was explained by Freud in his little essay on negation (“Negation” SE XIX, 235-239), among other places. In that essay he began by pointing out that there are many different kinds of phenomena in ordinary language in which, even in ordinary discourse, negation is taken as a sign of affirmation, along the lines of the “me thinks the lady doth protest too much” phenomenon. For example, when someone asserts that what he is about to say is not an insult, along the following lines:

Now you’ll think I mean to say something insulting, but really I’ve no such intention. (p. 235)

such an assertion implies, by undoing the negation, that it will be an insult. Freud explains the reasoning of the speaker of this speech act thus:

this is a rejection, by projection, of an idea that has just come up.

While Freud is right, this is a superficial characterization of the reasoning of the speaker, and in order to illuminate the point that is presently under discussion I think it will be useful to analyze the reasoning of the speaker in more detail.

In trying to sort out the logic of this speech act the first thing we must note that there are two types of negation in Freud’s explanation - projection and rejection. Let me first explain how it is that projection is a kind of negation. What motivates this projective distortion of the speaker’s thought is that prior to this speech act the speaker becomes aware of the fact that what he is about to say is an insult and he does not want to be responsible for the insult. So at the extreme, the remedy is to censor the speech act altogether and not say anything at all. This would be a total repression. But he also wants to say it, so he finds a compromise remedy in which he can say it, and at the same time disown that bad aspect of his speech act. So he projects that bad aspect of the speech act onto the other.

We can analyze the logic and the grammar of projection as a function of the displacement of negation as follows. To develop this line of reasoning we have to reconstruct an approximation of the internal dialogue that takes place in the mind of the speaker before he performs the overt speech act.
cited above. First, the speaker intends to say X. Then he realized that X is insulting. So he reasons, if I say X, I will be insulting you. Then he formulated the following desire, which we might formulate as follows, and this is what underlies his overt speech act.

I intend to say X, but [I do not want [to think that [I am insulting you]]]

For our purposes we must reconstruct the missing subject of the verb “think” in the underlying logical form of the sentence expressing the desire to get the following.

[I do not want [I think [I am insulting you]]]

Now it is well known in linguistics that these verbs are transparent to the negative so that the negative can be displaced onto any of the subordinate verbs without significantly changing the meaning of the sentence. Thus the following are different ways of saying the same thing as the above.

[I want [I not think [I am insulting you]]] = I want to not think that I am insulting you

[I want [I think [I am not insulting you]]] = I want to think that I am not insulting you.

These are what might be called “legal” displacements of the negative because they do not violate the connection between meaning and form. In other words, these are different ways of saying the same thing. Now projection is also a displacement of the negative, but it is an illegal displacement of the negative, because it changes the meaning of the sentence. And, of course, that is the whole point of projection—to change the meaning. Specifically,

**PROJECTION IS THE DISPLACEMENT OF THE NEGATIVE ONTO THE FIRST PERSON SUBJECT OF A LOWER SENTENCE.**

In this case the projection is effected by the following transformation.

[I do not want [I think [I am insulting you]]] ⇔

[I want [not-I think that [I am insulting you]]]

And then, since “not-I” = “you”, by substitution of equivalents, and by elision of the expression of intent, “I want”, which is similar to the normal elision of performatives, we get the surface form

You think that I am insulting you.

So this explains how the projection of the offending thought is a type of negation, and then the speaker distances the offending thought even further by denying it, and thus having been twice negated, twice marked, it is permitted to be spoken in what the speaker considers to be civilized dialogue.

You think that I am insulting you, but it is not true.

According to Freud the principle that is at work here is this:

the content of a repressed image or idea can make its way into consciousness, on condition that it is negated.

(Italic in SE version. Verneinen in original.)

I want to suggest that this is the principle of the gap, and that this one act of negation governs the two different manifestations of the gap—the repression of wild language and the transformation of civilized language. Wild language is repressed by the negation that derives civilized language and at the same time wild language is marked by the negation in the process of being transformed into civilized
language. So wild language is cut off by symbolic negation, and civilized language is marked by the same cut of symbolic negation. So there are not two acts or two forces at work here, but rather we are looking at the same act and the same force from two different points of view. The symbolic cut has sometimes been likened to a two-edged sword which simultaneously cuts between this and that and thereby derives the two sides of the symbolic coin. So Freud’s statement as a general principle we can rephrase it in the terminology of the present discussion as follows:

An element of wild language can make its way into civilized language, on condition that it is negated.

