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Chapter II. Monique Schneider

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Monique Schneider was born in France in 1935, *and works partly in philosophy and partly in psychoanalysis. Her work is beginning to be better known, though it is still not widely read in English-speaking countries. Her major works are not translated into English. What distinguishes her writing is a rigorous analytic method, juxtaposed with an interest in psychoanalysis in the Lacan mode. Her interest in Freud goes far beyond Freud to a general philosophy of psychological states, and to an ontology of personality. Her analytic method brings her to an examination of metaphor and image which is at once carefully reasoned and imaginative. Her professional career is divided between psychoanalysis and philosophy.*

2

MONIQUE SCHNEIDER

MS: Philosophy for me is an intermediate type of discipline: it is part conceptual and part literary. I like Plato a great deal: so I like to place myself at the crossroads between philosophy and a certain rhetorical style, which is quite natural - I don't recognize the separation of the two.

RM: That's interesting to Anglo-Saxons, because we don't have that literary side - at least I don't - in our philosophical training. One could almost say that our tradition of philosophy is anti-literary. English philosophical language is ugly. I've noticed that you're very attentive to your own style of writing: there is a literary tradition in French philosophy, isn't there?

MS: Perhaps not in the whole French tradition, because having a slightly literary style can be the subject of reproach both in philosophy and in psychoanalysis. Merleau-Ponty is not acceptable in some quarters because he's considered too literary, and there is something of a tradition of the severe style, as if there's some sort of obligation *not* to seduce by your writing, when you're dealing with important issues. It's true of philosophy to some extent, though it's less strong here than in Germany . . . but in psychoanalysis the obligation not to seduce by one's writing is extremely strong, which means that very often one has to be hermetic, to create in others the feeling that they understand nothing, that some initiation ceremony is required. This hermetic environment, this severity, and the image of the psychoanalyst as grand inquisitor - these are things which I find revolting. I think it's dishonest, in that there is a process of obfuscation going on. I mean that French psychoanalysis, particularly that emanating from Lacan, is extremely inaccessible: I hear students say, as they come out of seminars, 'I didn't understand a word'. They're pleased not to have understood, because, if they haven't understood, it's because what has been said to them is very good stuff.

RM: To be obscure is a proof of quality.

MS: That's right.

RM: And a kind of guru figure is created. If you're not understood, you can become a guru.

MS: Exactly.

RM: I've formed the impression also that in Paris it is not entirely the fault of the gurus that they are gurus, but it is also the public which. . .

MS: Which requires it, yes.

RM: In respect of yourself, I wonder whether you define yourself as a philosopher or a psychoanalyst.

MS: To reply I could well refer to my own development: initially I intended to abandon philosophy in favour of psychoanalysis. Historically speaking, the relationship between philosophy and psychoanalysis in France has been quite specific. It used to be customary to insist that it was necessary to renounce philosophy or any philosophical stance in order to enter the field of psychoanalysis, like going into a convent if you like. Psychoanalysis was supposed to be totally rigorous, with a radically different language, and it was supposed to be based on an experience, an experience of an initiatory character.

RM: An arcanum.

MS: Yes, exactly. And you were supposed to speak a radically different language. So at the outset there was an element of intimidation. I had the feeling that if I wanted to talk about Freud, I had to restrict myself solely to the confines of Freud. And within the study of Freud I was surprised to see that certain problems of Freudian theory itself, the problem of pleasure, or of what knowing is, these issues which are entirely mortgaged to philosophical problems, were taken up just as they were, without being enquired into. I think that there are a great number of philosophical postulates in Freudian psychoanalysis, and that psychoanalysis is frozen rigid if one doesn't see the extent of its involvement with a philosophical background. I can give a recent example: I'm working at the moment on a course on the imaginary. I was struck by the coincidence between the position of the

dialectician in Plato's dialogue the *Gorgias* and the way in which Freud presents himself as a psychoanalyst. At the metaphorical level, there is a striking continuity. In the same way as Plato enquires into the image of the rhetorician, comparing rhetoric to cosmetics - a destructive, shameful, dissimulating practice - in order to contrast it with positive activities such as gymnastics, or medicine, you find in the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* the habit of drawing a dichotomy between psychoanalysis and suggestion; he says that suggestion is like cosmetics, as in Plato's metaphor, but that psychoanalysis is like a surgical process. You feel that there is a problem about dissimulation here, which is linked to that of the likeness, and that, for Freud, whatever belongs to likeness or resemblance, belongs to the imaginary. One is supposed to somehow strip off the imaginary, remove it, to find what is behind it in Freud's thought - namely reality. It is as if the imaginary were a sort of painting, a disguise, a cosmetic placed over reality. Now if we rule out this notion, which seems to be a view about the imaginary itself, here I'm thinking aloud. . . and if we look for another approach in Freud which is virtually blocked. . .

