

THE MOVING DEATH OF MEANING
AND THE STILL LIFE OF
SIGNS.

(a critique on the dynamics of signification)

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The two terms of image and word has become one of the most centrally intractable problems, of not only language itself, but by extension all that language inhabits and relates to. It lies at the heart of all practices that utilise and, or reflect upon meaning and ultimately, human understanding. Critique of language was how Wittgenstein defined the practice of philosophy, and this idea clearly illustrates the intimate relationship between philosophical speculation and the medium through which it, and indeed all other intellectual inquiries, are expressed. What had been seen as a mere tool or a clear and indifferent medium, has now come into existence as an object of analysis in its own right, and the insights that this analysis has given us have implications far beyond the narrow field of linguistic study.

The study of signification which had its first analytical formulation in the work of the linguist Saussure has, under the name of Structuralism, been applied to a variety of other disciplines, most notably the social sciences. The reason for the varied applicability of this mode of analysis is that it concentrates on the apparatus of structuration and provides a methodology for pursuing such - this singular or particular application can be seen in the work of the anthropologist Levi-Strauss among others, where he has used the theoretical method of Saussurean linguistics to good effect in producing a structure or system for anthropological study. It is in providing an objective and systematic approach for such soft sciences as anthropology, that structuralism, by bringing together under generalising principles diverse and seemingly disparate information, and organizing that information in terms of its own integral relations, can be seen to be useful. By objectively formalising the internal mechanics of that through which we signify, we become aware of the manner in which we signify. In this the more general aspect of structuralism, we become cognisant of that which was previously

taken to be an indivisible medium and we realise the substance and quality of that which was taken to be non-qualitative and insubstantial, It is in this respect that structuralism is very much of it's time in identifying those structures that substantiate communication and recognition. This process of identification can be seen as one of the overriding dynamics of the modern world view, in that it is through the process of nomination that we enter that which unknown onto our circuit of understanding, and in the act of naming, we particularise that which is named, thus making it individually distinct from, and a sub-divided part of the whole to which it is now inextricably linked to, and bound by, in a process that can be most readily seen in the naming and classification of a newly discovered botanical or zoological species. This process is known as differentiation in structuralist and post-structuralist theories, but as I hope to show where there is differentiation, there is also nomination. Thus, as we name language as a structure, we differentiate it from us and vice versa. As we shall see, this recognition of structure as either difference or dominance, is co-extensive with all other dichotomous view points, and it's problematic is one central to the contemporary theory of meaning.

The hermetic atomism of the pre-modern world has been shattered and broken down into constituent parts, the physical manifestation of which can most readily seen in the field of particle physics, where what was held to be indivisible has been broken down into elements which themselves are capable of sub-division into even smaller parts. This most practically demonstrable situation is echoed throughout the entire system of human understanding, where culture can be sub-divided into particular sub-cultures, which are distinct from, and yet part of larger cultural groupings. This activity can be seen at work in the increased specialisation brought to various branches of scientific endeavour, in which it is increasingly impossible for the individual participant to master all the knowledge available to them with-

in their field of research. This increasing analytical diffraction can be found not only in the sciences, but exists in all fields of intellectual endeavour, and as I hope to show, is a result of, and synonymous with an overall societal dynamic, the influence of which is felt in all aspects of inquiry. This dynamic has become most obvious through structuralism with, and in the field of, the use of language and its analysis, this of necessity is concerned with language as word and text and it is here that the most intense theoretical investigations and debates are carried out, but this must be seen as only the most widespread particular of all the signifying structures, and so the investigation of this field of communication must be seen as applicable in the whole to other structures or languages, such as the Visual Arts, Mathematics etc. These structures, while sharing in a communal quality of structuralisation, operate on, with and of very different intentions and objectives, whose most basic formation could be conceived as unity and disparity. To trace these operations, it is most conveniently done by concentrating our attention for the moment, on analysis as division seen through structuralist method. Such divisibility can be most conveniently seen as a product of the objective analytical programme, and thus division by structural recognition, as applied to literature, can be seen as an active adaptation by Barthes and others, of the scientific method as pursued in the theoretical practice of the hard sciences. The reason simply being that the hard sciences are inherently and thoroughly structural, and it is an attempt to utilise this certain and well practised objectivity that is being appropriated and applied to areas where such a structured basis can give solid grounding to a critical analysis. The use of such a scientific structural approach seems to be synonymous with a highly individual application of a coherent theory to a given field. What it is that ties together such diverse subjects as psychology,

literary theory, and Anthropology is the adaptability of these fields to the structuralist method, and yet it is ironic that these applications have been formulated by some of the most idiosyncratic thinkers in contemporary culture. In an attempt to state what it was that tied together such thinkers as himself, Jaques Lacan and others, Barthes said that it was literally the use of the concept of sign, signifier and signified. Through this we can see that the application of these concepts are tied in with an attempt to identify what it is within each subject that is significant, a use that does not seem suprising when utilised by a literary theoretician, but its equal adaptability for other areas is an indication of the similarity of structure that underlies them all. The ground in which all these diversities meet is their common analysis of meaning, in terms of human society, and the formulation of this meaning in theory. The structure that Saussure identified is the structure of meaning that lies at the heart of a shared social practice, and it is this systematic theory of signification that is in use by academics.

The investigation of human language that made obvious the structure of human intercourse, has propogated from the field of linguistics as a theory of structuration, or a language of analysis and has been brought to areas where such a metalanguage is necessary, in order to bring large and complex informational relations together. Whether the metalanguage of structuration is applied to the individual's internal response to social interaction as in psychoanalysis, or to the systematic analysis of entire social structures as in Anthropology, or to the critique of certain specialised social practices, such as Literature, the approach is the same entailing as it does, an attempt to define the operational rules of the subject under study, in terms of it's relationships within itself. For in the same way that Saussure located the internal dynamics of the most commonly held social practice, so too does structuralism lay bare the mechanisms of any social practice to which it is applied.

The objective exactitude and translatability of structuralism can be seen most clearly in relation to existentialism, its philosophical predecessor. These two bodies of thought are, in essence oppositional, a point clearly brought out in the writings of the arch-structuralist, Levi-Strauss. As a philosophy of meaning in the language of personal autonomy, it is clear that an idea that gives a central role to the individual, cannot be applied to the collective as practice and so Existentialism existed more as an attitude than as a set of utilisable rules. As such it gave authority to the subjective individual and so proved eminently suitable as a semi-ideological stance taken up by artists and other creative individuals, especially in relation to their work. This is in contrast to Structuralism which is an inherently social theory, hence its translatability, and indeed it can be seen primarily as a theory of symbolic translation. In the same way that Existentialism provided an anarchically subjective authority for the artist, Structuralism provides a socially objective, rulebound framework for legitimising the authority of the critical analyst. Paradoxically, this social interpretation is, at the same time the highly individual promulgation of creativity through theoretical speculation, providing as it does, a language of analytical expression for those operative in fields of inquiry where traditional investigation has been limited to observation and tabulation, rather than explanation (this is an approach that can be found in Anthropology and linguistic analysis itself) that could be described as behaviourist or empiricist. This is the central problem of authority that becomes obvious in the work of writers, such as Barthes and Derrida, where an abdication of textual authority is given textually by the authors. A paradox that is echoed in the use of scientifically objective methods of social analysis which become the vehicles for

subjective theoretical speculation by individuals. Indeed it could be said that what is being applied in a structural analysis is not a rule of theory guided by the internal functions of that which is under study, but it is instead guided by the functions or rules of objective analysis itself.

