

FREUD AND
PHILOSOPHY

An Essay on Interpretation

by Paul Ricoeur
translated by Denis Savage

New Haven and London,
Yale University Press, 1970



Chapter 2: The Conflict of Interpretations

At the end of the preceding study we asked, What is interpretation? This question governs the following one: How does psychoanalysis become involved in the conflict of interpretations? The question of interpretation, however, is no less perplexing than that of symbol. We thought we could arbitrate the differences concerning the definition of symbol by appealing to an intentional structure, the structure of double meaning, which in turn is brought to light only in the work of interpretation. But the concept of interpretation itself poses a problem.

THE CONCEPT OF INTERPRETATION

Let us first settle a difficulty which is still merely verbal and which has been implicitly resolved by our intermediate definition of symbol.

If we consult the tradition we meet with two usages; the one proposes to us a concept of interpretation that is too short, the other a concept that is too long. These two variations in the extension of the concept of interpretation reflect fairly closely the ones we considered in the definition of symbol. If we recall here the two historical roots of these discordant traditions, the *Peri Hermêneias* of Aristotle and biblical exegesis, it is because they give a rather good indication of what corrections are to be made if one is to arrive at our intermediate concept of hermeneutics.

Start with Aristotle. As is well known, the second treatise of the *Organon* is called the *Peri Hermêneias, On Interpretation*. From it stems what I call the overly "long" concept of interpretation, a concept somewhat reminiscent of symbol in the sense of the symbolic

function of Cassirer and many of the moderns.¹ It is legitimate to look for the origin of our own problem in the Aristotelian notion of interpretation, even though the connection with the Aristotelian "interpretation" seems purely verbal: the word itself figures only in the title; what is more, it designates not a science dealing with significations but signification itself, that of nouns, verbs, propositions, and discourse in general. Interpretation is any voiced sound endowed with significance—every *phônê sêmantikê*, every *vox significativa*.² In this sense nouns, and verbs also,³ are of themselves already interpretations, since in them we utter something. But the simple utterance or *phasis* is only a part taken from the total meaning of the *logos*; the complete meaning of *hermêneia* appears only in the complex enunciation, the sentence, which Aristotle calls *logos* and which covers commands, wishes, and questions as well as declarative discourse or *apophansis*. *Hermêneia*, in the complete sense, is the signification of the sentence. But in the strong sense of the logician it is the sentence susceptible of truth or falsity, that is, the declarative proposition.⁴ The logician leaves the other

1. In Aristotle, moreover, *symbolon* designates the expressive power of voiced sounds with respect to the states of the soul (*ta pathêmata*). A symbol is a conventional sign for the states of the soul, whereas the latter are the images (*homoiômata*) of things. Interpretation has therefore the same extension as symbol; the two words cover the totality of conventional signs, either in their expressive value or in their significative value. The treatise *On Interpretation* does not again speak of symbols (except in 16^a 28), seeing that the theory of expression does not come under this treatise but under the treatise *On the Soul*. The present treatise deals exclusively with signification. Pierre Aubenque, in his *Le Problème de l'être chez Aristote* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), p. 107, remarks that Aristotle sometimes takes the word "symbol" in the sense of signification. The dominant idea remains that of conventional sign; a symbol is the intermediary instituted between thought and being. Thus we are set on the path of Cassirer—through Kant, it is true!

2. "A noun is a voiced sound having a meaning by convention with no reference to time, while no part of it has any meaning when taken separately" (*On Interpretation*, Ch. 2, 16^a 19).

3. "A verb is that which, in addition to its particular meaning, has a reference to time; no part of it has meaning by itself, and it is always a sign of something said of something else" (*ibid.*, Ch. 3, 16^b 5).

4. "An affirmation is a statement asserting something of something; a negation is a statement separating something from something" (*ibid.*, Ch. 6, 17^a 25).

types of discourse to rhetoric and poetics and retains only declarative discourse, the first form of which is the affirmation that "says something of something."

