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Abstract

This thesis examines the function of "chaos" and "cosmos" as understood through its spellings, conceptual roles and affects within the contexts of two discourses: philosophical and psychoanalytic. The bifurcated framework of this project attempts, firstly: to examine the cosmologies of Deleuze’s "Difference and Repetition" and Lacan’s tenth seminar on anxiety from within the limits of each field, rather than through a relational model in which the singularity of each is compromised and, secondly: to thereby offer a conceptual elucidation of "chaos" and "cosmos" – two dimensions that scholarship in each discourse commonly relegates to metaphorical status. In the former text, the Joycean neologism "chaosmos" is employed on several occasions that either tacitly or explicitly elucidate Deleuze's interpretation of Nietzsche. Recourse to "chaosmos" provides "Difference and Repetition" with its broadest possible vantage point; a genesis of the universe seen through its internal, rather than external, negative differences and, given the term's frequent occurrence alongside Nietzsche’s model of the eternal recurrence, a cosmological cycle that differentiates chaos into cosmos, ad infinitum. For Lacan, his emphasis and continual return to the relation between "the world" and "the stage" undergirds his critique of Claude Lévi-Strauss's notion of "the world" as expressed in "The Savage Mind.” To examine this moment as prefiguring Lacan's break with structuralism is certainly insightful in its own right yet this well-documented rupture, in my reading, also provides a tool that works to expose the "world" and "cosmos" implicit to Lévi-Strauss's notion of structure. Ultimately, beneath both of these chapters is the foundation of a single question: Is the absolute limit of a discourse’s conception of either the “cosmos” of "chaos" a point which inevitably converges with external fields or, perhaps more significantly, does this point mark a space without extension?
Chapter I

_Difference & Repetition: A Circular Chaosmos_

As the title of Gilles Deleuze's _Difference and Repetition_ would suggest, the proposal of Deleuze’s project is the undertaking and reimagining of two enormous dimensions of Western philosophy. On the one hand, Deleuze attempts to present philosophy from the other side of the mirror. Rather than subordinate _difference_ through its representation in a given concept, Deleuze’s notion of the concept depicts its internal difference rather than its external and thus its _negative_ difference. On the other hand, the second term relates Deleuzian difference to the spatial and temporal dimensions in which it is _repeated_. The critical operation that _Difference and Repetition_ takes on is to elaborate a philosophy of difference within an inverted world, in which the conditions that give rise to difference are firstly articulated and thereafter, represented as a given concept’s determining factors of intelligibility. Such a task turns itself in opposition to classical forms of philosophical representation with the intention of unearthing the differences buried beneath this apparatus. The project of _Difference and Repetition_ would seem to be something of a reversal, and this is precisely the case; “the task of modern philosophy has been defined: to overturn Platonism” (_Difference and Repetition_ 59).

For Deleuze, the philosophical tendency to think difference merely as a lack of resemblance between two dissimilar objects stops at the level of _external_ difference. Philosophical representation dissolves _internal_ difference at the moment in which _external_ difference is articulated. Rather than providing an account of the qualitative, quantitative and thus _internal_ differences that first bring an object into being, philosophical representation instead produces difference by way of explaining that element A is what it is precisely because it is _not_ elements B, C or D. By distinguishing A in this regard these external differences then
account for its *identity*, yet only at an external level. The postulate of Deleuze’s intervention maintains that a concept of difference cannot exist within a system of representation, so long as the system’s concepts and its intelligibility is delimited by a form representation that is only “mediation” between one conceptual difference and another, rather than *articulation* of the concept in-itself. Deleuze endeavors to define the in-itself of difference as *intensity* or, the intensive degrees of quantity and quality that separate one object from another. Deleuze inscribes intensity within a concept of difference precisely because of the role it plays as the differentiator of and between all differences; prior to qualitative or quantitative distinction, intensity traverses the very limit that its movement allows to be retroactively drawn.

Differences of intensity demarcate where one object begins and another ends, it is this movement of intensity or, what Deleuze will call the “dark precursor,” that facilitates retroactive representation in the form of a concept. While difference provides the condition of the possibility of any and all representation, the gesture of representation provides the paradoxical preclusion of differences being shown. In other words, difference in intensity exceeds the very limit that it produces. What separates between differential degrees of intensity simultaneously demarcates the border between one concept and another and consequently, can only represent this as a difference in *kind* thus covering over difference *in-itself*. By contrast, difference in-itself establishes the differences in kind that distinguish between red and orange for example, yet the degrees of intensity that bleed one color into another through this repetition of pure difference remains imperceptible. Ultimately at stake for Deleuze is a meticulous definition of that which allows a concept to be defined and the project he undertakes in *Difference and Repetition* attempts to do so without erasing difference within the limit of its own definition. The movement
of difference, therefore, brings representation into being while the being of difference is simultaneously moved elsewhere.

Deleuze’s world of difference presents intensity as the manifestation of pure difference in-itself, and nevertheless does so without simultaneously eliminating all intelligibility whatsoever. In this dramatic reversal, intelligibility and representation are instead subordinated to the differences in intensity that bring them into being. With this ambition, Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* unravels a cosmos of problems, or to use the Joycean neologism he frequently employs, a *chaosmos* of differences that a cosmos of representation had sought to mask.

*Finnegans Wake*, from which *chaosmos* is borrowed, provides Deleuze’s project with an example to which his work continually returns. Joyce’s *Wake* is cited on several occasions in *Difference and Repetition*, as well as in Deleuze’s other works, as an exemplary world in which difference is manifested in its “properly chaotic” fashion (*Difference and Repetition* 57). The circular structure of *Finnegans Wake*, its hundred letter word and the linguistic and syntactical differences that distort and defer the coherence of virtually every given word provides Deleuze with a literary example to which his own project is conceptually attached. However, the book serves *Difference and Repetition* with more than an example through which difference may be understood within a concept.

The often quoted Joycean neologism, “chaosmos,” appears at four separate occasions in *Difference and Repetition* and only at one of these instants is chaosmos mentioned in relation to Joyce. Chaosmos, on these other three occasions, is raised to the status of ontology, defined as the condition of the world, and is lastly presented as encompassing Nietzsche’s eternal return as "the internal identity of the world and of chaos" (299). With this in mind, the concern of my
project is to address the status of chaosmos within the system developed by Deleuze in
*Difference and Repetition*. If cosmos denote an *already* differentiated world of philosophical
representation, chaosmos exists as its inverted other. Chaosmos reimagines the cosmos of
representation through Deleuze’s lens, by inscribing within the face of the concept its own
*internal* difference rather than through its external resemblance to another object or model.

Much more than a neologism, the space of *chaosmos* in Deleuzian thought marks an
uncharted territory. Commonly, studies of Deleuze explain chaosmos through its association to
Whiteheadian process philosophy, Deleuze’s study of Liebniz in *The Fold* and Deleuzian
approaches to mathematical and scientific systems, all of these with well-warranted justification
and results. More recently, the dominant tendency in Deleuzian scholarship addresses the
antinomy of disorder and order between “chaos” and “cosmos” as anticipatory of dynamic
systems that, like Deleuze’s world, are simultaneously “completed and unlimited” (*Difference
and Repetition* 57). The aim of my critical intervention, however, is to define the concept of
chaosmos through its function in *Difference and Repetition*. The philosophical operation of
chaosmos in *Difference and Repetition* is manifold. Firstly, it connotes an antinomy that requires
it be firstly addressed as a site from out of which Deleuze’s reconceptualized differentiation
unfolds. If Deleuze's distinguishing accomplishment of *Difference and Repetition* is to
reestablish the concept from the ground up beginning from its internal difference, chaosmos
designates the explosion of difference from which this reestablishment begins. By examining
chaosmos through the role it occupies in *Difference and Repetition*, with recourse to Deleuze's
occasional references to the term in *The Logic of Sense* and to the aforementioned scholarly
insights, my aim is to reposition chaosmos within *Difference and Repetition* as a term understood
through its conceptual importance rather than as a Joycean neologism defined only through
external discourses. Attempting to understand “chaosmos” on its own terms, that is, specifically within the context of *Difference and Repetition*, might clarify several of the following topics in Deleuzian scholarship in addition to elucidating our own understanding of Deleuze’s thought. Firstly, chaosmos explicates Deleuze’s notion of “the fractured I,” a Rimbaudian phrase which frequently occurs in his readings of Kant. Deleuze later makes reference to “the fractured I” during a moment in which the stakes of the project, as well as chaosmos, are decidedly higher. Deleuze provides an account of ontology that methodically positions chaosmos as a universe of difference “from which the cosmos emerge” and “the fractured I” as the *only* “I” capable of hearing these chaotic “imperatives of Being” (199). This will be explored in greater detail as a moment that articulates Deleuze's conception of chaosmos, Kant and “the fractured I,” but perhaps more importantly, chaosmos here leaves a mark upon the passage that retroactively reflects the transition of *Difference and Repetition* from a Kantian to a Nietzschean position.

By definition an amalgam of “chaos” and “cosmos,” chaosmos is terminologically homogenized while remaining conceptually heterogenous. Chaosmos resists conceptual articulation in the same manner that the Deleuzian (and certainly, the Joycean) text that encompasses it systematically refuse to attach a fixed concept to a given topic. By employing the same procedures as the antinomy that defines chaosmos, Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* does not disavow the conceptual apparatus of philosophical representation but rather it produces a coherent philosophical framework upon a homogenous terminology that is conceptually, and strategically, heterogenous.

To recall, the overarching project of *Difference and Repetition* is to provide an account of difference that does not simply rely on negative terms, in which A is defined as A because it is *not* B, C, or D. Deleuze’s attempt is to define difference *prior* to the qualitative and quantitative
individuation upon which a negative account of difference relies. That is, difference may be
defined negatively only after element ‘A’ is produced through a play of quantitative and
qualitative intensities that distinguish element ‘A’ from element ‘B’. Chaosmos, however, stands
at an immediate point of contrast to difference defined in negative terms. At each of the four
moments of Difference and Repetition that refer to chaosmos, it is understood by Deleuze as
ontologically primordial because it precedes the quantitative and qualitative forms in which
differentiation occurs. In other words, chaosmos refuses identity as such if identity is thought to
be defined in differential terms. Rather, chaosmos is both chaos and cosmos. It resists any
attempts to be understood a chaos that precedes cosmos or as the inverse, chaosmos is instead
that from which the quantitative and qualitative modes of differentiation that form identity are
first made possible.

