

Towards a Logic of the Signifier

An Analytic Presentation

The current 14-page paper is only *Part I A-B* of a three-part presentation. It seeks to provide the background for a clinical construction of a *logic of the signifier* in the manner of Lacan. It will primarily be concerned with giving an introduction to the material on which an analysis of the signifier may be based. *Part I.B* discusses the risk of a too formalistic approach to the Lacanian mathemes. *I.C.* returns to an examination of Karl Abel's *Über den Gegensinn der Urworte* in light of our previous analysis of the signifier and letter. Once this basic philological and linguistic material is presented, we will proceed to *Part II*, which presents a clinical presentation that extends the material of *Part I*: passing from *Gegensinn* to the problem of *Gegenstand* and *Gegenbesetzung*. *Part III* generalizes the method and material in an explicit construction of a *logic of the signifier* from the ground up in propositional and predicate logic. What will be aimed for through all three parts, *I*, *II*, and *III*, is a presentation of the same structure with a change of writing.

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Now *analysis* is the method by which we assume that which is sought as if it were already done, and we inquire what it is from which this results, and again what is the antecedent cause of the latter, until, by retracing our steps in this way, we come upon something already known, or belonging to the class of first principles; and we call this process *analysis*, as being solution backwards.

But in *synthesis*, proceeding in the opposite way, we assume what was reached last in the analysis as already done, and, by arranging in their natural order as consequences what were formerly antecedents, and successively connecting them one with another, we arrive finally at the construction of that which was sought; and this we call *synthesis*.

Heath, *Greek Mathematics*, vol. II, p. 383

(*Ἀνάλυσις μὲν ἐστὶ μέθοδος, καθ' ἣν τὸ ζητούμενον ὡς ὑποτεθὲν λαμβάνοντες προϊέναι συμβαίνειν ἐκείνου ζητοῦμεν, καὶ πάλιν τὸ τούτου αἴτιον, ἕως ἐπὶ τι γνωστόν, ἢ ἐν τῇ τάξει τῶν πρώτων ἀρχῶν ὃν ἀπαντήσῃ· τοῦτο γὰρ ἡμεῖς ἀνάλυσιν ὀνομάζομεν, ὡς λύσιν ἐξ ὀπίσω.*)

Σύνθεσις δέ ἐστίν, ὅταν τἀνάλυσιν εἰλημμένον ὡς ὑποτεθὲν ἔχοντες, ἐξ ἐκείνου τὰ πρότερα κατὰ φύσιν ἐπακολουθοῦντα συντάττομεν, καὶ ἀλλήλοις ἐφεξῆς συνάπτοντες, τελευταῖον ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ ζητουμένου κατασκευὴν ἔλθωμεν· τοῦτο γὰρ σύνθεσιν καλοῦμεν.)

Hultsch, *Pappi Alexandrini Collectionis Quae Supersunt*, vol. 3, p. 634

Introduction

If a logic of the signifier can be achieved, the term unconscious will become obsolete.

J. Lacan

0.0 Preliminary Statement of the Problem: From Synthesis to Analysis

My concern in this paper is to work *analytically* in presenting what Lacan first called a *logic of the signifier*. This being said, I will not attempt to piece together a *logic of the signifier* from all the scattered insights Lacan offers on logic, mathematics, and the clinic. Rather, I assume a *logic of the signifier* has already been achieved in a set of propositions that are implied, directly or indirectly, but rarely stated well enough to be recognized in past and current presentations of psychoanalysis, logic, mathematics, and the clinic.

Though I am also embarrassed to admit, I may not have had the right instructors, or been able to read the right texts, or work in the right collective, so my circumstances force me to acknowledge a certain ignorance about the problems contained in his oeuvre, so this *unknown* can only be retrospectively constructed to begin with.

The opposition between *synthesis/analysis* is well known among mathematicians:

Analysis: start from the *unknown* as if it were *given* or *desired*, then work backwards to known truths.

Synthesis: start from known truths, then work forward to establish the *unknown*.

What is less well known is that Freud consistently makes the same methodological distinction:

There is no such thing as *psycho-synthesis*; there is only psycho-analysis.