RM: . . . blocked in Freud himself?

MS: . . . in Freud,

RM: . . . in spite of himself?

MS: Yes, in spite of himself, as if this long cultural tradition of suspicion of the imaginary, which is seen as a double, or as a misleading appearance, prevented him from situating it in its proper place. Freud seems to be locked into a philosophical, and almost theological, notion of the imaginary, an imaginary which provides for evil, the Fall, and error; and this locking-in may have stopped him working out his own research in the field of the imaginary. If you work through the seventh chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, you could give the imaginary an entirely different status, which would take us much closer to someone like Kant. Certain schemas which are outside that which is visual are inevitably there, for example the child and its relationship with the breast, and the principle of satisfaction; and also the suggestion that a Fall has taken place. The experience of the Fall is not an experience of real life. It is a structure of the spatio-temporal which is both experienced and given form by the child. Freud talks about the *Innenverwandlung*, the internal transformation. And this transformation can be seen as purely an emotional thing, affective, but it can also be seen as the child's way of designing or constructing a spatial structure capable of providing a foundation, on the basis of which the child can encounter the objects of the external world. So I would prefer to go in the direction of what Kant would call the 'schemas' of the transcendental imagination - the hidden technique. Perception in Freud cannot be understood without the supposition that beyond perception lies a mechanism which resembles that which Freud discerns in the dream. In the fulfilment of desire, where desire is at work, desire and experience together create form, a kind of matrix which gives structure to perception.

RM: Would it be true to say, then, that you began your career as a philosopher, and that in taking up psychoanalysis you felt that you could not in fact abandon philosophy? And you found a sort of continuity between the two, which you perhaps didn't expect?

MS: Yes, exactly. Exactly. I had the feeling that there would be a sort of gap, an inevitable and systematic rupture between the two. It seemed to me then that the postulation of this rupture made it impossible to restart Freud, as it were - to see his contradictions, and through them to carry out some development of his thought. My philosophical training was much longer than my training in psychoanalysis - I went as far as the Doctorate of Letters in philosophy, and worked on the problem of the relationship between representation and affect in Freud, and certain problems of an epistemological kind. For me the problem was the function of the affect within the process of knowledge itself, and I dealt with it by exposing Freud to a philosophical critique, without myself being a psychoanalyst. My transition took place gradually: I began to think that the reading of Freud was frozen, rigid, fossilized . . . that it had been brought to a halt by the psychoanalytic readings which had been given of it.

RM: And the philosophical background which you described to me a moment ago: clearly that's not in Freud, but you mean that there is implicitly in Freud a philosophy. Or perhaps it is explicit: I recall that he quotes Plato a bit. He went and read some philosophers, that is certainly true. But here you suggest developments, through the thought of Kant and others, which seem to you to be necessary developments.

MS: And which are not catered for by Freud. His attitude towards philosophy is very reticent; there's an element of fascination, but it's tinged with suspicion. He's aware of the fact, for example, that he comes close to Nietzsche in certain areas, but he says that he prefers not to read Nietzsche. With regard to Plato, and it is true that Freud quotes Plato often, he tends to quote Plato through the interpretation of somebody else. And Plato's contribution, the philosophy of love, constitutes another area in which psychoanalysis has its limits. Love is understood in psychoanalysis, and in the Freudian tradition, through a Judaeo-Christian perspective, in which love and hate are opposed; love is seen as a good thing, hate as a bad thing, and we're all unfortunately sinners, so to speak. In this way love is an ambivalent thing, tinged with hate, and it's supposed to get purified through the genital phase, in order to be rid of this element of hatred. I think that this way of looking at the problem is very unfortunate for psychoanalysis, and that it does cloud the understanding of what Freud calls *Verliebtheit*, which we could translate as 'amorous experience'. The German prefix 'ver' is of great interest because it points both to a deviation and to an experience which does actually culminate in its end. And I think that what Freud says of *Verliebtheit*, of amorous experience, doesn't sit at all well with what he says in general about love and hate: to understand *Verliebtheit* you have to go back to Plato, but not to what Freud has heard about Plato second-hand - he uses Aristophanes' speech only. . .