Quoting from the sentence fragment that concludes Finnegans Wake and which is
completed only through reading and hence, re-reading the book’s opening fragment, Deleuze
first writes of chaosmos; "Joyce presented the vicus of recirculation as causing a chasmos to
turn” (57). Joyce’s “recirculation” readily offers Deleuze an exemplary model of a concept seen
through the lens of difference; the Wake itself, whose fragmentary identity emerges from the
deliberate equivocation presented by nearly every word in Joyce’s infinite book. The language of
the Wake is the vocabulary of difference, this may perhaps be true in the Sausserean sense that its
system is both arbitrary and differential but more specifically, its differences are eminently
presented through the spelling of each word in addition to its differential, equivocal meanings.
Most notably for Deleuze, of course, is Joyce’s “reamalgamerg(ing)” of the disorder of chaos
and the order of cosmos into “chaosmos” (Finnegans Wake 49). The work of Joyce, for Deleuze,
also “remains a question of drawing together a maximum of disparate series (ultimately, all the
divergent series constitutive of the cosmos)” (121). The metaphorical recourse taken by Deleuze allows him to return to one of the foundational tenets of *Difference and Repetition*: in the last analysis, quantitative and qualitative individuation of differences in intensity underscore *difference as the being of the sensibile*. The divergence between one series and another is sensed only through a sign of divergent movement. In turn, the sign produced in this divergent motion allows for the distinction between two series and thus, for the identity of each. The chaotic displacement of sense from one heterogenous “series,” or sentence, to another, in which the semantic meaning of one sentence depends on its relation to the sentence that follows it is ultimately, for Deleuze, that which is “constitutive of the cosmos.” In other words, meaning is always-already displaced from one series, sentence or concept to another and, taking into account the circular structure of *Finnegans Wake*, precludes a given concept from arriving at a finalized, fixed state.

The syntactical requirement of reading *Finnegans Wake* only through one's re-reading and thus repeating of it, alongside the differences that remain in sight from a word's meaning to its spelling bears a notable resemblance to Nietzsche’s world of the Eternal Return. Quite often, the mention of Joyce in the work of Deleuze is accompanied by and thought in relation to Nietzsche. At this moment in *Difference and Repetition*, such is the case with this first allusion to chaosmos. Deleuze, immediately following this quotation from the *Wake*, adds that “Nietzsche had already said that chaos and eternal return were not two distinct things but a single and same affirmation” (57). Without a doubt, Deleuze’s efforts to inscribe difference within the face of the concept so as to invert the conceptual apparatus of philosophical representation may be thought of as a vastly Nietzschean project. By implication, the chaotic element that Deleuze locates in Nietzsche might also be seen to resonate in the operation of his own system. Chaos, ultimately, is
the result of submitting a fragile, internal identity to pure contingency in the eternal return’s endless repetition. To recall, Deleuze uses internal identity or, internal difference, as a starting point from which he attempts to redefine the identity of the concept. If this internal difference is subjected to the endless repetition of eternal return, chaos is the inevitable response to the uncertainty of what its internal difference will become.

As seen through its internal difference and external repetition, however, a concept would thus lack any determinant identity without any determinant, external model to judge it. Consequently, a sense of “chaos,” in the Nietzschean sense, would emerge as the result of Deleuze’s refusal to attach the concept with a determinate identity. However, if chaos were to be regarded through its relation to Nietzsche’s eternal return, it would not, as is often the case in critiques of “post-structuralism,” represent a term strategically employed by Deleuze to circumvent the need to account for meaning and philosophical coherence. Deleuze clarifies at several moments that this notion of the concept, as well as the methodical system of Difference and Repetition in which this concept is produced, is of an explicitly Nietzschean strain. The “chaos” of eternal return relates to a world “in which all previous identities have been abolished” while the axis that this world revolves upon, for which “returning is being, but only the being of becoming,” highlights the inevitability of a chaos that can only be affirmed (41). In other words, Nietzsche's eternal return imposes the requirement that in order for a concept to be, it must become. “All previous identities have been abolished” purely to clear the path for future iterations. Though the concept appears with only a momentary identity for Nietzsche as for Deleuze, this transient account of intelligibility provides the axis upon which both systems revolve. Ultimately then, the movement of eternal return requires that previous identity is necessarily abolished and while previous meaning, by implication, must also disappear, the
advantage of such a system is that through its prioritization of significance to come it refuses the persistence of a dogmatic, mythologized past.

Deleuze’s attempt to position difference as the question of being and as the being of the sensible presents one of, and very likely, the most complex dimension of *Difference and Repetition*. Deleuze explicitly implicates chaosmos in both of these ambitions. At this moment, amongst several others, the necessity of defining chaosmos in careful relation to *Difference and Repetition* is underscored:

> Ontology is the dice throw, the chaosmos from which the cosmos emerges. If the imperatives of Being have a relation to the I, it is with the fractured I in which, every time, they displace and reconstitute the fractures according to the order of time. (199)

At stake here are the implications of the nonhierarchical relationship that Deleuze highlights between chaosmos and ontology. In this regard, to examine Deleuzian ontology as “a chaosmos from which the cosmos emerges,” is to examine the larger dimension of *Difference and Repetition* in which the development of difference as a concept necessarily precedes the question of Being. Deleuze hints at this specifically through the order with which his claim is structured; chaosmos gives rise to a cosmos and *not the other way around*. The movement from chaosmos to cosmos is a movement from chaos to coherence, disorder to order, and fragmentation to unity. Attributing chaosmos with this *primordial* status serves as a minor operation that operates within a major dimension of Deleuze’s project: to open the ontological question of Being directly onto the question of difference. To postulate chaos *before* cosmos would equate to disorder preceding order, though either case would remain susceptible to the fallacy of the privileged origin. The primordial status of chaosmos, however, avoids this pitfall by leaving one indistinguishable from the other. As a result of articulating chaosmos in this regard, chaosmos would not imply a privileged beginning but rather a site of differentiation.
The movement from chaos to cosmos might be usefully understood through its resemblance to the movement from disorder to order. Jeffrey Bell, for example, has clarified this contrast between chaomos and cosmos by assimilating the pair to the contrast between dynamic and static systems. Imagined through this framework, the implications of Bell’s insight suggest that the Deleuzian cosmology is a dynamic system composed of and sustained by differences. If difference is primordial and thus ontological, the ontological question of Being becomes no more than a rhetorical exercise. Nothing could sufficiently or definitively provide an answer to the question of being, in other words, if it is seen through the lens of difference. Rather than a possible answer, the ontological question of difference would provide a task of elucidating a concept of difference, and subsequently begin the endless articulation of differences between differences that converge only in the ‘chaos’ of a ‘chaomos’ displaced and reconstituted ad infinitum.

As the unpinnable site at which differentiation is first made possible, chaomos is fittingly positioned as the roots of ontology. If ontology remains inextricably tied to the disorder and order of chaomos, such would also remain the case for its subject or self. The both/and nature of chaomos thus bears its blurred mark on the subject. This leads us to Deleuze’s conception of the ontological subject, or, the “fractured I in which, every time,” the questions and imperatives of Being “displace and reconstitute the fracture according to the order of time” (199). If an ontology of chaomos can adequately speak of the “I,” its subject would similarly reflect the disorder and order of chaomos. The subject meets the limits of its determinacy at the cycle or movement of displacement and reconstitution that firstly forms the “fractured I.” Consequently, the cyclical chaomos of Deleuzian ontology fundamentally obscures all attempts to impose a determined concept upon an undetermined being.
Though it would entail an extensive detour, the consideration of Deleuze’s reading of Kant’s ‘Copernican Revolution’ lends a tremendous deal of insight to the way in which Deleuze understands Kant’s “the fractured I,” and as a secondary consequence, whether or not Deleuze’s “fractured I” is solely Kantian. What distinguishes Kantian discourse from so many others and in particular, from Cartesian discourse, is the role of time in its transcendent operation. Deleuze’s reading of Kant considers this possibility but more specifically, considers whether this role should be properly attributed to Kant or to his transcendental contemporaries: “the greatest initiative of transcendental philosophy was to introduce the form of time into thought as such” (Difference and Repetition 87). In any case, the dependence of the transcendental operation on the role of time leads ultimately to the distinction between Cartesian and Kantian thought, often referred to as Kant’s ‘Copernican Revolution.’ Deleuze’s reading of Kant is prefaced by this: the entire Kantian critique amounts to objecting against Descartes that it is impossible for determination to bear directly upon the undetermined. The determination (‘I think’) obviously implies something undetermined (‘I am’), but nothing so far tells us how it is that this undetermined is determinable by the ‘I think’. (85-86)

Kant’s objection to Descartes famous conclusion; cogito ergo sum (‘I think, therefore I am’) is the precipitate therefore arrived at by Descartes. I think and I am designate an empirical difference between thinking and being as two distinct activities without attempting to account for the process that lead to their distinction. In Deleuze’s terms, the determination of the undetermined necessarily implies the form of the “determinable” through which Descartes empirically relates determination and undetermined. Or, to put it another way, I think and I am implies an external difference between thinking and being that separates the two without accounting for the initial conditions that led to their separation. Kant’s transcendental, as opposed to Descartes’ empirical, philosophy introduces the determinable through the form of time. Deleuze writes of Kant’s temporal objection and its results;
no longer in the form of an empirical difference between two Determinations, but in the form of a transcendental Difference between the Determination as such and what it determines... in the form of an internal Difference which establishes an *a priori* relation between thought and being. (86)

Through and because of the form of time, the subject determines its existence through the continual movement of its own self-differing. The difference here, is between the active being (*I am*) and the representation of this being which occurs in *thinking* (*I think*). Time is the form in which both being and thought occur, which consequently leads Kant to the conclusion that must thereby separate the actions of being (*I am*) from its representation thought (*I think*), separation must persist so long as the subject does. Quoting Rimbaud, Deleuze characterizes this condition as “*I as another,*” elsewhere, as “the fractured I” (*Kant’s Critical Philosophy* vii; *Difference and Repetition* 87). What distinguishes the being of the Kantian self, or, of the Kantian “I” from the Cartesian subject is the form through which it determines its own existence. The *I think* can only determine that it *is* (hence, *I am*) through the form of time, as opposed to the simultaneity with which Descartes associates thought and being. Yet this in no way amounts to Kant declaring a solution to the problem of the Cartesian subject. Rather, he introduces a severing. Between *I think* and *I am* is an *I* that remains split by both. Deleuze describes this split, “the activity of thought applies to a receptive being, to a passive subject which represents that activity to itself rather than enacts it, which experiences its effect rather than initiates it, and which lives it like an Other within itself” (86). The passive *I think*, in other words, represents its own selfhood to the active *I am* but the two remain severed by the form of time.

