

Along the course of our inquiry, we will have to provide an answer to this question. Yet to do so, we must be prepared to traverse a broad terrain of theory. In what follows, I will argue that what makes Lacan's "return" possible is Freud's complex relation to himself, the way in which Freud's invention of psychoanalysis allowed him to glimpse something that Freud himself could not fully articulate. And nowhere is this inchoate dimension of Freud's thought more palpable than in his metapsychology. Like the dreams he analyzed, the manifest terms of Freud's metapsychology conceal a latent content that can be brought to light only by transposition into concepts Freud didn't possess. The primary task of this book is to trace some of the main lines of that transposition. All the more appropriate, then, to begin by taking our bearings with respect to a point that lies outside the psychoanalytic field altogether.

CHAPTER ONE

Toward the Unthought Ground of Thought

Most philosophical evaluations of psychoanalysis accept the basic meaning of the Freudian doctrine as given from the outset and immediately pass on to its philosophical implications (its scientificity, its bearing on problems of truth, subjectivity, ethical responsibility, etc.). By contrast, we propose to reread Freud's text with an eye to a theory the meaning of which has yet to be determined. Such a reading requires a conceptual frame within which the fundamentals of Freud's thought can be rediscovered. To establish such a frame is the business of the present chapter—a labor that will require us to traverse the work of a large number of figures, from William James, Henri Bergson, and Friedrich Nietzsche, through Christian von Ehrenfels and Edmund Husserl, to Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. We begin, however, with a topic apparently even more remote from Freud's metapsychological speculations: the paintings of Claude Monet.