Of course, I do not mean to say, nor did Freud, that an element of civilized language must be overtly and literally negated in the sense of adding the word “no,” but rather that it must be negated in the larger sense that includes all of the various forms of negation, such as those mentioned above - projection, inversion, elision, opposition, etc.¹ And in saying that there is one cut, I mean to say that there is one type of symbolic cut and that it cuts two ways at the same time. The concrete forms of civilized languages are derived by the application of many many cuts, small cuts and large cuts, phonological cuts, grammatical cuts, semantic cuts, and pragmatic cuts. These myriad cuts are manifest as the marks which comprise the form of language. This includes every element of language down to and including the phoneme, which, as has been clear to linguists since the beginning of linguistics, the phoneme has no positive substance, but is rather wholly negative and oppositional. A phoneme is nothing but a position in a matrix of intersecting oppositions.

Thus every element of language is marked by the negativity of the symbolic gap. And thus the inversion of active and passive and the inversion of the priority of speech and hearing as a function of the gap is not at all unusual or unexpected. On the contrary, it is precisely what is predicted by the above principle.

Before we move on, I would like to add that I think it is useful to think of the mark of the symbolic gap in the following terms, as explained by Freud:

To negate something in a judgement is, at bottom, to say: ‘This is something which I should prefer to repress.’ A negative judgement is the intellectual substitute for repression; its ‘no’ is the hallmark of repression, a certificate of origin - like, let us say, ‘Made in Germany’. (p. 236)

So by implication, a mark in the form of civilized language is like a certificate of symbolic legitimacy that says, “This form is civilized.” Thus a mark is a sign of a symbol.

I would like to point out that it is possible to make sense of the inversion of speech and hearing without going into the depths of the human psyche and the logic of markedness. The inversion of the priority of speech and hearing can be explained in a simple way as follows. Wild language is nat-

¹ By the way, the most literal way of marking something as civilized is by an actual physical cut in the body, as in circumcision, tattooing, or other forms of ritualistic scarring. Such a cut is inflicted as the crux of a rite de passage, as sign that one has passed from the wild state into the civilized state. And the scar is the mark of civilization. This is the most literal form of the symbolic cut.
ural, whereas civilized language is unnatural, or, in other words, conventional. Therefore, the child’s mastery of wild language comes naturally. The child can ascertain on the basis of forestland experience what feels good and what works. In the realm of wild language, the direct experience of satisfaction is the standard of correctness. But when the child confronts the symbolic level, since the relationship between sign and referent is unnatural, being dictated by convention, correctness is in the hand of the other. So for the child to function in harmony with the other, for the child to play the role he is being cast in by the other, the child, who is totally dependent upon the other for his very life, must take the passive position and subordinate his speech to the dictates of the other. He can only ascertain what is the correct way to use sounds in interacting with the other by hearing, and only then can he learn how to produce them in speaking. Thus on the level of language the child must hear and understand as a precondition to speaking. So when the child wants to take part in the adult game, he must take a type of position that is prescribed in the symbolic universe of discourse, and at the beginning he can only take a passive position, which means that he must begin by hearing, so that he can learn what is considered to be correct in the alien world of the other, and only then will he be in a position to begin to learn how to speak correctly so that he can play what is considered to be an active role in this fundamentally passive frame of reference. So in this way, in the civilized realm the passive comes to be prior to the active, and hearing comes to be prior to speech.

Let me recapitulate. First, to clear the ground, contrary to the conventional conceptualization as represented in Figure 12, speaking and hearing are not in a symmetrical relationship of mutual interdependence. They are in an asymmetrical relation. From the beginning on the level of wild language speech is prior to hearing, but on the symbolic level the relationship is inverted such that hearing is prior to speech. This asymmetrical relation is manifest in language as a sequence of stages in the diachronic dimension and as hierarchical structure in the synchronic dimension. In a sense then, the relation between hearing and speech on the level of language replicates the relation between wild language and language, i.e., the latter is subsequent to the former, the latter derives from the former, and the latter is a subset of the former. We can add this new dimension of complexity to our representation of the linguistic situation as in Figure 14.

In a moment we will look at some examples of some phenomena which can only be made sense of by sorting them out in terms of a conceptualization of the linguistic situation such as this. But before we look at those examples, I would like to point out some of the general implications of the linguistic situation that follow from this new dimension of complexity.