S. Freud, *Terminable and Interminable Analysis*, SE XXIII, p. 216

(Es gibt keine Psycho-synthese, sondern nur Psychoanalyse)

Die endliche und die unendliche Analyse, GW XVI, p. 80

This double method of investigating a field and function, or the lack thereof, has always been part of the mathematical and clinical tradition. Leibniz writes:

It must be considered that all *symptomata* are, in a certain way, simple diseases, for they are always impairments of functions. But since one impaired function often causes several others to be impaired as well, a single cause can be taken into account for several *symptoms*. If the impairment of a function is not perceptible in itself, it is not called a *symptoma*. A method of treatment based on *symptomata* would be infinite, if we were to attempt to enumerate all their combinations. There are certain signs of good or poor constitution that cannot be called *symptomata*, such as color, urine, things that help or harm [the patient]. What must truly be taught is **analysis**, or the art both of inquiring into signs and of concluding the disease from the signs. **Synthesis** must be taught after a specimen of **analysis** has been presented; that is, a general method of healing, which stands in relation to **pathological synthesis** as algebra does to the *Elements* of Geometry.

— G. Leibniz, *On Writing New Elements of Medicine*, 1680–1682

*(Considerandum est, omnia symptomata esse morbos quosdam simplices: semper enim sunt laesae functiones; sed quia una functio laesa facit plures alias collabi, hinc saepe causa plurium symptomatum unica haberi potest. Si laesio functionis non sit perceptibilis per se, non appellatur symptoma. Methodus tractandi per symptomata infinita esset, si omnes eorum combinationes enumerare vellemus. Sunt quaedam signa bonae malaeque constitutionis, quae symptomata dici non possunt, ut color, urina, juvantia et laedentia. Vera tradenda est **analysis**, seu ars tum in signa inquirendi, tum ex signis concludendi morbum. Tradenda est **syllapsis** post subjiciendum specimē analyseos; seu methodi medendi generalis, quae habet se ad **synthesin pathologicam** ut algebra ad Elementa Geometriae.)*

De scribendis novis medicinae elementis, 1680–1682

Given this tradition, Leibniz seems to be saying: Don't rush into *synthesis* (general method of healing). First, you must present a worked-out example of *analysis*, then proceed to teach *synthesis*, just as one should present an algebraic entry to the geometrical problems present in a difficult, or 'pathological synthesis'. Without going into details in this initial probe, one may

well ask what has been so difficult to comprehend about Jacques Lacan's proposal to construct a *topology of the subject* without which "no identification of the symptom can even proceed." [x].

I only offer here a direction for a response: the reason Lacan's texts have remained so unreadable to many is the same reason a mathematical text is: there is simply no way to read Lacan or a mathematical text without rewriting and constructing them. Various developments, not only in mathematics but also in contemporary psychoanalysis, reveal symptoms of an inherent difficulty of reading and writing. What could be harder than a mathematical problem? What discipline is greeted in public with so much miscomprehension as psychoanalysis, especially that of Lacan? It is worth examining why this is the case and to learn to read with a symptom, explaining what is not understood in a writing, instead of trying to mimic and paraphrase in the name of comprehension. If this is indeed the case, then it is better to begin reading with a symptom by analyzing it, rather than trying to synthesize a multitude of concepts, texts, case studies, and so on, which, though still incomprehensible, are applied as a method of healing.

Here, then, I adopt willingly this double method of *analysis/synthesis* in what follows: instead of going forward from a collection of definitions, concepts, and texts of psychoanalysis, Freudian or Lacanian, then showing how they can be synthesized to present a coherent picture of its theory or applied in the clinic, I begin oppositely: by working backwards from a logic that is already assumed in any clinical situation.

- For example, it is easy to show that *analysis* differs from *synthesis* in that it tests the bidirectionality of inference. In *synthesis*, $p \rightarrow q$ suffices; in *analysis*, one must also attempt to prove the converse: $q \rightarrow p$. If this reverse implication fails, the result is not a true analytic proof but an inequivalence — akin to a *conversion symptom*, where a contingent effect is mistaken for its sufficient cause. Yet, this way of speaking, including the symbols made present ' \rightarrow ', has nothing evident about it to anyone who has not worked through the logic of a mathematical or clinical presentation.
- For example, the problem just symbolized in logic above can – and should – be presented in ordinary language: if it is true, 'the man has a lesion in his brain' then 'he has a bodily dysfunction' must also be true (since it is impossible to go from true antecedent to false consequence); but just because it is true 'he has a lesion the brain' does not mean 'he has a bodily dysfunction' is true. To think so is to confuse implication with equivalence and inevitably not allow for the reverse movement – the conversion symptom – that is so often isolated in analysis.