Let us stop with these definitions: they suffice to clarify in what sense the "semantic voice"—the signifying word—is interpretation. It is interpretation in the sense that, for Cassirer, the symbol is universal mediation; we say the real by signifying it; in this sense we interpret it. The break between signification and the thing has already occurred with nouns, and this intervening distance marks the locus of interpretation. Not all discourse is necessarily within the true; it does not adhere to being. In this regard, nouns that designate fictitious things—the "goat-stag" of Ch. 1 of the Aristotelian treatise—clearly show that there can be signification without the positing of existence. But we would not have thought of calling nouns "interpretation" if we did not see their signifying import in the light of that of verbs and that of verbs in the context of discourse, and if, in its turn, the signifying import of discourse were not concentrated in declarative discourse that says something of something. To say something of something is, in the complete and strong sense of the term, to interpret.⁵

How does this "interpretation," proper to the declarative proposition, orient us toward the modern concept of hermeneutics? The connection is not immediately evident. The "to say something of something" interests Aristotle only insofar as it is the locus of the true and the false. Hence the problem of the opposition between affirmation and negation becomes the central theme of the treatise; the semantics of the declarative proposition serves merely as an introduction to the logic of propositions which is essentially a logic of opposition, and the latter in turn leads to the *Analytics*, i.e. the logic of arguments. This logical aim prevents the development of

5. The notion of interpretation comes to the fore in the verb. On the one hand the verb looks to the noun, since it "adds to the meaning of the noun the meaning of present existence." On the other hand "it is always a sign of something said of something else"; Aristotle explains this formula thus: "Moreover, a verb is always a sign of something said of something else, i.e. of something predicated of a subject or contained in a subject" (ibid., Ch. 3, 16^b 10). Thus a verb looks toward the sentence or declarative discourse; in this sense it is as it were an instrument of the attribution which it "interprets," i.e. "signifies."

semantics for its own sake. Further, the way to a hermeneutics of double-meaning significations appears blocked from another side. The notion of signification requires univocity of meaning: the definition of the principle of identity, in its logical and ontological sense, demands it. Univocity of meaning is ultimately grounded in essence, one and self-identical; the entire refutation of the sophistical arguments is based upon this recourse to essence: "Not to have one meaning is to have no meaning."⁶ Thus communication between men is possible only if words have a meaning, i.e. *one* meaning.

A reflection that extends the properly semantic analysis of the "to say something of something" leads us back to the area of our own problem. If man interprets reality by saying something of something, it is because real meanings are indirect; I attain things only by attributing a meaning to a meaning. Predication, in the logical sense of the term, puts into canonical form a relation of signification that forces us to reexamine the theory of univocity. The study of sophistical reasoning poses not one problem but two: the problem of the univocity of meanings without which dialogue is impossible, and the problem of their "communication"—to use the expression of Plato's *Sophist*—without which attribution is impossible. Without this counterpart univocity condemns one to a logical atomism, according to which a meaning simply is what it is. It is not enough to struggle against sophistic equivocity; a second front must be opened against Eleatic univocity. Nor is this second struggle without an echo in the philosophy of Aristotle. It breaks out even at the heart of the *Metaphysics*; the notion of being cannot be univocally defined: "being is said in several ways"; being means substance, quality, time, place, and so on. The famous distinction of the many meanings of being is not an anomaly in discourse, an exception in the theory of signification. The many meanings of being are the categories—or figures—of predication; hence this multiplicity cuts across the whole of discourse. Nor can it be overcome. Although it does not constitute a pure disorder of words, seeing that the different meanings of the word "being" are all ordered by reference to a first, original meaning, still this unity of reference—

6. *Metaphysics* Γ(IV), 1006^b 7.

pros hen legomenon—does not make *one* signification; the notion of being, it has recently been said, is but “the problematic unity of an irreducible plurality of meanings.”⁷

I do not mean to draw from the general semantics of the *Peri Hermêneias* and from the particular semantics of the word “being” more than is allowed; I do not say that Aristotle raised the problem of plurivocal meanings in the way we shall elaborate it here. I merely suggest that his definition of interpretation as “to say something of something” leads to a semantics distinct from logic and that his discussion of the multiple meanings of being opens a breach in the purely logical and ontological theory of univocity. The task of founding a theory of interpretation, conceived as the understanding of plurivocal meanings, has not yet been accomplished. The second tradition will bring us closer to the goal.