Though time introduces both the condition of the possibility as well as the impossibility of determining the being and thinking of the Kantian Self, Kant adamentaly proposes throughout the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the subject is everywhere and at all times self-identical. “The
fractured I,” or the movement of self-differing between *I think* and *I am*, in Deleuze’s reading of Kant, is

quickly filled by a new form of identity – namely, active synthetic identity; whereas the passive self is defined only by receptivity and, as such, endowed with no power of synthesis...which amounts to a supreme effort to save the world of representation: here, synthesis is understood as active and giving rise to a new form of identity in the I, while passivity is understood as simple receptivity without synthesis. (87)

What this amounts to, for Deleuze, is the introduction of time by Kant’s transcendental philosophy which establishes a transcendental, *a priori* difference between thought and being.

While the form of time that Descartes had ignored would account for the conditions in which the self is determinable, the persistence of time would disbar the unity of the *I think* and the *I am* for both Kant and Descartes. Kant’s *I* is fractured through the form of time, yet Deleuze observes that the fracture is superficially filled and the requirements of representation are met through Kant’s self-identical and thus represented, subject. Kant’s subject remains self identical through the receptivity of the passive self, the specific reason for this being that “as such, [it is] endowed with no power of synthesis.” The passive self (*I think*) is receptive to intuitions but insofar as it is not capable of synthesizing them, the passive *I* remains an unbeknownst “Other.” The fracture of the Kantian subject is ultimately amended by the synthetic identity of the active *I*. I would remain both “fractured” and “another” but as the fracture is filled, in Deleuze’s reading, the I “underwent a practical resurrection.” Consequently, the *I* of Kantianism appears self-identical given that the passive self, insofar as it is receptive but endowed with no power of synthesis, seemingly disappears beneath active synthetic identity (87). Within “a new form of identity in the I,” the Kantian self’s passive dimension remains constitutive of this self. However, Deleuze objects that its inability to synthesize the intuitions to which it is receptive leaves the passive self masqueraded beneath and effectively erased by the active self’s synthetic identity. While Kant’s
‘Copernican Revolution’ introduces time as the determinable boundary between *I think* and *I am*, the *I* is only momentarily bifurcated. Towards the conclusion of the prior chapter, Deleuze hints at this: “A Cogito for a dissolved Self: the Self of ‘I think’ includes in its essence a receptivity of intuition in relation to which *I* is also an other” (58). That is, the passive self (*I think*) is receptive to the intuition of the activity of its active counterpart (*I am*) but the two remain barred from one another by the *time* required for *I think* to represent the activity of *I am*. Yet Deleuze continues, adding that “synthetic identity – and, following that, the morality of practical reason – restore the integrity of the self, of the world, and of God” (58). In Deleuze’s reading, it is necessary that this dissolved Self is resewn for the sake of Kant’s critical and systematic coherence. Kantian critique requires a self-identical subject, thus either time must be extirpated or the Self must bear a semblance of its own similarity less the entire operation collapse. Yet, to recall, the introduction of “the form of time into thought as such” serves as the fulcrum upon which Kant’s ‘Copernican Revolution’ and the foundation upon which his critical philosophy rests (87). Because time is inextricable from Kantian discourse, Deleuze’s reading of Kant highlights that Kant attempts to cover over this gap by inscribing active synthetic identity within the subject in order to efface the fracture between *I think* and *I am* that time had initially constituted. Active synthetic identity then appears to be the *only* dimension of the Self, given that the passive self is receptive to intuitions of the active self but incapable of synthesizing them. Ultimately, for Deleuze, Kant’s discovery of time as a “transcendental Difference” establishes a foundation upon which Kantian discourse may legitimately constitute a unified, transcendental subject.

Rightfully so, Deleuze’s notion of “the fractured I” is thought in relation to Kant’s ‘Copernican Revolution.’ To recall, however, Deleuze’s primary criticism of Kant postulates that “the fracture is quickly filled...giving rise to a new form of identity in the I” (87). Returning to
Deleuze’s conception of *chaosmos* and evaluating it through the opposition between this “new form of [Kantian] identity” and the momentarily “fractured I” would then prove insightful in relation to the previously cited passage:

> Ontology is the dice throw, the chaosmos from which the cosmos emerges. If the imperatives of Being have a relation to the I, it is with the fractured I in which, every time, they displace and reconstitute the fractures according to the order of time. (199)

At first glance, the passage extends the implications of Deleuze’s critique of representation, as well as that of Kantianism, to “the I” and its fractured variant. When specifically considering that the passage follows Deleuze’s previously discussed critique of Kantianism, however, the opposition between “the I” and its fracture would instead appear as the “new form of identity in the I” while the “fractured I” that Kant had sought to erase. In other words Deleuze is not placing Kant’s “fractured I” in opposition to the universal subject, which might commonly be thought to be the case, given his attempts to free difference from beneath its conceptual representation. To the contrary Deleuze makes use of “the fractured I” that Kant had sewn up and, like the “practical resurrection” of the I, situates it against the new Kantian Self (87). “The imperatives of Being” here relate not to the fractured I of Kantianism but to the fractured I that Kantianism had sewn up and that Deleuze seeks to resurrect. In this conception, the active Self of Deleuze’s “fractured I” would exist without “synthetic identity,” given that Deleuze accuses Kant on two occasions, of “restor(ing) the integrity of the self, of the world, and of God” and of “passivity...understood as simple receptivity without synthesis” (58; 87). If anything, the passage may be understood as Deleuze’s attempt to “restore” the integrity of Kant’s *dissolved* Self. Like the result of Kant’s Copernican Revolution then, the fracture of the dissolved Self is “displaced and reconstituted...according to the order of time” (199). Thus, if ontology is the chaosmos from which the cosmos begins then correlatively, the Self is the fractured I from which the I emerges.
The cosmos emerges from the undifferentiated abyss in which it had been indistinguishable from chaos only for a moment, in the same way as the fracture is “displace(d)” only to be “reconstitute(d).” Both procedures necessarily adhere “to the order of time” which, to recall, mediate between the undetermined I am and the determination I think as the form in which undetermined existence is determinable, at the price of separating the two with no possibility of reconciliation. As Jeffrey Bell’s study of Deleuze, Philosophy at the Edge of Chaos, proposes “chaosmos is forever open to an outside it presupposes” (178). Bell frames Deleuzian chaosmos through the lens of dynamic systems which, fittingly, is understood through chaos theory.

Whereas the ontological dimension of Deleuze’s chaosmos encompasses the fractured I in a cycle of displacement and reconstitution, the structural dimension for Bell is “a system that creates itself -- that is, it creates and constitutes the identity it is in response and adaptation to the chaos it is. To be, in other words, is to become” (178). For Bell and Deleuze alike, time introduces order and disorder within each system. For Bell, the temporal duration of chaosmos depends on the ability of a system to unhinge itself from a fixed identity and to adapt to its given environment as necessary. In other words, the determination of the system is determined by the activity of the system yet because it is determinable through time and is “forever open to an outside it presupposes,” chaosmos precludes a fixed definition (178). To recall Deleuze’s reading of Kant; “my undetermined existence can be determined only within time as the existence of a phenomenon, of a passive, receptive phenomenal subject appearing within time” (86). For both then, the form of time presents the medium of determinability while the movement of time negates it.

By the time in which “I think” determines “I am” and thus “displaces” the fracture in the I, the activity of the latter has already “reconstitute(d)” the fracture (199). Deleuze accordingly
characterizes this movement of self-differing elsewhere as the result of “the pure and empty form
of time” which, in addition to his reading of Kant, also describes the reason for the inevitable
self-differing of Bell’s chaosmos (86). Should time necessarily demand this self-differing
movement in Deleuze and Bell, the movement from the cosmos to chaos or, from representation
to difference, in the context of Difference and Repetition might also be thought on the same
terms. Returning to Difference and Repetition, this cyclical motion recalls the book’s first
moment at which Deleuze implies his critique of Kantianism:

A Cogito for a dissolved Self: the Self of ‘I think’ includes in its essence a receptivity of
intuition in relation to which I is already another. It matters little that synthetic
identity…restore(s) the integrity of the self, of the world and of God…for a brief moment
we enter into that schizophrenia in principle which characterises the highest power of
thought, and opens Being directly on to difference, despite all the mediations, all the
reconciliations, of the concept. (58)

Given its minimal attention before (and even after) Difference and Repetition’s 1968 publication,
Deleuze acknowledges the equally minimal amount of significance surrounding the implications
of the Kantian Self’s active synthetic identity. Deleuze instead employs this passing moment of
the fractured I as both a historical example and symptom of difference buried beneath conceptual
representation. The gesture through which Kant’s dissolved self “opens Being directly on to
difference,” would then highlight why in the passage cited earlier, “the imperatives of Being” in
the Deleuzian chaosmos relate only to the fractured I (299). If ontology is “the chaosmos from
which the cosmos emerge,” then for Deleuze, the question of Being thereby opens “directly on to
difference,” even if Kant had only momentarily posed the question in this regard before “the
mediations, [and] all the reconciliations, of the concept” (299; 58). To recall Deleuze’s reading
of Kant, Kant had sought to reconcile this dissolved Self with his own requirements of a subject
that necessarily remains self-identical. For Deleuze, Kant’s “mediation” and “reconciliation”
amounted to the “synthetic identity” of “I am” erasing the fracture in the I as a result of a passive
“I think;” receptive to the intuitions of “I am” but incapable of synthesizing them. This, for Deleuze, was accomplished only at the expense of “restore(ing) the integrity of the self, of the world and of God” (58). God, in this reading, was restored insofar as the active synthetic identity of the Kantian subject covered over the passive self, virtually repeating the spontaneous genesis of the Cartesian cogito (I think, therefore I am). In other words, the thinking of the Cartesian cogito would immediately bring it into being, yet such subject would only resemble an autogeneic God capable of representing its action to its own thought, without the obstruction of time. Deleuze’s criticism here firstly addresses that the Kantian subject retains a semblance of its self-similarity through its incapability of synthesizing the intuitions to which it is receptive. Active synthetic identity allows the subject to represent its own spontaneous action to itself without synthesizing the intuitions of its passive counterpart, thus the simultaneity of action and its representation in synthetic identity parallels the godlike Cogito of Descartes that Kant had originally intended to criticize.