The attempt to treat the logic of the clinic as mere theory may as well resign itself to the fact that it has had to start out from *practical* and *analytic* considerations of reading and writing.

Analytically speaking, we know there has been, over the past thirty or forty years, a strong interest in something called a *logic of the signifier*. We also know that there have been denizens of books written commenting on both this logic and the signifier, while only a few scattered resources actually construct such a logic. Rather than becoming trapped in the vortex of commentaries, I will begin by investigating the language of a theory of the signifier and its logic.

What are the conditions that would have to be in place for a logic of the signifier to exist?

For example, I will assume that Lacan's *logic of the signifier* is already found in problems presented not only in his own work, but also in what has been traditionally called the language of propositional and predicate logic. Then, I ask what demands an 'other' logic? I will then show how the conditions for this 'other logic' are reducible to attested facets of the clinic (symptoms, lapses, and dreams), linguistic and rhetorical readings (homophony, geggensinn, homonymy, etc), and the construction of a psychoanalytic object (*petite a*).

The advantage of an *analytic* manner of working is that it allows us to confirm, or not, a certain necessity and effectivity of our constructions. It is an invitation to others not to believe in my language or results, but only to confirm them until proof of the contrary. Unlike a *synthetic* presentation, which presents a finished construction or proof from propositions to conclusions as something that must be convincing, *analysis* must admit a certain ignorance and assume the result *as if* it were given, as something desired, and then works backwards, reducing it to what is already granted. As a result, *analysis* is more provisional. If the reduction fails, the affirmation is refuted. If it succeeds, the path to a construction is discovered. For this reason, *analysis* is more *critical* and open to refutation, whereas *synthesis* tends towards the *dogmatic*, inviting assent. This much said, the two are not completely separable, and, as we will show, there will be a crucial moment in our presentation where *synthesis* returns and the problem of assent/dogmatism must be constructed for itself as a problem of *cathexis* and *counter-cathexis* (gegenbesetzung).

An outline of my strategy of presentation might go something like this:

A. Supposition: Suppose such a *logic of the signifier* is achieved.

B. Backwards deduction: what is necessary for it to exist?

1. First, we must determine what a signifier is
2. but before this, we must determine what is one signifier
3. but before this, we must determine what is the name of a signifier
4. but before this, we must determine what is the void of a signifier
5. but before this, we must determine the negation of a signifier.

What this admittedly descriptive analysis shows is that whenever a signifier has been isolated, there are at least four previous conditions that are presupposed, but rarely explained: a condition

of (2) unicity, (3) nomination, (4) existence, and (5) negation. If I have begun to analyze just what a signifier is in the above, I have not said anything about what constitutes a logic. I will leave this more pointed construction for **Part III**.

0.1 *Plan of Presentation*

The current 14-page paper is **Part I A** of a three-part presentation, **A**, **B**, and **C**. **Part I. A** provides the background for constructing a *logic of the signifier* in the manner of Lacan. It will primarily be concerned with giving an introduction to the material on which an analysis of the signifier may be based. **Part I.B** discusses the risk of a too formalistic approach to the Lacanian mathemes. **I.C.** returns to an examination of Karl Abel's *Über den Gegensinn der Urworte* in light of our previous analysis of the signifier and letter.

Once this basic philological and linguistic material is presented, we will proceed to **Part II**, which presents a clinical presentation that extends the material of **Part I**: passing from *Gegensinn* to the problem of *Gegenstand* and *Gegenbesetzung*. **Part III** generalizes the method and material in an explicit construction of a *logic of the signifier* from the ground up in propositional and predicate logic. What will be aimed for through all three parts, **I**, **II**, and **III**, is a presentation of the same structure with a change of writing.

Part I. A: The Two Inertias: Signifier and Letter

Unlike physics, which has only one inertial theory, that determining the relation between mass and movement, a theory of language must pose two: that of the correspondence between speech and writing, respectively, of the signifier and letter that determine the relation between reading and writing¹. Before delving directly into Abel and Freud's treatment of *Gegensinn* in **Part I.C** and extending this to the clinic in **Part II**, it will be beneficial to begin descriptively by clarifying these two inertias and how they structure a space of transcription.