The structure of the analytical method formulated by Saussure has its counterparts in two of the most influential bodies of thought this century. The method that Saussure pursued in regards to language, proceeds by differentiating oppositional terms and, or functions and plotting the relations between these. Thus he divides language in terms of *Parole* and *Langue*, the synchronic and the diachronic and the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic. Without delving too deeply for the moment into the complex and verbose world of linguistic analysis, it becomes obvious that the most general/basic set of opposition terms in Saussure, as in so much of modern western thought can be expressed, as the relationship between *Langue* and *Parole*, or in essence the societal whole and the individual constituent of that whole. The bodies of thought that both proceed by, and are in themselves symbolic of this primary division are Freudian psychoanalysis and Marx's critique of Western political economy. Economics was actually used by Saussure as a model for his linguistic method and it is the application of economics through the means of production that enabled Marx to formulate the structure of political power, that is illustrated by the societal division of the class system. In the same way that Marx brought to light the full extent of those self-regulating and self-perpetuating mechanisms that operate within the framework of the social whole, so too did Freud bring to light the inner workings of the individual psyche, and exposed the general structure and functional dynamics of consciousness to the full view of analysis. In Marx, we can see the operation of divisional analysis as applied to society, in terms of masses and specific social groupings. In Freud, we find the same method applied to the analysis of consciousness in terms of individual mental functions, and the analysis of

these mechanisms under the specific groupings of conscious and sub-conscious, id, ego and superego. This is not an overextensive attempt to synthesise these separate theories into an homogenous whole, but it is an indication of the similarity of approach which can be seen as an inherent product of applying theoretical critique to what, till then, had been seen as un-ary things in themselves, which were not seen as having inter-relational structures of their own, e.g. the undivided consciousness as will before Freud, and the power relations of society as divine ordinance or will, as in aristocracy. The place where psychoanalysis and Marxist critical theory as paradigms of social and personal structures do meet most closely, is in the realm of social and personal meaning and its production. Writing in 'The End of Art Theory', Victor Burgin points out that Marx, in order to explain the nature of the commodity, must take his analogy of fetishism from "the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world" and goes on to indicate that "Althusser saw most clearly not only the vital necessity for an adequate theory of ideology, but also that this theory must draw on psychoanalysis. In Marx 'ideology is conceived as a pure illusion, a pure dream.....All it's reality is external to it'. Burgin goes on to state that "psycho analytical theory is necessary because ideology is not a matter of 'false consciousness' it is not a matter of consciousness at all, it is profoundly unconscious!" Whether obviously conscious or not, ideology and its relation to the commodity, can be seen as a mental relationship within the social whole, and can further be represented as the persona or personality of that whole. This cannot be seen as endowing ideology with a spurious metaphysical unity, as personality in individual terms can be seen as being, to a large extent, a complex amalgam of ideological imprints, such as gender, class and country of origin, (these elements being only some of the most basic influences, which combine to make the social phenomenon of personality)

Thus we can see the necessarily reciprocal and co-extensive nature of these two ideas, a nature that can be understood as the basic functioning of holistic structural recognition (what is being stressed here is not the absolute compatability of the theories of Marx and Freud, but their basic similarity of approach.

These interrelated languages of the macro and the micro, or ideological and personal, co-mingle, unite in and are expressed through the sign, and it is in Saussure's analysis of this mediating apparatus that we can see this interrelation between the communal and the individual most clearly. For in so far as there is a communal system of signs, there is also the particular event or individual use of this system. The surprising element within linguistic analysis and Structuralism in general is that in defining the operations of the social language system and the personal language use expressed in theory, as *Langue* and *Parole*, Saussure and Structuralism as a whole, gives a greater significance to the social, as opposed to the personal, seeing it as the dominant factor within the use of language. This can be seen as a reaction against what Levi-Strauss has called "the cult of personality", an attribute which has, in the West, given too weighty a significance to the autonomous power of the individual. In the work of Saussure this is brought out most clearly in a number of divisional elements, with which he structured his analysis and the way in which he credits one as dominant over the other. In formulating the most basic oppositional characteristics of languages, *Langue* and *Parole*, the emphasis is on their mutual equality as the primary constituent of language. These two terms can also be conceived of as the structure (*Langue*) and the event (*Parole*). Even in Saussure's most influential formulation of the sign, there is an equable distribution of authority among the divisional aspects of signifier and signified, although here the sign is seen as an autonomous entity, with only a tenuous identification with the referent, or thing in the world of which it is the sign. This, and the

concept of 'value', which Saussure introduces as an element of language along with signification, are the two structural or systematic biases that are central to his method. The formulation of language as "form not substance" comes about in his analysis due to the arbitrary nature of the sign. This arbitrary nature is a consequence of inter-linguistic comparison, where it becomes obvious that no two languages order their representation of the world, through language in quite the same way. What is of primary importance for Saussure is the recognition that the sign is not linked to the referent by determination or motivation, and therefore it is a relationship that has no absolute fixity. This characteristic whereby, (1) "languages differentiate differentially" is the basis upon which the structuralist approach raises itself, and it is the key to the concept of 'value' which Saussure points as a structural necessity, arising out of this differentiation.

The 'value' of a particular element of a linguistic structure comes about through its place within that system, so too is the form, as John Sturrock has it (2) "the form taken by the constituent elements of the system is determined, not by their references, but by the place they occupy within the system". The concept of 'value' as an individual element's positional relationship to the whole, leads Saussure to the theoretical expression of language as a system of differences, that proceeds by negative differentiation. (3) "in the language itself, there are only differences. Even more important than that is the fact that, although in general, a difference presupposes positive terms between which the difference holds, in a language there are only differences, and no positive terms, whether we take the signifier or the signified, the language includes neither ideas nor sounds existing prior to the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonetic differences arising out of that system. In a sign, what matters more than any other idea or sound associated with it, is what other signs surround it".

This identification of negative and positive, as negative system and positive use, goes on to be the foundation of much of post-structuralist theory, where the structured, negatively differential nature of language becomes even more rigorously formulated.

In this necessarily brief outline of Saussurian linguistic theory, what becomes obvious is the unequal, hierarchical disposition of working elements within language. In this theory, what started out as an equal interrelationship between language-system and language-use, has become biased toward the structure dominant. This bias runs through the work of Saussure, as a consequence of the manner of his linguistic investigations, which were concerned with the study of language, based on a synchronic or spatial perspective, rather than a diachronic or temporal one. This static analysis or approach, very much against the dominant trend in linguistics at the time, was an attempt to identify those atemporally permanent elements of the structure of language, which are relatively consistent throughout its diverse manifestations.

Thus, in Saussure we find an emphasis placed firmly on a semiotic analysis, as opposed to a semantic analysis, consequently a more important place is given to the value of a sign as a part of the system in general, rather than its signification. Saussure himself makes the distinction very clear in his work, between the analysis of 'value' and its role in understanding how a sign means, rather than an analysis of what it signifies, and it is this method that leads Saussure to define language as form, rather than substance. The problem inherent in this synchronic analysis is that it necessarily ignores the nature of language in use, which is in itself a diachronic activity and problem that Saussure's work does not deal with, but which is dealt with in the work of those followers of the structuralist method, in particular by such post-structuralist analysts as Jacques Derrida.

