In this chapter we will survey a wide variety of different kinds of linguistic phenomena in order to illustrate the depth and variety of the duplicity of language, in order to flesh out our understanding of the duplicity of language, and in order to marshal an array of evidence in support of the claim that language is intrinsically duplicitous.

A couple of procedural matters should be mentioned before we begin our survey. First, the whole of Chapter 6 will be devoted to a study of the duplicity of the phonology of language, so I will only touch upon a few extraordinary phonological phenomena in this chapter. Second, this is intended to be a survey, not a systematic analysis, so it is intended to be exemplary rather than exhaustive. And, the categories in terms of which I discuss the various different kinds of duplicity have been chosen as a matter of expository convenience. So from a theoretical point of view, these categories are sometimes incoherent, overlapping, etc. Also, as an expository principle I will begin with relatively superficial kinds of duplicity, which are commonly recognized as being duplicitous even by the ordinary person, and move down into deeper levels of language, of which the ordinary person would normally be unaware, and which linguists consider to be the core of language.

Two Superficial Examples of the Duplicity of Language

With these preliminaries out of the way, I will begin by discussion two superficial, and therefore, commonly recognized types of duplicity.

Irony

As our first example, let us consider the following dialogue.
Jim is speaking ironically here, which is to say that he means the opposite of what he said. At the literal level he said, “Senators always tell the truth” but he really intended to convey the sentence “Senators do not always tell the truth.” Now a simpleminded person, such as a child or an obsessively literal person, might naively take what Jim said at face value and think that he actually believed that Senators always tell the truth. However, to correctly understand his intent one must not take it at face value. One must realize that this speech act is to be taken in the frame of play. One must realize that this is a play on the literal meaning. In other words, one cannot grasp the sense of this speech act if one insist that it be either true or false, because that fact of the matter is that it is both true and false, which is to say that it is duplicitous. And what is more the duplicity of this speech act is integral to its force: this speech act derives its pragmatic force and its rhetorical quality from the particular way in which it plays upon the contradictoriness of the two levels of meaningfulness. Thus one cannot understand this ordinary kind of speech act, nor appreciate the force of the speech act, unless one appreciates its duplicity. We can represent the duplicity of this speech act, and duplicity in general, as in Figure 24.

**FIGURE 24. The Duplicity of Irony**

![Diagram of the duplicity of irony]

**Polite Request**

Next let us consider an ordinary request such as in the following dialogue.

**Bob** Senator Blowhard said that we could rely on receiving social security benefits when we retire.

**Jim** Oh well, if he said so you can bank on it, because everyone knows that Senators always tell the truth.

Bob Senator Blowhard said that we could rely on receiving social security benefits when we retire.

Jim Oh well, if he said so you can bank on it, because everyone knows that Senators always tell the truth.

Bob Do you have a watch?

Jim It is almost three o’clock.
An Example of Duplicity Explained in Detail

In order to understand this dialogue we have to realize that there are two layers of meaning in Bob’s question. At the literal level, Bob is asking a yes-no question as to whether Jim has a watch or not. If Jim had taken Bob’s question at this literal level, he would have replied as follows.

Bob: Do you have a watch?
Jim: Yes.

But the fact that he replied in the way he did is evidence that he interpreted Bob’s question in a totally different way. Jim took Bob’s question as a way of indirectly, and thus politely, asking Jim to tell him the time. We can represent this type of duplicity, polite duplicity, as in Figure 25.

![Figure 25. The Duplicity of Polite Indirectness](image)

Here again if one insists that the question either means what it appears to mean on the face of it or it does not mean anything at all, then one would be unable to grasp what is going on here. The fact is that this sentence both means what it appears to mean and it means something else. And so one can only grasp the sense of this dialogue if one understands it duplicitously, for that is how it means what it means.

Of course, these are only examples of superficial linguistic phenomena, but that is why they are able to serve as introductory examples. And yet in as much as everything in language has the same duplicitous character, these trivial examples can serve as well as anything else to illustrate the logic of duplicity. We will explore some of the deeper aspects of the duplicity of language as our discussion proceeds, but these examples illustrate and exemplify the logic of the duplicity of language.

An Example of Duplicity Explained in Detail

I think it would be helpful now to look at an example in more depth and detail in order to show how duplicity works. I have chosen to examine an example from the system of polite speech, a system which is commonly recognized as being duplicitous, so much so that we even have a conventional term in ordinary English (as do many other languages) to designate, and exonerate, this partic-
ular species of duplicity, viz. “little white lies.” I will look at the greeting ceremony in standard English.

In English when we meet someone for the first time we are supposed to say, “I am pleased to meet you”, (or some semantically equivalent variant such as “I am glad to meet you”). And we are supposed to say this whether we are really pleased or not. And because we are obliged to say this whether it is true or not, it is simply a ritualistic formula, an empty formal act, a hollow pretense. Let me put it in other terms: this speech act is the verbal equivalent of a mask which we are obliged to display momentarily by way of enacting the meeting ceremony. And like a mask, this ceremonial speech act does not manifest and convey our true feelings because it is displayed for the performance of a ceremonial function, and the same display cannot perform both as a manifestation of our personal feelings and as a ceremonial act at the same time. So there are two levels of things here: the level of the mask and the level of our real face. Second, the mask of the face is obviously derived from the face. And third, there is a falseness here in that the mask looks like a face, but it is not a face. And these are the three characteristics which constitute duplicity - doubleness and derivativeness and falseness. This is the sense in which this speech act of greeting is duplicitous.

In reply to this duplicitous display the other party is obliged to reply in kind, “The pleasure is all mine”, (or some semantically equivalent variant) whether he actually feels any pleasure or not. And from this point the two parties may go on to exchange various subsequent duplicities, depending on the situation, such as “Where are you from?”, “What do you do?”, “The weather is beautiful today?”, “How about those Bears?”, etc. But in the prescribed universe of discourse this initial exchange of duplicities is the minimal form of the greeting ceremony. Thus in the conventionally prescribed universe of discourse, in the ideal world, relationships are framed from the very beginning by the exchange of duplicities.

Then on subsequent occasions, when we encounter that same person again, we are obliged to say, “Hello. How are you?”, even if we do not care how he is. And he is obliged to answer in kind, “I am just fine, thanks.”, even if he is not fine. Thus all of our subsequent meetings in the conventional universe of discourse are framed by the exchange of duplicities.

And on the basis of these observations about the beginnings of relationships one can see that the general implication of the fact that language is inherently duplicitous is this: to the extent that our relationships are governed by convention, they will be framed by and consist entirely of the exchange of duplicities.

Indeed, in the case of these speech acts of ceremonial greeting the presumption of duplicity is so powerful that it is very difficult to overcome the presumption. So, if we greet someone whom we genuinely care about in a formal situation, and if we really want to know how they are, we sometimes have to go to great lengths to overcome the conventional presumption that such greetings are duplicitous.

In other words, in the context of the greeting ceremony the sentence “How are you?” has been usurped by its ceremonial function to the extent that it is precluded from being used to mean “How are you?”1 Likewise, “I am fine” is precluded from being used in the context of the greeting ceremony to mean “I am fine.” So if we really want to find out how the other party is in the context of a greeting ceremony, we must overcome the normal presumption that the question “How are you?” is duplicitous by adding something abnormal to convey our counterconventional sincerity. For example,

1. By the way this is an example of language colonization discussed in “Language, Wild Language and the Gap” beginning on page 109.
we might add an extra word, as in “How are you, really?”, together with an exaggerated posture of concern, exaggerated facial expression, and/or exaggerated voice qualities, etc. But unfortunately such abnormal and exaggerated expressions are themselves interpretable as part of the duplicitous pretense in accord with conventional standards, so the message of counterconventional sincerity might not get through the filter of the conventional presumption of duplicity.

