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THE SEMINAR OF  
JACQUES LACAN

Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller

The Other Side of Psychoanalysis

BOOK XVII

TRANSLATED WITH NOTES BY  
Russell Grigg

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THE SEMINAR OF  
JACQUES LACAN

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## BOOK XVII

## Translator's Note

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This is a translation of the seminar that Jacques Lacan delivered at the Law Faculty, Place du Panthéon, in 1969–70, in the unsettled aftermath of the eventful year of 1968. The original text is the version of the seminar edited by Jacques-Alain Miller and published by Éditions du Seuil.

Quite apart from the usual challenges facing any translator of Lacan into English, this seminar presents special difficulties of its own. Certain of them call for special comment.

### *l'envers*

Beginning with the title itself, *l'envers*, translated here as “the other side,” also carries the meaning of “back,” “verso,” “lining,” “underside,” “flip-side,” “underneath,” “bad side”—connotations of the unseen, even the obscene, which “the other side” in English only barely suggests.

### *lathouse*

What is striking about this made-up word, pronounced LA-TOOZE, is its suffix, *-ouse*, which can be used to turn ordinary words into slang and informal language. Thus, *une bague*, a ring, becomes *une baguouse*; *la (prison) centrale* becomes *la centrouse*; and so on. With “lathouse” Lacan is obviously having a bit of fun with his object *a*.

### *astudé*

This neologism, translated as “astudied,” attempts to work the “*a*” of “object *a*” into the term “student” or “studied” to convey something of the place the student occupies in the university discourse.

### *aléthosphère*

This neologism, constructed as it is from the Greek words for “truth” and for “ball,” “globe,” or “sphere,” is plain enough for the English reader. Lacan introduces it to refer to the means by which something can be recorded at a distance, whether in the form of light or sound waves. The alethosphere obviously extends beyond the limits of the earth’s atmosphere.

In other cases where the translation is open to question, potentially misleading, or has struck me as inadequate to the original French, I have included the original term in brackets; the reader can at least judge the adequacy of this English reflection to its French original.

I would like to thank Kerry Murphy and Justin Clemens for working their way through drafts, while Bruce Fink's detailed comments have also improved the quality of the translation.

Russell Grigg  
Geelong, Australia

# I

## Production of the four discourses

DISCOURSE WITHOUT SPEECH

*LOCI PREINTERPRET*

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND *JOUISSANCE*

THE SLAVE ROBBED OF HIS KNOWLEDGE

THE DESIRE TO KNOW

Allow me once again, my dear friends, to raise the question of this audience which has assisted me, most notably today, by following me in what for some of you is the third of my relocations.<sup>1</sup>

Before I do this, the least I can do is spell out how I have come to be here in order to thank those I owe thanks to. It is through an offer that the Faculté de droit has kindly made to several of my colleagues from the [École des] Hautes Études with whom they have kindly included me. I would like to thank, and I believe it is with your endorsement, the Faculté de droit, and in particular its senior Faculty, most notably the Dean.

As the notice may have informed you, I will only be speaking here—not that this place was not offered to me every Wednesday—the second and third Wednesdays of each month, thereby freeing me, no doubt, for other duties the other Wednesdays. And in particular, I believe I can announce that the first Wednesday of each month, at least for some of them, that is, every second month, and therefore the first Wednesday of December, February, April, and June, I will be going to Vincennes to give, not my seminar as was incorrectly announced, but what in contrast I have taken care to call, so as to stress that they are different, “Four Impromptus,” to which I have given a humorous title that you can read in the [university] grounds where the poster has already been put up.

Since, as you can see, it pleases me to leave certain details up in the air, I shall take immediate advantage of this to air a scruple that has stayed with me following the welcome that I gave a certain person, because on reflec-

\* The original French pagination is included in the margins to facilitate comparison with the French text.

<sup>1</sup> This was the first year of Lacan's seminar at the Faculté de droit, after having been first held at Sainte-Anne Hospital and then, under the patronage of the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, at the École normale supérieure.

tion it was not very friendly—not that I wanted it that way, but in fact that was how it turned out.

One day somebody who is perhaps here, and will no doubt not make herself known, accosted me in the street just as I was getting into a taxi. She pulled over on her scooter and said to me, “Are you Dr. Lacan?”

“Yes, I am,” I said to her. “Why?”

“Are you holding your seminar again?”

“Yes, of course, soon.”

“Where?”

And then, no doubt I had my reasons for this, and I ask her to take my word for it, I answered, “You’ll see.”

She then took off on her little scooter with so much throttle that I was left both nonplussed and full of remorse. It’s my remorse that I want to convey to her today by apologizing to her, if she is here, in the hope that she will forgive me.

In fact, this is surely an opportunity to point out that it’s never, in any way whatever, by another person’s excesses that one turns out, in appearance at least, to be overwhelmed. It is always because their excesses happen to coincide with your own. It was because I was already at this point, in a certain state that represented an excessive preoccupation, that I no doubt expressed myself as I did, in a way I very quickly found inappropriate.

With that, let’s go into what my contribution for this year is going to be about.

## 1

I thought I should call this seminar “Psychoanalysis upside down” [*La Psychoanalyse à l’envers*].

Don’t get the idea that this title owes anything to the current situation that thinks it is in the process of turning a number of places upside down. Let me give just the following as proof of this. In a text published in 1966—one of those introductions that I wrote at the time of the collection of my *Écrits*, and which punctuate it—a text called “De nos antécédents,” “On My Antecedents,” on page 68, I describe my discourse as being about, I say, a revival of the Freudian project upside down. It’s thus written down well before the events—a revival from the other direction [*reprise par l’envers*].

What does that mean? Last year I managed, with much perseverance, to ascertain what discourse is about, as a necessary structure that goes well beyond speech, which is always more or less occasional. What I prefer, I said, and I even wrote it up on the board one day, is a *discourse without speech*.

The fact is that, in truth, discourse can clearly subsist without words. It subsists in certain fundamental relations which would literally not be able to be maintained without language. Through the instrument of language a number of stable relations are established, inside which something that is much larger and goes much further than actual utterances [*énonciations*] can, of course, be inscribed. There is no need of the latter for our conduct, possibly for our acts, to be inscribed within the framework of certain primordial statements. If this were not so, what would we make of what we keep rediscovering in our experience, and especially in our psychoanalytic experience—I mention analytic experience in this connection only because it gives this a precise designation—what would we make of what keeps appearing in the guise of the superego?

There are structures—we cannot describe them in any other way—for characterizing what can be extracted from this “in the form of,” one particular usage of which I took the liberty of stressing last year—namely, what happens by virtue of a fundamental relation, the one I define as the relation of one signifier to another. And from this there results the emergence of what we call the subject—via the signifier which, as it happens, here functions as representing this subject with respect to another signifier.

How is this fundamental form to be situated? Without any further ado we are, if you will, going to write this form in a new way this year. Last year I wrote it as the exteriority of the signifier  $S_1$ —the one that is the point of departure for the definition of discourse that we will emphasize at this first step—with respect to a circle marked with the sign  $A$ , that is, the field of the big Other. But, simplifying, we will take  $S_1$  and the battery of signifiers, which we will refer to as the sign  $S_2$ . I am talking about those signifiers that are already there, whereas at the point of origin at which we place ourselves in order to establish what discourse is about, discourse thought of as the status of the statement [*l'énoncé*],  $S_1$  is the one to be seen as intervening. It intervenes in a signifying battery that we have no right, ever, to take as dispersed, as not already forming a network of what is called knowledge [*savoir*].

Knowledge initially arises at the moment at which  $S_1$  comes to represent something, through its intervention in the field defined, at the point we have come to, as an already structured field of knowledge. And the subject is its supposition, its *hypokeimenon*, insofar as the subject represents the specific trait of being distinguished from the living individual. The latter is certainly its locus, where the subject leaves its mark, but it isn’t of the same order as what is brought in by the subject, by virtue of the status of knowledge.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} S_1 & \rightarrow & S_2 \\ S & & a \end{array}$$

No doubt it's around this word "knowledge" that there is a point of ambiguity to which, we have to stress this today, I have already rendered your ears sensitive by means of several paths, tracks, moments of enlightenment, or flashes of light.

Shall I mention it for those of you who took note of it, for whom it is still fresh in your mind? Last year I had occasion to call the Other's *jouissance* "knowledge."

A strange business. To be honest, this formulation had never been prof-fered before. It's not new, since even last year I was able to make it suffi-ciently plausible for you, I could make the claim without raising any particular protests. This is something I announced I would return to this year.

Let me first of all finish what began with two legs, then had three. Let's give it its fourth.

The latter is something I have been emphasizing for quite a while, and last year especially, since for quite some time this was the purpose of the seminar—"D'un Autre à l'autre," "From an Other to the other," I called it. This other, this little other, with its famous "the," was what at this level, which is the level of algebra, of signifying structure, we designate as the object *a*.