As I hope to show, the conclusions drawn by post-structural analysis are somewhat flawed by compounding, rather than redressing the bias that is part of Saussure's theory. In demonstrating the (for Saussure) inherently differential nature of languages, he provides the anaology of a game of chess, where a piece in chess, akin to an individual sign in language, falls under a particular category, not by virtue of what it is outside the game, in it's substantiality as wood or plastic, but by virtue of the value invested in it by the rules of chess and by the differentiation of pawns from queens.

"We may not be conscious of this differentiability every time we move a chess piece, but it is very clear that such an event is wholly determined by the structure of the game in which it occurs". He continues: (4) "The anaology is particularly helpful in demonstrating the crucial difference between form and substance, given the insignificance for someone actually playing chess, of the substantiality of the pieces". This division of form from substance is patently inaccurate in that it divides two absolutely co-extensive elements.

Using Saussure's own anaology, it can be seen that, while in abstraction, form can be divorced from the substantial. In so far as it is possible to think of a move without having to physically carry it out, in actuality it cannot, due to its being necessary to actually play a game, one must provide a means whereby information is passed between two opposing players, and this act of communication necessitates the actualisation of a physical medium, be it actual chess pieces or some form of graphic notation, to actually utilise the structural rules. Some physical appartus must be present. Thus, in a structure form cannot be differentiated from substance. This division occurs in Saussure, due to his analysis of language as an abstract, synchronic system. The exact extent to which the formal rules of structure define the substance of the system use, will hopefully be elucidated as we progress.

The insubstantiality of signs is in Saussure's work, synonymous with, and a consequence of the arbitrary nature of language. Once again, this concept is a result of a synchronic analysis. For taken holistically, language is indeed of an arbitrary nature but in it's particular usage, it is always specific. As an analogy of linguistic comparison, one could take the example of the use of fifty-two playing cards, where from a basic set of hierarchically differentiated elements, any number of different game structures; e.g., poker, whist etc., can be enacted, where emphasis will be placed on certain cards or suits within the rules, peculiar to that game. This activity is one of nomination, or designation and in this we can see that between one game and the other, the designation of value is, indeed arbitrary, but that within any particular game, this designation must be followed and that any attempt at arbitrary valuation within the game will be invalid. Here we can see that inter-linguistically, language has an arbitrary nature, but that it functions in use as a specific; this point is worth stressing, as it is with respect to the relationship of language to meaning, that this particular characteristic of the structure of language endows language with a certain degree of autonomy, as regards reality (the exact extent of this autonomy is massively overrated by the structuralist method).

(5) As expressed by John Sturrock; "We should think of the language-system as being applicable to reality as a whole, instead of in it's separate elements. To conceive of it as the sum of very many one-to-one occurrences is to misconceive it utterly. The form taken by the constituent elements of the system is determined, not by their referents , as we have seen, but by the place they occupy within the system. Each element is as Saussure insists, 'a form, not a substance'". This is a neat summation of the idea of language as an abstractly formal interrelationship between language as a whole, and expresses clearly the structuralist's lack of emphasis on the relationship between the sign and the referent, or the

language and reality. At this formal level, many of Saussure's propositions do hold out, but this is necessarily to see language in its synchronic whole and to ignore the diachronic nature of language as used. As we have seen, the substantiality of language is an absolute necessity for its actantial use, and in the same way to see language as applicable to reality as a whole, is a synchronic manner of analysis, the consequence of which is to see language as a negative differential entity, for as Saussure has it:

"In the language itself there are only differences. Even more than this, although in general a difference presupposes positive terms between which the difference holds, in language there are only differences, and not positive terms".

This negatively dominant differentiability is like the insubstantial form, an absolute contradiction in terms, and can be seen as paradoxical products of a theory that, in practice, divorces the system from its actual existence as event.

The counterpoint to the differential view of language is to see language as nomination. The structural view-point is fundamentally opposed to this idea of language as nomenclature, citing as its arguments against it that, if all language consisted of verbs and nouns, then such a one-to-one correlation could indeed exist, but due to the existence of other sign categories, and the complex interrelationships that they enter into with each other, this idea is invalidated. This is a synchronic misconception of the nominative function. In that, in so far as language is differential, it must also be of necessity, equally nominative, a fact that can be most clearly appreciated by considering language in use. Where it is impossible to use language for the purpose of

differentiation without utilising it's co-extensively nominative function (as a simple example, in order to differentiate the particular from the general, and especially to bring it's existence to the attention of another in communication, it is necessary to name it in particular, precisely so that differentiation can be achieved, and so it's existence is validated or activated by it's difference from the whole as a constituent, as well as it's existence as a nominated individual particular). This does not disprove Saussurean analysis based on differentiation, as the nominative in order to function in a synchronic manner, would necessitate a language system, where there would be an infinite number of signs in direct correlation to the infinite diversity of references or things in the world, and yet neither does it disprove the nominative aspect of language, in that the nominative function of the diachronic use of language, which in as much as it is part of a system, expresses meaning due to the interrelationships between words in use as elements naming referents, and not as the abstract static relationships between words as a differential system, where consideration of one aspect leads to an analysis of language, expressed as differential differentiation, and it's converse, from which in use it cannot be separated the aspect of nominal nomination. In the realm of the abstract system, the act of naming must be seen as nominal, changing as does differentiation from language-group to language-group and also over time, within a particular system. These two qualities though, must be seen as being eclipsed by actual use, where they are always specific. At it's most fundamental and, or abstract, this division can be seen as a positional view point, where the former aspect sees the language structure as a whole, whose elements exist as differential constituents, and the latter, where the elements are seen as individual entities defining themselves as parts of the whole, one being a directional approach from the holistic to the particular, the other being the particular to the holistic. This seemingly complex paradox can be seen as a result of a positional, analytical viewpoint, based on either the diachronic or the syn-

chronic. The complexity of this paradox arises out of seeing as distinct entities, two elements which are reciprocally co-extensive. Thus the general differentiability of the system is translated through the use, via nomination, into particular actuality. The positional attitude in Saussure's theory is not a problem, in that he is careful to distinguish the value of a sign, or its synchronic use or its synchronic use and the signification of that sign or its diachronic use in reference, where one is language as it connects with reality and the other the 'value' is an internal relationship within language. From this we can see that Saussure, to a large extent, in concentrating on a synchronic and a semiotic mode of analysis, almost left the meaning of language to take care of itself. It is this that is picked up on by the post-structural analysts, with some very surprising results. In the work of such as Derrida, we come close to the important relations of meaning to language and especially to the site of language, as the means of human self-knowledge and self-expression.

To arrive at the ultimate objectivity of post-structuralism, we must touch upon the last set of oppositional abstractions in Saussure's theory; that of the syntagmatic and the associative or paradigmatic, as it is in this that the idea of the presence, and or absence of language, comes into play. These two aspects of the structure are given a dimensionality, where one operates in the horizontal, and the other in the vertical. This idea of language, operating in more than one direction or axis, is a product of, as with all of Saussure's theory, the systematic nature of language. This oppositional pair are associations which, in one direction hold as presence, and which in the other direction hold as absence or, more expansively:

- (7) "Syntagmatic relations hold in presentation. They hold between two or more terms co-present in a sequence. Associative relations, on the other hand, hold in absentia. They hold between terms constituting a

"mnemonic group."