First, it is now clear that the way we represented the stage of child language development where the child is struck dumb (Figure 8, Figure 9, and Figure 10) is misleading in regard to the dimension of hearing. These representations are misleading in part because they left hearing out of the picture, but they are also misleading in that they lead one to overlook the vital role hearing plays in the process of the child’s being struck dumb. Or in other words, in the process of repression. To begin with, it should be made clear that when the child is struck dumb, whether totally dumb or partially dumb, he is not correspondingly deaf. That is, to be quite explicit, we will cite numerous examples that show that the child can hear the very sounds with respect to which he is struck dumb. That there is this asymmetry would have been clear from the beginning if we had been discussing these phenomena in German because the name for this stage of child language acquisition in German is “Hörstummheit”, which, as Jakobson noted, means “comprehension without speech.” (p. 23) So it would be more accurate to represent this stage of “Hörstummheit” as in Figure 15. This should not be
taken to imply that the above representations are simply false, but that they are incomplete. They are guilty of having left out some important aspects of the situation, but then all representations necessarily leave out many important aspects of the situation, for that is inherent in the nature of representation.

This clarification of the situation in which the child is struck dumb permits us to be more precise about the process by which the child is struck dumb. We have already described this process as a matter of language taking over a certain area of the child’s natural phonetic capability. Now we can
see that this “taking over” is more precisely a function of hearing. That is, one might suppose that these sounds are not available for the expressive and appeal functions of wild language because they are being used for representational functions in civilized language. But now we can see that one cannot maintain this view because at this stage of development those sounds are not being used at all, neither in wild language nor in civilized language. So we must suppose that this area of wild language is identified and claimed as a function of hearing and through the agency of hearing it is removed from the sphere of wild language before it is put to use in speech. Hearing acts as an agent of civilized language, as Columbus was an agent of the government of Spain. And, like Columbus, hearing locates the uncivilized area, and claims it in the name of civilized language, and drives out the native peoples or enslaves them, and thus lays the ground for the subsequent development of a new productive colony of civilization. In short,

THE REALM OF LANGUAGE IS FRAMED BY HEARING.

Thus the phonological dimension of language is primarily a function of hearing, and only secondarily a function of speech. And of course it follows, mutatis mutandis, that the same is true of every facet of language that is downstream from the phonological dimension, which, formally speaking at least, is all of language.

I would like to point out one last implication that falls out from this clarification of the role of hearing in language. From the beginning of the discipline of linguistics there has been an ambivalence in linguistic theory due to the fact that there are two possible ways to characterize the features of sound that are distinctive in the phonology of language. The sound of language can be characterized, more or less equivalently in most cases, either in terms of articulatory phonetics or in terms of acoustic phonetics. And in practice most linguists shift back and forth or mix the two systems together as a matter of terminological convenience or typographical convenience or some other extrinsic standard. Of course, such ambivalence is intolerable theoretically, but I think linguists have ignored the issue because there has not been any compelling reason to prefer one system of representation to the other. Or, in other words, until now there has not been a theoretical frame of reference in which it has been possible to frame the issue in such a way as to make it clear what the implications of this choice of representations might be. The present theoretical frame of reference clearly implies that the distinctive features of sound are framed first in acoustic terms and then subsequently transformed into articulatory terms. Thus the acoustic representation of language is prior to, dominates, and governs the articulatory representation.

And again it must be made clear that the point is not that this is a newly discovered fact, as I will show in a moment, but that this another important fact about the nature of language that follows from and is explained by the present theory and that this property of language is integrated into the system of language as seen in the present theory in such a way that it could not be otherwise. Therefore, the fact that the distinctive features of the phonology of language are framed in acoustic terms first and in articulatory terms second is in turn proof of the validity and utility of the theory being put forth here.

That this is a fact was argued in Fundamentals of Language by Jakobson and Halle reasoning from the basic principles of communication and information. They argue that it follows from the nature of communication that the speech event unfolds in a series of stages or levels. And they argue that

the information conveyed by the sound-chain...determines the operational hierarchy of levels in their decreasing pertinence: perceptual, aural, acoustical, and motor (p. 34)
In terms of this hierarchy of these “stages of the speech event”, they point out that

The specification of distinctive oppositions may be made with respect to any stage of the speech event, from articulation to perception... (but)... The distinctive features have been portrayed only on the motor and acoustic level, because these are the only two aspects for which we so far possess detailed information... But since articulation is to acoustic phenomenon as means to effect, the classification of motor data must be made with reference to the acoustic patterns. (p. 34-35, emphasis added)

On the basis of this argument Jakobson and Halle maintained that the traditional articulatory categorization of the sounds of language must be replaced in the theory of language with the conceptually more fundamental acoustic categories (hence the title *Fundamentals of Language*). Thus they proposed that the labials and velars are to be distinguished from the dentals and palatals in terms of the acoustic distinction between grave and acute. And the velars and palatal are to be distinguished from the labials and dentals as compact to diffuse.