At this level of signifying structure we have only to learn the way it oper-ates. Thus we are at liberty to see what happens when we write the things out and give the entire system a quarter turn.

13 I have been speaking about this notorious quarter turn for long enough, and on different occasions—in particular, ever since the appearance of what I wrote under the title "Kant with Sade"—for people to think that perhaps one day it would be seen that this isn't limited to what the so-called Schema Z does, and that there are other reasons for this quarter turn than some pure accident of imaginary representation.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \S & \rightarrow & \underline{S}_1 \\ a & & \underline{S}_2 \end{array}$$

Here you have an example. If it seems justified to say that the chain, the sequence of letters of this algebra, must not be disturbed, then by perform-ing this operation of a quarter turn we will obtain four structures, and no more, the first of which in some way gives you the starting point.

It is a simple matter to quickly reproduce the remaining three on paper.

I am only saying this to specify an arrangement that has absolutely not been imposed in any way—as they say, from a certain point of view, noth-ing has been abstracted from any reality. On the contrary it's already inscribed in what functions as this reality I was speaking about before, the reality of a discourse that is already in the world and that underpins it, at

least the one we are familiar with. Not only is it already inscribed in it, but it is one of its arches.

Of course, the form of letters in which we inscribe this symbolic chain is of no great importance, provided they are distinct—this is enough for some constant relations to become clear. As is the case with this formula.

What does it say? It locates a moment. What my discourse subsequently develops here will tell us what the appropriate meaning to give this moment is. It says that it is at the very instant at which  $S_1$  intervenes in the already constituted field of the other signifiers, insofar as they are already articu-lated with one another as such, that, by intervening in another system, this  $\S$ , which I have called the subject as divided, emerges. Its entire status, in the strongest sense of this term, is to be reconsidered this year.

Finally, we have always stressed that something defined as a loss emerges from this trajectory. This is what the letter to be read as object *a* designates.

We have not left undesignated the point from which we extract this func-tion of the lost object. It's from Freud's discourse about the specific sense that repetition has in the speaking being. Indeed, repetition is not about just any old effect of memory in the biological sense. Repetition bears a certain relationship to what is the limit of this knowledge, and which we call *jouissance*.

This is why it's a logical articulation that is at stake in the formulation that knowledge is the Other's *jouissance*—the Other's, of course, insofar as—since there is no Other—the intervention of the signifier makes the Other emerge as a field.

You will tell me no doubt that here, in short, we are still going around in circles—the signifier, the Other, knowledge, the signifier, the Other, knowl-edge, and so on. But this is where the term *jouissance* enables us to show the apparatus's point of insertion. In doing so, we are no doubt leaving behind what knowledge authentically is, what is recognizable as knowledge, and referring to the limits, to the field of these limits as such, the field that Freud's words dare to confront.

What is the upshot of all that these words articulate? Not knowledge, but confusion. Well then, from this very confusion we have to draw some les-sons, since it is a question of limits and of leaving the system. Leaving it by virtue of what?—by virtue of a thirst for meaning, as if the system needed it. The system doesn't need it. But we feeble beings, as we will keep on dis-covering for ourselves at every turning point over the course of this year, we need meaning. Alright then, here's one.

It's perhaps not the right one. But then, it is certain that we will find that there are many of these "It's perhaps not the right one"—the insistence of which is for us a good indication of the dimension of truth.

Notice the ambiguity that the word "Trieb" has taken on in psychoana-

lytic stupidity, instead of people striving to grasp how this category is to be unpacked. The category is not without ancestry, I mean the word is not without a usage already, one that goes back a long way, as far back as Kant, but what it is useful for in analytic discourse would merit our not rushing in and translating it as "instinct." But, after all, these slippages do not occur for no reason. And although for a long time I have been emphasizing the aberrant character of this translation, we are nevertheless within our rights to benefit from it. Not so as to enshrine the notion of instinct, to be sure, and above all not in this respect, but to remind you what it is in Freud's discourse that renders it a habitable notion—and simply to try and make this discourse inhabit it in a different way.

Popularly, the idea of instinct is indeed the idea of knowledge—knowledge such that we are unable to say what it means, but it is supposed to result, and not without good reason, in the fact that life subsists. On the other hand, if we are to give any sense to what Freud says about the pleasure principle as essential to the functioning of life, being the principle whereby tension is maintained at its lowest level, aren't we already stating what, as his subsequent discourse shows, was forced upon him? Namely, the death drive.

What forced this notion upon him was the development of an experience, analytic experience, insofar as it has the structure of discourse. For don't forget that one does not invent the death drive by considering people's behavior.

We have the death drive here. We have it here, where something is taking place between you and what I am saying.

## 2

I said, "What I am saying." I am not talking about what I am. What would be the use, since, in short, one can see this, owing to your presence? It's not that your presence speaks in my favor. It does speak sometimes and, usually, in my place.

Be that as it may, what justifies me in saying something here is what I would call the essence of this manifestation that the diverse and successive audiences I have attracted according to the locations in which I have spoken have been.

I was particularly keen to tack the following remark on somewhere, because, as I am in a new location, today seemed to me to be the day. The location has always had an impact upon the style of what I am calling this manifestation, and I do not want to pass up the opportunity to say that it bears a relation to the usual meaning of the term "interpretation." What I

said by, for, and in your presence is at each of these moments, if we define them by their geographical locations, always already interpreted.

This will have to take its place in the little rotating quadrupeds I have begun to put to use today, and I will come back to it. But so as not to leave you completely in the dark, I will point something out to you straight away.

If I had to interpret what I said at Sainte-Anne Hospital between 1953 and 1963, I mean pin down its interpretation—interpretation in a sense contrary to analytic interpretation, which makes you feel how much analytic interpretation itself goes against the grain of the ordinary meaning of the term—I would say that what was the loudest chord, the chord that really resonated, was having fun.

The most exemplary character in this audience, which was a medical one obviously—but then, some of the participants were not doctors—was the person who punctuated my discourse with a sort of continuous stream of jokes. This is what I will take as most characteristic of what over a period of ten years was the essence of my manifestation. Further proof of this is that things only started to turn sour when I dedicated a term to the analysis of jokes.<sup>2</sup>

That's a big aside, and I can't go on in this direction for very long, but I must add what it was that characterized interpretation at the place where you left me last time, the *École normale supérieure*.

E. N. S.—it's quite magnificent in initials. It revolves around being [*l'étant*]. One must always know how to benefit from literal equivocations, above all when they are the first three letters of the word *enseigner*, "to teach." As it happens, it was in rue d'Ulm that it was noticed that what I was saying was a teaching.

Before that, it hadn't been at all obvious. It was not even permitted. The professors, and especially the doctors, were very worried. The fact that it wasn't at all medical left serious doubts whether it deserved to be called teaching, right to the day when they saw these young blokes from the *Cahiers pour l'analyse* come along, who were trained in this part of the world where—as I had said a long time before, precisely at the time of the jokes—one of the effects of training is that one knows nothing but teaches it beautifully. The fact that that was how they interpreted what I was saying—I am speaking today of a different interpretation from analytic interpretation—does indeed make sense.

Naturally, no one knows what will happen here. I don't know whether law students will come, but actually, it would be wonderful for interpretation. This will probably be by far the most important moment of the three, since this year we are tackling psychoanalysis from the other side, and per-

<sup>2</sup> See *Le Séminaire, Livre V, Les formations de l'inconscient, 1957–1958* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998).



haps, precisely, giving it its status, in what is called the juridical sense of the term. This, in any case, has surely always been concerned with the structure of discourse, and to the nth degree. If this isn't what law is, if we cannot grasp how discourse structures the real world here, then where can we? This is why we are no worse off here than anywhere else.

It is therefore not simply for reasons of convenience that I seized this opportunity. But it is also what causes you the least inconvenience in your travels, at least for those who were accustomed to the other side.<sup>3</sup> I am not so sure that, for parking, here is very convenient, but then, for that, you still have rue d'Ulm all the same.

## 3

Let's pick up the thread again.

We had got to the point of situating our instinct and our knowledge, in sum, on the basis of what Bichat defines as life. "Life," he says, and this is the most profound definition, it is not at all trite if you look at it closely, "is the totality of forces that resist death."<sup>4</sup>

Read what Freud says about life's resistance to the decline into Nirvana, as the death drive was otherwise described at the time he introduced it. No doubt, at the heart of analytic experience, which is an experience of discourse, he gives thought to this decline toward a return to the inanimate. Freud goes that far. But what, he says, makes for the subsistence of this bubble—really, this image forces itself upon you when you listen to these pages—is the fact that life only ever returns there via paths that are always the same, ones it has previously traced. What is this, if not the true sense given to what we find in the notion of instinct, which is that it implies knowledge?

This track, this pathway, is familiar to us. It's ancestral knowledge. And what is this knowledge, if we don't forget that Freud introduces what he himself calls "beyond the pleasure principle," the pleasure principle itself not being overturned thereby? Knowledge is what brings life to a halt at a certain limit on the path to *jouissance*. For the path toward death—this is what is at issue, it's a discourse about masochism—the path toward death is nothing other than what is called *jouissance*.