This nominative division seems an unnecessarily imbalanced concept, when these two terms can be seen as associative relations operating statically, and temporarily, or as being the synchronic and diachronic aspects of the one function. Thus the syntagmatic axis is a semantic function of association, it is the meaning of words constituted as a sequence, and more importantly, it is that axis of meaning which is realised through actual use, in contrast to this the paradigmatic, is the meaning of words as a semiotic function of the system, to which they belong. In this concept we come to see language as having a dynamic that operates intra-linguistically and inter-linguistically, two functions which cannot be seen as indissoluble entities, rather they are the twin aspects of the one system, in that where one is, so too is the other. This is the semantic and semiotic apparatus that generates, propogates and contains meaning in that communication between the individual and the world, which is language.

In order to better describe the functioning of this apparatus, we must re-analyse the most basic elements of Saussure's theories and attempt to describe more clearly, the relationship of the sign, to meaning and the world, which can only be elucidated by analysing co-tangentially the synchronic, semiotic and the diachronic semantic aspects of the system. To set about this, we must proceed from the point where these horizontal axes meet in the word or sign. The sign in Saussure is divided into a constituent form and a constituent meaning, as signifier and signified. These twin aspects of this conceptual and acoustic or graphic aspect are united in themselves as sign, and related to the world of the real, as being arbitrarily connected to the referent, or that thing in the world to which the sign refers. This relationship is essentially a synchronic one, which sees the sign as static, or more essentially,

it is a semiotic relation of the world to the language. This primarily gives meaning on the level of the word and language, as a synchronic system, of self-enclosed units which can be arbitrarily designated a referent. Ignoring as it does, the actual act of signification, it sees meaning as a value of the sign-system. It is thus necessary to explain more completely, meaning as found in the single word unit as part of the language system, in order to properly formulate the relationship of meaning to language. We must introduce the concept of the inferent as the diachronic and, by necessity, semantic actualisation of the referent.

The relationship between the world and It's signification is an extremely complex one, not fully elucidated in the abstract formulations of Saussure, in attempting to delineate the interaction of the world as collective entity and the communal signifying entity that is language; the first step must be to reappraise the concept of the referent, in terms of it's use. The simplest manner in which to do this is to consider for the purposes of analysis, the two elements of form and content as they apply to the act of signification. This division is implicit in Saussure and is expressed as the division of the sign into signifier and signified, but it is not further related to the referent as the other partner in the act of signification. In fact, the sign is in a relationship that is a lot more complex in terms of conceptual interaction with the world as referent, than is indicated in any systematic analysis of language. In so far as a sign signifies a referent, we can extend the conceptual division of form and content to include the referent, where just as a signifier has an existence in the physical world, (in language, a sign's graphic or acoustic aspect) with it's conceptual aspect given as the abstract signified, so too does the referent share in this split, with the referent being the physically extant thing in the world and it's abstract counterpart being given as the inferent. Through this we see that as the formal abstract

structure becomes physically actualised in use, in the same way the physically existant referent has it's conceptual realisation in the language use that is a text. Furthermore, just as the conceptual form of the language-system is substantiated through language-use, in the same way the substance of the world as referent is given contentual form through that same use. This may seem like a gratuitously unnecessary introduction of an unwanted concept, but the introduction of the inferent shifts the bias that runs through Saussure's work as astatic entity and redefining it as an interaction between perception and expression, as signification, a move that coincides more closely with the actual use of language. In Saussure's theoretical model, the referent is seen as an inert quantity, the conceptual expression of which is an arbitrary relationship with the sign as a whole, a model that fulfills it's function, in giving a semiotically, synchronic explanation of the 'Langue' in general, but which does not properly account for the act of use as 'Parole'. The act of signification is language in a conceptual and physical relationship with the world as referent. This act of reference operates on only one direction in the work of Saussure, where the conceptual aspect of the referent is seen as a quality of the system existing as a by-product of the differential nature of the sign within this structure.

In the present model, this one-sided relationship is restored to equilibrium as a reciprocal inter-relationship, between the referent and the sign. Thus the act of signification is seen as a balanced interaction with the signifier at one end and the referent at the other, with the site of conceptual meaning existing as signified and referent. In Saussure, the distinction between signified and referent is made very clear. The reason this necessary is that there has been a tendency in the use of this model, to confuse the two, a confusion that exists in the text of; "a course in general linguistics", (8) itself. This problem is a result of;

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"The considerable difficulty we all face in preserving the conceptual aspect of the sign as an abstraction, indissociable from its complementary account or graphic aspect. We are let into error by a certain idealism whereby we dissociate the two aspects of the sign and take the conceptual aspect to have precedence over the acoustic or graphic aspect". (9)

This popular misconception is more than just a misplaced idealism, in fact it is a direct by-product of that gap, in the process of significication, that is left unfulfilled in Saussure, between the referent as noumenal thing-in-itself, and the conceptual and physical aspects of the sign. We can agree with Saussure that the sign is indeed composed of twin aspects of form (physical manifestation) and content (conceptual association) but in Saussure the world as referent is conceptually represented only in terms of the sign, and yet we cannot associate the signified with the referent. This model leaves us with meaning as a self-enclosed unity, where the meaning is conceived of as a static relationship between the system and its differential constituents.

If we move away from this synchronic model, we can see that in the diachronic model of the act of meaning, there is the basic event of language-use, an event that is a bridging of the symbolic system and its use as significication. This is basically a split between the semiotic and semantic, or the language system, as indeed potential, that is only the possession of the collective consciousness, and the language use as actual event, which is only ever made manifest in the individual consciousness. In Saussure's neglect of *Parole*, what was left undiscussed was this individual use, and furthermore, even in semantics as a study, there is an understandable emphasis on the static structure of what is meant. This, as we shall see, is a product of the analytical programme. In this model, an attempt is made to bridge the gap between the structure and its use, where the referent as a concept is seen as being always diachronic, in that it comes from the act of association, manifest as either

the act of perception that is reading, or the act of expression that is writing (this formulation of writing as expression is an aspect that we shall come to in post-structuralist theory). In this act of association that is writing, the inferent is the appearance in the text of that sequence of references, that is the semantic aspect of the text, so that, in that sequence of signs that is a text, we associate the signifier with the signified, within each word in sequence, the signifieds become an act of inference, or association with the world of referents. Thus in terms of semiotics, the sign stands as meaning, in relation to the ideal abstraction of the language-system, where one sign indicates the presence of all others, and stands in relation to them as a differential quantity, where as semantically the sequence of signs indicates the act of reference, that stands as event in relation to the world of referents. In this way the form of the language-system is made substance as signifier, and the substance of the world as referent is made symbolic form as signified referent. It can be seen that this theoretical model of signification divorces the conceptual aspects of both sign and referent; this divorce can only be seen as an analytical understanding, in use as event, signified and inferent unite in the text to form meaning and thus associate the symbolic system with the world as referents. This model does divorce to a certain extent, ideation from signification, whereas in structuralist, and even more so in post-structuralist theory, they are seen as synonymous.