One sometimes sees the conflict between the normative presumption of duplicity and the genuine desire to express solicitude being played out in a dialogue such as the following.

```
Bob     How are you?
Jim     Just fine, thanks. And you?
Bob     No. I mean, how are you, really?
Jim     Oh, I'm fine.
Bob     No, I really mean, how have you been doing?
Jim     Well, I have been sick lately, my wife left me, and I lost my job.
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And one sometimes sees the converse.

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Bob     How are you?
Jim     I have been sick lately, my wife left me, and I lost my job.
Bob     (Probably to himself.) Who asked for your life history.
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Such deviations from the norm as these clearly demonstrate that the speech acts of greeting are not only duplicitous, but they are framed by a very powerful presumption of duplicity as well.

Now let us take one of these speech acts, “How are you?”, as an example that we can use to see how its duplicity works. When we try to understand how this speech act works, it is obvious that we must take its doubleness and its falsity into account. We have seen that it is false in the sense that it is an insincere pretense, but it would be an error to think of it as simply being insincere, because it is at the same time also sincere, or at least it can be sincere. This paradox is to be sorted out thus: while this speech act is insincere as an expression of solicitude, it is, or can be sincere as a greeting. Thus it is an error to apply the law of the excluded middle in trying to understand this speech act (or, I am claiming, any speech act), because it is both sincere and insincere.

Similarly paradoxical, as we have seen in the greeting ceremony the sentence, “How are you?” does not mean “How are you?” And yet it cannot mean anything other than “How are you?” Thus in the greeting ceremony the sentence, “How are you?” does mean “How are you?” and at the same time it does not mean “How are you?”

Similarly, in some greeting dialogues there are overt formal elements which cannot be accounted for except by reference to the duplicity of these speech acts. For example, how could one make sense of either of the dialogues above except in the framework of duplicity, for they both turn on the fact that the initial “How are you?” can be taken in either of two senses. Consider in this regard the second turn of Bob above: “No. I mean, how are you, really?” What does “No” do here? It negates the presumption of pretense which conventionally frames the greeting ceremony. It means “No, you misunderstand me. This is not merely a pretense of solicitude”. And what work does “really” do? It refers to the conflict between the pretense of solicitude and the expression of real feelings of solicitude and it asserts that the speaker intends the sentence to be taken as real, rather than mere pretense.

So in order to make sense of these various aspects of the sentence “How are you?” as it is used in the greeting ceremony, one must suspend the law of the excluded middle, and one must evaluate it in terms of a framework of duplicitous logic on two simultaneous levels of meaningfulness, two lev-
els of illocutionary force, etc. Figure 26 on page 220 is a visual representation of the duplicitous logic of this example.

**FIGURE 26. The Duplicity of the Greeting Ceremony**

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We will explain the logic of this representation in more detail as our discussion unfolds, but at this point I would like to point out the most fundamental fact about the logic of duplicity, which is that the two facets of duplicity are not symmetrically related, like two brothers, but rather are asymmetrically related, like mother and child. This relation of priority is the very crux of the logic of duplicity.

The relation of priority is manifest in our example in the fact that the form, “How are you?”, as a literal sentence is conceptually and historically prior to its being used as a greeting. So the literal sense constitutes the very material\(^1\) from which the subsequent usage derives. This is the sense in which use of the sentence, “How are you?”, as a greeting is a secondary level of usage. The image of duplicity as in Figure 26 is intended to iconically represent the fact that Level 1 is prior to Level 2, that Level 1 is the ground from which Level 2 arises, and that Level 1 is the very material of which Level 2 consists. This is the image of the paradigm of duplicity.

Now it is important to realize that the duplicity of this ceremonial speech act is not incidental. As we all know, some elements of language are more or less incidental. For example, the fact that the second person pronoun, “you”, begins with the letter “y” is incidental. The second person pronoun could just as well begin with “t”, as it does in French and as it did in Old English. So one might suppose that the duplicity of the greeting ceremony is incidental, but it is not. Duplicity is integral to the semantic value and to the pragmatic dynamic of this speech act. To see how this is so, let us examine this greeting a little further.

The key to understanding the value of the sentence “How are you?” when used as a greeting is to observe that even though it is used in the greeting ceremony to mean something other than what it appears to mean, it is used to mean that something other precisely because of what it appears to mean. Putting this rather confusing fact in terms of a mask, if we want to make a mask of a smiling face, we have to make it look like a smiling face. In our example we have a sentence that looks like an expression of solicitude, and that is precisely what qualifies that sentence to be used as a means to display an

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1. Note that the word “material” comes from Latin “mater” meaning “mother”.

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expression of solicitude. Thus this sentence, “How are you?” can be displayed as a greeting, i.e., used as a mask of solicitude, because it is an expression of solicitude.

Let me explain the connection between the expression of solicitude and a greeting ceremony. Although greetings vary from language to language, there are general underlying principles which govern greetings in all languages. In other words, languages do not just take any arbitrary random sentence and use it for a greeting, such as “My dog is wet” or “The earth was formed billions of years ago”. There is a reason why expressions of solicitude are appropriate as greetings.

We must step back from this particular example momentarily and look at the underlying dynamic of greeting ceremonies from a general, language universal perspective. Looked at from this broad perspective, one can see that at bottom the greeting ceremony is a symbolic reenactment of the role of mother. The role of mother, apart from giving birth, is to give the child food, to keep it warm and safe, and generally to take care of it. Therefore, in order to enact the role of mother, one acts nurturing and solicitous. One can give things or offer to give things, such as food, drink, blessings, good wishes, etc., or one can offer to be of service in a more general sense.

For example, in some cultures, e.g. Japanese, people bow in greeting as a token of subservience. It was not too long ago in English culture that people bowed in greeting, and said, “Your servant”, which was an elliptical form of “I am your servant”, which is an offer to serve, to take care of the other. In some languages, e.g. Spanish “Buenos dias”, as in English, one can greet someone by conferring upon them a benefactive wish for them to have a “Good day”. In Thai “Sawatdi kap”, one confers good fortune. In some languages one invokes the blessing of God. In some languages one can greet someone by offering to give them a cup of tea, even if it would be inappropriate or impossible to actually do so. In some languages one bestows the wish to have many children. And in modern colloquial English we greet by offering an expression of solicitude as to the other's well being.

Thus the form, “How are you?”, functions as an element of the English greeting ceremony by virtue of the fact that it is an expression of solicitude. And one who says, “How are you?”, is enacting the role which is prototypically that of mother. By saying, “How are you?”, the speaker is saying by implication “I am interested in your well being. I want you to be well. I want to take care of you.” It is via these relational implications that are implicitly conveyed by saying, “How are you?” that this form functions as a greeting.

For our purposes, the pivotal point is that this duplicity is not simply an incidental misuse of the sentence in question. The point is that the duplicity of the speech act is not extrinsic to the speech act, but rather it is the very mechanism by which the speech act enacts greeting. The very essence of the greeting is the performance of an act of solicitude. The point is that as a greeting it is not solicitude, but it is the performance of an act of solicitude, which uses the form which a genuine expression of solicitude would use. The duplicity of the act of greeting is the essential dynamic of the act of greeting.

Therefore, this greeting is an expression of solicitude, and it is not. It is sincere, and it is not. It is a misuse of the sentence “How are you?”, and it is not. It is misleading and it is not. It is, in short, duplicitous. And consequently unless one tries to sort out its many paradoxical facets of this speech act in the framework of the two-layered logic of duplicity, one will become hopelessly confused, and entangled, and disoriented. Thus this example illustrates my assertion that one cannot possibly make sense of any element of language except by realizing that language is essentially duplicitous, and by looking at language in the framework of the logic of duplicity.
An Analysis of the Duplicity of the Word “Duplicity”

Now that we have seen down into the depths of duplicity, we can undertake an analysis of the duplicity of the word “duplicity”. This will make it clear why the word “duplicity” is singularly appropriate to serve as the paradigmatic focal point of a theory of language. To begin with the word “duplicity” is appropriate because it refers to the duplicitous logical knot of which the fabric of language consists. But what is more, the word “duplicity” not only refers to duplicity, as the word “duck” refers to a duck, but unlike the word “duck”, the word “duplicity” is itself an instance of that which it refers to. That is, the word “duplicity” is a duplicity, whereas the word “duck” is not a duck. Thus the word “duplicity” exemplifies that to which it refers. I will explain this in this section. Furthermore, as I will explain in a later chapter, the word “duplicity” is a duplicitous duplicity. That is, there are two layers of duplicity, a gross duplicity contained in a subtle duplicity. So the word “duplicity” is really triplicitous. Therefore the word “duplicity” is singularly appropriate to serve as the paradigmatic word in a theory of language because it not only refers to duplicity, but also because it exemplifies duplicity, and it does so duplicitously. Let us begin to unfold the layers of this word one by one, beginning with an analysis of its etymology and morphology.

The word “duplicity” was borrowed into English from Latin “duplicítas.” There are many related words that were borrowed from Latin including “double”, “duple”, “duplex”, “duplicate”, “dubious”, etc. These words obviously begin with the same morpheme, “du-” or “dou-”, meaning “two”, which is from Latin “du-”. Latin “du-” and English “two” are etymological cognates both deriving from the same Proto-Indoeuropean root, *dwi-, which meant “two”. Thus the first morpheme of “duplicity” means “two”.

The second morpheme of the word “duplicity” is “-plic-”, which means “fold”, and is also seen in “duplicate”, “duplex”, “triplex”, “perplex”, “complex”, “simplicity”, etc. This morpheme is from the Proto-Indoeuropean root “*plek-” meaning “to plait, braid”, which became the native English word “flax”. This morpheme is the root of a verb in Latin, “plicāre”, meaning “to fold”. Compare Greek “pleko”, plekw.

One might suppose that the “pl” in the words “duple”, “triple”, “simple”, which were borrowed from Latin “duplus”, “triplus”, “simplus”, and which also means “fold”, is from the same root as the “pl” of “duplicity”, but it is not. This “pl” is descended from the same root as the “fol” of English “fold”, which is Proto-Indoeuropean *pel- (Pokorney’s # 802), meaning “to fold”. Compare Greek “diploũs”, “haplous”.

Let me parenthetically comment on the apparently aberrant spelling of “double”. We would expect English “duple” from Latin “duplūs”. We do have the word “duple” in English, but we also have the unexpected “double”. These facts are the result of two independent borrowings into English from the same Latin “duplus”. The fact that the version spelled “double” is used in ordinary everyday English whereas the spelling “duple” is only used as a technical term in logic and mathematics suggests that the former was borrowed from Latin indirectly through French by contact with the French speaking Normans during the Norman domination of England, as were so many of the ordinary English words of Latin origin, whereas “duple” was borrowed into English directly from Latin as a scholarly term in the language of scholars who used Latin as a technical language in logic and mathematics, among other subjects. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the earliest attested occurrences of the common word “double”, the earliest being in 1225, were already spelled with “b”, and this was after the beginning of the period of Norman domination. These facts, together with the fact
that the aberrant spelling, “double”, is exactly the same as the French spelling, confirms the above explanation.

Getting back to the word “duplicity”, the last part of the word is “-ity”, which serves the grammatical function of marking the word as an attributive noun. It is the equivalent of “-ness” in English, so the literal analytic meaning of the word “duplicity” is “double-ness”, or in purely English morphemes, “two-fold-ness.”

Now with the innards of this word laid out before us, we can get at the point I want to focus on here, which is this. Although the word “duplicity” is commonly used to mean falseness, there is no morpheme in the word that means “false.” So how does it come to mean “false”? Consider by contrast, for example, the word “falseness”, which means falseness because it has the morpheme “false” in it. In this sense the semantics of the word “falseness” is transparent. Somewhat less transparent, the word “fallacious” refers to falseness because it comes from a Latin word that has the morpheme “falsus” in it. Similarly, “pseudoscience” means “false science” because “pseudo” is the Greek morpheme for “false”. This is even less transparent because the morpheme that means “falseness” is not even phonologically similar to the English morpheme “false”. Still less transparent are “misinformation” and “disinformation”, both of which mean “false information” because of the negative prefixes “mis-” and “dis-”. These prefixes convey the meaning of falseness because they are negative, and negativity and falseness are semantically equivalent. For example, “It is false that the book is on the table” means virtually the same thing as “The book is not on the table”. So “information that is not information” is virtually the same as “false information.”

But when we consider the word “duplicity” we do not find a morpheme that means “false” and we do not find an element of negativity. The analytical meaning of the word is two-ness, and yet it is used to mean false-ness. Its plain meaning is in the sphere of quantity, but it ends up in the sphere of veracity. It is as if we put together the ingredients for a cake, pop it in the oven, and out comes a bicycle. So the point I want to focus on here is that the word “duplicity” is duplicitous in that it appears to mean one thing on the face of it, but something unseen happens such that in ordinary usage it conveys a totally different meaning. (See Figure 27.)

**FIGURE 27. The Duplicity of the word “Duplicity”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duplicity = False-ness</th>
<th>Level 2 - Derived Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplicity = Two-fold-ness</td>
<td>Level 1 - Analytical Meaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given that there is some sort of sleight of hand in the meaning of the word “duplicity”, the next question is how does this happen? What is the line of reasoning that goes on behind the scenes to transform the semantic value of this word from twoness to falseness?
Of course, we, the speakers of English, all know intuitively how this magic trick works, because we do it every time we use the word, but we go through it so automatically, and so unconsciously, that we are not normally aware that there is a semantic gap here, nor are we aware of how we bridge the gap. Thus what we are trying to get at here is not some arcane or mysterious facts about the word “duplicity”; rather we are trying to discover facts which we already know intuitively, but which are buried under the surface of our awareness. We are trying to slow down the ordinary everyday semantic trick that is already integrated into the semantics of the word, so that we can see what is actually going on, so that we can become aware of what we all already know intuitively about the semantics of the word “duplicity.”

If we stop to think about this semantic jump from twoness to falseness, we realize that there are many other familiar examples in English that make the same jump, such as “double-tongued”, “forked-tongue”, “two-faced”, “double dealing”, “double agent”, “double talk”, etc. All of these are examples where twoness is used to mean falseness. The fact that there are other cases of the same jump shows that this is not an isolated arbitrary characteristic of this particular word, but rather is a more general semantic process. The question is how general. Let us then hypothecate a semantic principle which holds that twoness implies falseness and consider what the general parameters of this principle might be.

As we survey the boundaries of this semantic implication, we note by way of limitation that not all references to twoness imply falseness. For example, a “two-way street” is not a false street, but rather a street on which cars can go in two directions, as opposed to a one-way street. Similarly, “double chocolate cake” is not false chocolate cake, but cake with two times as much chocolate in it as a normal chocolate. Thus the implication does not go through when twoness refers to a quantitative property of the referent. This suggest that the generalization is that twoness implies falseness in the absence of quantitative relevance. In other words, it is only when we are referring to the quality of twoness, as opposed to the quantity of twoness, that it implies falseness. Thus we take the expression “a two-faced man” to mean that the man is a liar, unless we can find some interpretation under which he actually has two faces. For example, I once saw a two-headed goat, and of course it was also two-faced.

Next, we may observe that the generalization extends by inversion to the opposite. That is, as twoness implies falseness, so does oneness imply truth. And these implications are symmetrical as well, which is to say the reverse also holds: falseness implies twoness, and truth implies oneness. There are numerous examples which evidence this more general form of the principle. For example, the oath that witnesses are required to say in court is, “I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” The word “whole” implies that its referent, “truth”, is one thing. Contrast “*the whole false”, which is incoherent because it is contradictory as a function of our semantic principle because “false” implies twoness but “whole” implies oneness.

Note also, by way of citing another example, the use of the word “incoherent” in the previous sentence. The analysis of this word morpheme by morpheme is “in-co-herent”, which means “not-together-sticking”, which means “not one”, which means by implication through our general principle, “not true”, which means “false”. To generalize from this example, the property of incoherence, inconsistency, contradiction, etc. is taken as a sign of falsehood, and the property of coherence, consistency, non-contradiction, etc. as a sign of truth.

We may observe further that the relevant opposition is not really between the number one and the number two, but more generally between the property of oneness, wholeness, unity, coherence on one hand, and twoness, partiality, division, and chaos on the other hand. Further, when we refer to twoness in this context, it is not the quantitative aspect of twoness, but the conceptual position of
twoness as the beginning of manyness. That is, if you begin with one - and you must begin with one, because one is the beginning - and then if you divide that one, you get two, and then if you divide one of the two, you get three, and if you divide one of the three, you get four, and so on. Thus twoness is the product of division and thus is the beginning of manyness. It is the first sign of manyness. So in this context, twoness should not be taken as a numerical operator, but rather is serving as a representation of the quality of manyness through its capacity as the first step on the way to manyness. In other words, in this context, the concept of twoness that is relevant is not the position between oneness and threeness in the endless chain of numbers, but the second position in the pairwise opposition between one and many. It is not the quantity of two that is relevant, but the quality of manyness that is implicit in twoness as the first product of division.

These observations open up the way to the realization that the semantic principle we are considering here is a very general principle which governs a vast system of pairs of oppositions which align with each other in accord with the semantic principle of similarity beginning with the true/false vs. one/many relationship\(^1\). For example, by similarity with the one/many opposition we say, “He was straight with me”, but we mean that he told me the truth. By opposition we say, “There is something crooked about this story”, but we mean there is something false about the story. The similarity here is a function of the fact that a straight line is one thing, whereas a crooked line has many facets. Therefore, straight is to crooked as one is to many as true is to false. And, of course, the straight/crooked opposition does not just imply the opposition true/false, but it also implies good/bad. Specifically, straight is to crooked as law-abiding-citizen/criminal.

Further, if we look at other languages we find the same system of implications, which leads us to believe that this system of semantic implications is not just a convention of English, nor just a tradition of Western culture, but that it is a universal semantic principle which is manifest in every language, which is to say, it is a natural semantic law. In other words, the ubiquity of this system of implications leads us to the conclusion that this law of implication governs universally in the realm of language just as the law of gravity governs in the physical universe.

To see that this semantic law governs the same complex system of implications in other languages, consider the text of the Bible, which was written in Hebrew and Greek, as an example. Consider, Psalms 12:2 “with a double heart do they speak”. Or James 1:8 “A double minded man is unstable in all of his ways”. Or consider the name of the devil, which in Greek is diaboulou, the root meaning of which is “to pull apart”, which means “to divide”, which means by implication via our general principle, “to generate falsehoods”, which is why the devil is called “the father of lies”.

On the surface, the language of the Bible appears to be wildly incoherent. One cannot make sense of it unless one realizes that the text is incoherent on the surface and that its coherence is at a deeper level of analysis, as a function of the system of oppositions and similarities we are considering here. The whole text is an exposition as well as an exemplification of the dynamic of the conflict between the truth and the false as this conflict is manifest in perception and in language in the properties of oneness and manyness.

This is not the place to undertake a systematic exegesis of the Bible, but I will mention a few more examples to illustrate the denseness of the fabric of implication which is a function of the principle we are considering here. Consider the general theme of the scattered vs. the gathered which is

\(^1\) Some might realize that this is the same semantic system which Roman Jacobson talked about in terms of similarity vs. contiguity and metaphor vs. metonymy. And also it is the same system as Freud called “primary process thinking” and which he talked about in terms of condensation vs. displacement. We will discuss these relationships more fully at a later stage of the discussion.
woven throughout the text, as for example in the scattering of the whole human species which took place at the tower of Babel by means of the confusion of language. In this regard, note that the root meaning of the Greek word “λογο”, used to mean “word” in the Koine Greek of the new testament, which is etymologically cognate with “logic”, “legal”, “ligature”, etc., is “to gather”. This textual play on the opposition of scattering vs. gathering is obviously parallel to the play of the one vs. the many, the true vs. the false, etc.

Or consider one particular sentence that is often cited as an example of the ludicrous incoherence of the Bible, Genesis 27:11: “Esau, my brother, is an hairy man, and I am a smooth man.” In the context of the general principle we are considering, we can immediately see that the point is that this is a play on the manyness of hairiness vs. the oneness of smoothness. In the context of the story in which it occurs, it conveys a value judgment in the pairwise relationship between the speaker, Jacob, the smooth, who is the exemplar of good, as opposed to Esau, the hairy, who is the exemplar of evil. After making this observation, Jacob proceeded to fool his father into thinking that he was Esau by putting the hairy skin of goats upon his hands and upon the back of his neck so that when the father touched Jacob’s hands and neck he would perceive the hairiness and think he, Jacob, was the hairy brother, Esau. Note that this theme, hairy-ness-as-a-sign-of-evil, is not just random symbolization because it becomes a very important element of the theme of substitutive sacrifice, which is played out for example in the coat of many colors that Jacob gave to his favorite son Joseph, in the idea of a scapegoat, of a hair shirt, etc.

Thus we see in ordinary English as well as in the Hebrew and Greek text of the Bible that there is a general system of pairs of opposites, generated from the basic pattern “one is to many as true is to false as good is to evil”, including gathered/scattered, straight/crooked, straight/twisted, straight/tangled (“Oh, what a tangled web we weave...”), smooth/hairy, smooth/rough, etc. And we find the same system in Latin, as we have seen in the Latin borrowings into English. These facts are evidence in support of the belief that this is a universal, natural principle.

There is a possible counter argument which would follow from a certain way of thinking about culture and language that enjoys a certain degree of popularity these days. One might counter by claiming that the examples I have cited from different languages are not independent of each other, but rather are all drawn from the same cultural system, the so-called Western Judeo-Christian culture. In other words, the idea is that this same system of semantic implications is found in these various languages, not because it is a function of natural semantic law, but because it was borrowed from biblical Hebrew into Greek and then into Latin and then into English, along with the religious ideas which comprise the common core of Western Judeo-Christian culture. I will make three points in reply to this counter argument.

First, as a matter of principle, this idea is ludicrous to anyone who is familiar with the historical dimension of these languages, or with language in general. Only someone who thinks of language and culture as an arbitrary hodgepodge could seriously entertain the idea. The fact is that language and culture is systematic both in its synchronic and its diachronic dimension. Consequently it is possible to precisely distinguish between inherited and borrowed elements, particularly in language. For this reason, from an informed point of view, it is perfectly obvious that there is no such thing as a Western Judeo-Christian system of language or culture. In the geographical area in question there are several etymologically independent systems of language, the Semitic system, the Indoeuropean system, the Fino-ugric system, the Ural-altaic system, and the Basque system, and with few exceptions, it is possible to distinguish alien borrowings from native structures, and the sort of borrowing that is envisioned in this counter argument simply does not take place. Ideas have been borrowed from Hebrew into English, but very few words or sentences were. The vocabulary that was borrowed into
An Analysis of the Duplicity of the Word “Duplicity”

English from Hebrew has almost entirely been filtered through Aramaic, then Greek, then Latin, and then into English. As a result, the modern English vocabulary that is used in relation to the Hebrew religion has very little relation to the Hebrew vocabulary of the Hebrew religion, not etymologically, and not through borrowing. This paucity of relationship between Hebrew and English is especially striking if one contrasts it to the massive borrowings into English from Latin and Greek in the vocabulary of philosophy and science. Thus these semantic structures have not been borrowed from Hebrew into English. As I said, the idea is ludicrous.

Furthermore, whereas languages do borrow words, and sometimes phrases or sentences, from other languages, they do not borrow systematic principles or structures. They do not even borrow the smallest of systematic phonological elements. On the contrary, when words are borrowed which contain foreign elements those foreign elements tend to change to conform to the native system, not vice versa. And to the extent that borrowed words do retain alien phonological features, they also retain their alienness. For example, there are several words like “pneumonia” which English borrowed from Greek, but in English we drop off the initial “p” in pronunciation because word initial “pn” violates the rules of English phonology. So although English has borrowed many words like these which are inconsistent with the prior rules of English, and although these words have been in English for hundreds of years, the phonology of English has not changed. In other words, English did not borrow a general principle, or even relax its own native principle in accommodation to these illegal borrowings. Thus if language does not borrow even the smallest and most superficial of generalizations, how much less likely is it to borrow the sort of deep and pervasive generalization we are considering. Therefore, the idea that this system of associations was borrowed from Hebrew into Greek and then into English is triply ludicrous as a matter of principle.

The second point I want to make in reply is a matter of fact. One can look at the native core of contemporary English, which is still uncontaminated by borrowings, and one can look back at the old English of the ninth century texts before the language had any contact with Hebrew or Greek or Latin, and by means of the method of internal reconstruction one can look back at the proto-Germanic stage of English, and even back to the Proto-Indoeuropean stage some four thousand years ago, and one finds evidence of this same system of associations throughout. For example, the native English word “truth” comes from a Proto-Indoeuropean root meaning “solid”, and is cognate with “tree” as a type of solidity, which is why trees were worshipped in old Germanic cultures.