<sup>3</sup> The École normale supérieure is located in the rue d'Ulm, which runs off the Place du Panthéon and is not far from the new location of Lacan's seminar at the Faculté de droit.

<sup>4</sup> Marie François Xavier Bichat (1771–1802), French doctor, anatomist, and physiologist. See his *Physiological Researches on Life and Death* (1827; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1977).

The relationship between knowledge and *jouissance* is a primitive one, and it is where what emerges with the appearance of the apparatus of the signifier comes to be inserted. It is henceforth conceivable that we are binding up the function of this emergence of the signifier.

"That will do!" I hear you say. "Do we really need to explain everything? And, why not, the origins of language?" We all know that to structure knowledge correctly one needs to abandon the question of origins. What we are doing, in spelling this out, is superfluous with respect to what we have to develop this year, which is situated at the level of structures. It is a futile search for meaning. But, as I have already said, let's take note of what we are.

I will go on, then. At the intersection of a *jouissance*—and not just any *jouissance*, it must no doubt remain opaque—at the intersection of a *jouissance* that is privileged above all others—not because it is sexual *jouissance*, since what this *jouissance* designates by being at this intersection is the loss of sexual *jouissance*, castration—in relation to this meeting point with sexual *jouissance* there emerges, in the Freudian fable of repetition, the engendering of something radical that gives body to a schema that is, literally, articulated.  $S_1$ , having emerged at the first moment, is repeated with respect to  $S_2$ . The subject emerges from this entry into a relation, the subject that something, a certain loss, represents. And it is worth having made this effort in the direction of meaning in order to comprehend the ambiguity.

It was not for nothing that last year I called "surplus *jouissance*" this same object that I had moreover described as the one that the entire dialectic of frustration in analysis is organized around. This means that the loss of the object is also the gap, a hole opened up to something, and we don't know whether or not this something is the representation of the lack in *jouissance*, which is situated by means of the knowledge process, insofar as it appears in a completely different light as a result of being, from that point on, knowledge scanded by the signifier. Is it even the same?

The relationship to *jouissance* is suddenly made to appear in a different light by this still virtual function called the function of desire. Moreover this is why I'm describing what appears here as "surplus *jouissance*" and not forcing anything or committing any transgression.

I beg you to bite your tongue a bit over all this nonsense. What analysis shows, if it shows anything at all—I invoke here those whose soul is a little bit different from the one of which one could say, as Barrès says of the cadaver, that it talks nonsense—is very precisely the fact that we don't ever transgress.<sup>5</sup> Sneaking around is not transgressing. Seeing a door half-open is not the same as going through it. We shall have the occasion to come back

<sup>5</sup> Maurice Barrès (1862–1923), French writer and conservative political figure of French nationalism.

to what I am introducing now—there is no transgression here, but rather an irruption, a falling into the field, of something not unlike *jouissance*—a surplus.

But perhaps even that has to be paid for. That is why I told you last year that in Marx the *a*, which is here, is recognized as functioning at the level that is articulated—on the basis of analytic discourse, not any of the others—as surplus *jouissance*. Here you have what Marx discovered as what actually happens at the level of surplus value.

Of course, it wasn't Marx who invented surplus value. It's just that prior to him nobody knew what its place was. It has the same ambiguous place as the one I have just mentioned, that of excess work, of surplus work. "What does it pay in?" he says. "It pays in *jouissance*, precisely, and this has to go somewhere."

What's disturbing is that if one pays in *jouissance*, then one has got it, and then, once one has got it it is very urgent that one squander it. If one does not squander it, there will be all sorts of consequences.

Let's leave the thing up in the air for the moment.

## 4

What am I up to? I am beginning to get you to acknowledge, simply through locating it, that this four-footed apparatus, with its four positions, can be used to define four radical discourses.

It's no accident that I presented this form to you as the first. There is no reason why I could not have begun with any of the others, with the second for instance. But it is a fact, determined by historical reasons, that this initial form—the one that we express by starting with this signifier that represents a subject with respect to another signifier—has a very special importance, insofar as, in what I am going to state this year, it will be singled out as being, of the four, the one that articulates the master's discourse.

The master's discourse. I don't see any point in recounting its historical importance, given that you are, after all, on the whole recruited through this sieve called the university, and that, as a consequence, you are not unaware that it's all philosophy ever talks about. Even before it began talking about this alone, that is before it called it by its name—at least in Hegel it stands out, and is quite specially illustrated by him—it was already apparent that at the level of the master's discourse something appeared which is of interest to us concerning discourse, irrespective of its ambiguity, and which is called philosophy.

I do not know how far I will be able to go with what I want to point out to you today, since we mustn't delay if we want to go over the four discourses in question.

What are the others called? I will tell you straight away, why not?—even if only so as to whet your appetite.

That one, the second on the blackboard, is the hysteric's discourse. It's not obvious straightaway, but I will explain it to you.

And then, the other two. One is the analyst's discourse. The other. . . . No, definitely not, I won't tell you what it is. Saying it just like that today would create too many misunderstandings. You will see—it's a discourse that is highly relevant today.

Coming back to the first one, then, I must ground why it is that the present algebraic formula is described in this way, as the one that gives the structure of the master's discourse.

$S_1$  is, to say it briefly, the signifier, the signifier function, that the essence of the master relies upon. From a different angle you may perhaps recall what I emphasized several times last year—that the slave's own field is knowledge,  $S_2$ . Reading the testimonies we have about life in Antiquity, in any case discourse about this life—read Aristotle's *Politics* on this—what I am claiming about the slave as being characterized as the one who is the support of knowledge is not in doubt.

In Antiquity this was not simply a class, as with our modern slave, it was a function inscribed in the family. The slave Aristotle speaks of is just as much a part of the family as he is a part of the State, and even more a part of the family than a part of the State. This is because he is the one who has the know-how [*savoir-faire*]. Before we can know whether the knowledge is known, whether a subject can be founded on the perspective of a knowledge that is totally transparent in itself, it is important to know how to mop up the register of what, at its origins, know-how is.

Now, what is it that happens right before our very eyes, which gives meaning, an initial meaning—as you will see, there are other meanings—to philosophy? Fortunately we have traces of this thanks to Plato, and it is quite essential to remember this so as to put what is at issue in its place and, after all, if anything in what is bothering us has any sense, it can only come from putting things in their place. What does philosophy designate over its entire evolution? It's this—theft, abduction, stealing slavery of its knowledge, through the maneuvers of the master.

To see this it is enough to read Plato's dialogues from time to time, and, as only God knows, for the past sixteen years I have been making an effort to get those who listen to me to do it.

I will begin by distinguishing what on this occasion I will call the two aspects of knowledge, the articulated aspect and this know-how that is so

akin to animal knowledge, but which in the slave is not totally devoid of the apparatus that transforms it into one of the most articulated networks of language. The point is that this, the second layer, the articulated apparatus, can be transmitted, which means it can be transmitted from the slave's pocket to the master's—assuming they had pockets in those days.

It is here that you have the entire effort to isolate what is called *episteme*. It's a funny word, I don't know whether you have ever given it much thought—"putting oneself in the right position," in short it is the same word as *Verstehen*. It is all about finding the position that makes it possible for knowledge to become the master's knowledge. The entire function of the *episteme* insofar as it is specified as transmissible knowledge—see Plato's dialogues—is always borrowed from the techniques of craftsmen, that is to say of serfs. It is a matter of extracting the essence of this knowledge in order for it to become the master's knowledge.

And then, naturally, this is augmented by a little backlash, which is absolutely what is called a lapsus, a return of the repressed. But so says someone or other, Karl Marx or someone.

22

Refer to the *Meno*, where it is a question of the square root of 2 and its incommensurable. There's someone who says, "Hey, look, get the slave to come over, that little fellow, can't you see, he knows." They ask him questions, master's questions, of course, and the slave naturally answers what the questions already dictate as their response. You find here a form of ridicule. It's a way of scoffing at the character who is being taken apart here. It is shown that the serious business, the aim, is to make it known that the slave knows, but by acknowledging it only in this derisory way, what is hidden is that it is only a matter of robbing the slave of his function at the level of knowledge.

To give what I have just said its sense one has to see, and we will take this step next time, how the slave's position is articulated with respect to *jouissance*. I already began to say this last year, in the form of a colorful hint. What people usually say is that *jouissance* is the privilege of the master. What is interesting on the contrary, as everyone knows, is what belies this within it.

In short, it's the master's status that is at stake here. By way of introduction today I only wanted to tell you how profoundly interesting this status is to us, the utterance of which is worth keeping for a future step. It is interesting to us when what is being unveiled and, at the same time, reduced to a corner of the landscape is the function of philosophy. Given the space, briefer this year than others, that I have allowed myself, I will no doubt be unable to develop it. It is of no importance, perhaps someone else will take up this theme and do what he will with it. Philosophy in its historical function is this extraction, I would almost say this betrayal, of the slave's knowledge, in order to obtain its transmutation into the master's knowledge.