The second tradition comes to us from biblical exegesis. Hermeneutics in this sense is the science of the rules of exegesis, the latter being understood as the particular interpretation of a text. There is no question that the problem of hermeneutics has to a great extent been constituted within the boundaries of the interpretation of Holy Scripture. The core of this hermeneutics lies in what has traditionally been called the “four senses of Scripture.” It cannot be emphasized too strongly that philosophers should be more attentive to those exegetical discussions in which a general theory of interpretation was operative.⁸ There in particular the notions of analogy, allegory, and symbolic meaning were elaborated— notions to which we shall frequently have to return. This second tradition, then, relates hermeneutics to the definition of symbol by analogy, although it does not entirely reduce hermeneutics to this definition.

What limits the definition of exegetical hermeneutics is, first, its reference to an authority, whether monarchical, collegial, or ecclesiastical, the latter being the case of biblical hermeneutics as practiced within the Christian communities. Most of all, however, it is limited by being applied to a literary text: exegesis is a science of writings.

Still, the exegetical tradition affords a good starting point for our

7. Aubenque, p. 204.

8. Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale* (4 vols. Paris, Aubier, 1959–64).

enterprise, for the notion of text can be taken in an analogous sense. Thanks to the metaphor of “the book of nature” the Middle Ages was able to speak of an *interpretatio naturae*. This metaphor brings to light a possible extension of the notion of exegesis, inasmuch as the notion of “text” is wider than that of “scripture.” With the Renaissance the *interpretatio naturae* was completely freed from its properly scriptural references, with the result that Spinoza could use it to inaugurate a new conception of biblical exegesis. The interpretation of nature, he says in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, is to inspire a new hermeneutics ruled by the principle of the interpretation of Scripture by itself. This step of Spinoza’s, which does not interest us here from the strictly biblical point of view, marks a curious rebound of the *interpretatio naturae* upon the interpretation of Scripture: the former scriptural model is now called into question, and the new model is henceforward the *interpretatio naturae*.

This notion of text—thus freed from the notion of scripture or writing—is of considerable interest. Freud often makes use of it, particularly when he compares the work of analysis to translating from one language to another; the dream account is an unintelligible text for which the analyst substitutes a more intelligible text. To understand is to make this substitution. The title *Traumdeutung*, which we have briefly considered, alludes to this analogy between analysis and exegesis.

At this point we may draw an initial comparison between Freud and Nietzsche. Nietzsche borrowed the concept of *Deutung* or *Auslegung* from the discipline of philology and introduced it into philosophy. It is true that Nietzsche remains a philologist when he interprets Greek tragedy or the pre-Socratics, but with him the whole of philosophy becomes interpretation. Interpretation of what? We shall answer that question later, when we enter into the conflict of interpretation. For the present this point can be made: the new career opened up for the concept of interpretation is linked to a new problematic of representation, of *Vorstellung*. It is no longer the Kantian question of how a subjective representation or idea can have objective validity; this question, central to a critical philosophy, gives way to a more radical one. The problem of objec-

tive validity still remained in the orbit of the Platonic philosophy of truth and science, of which error and opinion are the contraries. The problem of interpretation refers to a new possibility which is no longer either error in the epistemological sense or lying in the moral sense, but illusion, the status of which we will discuss further on. Let us leave aside for the moment the problem we shall turn to shortly, namely, the use of interpretation as a tactic of suspicion and as a battle against masks; this use calls for a very specific philosophy which subordinates the entire problem of truth and error to the expression of the will to power. The important point here, from the standpoint of method, is the new extension given to the exegetical concept of interpretation.