RM: The separation into pieces. . . he wonders if there's some primordial truth in this myth of Aristophanes, about the original humans being whole, then subsequently cut in half, with the result that love is defined as the pursuit of the lost half of oneself.

MS: Yes. I think that the blind alleys that Freud encounters in his thinking about love, which are also a problem in contemporary psychoanalysis, both being stuck in this Judaeo-Christian perspective, and which become clear in the expression 'love-hate relationship', which always involves a dichotomy - these blind alleys can be negotiated by paying a little more attention to Diotima's speech, and to the somewhat chancy birth of *eros.* Clearly *eros* is not the child of love, but the child of sleep, and if one examines the position of love in relation to its psychoanalytic duality - and we do have to say that *eras* is ambivalent in some sense - it would be quite stupid to fail to understand that the avid side of love, its hunting aspect, its active aspect, is part of its positive quality. So that if we try to purify *eros* of its ambivalent dimension, its dynamism will be destroyed. I think that it could be very useful if psychoanalysts went further into the text of Plato, and specifically into Diotima's speech, not only that of Aristophanes.

RM: You're talking about the love-hate ambivalence here: it could be said that in the Christian tradition there is no *eros,* but instead *agape,* which is completely different from *eros*- the erotic *eros.* This has been argued, and in certain Christian texts one could indeed demonstrate a clear distinction between Christian love and Platonic *eros,* and the Freudian libido as well. Perhaps in Christian mystical texts this distinction no longer holds: in Origen, for example, there is no real distinction between *eros* and *agape.* What do you think?

MS: This is an important problem, and I think it weighs very heavily on a great deal of French thought on the subject. Nygren's book, *Eros and Agape,* taken up again in *Love in the Western World* by Denis de Rougemont: these are important influences. We remain caught in an absolute dichotomy, a dualism between the true love, thought to be *agape* (even by certain psychoanalysts, especially those of thirty years ago), and *eros,* which continues to be vilified. And when Freud says 'true love', *die echte Liebe,* contrasting it with the love involved in transference, in which the patient believes that she loves the psychoanalyst, but does not 'truly' love the psychoanalyst, he has to make use of a distinction and which is in fact the Judaeo-Christian distinction and which doesn't cater for the ambiguity of *eros,* its connection with lack.

RM: May I ask you a question about the importance of psychoanalysis in the intellectual life of Paris, a thing which often appears striking to foreigners; or more exactly about the relationship which exists between philosophy and psychoanalysis in Paris. In the Anglo-Saxon tradition of philosophy Freud is dealt with from time to time - not often - but usually from the side of the philosophy of science; the question of

whether his hypotheses can be called scientific in the ordinary sense might be raised, for example. There's a concern for science in this sort of approach, but in Paris the encounter between the two, between philosophy and psychoanalysis, is of a completely different character, I think.

MS: Yes, I think that there was a turning-point in the history of the thing; there is one school of French psychoanalysis, which is less well-known now but which was very dominant thirty years ago, namely that of the Institute of Psychoanalysis, which did in fact work along essentially scientific lines. But the encounter which took place in France between psychoanalysis and philosophy occurred basically because of Lacan. Whether or not one is in the Lacan camp (and I'm not entirely, though I do make use of the path that Lacan opened up), he reintroduced Heidegger but especially Hegel to the conceptual world of psychoanalysis and specifically to the problem of desire, desire for recognition by the other. So Lacan, thanks to Hegel, dragged psychoanalysis out of a positivist framework by attributing a great deal of importance, not in fact to culture itself, but to the universal: this actually bothers me. The variety of culture doesn't interest Lacan at all. It's the universal which interests him. Lacan has a vision of a symbolic order, like that to which one accedes through the Oedipus figure, but which is in fact an extension of Hegel's thought. This means an abrupt transition: you get the impression that the symbolic order is rather like the intuitions in Kant, which is a completely transcendent order, cut off from the order of the imagination and which is impure, as part of culture. There's too much of the cult of the universal in French psychoanalytic thought: salvation no longer comes from libidinal self-expression, but is rather a question of discovering the signifier, the key words which bring the individual into harmony with the universal. The universal alarms me personally.

RM: This is an important reversal in relation to Freud himself isn't it? In Paris there's a kind of filter between Freud and the reader, and the filter is Lacan. It's impossible to read Freud outside this set of influences brought about by Lacan, who in fact transformed Freud in various important ways.