In the sentences that precede the quoted passage, Deleuze writes that contrary to Kant, “Nietzsche seems to have been the first to see that the death of God becomes effective only with the dissolution of the Self” (58). Though the work of Nietzsche follows that of Kant, Deleuze tacitly observes that only in Nietzsche are the Self and God dissolved for more than a passing moment. Whereas the operation of Kantian critique requires a self-identical subject, Nietzsche’s discourse, specifically that of eternal return, functions only once both God and the Self are dissolved. Deleuze adds:

What is then revealed is being, which is said of differences which are neither in substance nor in a subject: so many subterranean affirmations. If eternal return is the highest, the most intense thought, this is because its own extreme coherence, at the highest point, excludes the coherence of a thinking subject, of a world which is thought of as a guarantor God. (58)
For *Difference and Repetition*, eternal return is properly fitting and perhaps, structurally necessary to the logic of Deleuze’s project. Only that which differs is capable of returning in Nietzsche’s cycle, which is to say that substance and subject or, for Kant, God and Self are inevitably extricated from what they had once been attached to. Being could then be revealed only as that “which is said of differences,” since there would no longer be any thing-in-itself or essence to even attempt to grasp amidst the flux of eternal return. Another parallel then emerges with Deleuze’s chaosmos and Bell’s interpretation of it. Just as Bell characterizes chaosmos in relation to a dynamic system “forever open to an outside it presupposes,” Deleuze explains eternal return as “the unlimited of the finished itself” (Bell 178; Deleuze 57). Bell’s description of dynamic systems, to recall, is framed through a quasi-Nietzschean vocabulary; “to be, in other words, is to become,” just as in Deleuze’s reading of eternal return, “returning is being, but only the being of becoming” (Bell 178; Deleuze 41).

That “all previous identities have been abolished” in the eternal return, makes possible both the return of the different or new, and implicitly, the perpetual turn of the cycle (41). At the final moment in which *Difference and Repetition* employs chaosmos as a term, Deleuze appropriately integrates its polarities of chaotic difference and cosmic coherence into Nietzsche’s eternal return. Deleuze writes:

> Nothing which denies the eternal return returns, neither the default nor the equal, only the excessive returns...At the cost of the resemblance and identity of Zarathustra himself: Zarathustra must lose these, the resemblance of the Self and the identity of the I must perish, and Zarathustra must die. Zarathustra-hero became equal, but what he became equal to was the unequal, at the cost of losing the sham identity of the hero. For ‘one’ repeats eternally, but ‘one’ now refers to the world of impersonal individualities and pre-individual singularities. The eternal return is not the effect of the Identical upon a world become similar, it is not an external order imposed upon the chaos of the world; on the contrary, the eternal return is the internal identity of the world and of chaos, the Chaosmos. (299)
Here, Deleuze provides the most explicit account in which the status of chaosmos is clarified. The movements traced within the passage; from excessive to equal, identity to non-resemblance and similarly, from cosmos to chaos, all repeat eternal patterns that amount to the delineation of chaosmos. In other words, if Deleuze designates eternal return as “the internal identity of the world and of chaos,” “Chaosmos” would then encompass both and serve to mediate between chaos and cosmos by submitting one to the other. Chaos, for example, is submitted to cosmos, yet in the same way that “all previous identities have been abolished” through eternal return, cosmos provides only a moment of clarity that is immediately engulfed by the chaos it sought to represent (41). From this passage a number of consequences follow. Firstly, Deleuze had previously spoken of eternal return as “the highest, most intense thought” because it necessarily “excludes the coherence of a thinking subject” (58). Deleuze cites that it is Nietzsche and not Kant, as the first to present this excluded coherence as integral to the system of philosophy rather than a momentary lapse of philosophical intuition. To recall, Kant had restored the fracture while the dissolution of the Nietzschean Self remained, to the contrary, in order to enact the death of God. The loss of resemblance, identity and life that befall Nietzsche’s Zarathustra point to the persistence and even to the indispensability of “the fractured I” not only in Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche but the system of *Difference and Repetition* itself. “The resemblance of the Self and the identity of the I must perish” for Zarathustra, just as the fractured I must be “displace(d) and reconstitute(d) according to the order of time” (299; 199). In this latter passage, Deleuze assures us that “the imperatives and questions with which we are infused do not emanate from the I: it is not even there to hear them” (199). The identity of the “I,” for Deleuze, is of an altogether different nature than the fractured, dissolved Zarathustra. Moreover, Deleuze’s ontology; “the chaosmos from which the cosmos emerge,” infuse *only* the fractured I, which Zarathustra comes
to resemble, with “these imperatives and questions” (199). Deleuze installs the fracture in Zarathustra that had been abandoned in Kant; Zarathustra, in turn, hears the imperatives and questions of a chaotic ontology that a Kantian subject “is not even there to hear” (199). The fracture subjects Zarathustra to a cycle of displacement and reconstitution that, above all, characterizes the law of eternal return. Deleuze thus writes of Zarathustra; “‘one’ repeats eternally, but ‘one’ now refers to the world of impersonal individualities and pre-individual singularities” (299). At the level of the individual, this is precisely the logic of eternal return: the imperatives of the fractured I are precisely these impersonal individualities that ‘one’ occupies only for a moment until the disruption of another. At the level of the world however, eternal return, is “the internal identity of the world and of chaos” and accordingly, defining internal identity by providing an account of internal difference is precisely the ambition of Deleuze’s project.

For this reason, as for the excluded coherence of the Self, eternal return is accordingly “the highest, the most intense thought” for Deleuze (58). Though Kant had momentarily dissolved the Self which, “opens the question of Being directly onto difference,” Deleuze elevates Nietzsche to such a height given that the duration of Kant’s “brief moment of schizophrenia” lasts for a lifetime in Nietzsche (58). The violent manner in which the question of Being is hijacked by eternal return would then clarify the status that Deleuze had ascribed to ontology; “the chaosmos from which the cosmos emerge.” More than a Joycean neologism then, the concept of chaosmos contains the ontological dimension of *Difference and Repetition*.

Deleuze here presents the project of Difference and Repetition certainly as indebted to but nearly as indistinguishable from Nietzsche’s eternal return. Deleuze had specifically sought to provide a systematic account of “pre-individual singularities” or, in other words, of
differences between intensities and forces prior to their qualitative and quantitative individuation, precisely because without these differences, individuation would neither be necessary nor possible (199). The movement of eternal return, then, lends Deleuze a tremendous deal of structural support in terms of defining singularities, as well as “individualities,” without having to default to a model of external, negative difference. Deleuze explicitly underscores the priority of internal difference over its negative counterpart and, in doing so, simultaneously acknowledges the extent to which this is a Nietzschean gesture: “the eternal return is the internal identity of the world and of chaos, the Chaosmos” (299). As a result of repetition in the eternal return, the internal identity of the world is taken as the interplay of forces causally responsible for the external resemblance of the world. The persistence of this or any external appearance is, on the contrary, the result of the continual repetition of eternal return. The external resemblance only appears with consistency because the internal identity of the world continues to operate beneath the surface, continually bringing forth the slightest difference of change that revolves beneath a surface of similarity. In other words, the external resemblance of the same persists only through the repetition of an internal identity that subsists off of imperceptible differences.

Two phenomenon that would otherwise appear as disparate; the world and chaos, each come to resemble the other’s internal identity. However dissimilar both may seem, eternal return produces the internal identity for the world and for chaos and in spite of the incongruity, Deleuze conjoins both as constitutive of “the Chaosmos.” The operation of Deleuze's world, paradoxically with and without identity, refers back to the law of eternal return in which “returning is being, but only the being of becoming.” If the identity or, the being of the world is what it is becoming, this momentary world turns and returns as what it becomes, that is, it returns as its own difference. Again, we are referred back to the chaosmos as a site of order
conjoined with disorder; the order of the identity of the world at this moment and the disorder of the uncertain identity of what the world will return as. The image of the world, through this conception, is presented in accordance with Deleuze’s project — to represent difference within a given concept rather than through its negative relation to that which opposes it.

If survival or return is a strategic game of adaption, eternal return must be the internal identity of the world. Deleuze then necessarily equates this law to chaos in addition the world because it submits internal identity to external adaptability, just as for Bell’s Deleuzian characterization of a chaotic system that “creates and constitutes the identity it is in response and adaption to the chaos it is” (178). For Deleuze and Nietzsche alike, “eternal return relates to a world of differences implicated one in the other, to a complicated, properly chaotic world without identity” (Difference and Repetition 57). Eternal return, as the internal identity that forces the world to revolve and thus to differ from itself, is then the simultaneous and necessary negation of the world’s fixed external identity. Ultimately, eternal return as internal identity provides the rule of Deleuze’s system. To account for the genesis of a concept (by no means limited to the world or chaos) through its internal identity would necessarily submit this identity to the law of eternal return. The concept such a “tortuous” passage only through the excluded coherence of its external resemblance. In other words, external resemblance includes in it the presupposition of a model with which its similarity is judged, a model of the Idea that, since Plato, “founds the entire domain that philosophy will later recognize as its own: the domain of representation filled by copies-icons, and defined not by an extrinsic relation to an object, but by an intrinsic relation to the model” (The Logic of Sense, 268; emphasis mine). The internal identity of a concept, to be sure, is not “judged” by the “model” of eternal return; eternal return is not a model but a law to which the concept submits itself. Channeling further attention to the
Nietzschean tenets that found the project of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze writes: “the wheel in the eternal return is at once both production of repetition on the basis of difference and selection of difference on the basis of repetition” (*Difference and Repetition* 42). The operation of eternal return is thus the absolute reversal of the Platonic domain of representation. Opposed to the model of the Idea on which resemblance and likeness are judged, the law of eternal return is a continued repetition of difference. This difference is selected only to produce its repetition, to produce the previous iteration *within* its identity. Whereas Platonic resemblance is determined in relation to the unchanging essence of the Idea rather than other objects, resemblance in the eternal return “can only be thought of as the product of this internal difference” (*The Logic of Sense*, 269). It is not the “model” that judges the object; the eternal return is rather the requirement of difference between the given object and that which precedes and thereby, *repeats* it.