Further, and what is probably the most obviously devastating reply, the same system of associations can be found in every language throughout the whole world. And, as we are in the process of showing, this general semantic principle which we are considering here is not just manifest in the lexical system of associations, nor just in the implications we are considering, but is the most fundamental principle of language, and thus is manifest in every element at every level of structure of every language. To put it in a nutshell, the empirical evidence compels us to recognize that this is a natural semantic law.

The third point I would like to make in reply to the idea that this principle is an arbitrary element of Western Judeo-Christian culture, neither a matter of principle or of fact, but a matter of self-evident truth. You do not have to know anything about language to realize that this principle is intrinsically valid. If you think about it, there are many ways in which falseness has the property of many-ness. For example, a lie necessarily takes shape in imitation of the truth in relation to which it is false. So a lie is necessarily secondary and parasitic in relation to truth, and thus a lie is necessarily a second thing. Further, a lie creates a second, hypothetical world, the world in which the lie is taken as truth. The creation of this second world sets in motion a theoretically endless sequence of possibilities, implications, obligations, etc., in relation to the real world, and often in conflict with the real world.
So in order to sustain the viability of the lie one must keep track of these possibilities, implications, etc. in order to reconcile them with the real world. Thus it is self-evident that the false necessarily entails many kinds of manyness.

Or another way one can arrive at the same conclusion is this. Suppose I am hungry, and I am in a strange town, and suppose I ask someone to tell me where I can find a restaurant. If he tells me a lie, and if I follow his directions, I will not find a restaurant. So my hunger will not be satisfied, so I will have to ask again. But if he tells me the truth, I will find a restaurant, and I will eat, and my hunger will be satisfied, so one truth would satisfy. It is perfectly obvious from such an example that the false necessitates repetition, i.e., manyness, whereas the truth satisfies, and thus is only necessary once.1

So in conclusion, there is a natural law, a necessary law, a universal law, which is a self-evident consequence of the nature of the truth and the false, which holds that the truth is one and the false is many. This law holds the same position in governing the realm of language and logic and semantics as the law of gravity holds in governing the physical the world. For this reason, one must understand how language is a function of this law in order to understand language and to use language effectively, just as one must tacitly understand how physical things conform to the law of gravity in order to walk or throw a rock effectively. In other words, language presupposes this law, so one must play the game of language in accord with this law.

We will, of course, encounter this law throughout our inquiry into the duplicity of language, for it is inherent in the logic of duplicity, and in the structure and dynamic of language.

### A Variety of Examples Mentioned by Roman Jakobson

The fact that language is fundamentally dualistic is one of the themes which Roman Jakobson continually emphasized throughout his voluminous writings.

However, in spite of his appreciation of the dualism of language, and in spite of his legendary breadth of knowledge and depth of insight into language, he was unable to accept the falseness that is implicit in the duality of language. This is, as we have been arguing, the most basic principle of the realm of signs: doubleness implies duplicity and singleness implies truth. Nevertheless, just as Jakobson frequently quoted Saussure’s famous statement that every element of language is an “entité à deux faces”, apparently without appreciating the implication of duplicity inherent in the expression, so he was unable to appreciate the duplicity of the duality of language in general.

The only explicit reference I have found in his work to the idea that linguistic phenomena are duplicitous, deceptive, distorting, etc. is a denial. In his article “Linguistics and Communication Theory” there is a very turgid paragraph in which he touches on a plethora of duplicitous phenomena. I cite this paragraph here in full both because it is so dense and because it is richly suggestive.

When dealing with meanings, whether grammatical or lexical, we must be careful not to misuse the polar notions “regularity” and “deviation”. The idea of deviation frequently arises from a disregard for the stratified, hierarchic structure of language. There is, however, a substantial difference between secondariness and deviation. We

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1. By the way, this helps to explain why Moses was so severely punished for the seemingly trivial crime of touching the rock of truth twice.
are not justified in envisaging as deviant either Kurylowicz’s “syntactic derivation” with regard to the “primary function”, or Chomsky’s “transforms” versus “kernels”, or Bloomfield’s “marginal” (“transferred”) meanings in relation to the “central” meaning of the word. Metaphoric creations are not deviations but regular processes of certain stylistic varieties, which are subcodes of an overall code, and within such a subcode there is nothing deviant in Marvell’s figurative assignment of a concrete epithet to an abstract noun (properly a hypallage) - “a green Thought in a green shade” - or in Shakespeare’s metaphoric transposition of an inanimate noun into the feminine class - “the morning opes her golden gates” - or in the metonymic use of “sorrow” instead of “sorrowful while”, which Putnam’s paper excerpts from Dylan Thomas (“A grief ago I saw him there”). In contradistinction to such agrammatical constructions as “girls sleeps”, the quoted phrases are meaningful, and any meaningful sentence can be submitted to a truth test, exactly in the same way as the statement, “Peter is an old fox” could lead to a reply, “It is not true; Peter is not a fox but a swine; but John is a fox.” Incidentally, neither ellipsis nor reticence or anacoluthon can be considered as deviant structures; they, and the slurred style of speech, a brachylogical sub-code to which they belong, are merely lawful derivations from the kernel forms embedded in the explicit standard. (Volume II, p. 578-579, his italics)

Jakobson made this assertion within a frame of reference which did not recognize the fundamental duplicity of language. Since the present context does recognize the duplicity of language, we can transform his assertions into our frame of reference simply by reversing their polarity, and thus we can reap a rich harvest of examples of the duplicity of language from his denial that language is duplicitous.¹

For example, he says that “there is a substantial difference between secondariness and deviation”. By reversing this assertion thus:

Secondness and deviation are essentially the same thing

we get a hypothetical principle which makes a general claim about the various semantic and formal relations to be found in language. And, I am suggesting that this is exactly what we find: all secondness is deviant. We will discuss some of these kinds of duplicity in detail below. For now I will mention that in ordinary English the idea of secondness is often explicitly associated with deviance. “Factory seconds” are goods that were not manufactured correctly. That is, they deviate from the standard of quality. “Second hand evidence” is considered to be more likely to deviate from truth as compared with “first hand evidence”. Sometimes one hears the expression “second nature”, which is intended to mean that it is a nature that is just as good as first nature, but which also distinguishes it from first nature, and thus conveys the idea that it is not nature, or in other words unnatural, or deviant from nature.

Jakobson says in the above quote that

Metaphoric creations are not deviations but are regular processes of certain stylistic varieties, which are subcodes of an overall code...

¹. At a deeper level of analysis, Jakobson’s denial here is an excellent example of repression, and thus an example of the essential duplicity of negation. As Freud observed, when people begin a dialogue by saying, “I don’t mean this as an insult...”, you can be sure it will be an insult. The general principle is this: “the content of a repressed image or idea can make its way into consciousness, on condition that it is negated. Negation is a way of taking cognizance of what is repressed; indeed it is already a lifting of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed.” And, “To negate something in a judgement is, at bottom, to say: ‘This is something which I would prefer to repress.’ A negative judgement is the intellectual substitute (read ‘symbolic substitute’) for repression; its ‘no’ is the hall-mark of repression, a certificate of origin - like, let us say, ‘Made in Germany.’ (Or, “Made in the Unconscious”) With the help of the symbol of negation, thinking frees itself from the restrictions of repression and enriches itself with the material that is indispensable for its proper functioning.” (italics in original, my parenthesis) SE XIX, 235-6.
but it is quite clear that they are deviant. He himself cites the extremely deviant example, “a green
Thought in a green shade”, which alludes (duplicitously) to Chomsky’s famous sentence, “Colorless
green ideas sleep furiously”, which Chomsky invented precisely for the purpose of illustrating devi-
ance. If one did not consider these examples to be deviant, then the word “deviant” would be mean-
ingless. And yet deviance is not meaningless. On the contrary, it is precisely deviance that is
meaningful, at least in the linguistic sense of meaningful. This goes to the very essence of the nature
of the symbolic kind of meaningfulness: In order to be symbolically meaningful something must in
principle deviate from its natural meaningfulness. For example, a tip of the hat can be an act of polite-
ness precisely because it is not functional in any natural way, but an itch of the nose could not func-
tion as an act of politeness because it already has a natural function.

This confusion about deviance and meaningfulness can be easily sorted out by thinking about
metaphor in terms of the dual structure of duplicity as follows. First, as Jakobson mentioned, there
are two codes, and the literal code must be taken as prior to the metaphorical code. The literal code is
the code of universe¹, a universe that exists prior to the creation of the metaphor, and which provides
the substance of which the metaphor is created. Second, when a new metaphor is first created it has
something of the vital spontaneity of pure manifestation, as distinct from the dry correctness of literal
language. In the beginning it escapes from universe¹. The original thrust of its being is not one of
deviance, but rather one of a non-linguistic urge, a wild burst of creativity, which breaks the bonds of
language in manifesting itself. Or, the bonds of language are broken as a lamb is slaughtered at a
wedding feast. One would not want to say that the wedding took place in order to justify the slaughter
of the lamb. So too does Jakobson not want to say that metaphor is deviant. There, however a third
stage in which the metaphor is recaptured by language, it becomes institutionalized. It becomes a
conventionalized expression. And when this happens a subcode has been established, which is a new
universe², a deviant subuniverse of universe¹. Thus, while the urge which gives birth to metaphor
might not be deviant, even at its most sublime the metaphoric urge is deviant. And when this urge
becomes conventionalized, it does not cease to be deviant, it just becomes a conventionalized devi-
ance. (This is what Freud called “sublimation”, or in another frame of reference we would call “tam-
ing” or “civilization.”) So metaphor is duplicitous, and deviant. As is everything in language.

In this sense, I want to claim that every second in language, every derived form, must be
understood as deviant from a prior standard. In order to understand any element of language, one
must look at it in terms of the bifocal framework of duplicity in which both universes of the duplicity
are held in view at the same time. That is, I am claiming that in order to sort out the confusion of the
duplicity of language, every entity in language must be seen in its essential duplicity.

However, in conflict with this theoretical necessity, is the absolutely primitive law that one-
ness is prior to twoness. The very notion of a law presupposes a homogenous uni-verse. It is the reg-
ularity of the universe which makes it a uni-verse. Even the structure of duplicity in language is
governed by the prior law of the unity of truth. In unconscious obedience to this primitive law, the
mind seeks to resolve duplicity into unity. In psychological terms this has been called “cognitive dis-
sonance”, which refers to the unpleasant feeling of doubt and anxiety which accompanies the conflict
inherent in duplicity. And this unpleasant feeling provides the urge to resolve the conflict, sometimes
at the expense of truth, in favor of expedience, or social harmony, or one’s secret wishes. Thus, in
order to do linguistics one must struggle against this perfectly natural urge. One must sustain a dual-
istic point of view long enough to understand how it works in language. In this way, one can organi-
cally dissolve the conflict in the unity of real understanding, rather than impulsively grasping at one
or another horn of the dilemma in an expedient, but false, and thus temporary, escape from the unpleasantness of the dilemma.

I hasten to add, that this criticism of Jakobson's position is not intended to disparage his work in the least. My purpose is quite the opposite. It is because I recognize and appreciate the force of his work that I am trying to show how it only requires a slight adjustment in orientation to bring it to bear in support of my position.

Symbolism

I want to explore one particular family of symbolic signs in some depth. I have in mind the class of linguistic phenomena such as the use of the dove as a symbol of peace.

In common parlance this kind of symbolism is distinguished from ordinary symbolism by calling it “symbolism”, as if there were symbolic and non-symbolic kinds of symbolism. In this common sense of the word “symbolic”, people speak of a “very symbolic act”, “symbolic language”, “deeply symbolic poetry”, etc. as if there were symbolic acts, language, and poetry that were not symbolic. This usage is incoherent in the same way as “very wet water” is incoherent, and yet there is a certain way in which it makes sense. I suggest that it is not the symbolicity of these symbols that distinguishes them in the ordinary mind from the general category of symbols. I suggest that these symbols are distinct in the degree of prominence which they enjoy in the awareness of the ordinary linguistically naive speaker of language. To put it another way, the ordinary naive speaker would say,

The sentence ‘The dove of peace” is not normal language, it is symbolic. The sentence ‘The dove is a bird’ is not symbolic.

So the ordinary speaker is already aware of the fact that the use of the dove as a symbol of peace is a deviant usage. And it is precisely this awareness that offers us a convenient point of departure from which to begin our archeological dig down into the depths of symbolism.

So beginning with the dove as a symbol of peace, in order for the dove to function as a symbol of peace, there has to be the concept of the dove as a bird, which means that there has to be a word “dove” that refers to the bird in the ordinary sense. The first sentence below uses the word “dove” in the basic literal symbolic sense, the sense which provides the standard from which the second sentence deviates in using the word “dove” in the secondary symbolic way that we are going to explore here.

That bird is a dove.

May the dove inhabit your garden.

In this sense, this kind of symbolism is secondary.

However, this kind of secondary symbolic usage does not uniquely characterize a class of symbolism apart from the symbolism of language in general, for this particular kind of secondary symbolism uses the same mechanism which we have been arguing is the primitive dynamic of language in general. This kind of secondariness differs from the generic secondariness of language phenomena only in being relatively more prominent in the awareness of the ordinary linguistically naive speaker, and correspondingly, in being relatively marginal to the core of language. And it is precisely
because it is a superficial and marginal type of linguistic duplicity that it is a particularly useful place to begin.

The Dove

Most every normal person in our society knows that a dove is a kind of bird and that the dove is used as a symbol of peace. Taking this as an ordinary and familiar example of a large class of symbols then, let us consider not the word “dove” but the use of the actual bird itself as a symbol of peace.

There are certain occasions when people feel that it would be a good thing to display representations of peacefulness, for they believe that such a display will actually evoke a framework of peacefulness. For example, it is common in the opening ceremonies of international athletic competitions, such as the Olympics, to frame the competition in its opening ceremonies by ostentatiously releasing a large number of doves which fly up in the air in a spectacular display representing peace. Similarly, the release of a pair of doves is part of the wedding ceremonies in various cultures.

The fact that this particular display should be used to represent peace is not accidental. There are several associative similarities that provides the connection between the birds and the phenomenon of peace. There are at least three associative connections. First, not just any kind of dove can represent peace: it must be a white dove. The connection here is through the association of white with goodness as opposed to black with evil: Peace is good, thus a white dove is associated with peace. Second, the flight of birds is a natural manifestation of the freedom of movement, the joy, and the exuberant surge of energy associated with peace, in contrast with war. In a state of war, or conflict in general, one's freedom of movement is inhibited and a certain amount of one's energy must be dedicated to the conflict. The cessation of conflict, i.e. the onset of peace, thus releases a surge of exuberant energy and a freedom of movement which is eloquently expressed in the flight of birds. Third, the release of the birds from their cages so that they can fly away corresponds to the release from conflict which is characteristic of the coming of peace. This symbolism is represented in Figure 28.

The idea of Figure 28 is that the paper on which this text is being printed is supposed to represent the real world and the picture of the dove flying is supposed to represent a real dove in the real world. Universe is the conventional frame of reference in which the real flying dove is taken as a symbol of peace.

The point I am making here is not that it is incorrect to use doves as symbols of peace, for as we have just discussed, by its nature the dove is suited to being used as a symbol of peace. And the desire to invoke peace by the representation of peace is certainly a laudable and benevolent purpose. The point is that the symbolic conceptualization of the situation, whether well motivated or not, distorts our perception, induces violence, and inhibits our behavior.

In the first place the symbolic conceptualization of the situation leads us to evaluate the situation solely from the symbolically prescribed point of view of Universe. We see the on-stage aspect of the symbolic situation, and we totally ignore the off-stage part of the situation. We see the dove being released and we thrill at the exuberance of the spectacle and we congratulate ourselves on our benev-

1. This is of course the kind of magical thinking which moves language in general.
olent intentions. But what about the dove itself? We do not see the dove, except as the embodiment of our desire to display representations of our intentions. We consider the dove to be an apt embodiment of peace, but what does the dove think?

Second, we see the doves flying away with great exuberance, but we do not see them being released. The flying part of the symbolic drama is on-stage, but the being released part is not. Of course the doves fly away with exuberance; they have just been released from captivity, but we do not want to see that part of the situation because that would mitigate the symbolic value of the event.

Third, in order to be released, the doves had to be captive. Our laudable desire to use doves symbolically in our ceremony induces someone, someone else presumably, to catch them, put them in cages, sell them, ship them to the scene, and take care of them until we are ready for them to attain their moment of glory in our eyes. When the dove is used as a symbol of peace, when it is taken as the embodiment of our representation in order to serve our symbolic ends, it is forced to submit to our symbolic scenario.

In short, contrary to its nature, something¹, the dove in this case, is enslaved to its symbolic role. And we do not normally see this dimension of symbolism, because we are cooperatively focusing our attention on the situation as it is being portrayed on stage. In this case it is only violence against some birds, which might be considered a tolerable expense to bear in order to permit the show to go on. Of course, the birds probably do not feel the same. And, besides, the point is that this is a matter of general principle which holds in regard to all symbolism, not just that of the dove as a representation of peace. In some cases the role of the bird might be played by someone closer to home, in which case, the enslavement and the sacrifice necessitated by symbolism might be considered to be of greater significance. This is the dimension of symbolism to which Jacques Lacan is trying to direct our attention in the quote cited in the introduction:

**MAN IS THE SUBJECT THAT IS CAPTURED AND TORTURED BY LANGUAGE.**
Of course the use of the dove as a symbol is not by any means an isolated example. Animals figure prominently in the symbolic structuring of the human world view in many different ways. On one hand, our language leads us to associate certain stereotypical characteristics with certain animals. For example, we have the conventional sayings

- timid as a mouse
- busy as a beaver
- dirty as a pig

which have the authority of conventional wisdom, and so we believe that these are innate characteristics of those animals, and we interact with the animals accordingly. From an objective point of view, the idea of the animal thus fostered by language is at best accidentally related to the nature of the animal itself, and upon investigation can be seen to be sheerly imaginary attributes motivated by considerations quite apart from reality. That this is true becomes strikingly apparent when we consider the ludicrous characteristics attributed to animals by other cultures. Not so long ago, in Chaucer's English, for example, one said

- lecherous as a sparrow

which seems not just silly but so utterly inappropriate that it is hard to imagine anyone believing that a sparrow could symbolize lechery. A bull, yes. Or, a horse. Or, a mink. Or, a goat. But a sparrow?

In this way we are led to conceptualize animals, and nature in general, in an incorrect way, and thus to interact with animals in inappropriate ways, which often have violent results, which usually turn out to be to the detriment of the animal being cast in a symbolic role. Jacques Lacan has, as usual, put it in what appears at first sight to be a provocative hyperbola, which turns out, after some reflection, to be no more than the plain truth. In Lacan's words

- le mot est la meurtre de la chose,

an assertion which he intended to be taken literally as applying even to wild animals that have been so unfortunate as to have been named by human beings. This is clear from the fact that in one of his seminars (Miller 1988, p. 178) Lacan talked about the murder of the thing where the thing in question is the elephant. His point was explained by Jacques-Alain Miller thus:

the most important accident that happened to elephants in their lives was something they never knew: that we have the word “elephant”, and that the moment we have the word “elephant” elephants begin to disappear. Because we are now killing them, systematically. (Miller 1991, p. 30)

I will explain this point in more detail in the discussion of Figure 35, “The Naive (or Cooked) View of the Phonology of the Word “See”,” on page 294.

Then, having imposed symbolic identities upon animals, language turns those symbols identities around and attributes them to people. In English men and women are said to fight like cats and dogs, though cats and dogs only have particular enmity for each other in the stereotypical imagination of English speakers. A man who is in trouble with his wife is said to be in the dog house. A man is said to lead a dog’s life. A man who is caught thinking or acting in a particularly licentious manner is said to be a dirty dog. On the other hand, “kitten” is a common affectionate nick-name for women and
Symbolism

“Pussy” is a slang term for a woman's genitals. “A cat fight”, when referring to humans, can only mean a fight between two women.

A similar kind of animal symbolism, but one which is more explicitly elaborated and woven into the social structure, is the phenomena known as totemism. This term is used by anthropologists in several different senses to refer to different kinds of phenomena where individuals and/or groups identify with certain animals and regulate their behavior in various ways in accord with that identification. For example, sometimes people must imitate their totemic animal in certain stereotypical ways. Or, they might be forbidden to say the name of their totem, or forbidden to kill it, or forbidden to eat it. All of these regulations follow as a consequence of identity: imitation of one's totemic animal is simply an enactment of the behavior of that which one is; the naming of ancestors is a common prohibition in many cultures; killing one's totemic animal would be murder; and eating it would be cannibalism.

The Rat Man

A less familiar level of animal symbolism can be seen in Freud's famous analysis of the rat man in “A Case of Obsessional Neurosis” (SE Vol. X). This patient came to be called “the rat man” because he unconsciously identified with the rat, an individual totemism. In his idiosyncratic worldview the rat figured as a kind of ancestral protosymbol in an astonishingly complex private system of substitutive representations which Freud unearthed and interpreted over a long period of analytic interaction. We cannot hope to do justice to the complexity of this system, but we can point out some of its general features by way of illustration.

The general characteristic of any pathological system of symbolism is that it is deviant from some prior standard; so from the standard point of view it appears to be chaotic and meaningless. A deviant system such as this rat system is, in other words, a foreign language or a foreign code from the point of view of some prior standard code. And like any other deviant system, any given deviant system may be more or less deviant than another, but every symbolic system is deviant to some degree, even standard symbolic systems. And like any foreign language, no deviant symbolic system is intrinsically any less meaningful than any other. In fact, all languages are deviant and all languages are foreign languages. So in order to understand what people are doing with their symbols, one must learn to make sense of the particular style of deviance that characterizes each language. That is what Freud did with this man’s private language and he discovered that the key to understanding many of his unique expressions was the rat. He discovered that in this man's world view, the rat was the prototypical image in terms of which he constructed his identity. In his world-view he himself was a rat and everything else was either a rat or a transformation of a rat. Freud cites specific details of this man’s language in which the rat represented variously the man himself, the penis, father, feces, money, children, punishment, etc. For example, in regard to money,

The patient gave an indication of this connection by reacting to the word 'Ratten' ("rats") with the association "Raten" ("installments"). In his obsessional deliria he had coined himself a regular rat currency. When, for instance, in reply to a question, I told him my fee for an hour's treatment, he said to himself (as I learned six month's later): 'So many florins, so many rats'. Little by little he translated into this language the whole complex of money interests which centered around his father's legacy to him; that is to say, all of his ideas connected with that subject were, by way of the verbal bridge 'Raten - Ratten', carried over into his obsessional life and brought under the dominion of his unconscious. (vol. X. p. 213)
Another example: an important connection flowed through the accidental formal fact that word 'Spielratte', meaning 'gambler', is a compound word consisting of the words for play and rat. This fact, and the fact that his father had once lost money gambling, provided the pretext which justified his symbolic representation of his father as a “Ratte”. This representation also makes sense in terms of the fact that he considered himself to be a rat, for it is a biological necessity that the father of a rat must also be a rat. In addition, casting his father as a 'Spielratte' characterizes the father as one who is involved in an illicit transaction, which is exactly the role of his father his unconscious dramatic mythology of the world.

There are numerous other linguistic manifestations of this private rat language, such as the special associations in this language for a word like 'heiraten', which, because of a coincidental similarity of form, gets caught up in the network of rat associations, and is woven into the fabric of his mythological world view. But we do not have time to explore them further here.

Before we go on, since we have this example before us, I would like to take the opportunity to make a couple of general points about symbolism. First, there is no difference in kind between a standard collectively recognized symbol and an idiosyncratic individual symbol such as we have here in the Rat Man. The logic and the structure and the dynamics is exactly the same. The difference is solely a matter of how many people adopt a symbol. If one person thinks a particular man, in this case himself, is a rat, we call him crazy. If two people think a particular man is a rat, we call that a “folie à deux”. And if a whole culture thinks a particular man is a rat, we call that totemism. On an individual level we call it “illusion”, and on a collective level it is exactly the same thing. And that is exactly what Sapir called this sort of thinking - “collective illusion.” (Selected Writings, p. 54)

Does this imply that every symbol is pathological? Yes, it does. We could put it another way: a symbol is a symptom, and vice versa. That is the point I am trying to make here. However, one must recognize that there are degrees of pathology: it is a function of the number of layers of duplicity by which a given symbol deviates from the ground of truth. That is, degree of pathology is a function of degree of falsehood. Thus the rat man's rat language is not intrinsically any more pathological than any other language. What made his language and his world-view pathological was that it entangled him in a world of duplicities which was so deviant from the real world that it almost completely inhibited his ability to function in the real world and it caused him constant suffering. Normal languages do not normally deviate quite so far, and thus are not normally quite so severely inhibiting. And since normal languages are normal, in the technical sense of being composed of norms, they are not normally thought of as pathological by those who speak them. This normal point of view is the common folk theory of language, of which I spoke at the beginning.