In this we come to the post-structuralist theory of Jaques Derrida. Post-structuralism or deconstruction is reformulation of structuralist theory, made from inside Structuralism. In it Derrida has seen, what he terms the blind spots in Saussure's theories and has remodelled these theories in greater accordance with the fact of language, as Derrida sees it. Deconstruction theory can be seen as a forceful critique of what Derrida calls the 'metaphysics of presence', a concept which has apparently dominated Western thought for more

than two thousand years. Basically, the metaphysics of presence is that concept, whereby we can have an unmediated, direct experience of what is present to us. In order to destroy this myth, Derrida has used as a starting point, the theories of Saussure and especially those areas where Saussure discusses language as presence, and language as absence (in Saussure this is the syntagmatic and paradigmatic planes of association). The most essential thing that Derrida has done to the work of Saussure, is to re-introduce the idea of the diachronic or temporal aspect of language, in contrast to the synchronic or spatial analysis of Saussure. This one would think, would lead to a truly spatio-temporal formulation of language, but in Derrida, the structure of signification, hence meaning, is seen as being identical to the structure of time; this leads to a distinctly morbid concept of language as almost intellectual fatalism. The reintegration of the temporal structure of language in Derrida, is carried out most forcefully and is, to a large extent, a balance between synthesis of the spatial and the temporal, but there are in it, some fundamental flaws, flaws that need to be redressed, not in the sense of deconstruction but more as a reconstruction.

The most essential aspect of Derrida's thought is the co-extension of presence and absence, it is from this that all else follows. In this formulation, the value of presence is seen as only having value, in so far it is in an oppositional relation to absence:

- (10) "The metaphysics of presence presumes that whatever is present to us, is wholly and immediately so, grasped in an act of pure intuition which has no recourse to signs, presence precedes signification. If this were the case though, it is hard to see how we could be conscious of it, since consciousness does have recourse to signs."

Presence according to Derrida, can never be immediate, therefore only mediated by language. This particular concept would seem to equate cognition with signification, or thought with language. This is by structuralist definition, impossible in that a sign is only a sign if it has a co-extensive conceptual and physical aspect. A sign is not a sign unless it is the combination of signifier and signified. All through post-structural theory, the assumption is made that thought is co-extensive with signification. It is through this assumption that Derrida is able to say that we are not present to ourselves, even when we think, in that we are necessarily divorced from ourselves by the use of a sign system that is a social institution. This argument only holds, on the assumption that we think in terms of signs, an assumption that leads to the concept of a sign-system of thought, a sign-system that consists of signifieds divorced from their complementary acoustic or graphic aspect. Thus such a system could hardly be called a sign-system, but even given that the structure of thought is in some way assimilable to the structure of signification, the arguments construed from this can still be seen as erroneous. To take the concept of self as a divorced and alienated entity, where:

- (11) "We cannot be fully present even to ourselves, i.e., in so far as we must, of necessity, commune with ourselves in a system of signs, which is not ours alone but a social institution".

This shows up clearly what is at stake in this theoretical formulations of post-structuralism. For in so far as an ideal system of language exists, it only exists as the individual act; this is yet again the dichotomy of *Langue* and *Parole*, or the social and the personal. In Derridan thought the emphasis is very much on the social institution of language as that which generates, and essentially is meaning. This is a biased dichotomy that runs throughout Derrida's theory. Where as well as being divorced from ourselves by the communal aspects of the sign-structure, our use of language as communication

is also limited by the very nature of language itself. Thus we have the curious model of a social apparatus of interaction, that only alienates the individual from himself, but also alienates the self from others. As Derrida has it:

- (12) "Writing can no longer be understood then under the category of communication, at least if we take this in the restricted sense of the transmission of meaning".

This lack of communicability in language comes about, due to the concepts of trace, where a sign bears the trace of other signs or where its presence is contaminated by the absence of the other signs and 'differance' which is a Derridean word, encapsulating the sign's innate differentiality and its differential character, in that its meaning is constantly deferred to other signs. Both of these concepts operate to induce the process of textual dissemination, a process where meaning is never seen as a point or event, but where meaning is seen as a process or endless referral to other signs and hence, other meanings.

What is invalidated in this seemingly paradoxical model is neither meaning nor signification as such but rather any individual use, which sees itself as unique and irreplaceable. The social aspect of linguistic communication is not only maintained, it is exalted as the only location of, and source behind human meaning. Meaning then is not centred as it work of the author, a figure that constructed and controlled the meaning within the text, rather it is language itself in its manifestation, as Language that is meaning.

What is denigrated above all else in post-structuralism, is any attempt at what is thought of as authorial presumption, e.g., any attempt on the part of the individual to take possession of language for personal ends. For Derrida, the language-system:

"is a *memento mori*, because it reminds us that we may employ it, but that we cannot possess it".

Such fatalistic assertions are to be found everywhere in Derrida's work, where we read that :

"My death is structurally necessary to the uttering of 'I'"⁽¹²⁾, a theme that is echoed in other structuralist critiques, such as Barthe's essay, 'The Death of the Author', where once again the identification of an individual author with his work and hence the meaning in it, is seen as invalid. This is the most common form of structural anti-individualism. In terms of post-structuralist theory, the author is seen, in contrast to the masterful controlling presence of old, as a doomed victim of language-use, a figure that can only create reminders of mortality, in a concept of the language-user as an operator, that is deaf to the power of language itself and blind to the meaning they have created. It is by identifying these 'blind spots' or weaknesses, that inhabit a text, weaknesses of which the author is unaware and which are unavoidable, due to the power of language, "to go it's own way", that Derrida is able to proceed in his deconstructive method. Thus Derrida is able to contrast the crippled and impotent creator of meaning, to the insightful, and aware analyst, (a transfer of power from writer to reader, and from author to critic, that we will plot more fully later). Indeed, for Derrida, this is the only positive act that one can engage in before the ultimate authority of language, where:

(13) "The reading must always aim at a certain relation, unperceived by the writer, between what he controls and what he does not control in the schemata of the language he is using. This relation is not a certain quantitative apportioning of shadow and light, weakness or strength, but a signifying structure that the critical reading must produce".

Thus the critic makes use of the negagenic power of language to deconstruct the supposedly hermetic meaning in a text, by de-originating it, in other words, breaking the hold over language that the author erroneously believed they possessed, and transferring the responsibility for the origin of what is meant in

a text, from author to the language-system itself. In this way, the critic armed with the knowledge of structure, speaks on the behalf of language and the author's meaning, and consequently his presence as originator, is "disseminated", and is seen as an inter-textual linguistic flux, where the author exists as a conglomeration of second-hand meaning, rather than as an original producer. This idea of dissemination can be seen in direct contrast to the traditional idea of the author, as an inseminator of meaning, where a writer impregnates the body of language with his own personal stamp as user. A quasi-sexual concept of language as a process of fecundity, where the writer gives birth to language, that can be seen as irredeemably bound with and an expression of, a patriarchal culture. This is an oppositional relationship to patriarchal, centralised authority that is at the heart of Derrida's thesis, an opposition that is never clearly spelled out, but which is expressed in his work as an opposition to the author as a representing ; "God - the ultimate law-giver", that also has it's expression in the negation of what Derrida terms the "transcendental signified", or ultimate explanation of any text. This seemingly atheistic and anti-authoritarian stance, is as I hope to show, just a relocation of authority and not as post-structuralists would have us believe, a negation.