MS: Yes, that's right. But there again, things move extremely quickly. Lacan has made reading Freud virtually impossible, while representing himself as the person who brought about the return to Freud. But he put himself forward as the only authentic interpreter of the writings of Freud, as if Freud spoke through him alone. But Lacan did have an indirect influence; in his many references to Freud he indirectly, sometimes involuntarily, invited his followers to reread Freud. And now you find with the fringe of the Lacan school - and these are the psychoanalysts who are of most interest to me - a tendency to rediscover psychoanalytic enquiry. They see that Lacan's reading isn't the last word, and that Freudian thought is full of questions and full of dilemmas, and that we should in some way undertake a rediscovery of it. It is true that Lacan did create the possibility of this rereading of Freud, but for the second generation, not for the first generation of the Lacan school.

RM: May I ask you a question now about the myth of Oedipus? We were talking about it a moment ago: it seems to me important that Oedipus does not know that he's marrying his mother. This is true of the real Greek myth, at any rate, and he does it almost accidentally. Not completely, but you see what I mean. And he doesn't know either that it's his father he kills; it is perhaps indeed his fault that he does these things – a kind of *hubris* in Sophocles' play - but he is ignorant of the real situation. Finding out the *truth* is the tragedy of the play. Freud seems to overturn the myth when he supposes that in the Oedipus complex one actively *seeks* union with one's mother, and that, whether consciously or not, one actually *desires* the death of one's father. In the case of the real Oedipus the situation was practically the opposite. He didn't want to do it: if he had known, he wouldn't have done it. I find it striking that Freud felt he had to use a myth which he turned upside down. Why use the myth at all? Perhaps there's a more fundamental question here about myth in Freud. What do you think about this desire to establish a mythical setting for his psychoanalytic views?

MS: I think that the function of myth in Freud is extremely ambiguous: I refer here to Freud's self-analysis because it's important to note the moment at which Freud has Oedipus speak, and encounters Oedipus and the myth itself. Freud's relationship to the myth is one of ignorance: he does not wish to see that Oedipus did not know what he was doing when

he killed his father and married his mother, and the failure to acknowledge that fact is fundamental in his own self-analysis. There is a whole series of images: darkness, chest, enclosure, burial, not-seeing. It seems to me that Freud in some way identified himself with Oedipus on the basis of the end of the play, of Sophocles' play. I think that the encounter of Freud and the myth of Oedipus took place on the theatrical level, and in the context of the distancing implied by theatre, and not through the reading of the myth itself. Freud saw a re-presentation of the theme, and *this* had a catalysing effect on him: one might refer here to Rousseau's critique of the theatre - there is a distancing effect. It would seem that Freud identified in the first place with the blinded Oedipus. I'm thinking here of the theme in his work which touches on the one-eyed, the empty eye, the absent eye, the blind eye, and so on. So in a sense it's not surprising that he wasn't able to read the Oedipus myth in its real terms; what he took from Oedipus was the idea of not knowing. What strikes me also in the Oedipus play is that it's not just any old myth involved, but one which is entirely based on the search for truth, through the search for love - and in fact now I'm wondering about the reason for this link between the myth and tragedy of truth and the whole myth of love, or tragedy of love. Myths of love, and the tragedy of love, don't interest Freud: he confesses this indirectly in the *Observation on Transference Love,* where he tells us that the love of the patient is like a theatrical performance which is suddenly interrupted by a fire. So love comes on the scene like the fire which breaks out on the stage of the theatre: it's an interruption. While Freud is interested in the character of Oedipus, he's also fascinated by Hamlet, both characters of the most tragic kind, who belong to tragedy rather than myth, and the tragedy involved is about the search for something. Both characters will undertake a search for an objective truth, which is in some way obscured; the heroes ask themselves very few questions about what they are experiencing. And on the fascination with myth, in my view Freud has given expression to the myth in a way which is virtually the negation of myth; Oedipus is of course condemned to exile. This is not mentioned, nor the question of Oedipus' childhood, in which he is practically condemned to death. Oedipus the child fails to interest Freud. Freud hears

Oedipus only when he appears to be master of his destiny, the subject of certain acts. He misses out on the infanticide at the outset, and the element of matricide, that of bringing about the fall of the sphinx - it's of course *'die' Sphinx* in German, as in Greek, a feminine word, whereas in French it's *'le' Sphinx* - and there's Jocasta hanging herself, so there is an element of matricide. In the end Freud only wished to recognize that in the myth of Oedipus which corresponded to the words of the oracle. The oracle says that Oedipus will kill his father and wed his mother, but the oracle is seen in some sense as the mythical prefiguring of the scientific word. It gives a sort of absolute statement, of a profoundly penetrating truth, which obscures momentarily the total extent of the myth itself, and its relationship to other myths. Marie Delcourt makes the connection between the myth of Oedipus and the myth of Orestes, for example: as soon as you deal with the mythical a whole new dimension is opened up, since the myths are interrelated. And Freud didn't want to know anything about the 'mythical' in that sense, in its obscure or hidden dimension. He identified with the presence of Oedipus in the first instance and he protected himself against the threat of this powerful presence, so to speak, by clinging to the security of the oracle's authority, the equivalent of the positivist truth of science, which is a kind of discourse we're familiar with from the Greeks onwards.