1. *Inertia of the Signifier*

The signifier is **spoken** and indiscrete: a mark, glyph, or trait that is not necessarily discrete (like a letter) but that can be counted as one, without being able to say it is the same one or distinct ones. This is its inertial moment: it possesses a certain autonomy, independent of what it signifies, but once inscribed, it tends towards the formation of differential chains across

¹ With more time than I have here, it will be important to ask whether a second theory of inertia as weight/field has been sidelined.

various contexts. Thus, the inertia of the signifier is a sliding productive of a structure of erasure and inversion.

For example, in a story where there was once a king with two [härs] who fell off his throne, we can ask what hit the ground first, the [här] or the [här]? In this scenario, the spoken signifier indicated by the phonetic brackets [x] persists: it can be counted without being distinguished precisely². Yet, a response to the question, ‘What fell first?’ will require a recourse to a second inertia, that of writing.

2. *Inertia of the Letter*

The letter is **written** and discrete. It possesses a particular locality and materiality that determines its position and movement, producing a chain of other letters. Thus, the letter can also be counted as one, even if it is divided, or marked as not there by a diacritical mark³. Yet, the letter also *names*, since it determines the constraints on the various readings of a signifier. The *inertia of the letter* is, therefore, the material persistence of a discrete inscription that renders the signifier interpretable and, at the limit, functional, without being reduced to this function (as we will show in **Part III**).

In reference to the example of the king with two [härs] who fell off his throne, when the question is asked, what hit the ground first, the [här] or the [här]? A response must take into account what is being referred to by [här]. And in so doing, one can proceed in one of two ways:

- a. by a direct use of writing, one can write **hair** or **hare**, then decide which fell first, the **hair** or the **hare**, or perhaps, there were two **hairs (hares)**, and only one fell first, or
- b. by continuing to use just speech, one can just comment upon the signifiers in the use of a *metalanguage*. One could say, for example, that the first [här] was a *rabbit*, while the second [här] was a *filamentous biomaterial that grows from follicles in the skin of mammals*.

In both cases, (a) and (b), the signifier is not only distinguished as the same or different one, but also *named*. But in different ways, one directly through the use of writing, the other indirectly, through spoken language and the formation of a *sobriquet*.⁴

² The use of brackets ‘[’ and ‘]’ are standard in the phonetics which distinguishes between a spoken unit of analysis, a *phone* which is put between brackets such as [a] or [k], a formal unit of analysis, a *phoneme* which is put between slashes /a/ or /k/, for example, and the actual material instance of the letter, **a** or **k**. Although I will use the standard brackets of phonetics to refer to the spoken letter, or signifier, I will not adopt either its phonetic or phonological theory since they do not contain a theory of either a writing of letters, which I will simply present in **bold letters**.

³ For instance, the French word *hôpital* indicates the presence of an absent letter ‘s’ by the use of the diacritical circumflex ‘^’.

⁴ For those unfamiliar with the term *sobriquet*, it refers to a phrase or sentence used as a name. For example, the use of Indian names, *Big Chief Running Bear*; or older French names, *Jean Henri Pradelle de la Tour*; or perhaps the most popular examples are those used by current day rap artists such as *Lil Wayne*, *Notorious B.I.G.*, *Dr. Dre*, etc.

What is also important to note at this stage of our argument is that the signifier [här] is being *analyzed* into its minimal elements, *letters*, and then put into chains: **h + a + i + r**. Such an *analysis*, although necessary to isolate the signifier, is not sufficient as it leaves open the question of the inverse movement; what if there is a chain of written letters that make one sound, but produce two different senses? The problem of the *homonym* persists.

2.1 *From Homophony to Homonymy in a Lexical Theory*

Let us agree to call such scenes of reading '*primitive*,' while noting that even if there is no direct access to it, we can still recognize what is occurring there in two different ways:

- 1.a By writing the equivocation
- 2.b By commenting on the difference in a metalanguage.

No doubt, the *primitive scene* must be more complicated than the first example lets on to, since in the case of the [här] of the king, the signifier could be disambiguated by writing it as **hair** and **hare**. Thus, presenting the classic case of a *homophone*: one signifier having two different writings.

Yet, we can well imagine the case of a king on the throne who has two [bats], where the signifier cannot be disambiguated just by writing **bat** and **bat**, for the king could have two clubs, a club and a winged mammal, or two winged mammals. Without knowing which is which, we cannot respond to the inertial question: "Which fell first?"

