

FREUD AND
PHILOSOPHY

An Essay on Interpretation

by Paul Ricoeur
translated by Denis Savage

New Haven and London,
Yale University Press, 1970

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PREFACE

This book originates in the Terry Lectures given at Yale University in the autumn of 1961. I wish to express my deep thanks to the Lecture Committee, the Philosophy Department, the Director of the Yale University Press, and the President of Yale University for the invitation to undertake this work.

In the autumn of 1962, eight lectures given in the Cardinal Mercier Chair at the University of Louvain became the next stage of the work. I wish to thank the President of the Institut supérieur de philosophie and the colleagues who welcomed me in this chair for their criticism as well as for the indulgence they showed toward an enterprise in progress.

I now owe it to the reader to give some indication of what he may and what he may not expect from this book.

In the first place, this book deals with Freud and not with psychoanalysis. This means there are two things lacking: analytic experience itself and a consideration of the post-Freudian schools. As for the first point, it is taking a gamble, no doubt, to write about Freud without being an analyst or having been analyzed and to treat his work as a monument of our culture, as a text in which our culture is expressed and understood. The reader will have to judge whether the wager has been won or lost. As for the post-Freudian literature, I have deliberately set it aside, either because it stems from corrections brought to Freud's ideas from analytic experience that I do not have, or because it introduces new theoretical conceptions the discussion of which would have led me away from a rigorous debate with the true founder of psychoanalysis. Therefore I have treated Freud's work as a work unto itself, and have avoided discussing the conceptions of dissidents turned adversaries: Adler and Jung, or of students turned dissidents: Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, Harry Stack Sullivan, or of disciples turned creators: Melanie Klein, Jacques Lacan.

Secondly, this book is one not of psychology but of philosophy. My interest centers on the new understanding of man that Freud introduces. I place myself in the company of Roland Dalbiez,¹ my first professor of philosophy, to whom I here wish to render homage, and of Herbert Marcuse,² Philip Rieff,³ and J. C. Flugel.⁴

My work differs from that of Roland Dalbiez on an essential point: I do not believe that Freud may be confined to the exploration of the less human elements in man. My enterprise stems from the opposite conviction: Psychoanalysis conflicts with every other global interpretation of the phenomenon of man because it is an interpretation of culture. On this point I am in agreement with the last three authors cited. I differ from them, however, by the nature of my philosophical preoccupation: my problem concerns the texture or structure of Freudian discourse. First, it is an epistemological problem: What is interpretation in psychoanalysis, and how is the interpretation of the signs of man interrelated with the economic explanation that claims to get at the root of desire? Second, it is a problem of reflective philosophy: What new self-understanding comes out of this interpretation, and what self is it which thus comes to self-understanding? Third, it is a dialectical problem: Does Freud's interpretation of culture exclude all others? If not, what is the rule of thought by which it can be coordinated with other interpretations without falling into eclecticism? These three questions mark the circuitous route by which I take up the problem left unresolved at the end of my *Symbolism of Evil*, namely the relationship between a hermeneutics of symbols and a philosophy of concrete reflection.

The execution of this program required that Book II, the "Reading of Freud," conducted as rigorously as possible, be kept separate

1. Roland Dalbiez, *La Méthode psychanalytique et la doctrine freudienne* (2 vols. Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1936). "Freud's work is the most profound analysis history has ever known of the less human elements in man" (2, 513).

2. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1955).

3. Philip Rieff, *Freud, the Mind of the Moralists* (New York, Viking Press, 1959).

4. J. C. Flugel, *Man, Morals and Society* (New York, International Universities Press, 1945); Peregrine Books, 1962.

from Book III, the "Philosophical Interpretation" which I propose. Thus the reader may treat the "Analytic" of Book II as a separate and self-sufficient work. In it I have tried to remain close to the Freudian text itself; to this end I have retranslated almost all the passages I cite.⁵ The philosophical interpretation is placed before and after my "Reading of Freud," being divided into the questions that make up the "Problematic" of Book I and the attempts at solution that form the "Dialectic" of Book III.⁶

5. In spite of the cumbersomeness of the procedure, I have decided to cite (a) the German text in the *Gesammelte Werke* (18 vols. London, from 1940; abbreviation: *GW*) because it is the original text; (b) the *Standard Edition* (24 vols. London, from 1953; abbreviation: *SE*) because it is the only critical edition; (c) the available French translations, so that French readers can locate the citations in their context and discuss the respective translations. [Translator's note: By the author's directive, all quotations from Freud's texts will be taken from the *Standard Edition*; references to the French editions will be omitted, as being of little use to the English reader.]