**Incorporation**

The consumption of food and drink, being such an important dimension of life, is rich in symbolic associations throughout all languages and cultures, so let us consider some examples.

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1. See Reusch's *Disturbed Communication: The Clinical: The Assessment of Normal and Pathological Communicative Behavior* where it can be seen that every kind of psychopathology is a function of falsehood.
Consider the complex fabric of substitutive incorporation which makes up the text of the Bible. The problem of evil is said to have been set in motion by the eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil by Adam and Eve. In compensation for that consummation, the eating of the Passover lamb symbolically reenacts Abraham's sacrifice of his son, though he did not actually carry it through, because God provided a substitute sacrificial lamb of His own. In the temple regular sacrifices of animals was to be made as payment in substitution for the sins of the people, which sacrifices were said to be consumed by God, but which were actually eaten by the priests. The temple itself was a substitutive symbol of the body, where the symbolic representation of God rested in the deepest and most holy inner sanctum. To this day, Christians drink wine and eat bread, as a reenactment of the eating of the Passover lamb, and at the same time as a symbolic consumption of the blood and body of Christ, who is considered by them to be the real sacrifice of whom the sacrificial Passover lamb was a representation. The purpose of this symbolic act of consumption is to partake of the body of the sacrifice in order to become one with the sacrifice. That is, by the principle that you are what you eat, by drinking the blood of Christ, they believe they incorporate themselves in the body of Christ. By a kind of logical inversion, they get incorporated by what they eat: they become incorporated into that which they eat. And of course, putting aside this perplexing inversion, the most striking aspect of this symbolic eating is that it is a symbolic form of cannibalism?

In a similar way, throughout all cultures, food and drink commonly take on derivative symbolic values through association with the nurture of the mother. And as the mother is the prototypical other, the first other, upon whom the helpless infant is totally dependent, food and drink commonly come to represent the all-important love and/or hate of the primary other. (The father is the second other, by the way.) In this way, consumption of food and drink takes on a representative function, quite apart from its nutritive function, and becomes elaborately interwoven in the symbolic world.1

A common example from American culture is this. Many people feel hungry or thirsty for motherly love, so they eat and drink as a symbolic reenactment of the feeling of satisfaction that flowed in the form of mother's milk into their bodies as infants. But when they eat symbolically, their hunger is symbolically satisfied, which is to say it is not satisfied. One cannot satisfy a hunger symbolically. And in this case, the hunger itself is symbolic, being a function of the prolonged infancy and dependence that goes along with the standard world view, so how much less can one satisfy a symbolic hunger. Thus these people struggle with their desire in the chaos of a confusion between layers and varieties of real and symbolic hunger.

The offering of food and drink to a guest is a universal symbolic enactment of the original form of hospitality, that is, the hospitality of the mother. The word “hospitality” is from an Indo-European form, *ghos-ti-, which became English “guest” and Latin “hostis”, meaning enemy, and borrowed into English as “hostile”. In the same way, alcoholic drink can become a symbol of the opposite of mother's milk, or better, can become a symbol of the poisonous milk of hostility. This symbolism permits one to symbolically display an ostentatious symbolic disdain for the symbolic other's symbolic hostility by willingly and eagerly gulping alcoholic beverage down in great quantities in order to prove one's symbolic independence and immunity. Unfortunately, this symbolic behavior necessitates the real consumption of real alcohol, which is really toxic.

1. For examples and analysis of the cultural varieties of consumptive symbolism, see Sanday (1986) Douglas (1973), Harris ( ) and ( ), and Levi-Strauss The Raw and the Cooked, (1969).
Turning to a more official sort of symbolic incorporation, let us consider the corporation, in the sense in which General Motors, for example, is a corporation.

The word 'corporation' is borrowed from Latin 'corpus' and is related to 'corps', 'corpse', etc. The etymological English cognate is 'belly', but the native English semantic equivalent is 'body'. Thus to express the concept in native English vocabulary, 'a corporation' really means 'an embodiment', the verb 'to incorporate' is really means 'to embody'. A corporation, then, is a symbolic body, which is to say it is a symbolic being that is intended to be taken as if it were a member of society, though in reality it is not a body, nor a person, nor any thing at all. It is a duplicity.

The corporation is an unusual kind of symbolic duplicity because it is an instance in which the law and the government explicitly conspire with individuals in instituting and enacting the duplicity. In other words, the corporation, as defined in law, is a legal duplicity. Let us first consider the ontology of a legal corporation, and then we will consider the sense in which it is a symbolic duplicity.

Though a corporation is not a body in reality, it is defined as a body in the law and it is seen as a body in the eyes of the government.¹ The law defines a corporation as a legal fiction: specifically, a fictive entity which is accorded the status in law of a juridical person. And, since the kind of law we are speaking of here is the law of the government, this is the law which governs the behavior of the government, including the perception of the government. By law the government is obliged to recognize the existence of these legal fictions and to interact with them as juridical persons. Thus a corporation, as a legal fictive entity, can appear in a court of law, can buy and sell property, can obtain various kinds of licenses and permits, can (and must) pay local, state, and federal taxes, and so on.

The obvious question is why? Why does the law and the government explicitly conspire in the complexity and confusion of fictive beings? This question is, as always, difficult to answer, but it seems to be motivated by the same kinds of considerations which we discussed above as the motivation for symbolic substitution in general. However, here we are no longer looking into the mind of the naive infant, but rather the mind of the sophisticated lawyer, a region which is proverbially obnebulous. And, when it comes to attributing motive, it does not seem quite so heinous to speak of duplicity and strategic maneuver in relation to lawyers as it does in relation to infants. But before we can get at motivation we must analyze this duplicity a little further in terms of our framework.

The universe in which the corporation exists, then, is in the eyes of the civil government, and it is regulated by the law of the civil government, as distinct from natural law. However, the law that governs the corporation is not contained in the same universe as the corporation, for the law recognizes a corporation as a legal fiction. Therefore, the universe in which the corporation exists must also be contained in the universe of the law. Thus the corporation is in a univese² in relation to the universe¹ of the law.

We must take care to keep in mind here that this universe¹ of the law is not the first universe, but is only the universe¹ that is conceptually prior to the universe² in which corporations exist as fictitious juridical persons. There is, as we discussed in Chapter 3, the real universe prior to this universe¹, to which this kind of law does not extend. That is, the law¹, in the sense of civil law intended here, is incapable in principle of recognizing or apprehending things prior to this universe¹. I have tried to represent this confusing situation in Figure 29 on page 240.

¹. As if the government had eyes.
My dictionary defines a corporation as

A body of persons granted a charter legally recognizing them as a separate entity having its own rights, privileges, and liabilities distinct from those of its members.

It is obvious that, 'a body of persons' and 'its members' is the someone\(^1\) who perpetrates the fraud. The 'separate entity' is something\(^2\), the corporation, that which is represented. The government is someone\(^2\), the dupe in whose eyes something\(^1\) is accepted as something\(^2\). But it is not so obvious what something\(^1\) is. What is the thing that embodies the representation of the corporation?

One might suppose that something\(^1\) is the physical substance of the corporation, the property it owns and/or occupies, the machines it uses, the things it produces, etc. But just as I do not consist of my house, my job, or even my foot, so too the corporation does not consist of the material things it possesses or governs. The corporation must exist before it can purchase or occupy property, before it can acquire machines, before it can hire employees, etc. It is true that these things do represent the corporation in a secondary sense, just as my car can be said to represent me. All of these things are part of the image of a corporation, but none of them are essential to its existence.

What is essential to its existence, and the pivotal legal requirement, is that the corporation must have an officially registered name. To cause a corporation to come into being one must make up a name, check with the appropriate government office to make sure the name has not been used by another corporation, file the new name in that office, and pay a small registration fee.

Of course, the fact that this procedure is so similar to the requirements for the naming of a newly born child is not coincidental. A child has a marginal existence in the law until it is born. And even then it does not officially exist until it is given a name and that name is officially registered in the books of the government. And since official existence is the only kind the government can recognize, the government obliges everyone to exist officially, i.e. to have an official name in the government’s books. Thus, in the eyes of the government, having an officially registered name is the essence of existence. And this concept of existence permits the possibility that something could exist in name only. This is the kind of existence which the legal corporation enjoys. So, the something\(^1\) of the corporation is the officially registered name (which, of course, can be totally different from the name under which it holds itself forth to the public). We can represent this world of fictive existence in terms of the structure of duplicity as in Figure 29.

Of course, a person who creates a corporation must not only be a real person, but he must also be an officially existing person, and so must be a named someone\(^1\) in universe\(^1\). A person who is real but who does not have an officially recognized name cannot act in any official capacity: Among other thing, he cannot officially name another person, nor can he create a corporation. As we mentioned, something\(^1\) is the name that someone\(^1\) chooses to give to his corporation. The corporation is something\(^2\), which in this case is considered to be a legal, or juridical person.

This issue might seem irrelevant to linguistics, but it is not. The grammar of persons is the geometry of dialogue. And the fabric of dialogue is a function of the grammar of persons as applied to the various points of reference that are in play. And what is at issue here is precisely the very basis of points of reference, which is the body. So the question is, when we say “body”, what are we referring to? This problem of the legal corporation makes it clear that there are at least two, if not three distinct types of bodies that we might be referring to. And this is why Jacques Lacan insists that an adequate theory of psychology must be a “two-body psychology”, and what is more, he insists that “speech is the central feature” that mediates between the two types of bodies.\(^1\) In other words, when
we use a pronoun, what does it actually refer to? When I say “I”, I might be referring to the real me, to the official me, or to me as an agent of the corporation which employs me - Someone, Someone¹, or Someone². So there are times when I say something, but it is not really me saying it. And there are times when I am beside myself with anger. So it is absolutely necessary to understand the duplicity of the body, one example of which is being discussed here, in order to be able to understand how pronouns are used.

Turning now, finally, to motivation, the obvious question is this: In practical terms, if not moral ones, why conspire in the complexity of fictitious beings? What is to be gained? To see what is to be gained one must look at the situation from the different points of view of the various actors. The motive for someone¹ to conspire in this symbolic complexity is clear. It is a strategic complexity which permits someone¹ to do something and to not do something at the same time. Clothed in this fiction, he can act in the name of the corporation such that any desirable consequences can pass through the fictive person to him and any undesirable consequences fall to the fictive person. The fictive facade is transparent in the face of good things and opaque in the face of bad things. In particular, profits, tax benefits, glory, etc. will pass through to someone¹. But, if the venture fails and ends up with unpayable debts, the corporation can declare bankruptcy, leaving unpaid debts, and the obligation to pay the debts does not pass through to someone¹. The creditors cannot, as the lawyers say, “pierce the corporate veil”. The same is true of most other liabilities, even many criminal violations. The fictive corporation is stuck with the debts, responsibilities, and guilt.¹ The corporation is a shield

1. In regard to the need for a two-body psychology specifically see p. 90 in Lacan’s “Function and field of speech and language” in Écrits and also p. 11 in Lacan’s first seminar (Miller, 1988), and references there. However, the fact that the concept of the self, and thus of the body, is essentially duplicitous follows in his theory from the duplicitous logic of the mirror stage, which is the first stage of identification.

1. The major exception to this is that in regard to tax obligations the government does manage to see through the corporate veil.
Symbolism

and a fall guy. In sum, from the point of view of someone\(^1\), the corporation is a complex duplicity which is of strategic benefit to him.

Motivation is also clear from the lawyer's point of view. The ordinary legally naive person does not know of the existence of this realm of legal fictions. In fact, conventional law, as distinct from formally codified law, prohibits intentional duplicity, and so the ordinary person would think that a legal fiction would be an impossibility. In this sense, there is a barrier of conventional presupposition which insulates the realm of legal fictions from the knowledge of the ordinary person. In other words, the existence of this realm of legal duplicity is set off from the ordinary world by its socially reprehensible nature as a kind of dirty secret. And of course, in as much as it is a different kind of world, it must have a different kind of law. In effect then, from the ordinary point of view the realm of legal duplicity is a secret and its special laws are unknown. The lawyer, who knows how to maneuver in this secret realm, can sell his knowledge and expertise to the ordinary people who are his clients. In general the lawyer's professional interest is opposed to the natural inclination for clarity and simplicity, because the more duplicitous complexity he can create, the more money he stands to make.

This brings us to the question of the government's motivation for playing the role of someone\(^2\), the dupe, whose credulity sustains this realm of legal duplicity. It might seem that the government must loose, because of the cost of sustaining and transacting in the additional layer of complexity. However, in general bureaucracies tend to favor their own growth, so from the bureaucratic point of view, additional complexity would be considered a gain. And, in so far as the agents of the government are lawyers, additional complexity would also be their gain. However, in so far as the government is an agent of the people, the complexity of this realm of legal fictions is a dead loss. It would seem to be a device that is wielded by lawyers and bureaucrats for the benefit of those with enough money to hire a lawyer at the expense of the rest of the people. This duplicity, like all others, implies a division between the perpetrators and the victims. In this case, the government plays the role of the dupe on behalf of the people at large. The government represents the people who are the victims of the strategic duplicity of the corporation.

Nuts as Money

One could profitably explore the myriad symbolic duplicities in which money takes part, but here I propose to take money for granted and recount a situation in which nuts came to take on the value of money. This is a simple example of the evolution of a symbol. And it actually happened, though even as fiction it could have provided insight into the dynamics of representation.

There was this small group of friends who went on a fishing trip to a beautiful lake in the deep forest far away from the nearest outposts of civilization, where they stayed in a small but comfortable cabin. Being far away, they took everything that they thought they would need along with them. As soon as they arrived, they all rushed out to go fishing. Everyone had a good time catching lots of nice big fish. When night was approaching, they took the fish back to their cabin and ate them. They were delicious. Everyone was relaxed and contented.

Soon, however, they began to get bored. So they decided to play some kind of game. Someone had the foresight to bring a deck of playing cards, so they decided to play poker. They began to set up everything they needed to play, table in the center of the room, chairs arranged, light, drinks, etc. As
they prepared things, it was not long before they ran into a problem. They all had money to bet with, but no one had very much change. They wanted to gamble, in order to make the game interesting, to invest the play with value, and as a way of keeping score. But they did not want to gamble for high stakes. They only wanted to play a nickel-dime game. After all, it was only a game. They didn't want anyone to get hurt or angry in the game, that would defeat the purpose of the game.

So they looked around for something to use as a substitute for money. Someone suggested a small stick could be used as a nickel and a bigger one as a dime. This suggestion was immediately poked full of holes. “How big is big?” someone asked. “What is to keep someone from going out and getting all the sticks he wants?” another asked.

One of them suggested that if nothing else, they could always keep score on paper. But no one liked that idea. That would rob the game of half of its fun. Unaware of exactly why, they all rejected the idea. (What they were thinking about was that they wanted some tangible thing as a token of value that would allow them to exploit its expressive possibilities. They wanted to be able to touch and hold their valuables. To see them. To put them in heaps. To admire them. To display them. To hoard them. They wanted to be able to commit them to the game with a casual toss into the center of the table to express the nonchalance of a winning hand. To be able to shove a huge heap of them into the game as a show of force. To gleefully rake in a huge mound of them when they won. To slam them on the table, if need be. No, scores on paper would not do.)

They cast about hither and thither trying to find a substitute. Cans of beans would not work, too few and too big. Pebbles from the beach would not work; too easy to get. Fishing hooks would not work. etc., etc.

What they needed was something that was visible, tangible, durable, discreetly divided into units, not too big and not too small. Something of which many could be held in the hand at one time, and could be manipulated easily, possibly put in one's pocket.

Finally, they discovered that one of them, Bob, had brought a huge sack of nuts, peanuts, to be exact. He was addicted to eating them as snacks. He knew that no one else liked them, so he brought enough of them for himself to last for two weeks, and perhaps a little extra just to be sure.

Everyone instantly recognized that Bob's nuts was the perfect substitute, or at least as good as they were likely to find under the circumstances. They were the right size, sufficient in number, and there was no other source of supply. Everyone immediately began to make suggestions about how they could use Bob's nuts as tokens of exchange.

Only Bob failed to join in the enthusiasm with which the others hailed the resolution to their problem. He did not say anything against the idea because he didn't want to spoil the fun for everyone else. And, he wanted to enjoy the camaraderie of the game as well himself. But he could see where this line of reasoning led. At the very least, he was going to have to sacrifice his nuts.

Bob was caught in a dilemma, a conflict between two courses of action, either of which would lead to unpleasant consequences. On one hand he would have to sacrifice his nuts, and the personal pleasure which they might provide to him during the entire time they continued to play the game. This personal sacrifice would be compensated for to some extent by the social pleasure he would gain by being a participant in the game. On the other hand, if he refused to sacrifice his nuts and the personal pleasure which they could provide to him, he would suffer the social ostracism, the outrage at his selfish attitude, which was sure to descend on his head for ruining the game for everyone else and depriving them of their pleasure.
Everyone, of course, knew that Bob faced this dilemma, and spoke to him encouragingly. That is, encouraging him to make the sacrifice. “The game is the thing,” someone said. “All for one and one for all”, said another. “Good old Bob,” a third one said. “He is a guy you can always count on,” for that is exactly what they were planning to do. Well, as one might expect, as usually happens, Bob knuckled under to the wishes of the group.

They had the something¹ they needed to effect the substitution, but they were not finished establishing everything that was needed to put the substitutive system to work in service of the game of poker. They had accepted the principle of exchange and had decided on a medium of embodiment, but that was not enough. They also had to establish a system of laws by which to govern the exchange. Before they could start to play the game, it would be necessary for them to exchange the money which they already had for the nuts which they did not have. Then they could use the nuts as symbols of exchange during the course of play, exchanging these symbols according to the regulations of the game. During the weeks of the holiday they would keep their own nuts in their own care from day to day, some players winning and some loosing, and at the end of the game, they would want to exchange the nuts which they still had back into money. And presumably they might also want to exchange during the course of the game.

This is perhaps a little confusing, so let me try to clarify it. We have two systems of exchange in view here, two market places¹. Market² is inside the game of poker, where tokens of value are exchanged during the course of play under the government of the laws of the game. In the game the tokens of value will be nuts: they will bet nuts, they will win nuts, and they will lose nuts. In the context of the game, nuts is money.

Market¹ is outside of the game and contains it. In market¹ there is another system of exchange where money and nuts are exchanged. This system must be set up and begin to operate prior to the game, and be continued after the game, and even possibly, during the game.

The rules of poker, which govern market² were established prior to this situation, but now that they have resolved to use nuts to represent money, they need to establish rules to govern the exchange of nuts for money and money for nuts. Since Bob is an honest guy, and the nuts are his, they designate him to be the banker, the one who keeps the supply of nuts and who controls the exchange and who is in charge of the money that has been exchanged for nuts during the course of play. They decide that the rate of exchange will be ten nuts to one dollar.

However, as trustworthy as Bob might be, he could easily take some nuts from the bag of nuts under his control and use them illegitimately for money. So they decide that they would all feel more comfortable if Bob made an effort to keep the bag of nuts in plain sight of everyone so that no one can manipulate their currency illegitimately to their own advantage.

Now they are ready, so they all buy some nuts, including Bob, and they start to play. The nuts work out just fine. There is winning and loosing. They are filled with joy when they win nuts and they grieve when they lose nuts. They count their nuts carefully. They find safe places to keep their nuts when they are not playing poker and some decided to take their nuts with them in the boat when they went fishing, just for peace of mind. After a while, nuts begin to take on the value of money, and were accordingly treated like money, not like nuts. Nuts became money within this limited context.

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¹. Actually three systems of exchange, for there is the prior marketplace, the place where one can exchange money for apples, clothes, and automobiles. This is the market in which the value of money is located.
After a week or so, another friend, who had been delayed by his job, showed up. He got something to drink and sat next to a small table on which there sat a coffee can full of nuts, so he unthinkingly picked up a handful of them and started shelling them and eating them. The person to whom those particular nuts belonged, a big winner, did not notice at first that his money was being eaten. The others gleefully watched his fortune being eaten up and were eagerly waiting to see how he reacted when he noticed what was going on. When he finally did notice, before he realized what he was saying he blurted,

Don't eat my money!... Don't eat my nuts... They aren't really nuts...

Here, in the conflict between the point of view of an outsider and the point of view of an insider, the deviance from reality of the symbolic point of view becomes strikingly evident. The outsider, looking from the point of view of universe¹, takes the nuts naturally as something to eat, which they are. The insider, from the point of view of universe², thinks the nuts are money, which they are not. In universe², nuts are not nuts. Nuts are money.

And lets not forget Bob, for he represents the ordinary person. The nuts were his from the beginning and were really his during the game and were to have reverted to him after the game ass over. But when they got caught up as representative tokens in the game, they ceased to be his in the sense that he was no longer free to do with them as he wished. The demand of the group took priority over his wishes. So in a sense the nuts were taken away from him, even though they remained in his possession, because in the context of universe² he held them not as Bob the nut-eater, but as Bob the banker.

Further, he is not only the original owner of the nuts, now transformed into the keeper of the nuts, but he is also a player in the game. As a player in the game, he must buy his own nuts from himself, using his own money, so that he can transact with them in a third sense. Thus one can see how submitting something of one's resources to be used symbolically entails the sacrifice of those resources and divides one up into at least three different roles in relation to those resources.

Addendum: Tulip Bulbs as Money

Confusions of value like the above happen in what is commonly taken to be the real world more than we might think. Consider the following example that is supposed to have really happened as recounted by John Bollinger (Bollinger Capital Management, “Capital Growth Topics #122: Grains!!!”, Published electronically on April 29, 1996 and broadcast by DBC data management system.)

This morning the rally in the grains made it onto National Public Radio where a bite of the noise in the Kansas City grain pits was aired and a good solid swipe taken at the farm bill as if it had caused the rally. I am not certain whether that broadcast marked the top or not, but there is sufficient reason to be suspicious.

We often take a contrarian approach to the markets here, as typified by the work of Humphrey Neil. Mr. Neil was a great observer of crowds and he knew something crowds that seems to get lost these days. Namely that a crowd can be right—perhaps for a long time. Thus it is not sufficient to identify a crowd and take an opposing position. One has to wait for the crowd to hold an incorrect opinion, and then for a trigger to cause a reversal. For example, in late 1982 nearly everyone turned bullish and correctly so. It was many months and many points before a top was put in. Ultimately it was a rise in interest rates that triggered the ensuing decline, but not for many months after the top had been reached.
Euphemism

The basic tenant of contrarian opinion is that the majority will be wrong. But it is not sufficient to identify a widely held opinion, it must be a widely held erroneous opinion. Even then there is the additional requirement—something must trigger a reversal. It is said that in the great Dutch tulip craze a seaman who had been away for years and knew nothing of the madness called tulipomania returned from a voyage. While waiting to report to the master he plucked a tulip bulb valued at more than $10,000 from the master’s desk and, thinking it was an onion, ate it. Thus was the bubble punctured. In retrospect it seems obvious that a tulip bulb was not worth that amount. However in the heat of the craze they were meant to be traded not eaten, and in the eating the veil was lifted.

Euphemism

In common usage there seems to be some confusion about the relationship between euphemism, the subject of this section, and indirect speech, which is to be the subject of the next section. However, they are quite distinct in principle, for, although they are related, they refer to different parts of the dynamic of substitution: euphemism refers to a motive for substitution and indirect speech refers to the strategy of vicarious duplicity. So the same phenomena can be both euphemistic and indirect. To be more exact, all euphemism is indirect, but not all indirectness is euphemistic. Another difference in common usage: the term euphemism tends to be used more in reference to word level phenomena and indirect speech to sentence level phenomena. But as we are interested in these concepts only as a means of organizing our exploration of examples of the duplicity of language, we need not be bothered by a little incoherence in categorization. In this section we will focus on the formal consequences of the euphemistic motive for substitution and in the next we will focus on the strategic motives for non-euphemistic substitutive indirectness.