In practical terms, to a large extent, Derrida's philosophy can be shown to be false, in regards to the act of signification, that is interaction with language. The most fundamental flaw in Derrida's work comes from, and is a result of, his relationship to the structuralist theories of Saussure. Where in Saussure the nature of language is conceived of spatial as an abstract structure that limits the extent of meaning as Parole, Derrida redresses this imbalance, by re-introducing the temporal aspect of language as one central to his concept. This would appear to be an expression of language as a truly integrated dynamic, but is not so, due to Derrida's conception of time as a structure. An idea that he works out in his deconstruction of the phenomenology of Husserl, where the

present moment is seen as existing only in a structural relationship with the past and the future. In the end, what is formulated by Derrida, is an idea of language as a temporal structure and it is from this, that the concept of the essentially mortiferous nature of language-use is construed. Here then, we have language formulated as two oppositional structures, of language as time and language as space, but there has been no true integration of the two, and in essence both can be seen to downgrade the individual use of language. Derrida's formulation is still a structural one, a systematic concept that ignores, in the same way that Saussure does, the fundamental nature of signification as language-event. Where the dynamic of signification is apparent in his thesis, at it's most obvious, is in the notion of a text's force as opposed to it's form, a force that Derrida sees as a product of language itself. This is a structural misconception, for one cannot grant the abstract and static potential of language-system, with it's own internal dynamic. In order for the potential of the language-system to become actual, it must be expressed as an event, it is this act of meaning as event, that gives a text it's force. The basic function that gives language it's force for Derrida, is it's social aspect and it's structurally differential nature. This concept of the absolute of language is given as, in Derrida's term, the "archi-writing", of which writing and speech are both manifest forms. This is a system of pure differentiality, and is the basis for Derrida's metaphysics of absence. For him:

(14) "This archi-writing through it's concept, is called for by the themes of 'arbitrariness of the sign' and of difference, cannot and can never be recognised as the object of a science. It is what does not allow itself to be reduced to the form of presence".

It is tempting here to posit this as the site of that absent, unwritten text of Derrida's own subjectivity, a text outlined by the marginal deconstructive activity of his criticism. In post-structuralist terms, though this is the

all-embracing absence that indicates our own absence from ourselves as individuals, where we manage to believe we are present to ourselves due to the operation of desire, an act of self-repression where we foster the illusion of presence. This fundamentally absent concept is the structure upon which Derrida raises his whole thesis, in so far as it can be taken seriously, it could be seen as an extension of Saussure's *Langue*, as the abstract structure of language that exists only in the 'collective consciousness' and as such, is never the possession of the individual. If this is contrasted to the *Parole* or language-use, then it is clear that what is present in use is only so much of the socially extant *Langue*, that is in the possession of the individual consciousness.

This the abstract potential fund of the language structure is transformed into an event in use, an act that substantiates and manifests it. Thus is the structure made event through the individual act, an action that makes manifest the social potential of meaning. It is in the act of association (as reference, inference etc.,) that meaning is formed, a formation that absolutely necessitates the presence, both physically and mentally, of an individual as either propogater or receiver, writer or reader. As such, when Derrida says: "My death is structurally necessary to the uttering of 'I'", so too, it must be said, that the necessity of life as presence is even more fundamental to such an utterance. Here Derrida is outlining the obvious mortality of the sign-user, a point that is outlined by Sturrock: "The words which we use do not, structurally speaking, need us here in order to mean something, as we know from reading and understanding the printed words of so many dead authors"; the structural nature of language, a system of constant and endless referral, also reminds that no escape is to be got from the movement of time, that human life "is itself strictly linear". This is the passage from the individual to the cultural and vice versa, that sustains the continuous act of creation, it is obviously not some miraculous passage from mortality to immortality. Con-

siderations of, as part of what Barthes terms the, "superior life force", of human society, may be an illusion fostered by all, to a greater or lesser extent, but this is essentially unimportant, for expression is essentially an act and as such, is absolutely contemporary. Thus any creative act cannot be seen in terms of a passage from life into death or death into life, it is rather the signification of existence, both of the individual and the whole, which in the end means nothing more for the individual than the act of existence itself. In terms of the social dynamic, the relationship of the cultural to the ideological is also a contemporary event, or is more fundamentally so in our present, "pseudo-mythic society", in so far as history exists, it exists in the here and now. It is for this reason, that post-structuralism must necessarily be seen not only in relation to it's philosophical predecessors, but also in it's present day relation to contemporary society.

It is at this point that we again take up that point mentioned earlier of the redistribution of authority, from creator to receiver where,⁽¹⁵⁾ post-structuralism has deliberately exalted the role of the textual critic, by denying any real divide separates what critics do from what authors do". This is an oversimplification of an extremely complex relationship, that includes all the inter-relationships between transitive and intransitive writing and more fundamentally, the objective and subjective. The reason for this simplistic assertion is that both authors and critics:⁽¹⁶⁾ "Write and both therefore, enter into the 'play' of language and of meanings". Even if we stick to as here, "Textual critics", we can still see that there is an essential difference between the roles of the artist and that of the critic. A difference that has certainly become more complex under the aegis of modernism; for as Susan Sontag points out: "The contemporary zeal for the project of interpretation is often prompted, not by a piety toward the troublesome text (which may conceal an aggression) but by an open aggressiveness, an overt

(17)
contempt for appearances". This zeal for the exposition of excess con-
tent as interpretation is one that both critics and artists/authors are firmly
locked into. One thinks of the modern artist's use of Art as a social
critique (Brecht, Eisenstein) and conversely, one can see the expression of
muted subjectivity, that is such an essential part of the writings of such
as Barthes and Sontag, herself. This said, there are still those critics
who would vociferously deny any subjectivity in their work, and these are
generally those critics most ready to adopt quasi-scientific operative rules,
such as structural analysis. It is, as noted earlier, an essential part of
the structuralist method to appropriate a semi-scientific objectivity, and
whereas post-structuralism tends to denigrate subjectivity in particular, and
meaning in general, the critic can still operate with impunity, in so far as
there is no need for his actions to be called to account, as the critic is
speaking on behalf of language itself, where the critical reading must pro-
duce a signifying structure. In this scenario, the critic merely reads the
signs, and in reading this pathetic sham of the writer's power is uncovered,
exposing to view the apparatus through which the illusion of authority was main-
tained, thus is the mysteriously magical turned into the merely technological.
No will is required, akin to the prophet of God, the critic is merely a tool,
operating on behalf of a greater force. This is essentially Derridean ideal-
ism, in both its literal sense as idealising the role of the objective fac-
ulty of human intelligence, and philosophically where objective idealism is the
term given to that idealism (a conception of the world as created by the mind),
that conceives of the external world as the product of one mind (absolute mind),
this can be seen in contrast to Kant's subjective transcendental idealism;
"where what is known of objects is contributed by the human beings who
perceive them". (18)

In Derrida, the power of meaning is given to language, and language in total
is the possession of the collective, and it is in this relationship to the

social, that post-structuralism would most closely identify itself with. In identifying the role of the critical analyst as an eminently social one, post-structuralism has indeed identified a key role, as can be seen in the multiplicity of different social analyses, that are fairly recent products of human culture, e.g, Sociology, Anthropology and what is now termed Historiography. As textual analysis, criticism can be seen as an explanatory function as regards by an expansion of the subject matter under scrutiny, and can be seen as a magnification. It is a dynamic based on a contractory viewpoint that expands that which is analysed, and as such, re-socialises meaning. In contrast, the artist proceeds by implication, a dilatory or holistic view that contracts broad areas into a point of particularity, and can be seen as dynamic, whose dominal mode is emphathetic rather than analytic, (such generalisations are always in danger of being inapplicable in toto, and this should be seen as a general indication rather than a precise formulation).