RM: Yes, I see why you say that Freud's use of the myth practically negates it. He chooses certain things which confirm his own tendencies: he doesn't at all embrace the myth in its full form. But there is in another sense a mythical element in Freud, even if he's not fully attuned to the Oedipus myth, isn't there? In a completely other sense, he does seek to create mythical structures of his own: the genital stage in the child has a kind of mythical staging about it. It's somewhat like the garden of Eden. He creates his own myths.

MS: Oh yes. You mean by that a myth of a progressing kind: a tale in which different dimensions are added from time to time in order to reach a kind of synthesis which allows an individual to find his own unity. A kind of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century style of myth, a modern myth.

RM: There's an incantatory element to it: one is supposed to return continually to a source, to review the myth in order to

understand oneself and to develop.

MS: Yes. But at the same time what's interesting about Freud are his own contradictions: this is a way of reading him which he himself authorizes, and which psychoanalysts tend not to follow. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud, in the course of outlining his theory, says that it's only a hypothesis and that one has to be very careful not to confuse the scaffolding which he's putting up with the edifice itself. And I think that Freud will always be found to be placing himself on the scaffolding and on several scaffoldings at once. . . but where is the building? One doesn't know. Because on the question of his relationship to myth, I do think that Freud is in the process of creating a modern myth, but at the same time he feels the nostalgia for archaic myths, extremely archaic myths. For example in the research into female sexuality, Freud tells us that in order to understand the prehistory of the little girl, one has to go right back to the Minoan-Mycenaean period- so beyond even Oedipus. He feels that something's been lost, and he experiences an acute nostalgia, and I think that in one of the passages of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, a very brief one but one which I think is extremely important, he touches on something extremely significant: the birth, in the shadows, of the umbilical cord of the dream. Perhaps you can see there the return to the Delphic *omphalos:* I think that, underneath, Freud is fascinated by mythical allusions. He speaks also about the return of the shades of the Odyssey - this *is* his way of explaining the dream, through the return of Odysseus, the reference to the shades greedy for blood, coming to take the blood of the living - without being too positivist about it, you could explain the dream that way. I believe that Freud is fascinated by another level: so one can study Freud as much by trying to consolidate the edifice, making it consistent with itself, as by trying to understand the whole rite of initiation which is carried out in *The Interpretation of Dreams.* This is a magnificent construct: there's a myth here which is quite close to the myth of Genesis. At the outset Freud supposes that the child's dream is completely clear, in no way obscure: it has a pure truth about it, as if the child were in the garden of Eden. And then comes the mention of the uncle in Freud's tale, who (although he doesn't say it) seems to have led a counterfeit existence, and to have introduced falsehood into Eden. And the following chapter is about the corruption of the dream, which shows us that all our dreams are now corrupted. So all this can be interpreted as being about the intrusion of an evil character, and it can be read as a replica of the Genesis myth: at a certain point evil appears, and it is tied to deception, disguise and the figure of the fake. This is an attempt on the part of the psychoanalyst to rediscover desire, as if one could discover it within a garden of Eden, and discover it *through* a layer of falsehood.

RM: Leaving Freud and going to Wittgenstein: you've written on Wittgenstein, which is pretty rare in Paris, I suppose, and it is as both philosopher and psychoanalyst that you've dealt with his writings. What do you see as the importance of Wittgenstein for psychoanalysis?

MS: I think that Wittgenstein *should* be very important for psychoanalysis, but he's an obscure figure, hidden from view in a way: obscured by the French approach which is much too dominated by its Greek background, not so much by Plato as Platonism - the dualism of the later Platonist tradition. At a recent conference at which the philosophy of language was on the agenda, it was impossible to raise the subject of Wittgenstein: the discussion was dominated by the signifier/signified distinction, and in contemporary French psychoanalysis there is a kind of idolatry of the word, the word whether pronounced, or written down in textual form. You could say that it is in fact text idolatry which is the distinguishing feature of French psychoanalysis: we examine the discourse of a patient as if it were in textual form. Well. . . idolatry is not really the term; I should say. . .