Freud's position lies at one of the ends of this extension. For him, interpretation is concerned not only with a scripture or writing but with any set of signs that may be taken as a text to decipher, hence a dream or neurotic symptom, as well as a ritual, myth, work of art, or a belief. Thus we return to our notion of symbol as double meaning, with the question still undecided whether double meaning is dissimulation or revelation, necessary lying or access to the sacred. We had in mind an enlarged concept of exegesis when we defined hermeneutics as the science of exegetical rules and exegesis as the interpretation of a particular text or of a set of signs considered as a text.

As may be seen, this intermediate definition, which goes beyond a mere scriptural science without being dissolved in a general theory of meaning, receives its authority from both sources. The exegetical source seems the closer, but the problem of univocity and equivocity to which interpretation in the Aristotelian sense leads us is perhaps still more radical than the problem of analogy in exegesis. We return to this in the next chapter. On the other hand, the problem of illusion, central to the Nietzschean *Auslegung*, brings us to the threshold of the key difficulty that governs the fate of modern hermeneutics. This difficulty, which we shall now consider, is not a mere duplicate of the one involved in the definition of symbol; it is a difficulty peculiar to the act of interpreting as such.

The difficulty—it initiated my research in the first place—is this: there is no general hermeneutics, no universal canon for exegesis,

but only disparate and opposed theories concerning the rules of interpretation. The hermeneutic field, whose outer contours we have traced, is internally at variance with itself.

I have neither the intention nor the means to attempt a complete enumeration of hermeneutic styles. The more enlightening course, it seems to me, is to start with the polarized opposition that creates the greatest tension at the outset of our investigation. According to the one pole, hermeneutics is understood as the manifestation and restoration of a meaning addressed to me in the manner of a message, a proclamation, or as is sometimes said, a kerygma; according to the other pole, it is understood as a demystification, as a reduction of illusion. Psychoanalysis, at least on a first reading, aligns itself with the second understanding of hermeneutics.

From the beginning we must consider this double possibility: this tension, this extreme polarity, is the truest expression of our "modernity." The situation in which language today finds itself comprises this double possibility, this double solicitation and urgency: on the one hand, purify discourse of its excrescences, liquidate the idols, go from drunkenness to sobriety, realize our state of poverty once and for all; on the other hand, use the most "nihilistic," destructive, iconoclastic movement so as to *let speak* what once, what each time, was *said*, when meaning appeared anew, when meaning was at its fullest. Hermeneutics seems to me to be animated by this double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow of rigor, vow of obedience. In our time we have not finished doing away with *idols* and we have barely begun to listen to *symbols*. It may be that this situation, in its apparent distress, is instructive: it may be that extreme iconoclasm belongs to the restoration of meaning.

The underlying reason for initially posing the problem in the above way is to bring into the open the crisis of language that today makes us oscillate between demystification and restoration of meaning. To my mind, an introduction to the psychoanalysis of culture has had to proceed in this roundabout way. In the next chapter we will try to probe deeper into these prolegomena and relate the crisis of language to an ascesis of reflection whose first movement is to let itself be dispossessed of the origin of meaning.

To finish locating psychoanalysis within the general discussion of language, the terms of the conflict need to be sketched.

INTERPRETATION AS
RECOLLECTION
OF MEANING

This section is concerned with hermeneutics as the restoration of meaning. The point at issue in the psychoanalysis of culture and the school of suspicion is better understood if we first contrast what is radically opposed to them.