The model of the Idea serves to regulate the judgement of the copy with a metaphysical criterion of identity. Deleuze’s intervention problematizes this transcendent model at the limit of its function, at the *external* determination of concept and copy:

> It is no longer the Platonic project of opposing the cosmos to chaos, as though the Circle were the imprint of a transcendent Idea capable of imposing its likeness upon a rebellious matter. It is indeed the very opposite: the immanent identity of chaos and cosmos, being in the eternal return, a thoroughly tortuous circle. (128)

The first of many propositions worth calling attention to is the priority of chaos and cosmos, as *immanent*, over the Idea as *transcendent*. Deleuze here sets up a Kantian opposition between transcendent and immanent, the latter term which is not to leave the same connotation as the “plane of immanence,” a term of monumental importance in the later work of Deleuze as well as his collaborative work with Felix Guatarri. The transcendental status of the Kantian Idea may be understood as follows. Existing only as the ideal solution, the Kantian Idea appears only through
the form of a problem, it may be thus be understood as transcendent while the means of its solvability understood as immanent. The Idea, understood in this regard, serves to regulate and engender thought as the Ideal solution to the immanent conditions of the problem. If the Idea exists only through the tangible form of a problem, then solving the problem at hand through employing the ideal solution as that which regulates the problems solvability would not then manifest the Idea, but instead reposition it elsewhere. The Idea does not appear once the problem is solved but only results in a new problem that the initial solution gives rise to. To inquire into the transcendental conditions that determine the concept of a given object as presented in immediate, immanent experience is, for Kant, a proper use of the Ideas. However, to inquire into the transcendental conditions that determine the originary genesis of such a concept is to reach beyond these immediate conditions of possible experience and into a “transcendent Idea” that will only give rise to a transcendental illusion. Plato’s model relies on a “transcendent Idea, meaning that the Idea serves as that which the copy is judged off of, but as the model by which the copy is judged, this Idea cannot be represented.

Regardless of whether or not the transcendent Idea imposes the likeness of a coherent cosmos upon a chaos that represents either the copy or the simulacra, chaos would represent no more than a passing moment in the cosmos of representation. Yet by asserting the status of immanence rather than defaulting to Plato’s transcendent model of the Idea, Deleuze endeavors one step deeper into the question of difference and one step away from the Platonic questions of internal likeness determined by external resemblance.

Before proceeding any further, it is worth noting that immanence, for Deleuze, does not yet immediately connote his famed injunction to “overturn Platonism” (Difference and Repetition 57). “The immanent identity of chaos and cosmos,” in other words, is not the reversed
position of the “Platonic project of opposing the cosmos to chaos,” but is instead Deleuze’s attempt to equate the two. Rather, only after the chaos of eternal return swallows up the cosmos of the Idea is Platonism reversed. The preceding passage equates chaos and cosmos only within the context of an *already* hierarchical relationship. “The immanent identity of chaos and cosmos” is situated as the counterpart of the “transcendent Idea capable of imposing its likeness upon a rebellious matter” (128). Conjoining both aspects of this immanent identity, chaosmos is the force that circulates moments of cosmos with moments of chaos. The immanence of chaos articulates the *immediacy* of Deleuze’s concern; the movement of a philosophical system is to begin from the minutiae of difference and proceed outwards. This procedure demands the retention of the minor and trivial differences with its expansion, with the bridging of one concept to another, whence Deleuze’s emphasis upon the *immanent* rather than the *transcendent*. Chaosmos is not opposed to cosmos, chaosmos *contains* cosmos. With this in mind, Deleuze’s assertion that “it is no longer the Platonic project of opposing the cosmos to chaos” implies a series of consequences for the means by which chaosmos is to be understood (128). The opposition of cosmos to chaos emerges as the correlative opposition between representation and difference, being and becoming, the model of the Idea and eternal return and the external and internal criterion with which the identity of the concept is determined. As “the immanent identity of chaos *and* cosmos,” the allegiance of chaosmos would not be to either side, but to both (128; emphasis mine).

Chaosmos is, above all, a cyclical game of submission and extraction. Chaosmos submits one to the other, extracting the submission so as to endow it with the same dominance it was once submitted to. It is the assurance that the clarity of cosmos is transient, lest it become dogmatic. “The immanent identity of chaos and cosmos,” “the displacement and reconstitution of
the fractured I,” “the internal identity of the world and of chaos,” “the wheel in the eternal return;” chaosmos is the inverted universe of *Difference and Repetition*. Chaosmos is not simply the world, or its internal identity but that which allows for the perpetuation of “a properly chaotic world without identity” by submitting its internal identity to eternal return and chaos (57). Chaosmos is the possibility that difference is conceptually represented, rather than distorted. Deleuze’s project of internal difference is necessary because of the demands of the external site at which they are individuated; the Chaosmos. Chaosmos is neither chaos nor cosmos, it is the project of *Difference and Repetition*. 


To write about a work of Jacques Lacan’s, almost by definition, means to engage with at least one given topic on no less than three given registers. Of course, Lacan’s three registers — the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real — immediately come to mind, and while the conceptual difficulty of distinguishing and relating the dimensions of this tripartite model commonly presents a challenge that seems insurmountable, this difficulty is but the first. The conceptual challenges that Lacan presents to his audience are more often than not encompassed within a larger rhetorical challenge that, again, is manifold. On the one hand, Lacan’s stylistic approach demands a thorough and, above this, a patient reader though on the other hand, this style carries within itself an injunction of deciphering his maximal semantic utility. An example of this would be the problematic set up in his tenth seminar through the opposition between the world and the stage. The pairing of these terms allows Lacan strategic recourse to the postulates of his mirror stage, to the staging of Hamlet’s revenge and to his critique of the “homogeneity” of the “world” that’s established in Claude Lévi-Strauss’s The Savage Mind, to name but several. Yet these elements, disparate as they might reasonably seem, serve as integral components which Lacan synthesizes as he gradually establishes their relations to the overarching questions addressed by his seminar: the status of object a in the fantasy, the role of anxiety in relation to the Real and the relation of the affect of anxiety itself to object a. In spite of the brief extent to which its been addressed, this relation established between literary, anthropological and his previous psychoanalytic texts to the primary questions of Lacan’s seminar on anxiety nevertheless introduces the myriad of concepts that he tirelessly attempts to connect and,
indirectly speaking, underlines the limits that must necessarily be imposed if one is to intelligibly write of his work. However, to examine even a handful of particulars in Lacan’s anxiety seminar offers a singular illustration of what are perhaps the broader dimensions and implications of Lacanian psychoanalysis in addition to the seminar itself.

With this in mind, the question we are asking concerns the status of cosmism, of the world and of the stage in Lacan’s tenth seminar. This question finds its justification in a rigid distinction that Lacan makes during the third session of his seminar, in which he addresses two dimensions that remain irreducible to and irreconcilable with one another. For psychoanalytic praxis, Lacan observes that “this object of desire oughtn’t to be confused with the object defined by epistemology. The advent of the object of our science is very specifically defined by a particular discovery of the efficacy of the signifying operation as such” (*Seminar X* 37). Between epistemology and psychoanalysis stands a single object. Yet from within the structures of each framework, the object appears as configured in such a manner that renders it imperceptible through any other lens. Psychoanalysis, on the one hand, grounds a conception of the object reflexively observed through the strictures “of the efficacy of the signifying operation as such” (37). Epistemology, on the other, presents a configuration of the object as it appears from within the established rules of “the signifying operation” or, as reflected through two of Lacan’s three registers — the Imaginary and the Symbolic, both of which will be later explained in further detail. Such a concept of the object which actively accounts for a distortion that is inextricable from “the signifying operation” of language itself affords Lacan a vantage point that is, in his reading, strictly inaccessible through epistemological procedures. “This means that what is specific to our science,” he adds, “leaves open the question of what I earlier called the cosmism of the object” (37). By incorporating the linguistic medium through which the object is studied
into the study of the object itself, the psychoanalytic operation “leaves open” its relation to the world, with the cosmos to which it belongs and ultimately, to what it attempts to grasp. It is, in other words, an action that inscribes its own form within its own content. Standing in contrast to this, the epistemological, structural effort to describe a world through a series of fixed and thus, closed statements, laws and opposing terms for Lacan, remains by definition barred from any insight beyond the immediacy of its context.

So as to provide all due respect to the exclusive and ultimately particular insights of Lacan’s account of psychoanalysis and to Lacan's account of “epistemology,” each domain of Lacan’s thought and, for that matter, of Lévi-Strauss’s will be later examined with greater attention to detail. For the sake of establishing clarity as well as a guiding thread, however, another way of articulating the stakes of these topics may be understood through the differences between an account of the object and an account that considers what insists or rather, demands that this object is necessary of any consideration in the first place. Standing at the first pole is Lévi-Straussian epistemology while at the latter, of course, is Lacan’s critique of it – at the former lies the question of the world while at the latter, an interrogation of the stage that this world turns upon.

Before Lacan’s most explicit engagement with Lévi-Strauss, which takes place during the third session of seminar, he briefly recalls the postulates put forth in seminal essay on the mirror stage which to a certain degree, provide the foundation of his critique. With reference to “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,”

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1 Here meaning his respective position as formulated up to and through his lectures on anxiety delivered from November 1962 to July 1963.
2 Primarily concerning his critique of Claude Lévi-Strauss’s foundational work in structural anthropology and, in particular, to his 1962 text The Savage Mind.
Lacan reminds his audience that “the subject is constituted in the locus of the Other, constituted by its mark, in relation to the signifier” (31-2). In other words, this stage constitutes the inaugural moment in which the infant recognizes itself explicitly through the mirror’s reflection of its own image, though the concern that Lacan expresses specifically with respect to the infant reflects a twofold issue. On the one hand, the infant’s recognition of his or her specular image implies the moment “in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form” (Écrits 76). Of indispensable importance here is the primordial status assigned to “the I,” meaning that the possibility of an illusory subject, self or ego, is and must be preceded this moment of “the I’s” precipitation. On the other hand is the significance of the following moment in which occurs an irreversible act of severing between the I and the subject. Lacan explains that this primordial moment of recognition is immediately followed by the “movement” in which the infant turns around “to the one supporting him who’s there behind him…and then back to the image…asking the one supporting him, and who here represents the big Other, to ratify the value of this image” (32). Strictly speaking, the infant’s recognition of the I is purely a transient manifestation. Upon his or her awareness of “the big Other” or, the parent, acting as the infant’s physical support, the infant is constituted for life as an ego “that will only asymptotically approach the subject’s becoming” (Écrits 76). Identification in the mirror stage is not a moment of self-recognition but one of misrecognition [méconnaissance]. The infant henceforth no longer recognizes themselves as I but as ego, as the appearance of the Other’s desire. The image functions mutually for the Other as for the infant: valued by the infant because the infant is desired by the Other, valued by the Other as the stand in of their desire. We are thus referred back to Lacan’s explanation that “the subject is constituted in the locus of the Other” while the subject as such remains elsewhere.
This absent subject as “constituted by…the relation to the signifier,” that is, inscribed into language, reflects one of Lacan’s broader positions. Just as I desire to see what has fallen away from or what lies beyond the limit of the mirror’s image, for the subject to be inscribed within language something must likewise be left over in speech. That which is left over is that which the ego desires. The mirror stage brings into play the question of desire, which Lacan never ceases to remind us is, in the last analysis, the “desire of the Other” (22). On desire, Jacques Alain-Miller writes that:

all speech is demand; it presupposes the Other to whom it is addressed, whose very signifiers it takes over in its formulation…There is no adequation between the need and the demand that conveys it; indeed, it is the gap between them that constitutes desire…That is why Lacan co-ordinates it not with the object that would seem to satisfy it, but with the object that causes it. (Seminar XI 278-79)

Alain-Miller’s insight here is firstly to highlight the permanence of the gap between the demand to speak and the need to hear a response. The Lacanian understanding of language might then be imagined as language without telos: this unbridgeable gap exceeds any and every possibility of a final re-appropriation, whether metaphysical or theological. It is thus absolutely Other.