RM: Fetishism?

MS: Yes, perhaps fetishism *(laughter).* This comes from the fact that many psychoanalysts are of Jewish origin, which is a very valuable thing in one way, because of the importance of the Jewish tradition and the mythical resonances of such figures as Abraham and Moses, for example. But there comes with it an emphasis on the sacred text, whereas the whole history of psychoanalysis attributes enormous importance to the living word, to anything resembling a language game. What interests me in Wittgenstein is that he makes it possible to activate the dualism inherited from philosophy on one side and French psychoanalysis on the other, by bringing back into the word

the dimension of life itself, the word itself, not the textual word. He talks a lot about breathing, or thought. . . thinking - it's like walking. Breathing, playing too: what's important in Wittgenstein is the sense of rhythm, of pulsation, the movement which animates the word. The fact that for him you escape the Greek fear of the Sirens' song; in the fear of the Sirens entertained by the ancient Greeks, and by contemporary French thinkers as well, there is presupposed a clear distinction between statement and intonation. I've been astounded to read in certain linguists: 'we must escape from the magic of intonation.' It's as if now, like Ulysses, we must once more tie ourselves up, or block our ears, in order not to hear the Sirens' song.

Wittgenstein is a philosopher who is not afraid to listen to the song of the Sirens: there are many passages in which he presents intonation not as a mode of seduction which has been superimposed on the word, as it were, but as that which enables the understanding of the message itself. So there's no trace of the dichotomy which usually functions in enquiries of this kind. And another thing that interests me in Wittgenstein is the use of certain typical word-forms, which are frequently considered, like the cry 'I'm in pain', 'something's hurting me': take the first major dream of Freud, the dream about Irma's injection. What is the first word of the dream that Freud hears in the mouth of the patient? 'If only you knew how much pain I'm in.' For Wittgenstein the question raised by such a statement is the one about the identity of the sufferer: what is the difference between the statement 'I'm in pain' and 'Ludwig Wittgenstein is in pain'? The problem he raises is that of whether there is a *subject* of pain, a subject speaking in pain. I think that it's essential to consider this at the psychoanalytic level because it makes it possible to link language and what's called the affect, or emotion. Even in Freudian psychoanalysis, too much of a distinction has been made between the statement and the affect. There is an implication that the affect can only be understood as quantity, quantity of emotion: it's supposed not have any message. In my opinion violence has been done here to the psychoanalytic *hearing* of the word: when somebody speaks, what he says is the focus of attention, and the suffering in what he says, the seductive quality of the language he uses, which penetrates everything that is said, is neglected. The suffering colours the whole of what is said. And I think this is the point sent back to Freud by the patient who says to him: 'If you knew how much pain I'm in.' It's for this reason I'm tempted to call my last book 'Father don't you see': I think that Freud, in his capacity as theoretician and interpreter of texts, disallows the childhood of language, if you like, everything about language which goes beyond the level of the text itself. Wittgenstein on the other hand allows you to re-hear the breathing element in language, everything which is genuinely alive in the text - its energy, the many gestures of intonation. So language is not locked into being nothing more than the statement it contains: on this view you can go much further than the traditional distinction between the subject of the stating and the subject of the statement. Wittgenstein enables us to go much further than the subject who makes the statement: making a statement is taken as a vital thing, and is not merely a matter of the subject.

RM: So the philosophy of language in general is very important in your view?

MS: I think that Wittgenstein is important. Austin is important too. There's another book which is infrequently discussed, by an Israeli woman who spent some time in France and who now teaches in the United States, Shoshana Felman *[The Literary Speech Act: Don Juan with* J.L. *Austin*, trans. Catherine Porter, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1983], and she discusses Austin in order to bring out an aspect that male psychoanalysts often fail to recognize - the whole question of seduction. She compares Austin to Don Juan and uses Austin's writing in order to show to what extent the word plays an active role in the seduction process. French psychoanalysts in general are quite happy to accept the word as act, the idea that to say is to do, or that the word is an act: but it's only one face of the act which is recognized, and that is the imperative. That's to say the prescriptive element of the word, the hard side, which suggests order: but the seductive side - and here we're back to the Sirens - is kept entirely out of view. Austin opens up an avenue of enquiry with his idea of the implicit performative, which perhaps had already been raised by Wittgenstein; he opens up a way of introducing ethics into the word, and in France it's well accepted that there's an ethical dimension in language, together with a prescriptive or imperative element. What we do not want is the aesthetic or seductive dimension of the word. And these things can be reintroduced through the philosophy of language.