The contrary of suspicion, I will say bluntly, is faith. What faith? No longer, to be sure, the first faith of the simple soul, but rather the second faith of one who has engaged in hermeneutics, faith that has undergone criticism, postcritical faith. Let us look for it in the series of philosophic decisions that secretly animate a phenomenology of religion and lie hidden even within its apparent neutrality. It is a rational faith, for it interprets; but it is a faith because it seeks, through interpretation, a second naïveté. Phenomenology is its instrument of hearing, of recollection, of restoration of meaning. "Believe in order to understand, understand in order to believe"—such is its maxim; and its maxim is the "hermeneutic circle" itself of believing and understanding.

We will take our examples from the phenomenology of religion in the wide sense, embracing here the work of Leenhardt, Van der Leeuw, and Eliade, to which I add my own research in *The Symbolism of Evil*.

It will be our task to disengage and display the rational faith that runs through the purely intentional analysis of religious symbolism and "converts" this listening analysis from within.

The first imprint of this faith in a revelation through the word is to be seen in the care or concern for the *object*, a characteristic of all phenomenological analysis. That concern, as we know, presents itself as a "neutral" wish to describe and not to reduce. One reduces by explaining through causes (psychological, social, etc.), through genesis (individual, historical, etc.), through function (affective, ideological, etc.). One describes by disengaging the (noetic) inten-

tion and its (noematic) correlate—the *something* intended, the implicit object in ritual, myth, and belief. Thus, in the case of the symbolism of the pure and the impure alluded to in Chapter 1, the task is to understand what is signified, what quality of the sacred is intended, what shade of threat is implied in the analogy between spot and stain, between physical contamination and the loss of existential integrity. In my own research, concern for the object consisted in surrender to the movement of meaning which, starting from the literal sense—the spot or contamination—points to something grasped in the region of the sacred. To generalize from this, we shall say that the theme of the phenomenology of religion is the *something* intended in ritual actions, in mythical speech, in belief or mystical feeling; its task is to dis-implicate that object from the various intentions of behavior, discourse, and emotion. Let us call this intended object the "sacred," without determining its nature, whether it be the *tremendum numinosum*, according to Rudolf Otto; "the powerful," according to Van der Leeuw; or "fundamental Time," according to Eliade. In this general sense, and with a view to underlining the concern for the intentional object, we may say that every phenomenology of religion is a phenomenology of the sacred. However, is it possible for a phenomenology of the sacred to stay within the limits of a neutral attitude governed by the *epochê*, by the bracketing of absolute reality and of every question concerning the absolute? The *epochê* requires that I participate in the belief in the reality of the religious object, but in a neutralized mode; that I believe with the believer, but without positing absolutely the object of his belief.

But while the scientist as such can and must practice this method of bracketing, the philosopher as such cannot and must not avoid the question of the absolute validity of his object. For would I be interested in the object, could I stress concern for the object, through the consideration of cause, genesis, or function, if I did not expect, from within understanding, this something to "address" itself to me? Is not the expectation of being spoken to what motivates the concern for the object? Implied in this expectation is a confidence in language: the belief that language, which bears symbols, is not so much spoken by men as spoken to men, that men are

born into language, into the light of the logos "who enlightens every man who comes into the world." It is this expectation, this confidence, this belief, that confers on the study of symbols its particular seriousness. To be truthful, I must say it is what animates all my research. But it is also what today is contested by the whole stream of hermeneutics that we shall soon place under the heading of "suspicion." This latter theory of interpretation begins by doubting whether there is such an object and whether this object could be the place of the transformation of intentionality into kerygma, manifestation, proclamation. This hermeneutics is not an explication of the object, but a tearing off of masks, an interpretation that reduces disguises.