In the same way that a mirror very literally has physical limits, the image shown by the mirror is fundamental because of its limitation. It broaches the topic of desire by way of this limit insofar as its image does not show me who I am, but who I would like to appear as for the Other. This image is fundamental, in another way, because of its limitation as an inherently castrated object. Castration, in other words, is the inability of the libidinal image to capture all libidinal investment; castration is the very limit of the image. By definition, the image is founded upon a remainder insofar as it does not include everything. Castration can thus usefully be thought of as that which is cut out of the image, while this excess libidinal reserve may similarly be thought of
as that which the photograph could not visually depict or include. For Lacan, this limitation constitutes a fundamental dimension of the visual field; I continue to look because I continue looking for that which I cannot currently see, because of that which does not currently appear. At the castrating site of the mirror the object falls away from the body, lying somewhere beyond this side of the mirror and behind desire, functioning ultimately as its cause. The site of this fetishized object of desire [objet petit a] is that of a non-site, it is by definition a site which fails to appear and therefore constitutes the reason I continue to look.

Returning to the seminar’s immediate context, Lacan elucidates his description of the child’s “movement” and its implications, adding that it marks the “inaugural nexus between this relation to the big Other and the advent of the function of the specular image, noted by i(a)” (32). The specular image is firstly imaginary because as an image, it embodies a limit that by definition leaves something out. The limit and that which lies beyond it opens onto Lacan’s overarching concern with the question of anxiety. Within the Lacanian function i(a), a signifies the image. Insofar as a serves as a function of i, the a thus serves as that which stands in for and functions within the place of the other’s desire as marked by i. The little other that a demarcates, in other words, is always in the position of the other’s object of desire. The image, which ultimately belongs to the Imaginary dimension of the Lacanian registers, is endowed with an inextricably fictional structure to the extent that the image does not present what the infant believes him or herself to appear as, but rather as the image and object of what the Other desires. This brief summary ultimately, for Lacan, functions as a variation of the mirror stage modified so as to seamlessly inscribe it within the structural framework of anxiety. Such a mode of identification not only demarcates “the inaugural experience of recognition in the mirror” but insofar as it does so the mirror stage also unfolds as the primal scene of anxiety (32).
Lacan explains the demarcation of the specular image (“noted by i(a)”) and following this, poses a rhetorical question that momentarily leads beyond but ultimately back to psychoanalytic discourse: “But need we stick at this level?” (32). Answering this question himself, Lacan turns to the name most commonly associated with structural anthropology, (and perhaps most frequently to Jacques Derrida’s critique of structuralism) Claude Lévi-Strauss. In relation to Lacan, the work of Lévi-Strauss is often and rightfully cited as largely foundational to Lacan’s own texts and the friendship between the two often noted. Here, however, Lacan enlists Lévi-Strauss’s seminal text, *The Savage Mind*, as an initial step beyond the dimension of both the specular image and the object as preserved by anxiety and into that of structural anthropology, a domain in which anxiety remains forcibly neutralized. Before explicating his position, Lacan prefaces his critique: “what Claude Lévi-Strauss has put forward in his book, *The Savage Mind*…is in the spotlight at the moment and whose close relationship with what we have to say this year you’re going to see” (32). As for the critique itself, Lacan focuses on one particular dimension of *The Savage Mind*, which he introduces as “the gap in the face of which more than one of you have for the moment come to a standstill…the opposition between what [Lévi-Strauss] calls analytic reason and dialectical reason” (32). Rather than revise and support one of two sides in Lévi-Strauss’s opposition, Lacan instead assails both dimensions. This takes shape by way of situating a tertiary, external opposition between psychoanalytic reason, a form belonging to Lacan by way of Freud, and the oppositional gap constitutive of Lévi-Strauss’s claim. Lacan, with reference to Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams*, recalls the foundations of psychoanalytic reason:

Freud initially introduces the unconscious as a locus that he calls *ein anderer Schauplatz*, an other scene. From the beginning, from the moment the function of the unconscious comes into the picture in reference to the dream, this term is introduced as essential.
Well, I think that here we have a mode that is constitutive of what is, let’s say, our reason. (32)

Lacan firstly highlights this “other scene” for its indispensible support in psychoanalytic reason as well as *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The Freudian text borrows this phrase from 19th century physicist, psychologist and philosopher G.T. Fechner’s following line on two occasions: “*the scene of action of dreams is different from that of waking ideational life*” (Freud 538). The essential status with which Lacan ascribes the “other scene” may thus be equated to Fechner’s “*scene of action.*” The unconscious in Lacan’s reading of Freud first “comes into the picture in reference to the dream,” a dream that for Freud, is distinct but indispensible to any valid explanation of “*waking ideational life.*” To be sure, the unconscious grounding of psychoanalytic reason as well as the *other scene* that it stages, may be understood to assume the following role:

> The unconscious is the larger sphere, which includes within it the smaller sphere of the conscious. Everything conscious has an unconscious preliminary stage…The unconscious is the true psychical reality; *in its innermost nature it is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communications of our sense organs.* (The Interpretation of Dreams 607)

Psychoanalytic reason, as formulated by Lacan in the anxiety seminar and presented here in *The Interpretation of Dreams* is distinguished by the inextricable dimension of and the inevitable encounter with the unconscious. Above all else, the unconscious serves as the precursor to any and all forms of intelligibility. To put it another way, the sensible and intelligible being of the conscious domain is the becoming of the unconscious. As “the larger sphere,” however, the unconscious presents an inverted image of reason; reason and rational knowledge are ultimately subsumed by an unconscious form of alterity that resists logical classification because it exists prior to the possibility of any classification whatsoever. Moreover, by proposing the unconscious as “the true psychical reality,” Freud situates the unconscious as logically anterior to any
conscious state. Consciousness exists as a secondary stage that has *passed through* its preceding state of unconsciousness. To position consciousness as encompassing the whole of psychical life as well as external reality is indefensible, hence his conclusion that “*it is as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communications of our sense organs*.” This “other scene,” for Lacan, thus serves as the location of psychoanalytic reason and ultimately, of the subject as such.

Lacan then adds of this reason that in “searching for the path by which to discern the structures of this reason… the first phase is as follows – there is the world” (33). Presented here is the first of Lacan’s three stages; the world, the stage and the stage on the stage, each of which he continually unravels and revisits throughout his tenth seminar. “The world,” he explains, “is what analytic reason is concerned with, the same reason to which Claude Lévi-Strauss’s disquisition tends to give primacy” (33). Within this analysis, the world simultaneously stages the opposition between Lévi-Strauss’s analytical and dialectical gap and its psychoanalytic counterpart. Lacan’s reading of Lévi-Strauss ultimately concerns the “primacy” with which the latter provides to analytic reason and thus to the world. Simply put, the world contains the totality of what may be signified and, against the grain of Lévi-Strauss’s text; the stage is thought of as the excess of signification. Lacan’s second phase, the stage, is strategically set in opposition to the world as “that [which] we make this world climb up onto. The stage is the dimension of history” (33). The signifier, for Lacan, sets the historical stage upon which the world is played out. Though there are several means through which the operation of the stage might be understood, its primary dimension is again that of Lacan’s Imaginary register. If the signifier is thought in relation to the excess of signification, just as the stage is thought in relation to the world upon which it’s played out, then the role of the signifier must be thought of as
indispensable to the Imaginary register – molding the representation of how reality is imagined to be. Within this register, for example, undifferentiated and amorphous sentences are shaped into meaningful exchanges between two speaking subjects through the medium of language. Here, the conflicting meanings of a given signifier or word are made intelligible through an imaginary closure in the exchange between the two speakers and the given signifier. Semantic intelligibility might then be thought of as possible largely because of the Imaginary’s regulative function – erasure of the ambiguity that occurs within it. If the Imaginary register can then be thought to mold the dimension of language, it must in part be attributed to that which puts into play the question of the remainder, and concomitantly, the question of desire. To recall Alain-Miller:

> all speech is demand; it presupposes the Other to whom it is addressed, whose very signifiers it takes over in its formulation. That which comes from the Other does not satisfy, but responds to a gift, appeal, token of love. There is no adequation between need and demand: the gap constitutes desire. (278-79)

The response of the Other does not satisfy but rather, displaces the demand of the speaker by reinscribing it elsewhere. To satisfy and to respond, Alain-Miller observes, are two entirely different outcomes. The Other does not satisfy my address but perpetuates it, hence the emergence of “the gap [that] constitutes desire.” That something in sight should tacitly remain left out of language forcibly installs desire within it. A language governed by the laws of the signifier which, to recall Lacan, “all the things of this world come to be staged in,” impedes any homogenized conception of the world since the assumed premises of such laws are, firstly, an inextricable relation to language and secondly, by extension, language’s inextricable relation to desire (33). Thus, the stage remains in perpetual motion while the world it constitutes resists any homogenization insofar as speech is articulated.
What Lacan poses through the question of the stage is undergirded by the question of how a discontinuous sequence of events and experiences, in their spatial and temporal dimensions, is ultimately synthesized into what we call *the world*. This illusory unified whole, *the world*, is thought in relation to the Imaginary register’s erasure or closure of any gap between speaker, signifier, experience, etcetera. In other words, lived experience unfolds upon the stage and with recourse to the Imaginary (notwithstanding the Symbolic), the totality of these moments comprise the world. At a different level, particularly through his criticism of Lévi-Strauss, the problematic of *the world* and *the stage* reflects Lacan’s greater concern with the scientific formalization of psychoanalysis, a conceptual aspect specific to this period of Lacan’s thinking.