One standard way to formulate this complication is to say that the word 'bat' is two different words and is a *homonym*, as it has the same sound and spelling but with two distinct meanings. Yet, this manner of formulating the problem makes writing and reading secondary to meaning (the signified), which is supposed (in the head, the community, society, etc.), but never isolatable beyond its own existence as written and read.

2.2 *Homophony and Homonymy Defined in a Theory of Writing-Reading*

A more direct way to formulate the inertial problem of *homonymy* requires a more materially explicit definition. One that does not already depend upon a lexical definition that determines the *homonym* as two different words from the beginning (as contained in a dictionary, for example). On the contrary, if we consider the *use* of language itself as being essential to the determination of meaning (sense, signified), then any word is a potential *homonym* in the sense that any spoken or written word can always be *used* to say the opposite of what it means by convention (a good writer or lawyer can testify to this).

This being the case, if it is asked which fell first, and the king has two [bats] in the *homonymic* case, we must resort to a combination of (1.a) and (2.b) above by referring in the

metalanguage to writing to determine the signification of the terms. Thus, stating that the first [bat] is not the second [bat] insofar as the signified of the first can be written **club** and the second signified a **winged mammal**. Thus, unlike a *homophone*, where the signifier can be disambiguated by writing it directly (hair/hare) using method 1.a, in the case of a *homonym*, it is the signified that must be written directly using method 1.b: **club** or **winged mammal** serving as *sobriquets* naming the now two distinct signifiers in the metalanguage.

3. *The Use of Homonymy in Metaphor: The King's Two Bodies*

What is left out by both the *homophonic* and *homonymic* scenes of reading, as they have been depicted so far, is that there are cases where the signified implied by the signifier and the letter may not be evident or may well be missing. For example, let us take Ernst Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies* (1957) as the context, if it is posited that 'The king has two bodies, but died'. What is the answer to the question, "Which body was put in the grave first?"

To respond to this question, in the first instance, demands a response to a prior question: What is the reference of 'The king has two bodies?', or more generally, what is the reference of a metaphor? It is important that at this level we are not simply referring to how a metaphor functions as a *trope* or *figure of speech*, but referring to how a metaphor can be commented upon – in a metalanguage – and developed as what the rhetoricians called a *figure of thought*, or in modern terms, a *figure of discourse*⁵.

In the first instance, as a *trope*, it could be claimed that a reading of a metaphor consists of disambiguating the *homonymic* use of the word 'body' in the phrase, 'two bodies', such that the signified of one, implying the **body politic** (*corpus politicum*), opposes the signified of the other, **the natural body** (*corpus naturale*). In this sense, it could be claimed that a reading of the metaphor, *The King's two bodies*, as a *trope*, consists in a transfer of *sense* from the vehicle, the *two bodies*, to *the King* (the tenor). It may be supposed, on the basis of this transfer of *sense*, that the response to the question "Which body was put into the grave first?" is the **natural body** of the king.

This first-degree analysis of a metaphor as a *trope* and a transfer of *sense* is altogether familiar, as it follows the conventional significations typically assigned to words (as in a dictionary, for example). Such readings are what justify other commentaries, like "The King is dead, long live the King!" where it is the **political body** that is supposed to be eternal and the **natural body** that is mortal.

Yet, within this *Doctrine of Two Bodies*, such conclusions reveal, through circumlocution and equivocal commentaries, that this is not the case. Instead, what is named and really put to rest is not the natural body that dies and is buried, but the gap that this two-body theory tries to conceal.

⁵ R. Jakobson (1956) was the first to construct a linguistic theory of metaphor that no longer describes it as a *trope*, but a *figure of discourse* in the sense that a metaphor would no longer rely upon a transfer of *sense* or a hypothetical similarity between tenor and vehicle. See *Appendix I, From Figure to Trope* for a detailed construction.

Thus, at another level, the metaphor cannot simply be read as a *trope* and a mere transfer of *sense* between two opposed interpretations, but as a *figure of discourse* posing a question of reference that is developed in its metalanguage commentary. Indeed, the question posed to it, “Which was buried?” and the commentary on it, “The King is dead, long live the King,” serve to reveal a different scene of reading where a fictional reference becomes crucial.

The elaborate funeral processions and contradictory remarks about the burial are not about disposing of the flesh of the King, as the first level reading of a *trope* would assume, but must pose another question: What is a reference of a metaphor, the King’s Two Bodies? And what is it of the real King that does not get embodied in his mortal (natural) or immortal (political) binary?