Second, according to the phenomenology of religion, there is a "truth" of symbols; this truth, in the neutral attitude of the Husserlian epoché, means merely the fulfillment—*die Erfüllung*—of the signifying intention. For a phenomenology of religion to be possible, it is necessary and sufficient that there be not only one but several ways of fulfilling various intentions of meaning according to various regions of objects. Verification, in the sense of logical positivism, is one type of fulfillment among others and not the canonical mode of fulfillment; it is a type required by the corresponding type of object, namely, the physical object and, in another sense, the historical object—but not by the concept of truth as such, or, in other words, by the requirement of fulfillment in general. It is in virtue of this multiplicity of types of fulfillment that phenomenology, in a reduced, neutralized mode, speaks of religious experience, not by analogy, but according to the specific type of object and the specific mode of fulfillment in that field.

We encountered this problem of fulfillment in the order of symbolic meanings in our investigation of the analogical bond between the primary or literal "signifier" and the secondary "signified"—for example, the bond between spot and stain, between deviation (or wandering) and sin, between weight (or burden) and fault. Here we run up against a primordial, unfailing relationship, which never has the conventional and arbitrary character of "technical" signs that mean only what is posited in them.

In this relationship of meaning to meaning resides what I have called the *fullness* of language. The fullness consists in the fact that

the second meaning somehow dwells in the first meaning. In his *Traité d'histoire générale des religions*, Mircea Eliade clearly shows that the force of the cosmic symbolism resides in the nonarbitrary bond between the visible heavens and the order they manifest: thanks to the analogical power that binds meaning to meaning, the heavens *speak* of the wise and the just, the immense and the ordered. Symbols are bound in a double sense: bound *to* and bound *by*. On the one hand, the sacred is *bound to* its primary, literal, sensible meanings; this is what constitutes the opacity of symbols. On the other hand, the literal meaning is *bound by* the symbolic meaning that resides in it; this is what I have called the revealing power of symbols, which gives them their force in spite of their opacity. The revealing power of symbols opposes symbols to technical signs, which merely signify what is posited in them and which, therefore, can be emptied, formalized, and reduced to mere objects of a calculus. Symbols alone *give* what they say.

But in saying this have we not already broken the phenomenological neutrality? I admit it. I admit that what deeply motivates the interest in full language, in bound language, is this inversion of the movement of thought which now addresses itself to me and makes me a subject that is spoken to. And this inversion is produced in analogy. How? How does that which binds meaning to meaning bind me? The movement that draws me toward the second meaning assimilates me to what is said, makes me participate in what is announced to me. The similitude in which the force of symbols resides and from which they draw their revealing power is not an objective likeness, which I may look upon like a relation laid out before me; it is an existential assimilation, according to the movement of analogy, of my being to being.

This allusion to the ancient theme of participation helps us make a third step along the path of explication, which is also the path of intellectual honesty: the fully declared philosophical decision animating the intentional analysis would be a modern version of the ancient theme of reminiscence. After the silence and forgetfulness made widespread by the manipulation of empty signs and the construction of formalized languages, the modern concern for symbols expresses a new desire to be addressed.

This expectancy of a new Word, of a new tidings of the Word, is

the implicit intention of every phenomenology of symbols, which first puts the accent on the object, then underscores the fullness of symbol, to finally greet the revealing power of the primal word.

INTERPRETATION AS EXERCISE
OF SUSPICION

We shall complete our assigning of a place to Freud by giving him not just one interlocutor but a whole company. Over against interpretation as restoration of meaning we shall oppose interpretation according to what I collectively call the school of suspicion.

A general theory of interpretation would thus have to account not only for the opposition between two interpretations of interpretation, the one as recollection of meaning, the other as reduction of the illusions and lies of consciousness; but also for the division and scattering of each of these two great "schools" of interpretation into "theories" that differ from one another and are even foreign to one another. This is no doubt truer of the school of suspicion than of the school of reminiscence. Three masters, seemingly mutually exclusive, dominate the school of suspicion: Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. It is easier to show their common opposition to a phenomenology of the sacred, understood as a propaedeutic to the "revelation" of meaning, than their interrelationship within a single method of demystification. It is relatively easy to note that these three figures all contest the primacy of the object in our representation of the sacred, as well as the fulfilling of the intention of the sacred by a type of analogy of being that would engraft us onto being through the power of an assimilating intention. It is also easy to recognize that this contesting is an exercise of suspicion in three different ways; "truth as lying" would be the negative heading under which one might place these three exercises of suspicion. But we are still far from having assimilated the positive meaning of the enterprises of these three thinkers. We are still too attentive to their differences and to the limitations that the prejudices of their times impose upon their successors even more than upon themselves. Thus Marx is relegated to economics and the absurd theory of the