To recall Lacan’s position, the Other presupposed by speech manifests in language’s inextricable dimension of desire. Consequently, “the discourse in which we are implicated as subjects” not only precedes Lévi-Strauss’s attempt to contain magic and science within a unified discourse but, by definition, perpetuates the movement of the “accumulated remains” comprising the stage – remains which amalgamate as the same world that scientific discourse takes as the object of its study (34). In addition to Lacan’s critique of *The Savage Mind*, the position taken here tacitly addresses the difference between the epistemological, structural approach to the scientific object and the psychoanalytic consideration of the object of desire. And, on another level, this critique addresses the limits of formalization with respect to each discourse. Writing on the extent to which the Lacan of the 1960’s was concerned with these limits, Bruce Fink explains that:

> the formalization of psychoanalysis into mathemes and rigorously defined clinical structures – so characteristic of Lacan’s work at that stage – does not suffice to make psychoanalysis into a science…Science must first come to grips with the specificity of the psychoanalytic object. At that time, then, Lacan’s view is that *science is not yet equal to the task of accommodating psychoanalysis*. (140)
Lacan’s rigorous attempt to distinguish the psychoanalytic operation from adjacent fields of science, epistemology and structural anthropology is, to recall, ultimately hinged upon the incorporation of the “particular discovery of the efficacy of the signifying operation as such” (37). At this stage in Lacan’s work, it would be insufficient to merely define psychoanalysis by way of assimilating, comparing or contrasting it to scientific research. Such a definition is prematurely concluded. As Fink explains, psychoanalysis must be defined with a similar rigidity that, by specifically demarcating its object of study with respect to language and thus to desire, reach beyond the limits of scientific strictures. Science must then accommodate itself accordingly.

Psychoanalysis, at this stage in Lacan’s thought, aims to systematically outstrip scientific “objectivity” through the detour of “the signifying operation” (37). In a footnote to the preceding passage, Fink adds that:

‘[W]here positivism defines a science in terms of the preexisting objects studied by that science, Lacan offers a definition of a science in terms of the kinds of signifiers, of formal vocabularies, that it adds to the objects it studies and that, in turn, transform those objects into the objects of science’ (p. 188). As such, ‘scientific objects’ are cut out of the real, or hewn therefrom, by ‘scientific language’; in psychoanalysis, on the other hand, object (a) is the remainder of that process; in other words, what is left over ‘after’ the constitution of science’s objects. There is always a limit to formalization: the progressive symbolization of the real always leaves a remainder. (199-200)

Fink lays bare several insights that are particularly useful in relation to Lacan’s understanding of science. Following the alteration, manipulation and discovery of scientific objects “cut out” from an inexhaustible real, the object is then inscribed within the symbolic field. In a certain way, the object of science and the object of psychoanalysis are one and the same. Correlative to the process through which the scientific object of study emerges as a symbolic transcription of the real, Fink notes, is the emergence of the psychoanalytic object of study as the scientific object’s
remainder. Should science here be understood as the inevitably distorted translation of the real into the symbolic, psychoanalysis, on the other hand, may then be conceived of as the treatment of the real through the consideration of the scientific object’s irreducible remainder.

Psychoanalysis, at least in Fink’s account of its Lacanian variant, takes issue with the linguistic pre-conditions or “the kinds of signifiers, of formal vocabularies” that lay the primordial foundation of scientific formalization. Beyond this single dimension, however, psychoanalytic inquiry addresses the limits of this very formalization and, as an extension of this, the question of the ego’s relation to this very limit.

Returning to the context of Lacan’s seminar, this remainder and the question of desire it opens as a result must similarly be thought in relation to the opposition that Lacan unravels between the world and the stage. “Now, the dimension of the stage,” Lacan assures us:

in its separation from the locus, worldly or otherwise, cosmic or otherwise, where the spectator is, exists precisely to picture in our eyes the radical distinction between the world and the locus where things, if only the things of this world, come to be voiced. All the things of the world come to be staged in keeping with the laws of the signifier, laws that we could never fancy in any way to be consistent with the laws of the world at the outset. (33)

For the “laws of the signifier” and its correlate, “the dimension of the stage,” both must be thought of as implicitly grounded upon an unshakeable excess. For the signifier, an excess inherent to language may only be effaced with recourse to the Imaginary register. Similarly, “the dimension of the stage” dually functions as “the dimension of history” and ultimately unfolds as “residues that accumulate without the faintest care for contradiction” (34). In other words, history and the signifier each persist as the lived contradictions that constitute meaning from the level of a sentence to the level of an epoch. Because of each, and perhaps because of the relations between both, recourse to the imaginary register allows for the erasure of ambiguity and the
possibility of conceiving who we are and where we might be. Lacan observes that Lévi-Strauss’s “homogen(ized)” world attempts to shirk the inherent excess of language and thus to shirk the fact that “all the things of the world come to be staged in keeping with the laws of the signifier” (33). The things of the world must of course “be staged” and thus signified in accordance with these laws, or to put it another way, the definition given to an object must be articulated within language and therefore through its laws. “The laws of the signifier” might remain arbitrary and differential for Lévi-Strauss and perhaps (up to a certain point) for Lacan, however, for the latter the unconscious remains embedded within the laws of that which comes to be spoken. In other words, the meaning of the arbitrary signifier, in part, remains the byproduct of the other discarded signifiers. Moreover, for Lacan, the given signifier might be arbitrary for language though not for the unconscious. The laws of the signifier problematize Lévi-Strauss’s notion of the world insofar as Lacan takes greater concern with the excess than with the totality of what comes to be signified – the world. To the contrary, Lévi-Strauss’s position may be thought of as precisely the reverse. For Lacan’s, by contrast, this excess governs the play of the world and in the last instance, determines a heterogeneous world that remains irreducible to Lévi-Strauss’s “homogenized” conception.

While Lacan voices his objections to The Savage Mind on several occasions, most explicitly through the problematic of the world and the stage, the postulates as well as the location of this criticism within Lacan's broader psychoanalytic framework remain, to a certain extent, obscured. Proceeding in his usual fashion, Lacan cleverly and swiftly incorporates his critique of Lévi-Strauss’s then contemporary The Savage Mind into the aims of his own discussion. Although beyond “an ultimately peculiar homogeneity,” the specifics of Lacan’s assessment remain abstruse (33). Two oppositions set forth in Lévi-Strauss’s book are brought to
attention. Prior to discussing the world and the stage, Lacan mentions the first: “the gap in the face of which more than one of you have for the moment come to a standstill…the opposition between what he calls analytic reason and dialectical reason” (32). And the second: “to homogenize the discourse he calls magic with the discourse of science” (33). Although structuralism most immediately connotes Lévi-Strauss’s tireless effort to preserve distinctions of degree on the vertical plane and kind on the horizontal, the stated objective of The Savage Mind presents his ultimate ambition of maintaining its notorious binaries: “the reintegration of culture in nature and finally of life within the whole of its physico-chemical conditions” (247). Lévi-Strauss’s intended trajectory would dissolve both the primitive and modern conceptions of humanity, and with that, clear the path for the objectivity of a discourse that intertwines humanism with the natural sciences. Elsewhere, the text describes this undertaking as an attempt to understand life “as a function of inert matter,” rather than any grand resolution of dialectical opposites, as Lévi-Strauss believes Jean-Paul Sartre would have it (247-48). For Lévi-Strauss rather, Sartre’s traditional conception would only constitute the first of several steps for the human sciences: “The role of dialectical reason is to put the human sciences in possession of a reality with which it alone can furnish them, but the properly scientific work consists in decomposing and then recomposing on a different plane” (250).

Contrary to Sartre’s discussion of anthropology in Critique of Dialectical Reason, Lévi-Strauss maintains that a self/other opposition is “true” only within a dialectical form of discourse. Purely dialectical reason does not go far enough for Lévi-Strauss and is by no means a sufficient foundation for anthropological research. To build an anthropological discourse upon a self/other, human/world dialectic, Lévi-Strauss notes, manifests only the differences of the culture from which it was started. Rather than study cultures external to his own, Sartre merely reduces the
cultures he attempts to study as the other of contemporary France. To the contrary, Lévi-Strauss’s structural anthropology positions analytical and dialectical reason as counterparts rather than opposites, reaching beyond Sartre’s gesture by incorporating it as an object of study. “To the anthropologist,” Lévi-Strauss explains, “this philosophy (like all others) affords a first-class ethnographic document, the study of which is essential to an understanding of the mythology of our own time” (249). Lévi-Strauss’s accusation is not of an inherent falsehood to philosophical discourse but, more specifically, of an inherent limit to its scope. In other words, philosophical truth reflects only that of its own discourse. And this discourse, in turn, reflects only the limits of the era and mythology to which it belongs. In a more specific engagement with Sartre’s Critique, Lévi-Strauss explains that when “seen in this light, therefore, my self is no more opposed to others than man is opposed to the world: the truths learnt through man are ‘of the world’, and they are important for this reason” (248). That which is true of the human is tacitly true of the world as such. The dialectical opposition between self/other, human/world remains true within Sartre’s philosophical sense; however, beyond the limits of this boundary, Lévi-Strauss seeks to integrate this philosophical truth within his structuralist vision of the world. In other words, and in an almost Heideggerean sense, what is true of the human is true of a human that is in the world – the two remain inextricable from one another. If it is to be treated as a truth of the human, it is to be treated as a truth of the world.

This theoretical premise is essential to the operation of Lévi-Strauss’s structuralism and throughout The Savage Mind provides his research with a point of return. A footnote to the aforementioned critique of Sartre attests to the worldly status Lévi-Strauss attaches to his conception of truth:

this even holds for mathematical truths of which a contemporary logician, however, says that ‘The characteristic of mathematical thought is that it does not convey truth about the
But mathematical thought at any rate reflects the free functioning of the mind, that is, the activity of the cells of the cerebral cortex, relatively emancipated from any external constraint and obeying its own laws. As the mind too is a thing, the functioning of this thing teaches us something about the nature of things: even pure reflection is in the last analysis an internalization of the cosmos. It illustrates the structure of what lies outside in a symbolic form: ‘Logic and logistics are empirical sciences belonging to ethnography rather than psychology’. (248)

Although mathematics articulates nothing about the external world as such, its presentation of an ordered world adhering to a series of seemingly invariable laws is no less insightful. The significance of this parallel to Lévi-Strauss’s project is twofold: firstly, mathematical laws are a pure reflection of their own conditions of intelligibility and secondly, these laws also reflect the functioning of the mind. In tandem, both postulates divulge Lévi-Strauss’s conclusion; although mathematics “does not convey truth about the external world,” the laws of the mind that it does convey reveal the means of the external world’s appearance. The world that lies outside is then to be thought of as the visual manifestation of the mind’s internal, mathematical laws. If the mind “illustrates the structure of what lies outside in a symbolic form,” then the appearance of an external world is in fact the manifestation of a set of laws, that is, of a structure (“empirical and intelligible” 130 – hence why math is an “empirical science” 248). The appearance of the world itself is rather its structured, symbolic variant as interpreted through the mathematical laws of the brain. This example implies, for Lévi-Strauss, that the appearance of phenomena in the external world is always-already subjected to structural mediation. On one level, the mind “illustrates the structure of what lies outside in a symbolic form” and on another level, this symbolic form

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3Rather than any pronoun, Lévi-Strauss instead writes that mathematics illustrates the functioning of the “mind,” which points beyond any historical or cultural category and in the direction of the entirety of humanity, not a mere subsection. This distinction supports Lévi-Strauss’s classification of mathematics as an ethnographic rather than psychological science, at least in terms of the internal coherence of his argument. In other words, if psychology is here conceived of as the study of the individual’s psychic life in relation to social and familial upbringings, psychology would fall under culture whereas the study of “the activity of the cells of the cerebral cortex” concerns the “mind” and thus to Lévi-Strauss’s attempt to provide a universal picture through ethnography.
adheres to the parameters of the cultural structure to which this mind belongs. In this repeating pattern of self-similarity microcosm resembles macrocosm, or, as Lévi-Strauss puts it; “pure reflection is in the last analysis an internalization of the cosmos” (248).