It is at the point where this irreducible gap between two bodies arises that what is really named by the metaphor emerges: an unincorporated *real*, a residue that falls out in distinguishing the King’s two bodies. The residue situates not so much what is between the **natural** and **political** body, but what their opposition fails to incorporate in distinguishing them as two. What the metaphor refers to, what it figuratively shows and develops in a commentary language, is a residue.

Put into ordinary language, as two opposed terms in one phrase, the metaphor does not simply reconcile a logical contradiction – how can sovereignty, which must be immortal, reside in a mortal? – but names, at the place of a cut, a *tertium quid*⁶. For Kantorowicz teaches us that what is buried by the *Doctrine of Two Bodies* is only seemingly the natural body; rather, with a second look and a tighter grip on the definition of metaphor, it is the anxious difference between the two that is put to rest.

It is crucial to notice that Kantorowicz, following the tradition, puts at this place of the *tertium quid*, both an incorporal, a *mystical body*, and what escapes any incorporation: a *royal corpse* – something that has to be done away with, which is neither the man of the natural body nor the political body nor the mystical body.

It is in this gap that Kantorowicz refers not simply to two bodies, but a third, an “ubiquitous presence” that “cannot be confined within the categories of either the natural or the political body.” [x]

The ‘*King’s Two Bodies*’ metaphor can be written schematically as:

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{Political} & = & \underline{x} & \Rightarrow & \text{Political} \bullet \text{Body}_2 & = & \text{II (Political)} \\ \text{Body}_1 & & \text{Body}_2 & & \text{Body}_1 & & \text{X} & & \text{\textbf{\texttheta}} \end{array}$$

Where it is written that what falls under the bar (is buried), **θ** on the right-hand side, is not the natural signified of the second body, but the incorporal signifier, that is exposed in the nomination **II** and commentary of the metaphor. Of course, such a formula is that first put into

⁶ In Chapter VII, Kantorowicz stresses that the *corpus mysticum* is “neither wholly natural nor wholly political, but a *tertium quid*.”

circulation by Lacan, which I avowedly transcribe with only a footnote for commentary⁷. It is important to note here that this algebraic formula attempts to write in a formula what is only spoken in a metaphor and its development in various denegations. And, it is here, once again, that, as in our case of homophony and homonymy, writing can be used to disequivocate the signifier in the mode of a *figure of discourse*⁸.

It is not my aim to produce either a rhetorical or a psychoanalysis of Kantorowicz's text; rather, I am using his text to respond to a question that is exceedingly difficult to isolate in a theory of reading and writing: How is the reference of a metaphor and its commentary determined? How is this problem of nomination crucial to a generalization and extension of the problem of Abel and Freud's *Gegensinn*? How can it be extended to cover the Freudian-Lacanian clinic? And finally, how can these problems be generalized into a presentation in logic and mathematics?

4. *Analyzing the Signifier*

In Section 0.0, I outlined 5 moments in the analysis of a signifier. There will be a time in my presentation where we ask if these five moments are necessary and sufficient. For the moment, however, I will proceed descriptively to situate what is at stake in the construction of a theory of the signifier. To recall my previous analysis:

1. To determine what a signifier is (supposition)
2. we must determine what is one signifier (unicity)
3. but before this, we must determine what is the name of a signifier (nomination)
4. but before this, we must determine what is the void of a signifier (existence)
5. but before this, we must determine the negation of a signifier. (negation)

This analytical matrix, along with the problems stated above, can be used to highlight what is at stake in constructing a theory of the signifier. To establish the correspondences between this matrix and the topics of *Homophony*, *Homonymy*, and *Metaphor that we have just presented*, I will review each section while annotating the correlations.

1. Suppose there is a signifier: a trait, a mark, a glyph, that is spoken and can be read, though not necessarily distinctly written or one.

⁷ If we had replaced the 'x' in the formula with the word *natural*, this would have created a four part analogy: **political/body₁ // natural/body₂** and not a metaphor. Moreover, it is important to recognize that what is being written in this formula is, strictly speaking, not a *trope* or *figure of speech*, but *figure of thought*, or more modernly, a *figure of discourse*. This is because such a formula, algebraic in its lineaments, does not describe a transfer of *sense* between vehicle (two bodies) and tenor (King), but is an act of writing that condenses one thing that is two: One King with Two bodies. Are they one or two? As such, it is the *homonymic* writing of the vehicle that opens up the question, while making room for an act of interpretation. In Chapter VII, he stresses that the *corpus mysticum* is "neither wholly natural nor wholly political, but a tertium quid."