In a more disturbing form, the act of analysis can be seen essentially as a reordering of pathic and anti-social elements. The term Semiology, was used in England for centuries previous to it's linguistic appropriation, to denote the study of symtoms as signs of illness, and it is this interpretation of malady that has it's echo throughout modern Western analysis. The two great works of modern interpretation, e.g., Marxism and Freudian psychoanalysis, as Sontag has it:

"Actually amount to elaborate systems of hermeneutics, aggressive and impious theories of interpretation",⁽¹⁹⁾ and more, they see themselves as essentially normalising antipathic attempts to restore balance; Without arguing the merits or demerits of either, what is obvious is their relation to the social and personal phenomenon under study.

In many ways, art has played its expected role in this relationship, providing as it does, an image of modernist art that teems, with both connotations of mental and physical withdrawal, and is littered with causes of despair, suicide and anguish. This is not to say that these maladies are, in social terms, either waxing or waning, but simply points to a mythic relationship to the pathetic that is part of modernism, a relationship that is intensely delineated in Sontag's essay on Simone Weil. This myth would seem to have had its last manifestation in abstract expression, but can now be seen as having been appropriated, like everything else, to the media, where the myth of nihilism had its last expression in the Sixties, albeit a little less strongly, among the pop music and film stars. It could be said that contemporary culture is far too chilling a place in actuality, to allow such public and histrionic excesses.

Whether or not the roles of artist and critic have changed, what has changed in a fundamental way, is contemporary culture's relationship to meaning and signification, where the preponderance of increasing media communication has radically shifted the topography of social understanding. The exaltation of not only the critic, but by extension the reader in post-structuralist theory, is very much in line with the relocation of emphasis in the West, which can be summed up as a shift from production to consumption. In limiting the authority of the author over the signifying process, post-structuralism would seem to be giving intellectual weight to our passive consumption of goods and signs, two elements that are absolutely and inextricably linked in Western culture. Structuralism of the Barthian kind, placed an emphasis on the equation of semiotic capacity and sound citizenship, where: (20)

"The more competent we are of the reading of the infinitely many signs around us in daily life, the more alertly and intelligently we will live".

This posits an aware and incisive reading of signs, a position that is destroyed by post-structuralism for, where no true meaning can be found, there

can be no definition. For Derrida, the structuralist method of oppositional terms is destroyed, and that instead of opposing terms, he searches between them in order to show the falsity of such opposition. Thus the concept of 'betweeness' is a key concept in Derridean thought, in that as a sign it is essentially unstable, with no true meaning in itself:

"It calls for completion and so exemplifies Derrida's entire case for the productivity of language". (21)

Far from exemplifying the productivity of language, this concept exemplifies the contemporary dilemma in front of meaning, where everything exists as a concept of betweeness or medianism. It is the explosion of the middle ground in all aspects of contemporary culture, that is its most remarkable aspect. Truly now, the medium is the message; the ultimate sign of the times. In this way everything becomes capable of mediation and it is the mediation that is essential, not what is mediated. What is being enacted by the proliferating informational structures of modern media, is an art of dissemination and represents a move in terms of meaning from bivalent values to polyvalent and necessarily ambivalent values. In terms of modern signification, a statement or expression acquires a value by virtue of being mediated, and so therefore, there is no means of establishing a hierarchy of values, for in so far as anything is mediated, it acquires a value. Therefore meaning does lie in a thing as an inherent property of itself, rather meaning is placed on a thing and it becomes itself, as a consequence of this act of valuation. This is a transfer from noumenal reality to communal reality, that is expressed in intellectual terms as a relocation of emphasis, from producer to consumer, that is a reflection of a social change initiated at the beginning of the modern age, a change that is becoming even more obvious in this era of: "late-capitalist society".

This change in respect of meaning has existed since the collapse of what, Burgin calls the "Grand narrative" of Western culture, that humanist ideal

of progression, that had it's birthplace in classical Greece. This is the profound change over from a monistic intellectual conception of the world, that it's last expression in the age of reason. Prior to the nineteenth century, social and ideological beliefs were seen in terms of a unary conception of universal meaning. In the age of reason, intellectual conceptions existed as transendant standards of reality. Where in terms of art, the master narrative of academic realism could be judged in terms of a canonical standard of beauty. In science all things were conceived of as being manifested by the basic Newtonian principles of cause, and effect. This was an age of unified distinction, the age of empire and monument (literally the singular, noumenal entity). This was an age of individual ideology, ^{and} empirical values, where man stood in a monochromatic relationship to such questions as ethics etc., where things were either good or evil, right or wrong, in regard to a total standard, that was not arbitrary but was a fixed condition of reality. In the modern world view, such antitheses still exist as they always will, but there is no overall definite absolute against which we judge such things, there exists now, a broad spectrum of relative positions between extremes, where one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter. The world view of Empirical realism had it's zenith the Victorian age, a time when Europe was seen as the cradle of civilisation, and countries such as Germany, Holland, Britain etc., expanded their dominion of the world, absolutely sure of their right to do so, due to their supposition of natural superiority over those less developed, less evolved members of the human species. The guiding ideology of this age was rationalism, based on the reality of things, a conception bound up with ends and means, the expansion of central concepts and linear development. A view based around a morality of work, where everything could be put to work, now that mankind (European civilisation) had found the means to transform the inert material of nature. At the Great Exhibition of 1851, the Prince Consort described this collection of:

"Works of industry of all nations", as "a living picture of the point of development, at which the whole of mankind has arrived", a point which marked "the new starting point from which all nations will be able to direct their further exertions". (22)

This was the self-made myth of European colonialism, and is a theme of expansion and control. It was through the belief in the transcendent rightness of their actions, that the white inhabitants of Europe, guided and illuminated by the light of reason, were able to tap the resources of those dark and inaccessible regions of the earth, and to this end, the coalmine and the colony were made to yield up material which could be made to work for the so-called common good.

The reason for this historical detour, is to appreciate the relationship between the concepts of the classical world, and those of the modern. This conceptual change is a change from points of singularity, acting in a relationship to each other, to an absolutely co-extensive interaction between points. This is seen even in terms of logic, where there is a distinction made between classical logic and modern quantity logic, which exists as a mathematical proof, created by Birkoff, von Neuman. This change is at it's most obvious in the hard sciences, where the revolutionary concepts of Relativity and quantity physics, took the place of the Newtonian or classical Universal view. Although these two theories together overturned the Empirical and material concepts of pre-modern physics, there is an interestingly distinct difference in conception between the two. For even though Einstein's theory changed the views of Newton's world view, it is still a formal action based very much on the classical model. What interests us here, is not so much these theories as they apply to physics, but rather their attendant philosophical conceptions of reality. In the famous Bohr-Einstein debates, what was being argued between these two views of physical reality, was our conceptual understanding of the nature of physical phenomena. In these debates Einstein argued that:

"Unless a physical theory has one-to-one correspondence with phenomena, it is not complete". In Einstein's words: "Whatever the meaning assigned to the term complete, the following requirement for a complete theory seems to be a necessary one: every element of the physical reality must have a counterpart in the physical theory". (23)

The essential difference between this the arguments of such as Bohr, is that quantum physics does not have this one-one correspondence (it cannot predict individual events - only probabilities). Einstein's conception of theory can be equated as a view in regards to meaning, that is based on a singular nominalism, a position in contrast to the theoretical position of quantum physics and the Copenhagen interpretation, where reality can only be studied in terms of systematic changes, a view which is essentially holistic and statistical. In a point illustrative of this split between system and event, there is no single author of quantum physics; it was given it's form in the Copenhagen interpretation by a group of Physicists. The essential split in the scientific world view is neatly summed up in the interpretation of the phenomenon of light, which can be said to exist either as wave or particle. The essence of this is that there is no way of operating with the one only, for both are equally valid and both can be proved experimentally.