Does this mean that what we have seen emerge as the science that dominates us is the fruit of this operation? Here again, rather than having to rush in, we can observe that on the contrary it's nothing of the kind. This wisdom, this *episteme*, created with every recourse to every dichotomy, led only to knowledge that can be designated by the term that Aristotle himself used to characterize the master's knowledge—theoretical knowledge. Not in the weak sense that we give this word, but in the emphatic sense that the word "theoria" has in Aristotle. A singular mistake. I will come back to this, since for my discourse this is the crucial point, the pivotal point—it was only when, by a movement of renunciation of this wrongly acquired knowledge, so to speak, someone, for the first time as such, extracted the function of the subject from the strict relationship between  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ —I named Descartes, whose work I believe I am able to spell out, not without agreement with at least a significant number of those who have discussed it—that science was born.

23

It is well to distinguish between the time at which this turn emerged in the attempt to pass knowledge from the slave to the master, and the time it recommenced, which is motivated only by a certain way of raising, within the structure, all possible functions of the statement insofar as the articulation of the signifier alone supports it. There you already have one small example of the insight that the type of work I am proposing this year may bring you. Don't think it stops there.

What I have been proposing here presents, as soon as one shows it, at least this characteristic of uncovering the obvious—who can deny that philosophy has ever been anything other than a fascinating enterprise for the master's benefit? At the other extreme we have Hegel's discourse, with its outrageous absolute knowledge, as it's called. What can this absolute knowledge possibly mean, if we begin with the definition that I took the liberty of recalling as being a foundational one for our way of proceeding concerning knowledge?

This is perhaps where we will start next time. It will at least be one of our points of departure, for there is another, which is no less important, and which is quite particularly salubrious because of the overwhelmingly outrageous things one hears from psychoanalysts concerning the desire for knowledge.

If there is one thing that psychoanalysis should force us to maintain obstinately, it's that the desire for knowledge bears no relation to knowledge—unless, of course, we wheel out the lubricious word "transgression." A radical distinction, which has far-reaching consequences from the point of view of pedagogy—the desire to know is not what leads to knowledge. What leads to knowledge is—allow me to justify this in the more or less long term—the hysteric's discourse.

24 There is as a matter of fact a question to be asked. Does the master who brings about this operation of the displacing, the conveyancing, of the slave's knowledge want to know? Does he have the desire to know? A real master, as in general we used to see until a recent era, and this is seen less and less, doesn't desire to know anything at all—he desires that things work. And why would he want to know? There are more amusing things than that. How did the philosopher manage to inspire the master with the desire to know? I will leave you on this note. It's a bit provocative. If there are any of you who work this out between now and next time, let me know.

26 November 1969

## Supplement

### *Following session: Agitation*

The people who, for various reasons, love me warned me that agitation was in the air.

They are not sufficiently aware that for me, too, agitation is in the air. And I do so for a reason that is of supreme interest to me—for what it proves or disproves concerning this level at which I am situating the structure of a discourse.

I have just said "I."

It's obviously because I am viewing the discourse in question from somewhere else. I am viewing it from a place in which I am situated by another discourse, of which I am the effect—so that, in the present case, saying "This discourse situates *me*" is the same as saying "This discourse is situated."

At the level of this discourse it's not so as to be able to blow my own trumpet, to give a good course, as we say, which is everything. It doesn't count for nothing, to be sure, and no one can tell me that, up till now, there has been any lack of opportunity for taking notes.

25 To be honest, I cannot complain of ever having been disturbed.

But I do not think that agitating is about disturbing classes. It would be a pity if I had to teach this to the agitators themselves.

To be honest, as essential in fact as whether or not I speak without being disturbed is what my listeners are steeped in. In effect, what I am speaking about is a signal that this discourse that is not my own, but the one of which I am—to restrict myself to this provisional term—the effect, is swinging into action.

I went to Vincennes last week where people might have thought that what took place wasn't to my taste. Everyone agreed in fact that my going, solely by virtue of my being a prominent person, would be the occasion for obstruction. Does anyone believe that this would have made any sort of impression on me? Need I say that I was fully aware of what I was to encounter there? And what sort of great novelty, in the context, do people expect this incident to have constituted for me when such obstruction has nothing new about it?

If we go right back to the start, when I began my discourse at Sainte-Anne, what I am calling "what my listeners are steeped in" was at that time constituted by a little survey the frequency of which I couldn't say, but it may well have been monthly then quarterly. It was an anxious investigation they were carrying out on my listeners, in the very milieu where I was their guest, on the subject of knowing how well my teaching fulfilled the requirements of what constitutes medical teaching. It might have been the case—horror of horrors—that my teaching did not possess the characteristics of medical teaching.

On the subject that I chose to begin with, namely, good heavens, the critique of Freud, what could the characteristics of medical teaching have possibly been? Did it only have to consist in some act of reference—I didn't say "reverence"—to terms considered to be sacred because they are themselves located right in the center, at the heart, of medical teaching? Should I have indicated, in order for this teaching to be medical, that perhaps one day endocrinal causes will be found for neurosis? Or just simply recalled that there is one of these little elements that we cannot fail to take account of, and that we call the constitutional factor? That would have been medical.

In short, as I did not bother to waste time on these genuflections the investigations stopped and they were convinced that I had placed them in the unfortunate position of being subjected, at the heart of a place that is essentially medical, to a teaching that wasn't.

It was then that I was made aware, by people through whom, since they were in analysis with me, one was, unfortunately, only too sure that the message regarding what one thought of my public would necessarily get to me.

I mention this because in the audience that you are today I can discern a bit better than last time the seams, the components, I can situate the faces better. There are many familiar faces here, but I am delighted by this, as I am also delighted with the relative decrease in numbers I can observe—last time, it was a bit like a crowded Metro in here.

A fair few of you were already part of that very old audience before following me to that place from which I had to emigrate, as it turned out, and I can say that my audience at Sainte-Anne really did consist then of those

who are currently the pillars of the *École freudienne*—I do not mean by that that these are not people you can count on. Well then, good heavens, one had the impression, it seems, merely on the basis of watching them wander about before they went in to listen to me at half-past twelve, as usual, that they showed all sorts of signs of drug addiction and homosexuality. It was palpable. It was, obviously, what the style, the general form, and the bearing of these itinerants reflected.

This is so that you know that it's no recent thing that, because of its composition, my audience gives rise to—what? this is precisely what I am wondering about—a certain discomfort. We experienced this in a place that organized a venue for us, and, to be sure, I am grateful to those who mentioned the fact that it lasted as long as it did. Nevertheless, don't imagine that characterizing my audience as troublemakers began at these incidental places.

It was students at the *École normale*, the Normalian elements, these little princes of the university who know quite well that you don't have to know something in order to teach it, who discovered that very curious things were happening at my seminar. It so happened over there that when you smoked—in fact, for this reason I made myself the echo, every now and then, of the fact that you might refrain from doing so—something happened that I have never seen anywhere, which is that the smoke went through the ceiling of the room, so that the elegant Normalians who were apparently in the library space above could no longer breathe.

These are extraordinary things that can obviously only occur because of the audience that you are. It is the importance of this that I am showing you.

[Arrival of a building supervisor.]

I was calling this agitation at Vincennes into question, you really see it, perfectly. This dear man is very touching.

All this takes place in a zone that nevertheless does not lose its meaning.

[The supervisor turns off the lights and retracts the blackboard.]

However amusing these jokes about higher offices, I declare the session over.

10 December 1969

## AXES OF THE ANALYTIC SUBVERSION

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## The master and the hysteric

KNOWLEDGE THAT IS NOT KNOWN  
 THE HYSTERIZATION OF DISCOURSE  
 KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH  
 THE HALF-SAID  
 ENIGMA, CITATION, INTERPRETATION

$$\begin{array}{cccc}
 \text{U} & & \text{M} & & \text{H} & & \text{A} \\
 \frac{S_1}{S_2} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\mathcal{S}} & & \frac{S_1}{\mathcal{S}} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a} & & \frac{\mathcal{S}}{a} \rightarrow \frac{S_1}{S_2} & & \frac{a}{S_1} \rightarrow \frac{\mathcal{S}}{S_2}
 \end{array}$$

These four formulas are useful to have here as a reference.

Those of you present at my first seminar heard my reminder of the formula that the signifier, as distinct from the sign, is what represents a subject for another signifier. Since there is no suggestion that the other signifier knows anything about the matter, it is clear that it is not a question of a representation but of a representative.

As a consequence, on that same occasion, I thought I would use it to illustrate what I have called the master's discourse.

### 1

If the master's discourse can be seen as reduced to a single signifier, this implies that it represents something. Calling it "something" is already saying too much. It represents *x*, which is precisely what is there to be clarified in the matter.