⁸ The common mistake of equating Jakobsonian *metaphor* and *metonymy* to Freudian *condensation* and *displacement* overlooks the fact that the latter writes what the former attempts to speak.

2. *Unicity/Memity* – It is difficult to tell a story with just one; instead, most narratives begin with something like the question: 'Suppose there is one, but if it were two, would it be the same?'. Thus, my story of the King with two [härs] began with a question posed to it, “Which fell first? The [här] or the [här]? This led to the description of an indeterminacy of the one, which then raised the question of whether it is a *homophone*: whether the signifier is one or two, and whether it can be distinguished as the same or not through writing. We concluded that the signifiers could be one, at least at the level of speech, but the use of writing could distinguish the two: **hair** or **hare**. What is supposed at this level, but not yet written explicitly in a logic, is that if some thing exists, then it is unique or two, and that this can be isolated through writing⁹.
3. *Nomination* – What was discovered in proceeding further into this story in was that the King also had two [bats] when he fell, and that when asked a question referring to the English language, “Which fell first, the [bat] or the [bat]?”, the question could not be so easily resolved in reference to a transcription of the signifier. I had to, therefore, reconsider what is involved in referring not simply to the signifier, but to the signified of the word, which was only directly recognizable in a writing (it being admitted that if someone supposed they had a preunderstanding of the word in their head, the community, the society, etc. there was nothing further for a theory of reading and writing to ask). In fact, it was recognized that in beginning to write the signified, in this case [bat] as a **club** and **flying mammal**, the signified was not simply being transcribed, but was being *named*, *i.e.*, the words functioning as the signified of [bat] were written in letters and it was this chain of letters that was being *named* as both a word and the signified of the signifier. Thus, the failure to determine the spoken signifier in a *homophonic* structure of the signifier led us to extend it to a *homonymic* structure of writing its signified with a *name* or *sobriquet*. What is supposed, but not yet written at this level, is what the logicians call *protocol rules* (Carnap) and *definite descriptions* (Russell) that can be extended to *indefinite descriptions* (Hilbert) and *abbreviation symbols* (Bourbaki). I will revisit these problems in *Part III*.
4. *Existence* – It was further discovered that another obstacle posed itself even after the problem of the *homonymic* structure of the signifier was resolved by situating the nomination of its writing at the place of its signified (not signifier as in the case of the *homophone*). This third problem arose when it was posed that there could be words, phrases, or sentences whose referent cannot be identified empirically in a spatio-temporal reality¹⁰. Or more strictly stated, in reference to language itself, there are units of a language with no reference to the signified in a written alphabet or lexicon. Metaphors or *figures of discourse* in general are examples: *The Golden Mountain*, while Kantorowicz’s *The King’s Two Bodies* was put forward as just such a case. What is implicit here, but not

⁹ See *Part II* for the writing of *existence* and *unicity* in a predicate logic.

¹⁰ The case where the reference of a letter would be void is implied not explicitly stated at this point of our argument. See *Part II*.

yet written explicitly, is how the protocols of nomination, from Russell and Hilbert to Kripke and Bourbaki, have all had to isolate a presence of an absence, a void, not only as the very basis for nomination but recasting classical negation.

5. *Negation* –When it was asked, ‘Which body was put into the grave first?’ we were forced to reason with a fiction by naming the two bodies of the King, writing them *homonymically* as $body_1$ and $body_2$. At which point it was noted that in the tradition, as outlined in the *Doctrine of Two Bodies*, the body of the King is named by a *sobriquet* expressing a contradiction: “The King is dead, long live the King!”. It was then posed, counter to this typical equivocation, that there is a more explicit reading of the metaphor which takes its commentary seriously, not as a reconciliation of a contradiction. The equivocal sobriquet, ‘The King is dead, long live the King!’ being read as a symptom of an obstacle of reference – a *tertium quid* – which is referred to within the tradition as a *corpus mysticum*. Yet, it was determined at this point that there is an anxious reference to the *King’s Two Bodies* that is neither the political body, the natural body, nor the mystical body, but to a dead body – a royal corpse. Looked at one way, with the *Doctrine of Two Bodies* claiming the eternity of the political body, this royal corpse remains a silent residue, hidden beneath a contradictory sentence acting like a name: “The King is dead, long live the King!”. Yet, with a slight shift of attention and a tighter grip on a theory of the signifier, this residue can itself be given a place that, like the circulation of a letter, begins to *autonomously* name the body divided by the signifier. For those who recognize what is at stake, you are invited to continue reading on the page. For those who do not follow the argument, Part I.B gives the details.