In his subsequent writings Jakobson consistently held this view, insisting on the priority of hearing to speech in language, and over the years he added many new arguments. For example he cited numerous arguments in his discussion of this issue in *The Sound Shape of Language* (1979, especially p. 60-64), which began with the following assertion:

The perceptual value of the distinctive features control their physicomotor aspect and is directly linked with the acoustic level (p. 60).

In other words, in the realm of language hearing is prior to speech.

### A Survey of Facts which Evidence the Symbolic Gap

In this section I will survey some of the various different kinds of linguistic facts which motivate the conceptualization of the linguistic situation sketched above. To begin with, the first and most general facts which speak to this matter, as I discussed in detail above, is the sequence of stages in child language acquisition: First, free and fluent sound production; Second, a sudden inhibition of more or less general scope; Third, the ability to hear words of adult language; Fourth, the ability to pronounce the words of adult language.

These general stages are also manifest in a number of more fragmentary way in a wide variety of phenomena. For example, we mentioned that stage fright and stuttering are manifestations of the oscillation between the stage of inhibition and the stage of adult language. These phenomena show that the inhibition is not a biological phenomenon, but a function of frame of mind, because it is possible to overcome the inhibition merely by changing one’s frame of mind. Another example, I would argue, is that the difficulty of hearing and pronouncing sounds in a foreign language is a manifestation of the stage of repression and inhibition. But such general claims are not very forceful, and rather than getting caught up in what would be a lengthy argument here, I would prefer to cite a variety of specific facts which evidence the complex structure which I have posited.
The Basic Characteristics of Stuttering

Let us recall the little dialogue which I cited at the beginning of our discussion of wild language (page 111), which I repeat here for convenience.

MacKay (1970b:320) cites the dialogue of a mother with her child, who months earlier had been able to produce [f] and [p] in his babbling and now asked her to “give me my pork” (meaning fork); when she handed him his fork, saying in his style “Here is your pork,” she received the answer: “No, no! Pork! Pork!

I would like to cite my own observation of this phenomena in one of my own children. When one of my sons was six months old we lived in an apartment that had a metal heating vent in the floor which became hot in the winter (but not dangerously hot). As he crawled around on the floor he often approached this heating vent, and we warned him loudly and often to stay away from this vent by saying “Hot!”; which of course he understood in his own way, but not as we intended it. Then one day as I watched him crawl over to this hot vent for the five thousandth time and reach out his hand to touch it while looking at me to watch me jump, I pretended that I was reading and I did not prevent him from touching it, so he did touch it, and he quickly drew his hand back in shock, and then you could see the dawning of understanding come over his face and he said clearly and precisely “Hot!” For many months after that he spent much of his time pointing to that heat vent and instructing them that it is “Hot!” And he soon generalized it to refer to food that was too hot. Now it is crucial to note that he pronounced the word correctly and with great precision, in perfect imitation the pronunciation we had used, with exactly the same exaggerated loudness and tone and exactly the same careful and hypercorrect articulation, i.e. with stronger than normal friction on the /h/ and with a precisely articulated and strongly aspirated final /t/.

Then all of a sudden when he was about one year old, he was struck with this mysterious inhibition Jakobson is talking about and he could no longer pronounce this word correctly. Of particular note, he could no longer pronounce the syllable final consonant in this word. So he was reduced to saying /ha/ instead of /hat/. And while he certainly did not understand what had happened, he was aware of the fact that he was no longer able to pronounce this word correctly and it became a source of great frustration, especially because he could hear the difference in my pronunciation between /hat/ and /ha/ and, when I said /ha/ in imitation of him when he said /ha/ but was trying to say /hat/, he became furious and insisted that I pronounce the word correctly saying to me,

Say /ha/, not /ha/. 

Say /ha/, not /ha/.
Having observed this paradoxical speech act in my own child, and having dismissed it as an idiosyncratic peculiarity, I was all the more struck by the subsequent discovery in reading Jakobson’s works that the very same paradoxical speech act has been observed in many other children. Jakobson (1979) cites a number of examples from published studies of child language learning that are exactly the same. For example he cites a study of a Czech child who could not pronounce /r/ as opposed to /l/, so he would pronounce words like Ilenka and Irenka the same way using /l/ for both, and yet the child readily commented on our incorrect interpretation and demanded the distinguishing of the two liquids in our speech though he himself was content with the realization of one of them. (p. 159)

In another example Jakobson cites a child who said

“Not fis, fis!” instead of fish.