In effect, there is no indication of how the master might impose his will. That consent is necessary is not in doubt, and the fact that in this instance Hegel can do no more than refer to death as the signifier of the absolute master, is, on this occasion, a sign—a sign that nothing is resolved by this pseudo-origin. In fact, for it to continue it would only be demonstrated that the master is the master if he were to be resuscitated, that is, if he had actually been put to the rest. As for the slave, it's the same thing—he has, precisely, declined to confront it.

The enigma of the master's function does not therefore reveal itself immediately. I will point out, because it is already on our path—a path that we do not have to pretend we have discovered, and which is not that of the theory of the unconscious—that it is not at all self-evident that all knowledge, by virtue of being knowledge, is known as knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

What we discover in even the slightest bit of psychoanalytic experience is, indeed, of the order of knowledge [*savoir*],  $S_1$ , and not of acquaintance [*connaissance*] or representation. It is very precisely a question of something that links one signifier,  $S_1$ , to another signifier,  $S_2$ , in a relationship of reason.

These are fairly pulverizing terms, I would say, if in using this metaphor I can get you to see the connotation that should be placed, on this occasion, on the term “knowledge.”

Nevertheless, the foundation of what is known, of what is quietly articulated as the little master, as the ego, as he who knows a bit about it, resides in such a relation as this and, precisely, insofar as it is not known.

All the same I do notice from time to time that this breaks down. Here we have the eruption of the entire phase of lapses and stumblings in which the unconscious is revealed. But it is much better and goes much further than in the light of analytic experience.

We allow ourselves to read a biography when we have the means to do so, when we have enough documents for it to be attested what a life believes, what it believed it was as destiny, step by step, indeed in certain circumstances even how it believed it has concluded this destiny.

Nevertheless, in light of this notion that it is not certain that knowledge is known, it does not seem impossible that we might be able to read at what level of unconscious knowledge the work has been carried out that delivers what is effectively the truth of everything that has been believed to be.

33 Operating on the schema of the discourse of the big M, let us say it is, invisibly, the slave's labor, the labor that constitutes a non-revealed unconscious, that reveals whether that life is worth speaking about—that which, out of truths, out of true truths, has brought forth so many detours, fictions, and errors.

Knowledge, then, is placed in the center, in the dock, by psychoanalytic experience. This fact alone imposes on us a duty to question, which has no reason to limit its field. In short, the idea that knowledge can, in any way or at any time, even as a hope for the future, form a closed whole—now there's something that didn't have to wait for psychoanalysis for it to appear questionable.

Perhaps this doubting was approached from a bit low down where the

<sup>1</sup> “ . . . tout savoir, d'être savoir, se sache comme tel.”

skeptics were concerned. I am speaking of those who adopted this name at the time this doubting formed a school, something that we no longer have anything but a very feeble idea of. But, after all, would that be worth it, what do we know about it? What do we know about this on the basis of what has remained for us from the skeptics? Perhaps it's better for us not to pass judgment. Concerning their own knowledge perhaps we only have what others were able to gather from them, others who did not know where their skeptical formulas that radically questioned all knowledge, and *a priori* the totalization of knowledge, were starting from.

What is well designed to show how little impact the schools carry is the fact that the idea that knowledge can make a whole is, if I may say so, immanent to the political as such. This has been known for a long time. The imaginary idea of the whole that is given by the body, as drawing on the good form of satisfaction, on what, ultimately, forms a sphere, has always been used in politics by the party of political preaching. What is more beautiful, but also what is less open? What better resembles closure of satisfaction?

We have to struggle against the collusion of this image with the idea of satisfaction whenever we encounter anything that forms a knot in the work in question, which is the work of bringing things to light via the paths of the unconscious. It is the obstacle, the limit, or rather it's the hard road on which we lose our bearings, and where we find ourselves blocked.

It is odd to observe that a doctrine such as Marx's whose articulation onto the function of struggle, the class struggle, which he instituted has not prevented it from giving birth to what for the moment is, indeed, the same problem that confronts us all, namely the persistence of a master's discourse.

To be sure, the present one does not have the structure of the old, in the sense in which the old is installed in the place indicated under this big M. The present one is installed in the place on the left, the one capped by the U. I will tell you why. What occupies the place there, which we will provisionally call dominant, is this  $S_2$ , which is specified as being, not knowledge of everything [*savoir de tout*]—we've not got to that point yet—but all-knowing [*tout-savoir*]. Understand this as what is affirmed as being nothing other than knowledge, which in ordinary language is called the bureaucracy. It cannot be said that there are no problems created there.

In my opening remarks three weeks ago we began with the fact that in the initial status of the master's discourse knowledge is on the side of the slave. And I thought I could indicate, without being in a position to develop it last time owing to a minor inconvenience I regret, that what happens between the classical master's discourse and that of the modern master, whom we call capitalist, is a modification in the place of knowledge. I even thought it possible to go so far as to say that the philosophical tradition has some responsibility for this transmutation.

Consequently, because the proletarian has been dispossessed of something—this is before communal property, of course—he finds himself characterizable by this term “dispossessed,” which justifies both the attempt at and the success of revolution.

Is it not evident that what is restituted to him is not necessarily his own share? Capitalist exploitation effectively frustrates him of his knowledge by rendering it useless. What, in a type of subversion, gets returned to him is something different—master’s knowledge. And this is why all he has done is change masters.

What remains, in effect, is the essence of the master, namely, that he does not know what he wants.

There you have what constitutes the true structure of the master’s discourse. The slave knows many things, but what he knows even better still is what the master wants, even if the master does not know it himself, which is the usual case, for otherwise he would not be a master. The slave knows what it is, and that’s what his function as slave is. This is also why it works, since, indeed, it has worked for quite a while.

35 The fact that all-knowing has moved into the place of the master is something that does not throw light on it, but rather makes a little bit more obscure what is at issue, namely, truth. How does it come about that there is a master’s signifier in this place? For this is well and truly the  $S_2$  of the master, revealing as it does the bare bones of how things stand under the new tyranny of knowledge. This is what makes it impossible that in this place, over the course of the movement of history, as we were perhaps hoping, the nature of truth might appear.

Now the sign of truth is somewhere else. It is to be produced by what has come to be substituted for the ancient slave, that is, by those who are themselves products, as we say, consumables every bit as much as the others. “Consumer society,” we say. “Human material,” as it was called at one stage—to the applause of some who thought there was something tender in this.

It was worth highlighting this, since what equally concerns us now is to question what is at issue in the psychoanalytic act.

## 2

I won’t be taking this up at the level at which I had hoped to bring things to completion two years ago, which was left interrupted, concerning the act by which the psychoanalyst grounds himself, is instituted as such.<sup>2</sup> I will be

<sup>2</sup> *Le Séminaire, Livre XV, L’Acte psychanalytique, 1967–1968* (unpublished).

taking it up at the level of the analyst’s interventions, once [analytic] experience has been instituted within its precise limits.

If there is knowledge that is not known, as I have already said, it is instituted at the level of  $S_2$ , which is the one I call the other signifier. This other signifier is not alone. The stomach of the Other, the big Other, is full of them. This stomach is like some monstrous Trojan horse that provides the foundations for the fantasy of a totality-knowledge [*savoir-totalité*]. It is, however, clear that its function entails that something comes and strikes it from without, otherwise nothing will ever emerge from it. And Troy will never be taken.

What does the analyst institute?

I hear a lot said about the discourse of psychoanalysis, as if this actually meant something. If we characterize a discourse by focusing on what is dominant in it, then the analyst’s discourse exists, and this is not to be confused with the psychoanalyzing discourse, with the discourse effectively engaged in in the analytic experience. What the analyst establishes as analytic experience can be put simply—it’s the hystericization of discourse. In other words, it is the structural introduction, under artificial conditions, of the hysteric’s discourse, the one that is indicated here by a capital H. 36

I tried to point this out last year by saying that this discourse exists, and that it would exist whatever the circumstances, whether there was psychoanalysis or not. I expressed it in a figurative way, giving it its most common support, the one from which the major experience has issued for us, namely the detour, the zigzag lines, on which this misunderstanding that sexual relations [*rappports*] constitute in the human species rests.

Since we have signifiers, we must understand one another, and this is precisely why we don’t understand one another. Signifiers are not made for sexual relations. Once the human being is speaking, it’s stuffed, it’s the end of this perfection, this harmony, in copulation—which in any case is impossible to find anywhere in nature. Nature presents an infinite number of species of it, which, moreover, for the majority do not include any copulation. This shows how little it is part of nature’s intentions that this form a whole, a sphere.

In any case, one thing is certain—if for man it works out more or less okay, it’s due to a trick that makes it possible, by first of all making it insoluble.

This is what the hysteric’s discourse means, industrious as she is. In saying “she,” we are making the hysteric a woman, but this is not her privilege alone. Many men get themselves analyzed who, by this fact alone, are obliged to pass through the hysteric’s discourse, since this is the law, the rule of the game. It is a matter of knowing what one deduces from this concerning the relations between men and women.