What is implicit in (3) *nomination*, (4) *void*, and (5) *negation*, but not yet written explicitly, is how the protocols of nomination once written literally, from Russell and Hilbert to Kripke and Bourbaki, have all had to isolate a presence of an absence, a *void*, not only as the very basis for nomination but also recasting classical *negation*. One example among many. It is a well-known denoting conundrum of Russell to ask how to read sentences like “*The present King of France is bald*” when there is no present King of France. (*On Denoting*, 1905) If you treat “the King of France” as a name, the statement becomes neither true nor false — it crashes on the void (it is not simply false, since there is nothing the predicate ‘is bald’ to apply to. Thus, it can be neither true nor false, but is simply nonsense according to Russell). Therefore, Russell posits a nonempty universe in writing the sentence in the formula: $\exists x(K(x) \wedge \forall y(K(y) \rightarrow y=x) \wedge B(x))$. Read: There is exactly one King of France, and he is bald. This formulation gets rid of the void reference, while at the same time modifying classical negation into a *wide scope* negation: It is *not the case* that there exists exactly one King of France who is bald (true); and a narrow scope negation: There is exactly one King of France who is not bald (false). By shifting negation into scope distinctions, Russell modifies how negation works in void case nomination: failure of reference doesn’t make the sentence meaningless, just *false* under one scope.

Without going further into the logical problem in this section, my aim has been only to situate descriptively a point of entry for an analysis of the signifier. At this point of juncture, the reader is invited to proceed directly to Part II., where I test the necessity of my construction with regard to the clinic, or to turn to Part I, B and C, where I return to detail some of the writing and reading problems opened up in Part I.A.

Specifically, Part I.B serves to correct a systematic misuse of his quaternary formulas of metaphor and four discourses, while Part I.C extends our analysis in Part I.A to a construction of the problem of *Gegensinn* as it is found in Abel's *Über den Gegensinn der Urworte*. Though Part I.B can be used to clarify further what is at stake in determining the reference of a metaphor and how a letter can function as a name, my analysis is not dependent upon Part I.B. This section could be skipped altogether without diminishing our argument.

I.B – The Risk of Lacanian Formalism

Part of the strategy of writing this article is to use sparingly any reference to a preset formalism or jargon, Lacanian or *tutti-quantum*, since it is my conviction that if a discourse is constructed well enough, then the necessity of its argument can be made despite such references. In fact, this is a way to test a discourse that is as ancient as the logic of Aristotle and the Stoics themselves: enter the marketplace and replace all the words and sentences with letters and symbols, such that the *sense* of a discourse is not leading one by the nose.

Needless to say, the problem does not stop there, but becomes amplified to a point that someone can begin to multiply senselessly, if not deliriously, a formalism cut off from any reference to anything *real*. Personally, I prefer a certain delirium to what inevitably arises in a too sensible speech devolving into catechism and the morality of nannies, but surely one cannot remain there.

It will be important, with more time than I have here, to address the kind of foreclosure that such formalisms promote. What is excluded? An initial response: an adequate *theory of reading and writing*, where an analysis of the signifier and problems of literalization are no longer confused with formalization. This is a future article. What I want to address here has a smaller focus: how a literalization of metaphor and discourse can systematically lend itself to a misinterpretation bordering on delirium.

To facilitate the presentation of this problem, I will return to where I ended in Part I.A. in my previous analysis of the *King's Two Bodies*. I had just made the point that there are two opposed ways to interpret the division of one to two (bodies), as it has been so eloquently laid out in Kantorowicz's book¹¹. If you were counting, you have recognized that we ended up with two corporal bodies – the natural and the political body – and one incorporeal body – the *corpus*

¹¹ No doubt, there may be more than two different interpretations, but the two that I am identifying are crucial with regard to the current misunderstanding of the problem of a formalism.