The word 'euphemism' was borrowed from Greek, where it meant 'good speech'. My dictionary defines it as follows:

1. The substitution of an inoffensive term for one considered offensively explicit. 2. The term thus substituted; "Euphemisms such as 'slumber room'... abound in the funeral business." (Jessica Mitford)

Let us begin by illustrating the structure of duplicity in terms of the above quoted example. Universe¹ is the level of usage where the words 'death' and 'slumber' are used literally. In universe¹ there is also a prohibition against speaking of death. In conflict with this prohibition, someone¹ wants to speak of death. This conflict is what motivates someone¹ to seek a substitution for the prohibited word. When casting about for suitable substitutive alternatives, one's mind naturally flows along the lines of associative similarity, where it soon comes upon the similarity between sleep and death. This natural iconic similarity provides the pretext which motivates someone¹ to choose terms of sleep as substitutes for terms of death, in this case 'slumber room' for 'death room'. In this way the superficial form of the speech of someone¹ does not violate the prohibition and yet it indirectly conveys the prohibited meaning. This permits a someone² to see only sleep in the scene portrayed by the language of someone¹, and yet to be secretly aware that it is death behind the facade. In this way, the desire of someone¹ to speak of death was satisfied without overtly violating the prohibition. Through the devise of substitution someone¹ both obeyed and disobeyed.

In some ways euphemism is similar to metaphor. They are similar in that both use associative similarity as the link between the prior and the subsequent. But they are totally different in motive.
Metaphor is creative, whereas euphemism is obsequious. The force of metaphor is that of self expression. The force of euphemism is duplicitous evasion whereby one seeks both to obey and to disobey, and in fact succeeds in doing neither. Metaphor violates and sacrifices language to the higher demand of vitality. Euphemism also violates and sacrifices language, but as a means of compromise.

“Good speech” can mean so many different things. It could mean true speech, or persuasive speech, or clear speech, or entertaining speech, or beautiful speech, or respectful speech. But what it has come to mean in practice, in the case of “euphemism”, is speech that is obedient to the dictates of social fashion as to what is proper and what is not. In other words, it is an instrument through which society induces people to obey its dictates and submit to its world view. It is an instrument of control through the repression and distortion and distraction of natural urges, as we will see shortly. I think it is the unconscious realization of this tyrannical quality of euphemistic language which has induced a countervailing trend of intentionally obscene and impolite speech in our society.

I suppose it is necessary to state that I do not condone totally free speech as the antidote to euphemistic repression. Politeness and consideration of others are natural to an extent. Even animals have certain rites that govern their interactions with each other. But there is a time for politeness and delicacy, and there is a time for crude and brutal bluntness. And what the rebels do not realize is that those who oppose a stupid dictate of language are governed by that dictate just as much as those who obey it. “I am against him”, is ambiguous between a friendly apposition and a hostile opposition.

The Dynamics and Formal Mechanism of Euphemism

The formal manifestations of euphemism are various. The basic process underlying euphemism is ellipsis. When a person is being careful of his speech, before he says something aloud, it comes up before his mind's eye for review. If his censor considers it to be offensive, it is not permitted to be spoken aloud. In this way the natural expression of himself as it evolves from a spontaneous urge to a fully matured manifestation, in the form of language in this case, is interrupted. It is not that the form of his expression never existed. The form has to exist, for it is the linguistic form that is reviewed by the censor. It is not the urge, or the intent that is censored, but the form. Both the urge and the form that the urge has taken exist prior to the ellipsis, and they are still there after the ellipsis. It is only the overt performance of the speech act that is inhibited. Or as we would say in terms of generative linguistic theory, euphemistic ellipsis is late in the ordering of syntactic transformations.

Psychologically speaking, this superficial ellipsis is the mechanism of what Freud called “repression”. In fact, he defined it in the same way, as a prohibition against the overt verbalization of forbidden impulses. According to Freud, this prohibition, and its formal instrument, ellipsis, is the mechanism that creates and sustains the division between conscious and unconscious sectors of the mind, for the unconscious is the collection of forbidden urges embodied in their unborn linguistic forms. In his theory of psycho dynamics, although these repressed forms disappear from consciousness, that is, from the prescribed social dialogue, they do not become extinct. On the contrary, ellipsis is too superficial to totally curtail the urge. It cuts the branches, but leaves the root intact. And the effect is not to eliminate the urge, but to dam it up, and make it more powerful, and cause it to seek other routes by which it might make itself manifest.

In this way, the euphemistic inhibition of the act sets in motion the dynamic of euphemistic substitution. The urge and the unspoken form are not annihilated; they are restrained, just as the dove
Euphemism is restrained. The urge thus frustrated strives to manifest itself all the more energetically, and in doing so the form of the urge becomes more or less radically transformed. Or, in more graphic terms, the form becomes more or less violently distorted and mutilated in the conflict.

In the extreme of euphemistic ellipsis, the distortion of the censured form does not show up on the surface of language, because nothing at all is overtly manifest of the repressed urge. For example, suppose a person is suddenly exposed to the overpoweringly bad breath of his boss. Perhaps he involuntarily backs away while his reaction begins to form itself on his lips something like this.

Whew! Your breath is enough to gag a dead dog!

Perhaps he is quick witted enough to completely squelch his spontaneous verbalization, in which case there would be no overt distortion in the flow of their dialogue. His abrupt withdrawal would then be the only sign of distortion, but that would not be a linguistic sign.

However, very often, especially where there are sudden and powerful forces at work, or when the censor is not very alert, at least part of the verbal response comes out before one realizes that it would not be a good thing to say in the present context. If he manages to stop himself soon enough he might be able to cover up his intent with a more or less appropriate substitute continuation like this.

Whew! Your.... absolutely right!

Here we can see euphemistic distortion in the sentence right on the surface. First, the end of the first sentence is torn off and a different ending is grafted on. It happens in this example that the first and second parts of the sentence grammatically fit pretty well, in spite of the fact that “your” is not grammatically equivalent to “you’re”. But aside from grammatical coherence, it is almost impossible that the two parts would fit smoothly together in every respect. Even though I have made this example quite harmonious appearing, the emotional energy of the first part would be inappropriate for the second part. Thus at the least, the speed, rhythm, and intonation of the sentence would be distorted. In addition, the informal tone of “Whew” is not consistent with a subordinate's approbation of his superior.

Second, there is almost always a gap between the two parts; there is a period of silence after the first sentence is cut off, which is the time it takes the speaker to formulate a suitable substitute. This gap is another kind of distortion of the form of the sentence in the sense that it is unmotivated grammatically or semantically. That is, it deviates from the grammatical and semantic standards of well formedness.

Given the principle that euphemistic substitution induces distortion in the form of language, then by reversing this principle we can derive another. When one encounters distortion in the form of a linguistic act, or any other for that matter, that distortion is a diagnostic symptom of euphemistic substitution. This can be interpreted in a perfectly general way as the fundamental principle which governs all of language. It is the desire to substitute something good for something bad which motivates language in the first place. And, conversely, everything that is considered to be good in language results from a distortion of the prior. Or in other words, in language goodness is a function of deviance. This is the conclusion that euphemism leads us to, and thus the analysis of euphemism supports the general theoretical argument being put forth here.

But we must not allow the force of our argument rest on one or two examples. Let us go on in the light of this general analysis of the dynamics and mechanisms of euphemism to consider a variety of examples.
Various Examples of Euphemistic Distortion.

Perhaps we should begin our survey of examples by returning to consider the stereotypical ideal kind of euphemism that was exemplified in the dictionary quotation above, where “slumber room” is used euphemistically in the place of something more blunt like “death room”. The ordinary person would not ordinarily consider this to be deviant or distorted. He would transact so automatically, unconsciously making the appropriate grammatical and semantic calculations, that it would not register in his consciousness as remarkable in any way. Or if it occurred to him that it might be slightly deviant, it would be considered to be a harmless kind of deviance, in the same category as the “white lie”: it would be considered to be an innocent, and moreover a socially condoned, perhaps even a conventionalized, distortion.

This is, of course, the socially predominant linguistically naive point of view, which is what led the people who wrote the dictionary to choose this particular example out of the millions they might have chosen. From our linguistically sophisticated point of view it does not matter if it is a white or black lie. It does not matter if it is an innocent and harmless distortion. It does not matter if it is socially condoned or socially condemned. And it does not matter if it is a single isolated example, the conventional practice of one single individual, a particular sub-group of a society, a whole society, or even of all societies.

The technical issue is this: is it a duplicity? Is it deviant? Is it a distortion? Is it violent? And the answer is unequivocally, yes, to all of these questions. Then, after we have seen the true nature of euphemistic phoneme, we can ask the secondary questions of whether it is a white or black duplicity, whether it is pathologically deviant, whether it is innocent violence. If we were to judge this single example in isolation, we would have to conclude that it is indeed a trivial violence. But it should be obvious by now that it would be a great mistake to consider this example in isolation.¹ To get a realistic idea, one must weigh the systemic duplicity, deviance, distortion, and violence of language as a whole.

In this case, there are two kinds of isolation. As I mentioned this example should not be considered by itself. And, secondly, a lexical euphemism such as this would never be used in isolation. It would always appear in a larger context. When one considers these lexical euphemisms in their natural context, the distortion becomes much more evident. To set the prior standard frame of reference, let us suppose that the origin of this euphemism arose from a hypothetical offensive interaction such as the following.

The widow: (Appearing at the funeral home to attend to her dead husband.)

The funeral director: The body is laying in the death room.

Instead of this blunt statement, the funeral director would say something like this:

Your loved one is in the slumber room.

On the face of it this seems like it is just as coherent as the prior sentence. But in the first sentence the choice of the expression “the body” as opposed to the more usual “Mr. Smith” or “your husband” is appropriate because it implies that the subject of the sentence is no longer “Mr. Smith” nor “your hus-

¹. Freud said that isolation is the essential defensive technique which insulates duplicity from discovery. Another example of “divide and conquer”.
band”. It implies that the subject is not a person, but a body, i.e. a dead person. Thus the fact that the subject is located in the death room is consistent. However, the second sentence is not only at odds with the truth, but it is also internally inconsistent. There is no semantic connection between the fact that the subject is loved and the fact that he is located in the sleeping room. There is no motivation for mentioning either fact, nor for connecting them in one sentence, except the unifying fact that he is dead. Thus even such a seemingly innocent euphemism, is in fact a distorted representation of the prior suppressed sentence.

A slightly more explicit distortion can be seen in the following mundane example, which was actually said by one of my children.

The dog went to the bathroom under the table.

Of course one can calculate the meaning of this sentence quite easily, but that does not alter the fact that it is an extremely complex agglomeration of euphemistic distortions. Does “bathroom” mean a room in which there is a bath or a room in which one urinates? It would seem that in either case, there must be a room of some kind under the table. But of course, in this case, the word “room” does not refer to a room at all. And the dog did not “go” anywhere.

Moving on to a different kind of euphemistic process, there is a kind of euphemistic pronominalization. In speaking we sometimes substitute a pronoun for a forbidden noun for euphemistic reasons and not for reasons of anaphora. For example, “Eat it” in adolescent English means “eat shit”. “Doing it” means “fucking”. The general semantic rule that emerges from such examples, in accord with the above mentioned principle, is that any grammatically unmotivated pronoun is to be interpreted as having a bad referent.

Similarly, in the expression, “We went all the way”, the grammatically obligatory adverb of place is not pronominalized, but is just left unsaid. In accord with the rule for interpreting deviance, the resulting vagueness is to be filled in with some forbidden subject. In this case, it means “we went all the way to the end of the sequence of forbidden things”, hence it means, “we fucked”.

A similar example is this: “I have to go” which is derived by euphemistic ellipsis from “I have to go to the bathroom” which is itself a euphemism. “Go” then means “do number one or number two” which is a euphemism for “urinate or defecate”, which is a euphemism for “piss or shit”.

This brings us to another family of euphemistic substitutions, namely, euphemistic foreignization. This is a very interesting topic, which I would like to explore further, but to do it justice would require a whole book of its own. And, as euphemistic foreignization is a diagnostic feature of high class English, it is familiar enough that we can make the point that is relevant here by connecting the euphemistic motive with the mechanism of substituting foreign words for native English words.

The point is that foreign words imported into English as substitutes for native words are originally secondary, and they remain secondary. Being originally they fulfill the requirement of secondariness that any substitute must have and so they remain secondary in performing that function. They do not hold equal standing in the lexical structure of English with native words, but comprise a complex sub-system of alienated representations which remain systematically exceptional to the canonical form of native words. “Intestines” functions as a euphemistic substitute for “guts” precisely because it does not have the associative force of the native English word. And its multi-syllabic form, as distinct from the typical mono-syllabic form of native words, marks it as an alien word. This is in
exact accord with our fundamental hypothesis that the linguistically naive world view is driven by the assumption that what is first is bad and what is second (= other = alien) is good.

I would like to mention parenthetically, that this particular euphemistic mechanism seems to be more common among the languages of the world than could be attributed to accident. To cite a few examples consider the following. In relation to English, it is primarily Latin and French which play the role of the other whose words are considered better than our own native words. For the French, it is of course Latin. For the Romans it was Greek. And for the Greeks it was Egyptian. In a similar way, for Christians in English society, Latin is superior to English, Greek is superior to Latin, and Hebrew is superior to Greek. Moving to a different linguistic theater, for Tibetans, Burmese, Thais, Laos, and Cambodians, it is Sanskrit that fulfills the role of the superior other language. For most Indonesians it was Sanskrit, but now it is Arabic, except in Bali.¹ For the Vietnamese and Japanese it is Chinese.

I suggest that the reason this phenomenon is so wide spread is that it is a function of natural psychological processes which are inherent in the logic of interpersonal and cultural development. In particular, this phenomenon is a manifestation of what Freud called “secondary identification”, as distinct from the kind of primary narcissistic identification which we discussed briefly above.² This second identification, or as we might say in the present context, secondary duplicity, is when the child identifies with a powerful and dangerous other whom he feels he must conciliate in order to avoid being harmed and to gain favor. In the case of a child, this role is ordinarily played by the father. In the case of cultural development, it is played by a neighboring culture that is militarily and/or intellectually dominant. In the case of English, this secondary identification took place during the period of several hundred years when French speaking Normans were the dominant social force in England.

In the other cases I have cited, there were similar intercultural relationships. The Japanese, for example, at the point in history when their culture was beginning to emerge as a coherent social unity, when they first looked at themselves from the point of view of the other, the predominant other in their case was the Chinese. At that time Chinese culture was already extremely sophisticated, intellectually superior, militarily superior, and superior in every other way. The Japanese recognized the superiority of Chinese culture and they thus became foreigners in relation to Chinese culture. They went there in droves to study the alien superior language and culture, and they brought back the knowledge of what they thought was superior about Chinese, and they proceeded to incorporate it in the framework of Japanese culture. Thus Japanese government and less official social regulations imitated the Confucian idea of social order. The Chinese version of Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, was imported and had a tremendous social impact, although it never was the religion of the masses. Indeed, just as it was originally the religion of the external superior, when it was imported it remained the religion of the internal superior, i.e. politically, intellectually, or militarily superior classes. Along

¹. By the way, Arabic is unusual in being a socially powerful language which does not exhibit this phenomenon. Presumably this is because its power flows from the Koran and the other teachings of Mohammad, which are written in Arabic. One could make the case that Arabic is now in the process of incorporating English as the superior other. Also, I believe Chinese has little systematic foreignization. As did German, until World War II.

². Freud defined “identification” as a kind of incorporation, or eating, or embodiment. Consider this process in the context of the analysis of incorporation above. The first identification is an imaginary incorporation of the image of the mother, the second identification is a symbolic incorporation of the symbolic father. In the logic of language, one can control the other by symbolic means through becoming him symbolically. This phenomenon is seen overtly in the “Stockholm syndrome”, where captives identify with their captors.
with Zen the Japanese borrowed the characteristic Zen approach to art in painting, architecture, ceremonial gardens, martial arts, etc. Even the Tea Ceremony was borrowed. This is not to belittle the Japanese contribution to these dimensions of art, for no one can seriously doubt the genuine creativity of their Zen art. But it is, just the same, a world view which they learned about from the Chinese. And, finally, at the core of this incorporation of the superior other is language: The Japanese writing system was borrowed from Chinese, as were something over half of its vocabulary.

The Euphemistic Mutilation of Phonological Form

There is a system of phonological euphemization in English that I think is particularly revealing in regard to the dynamics and formal machinery of euphemism. The ordinary linguistically naive speaker is almost entirely unaware of this system, and as far as I am aware, it has barely been noticed by linguists. It would be inappropriate here to comprehensively explore this system, so I will consider one example in depth and point out some of the outer dimensions of the system.

As a member of modern American society, I have had occasion to interact with a variety of people who try to be obedient to what they consider to be the laws of Christianity. One of the things that they are concerned with is good speech. Of course, they strive to avoid obscenity, as do we all, and they also strive to avoid blasphemy. I have observed a striking kind of euphemism in the speech of these people which arises from their desire to obey the prohibition against blasphemy, as they conceive of it.

In their desire to avoid forbidden expressions, it is common for these people to use what they consider to be mild and meaningless expletives such as “gosh”, “golly”, “gee”, “dang”, “darn”, etc. This practice however is nothing more than a hypocritical euphemistic duplicity, which they permit themselves to believe so that they can violate their own prohibitions under the facade of piety.

If one looks in many ordinary dictionaries such “informal” words are not even listed, and when they are listed, they are often defined vaguely as “mild expletive”. The Oxford English Dictionary, however, clearly defines each of them as a “perversion” or “substitute”, for “God” and “damn”. No doubt these people would argue in their defense that just because a dictionary says that “golly” came from the word “god”, that does not make it so, and even if it were so, a person cannot be held accountable for being aware of every little detail, and what is more an ordinary person cannot be expected to know what words meant way back in history. One might be inclined to accept such a defense if it were not for the fact that these people do not normally consider the matter of blasphemy to be a minor detail. It is an issue into which they invest a lot of energy and with respect to which they condemn other people and act as if they were holier because they say “golly” instead of “God”.

Furthermore, I do not buy the claim that these substitutions are dead historical events nor do I buy the claim that an ordinary person could not possibly be aware of the original meaning of these words. Once again, it is true that if one considers these terms in isolation, it is easier to persuade oneself that they really are meaningless inventions like “jabberwocky” or “gobbledy gook”. However, if one takes the trouble to consider them systematically, it is perfectly obvious that they are euphemistic transformations of forbidden expressions.

Let us take the forbidden expression, “God damn it”, which is held by these people to be a particularly objectionable invective. There are numerous euphemistic transformations of this form,
which are known to any normal English speaking person. The following variations show a relatively small degree of mutation.

Gosh darn it

Gol dang it

Only the syllable final consonants in the offensive words are slightly altered. In the first, the [d] of “god” becomes [š] and the [m] of “damn” = [dam] becomes [rn]. In the second, the [d] becomes [l] and the [m] becomes [ng].

A much more radically mutated example is

Dag nab it.

Here the euphemistic substitute for “God” has been derived by reversing the order of the consonants, together with a change in the quality of the vowel. The substitute for “damn” was derived by a metathesis of the nasality, but with retention of the point of articulation, of the consonants of “damn”. That is, the initial dental stop [d] becomes a dental nasal [n], and the final labial nasal [m] becomes a labial stop [b].

An even more radically mutated substitute is

Dog gone it.

This variant also offers the added advantage that, although it appears to be as meaningless as the above variants, the mutilated forms coincidentally look like existing words. Thus one can flesh out the pretense that it is not a substitute for “God damn it” by pretending that it has something to do with dogs being gone. In other words, the fact that these mutilated forms look like existing words helps to disguise its origin.

We can represent the structure of these examples as follows.

In this situation, something¹ is the form “God damn it” and there are several something²s which are derived from it by the various processes of phonological mutilation. Thus someone¹ can substitute any of the various forms of something¹, and since it appears on the surface to be unrelated to the original forbidden expression, he can hold it forth to someone², which is the persona of his own hypocritical self, as well as any one else who conspires with him in giving credibility to the duplicitous view of universe².

The most unfortunate dimension of this situation is that in struggling with the superficial prohibition of law², and the superficial duplicity it engenders, whether one obeys it or flaunts it, one gets caught up in a struggle that is contained in a more subtle duplicity. There is a law¹ prior to the above mentioned Law². In fact, Law² is a misunderstanding of the intent of law¹ in regard to the name of God. If we take God as the first first, then we can say that it is not a particular pronunciation of the name of the first first that is prohibited but the fact of naming the first first. That is, where law² says that you should not do something, law¹ says that you cannot do something. Just as you cannot walk on water, you cannot name the first first.

Moses asked God what his name was and God said something that is physically unpronounceable - YWH - and which meant “I am”. Therefore, the point of the commandment that says “Thou shalt not take the name of the lord thy God in vain” is not that one should not pronounce the name of God, for that is impossible. Nor does it mean that one should not say the word “God”. It means that
one who is not “I am” should not call himself “I am”, for to do so would be to attribute being to non-being. That is, this law¹ is not about crime, it is a law about error. The point is that it is an error to think that an unnamed someone is the same as someone¹ and that they both are the same as someone². And it is another error to think that you can represent the prior someone in the same sense as you can represent a something¹ by a something². Thus “God damn it” is not wrong so much because it is blasphemy, as because it misses the point.¹ And if “God damn it” misses the point, then “Gosh darn it” misses the universe in which the point exists. Both someone¹ and someone² are concerned with the superficial problem of good language vs. bad language, when the deep problem is language per se. The gross duplicity of the euphemistic structure is contained in the much more subtle duplicity of language itself.

A Justification of the Term “Mutilation”

Perhaps some readers are troubled by my persistence in using radical terminology such as “violence” and “mutilation” in reference to trivial linguistic phenomena that are conventionally thought of, when they are thought of at all, in more neutral terms such as “change” or “variation” or “transformation”. My choice of terminology is intentional, and it is integral to the force of the argument. In the present argument terminology is not just an instrument which we are using to get at something else. Here the issue is terminology itself. Does “representation” intrinsically mean “mis-

¹. By the way, according to my dictionary the Hebrew word for “sin” is from the root, (in transliteration) chââ’, which means “to miss”. The Greek word for “sin” is, (in transliteration) hamartan, meaning “to miss the mark” or “to miss the point”.
"representation", or is just a coincidence? Is language intrinsically duplicitous, or is its doubleness coincidentally related to its misleading character? Is the relation of secondness of which language is constructed a natural relation, or is it artificial? Are the two phases of the situation in language related like phases of the weather? Or are they related as the true to the false, the real to the imaginary? If the former were the case, if the two phases were equally natural, then we could accurately refer to this relationship as "change" or "variation".

But they are not equally natural. This is the crux of the point here. And to comply with the conventional point of view in using conventional terminology vitiates the point. The second is second in the sense that it comes into being through a transformation that violates the nature and the law of the prior, hence a violent transformation. And since the purpose of this violent transformation is to remove the identifying marks of the prior - to twist, distort, or deform the prior - it is precisely a mutation. To call once again on the extremity of the language of Jacques Lacan:

> the symbol manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing (p. 104)

One of the reasons we do not appreciate this phenomenon as a mutilating violence is because it is conventionally approved violence. It is legal violence. In other words, one is free to use violence, but only when it is conventionally condoned. Social institutions, including language, arrogate to themselves the authority to use violence. And, what is most important, from the point of view of the subsequent, the violent is not considered to be violent. That is, something² is not seen in universe² as a mutation of something¹, for the awareness of someone² is limited to universe², which excludes an awareness of something¹ as something¹. From the point of view of universe² there is no violation of the nature of something¹ and no violation of the law¹ of universe¹. In the normal course of events, a normal person is not aware of this violence.

However one can gain a feeling for the sense of violence in these phenomena by playing with it in ways that are not conventionally condoned. Under these circumstances, one can readily see that when there is no conventional sanction we cannot freely violate even something as trivial as the phonological forms of language. Consider the force of the punitive reaction that is provoked when someone violates the language by misspelling a word, for example. The violence of the reaction is all out of proportion to the actual harm caused by the trivial violation of spelling rules. In this case, there is really no harm at all, because the misspellings do not materially affect the communicative function; one can interpret every word perfectly. Indeed the rigidity with which we normally conform to the laws of form in language is truly obsessive.