RM: Can we go to some feminist issues? There is a great deal of discussion of the role of the woman in philosophy. Progress has been made, in that many texts have been brought forward which show that there has been not only a role, or absence of one, for women in philosophy, but also an image of the feminine in philosophy, which portrays the woman as weak, lacking in rationality and so on: remarks of this kind may be found in many philosophical documents. It can be seen also that there has been a kind of difficulty on the institutional level for women: it has been practically impossible for women to become philosophers in the institutional sense, from antiquity onwards. In Plato's academy there were no women, and there were very few women philosophers in the whole history of Greek philosophy. There has been a masculine presence in philosophy, and a feminine absence, apparently. Leaving aside the social questions, about institutions, what do you think about the texture, the substance of philosophy itself? Do you think this masculinism has had an important effect on philosophy itself, on the development of philosophy?

MS: I think that is certainly true and several people have demonstrated it. At the present time there are two possible positions: defending a kind of specificity of the female word is one. A lot is said now about female discourse, as if the woman alone were able to say certain sorts of things, and as if she alone were capable of bringing forward certain new ideas. I would like to work in two different directions; to go the way of this specificity of feminine discourse, which could, I think, be linked to the connection between form and logos, and everything which is beyond form and logos. The eclipse of the woman is also the eclipse of the mother, and in the end the first step in philosophy, even if it's not expressed, is in effect the negation of one's childhood, or the sense that it must be rejected. Real philosophy is thought to be a matter of coming out of the cave, out of the state of childhood where we were before becoming men. And I think that the contribution of women is to remain sceptical about already established forms, and to place themselves in the beyond, in the very becoming of forms, as they emerge from the night. I'm thinking of the text of Aeschylus, of the *Eumenides,* and the line 'O mother, my night' [1. 876]: in this transition from the nocturnal to the reign of form, to the imaginary, and to everything that's in movement - I think that here is the contribution of the feminine.

But thinking that women are the only ones who can make this contribution is to remain trapped in a masculine logic, which I would call the philosophy of the sword, the logic of the dichotomy, of difference. This is a view not shared by many feminists, of course. I think that certain male philosophers assist, perhaps, in developing a feminine theoretical perspective. I feel that Wittgenstein is close to this - obviously in certain passages more than others - because ideas are being generated with him, and are not presented in petrified form. Austin also has this side, and there is a Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas [see interview 1], whom I consider to be very important: he presents the psyche as the maternal body, and he talks about the 'elemental', where there is no object, no subject/object distinction. I think also that where there is a kind of self-scrutiny in philosophy - the possibility of discovering certain theoretical tools or certain themes which address women as well, which makes it possible to work within a *confusing* of the difference - in all these dimensions there can be a contribution which is masculine in origin.

RM: Could I ask you to define 'forms' a little more closely: the 'forms' about which you said that it might be the role of women to remain sceptical?

MS: Oh yes. . .

RM: Are they Structures of thought, or dominant modes?

MS: Something instituted or established; I understand form as the procedure which permits one to establish oneself as tomb monument. In Freud, in *The Interpretation of Dreams,* scientific truth is compared in a way (it's my comparison) to a tombstone: I'm not so hostile to form, it's not a matter of being against *forms,* but of seeing from what movement, from what genesis the forms take their origin. This whole matrix, or womb, of the imagination, of the senses, of the sensitivities, enables the emergence of forms. Perhaps this is rather a personal position: I can't manage to accept psychoanalysis as it has established itself, as a monument, a tombstone; I want to get back to the originating process, to return continually to the moment of birth. So maybe I'm stuck in a birth framework, wanting to see the gestation of things, but the passion for gestation is perhaps equally as important as the passion for the institution, or the building . . . or what's circumscribed in a rigidified form.

RM: It's true that if there's too much insistence on feminine specificity, a kind of prison is created for women, and perhaps for men as well . .

MS: I think so, yes. . .

RM: And there is another tendency, perhaps it doesn't exist in France to the same extent, towards what might be called androgynism. This is a tendency to identify the sexes, or to create a kind of mediation, a central point at which one can say that the two are the same: there are dangers in this, because difference doesn't figure.