6. The four problems mentioned above constitute the four levels of this "Dialectic."

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This translation began when my wife, Rosa, and I first translated the three lectures which Paul Ricoeur presented as the Terry Lectures. We both feel very grateful to M. Ricoeur for his friendship and for opening up to us the richness of his meditations on Freud, symbolism, and interpretation.

I have tried to make the translation conform as closely as possible to the French text. Several minor corrections were made of the original text, all of them after consultation with the author.

I wish to thank Mary Parr for reading several chapters for style, and especially Paul Lee of the University of California, Santa Cruz, for his painstaking reading of the entire manuscript and for his many helpful suggestions. I also wish to thank the Department of Philosophy of Marquette University for their secretarial help in typing the manuscript.

Denis Savage

Milwaukee, Wisconsin
November 1969

BOOK I

Problematic: The
Placing of Freud

Chapter 1: Language, Symbol, and Interpretation

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND LANGUAGE

This book is a discussion or debate with Freud. Why this interest in psychoanalysis, an interest justified neither by the competence of an analyst nor by the experience of having been analyzed? The purpose of a book is never entirely justified. In any event, no one is required to display his motives or to entangle himself in a confession. To attempt it would be self-delusion. Yet, more than anyone, the philosopher cannot refuse to give his reasons. I will do so by placing my investigation within a wider field of questioning and by relating my particular interest to a common way of posing certain problems.

It seems to me there is an area today where all philosophical investigations cut across one another—the area of language. Language is the common meeting ground of Wittgenstein's investigations, the English linguistic philosophy, the phenomenology that stems from Husserl, Heidegger's investigations, the works of the Bultmannian school and of the other schools of New Testament exegesis, the works of comparative history of religion and of anthropology concerning myth, ritual, and belief—and finally, psychoanalysis.

Today we are in search of a comprehensive philosophy of language to account for the multiple functions of the human act of signifying and for their interrelationships. How can language be put to such diverse uses as mathematics and myth, physics and art? It is no accident that we ask ourselves this question today. We have at our disposal a symbolic logic, an exegetical science, an anthropology, and a psychoanalysis and, perhaps for the first time, we are able to encompass in a single question the problem of the unification of

human discourse. The very progress of the aforementioned disparate disciplines has both revealed and intensified the dismemberment of that discourse. Today the unity of human language poses a problem.

Such is the broad horizon within which our investigation is set. The present study in no way pretends to offer the comprehensive philosophy of language we are waiting for. I doubt moreover that such a philosophy could be elaborated by any one man. A modern Leibniz with the ambition and capacity to achieve it would have to be an accomplished mathematician, a universal exegete, a critic versed in several of the arts, and a good psychoanalyst. While awaiting that philosopher of integral language, perhaps it is possible for us to explore some of the key connections between the disciplines concerned with language. The present essay is an attempt to contribute to that investigation.

I contend that the psychoanalyst is a leading participant in any general discussion about language. To start with, psychoanalysis belongs to our time by virtue of Freud's written work; through this medium psychoanalysis addresses itself to those who are not analysts and who have not been analyzed. I am well aware that without actual practice a reading of Freud is truncated and runs the risk of embracing only a fetish. But if the textual approach to psychoanalysis has limits which practice alone can remove, still it has the advantage of focusing attention upon an entire aspect of Freud's work that may be hidden by practice or overlooked by a science whose sole concern is to account for what goes on in the analytic relationship. A meditation on Freud's work has the advantage of revealing that work's broadest aim: not only the renovation of psychiatry, but a reinterpretation of all psychical productions pertaining to culture, from dreams, through art and morality, to religion. This is how psychoanalysis belongs to modern culture. By interpreting culture it modifies it; by giving it an instrument of reflection it stamps it with a lasting mark.