This force of social sanction can also be readily mobilized by mispronunciation, misnaming, incorrect morphological construction, syntactic incorrectness, etc. For example, in computer English the name of the predominant computer operating system is DOS, an acronym which according to English spelling rules could be pronounced to rhyme with “most” or with “moss”. It happens that one of these alternatives has been arbitrarily chosen as the prescribed standard and computer people react to the other with a force that is inversely proportional to the degree of justification for choosing one over the other. Or, try saying “Dag roming” instead of “Good morning” and see how far you get. In view of the obsessive rigidity with which the rules of language are normally enforced, the notion that “Dag nab it” could be considered to be some sort of free-floating change, like the change of weather, a kind of change that does not necessitate the violation of laws would be ludicrous if it were not so serious.
It is the force of conventional presupposition that precludes us from seeing these phenomena. But that does not mean they are not there. Speaking in regard to phonology alone, there is a vast unconscious world of imaginary and symbolic relationships which governs our thinking and speaking in myriad detailed ways of which we are usually entirely unaware. We saw above in the case of the rat man how higher level symbolic structure follows the lines of the prior structure of phonological associations of similarity and contiguity. That is, words that sound like “rat” become salient in his efforts to construct a rat identity, and thus become incorporated in the structure of his mythical rat persona. This is essentially the process of naive, or folk etymology.

Of course, in terms of the folk theory of language one is inclined to isolate such examples, setting them apart from the sphere of ordinary language, under the assumption that the conceptual machinery of pathological language is different from ordinary language. However, in the present context that barrier of isolation is undermined, for we are claiming that all language is pathological. Freud addressed this barrier long ago in his most popular book, The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, in which he gathered together numerous examples to show that the same processes are at work in normal people that are at work in abnormal people. That book cites numerous examples that illustrate the extent to which mental processes are a function of trivial phonological similarities and contiguities. Indeed, the literature of psychoanalysis is can be seen from the linguistic point of view as a vast compendium of such phenomena. But in pursuing our discussion of euphemistic mutilation so far, we have strayed from the area of euphemistic phonological processes into the area of phonology in general. Thus instead of discussing a large quantity of examples of phonological mutilation, I will close the justification for using the term “mutilation” by citing two examples that I think are of exceptionally forceful quality as examples of phonological mutilation.

The two examples I have in mind were described by Freud in his two major case studies: the first is from the case of the Wolf Man (vol. XVII); the second is the case of the Rat Man (vol. X), whose rat economy we touched upon above. As both examples are complex and deeply embedded in the bizarre world view of these individuals, it would be impossible to fully lay out all of the specific facts and lines of reasoning which underlies these phonological analyses. For that one must consult the original case studies.

Let me cite these examples first as described by Lacan in his essay on the “Function and field of speech and language”.

language is not immaterial. It is a subtle body, but body it is. Words are trapped in all the corporeal images that captivate the subject... 2

What is more, words themselves can undergo symbolic lesions and accomplish imaginary acts of which the patient is the subject. You will remember the Wespe (wasp), castrated of its initial W to become the S. P. of the Wolf Man's initials at the moment when he realizes the symbolic punishment whose object he was on the part of Grusha, the wasp.

You will remember also the S that constitutes the residue of the hermetic formula into which the conjuratory invocations of the Rat Man became condensed after Freud had extracted the anagram of the name of his beloved from its cipher, and which, tacked on to the final 'amen' of his jaculatory prayer, externally floods the lady's name with the symbolic ejection of his impotent desire. (p. 87, my emphasis)

1. See Jakobson (1979) for a detailed discussion of sound symbolism, synesthesia, verbal taboo, etc.
2. Consider the relationship between “body” and “corporeal” in the sense intended here and the concept of the corpora-

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In the first example, Lacan is referring to the following passage in Freud's analysis of the Wolf Man.

He confirmed the connection between the Grusha scene and the threat of castration by a particularly ingenious dream, which he himself succeeded in deciphering. 'I had a dream,' he said, 'of a man tearing off the wings of an Espe.' ‘Espe?’ I asked; ‘What do you mean by that?’ ‘You know; that insect with yellow stripes on its body, that stings.’ I could now put him right: ‘So what you mean is a Wespe [wasp].’ ‘Is it called a Wespe? I really thought it was called an Espe.’ (Like so many other people, he used his difficulties with a foreign language as a screen for his symptomatic acts.) ‘But Espe, why, that’s myself: S.P.’ (which were his initials). The Espe was of course a mutilated Wespe. (vol. XVII, p. 94)

In the second example, Lacan is referring to an expression which had become conventionalized in the speech of the Rat Man, described by Freud thus:

When he first masturbated he had an idea that it would result in an injury to someone he was fond of (his cousin). He therefore pronounced a protective formula constructed... from various short prayers and fitted with an isolated ‘amen’. We examined it. It was Glejisamen. (vol X, p. 280)

This formula, “Glejisamen”, like “Dag nab it”, is as meaningless on the surface in German as it is in English. And the patient himself was only able to give vague and improbable suggestions as to its interpretation. However, this is another example which shows that isolating a linguistic phenomenon from its context contributes to the maintenance of its veil of confusion, and that if one considers even such a seemingly meaningless bit of language as this in the larger dialogical context, it can sometimes reveal connections that provide the key to unraveling the knot and dispelling the fog. What makes this example particularly interesting is that through the course of his analysis of this patient Freud was able to gather together enough details of the patients dialogical context, his private world view, to permit one to reconstruct the conceptual evolution of its form and of its pragmatic function.

The key to deciphering the form of this formula is the fact that the forbidden object of his love was named “Gisela”. Given this fact, as Freud pointed out,

It is easy to see that this word is made up of

\[
\text{GISELA} \quad \text{S AMEN}
\]

and that he united his ‘Samen’ [‘semen’] with the body of his beloved, i.e., putting it bluntly, had masturbated with her image. He was of course convinced and added that sometimes the formula had secondarily taken the shape of Giselamen, but that he had only regarded this as being an assimilation to his lady’s name (an inverted misunderstanding). (p. 281)

Thus in this magical formula, through the violent manipulation of the phonological form of his formula he is able to symbolically enact in the body of the word the event which he is forbidden to enact in the body of reality. He enacts symbolic sexual intercourse by metonymic association (Jakobson’s ‘contiguity’) of the name of his beloved with the name of that which he wishes to associate with his beloved, this latter name, ‘samen’, being a further metonymic substitute for himself. He enacts sexual intercourse through the juxtaposition of words, and then he obscures this symbolic act even further, and simultaneously consummates the sexual merger by mutilating the two words and blending them together in one.
As to the ostensible pragmatic force of this formula, in the quote above Freud says that the Rat Man uttered it as a “protective formula”. From this it would appear to be intended with the same kind of force as, “May God protect her” “God bless her”. However, this characterization is the one that the Rat Man put on it. It is certainly not Freud's assessment of its intended force. To understand the dynamics of this kind of magical language, one must look back in the patients dialogue to its inception. In this case, and probably in all others, it springs from the dialectical conflict between love and hate. The way this conflict is played out in language is clearly seen in the following segment of Freud's description of this patent's behavior.

At the time of the revival of his piety... he made up prayers for himself, which took up more and more time and eventually lasted for an hour and a half. The reason for this was that he found, like an inverted Balaam¹, that something always inserted itself into his pious phrases and turned them into their opposite... E.g., if he said, 'May God protect him,' an evil spirit would hurriedly insinuate a 'not'... In the end he found his way out of his embarrassment by giving up the prayers and replacing them by a short formula concocted out of the initial letters or syllables of various prayers. He then recited this formula so quickly that nothing could slip into it. (p. 193)

And in another place Freud notes that the patient became aware of the disturbing element of hostility which injected itself into his intended benefactions.

The words he wanted to use in his prayer were, 'May God protect her', but a hostile 'not' suddenly darted out of his unconscious and inserted itself into the sentence; and he understood that this was an attempt at a curse. (p. 242)

Nevertheless, in spite of his elaborate linguistic precautions, in the particular formula we are looking at, his semen still manages to insert itself into Gisela, against his wishes. Or at least against the wishes of himself in the role of someone² who conveniently accepts his symbolic interjection as meaningless. But at the level of someone¹ his blessing can be seen as a curse, and his meaningless formula as a symbolic enactment of that which he wishes to do, but is forbidden from doing. The mutilation which his words suffer as they force their way through the violence of his conflict are the manifestation in the symbolic medium of the mutilation of his soul.

Now that we can see this symbolic mutilation as an integral component of the larger dialogical structure of this person we can see that it is very similar to the euphemistic mutilation of “Dag nab it”. For one thing, both are magical formulas which were mutilated in order to permit someone¹ to perform a forbidden act while appearing to someone² to not be performing that act. Also, both appear to be meaningless and harmless on the surface, but are essentially hostile and violent in intent. The main difference is that the Rat Man's formula is a private conventional mutilation, whereas “Dag nab it” is a more public conventional mutilation. The former is an idiosyncratic illusion, the latter a collective illusion.

There is a class of phenomena which have come to be called “indirect speech acts” in the technical language of linguistics. However, this terminology suffers from the same incoherence as the terms “symbolism” and “euphemism”. As we saw in the beginning of this chapter, the conventional

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1. Freud is referring to the fact that “Balaam came to curse and stayed to bless” as he explains in a later footnote.
use of the term “symbolism” to refer exclusively to the class of superficial symbolic phenomena, such as the dove as peace, incorrectly implies that the rest of language is not symbolic, or is symbolic in a different way, whereas the fact is that these superficial symbols use the same duplicitous logic as the rest of language. Thus that class of phenomena is not distinct in being symbolic, but in being superficially symbolic. Similarly, we saw that the term “euphemism” is conventionally used to refer to a limited class of substitutive phenomena in which it is supposed that the motive is “good speech”. While this term, “euphemism”, is correct in attributing this motive to the phenomena to which it refers, it incorrectly implies that the rest of language is not euphemistic, whereas the fundamental point I am trying to make here is that this euphemistic motive is what drives the entire machine of language. In the same vein, while it is true that the class of phenomena called “indirect speech acts” are indirect, this usage of the expression implies that the rest of language is not indirect, whereas the fact is that everything in language is indirect. There is nothing in language that is not indirect, for language is precisely mediated behavior, which is to say, behavior that does not get at something directly but rather gets at it through the agency of something else, i.e., through a symbol, or a representation.

In spite of this incorrectness of the conventional terminology, there is a coherent class of phenomena which linguists have intuitively distinguished to which the conventional terminology refers. So the question is, if it is not indirectness that distinctively characterizes the class of phenomena called “indirect speech acts”, what does?

The characteristic of an indirect speech act which motivates the name “indirect” is, in informal terms, that it is an act in which a person says one thing but means another. In technical terms, an indirect speech act is a speech act in which there is a duplicity in the function of language such that there is a split between the semantics of the act and its actual intended force. Or, in other words, the semantics of the act is distorted in the service of pragmatic motives.

Since the chief mechanism of politeness in language is indirectness, one can observe innumerable highly conventionalized, and thus familiar, examples in polite language. For example, when uttered to a companion at dinner,

Can you pass the salt?

has the pragmatic force of a request for the addressee to give him the salt, but it is semantically a question about either the ability of the addressee to move the salt from one place to another, or the legality of it. Thus one could legally reply to this speech act in three different ways.

1. Yes, I can.
2. Yes, you can.
3. Here it is. (while passing the salt.)

However, although these replies are all legal, they are also all illegal: The first two replies would be semantically legal, but would be pragmatically illegal. And the latter reply would be semantically illegal, but pragmatically legal.

In this way, this kind of duplicity, the duplicity of indirectness, imposes a dialogical dilemma upon its addressee: He must choose semantic harmony at the expense of pragmatic harmony, or he must choose pragmatic harmony at the expense of semantic harmony. In short, the indirect speech act is characterized by pragmatically motivated semantic distortion, i.e., functional duplicity.
We can sort out the various elements of this kind of duplicity, and represent their logical and dynamic relationships in terms of our elementary structure of duplicity.

**FIGURE 31. The Duplicity of Indirectness**

To understand the relationships between the elements here, let us describe the evolution of this situation. In the beginning, prior to the emergence of universe², there were two formally, semantically, and pragmatically unrelated forms: “Can you pass the salt?” which was a question about the addressee’s capability (leaving the other sense of “can” aside as irrelevant to the present history), and the command, “Give me the salt!”.

Now, one of the basic principles of politeness, which helps to sustain the bonds of the social fabric, is that one must not intrude upon the ego of another. Each person’s ego must be permitted its sovereignty. This is basic to the social contract: I will permit you to have your ego, and help you to make it look real, but only if you permit me to have my own ego, and help me to make mine look real. A direct command violates this principle, and is thus forbidden in socially polite language.

Nevertheless, most people want to control the behavior of other people, which gives rise to the conflict that motivates indirectness: for certain reasons one wants to control the behavior of others and for certain reasons one does not want to control the behavior of others. The mechanism of duplicity, in this case, duplicitous indirectness permits one to do both, or at least it permits one to control the behavior of other people without appearing on the surface to do so. Here, “on the surface” means in universe².

Thus someone¹ takes the sentence “Can you pass the salt?” which was originally found in universe¹ and uses it to represent another sentence in universe¹, and thereby creates a universe² in which the former something¹ is now a something² in the eyes of a someone². As a result, in universe², the sentence “Can you pass the salt?” no longer means “Can you pass the salt?”, because it has been captured and put to use in the service of politeness to mean “Give me the salt!”. That captured sentence is no longer available for free use, because it has been dedicated in the eyes of the new law of universe² to serve as the representation of another sentence. And, in universe² it is illegal to interpret that captured sentence in its underlying, more natural, semantic sense. One must treat it in terms of the value which it has been assigned in universe². And, finally, in universe², the sentence, “Give me the salt!” is not recognized as a legitimate entity. It is an illegal alien. It does not exist. And with this banish-
ment, we have rounded out the provisions of the (conventionally) legal duplicity which comprises universe².

The phenomenon of indirectness has received a good deal of attention in linguistics in the last decade or two, but the focus of attention has always been upon the relation between the indirect speech act and the speech act for which it is the substitute. Why is this particular sentence chosen as the substitute? What is the process of reasoning by which one decides that a sentence is not being used for itself, but rather as an indirect way of referring to another sentence? And, and by what process of reasoning does one conclude which other sentence is being referred to? The connection between sentence¹ and sentence² in the above example has been conventionalized, so its interpretation would seem to be merely a conventional matter. But conventionalized indirectness is only a superficial layer of the phenomenon, and as is always the case with conventions, whatever becomes conventionalized must have occurred previously as a spontaneous phenomenon. Thus, conventionalized indirectness is merely that class of indirectness which has become ossified as social institutions. However, in practice, the same kind of substitutive duplicity pervades normal speech to an extent that is far beyond the bounds conventionally recognized as indirectness. In fact, more or less spontaneous instances of indirect speech acts are such a ubiquitous and vital component of ordinary conversation that indirectness is more normal in ordinary conversation than is directness. That is, the notion that ordinary language is direct and that indirectness is a marginal phenomena is a stereotype, or a myth, of the predominant folk world view. And thus the problem of how one calculates the relations between sentence¹ and sentence² becomes correspondingly vital to an understanding of how language actually works.

Nevertheless, as important as it is to understand the logic and semantics of indirectness, I think it is more important to understand its pragmatic dynamics. I think it is more important because the pragmatic dynamics is prior to and governs and motivates the logical and semantic distortions of indirectness. Therefore, without dismissing the logical and semantic problems, we will focus exclusively on the pragmatic dynamics.

Focusing then on the dynamics of indirect speech acts, we can make the following general observations, which will frame our further exploration. First, as we have already seen in several different examples, indirectness arises in situations of conflict. A corollary of this fact is that indirectness only arises in what we might call tendentious situations. And in the contrary case, where there is no particular purpose, indirectness cannot occur. Thus, an indirect phatic communication, an indirect ceremonial speech, or an indirect offering in an aimless meandering conversation, etc. would be an impossibility. The notion that there could be an indirect way of greeting someone, for example, makes not sense. How could one say “Hello” indirectly?

Second, indirectness is a strategic maneuver. By this I mean that it is a positional move in the play of a situation of conflict which is intended to out flank the opposition, or to circumvent the opposition, or to undermine it, or to subvert it. It is a strategic maneuver as distinct from what is conventionally considered the only possible alternatives, namely, continuation of conflict (fight), submissively abandoning ones desires (flight), or compromise. Paraphrasing Klausewitz’ famous dictum, an indirect speech act is the pursuit of one’s objectives by other means. In the realm of concepts, the realm in which words and sentences are the issues and the weapons, in a situation where neither overt war, i.e., physical violence, nor diplomacy can overcome the opposition, indirectness is the strategy of guerrilla warfare. It is the strategy of the Trojan horse. It is the strategy of pretense, duplicity, distortion, evasion. It is the strategy of attacking from an unexpected and undefended flank.
The Indirect Speech Act as a Strategic Maneuver

The examples we have been looking at thus far are very tame and ordinary, because they are conventionalized, and because they are evasive in intent. The framework of conflict in all these cases has been the same, namely, a conflict between an egotistical objective and an inhibiting social prohibition. Naturally the character of the indirectness created to circumvent this rather mundane kind of conflict will be correspondingly mundane. However, there are other basically different kinds of conflict, and correspondingly other species of indirectness. One prominent kind of verbal conflict is a more or less symmetrical conflict between individuals, groups of individuals, or points of view, etc. Such conflicts are sometimes staged between individuals, who fight in a highly stylized manner, as representatives of higher or larger ends, as in a court of law. Or, the individuals might fight as representatives of their societies in lieu of more general war. Or, as a prelude to general war. Or, perhaps such a battle might be for the hand of a fair maiden. Or, or perhaps it might be a merely personal power struggle. Or, perhaps it might be sheer play, just for the fun of the battle.

In any case, the parameters of this kind of conflict are quite different from euphemistic conflict, and so is the nature of the strategic indirectness. In this kind of verbal warfare one sees a much more creative, aggressive, and insidious kind of duplicity, as opposed to the more obsequious kind of indirectness seen in politeness. And, of signal importance, whereas euphemistic conflict is seen as somewhat pathetic, aggressive symmetrical conflict is considered to be not only entertaining, but also it is considered to be of mystical significance, in the sense that victory is considered to be a sign of the truth and superiority of the victor. Of course these two kinds of indirectness are not necessarily mutually exclusive: in verbal battle anything can be used to gain advantage, and sometimes the most clever attacks are disguised as refined and attentive shows of politeness, and are thus all the more difficult to counter, without appearing to be rude and stupid. In a more or less conventionalized expression, the weapon which one wields in this kind of polite verbal duel is called “rapier-like wit” in appreciation of the fact that, while such conflict may be subtle, it’s intent is nevertheless aggressive and violent.

One must recognize also, that verbal battle, like any other kind, is often not conducted with strategic acumen. Often verbal battle is overt, blunt, direct, and correspondingly brutal, ineffective, and unentertaining. The structural prototype of this kind of uninspired conflict is blunt assertion countered with blunt denial:

Person A Yes it is.
Person B No it isn’t.

This kind of conflict does not persuade any one, or reveal anything, or make any progress. It is the verbal counterpart of stalemate: Uninteresting, unproductive, and brutal.

But when conflict is played with strategic skill it can be penetrating, insightful, and decisive, and it can be very amusing, for the prototypical structure of strategic indirectness is the structure of the joke. The evolutionary structure is this: first, the situation is framed in such a way as to be brought to an impossible conflict, i.e., a dilemma; then the punch-line reframes the situation in such a way that the conflict collapses, and the energy bound up in the dilemma is suddenly released with an upsurge of delight and exhilaration. This is the feeling that people want to get from humor and from battle.

1. See Bohannan Law & Warfare for a sampling of the ethnological variety of this kind of conflict.
Obviously these are the outer parameters of symmetrical conflict. Most verbal battles are somewhere between being crudely blunt and being strategically brilliant. But in order to understand the dynamics of any particular instance of indirectness in verbal battle, we must be able to see it in terms of a general framework.

Before we go on to consider some examples, we must look at one more aspect of the framework of indirectness, namely, the relationship between universe¹ and universe². It will be useful, I think, to characterize the relationship between these two points of view, and to correlate this relationship with some other well known concepts.

We can begin with the distinction that philosophers have made between use and mention. The classical example is the following pair of sentences.

Socrates is a man.

Socrates has eight letters.

The point is that although the word “Socrates” is formally identical in these two sentences, two totally different functions are being performed. In the first, the word is being used in a sentence, and in the second the word is being referred to, or as the philosophers say, it is being mentioned.

However, linguists have found this distinction to be far more complex than is implied in this way of talking about it, and that the philosophical terminology is rather confusing in a way which I will specify shortly.

The distinction which seems to be more generally applicable is that the first sentence is in English, whereas the second sentence is about English. The first “Socrates” refers to Socrates, but the second “Socrates” refers to the word that refers to Socrates. Thus in the logic of the second sentence there is an additional layer of reference, hence, it is called a metalinguistic sentence.

It would seem to make more sense then, to say that in the first sentence the word “Socrates” is spoken in English, and the second the word is used to speak about English. Instead of “use vs. mention”, it would be better to characterize these two modes of linguistic behavior “spoken vs. used”.

In precisely the same sense, an indirect speech act is not a speech act in language, it is a speech act which uses language. When one says “Can you pass the salt?” he does not mean what he says, he uses what he says to mean something else. An indirect speech act is thus a metalinguistic act. It is an act which transcends language. It is an act which is motivated from outside of language, comprehends the situation from a point of view outside of language, and manipulates language duplicitously in accord with laws outside of language - the laws of strategy. The very evaluation of “indirectness” implies a point of view outside of language. In terms of the broadest frame of reference, the distinction here is between playing in the game, and playing with the game. There is an act or move in the game, and there is a higher order act or move that merely uses the game as a medium or instrument or weapon.

Now we are in a position to properly locate the conventional assumption that the primary function of language is to communicate. Communication is the purpose in the game of language. But there is a whole world that is prior to and contains and dominates the game of language, namely, the real world, the natural world. And, of course, that prior world has its own prior motives and laws. Thus we cannot possibly hope to understand language by limiting our analysis to the framework of the game of language. We must be able to look at linguistic phenomena both from the point of view inside the game and the point of view outside of the game, that is, universe² and universe¹. We must
analyze a speech act in terms both of its function in the narrow sense as an act in language and its broader metafunction as a real maneuver in reality. The former is the realm of the law of language, the realm of semantics, information, consensus, correctness of form, etc.; the latter is the realm of natural law, the realm of pragmatics, force, truth, effectiveness, etc.

Let me illustrate the strategic dynamics of the indirect speech act first by a fairly deep look at one simple, stereotypical example, and then by superficially looking at a variety of more subtle examples.

For the first example, which is a verbal version of the fabled Trojan horse strategy, lets look at a trick which lawyers and prosecuting attorneys like, at least on TV, which involves the incorrect use of a performative verb, as in the following exchange.

**Police:** Do you admit that you saw Bob?

**Max:** I don't admit it, I say it.

What is wrong with the question is that the verb “admit” is grammatical only if its complement is the description of an event that is a crime, or at least a failure, such as

- I admit that I stole the diamonds
- I admit that I failed to keep my promise
- I admit that I forgot.

It is ungrammatical to use “admit” where the complement is a simple description of fact, so unless a pretext had been established which made it a crime to be six feet tall or for today to be Tuesday the following would be ungrammatical.

* I admit that I am six feet tall
* I admit today is Tuesday.

Thus the use of “admit” where its complement is the innocent fact that Max saw Bob is ungrammatical, and as a result, this way of asking the question appears on the face of it to be dysfunctional. That is, to be precise, it appears to be dysfunctional in terms of the simple minded idea that the function of language is to exchange information or to communicate.

It is dysfunctional in the first place because it makes the question more complicated and thus more difficult to understand and thus more likely to fail in its ostensible intent to elicit information. Second, it makes it more complex for Max to compose his reply: it forces Max to calculate whether to accept or ignore the incorrect use of the verb or to correct it, and if the latter, how to correct it. Third, if he does correct it, as he did above, the formal structure of his reply would also be more complex than it would otherwise have to be, thereby complicating the form and the semantic structure of his part of the dialogue, and making the next stage of the exchange more complex in turn. Finally, if the police were to persist in their misuse of the verb “admit” it might make Max angry and uncooperative and eventually he might refuse to answer any questions.
All of the above complexity would be dysfunctional from the point of view of a hypothecated