What is at stake, both in quantum physics, is a relationship to meaning that is uncertain and relative, that which is central to both is re-evaluation of the power of symbolic understanding. For contemporary physics there is no way to translate the abstract mathematical formulations of sub-atomic phenomena, into the communal understanding, For post-structuralism, this communal method of communication that is language, is itself called into question as a feasible method of informational transfer. This seems paradoxical in an age of incredibly proliferating information systems. In actuality, though, these theories are expressions based on the statistical and systematic. They in essence, limit the action of the individual, in prescribing the amount of understanding that

they can possess. Structure is essentially then, a vehicle for containment, for there is no possibility of being outside it. Post-structuralist theory would like to think of itself as an anti-authoritarian liberality, when in fact, it reinforces the ideological, as opposed to personal value of meaning. Ideological values that are perpetuated through the essentially anonymous media-system. The fundamental idea that lies behind modern ideology in contemporary Western society, revolves around the question of identity and authenticity. Societal consciousness is now fundamentally a surface dynamic, a ceaseless flow of image, and that shifts and relocates meaning at an incredible speed. The relocation of emphasis from in to on, is stated expressly in Derrida's work, in that he conceived of language as a surface possessed of no within or without. It is on this surface that the social consciousness is projected as ideology and it is through this that value is in a constant state of relocation, reappropriation etc,. Reality is now a surface, on to which meaning and value can be ascribed and everything becomes available to such projections. This is ^{the} mechanism that dynamises fashion, where the functional ability of a product is an unnecessary addenda to it's function as signification. This is meaning moving at thirty-two frames a second, more it is the image of society moving at the speed of light, and like light it has no mass, it takes up no space, it exists purely in time. This is the cyclical wave pattern of reassociation, reappropriation and revival that is given under the guise of the new. The scintillating surface of contemporary signification removes the principles of individuality and originality and replaces them with those of anonymity and duplicity. The only roles left for individuals are those of actor, presenter, reporter etc,. This is the individuality of the star, the idol, an essentially docile position, where personal action is directed by anonymous powers and the whole is produced by an even more anonymous system. The advertising, that dynamic mechanism of capitalist culture, is about a transcendence of the ideological over the personal, one thinks of the anonymity or those who produce advertising, the only individuals in advertisements are 'personalities'

which in effect, are themselves mediated and consequently ideological. Power is no longer, as in aristocratic culture, centred on the individual as a shaper of history, that idea of Western culture as a list of great men actuating momentous events, rather, power, is now disseminated among conglomerates, combines, and corporations, obeying the cohesion of alliance. In deference though, to current conspiracy theories, individual power could be said to be still operative behind the surface illusion of the media (the anonymous yet powerful presence of Charles Satchi, one of the true ideological authors). For the individual though, we are continuously exposed to, and by the media technologies, a process that contains, as we are in a sense 'fixed', our possibility of individual action is nullified. In this way, reality is caught, taken, captured by an increasing mechanical scrutiny. A process that transfers meaning from object to image and that inscribes the material from space to the insubstantial surface of time. It is through this that our sign sensitivity has been dulled, we have become significantly overexposed to reason.

It is fitting to end this attempt to delineate the sign in, and through, language with the symbolic value of photography. For it is photography, the protean means of mechanical reproduction, that has exercised the thoughts of some of the most perceptive critics, for it is in photography that spectrum and spectacle are symbolised. The allure of the photograph is truly that of fatalism, expressing as it does, all the melancholy of absolute realism. The finest essay on photography is surely Barthes's *Camera Lucida*. Barthes himself delineated the two possible creative existences, as either that of the terrorist or the egoist, and in this book we can see him follow the principle of: "the ego's ancient sovereignty". It is part of the irony of Barthes the terrorist, the rational structuralist, that his last work was one of such absolute subjectivity, a work that under the guise of photographic analysis, was an exploration of love, death and finally, selfhood. In it Barthes the egoist,

expressed the fundamentals of the absolute singular, and formulated beautifully the only possible maintainance of meaning for the self, that of delineation and separation. To this end, inference was drawn from a body of photographs and one in particular. What Camera Lucida is not, is book on the photograph at large, it is a book delineating the personality as opposed to the ideology of art. In this book, the general spectacle of the photograph has become an optical singularity, a process which is the catharsis of emotion, through the anima of the photographic totem. Here, there is an exploration of death and of life, through identification of two aspects of a photograph, that of the 'spectrum', or socially referred generality, the perfect indication of that which is absent, 'the return of the dead', and that of the 'punctum', the unnamably singular, the living wound. These then are the twin aspects of the photograph, for Barthes this is "Mathesis singularis" of the sign. Here is the black and white of photography, because for him colour is an unnecessary additive, something applied after the act. This seemingly unrealistic assertion is actually true, though for photography the spectrum, the range between extremes lies not in it's form, for this is only surface, but instead lies ⁱⁿ it's meaning. A photograph as well as being monochromatic, is also monodimensional, having no depth. In a photograph there are no layers to indicate objecthood, there is no texture, no organic irregularity; photographs do not possess 'grain' a concept Barthes used to describe his own authorial voice. This is one of the aspects of photography, which are the vehicles for his exploration of self, the other being, what he sees, as the inherent pathos of the photographed, but what could be called reality's essential docility in a photograph, a docility which is also an innocence, having no power over us, as presence. So it is that the authority of reality is usurped and photography becomes its own author as what Burgin has called: (24) "the pre-constituted field of discourse itself". This is the reason for photography's total suitability as an ideological medium. Alternately, as a result of the same displacement of reality, the particular authority of a photograph lies with the viewer, as

what is indicated is a docile reality, a reality of the past and thus, the viewing leads to the expression of the selfhood of the viewer, (self-autonomous authority that comes hard to those who would have the security and containment of a structure).

In this investigation of photographs, Barthes gives us his self as subject, as it were obliquely, as it were by reflection. In the body of photographs under analysis, Barthes constitutes the self and so expresses it. Thus this beautiful and poignant book, can be read as with every other text, as either a personal or social discourse. In the last chapter of the book, Barthes states that: (25) "society is concerned to tame the photograph, to temper the madness which keeps threatening to explode in the face of whoever looks at it".

This is the labyrinth of social signification, a labyrinth that is the opposite of the monumental plinth, a structure of containment, where surface is folded and multiplied back on itself, in an illusion of infinity. Here as Nietzsche said: (26) "The labyrinthine man never seeks the truth, but only his ariadne".

In the labyrinth that is 'La chambre claire', we will find only the image of ariadne, an image that, like a photograph, like all signs, is part mad and part tame, in which we will find, as did Barthes, a reflection of the divided self, a creation both half human and half animal, a social and individual entity.

In a preface of 1963, Roland Barthes remarked that to write is: "to become someone to whom the last word is denied". In order to indicate that which must be sought after by the user of signs, I must, in deference, give the last word, the final utterance to the singular voice of Barthes himself. For him the last word (literally) was "Reality". (27)

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