We therefore see the hysteric fabricate a man as best she can—a man who would be animated by the desire to know.

I raised this issue in my last seminar. We can observe that historically the master has slowly defrauded the slave of his knowledge and turned it into the master's knowledge. But what remains a mystery is how the desire to do this could have arisen for him. Desire, if you take my word on this, he can easily do without, since the slave satisfies him even before he himself knows what he might desire.

37 This is the point my reflections might have got to last time if this charming thing had not emerged from the real—I am informed that it is the real of decolonization. He was apparently a patient from a hospital, a supporter of ours from the former Algeria and billeted here. As you can see, a charming romp, owing to which I won't know, at least not for sometime, for I have to move on, what kinship I place between the philosophical discourse and the hysteric's discourse, since it seems that it is the philosophical discourse that has inspired the master with the desire to know. What can the hysteric in question here be? There is a domain here that must not be spoiled. If there is anyone whose thinking loves to run on ahead of the speaker, they will find an opportunity here to exercise their talent. I assure them that to me it seems to be a promising path.

Be that as it may, so as to provide a formula that is more extensive than one that limits it to relations between man and woman, let's say that if we just read what I have inscribed here concerning the hysteric's discourse, we still don't know yet what this  $\$$  is. But if it concerns her discourse, and if it's this discourse that brings it about that there is a man motivated [*animé*] by the desire to know, it is because it is a matter of knowing . . . what? Of knowing at what price she herself is this person who speaks. For, qua object *a*, she is the fall, the fallen object, fallen as an effect of discourse, which in turn is always broken at some point.

What hysterics ultimately want one to know is that language runs off the rails concerning the magnitude of what she as woman is capable of revealing concerning *jouissance*. But this is not what matters to the hysteric. What matters to her is that that other called a man know what a precious object she becomes in this context of discourse.

Isn't this, after all, the very basis of analytic experience? If I say that it gives the other as subject the dominant place in the hysteric's discourse, it hystericizes his discourse, it turns him into this subject who is asked to abandon every other reference than to the four walls that surround him and to produce signifiers that constitute this free association that is, in a word, master of the field.

How could saying no-matter-what lead anywhere, unless it was deter-

mined that there is nothing in the random production of signifiers that, simply because it involves signifiers, does not bear upon this knowledge that is not known, and which is really what is doing the work?

The only thing is that there is no reason why he should not come to know a bit more about it. If the analyst doesn't speak, what might become of this swarming production of  $S_1$ s? Many things, surely.

The analyst who listens is able to record many things. With what your average person today can state, if he pays no attention to anything, one can compile the equivalent of a small encyclopedia. This would generate an enormous number of keys, were it to be recorded. Afterward one could even construct a little electronic machine, get one made. And this is moreover the idea that some people can have—they construct an electronic machine so that the analyst only has to pull out a ticket that will give them their answer.

Let's see what is at work here in the analyst's discourse. It is he, the analyst, who is the master. In what form? This is what I shall have to reserve for our subsequent meetings. Why in the form of object *a*?

It's on his side that there is  $S_2$ , that there is knowledge—whether he acquires this knowledge through listening to his analysand, or whether it is already acquired, locatable knowledge, which at a certain level can be limited to analytic know-how.

The only thing is that what has to be understood about this schema—as was already indicated when in the master's discourse  $S_2$  was put in the slave's place, and when in the modernized master's discourse it was then put in the master's place—is that the knowledge is not the same.

There in the last discourse on the right, what place is it in? It is in the place that in the master's discourse Hegel, the most sublime of hysterics, designates for us as being that of truth.

We cannot say, in effect, that *The Phenomenology of Spirit* consists of starting from the so-called *Selbstbewusstsein* grasped at the most immediate level of sensation, thus implying that all knowledge is known from the outset. What would be the point of all this phenomenology if it were not a question of something else?

It's just that what I am calling the hysteric of this discourse stems precisely from the fact that the discourse eludes the distinction that would enable one to perceive the fact that if this historical machine, which is in fact only the progress of the schools and nothing more, ever did culminate in absolute knowledge, it would only be to mark the annulment, the failure, the disappearance at the conclusion of the only thing that motivates the function of knowledge—its dialectic with *jouissance*. Absolute knowledge is supposed to be the abolition of this conclusion, purely and simply.

Whoever studies the text of *The Phenomenology* closely can be left in no doubt about this.

What does the position of  $S_2$  in the place of truth offer us now?

39

3

What is truth as knowledge? It can be put like this: How can we know without knowing?

It's an enigma. This is one response—it's an enigma—among other examples. And I will give you a second one.

The two have the same characteristic, which is a property of truth—truth can only ever be said by halves. Our dear truth, from the imagery of Epinal, emerging from a well is only ever a body.<sup>3</sup>

In Italy, at one of the lectures I had been asked to give, I don't know why, and which I went about in a mediocre way, I know, I mentioned the Chimera, in which precisely the original characteristic of the hysteric's discourse is incarnated. And the Chimera put an enigma to Oedipus the man who perhaps already had a complex, but certainly not the one he gave his name to. He replied in a particular way, and that was how he became Oedipus.

There could have been many other replies to what the Chimera asked him. For example, he might have said, "Two feet, three feet, four feet—that's Lacan's schema." That would have produced quite a different result. He could also have said, "It's a man, a man as a baby. As a baby he starts out on four feet. He walks on two, he acquires a third, and instantly he flies as straight as an arrow into his mother's stomach." That's in effect what one calls, rightly, the Oedipus complex.

I think you can see what the function of the enigma means—it's a half-said [*mi-dire*], just as the Chimera appears as a half-body, with the risk of disappearing altogether once the solution has been found.

Knowledge as truth—this defines what the structure of what we call an interpretation must be.

If I insisted at length on the difference in level between the utterance [*énonciation*] and the statement [*énoncé*], it was so that the function of the enigma would make sense. An enigma is most likely that, an utterance. I charge you with the task of making it into a statement. Sort that out as best

<sup>3</sup> The images of Epinal were a popular form of illustration, familiar to everyone in France, invented at the end of the eighteenth century.

you can—as Oedipus did—and you will bear the consequences. That is what is at issue in an enigma.

But there is something else, rarely thought of, that I have touched upon, that I have raised from time to time, but frankly, it concerned me so much that it was not easy for me to speak freely about it. It's what we call a citation.

What does a citation consist in? In the course of a text where you are making more or less good progress, if you happen to be in the right places of the class struggle, all of a sudden you will cite Marx, and you will add, "Marx said." If you are an analyst you will cite Freud and you will add, "Freud said." This is fundamental.

An enigma is an utterance—you do what you can about the statement. A citation is like this. I make a statement, and for the remainder, there is the solid support you will find in the author's name for which I hand responsibility back to you. This is how it is, and it has nothing to do with the more or less shaky status of the author's function.

When one cites Marx or Freud—I haven't chosen these names by chance—one does so as a function of the part the supposed reader takes in a discourse. The citation is in its own way also a half-said. It is a statement about which someone is indicating to you that it is admissible only insofar as you already participate in a certain structured discourse at the level of the fundamental structures that are there on the blackboard. This is the one point—could I have explained it before now?—that makes it the case that the citation, the fact that one cites an author or not, can have second-order importance. I am going to get you to understand this and I hope that you will not take this the wrong way, because it's a familiar example.

Suppose that at a second moment someone cites a sentence indicating where it comes from—the author's name, Mr. Ricoeur, for instance.<sup>4</sup> Suppose that someone cites the same sentence, and that they put it in my name. This can definitely not have the same sense in the two cases. I hope I have made you feel how things are with what I am calling a citation.

Well then, it is these two registers that, insofar as they partake of the half-said, give the medium—and, if I can put it like this, the heading—under which interpretation intervenes.

Interpretation—those who make use of it are aware of this—is often established through an enigma. It is an enigma that is gathered as far as possible from the threads of the psychoanalyst's discourse, which you, the interpreter, can in no way complete on your own, and cannot consider to be an avowal without lying. It is a citation that is sometimes taken from the very same text, on the other hand, from a given statement—such as the

<sup>4</sup> See Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1970).

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one that can pass for an avowal, provided only that you connect it to the whole context. But you are thereby appealing to whoever is its author.

What is striking, in effect, in this institution of the analytic discourse, which is the mainspring of the transference, is not, as some have thought they have heard me say, that the analyst is the one who is given the function of the subject supposed to know. If speech is so freely given to the psychoanalysand—this is precisely how he receives this freedom—it's because we recognize that he may speak as a master, that is, as a birdbrain, but that this will not give results that are as good as in the case of a real master, since it's supposed to lead to knowledge. This is knowledge of which he who is prepared, in advance, to be the product of the psychoanalysand's cogitations, that is, the psychoanalyst, makes himself the underwriter [*gage*], the hostage—insofar as, as this product, he is in the end destined to become a loss, to be eliminated from the process.