reflex consciousness; Nietzsche is drawn toward biologism and a perspectivism incapable of expressing itself without contradiction; Freud is restricted to psychiatry and decked out with a simplistic pansexualism.

If we go back to the intention they had in common, we find in it the decision to look upon the whole of consciousness primarily as "false" consciousness. They thereby take up again, each in a different manner, the problem of the Cartesian doubt, to carry it to the very heart of the Cartesian stronghold. The philosopher trained in the school of Descartes knows that things are doubtful, that they are not such as they appear; but he does not doubt that consciousness is such as it appears to itself; in consciousness, meaning and consciousness of meaning coincide. Since Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, this too has become doubtful. After the doubt about things, we have started to doubt consciousness.

These three masters of suspicion are not to be misunderstood, however, as three masters of skepticism. They are, assuredly, three great "destroyers." But that of itself should not mislead us; destruction, Heidegger says in *Sein und Zeit*, is a moment of every new foundation, including the destruction of religion, insofar as religion is, in Nietzsche's phrase, a "Platonism for the people." It is beyond destruction that the question is posed as to what thought, reason, and even faith still signify.

All three clear the horizon for a more authentic word, for a new reign of Truth, not only by means of a "destructive" critique, but by the invention of an art of *interpreting*. Descartes triumphed over the doubt as to things by the evidence of consciousness; they triumph over the doubt as to consciousness by an exegesis of meaning. Beginning with them, understanding is hermeneutics: henceforward, to seek meaning is no longer to spell out the consciousness of meaning, but to *decipher its expressions*. What must be faced, therefore, is not only a threefold suspicion, but a threefold guile. If consciousness is not what it thinks it is, a new relation must be instituted between the patent and the latent; this new relation would correspond to the one that consciousness had instituted between appearances and the reality of things. For Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, the fundamental category of consciousness is the relation

hidden-shown or, if you prefer, simulated-manifested. That the Marxists are stubbornly insistent on the "reflex" theory, that Nietzsche contradicts himself in dogmatizing about the "perspectivism" of the will to power, that Freud mythologizes with his "censorship," "watchman," and "disguises"—still, what is essential does not lie in these encumbrances and impasses. What is essential is that all three create with the means at hand, with and against the prejudices of their times, a mediate *science* of meaning, irreducible to the immediate *consciousness* of meaning. What all three attempted, in different ways, was to make their "conscious" methods of deciphering coincide with the "unconscious" *work* of ciphering which they attributed to the will to power, to social being, to the unconscious psychism. *Guile will be met by double guile.*

Thus the distinguishing characteristic of Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche is the general hypothesis concerning both the process of false consciousness and the method of deciphering. The two go together, since the man of suspicion carries out in reverse the work of falsification of the man of guile. Freud entered the problem of false consciousness via the double road of dreams and neurotic symptoms; his working hypothesis has the same limits as his angle of attack, which was, as we shall state fully in the sequel, an economics of instincts. Marx attacks the problem of ideologies from within the limits of economic alienation, now in the sense of political economy. Nietzsche, focusing on the problem of "value"—of evaluation and transvaluation—looks for the key to lying and masks on the side of the "force" and "weakness" of the will to power.

Fundamentally, the *Genealogy of Morals* in Nietzsche's sense, the theory of ideologies in the Marxist sense, and the theory of ideals and illusions in Freud's sense represent three convergent procedures of demystification.