The fluctuation in Freud's writings between medical investigation and a theory of culture bears witness to the scope of the Freudian project. True, the major texts on culture are to be found

in the last part of Freud's work.¹ However, psychoanalysis should not be regarded as a form of individual psychology, tardily transposed into a sociology of culture. A summary glance at the Freudian bibliography shows that the first texts on art, morality, and religion follow shortly upon *The Interpretation of Dreams*² and are then developed alongside the great doctrinal texts that constitute the "Papers on Metapsychology" (1913–17), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), and *The Ego and the Id* (1923).³ In fact, to grasp how the theory of culture is related to the theory of dreams and the neuroses, it is necessary to go back to *The Interpretation of Dreams* of 1900, for it is here that the connection with mythology and literature was first established. Ever since 1900 the *Traumdeutung* had proposed that dreams are the dreamer's private mythology and myths the waking dreams of peoples, that Sophocles' *Oedipus* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* are to be interpreted in the same way as dreams. We shall see that this proposal presents a problem.

Whatever the outcome of this difficulty, the entrance of psychoanalysis into the general contemporary discussion about language is not due solely to its interpretation of culture. By making dreams not only the first object of his investigation but a model (in what sense we will discuss below) of all the disguised, substitutive, and fictive expressions of human wishing or desire, Freud invites us to look to dreams themselves for the various relations between desire and language. First, it is not the dream as dreamed that can be interpreted, but rather the text of the dream account; analysis attempts to substitute for this text another text that could be called

1. *The Future of an Illusion* was published in 1927, *Civilization and Its Discontents* in 1930, *Moses and Monotheism* in 1937–39.

2. *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* was published in 1905, "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices" in 1907, *Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's "Gradiva"* in 1907, the short essay "Creative Writers and Day-dreaming" in 1908, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood* in 1910, and the very important *Totem and Taboo* in 1913.

3. "The Moses of Michelangelo" appeared in 1914, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" in 1915, "A Childhood Recollection from *Dichtung und Wahrheit*" in 1917, "The 'Uncanny'" in 1919, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* in 1921.

the primitive speech of desire. Thus analysis moves from one meaning to another meaning; it is not desires as such that are placed at the center of the analysis, but rather their language. Later we will discuss how this semantics of desire relates to the dynamics expressed in the notions of discharge, repression, cathexis, etc. But it is important to stress from the start that this dynamics—or energetics, or even hydraulics—is articulated only in a semantics: the “vicissitudes of instincts,” to use one of Freud’s expressions, can be attained only in the vicissitudes of meaning. Therein lies the deep reason for all the analogies between dreams and wit, dreams and myth, dreams and works of art, dreams and religious “illusion,” etc. All these “psychical productions” belong to the area of meaning and come under a unified question: How do desires achieve speech? How do desires make speech fail, and why do they themselves fail to speak? This new approach to the whole of human speech, to the meaning of human desire, is what entitles psychoanalysis to its place in the general debate on language.

SYMBOL AND INTERPRETATION

Is it possible to locate more exactly just where psychoanalysis enters this general debate? Having found the origin of the problem in the theme of Freud’s first great book, let us also look there for a first indication of the program of psychoanalysis. We are not yet ready to enter into the book itself, but at least the title *Traumdeutung* may serve as a guide. In this composite word we are confronted with the question of dreams and the question of interpretation. Let us take the two paths of the title and follow each in turn. The interpretation is concerned with dreams: the word “dream” is not a word that closes, but a word that opens. It does not close in upon a marginal phenomenon of our psychological life, upon the fantasies of our nights, the oneiric. It opens out onto all psychical productions, those of insanity and those of culture, insofar as they are the analogues of dreams, whatever may be the degree and principle of that relationship. Along with dreams is posited what I called above the semantics of desire, a semantics

that centers around a somewhat nuclear theme: as a man of desires I go forth in disguise—*larvatus prodeo*. By the same token language itself is from the outset and for the most part distorted: it means something other than what it says, it has a double meaning, it is equivocal. The dream and its analogues are thus set within a region of language that presents itself as the locus of complex significations where another meaning is both given and hidden in an immediate meaning. Let us call this region of double meaning “symbol,” and reserve discussion of the equivalence for later.