desire on the part of the police to get information from him as compared with the relative simplicity
and overt functional effectiveness of the following alternative dialogue.

Police Did you see Bob?
Max Yes.

This would be the most effective way for them to get information, but of course we all know that the
police are not playing the game of getting information. They are playing the much deeper game of
attributing guilt. And what they accomplish by their incorrect dysfunctional way of speaking is that
they can indirectly accuse Max of a crime, an accusation which they presumably could not justify
making explicitly, or else they would do so. And by doing it indirectly they also obscure the fact that
they are making an accusation by hiding it behind a mask of complexity, which most people would
not be linguistically sophisticated enough to be able to penetrate. The ordinary linguistically naive
person would probably not be consciously aware that he was being accused of a crime. He would
unconsciously grasp that fact, and would probably feel uncomfortable, but in the speed and the heat
of the dialogue, he would not be able to precisely identify the cause of his discomfort, and he would
not therefore be able to defend himself effectively.

This aspect of the strategy is similar to the Trojan horse. By wording their accusation in this
way they insidiously posit the existence of guilt in the addressee. Having posited guilt in him, the
police can attack him both from inside and from outside. Now that his guilt has entered the universe
of discourse, no matter how, they can refer to it, build on it, and treat it as if they had not introduced
it. And, if he refers to this guilt in any way whatsoever, he only contributes to its substantiality.

In addition to the covertness of the accusation, if Max were able to figure out that he is being
indirectly accused of something, he would be faced with the confusing fact that what he is being
accused of does not make sense: How could seeing Bob be a crime? Since it is not a crime, he could
not possibly be being accused of that crime. Thus he must conclude that the police are referring to
another crime, to some as yet unspecified crime. And, since everyone is guilty of something, every-
one is vulnerable to the vague accusation of guilt, quite independently of the crime the police have in
mind. So by making this covert and vague accusation, what the police are trying to do is to get at
Max's feeling of guilt, to get around the defensive barriers of secrecy which he, and everyone else,
erects around their guilt, to agitate him and get him scared, to get him confused, to get him hot, to get
him to panic, and perhaps to confess. That is what function of their dysfunction is. It is a strategic
maneuver get inside his defenses, to bypass his resistance, and to induce him to confess.

Furthermore, the incorrectness can also serve as a defensive shield. If Max should be percep-
tive enough to realize that he was being accused of a crime, and if he were to accuse the police of
having made a false accusation, because their construction is incorrect in the first place, the police
could plead lack of knowledge, or inadvertence, or dismiss it as an unimportant semantic detail, or
simply deny that the question conveys an accusation.

And, finally, the fact that no accusation appears on the surface of the question permits the
police to frame the situation in such a way that anything Max might say to defend himself could be
turned into weapon against him. In order to defend himself against the covert accusation, Max would
have to say something about accusation or crime or guilt or something else relevant to the covert
accusation. Whatever he might say can then be misinterpreted in accord with their frame of reference
Indirect Speech Acts

As the first mention of the subject and thus as proof that he felt guilty and that they were right in the first place for doing what they are pretending they didn't do. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Police</th>
<th>Do you admit that you saw Bob?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>I don't admit it, I say it. What is wrong with that? I is not a crime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Who said anything about a crime?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>You indirectly accused me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>I didn’t accuse you of anything, but if you are not guilty of anything, you have nothing to worry about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>I’m not worried.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Who said you were worried?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And so on and so on. In such a struggle, because the attack is by indirect means, and because of the fundamental asymmetry of guilt and innocence, it is impossible to either defended oneself or to counterattack in any effective way. On the contrary, because of the duplicitous framing of the situation, the force of any defensive effort can easily be turned back against the accused. It is for this reason that silence is really the only defense.

As can be seen even in this simple example, the conventional idea that the main function of language is to exchange information is hopelessly naive. In fact, the very idea of function, as it is ordinarily thought of, is itself naive, for in the rough and tumble of real life, whatever idea of function one might assume becomes the basis for expectations that can be strategically exploited by violating those assumptions. Thus in the larger framework, linguistic dysfunction can actually be pragmatically functional.

This is not an unusual example by any means. The classical question used to illustrate an unfair question is an example of this Trojan horse strategy.

When did you stop beating your wife?

This question presupposes that the addressee regularly beat his wife for a period of time that ended at some point prior to the present, and asks for a specification of that point in time. According to the rules of grammar, which are enforced in a court of law when a hostile witness is being questioned, the only possible responsive answer would be a date. And an attempt to deny the presuppositions of the sentence would be technically ungrammatical, perhaps enforced by certain penalties.

The general strategic principle here is this. Logical presupposition, as distinct from assertion, provides a convenient technique by which one can place saboteurs in the enemy camp. In as much as presuppositions are prior to the central point of a speech act, they are off stage, or in other words, they are normally out of our awareness. Therefore, such saboteurs are normally hidden from our awareness. And what is more, even if we do become aware of an insidious presupposition, it is legally protected from attack by virtue of its privileged grammatical position as a presupposition. What I mean by this is that it is grammatically illegal to negate, deny, question, or even assert a presupposition. In other words, the rules of grammar force you to accept the insidious attack by presupposition. In order to effectively respond to such an insidious attack, one must violate the rules of grammar.
In more general terms, the attack is duplicitous in that it appears to be playing the game of language, when in fact it is really using language, or rather mis-using language, by performing a speech act which presupposes things that are false. To effectively reply to the attack, one must go outside of language and reply in a grammatically inappropriate way. The only appropriate reply is an inappropriate reply. That is to say, one must realize that the power of the duplicitous attack is a function of the victim’s mistaken belief that they are playing the game of language. To defend himself, the victim of the attack must realize that there is a difference between a game in language and a war which uses language. He must realize that there is a difference between appropriateness¹ and appropriateness².

Both examples of this Trojan horse strategy that we have discussed are relatively stereotypical, and both have to do with officials of the law. Lest one draw the incorrect inference that this strategy is limited in some way, I will briefly mention a few examples.

There is another class of indirectness which uses a strategy that is quite distinct, almost opposite to the Trojan horse strategy. Instead of using implication to attack the integrity of the other by planting an agent of sabotage within the other, this strategy attacks the conceptual framework of the other by insidiously reframing his position or his character or his beliefs, etc., through implication. In other words, this strategy imposes insidious categorizations upon the other. One example is from an episode of the TV comedy “Cheers”. John Cleese was playing the role of a marriage counselor. He had just met a woman in a superficial social relationship, and he had no more than exchanged the usual polite words, when she said something rather insulting to him. He instantly replied, in a manner which was totally unresponsive and inappropriate, grammatically speaking, thus:

My ex-wife had a dress just like the one you are wearing.

On the face of it, this might be taken as a mere factual observation. And one could suppose that his statement flowed spontaneously from a sudden realization of the fact, and that it was not intended to be a response to her insult at all. One could, of course, only accept such an interpretation as a collusive attempt to maintain the facade of social harmony. This superficially innocent observation is an insidious counterattack in the guise of a factual observation. He is imposing on her, through the agency of his indirect representation, the identity of his ex-wife.

The works of Stephen Potter, who invented the concept of “one-upsmanship”, are a rich source of insight into and examples of strategic maneuver on the interpersonal level of interaction. He cites numerous varieties of the present strategic maneuver. In a chapter on “Conversationship” he discusses one-up conversational openings, i.e., opening remarks designed to frame the other’s position in an undesirable and/or disadvantageous way. (1970, p. 88)

Another opening, more difficult to guard against, is the encouraging personal remark aimed at your chief rival, e.g. “Good lord, how do you always manage to look so well? There are many variants. ‘I’m glad to see you looking so fit’ can suggest that at last your friend has cut down to a bottle of whisky a day. More subtle, and more difficult to answer is:

Lifeman You are looking wonderfully relaxed.

What makes this kind of maneuver so brilliant is that it exploits the intrinsic duplicity of language in such a way that it permits one to attack without revealing the slightest sign of attack on the surface of the speech act. That is, in the above example, an attack is disguised as an innocent factual observation. However, it is a factual observation which does not fit in the flow of the dialogue. It is inappropriate. This inappropriateness is the sign that something devious is going on. In this case, there is no
Indirect Speech Acts

disguise, for these attacks not only look like complements, they are complements in the sense that the speech act itself would be identical in form whether one was truly intending to complement the addressee or to attack him. This kind of attack is not really indirect in the sense of there being two forms. This is not a duplicity of form, but a duplicity of the very force of the speech act. This strategy exploits the intrinsic duplicity of language, rather than a specially contrived duplicity of form, to make its insidious attack.

The logic of this strategy is as follows. Let us begin to reason this out from the basic principle that language is intrinsically duplicitous. From this it follows that every element of language is duplicitous and is necessarily suspended in the framework of doubt. As a consequence of its duplicity, every sentence is semantically ambiguous and the force of every speech act is ambivalent. This property of language can be formulated as a corollary pragmatic principle thus:

Every speech act is both what it appears to be and the opposite.

Therefore, to properly comprehend the force of a given speech act one must bear in mind its duplicitous ambivalence. The effect of this ambivalence is that every complement is also an insult, and every promise is also a threat, every praise is also criticism, etc. In general, in the framework of language, every good thing can be interpreted as a bad thing and vice versa. Every gift has strings attached which convert it into an obligation.1

One need not be intending to insult the other to become entangled in this bewildering chaos of reversals and inversions. In fact, whenever one enters into the realm of language, he necessarily finds himself in this chaotic realm. From the point of view of the addressee it is impossible to determine the intentions of the speaker, so the addressee must decide what intentions to attribute to the speaker on a priori grounds. Thus whether one takes an offering as a gift or as a trap is a function of the prior framework in which one evaluates the offering. And language can be of no help in disambiguating. On the contrary, since every element of language is ambiguous and ambivalent, at bottom there is no linguistic sign which can be used to unambiguously represent anything. In the realm of language, the message is ambiguous, and the metamessage which is intended to frame the message is itself ambiguous. So too is any higher order message about metamessages. There is no way to escape from the intrinsic ambiguity of language by means of language.

It is this intrinsic duplicity of language which Potter’s attack exploits. The following sentence,

Good lord, how do you always manage to look so well?

praises the addressee for looking so well. But in doing so, it implies that there is some unmentioned prior debilitating condition that the addressee overcomes at great expense of effort. The speech act appears to be delicate in not mentioning what this debilitating condition is, but in being delicate it implies that the condition is the sort of thing that a polite person would not mention. It implies that this condition, whatever it might be, is socially reprehensible. And, in being vague, after having por-

1. The premise that a gift necessarily conveys an obligation along with its benefit is the fundamental premise of the prevailing theories of social exchange. In effect, this premise holds that there is no such thing as a gift, in the proper sense of something given freely; it is held that what appears to be a gift is merely a disguised form of purchase. See the discussion in Mauss’ classic The Gift.
trayed the general character of this offensive condition, it leaves plenty of room for the imagination to work. A variety of possibilities pass through the back of one’s mind, such as a disease of some kind, perhaps leprosy; or, a particularly burdensome family life, perhaps a drug addict son; or, perhaps it is simply poverty that he manages to overcome.

Because there is absolutely no formal difference between the speech act as a compliment and the speech act as an insult, an attack of this kind is impossible to uncover. There is no sign on the surface that is a direct manifestation of the intent of the speaker. There is no leakage. And for this reason, this strategy is, as Potter states, is very difficult to counter. This smooth attack duplicitously frames the situation in such a way that any sort of direct response on the part of person², the victim of the attack, would not merely be ineffective, but it would be turned against person². For example, the following replies,

Don’t insult me.

There is nothing wrong with me.

I’m not particularly well.

What are you getting at?

all cast person² in the role of a hypersensitive paranoid person who reads insults into everything. In effect, if person² makes any direct response, he will be portraying himself as exactly the kind of person that he was implicitly characterized as in the original attack.

Potter mentions a possible, though not particularly effective, defensive maneuver. It is a symmetrical counter used by experienced one-upsman, which results in a stalemate, which is typical of symmetrical conflicts. Potter said, “I have noted J. Pinson’s reply (known as ‘Pinson’s reply’) to this clever gambit:"

Lifeman You’re looking wonderfully relaxed...I thought something good had happened to you.

Pinson You’re looking tremendously relaxed too.

Lifeman (counter-reposting) Ah, but I’m not looking nearly so relaxed as you are.

Pinson Oh, I don’t think I’m very relaxed.

Lifeman Oh, yes, you are.

Two lifemen may go on in this way for twenty minutes, but to a layman the statement that he is relaxed can suggest that normally he is nervy and abstracted, if not on the verge of a breakdown.

I would like to close this discussion of indirect strategic maneuver in the realm of language by emphasizing a point that I have repeatedly made, namely, that this topsy turvy logic of inversion only obtains within the bounds of language. The duplicity, ambiguity, and ambivalence of the speech act is a function of the duplicitous frame of reference consisting of two competing points of view, universe¹ and universe². In other words, the duplicity exists only from the point of view of the secondary universe of discourse. In reality, a gift is a gift. If someone wants to attach strings to a gift, then that is a secondary evaluation that takes place in the context of universe². In nature there are no strings. What
is good is good and what is bad is bad. The realm of chaotic inversion and confusion is entirely a function of the symbolic frame of reference.

On the Duplicity of The Word

The word is the crux of language, in both senses of the word. The word is the crux of language in that it is the central point in the structure of language where the two dimensions of language, symbolic form and symbolic meaning, are joined together in symbolic union. And the word is the crux of language in that it is the central paradox of language. Thus the word is the symbol par excellence, the prototypical symbol. And, as is perfectly obvious, the word is essentially duplicitous.

As a basis on which to develop our understanding of the duplicity of the word, let us consider how Ferdinand de Saussure, one of the founders of the discipline of linguistics, characterized the word in his lectures given in the first decade of this century.1

Saussure begins, by observing (p. 65), as do all linguists, that the common idea of the word is “naive” (his word), and proceeds to distinguish the linguistic idea therefrom. The common idea was, and it is still the common idea, that a word grows out of the naming process. Saussure mentions several respects in which this idea of the word is naive. First, this idea of the word is naive in that it assumes “that ready-made ideas exist before words” when in fact an idea is one of the two parts of a word. Just as the head of a baby and the body of a baby come into being at the same time, so ideas and words come into being simultaneously. Saussure says bluntly,

There are no pre-existing ideas (p. 112)

and that

Language can also be compared with a sheet of paper: thought is the front and sound the back; one cannot cut the front without cutting the back at the same time...2 (p. 113)

Second, the common idea of the word is naive in that it assumes that the linking of a name and a thing is a very simple operation - an assumption that is anything but true. (p. 65)

However, Saussure allows that the “naive approach” is right in that it highlights the fact that the linguistic unit is a double entity, one formed by the association of two terms.

But it is wrong in that the two terms that are united in the word are not a thing and a name. Rather, Saussure said, it “must be emphasized” that

1. Saussure, 1959. Saussure uses the words “word” and “sign” as more or less equivalent. Thus he uses the word “sign.” in a different way from the way Peirce uses it and different from the way I am using it. Technically, Saussure’s “sign” is the same as Peirce’s “symbolic type of sign.” In the present discussion one can take Saussure’s “sign” to be equivalent to “word.”

2. It is interesting to note that Saussure and Peirce use the same imagery in the same way independently. Language, as a universe of discourse, is likened to a sheet of paper and the elements of language are pieces that have been cut or sliced from the whole. For a detailed explanation of how Peirce integrated the concept of universe of discourse as a “sheet of assertions” and “cuts” of such sheets into his logic see Robert’s study of The Existential Graphs of Charles S. Peirce.
both terms involved in the linguistic sign are psychological and are united in the brain by an associative bond. (p. 66)

To be more specific:

The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image. The latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression it makes on our senses.

Or, as we would say in modern linguistic terminology, the sound-image is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but a phoneme.

The linguistic sign is then a two-sided psychological entity that can be represented by the drawing:

![Diagram](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Saussure then suggests (p. 67) that it would be better to replace these terms as follows:

![Diagram](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

because these latter two terms

have the advantage of indicating the opposition that separates them from each other and from the whole of which they are parts.

And Saussure cites a specific example of a word as follows

![Diagram](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Of course, Saussure went on from this basic characterization of the word to develop numerous important insights into the machinery of language, but this basic characterization is sufficient for our present purpose, which is just to make it clear that the word is essentially duplicitous and to develop a basic idea of the nature of its duplicity.

Now I assume that it is clear, not just on the authority of Saussure’s assertions above, but because it is patently obvious, that the word is essentially a two-part entity. And, while Saussure is right to focus on the doubleness of the word, his decision to focus on the doubleness of the word and
his decision to represent that doubleness as above are *ad hoc*. By contrast, the theory of signs compels us to focus on the doubleness of the word. The theory of signs motivates the hypothesis that the word is not just double, but that it is duplicitous. And it motivates us to represent the duplicity of the word in the same way as we have represented the other duplicities of language. Therefore, to provide a preliminary hypothesis of the duplicity of the word, subject to subsequent refinement, let us transform Saussure’s characterization of the word into the logic of duplicity as in Figure 32. Note, by the way, that I have thought it appropriate to substitute English “tree” for Latin “arbor.”

There are several features in this representation which are wrong and/or misleading, and there are a number of ways in which it is at odds with Saussure’s representation, and there are a number of ways in which it is at odds with prevailing linguistic theory, and there are a number of ways in which it is at odds with conventional thinking. So I propose to discuss some of these features as a way of developing a fuller and more accurate conceptualization of the duplicity of the word. I will divided the discussion into three sections. First, I will discuss the object that is at the level of Universe¹, then I will discuss the object that is at the level of Universe², then I will discuss the relationship between them.

**The Signifier of a Word**

The signifier part of a word consists of a complex of phonological elements, which have come to be called “phonemes” in linguistics. Of course, as all linguists well know, the typical naive speaker oscillates between the error of thinking that the signifier of a word is made up of letters on one hand, and the error of thinking that the signifier of a word is made up of actual sounds on the other hand. Of course, a word can be represented orthographically, but as I have pointed out above, orthographic representations are ontogenetically and phylogenetically subsequent to phonological elements. So the prototypical signifier of the word is not letters. And on the other hand, as Saussure states above, the signifier part of a word is not sounds. The signifier of a word consists of neither letters nor of sounds,
but of what Saussure called “sound-images”, a concept which was a precursor to the concept of the phoneme.

It should be noted that Saussure’s representations above are misleading in this respect because he used letters to represent the signifier part of the word, but he can be forgiven because he did not have the concept of the phoneme available.

We will discuss the phoneme in great detail in Chapter 5, so here I will just try to establish a general idea of what the phoneme is by way of elaborating the duplicity of the word. First, the phoneme is not a sound, but a category of sound. It is, as Saussure said above, not a “physical thing”, but a “psychological” thing.¹ And it might seem trivially obvious when considered in the abstract that a category of sound is not a sound, but as I will explain in Chapter 5, language works by virtue of the systematic confusion of the physical sound with the psychological thing, and as a consequence there is a normal tendency for the naive speaker to confuse sound and the linguistic categories of sound, i.e., phonemes. So the linguistic point of view departs from the normal naive point of view in the rigorous insistence that the signifier part of a word consists not of sounds but of categories of sounds.

Second, Saussure described the phoneme as a “sound-image”, and I think it is likely that the image of sound does play a role in the genesis of the phoneme, but a full fledged phoneme is not simply an image of a certain sound, but rather it is a conventionalized or idealized image. Perhaps one could say that the phoneme is not an actual sound-image, but rather an abstract sound-idea, or an ideal of a sound. Each different phonemic ideal, or phoneme, is characterized by a set of distinctive identifying features, or marks. For example, in English the phoneme ideal that we write as /t/ is distinctively characterized as a voiceless alveolar stop consonant. So if a certain sound has these distinctive marks, then it would be considered by an English speaker to be a /t/. But it is really just a sound. Similarly, if a certain piece of paper has the appropriate distinctive marks, it would be considered to be a dollar. But it is really just a piece of paper.

Third, I must make it clear that the prevailing linguistic theory holds that the object on the level of Universe¹ should be formally represented as a matrix of distinctive features. From this point of view, a phonemic representation like /tri/ for “tree” would be considered to be merely an informal way to represent the proper representation, which would be a matrix like the following. (This is just a simplified version of what the real matrix of the word “tree” would look like.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>t</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>consonant</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sonorant</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stop</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diffuse</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voice</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹. For an explanation of what it means to say that the phoneme is a “psychological” thing in the present frame of reference, see “On the Psychological Reality of the Phoneme” beginning on page 314
In this representation the definition of the phoneme /t/ would be the set of distinctive feature specifications in the first column, the definition of the phoneme /r/ would be the set of distinctive feature specifications, in the second column, and the definition of the phoneme /i/ would be the set of distinctive feature specifications in the third column.

If one believes that a matrix of this sort is the best way to represent the phonological part of a word, there is nothing preventing one from formulating a theory of language that specifies that the object on the level of Universe\(^1\) is such a matrix. However, I am convinced that a matrix of this sort is theoretically inadequate. I do not think it is appropriate to go into this issue in detail here, but I will briefly outline my reasoning.

In my view there is one general type of problem with this sort of representation, but there are several different ways to talk about it. The general problem is that a matrix misrepresents the facts. To be more specific, the problem with a matrix is that all of the columns and all of the rows and all of the cells are the same, and thus a matrix claims that every feature and every segment and every specification is the same, but that is not true. There are several different kinds of groupings of segments and features and specifications, and there are hierarchical relationships between segments and groups of segments, between features and groups of features, and between specifications and groups of specifications. This dimension of phonology has been largely ignored because it does not fit into a square matrix, but it was most comprehensively and systematically described by Jakobson (1968) in the section entitled “Stratification of the phonological system.”

For example, it is common knowledge that there is a hierarchy of distinctive features as a result of which there are sheerly mechanical redundancies in feature specifications, e.g., it is physically impossible for a sonorant to be a stop. And then there are the hierarchical redundancies known as markedness phenomena. On the paradigmatic axis of the matrix, the intra-segmental axis, it is physically possible for a vowel to be voiceless, but a phonemic distinction between a voiced and voiceless vowel is a rare as hen’s teeth. And on the syntagmatic axis of the matrix, the inter-segmental axis, the matrix claims that every segment is the same as every other segment, but everyone knows that vowels and consonants are radically different, opposite in fact, and that they perform radically different roles. As everyone knows, each vowel is the nucleus of a syllable and is capable of standing alone, but a consonant must be attached to a vowel. A consonant like /t/ is inaudible except as an appendage of a vowel. Thus to assert, as this sort of matrix does, that the /i/ and the /t/ of the word “tree” are the same type of segment, as if we were dealing with a string of beads, is profoundly wrong in every possible dimension.

In sum, the problem with a matrix is that it is the wrong kind of space. Indeed, it is a function of the wrong kind of geometry. A matrix is a space of discrete and symmetrical and homogenous categories. It is a square space. And the geometry underlying a square matrix is, in terms of Peirce’s categories, a function of the geometry of thirdness, of the conventional kind of three dimensional Euclidean geometry, or in other words, of symbolic logic. But the categories of language, and thus the categories of the phonology of language, are not discrete and not symmetrical and not homogenous. Language is not square. And language does not grow out of the logic of thirdness. On the contrary, the logic of thirdness, symbolic logic, is the logic of language. Language, and the logic of language, grows out of the logic of firstness and secondness. Therefore, in order to make sense of language one must think of language as a function of the logic of firstness and secondness.
That is the line of reasoning that leads me to the conclusion that the square matrix is the wrong type of conceptual machinery for the task at hand. And, on the positive side, it also leads me to the hypothesis that the logic of duplicity is exactly the type of conceptual machinery that is needed to account for the complex tree-like pair-wise hierarchical stratification of the phonological system as described by Jakobson.

The Signified of a Word