What does it mean to say that he may assume this place which at the level of the master's discourse is that of the master? Already in the simple functioning of the relations between master and slave, it is clear that the master's desire is the Other's desire, since it's this desire that the slave anticipates.

It's another question to ask what the analyst is taking the place of when he unleashes the movement that invests the subject supposed to know—a subject who, by being recognized as such, is, with regard to the analyst, ready in advance for what is called the transference.

To be sure, it is only too easy to detect here a shadow of satisfaction at being recognized. This is not what is essential, if one supposes that he, the subject, knows what he is doing any better than hysterics do, for whom it is the truth of their conduct, but not at all their very being.

The analyst makes himself the cause of the analysand's desire. What does this strange notion mean? Do we have to regard it as an accident, as a historical emergence, that has appeared in the world for the first time?

Anticipating the continuation of a path that will perhaps take us down a long detour, I will just indicate that this function has already appeared, and that it is not for nothing that Freud had a liking for resorting to so many Presocratics, Empedocles among others.

42 Since I am aware that this amphitheater is occupied at two o'clock, from now on I shall finish at a quarter-to. Let's meet again the second Wednesday of January.

17 December 1969

### III

## Knowledge, a means of *jouissance*

HOW I AM TRANSLATED

DOMINANTS AND FACTS OF STRUCTURE

REPETITION AND *JOUISSANCE*

THE PRODUCTION OF ENTROPY

TRUTH IS IMPOTENCE

$$\begin{array}{cccc}
 U & M & H & A \\
 \underline{S}_1 \rightarrow a & \underline{S}_1 \rightarrow S_2 & \underline{S} \rightarrow S_1 & a \rightarrow \underline{S} \\
 \underline{S}_2 & \underline{S} & a & S_2 \\
 \underline{S}_2 & \underline{S} & a & S_2
 \end{array}$$

I have been given red chalk, very red chalk. Red on black—it is not obvious that it is going to be legible.

These are not new formulas, since I already wrote them up on the blackboard last time.

They are useful to have present there because—as simple as they are, so simple to deduce one from one another since it's just a matter of their circular permutation with the terms remaining in the same order—it just so happens that our powers of mental representation are not able to compensate for whether they are written on the blackboard or not.

We shall therefore continue what I am doing here, where “here” is always at the same time, whether here or somewhere else, Wednesday at half-past twelve for the last seventeen years.

It's worth mentioning this again at a time when everybody is rejoicing at entering a new decade. I would instead turn it into an opportunity for looking back over what the previous one has given me.

1

Ten years ago two of my students presented something that came out of Lacanian theses under the title “L'Inconscient, étude psychanalytique.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The article, by Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire, appeared in Henri Ey, ed., *L'Inconscient* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966) and appeared in English as “The Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Study,” *Yale French Studies* 48 (1972): 118-75.

This was brought about by what one can call the efforts of a prince. A prince is the only person capable of a liberal act, if one understands a liberal act to mean an arbitrary act, allowing also that "arbitrary" means not governed by any necessity. There was no necessity urging the prince, my friend Henri Ey, in one direction or another on this point. He placed the unconscious on the agenda at a certain conference, that of Bonneval, and entrusted the composition of it, at least in part, to two of my students.

In some ways this work is considered definitive. And, to be truthful, not without reason. It is indeed definitive in the way in which these two, my students, thought they might explain some of what I was putting forward on an interesting topic, since it was about nothing less than the unconscious, that is, that from which at the outset my teaching took wing, and explain it to a certain group.

This group was characterized by having been given orders of some sort concerning what I was saying. The interest they took in it was manifested in effect by something that I translated recently in a small preface as "forbidden to anyone under fifty." It was 1960, don't forget, and we were a long way away—are we any closer? that's the question—from challenging authority—challenging, among other things, the authority of knowledge. The upshot was that this prohibition, proffered in strange characters—one of them rendered it comparable to a sort of monopoly, a monopoly on knowledge—this prohibition was observed, purely and simply.

This is to tell you what the task was that was proposed to the people who had been kind enough to take it on—it was the task of having to explain to the ears in question something that was strictly speaking unprecedented.

How did they go about it? It is not too late for me to take stock of this now, especially since there was no question of my doing so at the time, for the reason that it was already quite a lot to see this brought into play for ears that were totally uninformed, that had picked up not even the slightest of what I had been able to develop over a period of seven years. It was obviously not the moment, with respect to the very people who had dedicated themselves to this work of deciphering, to contribute anything at all that might have given the impression that there was anything there to be restated. Moreover, there were many excellent elements in it.

This point arises, then, apropos of a thesis, a recent thesis, which, good God, was produced at the frontier of the French-speaking region, there where they struggle valiantly to maintain their rights. In Louvain someone has written a thesis on what they have called, perhaps improperly, my work.<sup>2</sup>

Let's not forget that this thesis is an academic thesis, and, at the very

<sup>2</sup> See Anika Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977).

least, what emerges is that my work lends itself poorly to that. Indeed this is why it is not unfavorable, at the head of any such proposition by a university thesis, to situate the extent of the contribution that what was already academic makes to serving as the vehicle of the said work, still in inverted commas. This is also why one of the authors of this Bonneval report is singled out there, and in a way that made me unable to observe in my preface that a division has to be made between what is possibly a translation of what I state and what I have strictly speaking said.

In this little preface I did for this thesis that is going to appear in Brussels, and it is obvious that a preface by me will lighten its wings, I am obliged to note—this is its one useful purpose—that it is not the same thing to say that the unconscious is the condition of language as it is to say that language is the condition of the unconscious.

Language is the condition of the unconscious—that's what I say. The way in which one translates it stems from reasons which, to be sure, could, in their detail, be altogether activated by a strictly academic motive—and this would certainly go a long way, and will perhaps take you far enough for this year. From a strictly academic motive, I say, flows the fact that the person who has translated me, by virtue of having a background in the style, in the form of imposition of the university discourse, cannot do anything other, whether he believes he is commenting on me or not, than reverse my formula, that is, give it a significance that, it has to be said, is strictly contrary to the truth, without even any homology at all with what I claim.

Surely, the difficulty endemic to translating me into academic language will also blight anyone who, for whatever reason, tries their hand at it, and in truth the author of the thesis I am speaking about was motivated by the best of qualifications, that of an immense good will. This thesis, then, that is going to be published in Brussels retains its value nonetheless, its value as an example in itself, its value also as an example because of what it promotes to the level of distortion, in some way an obligatory one, of a translation into the university discourse of something that has its own laws.

I have to unravel these laws. They are the ones that claim to give at least the conditions of a properly psychoanalytic discourse. Of course, this remains subject to the fact that, as I stressed last year, because I am stating this from high up here on a podium there is in effect a risk of error, an element of refraction, which means that in some respects it will fall under the influence of the university discourse. There is something here that stems from something fundamentally off balance.

To be sure, in no way am I identifying with a certain position. I assure you that whenever I come here to speak it is certainly not to speak about just anything, nor is it a question of "What am I going to tell them this time?" I have no role to play in this respect, in the sense in which the func-

tion of anyone who teaches has to do with a role, with a place to occupy, which is, undeniably, a place that has a certain prestige. It is not this that I am asking of you, but rather something that is a kind of putting into order imposed on me by the fact that I have to submit this unraveling to this trial. I, like anyone else, would escape this putting into order if, before this sea of ears among which there is perhaps the odd critical pair, I didn't have to give some account, with this fearful possibility, of the path my actions are following with respect to the fact that there exists a psychoanalyst [*qu'il y a du psychanalyste*].

That is my situation. The status of this situation as such has so far not been settled in any appropriate way, unless by imitation, unless at the incitement, the semblance, of various other established situations. In the present case this results in timid selection practices, in a certain identification with a figure, in a form of conduct, indeed, in a human type whose form nothing seems to render obligatory, or again in a ritual, indeed in some other measure that, at a better time, a former time, I compared to that of a driving school, without moreover provoking any protest from anyone.<sup>3</sup> There was even someone among my students, very close at the time, who remarked to me that this was, in reality, what was desired by everyone who was starting an analytic career—to receive one's driving license, as in a driving school, according to paths that were mapped out well in advance and that included the same type of examination.

It is certainly notable—I mean, worth noting—that after ten years I have arrived all the same at spelling out a way that is the one I call the discourse of this position of psychoanalyst. Let's say its hypothetical discourse, since this is also what is being put to you this year for your examination. Namely—what is the structure of this discourse?

## 2

I have managed to state the psychoanalyst's position in the following terms. I have said that it is substantially made from the object *a*.

In the way I characterize the structure of discourse, insofar as it interests us and, let's say, insofar as it is taken at the radical level it has attained for the psychoanalytic discourse, this position is, substantially, that of the object *a*, insofar as this object *a* designates precisely what presents itself as the most opaque in the effects of discourse, as having been misrecognized for

<sup>3</sup> See Lacan, "The Situation of Psychoanalysis and the Training of Psychoanalysts in 1956," pp. 384–411 in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).

a long time, and yet is essential. It is question of an effect of discourse that produces a reject. I shall shortly try to indicate its place and its function.