The problem of double meaning is not peculiar to psychoanalysis. It is also known to the phenomenology of religion in its constant encounter with those great cosmic symbols of earth, heaven, water, life, trees, and stones, and with those strange narratives about the origin and end of things which are the myths. However, insofar as this discipline is phenomenology and not psychoanalysis, the myths, rituals, and beliefs it studies are not fables but a particular way in which man places himself in relation to fundamental reality, whatever it may be. The problem dealt with by the phenomenology of religion is not primarily the dissimulation of desire in double meaning; this discipline does not begin by regarding symbols as a distortion of language. For the phenomenology of religion, symbols are the manifestation in the sensible—in imagination, gestures, and feelings—of a further reality, the expression of a depth which both shows and hides itself. What psychoanalysis encounters primarily as the distortion of elementary meanings connected with wishes or desires, the phenomenology of religion encounters primarily as the manifestation of a depth or, to use the word immediately, leaving for later a discussion of its content and validity, the revelation of the sacred.

Within the general discussion of language a limited but important debate immediately arises—limited, certainly, because it does not raise the question of the status of univocal languages, but important, since it covers the totality of double-meaning expressions. At the same time the form of the debate is set and the key question proposed: Is the showing-hiding of double meaning always a dissimulation of what desire means, or can it sometimes be a manifes-

tation, a revelation, of the sacred? And is this alternative itself real or illusory, provisional or definitive? This question runs throughout this book.

Before elaborating in the next chapter the terms of the debate and before sketching the method of its resolution, let us continue to explore the outlines of the problem.

Let us return to the title of the *Traumdeutung* and follow the other path of this great title. The term *Deutung* does not mean science in a general way; it means interpretation in a precise way. The word is chosen by design, and its juxtaposition with the theme of dreams is itself quite meaningful. If dreams designate—*pars pro toto*—the entire region of double-meaning expressions, the problem of interpretation in turn designates all understanding specifically concerned with the meaning of equivocal expressions. To interpret is to understand a double meaning.

In this way the place of psychoanalysis within the total sphere of language is specified: it is the area of symbols or double meanings and the area in which the various manners of interpretation confront one another. From now on we shall call this special area, broader than psychoanalysis but narrower than the theory of language as a whole which is its horizon, the “hermeneutic field.” By hermeneutics we shall always understand the theory of the rules that preside over an exegesis—that is, over the interpretation of a particular text, or of a group of signs that may be viewed as a text. (We shall explain later what we mean by the notion of text and by the extension of the concept of exegesis to all signs bearing an analogy to a text.)

If then double-meaning expressions constitute the privileged theme of the hermeneutic field, it is at once clear that the problem of symbolism enters a philosophy of language by the intermediary of the act of interpretation.

But this initial decision to interrelate the problem of symbolism and the problem of interpretation raises a series of critical questions which I wish to pose at the beginning of this book. These questions will not be resolved in this chapter but will remain open to the end. It is precisely this mutual relationship that makes the hermeneutic

problem a unique one; at the same time it is decisive for the definitions of symbol and interpretation. And these are anything but self-evident. The extreme confusion of vocabulary in these matters calls for a decision, for taking a position and sticking to it; and this decision entails a whole philosophy which must be brought into the open. I have decided to define, i.e. limit, the notions of symbol and interpretation through one another. Thus a symbol is a double-meaning linguistic expression that requires an interpretation, and interpretation is a work of understanding that aims at deciphering symbols. The critical discussion will be concerned with the legitimacy of seeking the semantic criterion of symbolism in the intentional structure of double meaning, and with the legitimacy of taking this structure as the privileged object of interpretation. This is what is at stake in my decision to mutually delimit the fields of symbolism and interpretation.