Here is another example he cites, and this one mentions the pre-inhibition stage. In the dialogue of a mother with her child, who months earlier had been able to produce [f] and [p] in his babbling and now asked her to “give me my pork” (meaning his fork); when she handed him his fork, saying in his style, “Here’s your pork,” she received the answer: “No, no! Pork! Pork!” (p. 159)

Now here we see another characteristic of symbolic learning. First, as we saw above, it involves an inhibition of capability, and second, as we now see, this inhibition is asymmetrical. For example, in this case there was an inhibition of ability to produce syllable final consonants, but not syllable initial consonants. And there was an inhibition of ability to pronounce final consonants, but not an inability to hear them.

The Dynamics of the Symbolic Gap

Logically the gap is paradox. Pragmatically the gap is inhibition and frustration. Emotionally the gap is fear and anxiety.

According to Jakobson from the beginning the child has the desire to communicate. But the gap appears when the child adds the desire to communicate something. So the gap is a function of the third element. It is not a function of manifestation, nor of appeal. It is a function of representation and of the paradoxical logic of the symbolic type of sign function.

Wilderness vs. the City in the Bible

Not many people are aware of the fact that, according to the Bible, the first city was built by Cain.
Genesis 4:16 And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. 17 And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.

Most people know Cain as the first murderer, the character who first brought the error of Adam and Eve to its natural consequences. The first murderer built the first city, and thus the city is established as the symbol of the fruition of man’s error. It is thus opposed to the garden of Eden, the original wilderness which God provided for man in the beginning, the place of which God said, “It is good.” This symbolic opposition between the wilderness and the city is one of the major threads of which the fabric of the Bible is woven.

And the relevance of this duality to the present discussion is that it correlates with and sheds light upon the distinction between wild language and civilized language in many different ways. Not least among them is the fact that the language of the Bible is itself very wild. By contrast, a scientific treatise or a legal argument would be the epitome of the civilized style of language. What is more, it should be made clear that the wildness of the language of the Bible is not just coincidental; is integral to the purpose of the text, for the purpose of the Bible is to lead people from the land of civilized suffering back to the land of natural benevolence, and it is only natural to do so by means of wild language. Indeed, one cannot get there by means of civilized language. Civilized language goes around and around inside the city.

So I will point out some of the places where this duality is manifest on the surface of the fabric of the Bible.

Perhaps the fullest and most explicit statement of the association of the city with language and the association of both language and the city with rebellion against God is in the story of the Tower of Babel.

Gen 11:1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. 3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. 4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. 5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. 6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. 7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. 9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

So far we have only dealt with the city part of the opposition, so let us discuss the wilderness part. There are several different Hebrew words that have been translated into English as “wilderness”, and sometimes the same word has been translated as “wilderness” and sometimes in another way. One of these cases which is of particular relevance to the present issue, since adult language is essentially form and not substance, is the word “tohu.” This word has been translated as “wilderness” in De 32:10 and Job 12:24, but as “without form” in the second verse of Genesis.

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
The point is not that there is anything wrong with this translation, but rather that the variability of translation demonstrates that “formlessness” and “wilderness” are the same. And thus we can add the following opposition to our paradigm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wilderness</th>
<th>City</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>formless</td>
<td>formal</td>
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</table>

KJV Isa 51:3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her **wilderness like Eden**, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Num 1:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness

Psa 107: 4 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.

Isa 51:1 Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.
2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.
3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Lev 16:10 But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the **wilderness**.
21 And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the **wilderness**.
22 And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the **wilderness**.

Num 14:32 But as for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this **wilderness**.
33 And your children shall wander in the **wilderness** forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the **wilderness**.

Psa 95:8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the **wilderness**:
Isa 43:19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

Mat 4:1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.  
2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.  
3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.  
4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Heb 13:11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.  
12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.  
13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.  
14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

3925 parembole {par-em-bol-ay'} § 1) an encampment  
1a) the camp of Israel in the desert  
1a1) used for the city of Jerusalem, inasmuch as that was to the Israelites what formerly the encampment had been in the desert  
1a2) of the sacred congregation or assembly of Israel, as it had been gathered formerly in camps in the wilderness  
1b) the barracks of the Roman soldiers, which at Jerusalem were in the castle of Antonia  
2) an army in a line of battle and this