Yet there is perhaps something they have even more in common, an underlying relationship that goes even deeper. All three begin with suspicion concerning the illusions of consciousness, and then proceed to employ the stratagem of deciphering; all three, however, far from being detractors of "consciousness," aim at extending it. What Marx wants is to liberate *praxis* by the understanding of necessity; but this liberation is inseparable from a "conscious in-

sight" which victoriously counterattacks the mystification of false consciousness. What Nietzsche wants is the increase of man's power, the restoration of his force; but the meaning of the will to power must be recaptured by meditating on the ciphers "superman," "eternal return," and "Dionysus," without which the power in question would be but worldly violence. What Freud desires is that the one who is analyzed, by making his own the meaning that was foreign to him, enlarge his field of consciousness, live better, and finally be a little freer and, if possible, a little happier. One of the earliest homages paid to psychoanalysis speaks of "healing through consciousness." The phrase is exact—if one means thereby that analysis wishes to substitute for an immediate and dissimulating consciousness a mediate consciousness taught by the reality principle. Thus the same doubter who depicts the ego as a "poor creature" in subjection to three masters, the id, the superego, and reality or necessity, is also the exegete who rediscovers the logic of the illogical kingdom and who dares, with unparalleled modesty and discretion, to terminate his essay on *The Future of an Illusion* by invoking the god Logos, soft of voice but indefatigable, in no wise omnipotent, but efficacious in the long run.

This last reference to Freud's "reality principle" and to its equivalents in Nietzsche and Marx—eternal return in the former, understood necessity in the latter—brings out the positive benefit of the ascesis required by a reductive and destructive interpretation: confrontation with bare reality, the discipline of Ananke, of necessity.

While finding their positive convergence, our three masters of suspicion also present the most radically contrary stance to the phenomenology of the sacred and to any hermeneutics understood as the recollection of meaning and as the reminiscence of being.

At issue in this controversy is the fate of what I shall call, for the sake of brevity, the mytho-poetic core of imagination. Over against illusion and the fable-making function, demystifying hermeneutics sets up the rude discipline of necessity. It is the lesson of Spinoza: one first finds himself a slave, he understands his slavery, he rediscovers himself free within understood necessity. The *Ethics* is the first model of the ascesis that must be undergone by the

libido, the will to power, the imperialism of the dominant class. But, in return, does not this discipline of the real, this asceticism of the necessary lack the grace of imagination, the upsurge of the possible? And does not this grace of imagination have something to do with the Word as Revelation?

This is what is at issue in the debate. Our question now is to determine to what extent such a debate can still be arbitrated within the limits of a philosophy of reflection.

Chapter 3: Hermeneutic Method and Reflective Philosophy

We assigned ourselves the task, in these beginning chapters, of placing Freud within the movement of contemporary thought. Before becoming involved with its technical language and specific problem we wanted to reconstruct the context in which psychoanalysis is set. We first fixed its hermeneutics of culture upon the background of the problematic of language. From the outset we have looked upon psychoanalysis as throwing light upon and contesting human speech; Freud belongs to our time just as much as Wittgenstein and Bultmann. The place of psychoanalysis within the general debate on language might be more precisely described as an episode in the war between the various hermeneutics, though this does not tell us whether psychoanalysis is but one hermeneutic sect among others or whether, in a manner we shall have to discover, it encroaches upon all the others. In this chapter we would like to go further and discern in psychoanalysis, in the hermeneutic war itself, and in the problematic of language as a whole, a crisis of reflection—that is to say, in the strong and philosophic sense of the term, an adventure of the Cogito and of the reflective philosophy that proceeds therefrom.

THE RECOURSE OF SYMBOLS TO REFLECTION

I will begin by retracing the path of my own inquiry. It was as a requirement of lucidity, of veracity, of rigor, that I encountered what I called, at the end of *The Symbolism of Evil*, "the passage to reflection." Is it possible, I asked, to co-