In the semantic discussion to follow I shall bracket the conflict that, at least on a first reading, opposes psychoanalytic interpretation, as well as any interpretation conceived as the unmasking, demystification, or reduction of illusions, to interpretation conceived as the recollection or restoration of meaning. I am interested here merely in recognizing the contours of the hermeneutic field, although a discussion that falls short of the above conflict undoubtedly remains formal and abstract. It is important at first not to dramatize the debate but rather to contain it within the strict limits of a semantic analysis that ignores the opposition between distortion and revelation.

TOWARD A CRITIQUE OF SYMBOL

Let us take up the question on the side of symbolism. Certain widespread uses of the word are totally incompatible with one another and call for a reasoned decision. The definition I propose lies between two other definitions, one too broad, the other too narrow, which we shall proceed to discuss. Moreover, it is completely distinct from the conception of symbol in symbolic logic; we shall be able to account for this third differ-

ence only after we have elaborated the problem of hermeneutics and have located this problem within a wider philosophical perspective.⁴

Too broad a definition is one that makes the “symbolic function” the general function of mediation by which the mind or consciousness constructs all its universes of perception and discourse; this definition, as is known, is the one given by Ernst Cassirer in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. We should not forget that the explicit aim of Cassirer, inspired by Kant’s philosophy, was to break the too narrow framework of the transcendental method confined within the critique of the principles of Newtonian philosophy and to explore all the activities of synthesis and their corresponding realms of objectivization. But is it legitimate to use the term “symbolic” for those various “forms” of synthesis in which objects are ruled by functions, for those “forces” each of which produces and posits a world?

Let us do justice to Cassirer: he was the first to have posed the problem of the reconstruction of language. The notion of symbolic form, prior to constituting an answer, delimits a question, namely, the question of the composition of the “mediating functions” within a single function, which Cassirer calls *das Symbolische*. “The symbolic” designates the common denominator of all the ways of objectivizing, of giving meaning to reality.

But why call this function symbolic? Cassirer chose the term first of all in order to express the universality of the Copernican revolution, which substituted the question of objectivization by the mind’s synthetic function for the question of reality as it is in itself. The symbolic is the universal mediation of the mind between ourselves and the real; the symbolic, above all, indicates the nonimmediacy of our apprehension of reality. The use of the term in mathematics, linguistics, and the history of religion seems to confirm that “symbolic” has this species of universality.

Furthermore, the word “symbol” seems well suited to designate the cultural instruments of our apprehension of reality: language, religion, art, science. The task of a philosophy of symbolic forms is to arbitrate the claims of absoluteness of each of these symbolic

4. See below, Ch. 3.

functions and the many antinomies of the concept of culture that result from those claims.

Finally, the word “symbol” expresses the mutation undergone by a theory of categories—space, time, cause, number, etc.—when it escapes the limits of a mere epistemology and moves from a critique of reason to a critique of culture.

I do not deny the advantages of this choice, still less the legitimacy of Cassirer’s problem, although the Kantian transcendentalism which continues to govern the notions of objectivization, synthesis, and reality is prejudicial, in my opinion, to the work of description and classification of the symbolic forms. We mentioned the unique problem that Cassirer denotes by the term “symbolic” from the beginning: the problem of the unity of language and the interrelationship of its multiple functions within a single empire of discourse. But this problem seems to me better characterized by the notion of sign or signifying function.⁵ How man gives meaning by filling a sensory content with meaning—that is the problem Cassirer deals with.