Beyond its theoretical principles, the text’s strictly anthropological concerns address the classification of thought’s various modalities in relation to the civilizations shown to employ these forms. For Lévi-Strauss, modern thought can be understood as an “analytic” technique exclusively “concerned with closing gaps and dissolving differences” (263). So-called “primitive” or “savage” thought, by contrast, is to be understood as a “dialectical” and totalizing form that expresses an “intransigent refusal…to allow anything human (or even living) to remain alien to it” (245). However abyssal the gap between the two might appear, the forms of thought that characterize each recall Lévi-Strauss’s critique of Sartre and, indirectly speaking, reveals the former’s intentions. The structuralist intervention of Lévi-Strauss works to dissolve the sharp contrast established between both civilizations by positioning them within a framework that renders analytic and dialectical reason as “two distinct though equally positive sciences” (269). In his conclusion, Lévi-Strauss recalls a reason for the specifically scientific nature of the affair which, again, suggests that his notion of “world” necessarily buttresses his notion of structure; in both civilizations, “the physical world is approached from opposite ends” (269). And, beyond this, “it is important to not make the mistake of thinking that these are two stages or phases in the evolution of knowledge. Both approaches are equally valid” (22). Analytic, modern thought and dialectical, savage thought can be grasped scientifically to reveal within each culture a scientific set of operations through which the world and daily life become intelligible. Worthy of crucial consideration here is the specifically scientific dimension of each which comes to form the crux of Lévi-Strauss’s argument in The Savage Mind. This postulate is asserted from the beginning:
There is only one solution to the paradox, namely, that there are two distinct modes of scientific thought. These are certainly not a function of different stages of development of the human mind but rather of two strategic levels at which nature is accessible to scientific enquiry: one roughly adapted to that of perception and the imagination: the other at a remove from it. It is as if the necessary connections which are the object of all science, Neolithic or modern, could be arrived at by two different routes, one very close to, and the other more remote from, sensible intuition. (15)

The “paradox” discovered by Lévi-Strauss refers to the period of intellectual stagnation separating the Neolithic from the modern scientific revolution. Addressing the validity of this claim, however contestable it might be, is not nearly as much of a priority here as are its implications to Lévi-Strauss’s own work. By virtue of introducing “two distinct modes of scientific thought,” the paradox would appear to be solved. Moreover, by expanding the definition of “science” to include the distance at which a given culture stands from “perception and the imagination” as well as “sensible intuition,” Lévi-Strauss precludes any hierarchical distinction between savage and modern thought. If possible, the only distinction to be made is of method rather than intellect.

At a foundational level, the “scientific” principle of thought that Lévi-Strauss locates in both civilizations is the result of the means by which each interacts with the physical world. Yet, to recall, it is not the world as such but rather a structured appearance that a structured, mathematical mind processes by relating it to the structural principles of its culture. Whether the form of reason employed by this mind is analytical or dialectical, for Lévi-Strauss, depends upon its respective culture yet structuralism’s essential relation between these forms of thought and the world itself remains to be clarified. Lévi-Strauss later acknowledges one of the multiple criticisms that might target his model of “domesticated thought.” He admits that “this analytic, abstract continuity will doubtless be opposed to that of the praxis as concrete individuals live it” (263). In other words, this conception of modern thought, as he’s portrayed it, is far more
exhaustive and abstract than everyday thought either is or ought to be. Borrowed from Marxist lineage, “praxis” is here understood as the possible expressions of a given phenomena with respect to the constraints of a given discourse. Lévi-Strauss adds that “in order for praxis to be living thought, it is necessary first...for thought to exist: that is to say, its initial conditions must be given in the form of an objective structure of the psyche and brain without which there would be neither praxis nor thought” (263-64). Prior to this abstract model and its contrasting everyday manifestation, the initial conditions of thought must necessarily be accounted for. This demand is prefaced by the following assertion whose implications, for Lévi-Strauss, extend to any given civilization: “man’s mode of thought reflects his relation to the world and to men” (263). By accounting for thought’s “initial conditions,” Lévi-Strauss endeavors to lay bare the premises of reason that are as specific to the so-called “savage” mind as to its “domestic” ancestor. Understanding a given culture’s specific mode of thought, Lévi-Strauss proposes, requires that the “objective structure of the psyche and brain” – a structure that precedes any formal distinction between modes of reason – is firstly articulated.

As for dialectical thought, Lévi-Strauss notes that the primary element distinguishing it from the analytical form is a principle of discontinuity. Whereas analytical thought privileges historical continuity, “closing gaps and dissolving differences,” dialectical thought instead “[multiplies] objects by schemes promoted to the role of additional objects” (263). In other words, rather than modify a new object so as to fit a pre-existing picture of historical or analytical continuity, thought in its dialectical form involves the representation of an object within a given schema that the object in turn modifies. “The savage mind,” Lévi-Strauss adds, “builds mental structures which facilitate an understanding of the world in as much as they resemble it. In this sense savage thought can be defined as analogical thought” (263). Again, the
concept of structure and the concept of world presuppose one another and here, become nearly indistinguishable. The resemblance that such a form of understanding bears to the world recalls what perhaps serves as the structuralist maxim: “pure reflection is in the last analysis an internalization of the cosmos” (248).

Whether it is the world of the “domestic” or “savage” mind, its appearance is in either case framed by a continuous or discontinuous historical lens. Both, to recall, “are equally valid” variants of a scientific approach to the world and, in tandem, compose Lévi-Strauss’s universal, “objective structure of the psyche and brain” (22; 263-64). This, Lacan notes, “would merely join up with the structure of the brain itself, for example, indeed the structure of matter, and represent…its doublet” (33). However plausible this effort might seem, Lacan takes issue with the “ultimately peculiar homogeneity” that affords Lévi-Strauss’s model the presentation of a superficially unified world (33). Whatever the formal means taken, for Lacan, the question of the world and the question of history is always a question of the signifier. “The stage of history that we make this world climb onto” is the same stage in which “all the things of this world come to be voiced in keeping with the laws of the signifier” (33). Lacan tacitly circumscribes the world and the signifier within the domain of the symbolic order which, as he explains elsewhere, “is constitutive for the subject – by…the major determination the subject receives from the itinerary of a signifier” (Écrits 7). Within this context, the symbolic order might then be thought of as a causal sequence; the signifier determines the subject that, in turn, believes the appearance of the world to necessarily accord with the signifier’s totalizing laws.

In fully elaborating the implications of Lacan’s objection, we might consider Lacan’s own conception of structure as articulated in his seminar on Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Purloined Letter.” Lacan endeavors, firstly, “to figure out how a formal language determines the subject”
and, secondly, to articulate this determination through revealing that “we can find in the ordered chains of a formal language the entire appearance of remembering” (Écrits 31). There exist only a finite number of possible syntactic permutations that a formal language permits so long as what is spoken of is spoken intelligibly. One word necessarily follows another in sequential order and this order or, “the entire appearance of remembering,” reflects the dimension of syntax that imposes its own laws on the subject – not the other way around. “Thus,” Lacan adds, “right from the primordial symbol’s first composition with itself…a structure, as transparent as it may still remain to its givens, brings out the essential link between memory and law” (36). The structure of the symbolic itself precedes analytical or dialectical reason, continuous or discontinuous history and certainly, the possibility of their structural classification. In giving rise to “memory and law” – the former undergirding history while the latter no doubt grounds reason – this structure is necessarily and logically anterior to Lévi-Strauss’s.

Whether or not savage thought entails a scientific approach to the world that, to recall, Lévi-Strauss asserts as its object of study, this or any object is entirely neutral prior to its determination in the symbolic order. With reference to Freud’s discussion of the Fort-Da game, Lacan explains that it is “at the zero point of desire that the human object comes under the sway of the grip which, cancelling out its natural property, submits it henceforth to the symbol’s conditions” (35). That is, the “symbol’s conditions” entail a process that is equally contingent on both memory and repetition, as shown through the example of syntax. The object takes on a produced meaning that is entirely the result of “cancelling out its natural property.” By way of its repeated appearance, this produced meaning or, in Lacanian terms, this “symbolic determination” each time retroactively modifies all preceding appearances in relation to that which is given. Successive appearances are grouped into categories on the basis of common
patterns or, to borrow the term recently employed by Sheryl Brahnam, into a “numeric encoding scheme” (205). Commenting on Lacan’s reading of the *Fort-Da* game, she observes that “whereas any given plus or minus in a record of tosses is (ideally) independent, a specific numeric code in a sequence of such codes is *always* restricted by those that precede it” (205; emphasis added). On the one hand, Lacan’s “numeric encoding scheme” denounces chance as an illusion, but by the same token, the relegation of phenomena to their pre-existing occurrences makes possible the organization of any governing principles – reason, history and science, to name several. Only these conditions alone, for Lacan, provide the object with any form of value. The laws of the signifier and hence, the structure that emerges within the symbolic register, necessarily precede the laws and structure of scientific discourse as classification’s primordial possibility. Before “the things of this world” are classified into structures, events, or even the appearance of the world itself, before structured reflection becomes “an internalization of the cosmos,” the signifier provides a stage (Lacan 33; Lévi-Strauss 248). And, as Lacan notes, “as soon as we start making reference to the stage, nothing is more legitimate than to call into question what the world of cosmism is in the real” (*Seminar X* 34).
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