As Saussure said in the above quotes, the naive speaker erroneously believes that a word is a relationship between sound and a thing. But as we saw above, the signifier of a word is not sound. And just as the signifier is not sound, so too the signified is not a thing. As Saussure said a word is an abstract, psychological thing. And from this it follows that the parts of a word are the same kind of abstract, psychological thing.

It is interesting to note that at about the same time as Saussure was giving his lectures in Europe, C. S. Peirce was putting the same observations in writing in America.

We speak of writing or pronouncing the word “man”, but it is only a replica, or embodiment of the word, that is pronounced or written. (2.291)

Further, as we saw in Chapter 2 in Peirce’s theory of signs the word is the prototypical symbolic type of sign, and

A symbol...cannot indicate any particular thing, it denotes a kind of thing. Not only that, but it is itself a kind and not a single thing. (2.301)

So just as the signifier is not a sound but a category of sound, so too the signified is not a thing but a category of things.

Preliminarily, then, we can characterize the signified category as an idea, or ideal. Just as the signifier is a sound-image, or better, a sound-idea, so too the signified is a thing-image, or a thing-idea, or an ideal of a thing. And just as linguists have subsequently conceptualized sound-ideas, i.e. phonemes, in terms of the logic of a matrix of distinctive sound-features, so too have linguists conceptualized thing-ideas in terms of a matrix of distinctive semantic features, known as semantic fields. As an example, let us consider the word “tree” in terms of a semantic matrix.

In my dictionary “tree” is defined as “a perennial woody plant having a main trunk and usually a distinct crown.” So the idea of “tree”, as distinct from “shrub” and “grass” and “duck”, might be characterized in terms of a semantic field as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>living</th>
<th>tree</th>
<th>shrub</th>
<th>grass</th>
<th>duck</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>living</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now, if one were so inclined, there is nothing to prevent one from using a matrix to characterize both parts of a word and putting them together as in Figure 33 below. As a matter of fact I think this is what most linguists assume the lexical entry of a word looks like. However, in my view, just as the logic of a matrix is inappropriate for the signifier, as I argued above, so too is a matrix inappropriate for the signified, and for the same reasons. Just as the form of words is structured in terms of hierarchical strata, rather than a square matrix of square boxes, so is the semantics of words. The fact is that there are many different kinds of hierarchical structures both internal to the word and external to the word, and on both the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes, and on both the synchronic and diachronic axes. And the point is that these intersecting systems of hierarchical structures seem to be a function of the same types of relationships whether internal or external and whether paradigmatic or syntagmatic, etc. That is, the same relationships that are found within the idea of one word are also found between different words, and the same relationships that are found within a paradigm of the same type of words are also found in the syntagmatic relations between different types of words.
For example, according to the dictionary the first, and most basic, meaning of the word “star” is “a self-luminous celestial body”, but this word also has a secondary meaning, “a famous movie actor.” So we can use the same word to characterize both a celestial body and a human body.

Orion is a star.

Bob is a star.

One of the perplexities of the significance of words that can be seen in this word is this. We think of the first sentence as the background, the paradigm, in the context of which the second is metaphorically derived, whereby a person is metaphorically characterized as a celestial body. But in doing so we overlook the fact that Orion was originally the name of a person and that the sentence “Orion is a star” was originally the metaphorical characterization of a celestial body as a human being. So when we ask the question of whether the star is a metaphor of the person or the person is a metaphor of the star, we run into a paradox. So to answer the question we must suspend the law of the excluded middle and realize that the answer is that each is a metaphor of the other. This shows that symbolic significance is circular. And therefore it shows that the square logic of a matrix is incapable of characterizing circular nature of symbolic significance.

Another problem is this. If we take the meaning “famous movie actor” as a metaphorical derivative of the basic meaning, then we can assume that at some time in the past “star” did not have this secondary meaning, then at some time it came to be used metaphorically to refer to famous movie actors, then that usage of the word became conventionalized, so now we consider this to be one of the internal meanings of the word, and we no longer think of this meaning as metaphorical. By contrast, the metaphorical usage of the word “gazelle” to mean “fast” which I mentioned at the beginning of this book is not conventionalized, and thus we think of this meaning of “gazelle” as a derivative meaning that is external to the word. Because of this difference we can say, for example, “In this movie, a star is born”, but we cannot say, “In this track meet, a gazelle is born.” Thus what was once an external derivative meaning of the word “star” is now an internal derivative meaning. And the same theoretical machinery should be used to account for the same phenomenon whether internal to the meaning of a word or external.

Similarly, as I have pointed out, the word “language” was borrowed from Latin, where it had the basic meaning “tongue”, but was also used metonymically in Latin to refer to the system of speech. So this was only a secondary meaning in Latin. But the naive speaker of English is not aware of this and takes the metonymic meaning as the basic meaning of the word. However, there are still traces of this connection in English as in the medical usage of “lingual” to refer to the tongue, of which the naive speaker might become aware.

Now, this same semantic relationship is found in the native English word “tongue.” The original meaning is, “The fleshy, movable, muscular organ, attached in most vertebrates to the floor of the mouth, that is the principal organ of taste, an aid in chewing and swallowing.” But it is used metonymically to mean “the system of speech” as in “the French tongue”, “English is my mother tongue”. etc. Thus what was a process of derivation in Latin that has found its way into English in a fragmented form and is mirrored in the native vocabulary. And presumably, once again, the same theoretical machinery should account for both instances of what appears to be the same phenomenon.

Obviously we are getting into some very deep and murky water here, but it is important not to allow our thinking about the significance of words to be dominated by the conventional simple-minded and naive idea of the significance of words just because we cannot replace it with a better
simpleminded and naive idea. The fact is, and this is the main point that I want to make about the significance of words, that one cannot characterize the significance of any word in isolation, or any other element of language for that matter. The fact is that the significance of words is an intricate fabric of bewildering, paradoxical complexity. And while the patterns of the fabric of the significance of words in certain times, in certain languages, in certain personalities, tend to manifest certain characteristic styles or families of styles (such as the hysterical family of styles - baroque, rococo, etc. - or the obsessive family of styles - functional, scientific, etc. - or the narcissistic family of styles, or the paranoid family of styles, etc.) at bottom all of the styles of symbolic significance are essentially of diabolical and maniacal complexity. And so we must take care not to get entangled and caught up in the intricacies of the fabric of significance. So I propose to escape from the web of symbolic significance after making two observations.

First, I would like to make it clear that, although the fabric of significance is paradoxical, circular, and of maniacal complexity, it is not necessarily mysterious or obscure. It is only mysterious and obscure from the conventional point of view, i.e. the point of view that assumes that language is rational and reasonable. From the point of view that recognizes the essential duplicity of language, the tortured fabric of significance is obvious and easy to see. As the above examples suggest, one can easily see the stratification of associations, the paradoxical complexity, and the circularity of the significance of words by looking in the dictionary. What one finds there in the main entry is a list of the layers and layers of derivative meanings. Some of the derivative meanings are metaphorical, some are metonymic, some are ironic, etc. And after the main entry one finds a discussion of the layers and layers of etymological relationships. And one finds all sorts of cross references to morphologically and semantically related words, synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, etc. And as to the circularity of significance, everyone has probably been struck at one time or another by the realization that one cannot look up a word in the dictionary in order to find out how to spell it unless one already knows how to spell it, and that one cannot really understand the definition of a word in the dictionary unless one already knows what the word means. So one can see the fabric of significance of words in any dictionary. But, of course, dictionaries only scratch the surface of the fabric of significance because they restrict themselves to the network of more or less conscious associations.

Second, I would like to point out that Saussure and Peirce, independently, at about the same time, but on different continents were describing the fabric of significance in language in very similar ways. And I would like to suggest that the outlines of a theory of symbolic significance, such as the following, can be arrived at by considering their observations together.

The Relation Between Signifier and Signified

The relationship between signifier and signified is more commonly known as “meaning.” So another way of describing what we are doing here is this: We are developing the basic framework for a theory of the symbolic type of meaning in the context of the theory of signs.

From Chapter 2 we have a general idea of how significance fits in Peirce’s theory of signs. Given the definition of a sign (“A sign represents something to someone”), then the significance of a

1. A sample of the various kinds of derivative meanings one might find can be seen in the quote from Jakobson on page 228.
sign is that which the sign represents. Now you will recall that in the case of an iconic sign, such as the visual image of the moon, it is obvious and trivial that the image of the moon represents the moon. And in the same sense it is obvious and trivial that the quacking of a duck is an indexical sign that represents the duck itself. However, as we have already seen, the symbolic type of sign is a different kettle of fish. As we quoted from Peirce above,

A symbol...cannot indicate any particular thing, it denotes a kind of thing. Not only that, but it is itself a kind and not a single thing. (2.301)

Where the quack of a duck is a particular thing that refers indexically to the particular duck that emits the quack, the sentence “That is a duck” does not refer to any particular duck. In order to felicitously use such a sentence, one’s speech act must be complemented by some sort of indexical sign, such as an act of pointing, which would signify which particular duck “that duck” is intended to refer to. Thus the word “duck” does not and cannot refer to a particular duck. And if the word “duck” does not refer to a duck then the question is what does it refer to. That is the question that requires a theory of symbolic significance.

In one place Peirce characterized the significance of the third type of signs, symbolic signs, of which the word is the prototype, in the following way.¹

A sign stands for something to the idea which it produces, or modifies. Or, it is a vehicle conveying into the mind something from without.² That for which it stands is called its object; that which it conveys, its meaning; and the idea to which it gives rise, its interpretant. The object of representation can be nothing but a representation of which the first representation is the interpretant. But an endless series of representations, each representing the one behind it, may be conceived to have an absolute object at its limit. The meaning of a representation can be nothing but a representation. In fact, it is nothing but the representation itself conceived as stripped of irrelevant clothing. But this clothing never can be completely stripped off; it is only changed for something more diaphanous. So there is an infinite regression here. Finally, the interpretant is nothing but another representation to which the torch of truth is handed along; and as representation, it has its interpretant again. Lo, another infinite series. (1.339, italics in original)

This extremely dense paragraph should not be read as an attempt to explain the significance of symbolic signs, but rather, I suggest, it is a concise statement of the theory of significance which follows from his theory of signs. I will not try to develop this theory of significance in any systematic way here, but even on the face of it one can see that his view of significance is similar in many respects to the well known views of Saussure, the relevant portions of which I will lay out here for comparison, and then I will point out some of the important ways in which the views of Peirce and Saussure agree.

In speaking of linguistic value Saussure said the following.

Let us take signification as it is generally understood and as it was pictured on (page 270). As the arrows in the drawing show, it (i.e. the significance of the word) is only the counterpart of the sound image. Everything that occurs concerns only the sound-image and the concept when we look upon the word as independent and self-contained. (p. 114, parentheses added, page number in quote refers to present text.)

For ease of reference I reproduce the “drawing” he is referring to below.

And he continues:

¹. Unfortunately, as the editors of his Collected Works note, this paragraph was found as an “unidentified fragment” and, as far as I have been able to figure out, he did not develop these ideas in a systematic way.
². Like a Trojan Horse.
But here is the paradox: on the one hand the concept seems to be the counterpart of the sound-image, and on the other hand the sign itself is in turn the counterpart of the other signs in language.

Language is a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others, as in the diagram:

![Diagram of signifier and signified](image)

Obviously what he is trying to suggest is that the relationship represented by vertical arrows in the first drawing is the same as the relationship represented by the horizontal arrows in the second drawing. That is, he wants to suggest that the relationship between signifier and signified in a symbolic sign is the same as the relationship of implication or other kinds of associations between one sign and another sign, but he realizes that this is paradoxical and so he says,

> It seems impossible to liken the relationships represented here by horizontal arrows to those represented above by vertical arrows. (p. 115)

But he wants to do it anyway, and so he suggests that the paradox can be resolved by thinking of the realm of signs, the universe of discourse, in terms of a sheet of paper, very much as Peirce does.

Putting it another way - and again taking up the example of the sheet of paper that is cut in two (see page 269) - it is clear that the observable relation between the different pieces A, B, C, D, etc. is distinct from the relation between the front and the back of the same piece as in A/A', B/B', etc. (p. 115, I have substituted the page number referring to present text for the page number in original.)

And he characterizes these two dimensions of value in yet another way:

all values are apparently governed by the same paradoxical principle. They are always composed:

(1) of a *dissimilar* thing that can be *exchanged* for the thing of which the value is to be determined; and

(2) of *similar* things that can be *compared* with the thing of which the value is to be determined. (italics in original)

And he gives an analogy of the two dimensions of value in terms of money:

Both factors are necessary for the existence of a value. To determine what a five-franc piece is worth one must therefore know:

(1) that it can be exchanged for a fixed quantity of a different thing, e.g. bread; and

(2) that it can be compared with a similar value of the same system, e.g. a one-franc piece, or with coins of another system (a dollar, etc.).
Now, there are many things that are not entirely clear about these two characterizations of the significance of words, but there are a few points which I think are clear, and which I would like to suggest as points of reference in trying to develop a theory of the significance of words, and of symbolic signs in general.

1. **There are two types of value: Symbolic value and natural value.** Saussure distinguishes two types of value in language, both based on relations of exchange, but one where the exchange is between things of the same type, and the other where the exchange is between things of different types. In his examples, cited above, the exchange of one five-franc piece for five one-franc pieces is an exchange of things of the same type, and the exchange of bread for money is an exchange of things of different types. The former is a symbolic type of exchange, which is the type of exchange that determines the symbolic value of symbolic signs. And the latter is an exchange of a symbolic object for a different type of object, i.e. an object which has real and natural value, and which therefore determines the value of symbolic signs in terms of real and natural values.

2. **Symbolic value is arbitrary.** Saussure’s distinction between the two types of value corresponds to the distinction in Peirce’s theory of signs between the man-made, symbolic type of sign on one hand and the natural indexical and iconic types of signs on the other. As was explained in Chapter 2, the difference is that a symbolic sign refers to its referent by virtue of a stipulation or convention, whereas an indexical or iconic sign refers to its referent by virtue of a relation of physical contact or similarity. Thus in Peirce’s theory the significance of a symbolic sign is arbitrary, whereas the significance of an indexical or iconic sign is intrinsic and naturally motivated. Saussure also insisted that symbolic value is arbitrary. Saussure posits as the first of the two “primordial characteristics” (p. 67) of the linguistic sign what he calls “Principle I”, which is that

The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Since I mean by sign the whole that results from the associating of the signifier with the signified, I can simply say: *the linguistic sign is arbitrary* (p. 67, italics in original)

and he explains what he means by “arbitrary” thus:

I mean that it is unmotivated, i.e. arbitrary in that it actually has no natural connection with the signified. (p. 69)

Finally, Saussure makes it clear that he calls this “Principle I” because

Principle I dominates all the linguistics of language; its consequences are numberless. (p 68)

3. **Symbolic value is tautological, or synthetic.** Symbolic exchange, which is the exchange of symbol for symbol, is totally enclosed in the symbolic realm, therefore symbolic value is totally a function of symbolic value. That is, symbolic value is circular, or tautological. Thus it is an immutable law that a five-franc piece will always and forever be worth five one-franc pieces, and that five one-franc pieces will be worth one five-franc piece. But such a law is merely a tautology, a synthetic truth, and has no bearing on reality. In reality a five-franc piece might buy five loafs of bread at one

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1. By the way, this also corresponds to Freud’s distinction between secondary and primary process thinking. And instructively, where Saussure speaks of exchanging francs for bread, Freud speaks of “children of nature who refuse to accept the psychical in place of the material, who, in the poet’s words, are accessible only to ‘the logic of soup, with dumplings for arguments’” (SE VolXII, p. 166).
time, and only one loaf of bread at another time, and it might be of no more value than a scrap of yesterdays newspaper at yet another time. So the symbolic value of a symbolic sign is a function of the other symbolic signs for which it can be exchanged.

4. **Symbolic value is a function of chains of extrinsic associations.** The symbolic significance of a symbol is a function of the endless chains of exchange in which that symbol could possibly be implicated. So the symbolic value of a symbolic sign is a function of the whole symbolic system. A symbolic object has no value in and of itself, but only as an element in the system of symbolic objects. As Peirce said in the above quote, speaking of symbolic signs, the meaning of a sign is another sign, and the meaning of that sign is another sign, etc., in an infinite series. An infinite chain of associations.1 Saussure cites several concrete examples to illustrate this characteristic of symbolic significance. For example, he points out that French *mouton* does not have the same value as English “mutton” even though the two words refer to the same animal because English also has the word “sheep”, and thus in English “mutton” only refers to the pre-cooked, or raw, form of the animal, but not the living form of the animal. So the meaning of “mutton” is different in English because there is another associated word “sheep.”

The value of just any term is accordingly determined by its environment (p. 118)

5. **The symbolic value of a symbol is a function of that to which a symbol is opposed.** It follows from the foregoing points that symbols do not have value because of what they are, but because of what they are not. So the symbolic value of a symbol is a function of all of the other symbols to which it is opposed. That is what the sort of matrix represented above is trying to get at: the pluses and minuses are supposed to represent the valence of some of the main oppositions in which a given symbolic object participates. Thus, in Saussure’s words,

> Everything that has been said up to this point boils down to this: in language there are only differences. (p. 120)

And at the bottom of the whole system of oppositive symbolic relations, the fundamental thing to which everything is opposed, the ground from which the whole system arises, is truth. Therefore at bottom symbolic value is a function of truth, an inverse function of truth.

6. **Real natural value is different.** It is crucial to realize that pre-symbolic or sub-symbolic value is a different type of value from symbolic value. We saw in Chapter 2 that there are duplicities on the level of iconic and indexical signs, and we saw that there are chains of iconic and indexical associations, but these types of chains are seldom very long, and there is always something real at the end of a chain of indexical and/or iconic associations. That is, to put it in terms of the example Saussure gave above, you can eat bread, and be satisfied. But words in and of themselves are of no value at all. And that is why the chain of symbolic associations, driven by the quest for symbolic satisfaction, goes on and on without end. The chain of symbolic associations is endless because it never attains satisfaction. That does not mean there is no satisfaction; it means that there is no symbolic satisfaction. Truth satisfies, but symbols are entirely enclosed in the universe of symbolic duplicity.

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1. Since language, unlike the real universe, is finite, one might wonder how there could be infinite chains of associations in language. It is possible only because symbolic chains of associations can be reflexive, circular, conjoined, embedded, etc. Or in other words, the chains of symbolic associations go around and around, back and forth, in and out, weaving the fabric of symbolic significance, and yet one never really goes anywhere or gets anywhere.
7. The chains of symbolic associations flow along two opposing and intersecting axes. These two vectors, or axes, are similar to the vertical and horizontal axes of conventional geometry in that they are opposite and intersecting, but these axes are also different in certain critical ways and must not be confused with conventional geometric axes. The axes we are talking about here are different from conventional geometric axes in that the latter are governed by conventional, or symbolic, logic, whereas the former are governed by the logic of duplicity. These axes have been described variously, but equivalently, as firstness and secondness (Peirce), as similarity and difference (Peirce and Saussure), paradigmatic and syntagmatic (Saussure), iconic and indexical (Peirce), condensation and displacement (Freud), similarity and contiguity (Jakobson), metaphor and metonymy (Jakobson and Lacan), imaginary and symbolic (Lacan), etc. Because of the essential bivalence of associations, the same relationships can be seen in either or both axes, a certain relationship in one dimension can be transformed into the other one, etc. One general example of this: Jakobson’s explanation of the difference between prose and poetry is that the latter is a mode of language that is characterized by a greater than normal degree of transformation and projection of paradigmatic relations onto the syntagmatic dimension. And this is the bivalent frame of reference in terms of which Saussure resolved the paradox cited above: he can say that the arrows in the above drawings represent the same sign relationship in spite of the fact that in one case they are vertical and the other they are horizontal. To be more specific, in the bivalent network of associations the signifier of a word can be associated with the signified of a word to comprise a single unity which we know as the word in exactly the same sense as a word taken as a whole can be associated with another word. In short, the whole fabric of associations which comprises the significance of symbolic signs is a function of the duplicitous logic of the theory of signs.

8. A word is one of the links in the chain of associations. As we know, there are iconic associations, indexical associations, and conventional associations. A word is a conventional association where a sound-idea, consisting of a phoneme or complex of phonemes, is linked with a thing-idea. As I said at the beginning of this section, the word is the central link in the system of symbolic associations, it is the central type of symbolic sign, but at the same time it is still an association and as such it is like all the other associations.

9. A phoneme is a signified, as well as a signifier. It is commonly supposed that a phoneme, as the signifier of a word, is a different type of thing than the signified of a word. But it obviously follows from the above discussion, and both Saussure and Peirce agree, that a phoneme is the same type of thing as a signified. In other words, a phoneme is not the beginning of a chain of associations, but is merely an intermediary link. Thus a phoneme is a signified as well as a signifier. To be precise, a phoneme is signified by sound.

10. The links that comprise the chain of associations are duplicities. It is commonly supposed that the relationship between sound and phoneme, and the relationship between phoneme and word, and the relationship between word and word, are different kinds of relationships. And there are indeed differences between them, but there are also samenesses. And when the sameness of these three types of relationships, and all other relationships in the fabric of associations which comprises language is distilled down to its essence, we find that general type of relationship which they all have in common is the relationship of duplicity. So the binary logic of duplicity, as represented throughout this book, is the link of which the fabric of language consists.

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1. See Figure 17, “The Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Axes of Form,” on page 158.
11. **The signifier / signified relationship is one of opposition.** I acknowledge that this implication is contrary to the conventional way of thinking about the word, and thus it might be hard to swallow, but it follows from the foregoing. If we can take it for granted that the false is opposite to the truth, then it follows that in the logic of duplicity the second is opposite to the first. Thus if all of the pairwise links in language are duplicities, then it follows that the signified must be opposite to the signifier.

Let me remind the reader that Saussure explicitly asserted, in a quote cited above (page 270) and which I repeat here, that he chose the terms “signifier” and “signified” precisely because these words

have the advantage of indicating the opposition that separates them from each other and from the whole of which they are parts. (p. 67)

It might help in trying to get an intuitive grasp of this fact to point out that this kind of opposition is not the same as the conventional geometric idea opposition. Consider the fact that when you look at your face in the mirror there is a relation of geometric opposition between your face and the image of your face which you see in the mirror. In the same sense, all visual images are opposed to the original of which they are replicas. And so, if the signifier / signified relationship which is manufactured on the symbolic level by analogy to the original / image relationship, then it must be an oppositive relationship in the same sense.

12. **The signifier is prior to the signified.** As noted above, the naive idea of the word is that words are just names of things. As Saussure pointed out in a quote cited above this idea assumes that there are ideas of things prior to language, and that language is nothing more than attaching sounds to those preexisting ideas. In opposition to this naive idea Saussure put forth the idea, to which most of the theories of modern linguistics subscribe, that the two parts of the word come into existence at the same time. But in opposition to both of these views, an obvious implication of the theory of signs, and a fact that is directly represented in Figure 32 on page 271, is that the signified is subsequent to the signifier. To see that this is necessarily so, cast your mind back to the discussion of the genesis of a sign in Chapter 2. A sign is a thing that is taken as a sign. That is, a sign is a thing in and of itself before it is taken by an observer as a sign of something else. A bit of reflected light is just that before it is taken as an image of the moon. A sound is just a sound before it is taken as a sign of a phoneme. A word is just a word before it is taken as a metaphor of another word. A cat is a cat before it is taken as a sign of bad luck. And in general in any sign relationship the signifier is prior to the signified.

the word is an idealized conjugation of idealized images of things, i.e., images of things that have been cut off from their natural source and reduced to their minimal distinctive features, with idealized images of sounds, i.e., images of sounds that have been cut off from their natural source and reduced to their minimal distinctive features. Or in other words, a word is a synthetic creature which consists of an idea embodied in a complex of phonemes.