Is this a dispute over words? I do not think so. What is at stake in this terminological discussion is the specificity of the hermeneutic problem. By unifying all the functions of mediation under the title of “the symbolic,” Cassirer makes this concept equally as broad as the concepts of reality and culture. Thus a fundamental distinction is wiped out, which constitutes, as I see it, a true dividing line: the distinction between univocal and plurivocal expressions. It is this distinction that creates the hermeneutic problem. Moreover, Anglo-Saxon linguistic philosophy will see to it that we are mindful of this division of the semantic field. If we use the term symbolic for the signifying function in its entirety, we no longer have a word to designate the group of signs whose intentional texture calls for a read-

5. As Cassirer himself says, the concept of symbol is meant to “encompass the totality of those phenomena in which the sensuous is in any way filled with meaning [*Sinnerfüllung im Sinnlichen*], in which a sensuous content, while preserving the mode of its existence and facticity [*in der Art seines Da-Seins und So-Seins*], represents a particularization and embodiment, a manifestation and incarnation of meaning.” *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, tr. R. Manheim (3 vols. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1957), 3, 93. Cited in C. Hamburg, *Symbol and Reality* (The Hague, Nijhoff, 1956), p. 59.

ing of another meaning in the first, literal, and immediate meaning. As I see it the problem of the unity of language cannot validly be posed until a fixed status has been assigned to a group of expressions that share the peculiarity of designating an indirect meaning in and through a direct meaning and thus call for something like a deciphering, i.e. an interpretation, in the precise sense of the word. To mean something other than what is said—this is the symbolic function.

Let us proceed a bit further in the semantic analysis of sign and symbol. In every sign a sensory vehicle is the bearer of a signifying function that makes it stand for something else. But I will not say that I interpret the sensory sign when I understand what it says. Interpretation has to do with a more complicated intentional structure: a first meaning is set up which intends something, but this object in turn refers to something else which is intended only through the first object.

What may lead to confusion here is the fact that in a sign there is a duality, or rather two pairs of factors, which in each case go together to form the unity of the signification. First there is the structural duality of the sensory sign and the signification it carries (the signifier and the signified, in the terminology of Ferdinand de Saussure); second there is the intentional duality of the sign (both sensory and meaningful, signifier and signified) and the thing or object designated. This double duality, structural and intentional, is most clearly seen in linguistic signs of conventional institution. On the one hand, words, phonetically different according to various languages, carry identical significations or meanings; on the other hand, these significations make the sensory signs stand for something that the signs designate. We say that words, by their sensible quality, *express* significations and that, thanks to their signification, they *designate* something. The term "to signify" covers the twofold duality of expression and designation.

But this is not the duality that specifies a symbol. The duality of symbolism is of a higher degree. It is neither the duality of sensory sign and signification nor that of signification and thing, the latter duality moreover being inseparable from the former. In a symbol the duality is added to and superimposed upon the duality of sen-

sory sign and signification as a relation of meaning to meaning; it presupposes signs that already have a primary, literal, manifest meaning. Hence I deliberately restrict the notion of symbol to double- or multiple-meaning expressions whose semantic texture is correlative to the work of interpretation that explicates their second or multiple meanings.

Though this delimitation may appear at first to break the unity seen by Cassirer between all the signifying functions, it helps to disengage an underlying unity, thus affording a starting point for a new approach to Cassirer's problem.

Let us try to give a panoramic view of the zones of emergence of symbolism thus conceived.

For my part, I encountered the problem of symbolism in the semantic study I made of the avowal of evil. I noticed that there exists no direct discourse of avowal. Evil—whether the evil one suffers or the evil one commits—is always confessed by means of indirect expressions that are taken from the sphere of everyday experience and which have the remarkable character of analogously designating another experience. I will provisionally call it the experience of the sacred. Thus in the archaic form of avowal, the image of a spot—the spot that one removes, washes, wipes away— analogously designates stain as the sinner's situation in the dimension of the sacred. That this is a symbolic expression is amply confirmed both by the expressions and by the corresponding actions of purification. None of these modes of conduct reduces itself to a mere physical cleansing; each refers to the others without exhausting its meaning in a material gesture; burning, spitting, burying, washing, expelling, each act is an equivalent of or substitute for the others, while at the same time designating something else, namely, the restoration of integrity, of purity. Thus, all the various stages of the feeling and experience of evil can be marked off by semantic stages; I have shown how one moves to the experience of sin and guilt through a series of symbolic progressions, marked off by the images of deviation, the crooked path, wandering, and rebellion; next, by the images of weight, burden, and fault; and last, by the image of slavery, which encompasses them all.