MS: Yes, but the important thing is not to structure the problem so that it's *either* difference *or* androgynism. The androgynous idea can be of value in its critical aspect, and not only in its mythical aspect. There is a zone of confluence, and here a psychoanalytic point about male sexuality is very relevant: by seeking too much difference, Freud amputated the vision of the male sex. Perhaps it is dishonest to allude to an operation which actually took place, in which he requested that the tracts connecting the penis and the testicles be severed. For Freud the testicles have an important imaginative significance: for the man, they're the equivalent of the breasts, or of the maternal dimension of fruitfulness and creation of life. I would think it's essential, even for men, and I think that this is part of the scientific or medical imaginary at the present time, to reintroduce men into the circuit of life. To create a suture so that masculine thought is not only a matter of the phallus, or of the penis, which identifies masculinity. The idea of difference by itself mutilates both sexes. So something is at work, on the side of both men and women, and I think that if we escape the trap of dichotomous thought we can accept that there is an intermediary zone. Above all for Ferenczi who presents sexual union, or amorous behaviour, as a way of putting sexual difference at risk, in a dynamic way, for a time. So the sexes would recognize each other, each in the other, in a moment of indifferentiation, which doesn't exclude returning to a position which may be characterized by difference. I think that androgyny, and passing through androgyny, is not something to be afraid of.

RM: To conclude, could you tell us what you are working on at present?

MS: I'm taking up the trail of several things I've already touched on, but in particular I want to look at the world of tales and fables, and the question of how these are structured, by comparison with myth. There's a whole series of anonymous tales, and in the more terrifying ones everything concludes with the death of the child. These tales tend to be set aside, and I think that there is here a mode of living beyond or outside forms, being in the forest - the trip through the forest. This is a very important aspect of fables, and one doesn't see the same thing at all in myth, unless it is through the image of the labyrinth, which is, however, much more circumscribed. In this way it can be said that the hero of the fable differs from the hero of the myth, and this appears to me to be very important for the feminine imaginary, because the forest could represent the woman, if you like. It is particularly the question of time in the fable which interests me, and I want to develop this in opposition to structuralism, which tends to reject the temporal dimension. I want to explore the pulsation of the fable, its breathing, its temporality. And beyond that, I would like to investigate the origins of the feminine (l' *originaire feminin)* in relation to this separation of the maternal and the feminine, since at a certain point feminists demanded a form of emancipation which did not take account of the maternal to an adequate degree, and were even apprehensive of the notion of maternity.

I want also to look at fatherhood, and how the father can cease to be imprisoned - he's as alienated as the woman in my view - in his metaphors, rigid, vertical metaphors which cut him off from life. The 'true father' really means the one who is dead: the male is invited to see himself in terms of a model according to which he is already dead - before his birth. There's a vision of manhood, a rather final vision, which fossilizes the man. Beyond that I would like to return to the problem of the affect, or perhaps it would be better to speak of the imaginary, and the

problem of what it is to become conscious *of* something, the problem of knowing. How do we gain access to knowledge? In this context Plato is very important because knowledge for him is a transformation.

RM: Yes. When you say the' *originaire'* of the woman, it's difficult to translate. I've already some difficulty with *'imaginaire'*.

MS: Oh, of course it's Athena who presides over the setting-up of things in Greece, and she had no mother. A fine passage of Nicole Loraux says 'to think that she's never known the darkness of a womb *(matrice)'*. What is it in this woman which allows her to experience herself, to recognize herself, while at the same time remaining in darkness, not knowing whether what she shelters in herself is a part of herself or a part of her mother. So the relationship to darkness, to the womb, to the belly, is very important for women, and the whole movement of the Enlightenment tended to empty out the womb. Purging the womb was necessary, if ideas were to be clarified.

RM: So the *originaire* is not the theory of origins, but the site, or the ensemble of origins . . .?

MS: The beyond the birth of form. The not-seeing woman as the equivalent of Pandora, who is in fact already a constructed form. I think that this vision of the form as it were protects against another vision of woman: when a woman is pregnant she is carrying a life, but this life she does not know. So I think it is possible to suppose that one may not know the form in itself, and this can be described as not knowing. I'm opposed to the idea of a female discourse, in which women speak about themselves as if they know who they are, as women. I think that women come to realize themselves at the moment at which they do not in fact know what they are going to bring forth. For me the relation mother-child remains captivating, and I'm greatly interested in the myth of Demeter, a myth of great power: when she loses her daughter, she does not know her form; she has simply heard a cry. Here we're back to Wittgenstein; she will travel the whole world to find her again. Where is what she's lost? What has she lost? It's something that can be reborn anywhere: every time a plant springs up from the earth, it could be her daughter. That's what I mean by the *originaire*, something beyond the established form, a kind of wandering principle, according to which one knows neither who one is, nor whom one seeks.

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