This cycle of examples concerns only one of the zones of the

emergence of symbolism, the one closest to ethical reflection, constituting what might be called the symbolism of the servile will. Upon this symbolism is easily grafted a whole process of reflection that leads to St. Augustine and Luther, as well as to Pelagius or Spinoza. Elsewhere I will show the fruitfulness such reflection may have for philosophy. The concern in the present work is not the richness of a particular symbolism but the texture or structure of symbolism revealed in it. In other words, the issue here is not the problem of evil, but the epistemology of symbolism.

To carry this epistemology through successfully we must broaden our starting point and enumerate some other areas where symbols make their appearance. This inductive approach is the only possible way to begin our investigation, for we are searching for the common structure of the various manifestations of symbolic thought. The symbols we have consulted have already attained a high level of literary elaboration; they are already on the path of reflection; they already contain the seeds of a moral or tragic vision, a wisdom or a theology. Going back to less elaborated forms of symbol I discern three different modalities of symbolism, the unity of which is not immediately apparent.

I have already alluded to the conception of symbolism in the phenomenology of religion, as developed, for example, in Van der Leeuw, Maurice Leenhardt, and Mircea Eliade. Bound to rituals and myths, these symbols constitute the language of the sacred, the *verbum* of the "hierophanies." Whether it be the symbolism of the heavens, as a figure of the most high and the immense, the powerful and the immutable, the sovereign and the wise; or the symbolism of vegetation, which comes to birth, dies, and is reborn; or of water, which threatens, cleanses, or vivifies, these innumerable theophanies or hierophanies are an inexhaustible source of symbolization. But we should be careful to note that these symbols do not stand apart from language as values of immediate expression, as directly perceptible physiognomies; only in the universe of discourse do these realities take on the symbolic dimension. Even when the elements of the universe are what carry the symbol (Heaven, Earth, Water, Life, etc.), it is a word—the word of consecration, of invocation, the mythic commentary—that *declares* the cosmic expres-

siveness, thanks to the double meaning of the words earth, heaven, water, life, etc. The world's expressiveness achieves language through symbol as double meaning.

The situation is no different in the second zone of the emergence of symbolism, that of the oneiric, if one designates by this word the dreams of our days and our nights. It is well known that dreams are the royal road to psychoanalysis. All question of schools aside, dreams attest that we constantly mean something other than what we say; in dreams the manifest meaning endlessly refers to hidden meaning; that is what makes every dreamer a poet. From this point of view, dreams express the private archeology of the dreamer, which at times coincides with that of entire peoples; that is why Freud often limits the notion of symbol to those oneiric themes which repeat mythology.⁶ But even when they do not coincide, the mythical and the oneiric have in common this structure of double meaning. The dream as a nocturnal spectacle is unknown to us; it is accessible only through the account of the waking hours. The analyst interprets this account, substituting for it another text which is, in his eyes, the thought-content of desire, i.e. what desire would say could it speak without restraint. It must be assumed, and this problem will occupy us at length, that dreams in themselves border on language, since they can be told, analyzed, interpreted.

The third zone of emergence is that of poetic imagination. I might have started here were it not for the fact that without the detour through the cosmic and oneiric, poetic imagination is the least understood of the three. Too often it has been said that imagination is the power of forming images. This is not true if by image one means the representation of an absent or unreal thing, a process of rendering present—of presentifying—the thing over there, elsewhere, or nowhere. In no way does poetic imagination reduce itself to the power of forming a mental picture of the unreal; the imagery of sensory origin merely serves as a vehicle and as material for the verbal power whose true dimension is given to us by the oneiric and the cosmic. As Bachelard says, the poetic image "places us at the origin of articulate being"; the poetic image "becomes a

6. See below, "Analytic," Part II, Ch. 3, for the discussion of the Freudian concept of symbolic dreams.