That, then, is how it is, substantially, with the psychoanalyst's position. But this object stands out for another reason, which is that it occupies the place from which the discourse is ordered, from which, if I can put it in these terms, the dominant is issued.

You are well aware of the reservation with which this is used. Saying "the dominant" means exactly that by which I ultimately designate each of the structures of these discourses so as to distinguish them from one another, naming them differently, the university, the master's, the hysteric's and the analyst's, according to the various positions of the radical terms. Let's say that because I am unable to give a different value to this term for the moment I will call "dominant" what I use to name these discourses.

This word "dominant" does not imply dominance, in the sense in which this dominance is supposed to be, and this is not certain, specific to the master's discourse. Let's say that one can give, for example, different substances to this dominant according to the discourse.

Take the dominant in the master's discourse, whose place is occupied by  $S_1$ . If we called it "the law" we would be doing something that has great subjective value and that would not fail to open the door to a number of interesting observations. It is certain, for example, that the law—I mean the law as articulated, that very law within whose walls we are finding shelter, this law [*cette loi*] that constitutes the law [*le droit*—must certainly not be taken as a homonym for what may be spoken of elsewhere under the heading of justice. On the contrary, the ambiguity and the trapings that this law adopts by virtue of the fact that it derives its authority from justice is very precisely a point on which our discourse can perhaps give a better sense of where its real resources are, I mean those that make the ambiguity possible and bring it about that the law remains something that is, first and foremost, inscribed in the structure. There are not thirty-six ways to make laws, whether motivated by good intentions, justice, or not, for there are perhaps laws of structure that make it the case that the law will always be the law located in this place that I am calling dominant in the master's discourse.

At the level of the hysteric's discourse it is clear that we see this dominant appear in the form of a symptom. It is around the symptom that the hysteric's discourse is situated and ordered.

This is an opportunity for us to make an observation. If this place remains the same, and if in a particular discourse this place is that of the symptom, this will lead us to wonder whether the same place is that of the symptom when it is in use in another discourse. This is, in fact, what we can see in our own time—the law is being called into question as a symptom.

And saying that this appears to us in the light of our own time is not sufficient to explain it.

I said before how it is that this same dominant place can be occupied when it is a question of the analyst. The analyst himself here has to represent, in some way, the discourse's reject-producing effect [*effet de rejet*], that is, the object *a*.

49 Is this to say that where the university discourse is concerned it will also be easy for us to characterize the said dominant place? What other name can we give it, one that would enter into this sort of equivalence that, as I have just been suggesting, exists at least at the level of a question, between the law, the symptom, and even the reject insofar as it is the place the analyst is destined for in the psychoanalytic act.

The difficulty we face in giving a reply to what constitutes the essence, the dominant, in the university discourse has to make us aware of something in what is our research—for what I am outlining in your presence are the very paths over which, when I deliberate, my thoughts drift and wander before finding any points of certainty. It is here, then, that the idea might occur to us to look for what would appear altogether certain, as certain as the symptom where hysteria is concerned, in each of these discourses, so as to designate at least one of its places.

I have already shown you that in the master's discourse the *a* is precisely identifiable with what the thought of a worker, Marx's, produced, namely what was, symbolically and really, the function of surplus value. We would therefore already be faced with two terms and, thereby, we would only need to modify them slightly, give them a freer translation, in order to transpose them into other registers. The following suggestion presents itself here—since there are four places to characterize, perhaps each of the four permutations could, from within itself, yield the place that is the most prominent, making a step forward in an order of discovery that is nothing other than what is called structure.

In whatever way you put such an idea to the test, it will consequently lead you to put your finger on the following, which will perhaps not occur to you at first sight.

Independently of this place that, I am suggesting, may be the one that interests us, try, in each of these figures of discourse, as we'll call them, to get yourself simply to choose a different place, defined as a function of the terms "above," "below," "right," "left." You will not be able to get any of the places occupied by a different letter, no matter how you go about it.

Try, in the opposite direction, making it a condition of the game to choose a different letter in each of these four formulas. You won't be able to get any of the letters to occupy a different place.

Have a go. It is very easy to do it on a piece of paper, as it is if you use

50 this little grid that is called a matrix. With such a limited number of combinations, the specimen drawing is immediately sufficient to illustrate the thing in a perfectly obvious way.

There is here a certain signifying connection, which one can suppose is altogether radical. This simple fact presents us with an opportunity to illustrate what structure is. In supposing the formalization of discourse and in granting oneself some rules within this formalization that are destined to put it to the test, we encounter an element of impossibility. This is what is at the base, the root, of an effect of structure.

And this is what interests us, in the structure, at the level of analytic experience. And this is not at all because we would here be at what, at least in its pretensions, is an already higher degree of elaboration, but from the outset.

## 3

Why are we caught up in these manipulations of the signifier and its possible articulations? It is because it is in the material of psychoanalysis.

I mean that it is in what occurred to a mind as little accustomed to this sort of development as a Freud could be, given the training we know he received, in the parapsychical sciences and in a physiology armed with the first steps in physics and with thermodynamics in particular.

What Freud, in following the vein, the thread of his experience, was led to formulate at a second stage in his declarations is of even greater importance since after all nothing seems to have made it necessary at the first stage, which was that of articulating the unconscious.

The unconscious makes it possible to situate desire. That is the meaning of the first, already quite complete, step Freud took, which was not merely implied but in fact fully articulated and developed in the *Traumdeutung*. This is already acquired knowledge when, at a second stage that opens with *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he states that we must take into account this function called what?—repetition.

What is repetition? Read Freud's text and see what he says.

51 What necessitates repetition is *jouissance*, a term specifically referred to. It is because there is a search for *jouissance* as repetition that the following is produced, which is in play at this stage of the Freudian breakthrough—what interests us qua repetition, and which is registered with a dialectic of *jouissance*, is properly speaking what goes against life. It is at the level of repetition that Freud sees himself constrained, in some way, by virtue of the very structure of discourse, to spell out the death instinct.

This is hyperbole, and a fabulous and, in fact, scandalous extrapolation for anyone who takes the identification of the unconscious with instinct literally. It means that repetition is not only a function of the cycles that life consists of, cycles of need and satisfaction, but of something else as well. It is a function of a cycle that embraces the disappearance of this life as such, which is the return to the inanimate.

The inanimate. A point on the horizon, an ideal point, a point that's off the map, but one whose meaning reveals itself to a structural analysis. It is revealed perfectly by the fact of *jouissance*.

One only has to begin with the pleasure principle, which is nothing other than the principle of least tension, of the minimum tension that needs to be maintained for life to subsist. This demonstrates that in itself *jouissance* overruns it, and that what the pleasure principle maintains is a limit with respect to *jouissance*.

As everything in the facts, in clinical experience, indicates to us, repetition is based on the return of *jouissance*. And what, in this connection, is well spelled out by Freud himself is that, in this very repetition, something is produced that is a defect, a failure.

At the time, here, I pointed out the kinship with remarks by Kierkegaard.<sup>4</sup> By virtue of being expressed and as such repeated, of being marked by repetition, what is repeated cannot be anything other, in relation to what it repeats, than a loss. A loss of whatever you like, a loss of momentum—there is something that is a loss. Right from the outset, right from the elaboration that I am summarizing here, Freud insists on this loss—in repetition itself there is a reduction in *jouissance*.

This is where the function of the lost object originates in Freudian discourse. And there is really no need to remind you that it is explicitly around masochism, conceived only in the dimension of the search for this ruinous *jouissance*, that Freud's entire text revolves.

Now, what Lacan contributes follows. It concerns this repetition, this identification of *jouissance*. Here I will borrow something from Freud's text and give it a sense that is not highlighted there, namely, the function of the unary trait, which is the function of the simplest form of mark, which properly speaking is the origin of the signifier. And I propose—this cannot be seen in Freud's text, but it can in no way be brushed aside, avoided, rejected, by the psychoanalyst—that everything that interests us analysts as knowledge originates in the unary trait.

Psychoanalysis in effect takes as its point of departure a turning point, one at which knowledge is purified, if I may put it like this, of everything

<sup>4</sup> See Soren Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, in his *Fear and Trembling; Repetition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).

that may create ambiguity over natural knowledge, that may be taken for an unknown something that would be able to guide us in the world around us with the help of unknown sensors which, in us, would know how to orientate us in the world from birth.

Not, to be sure, that there is nothing like this. When a learned psychologist writes in our time—I mean not so long ago, forty or fifty years—something called *Sensation, guide de vie*, he is not saying anything absurd, of course not.<sup>5</sup> But if he is able to declare it in this way, it is precisely because the entire evolution of a science makes us see that there is no co-naturality between this sensation and what, by its means, can be born out of the apprehension of a supposed world. If a properly scientific construction, the examination of the senses of sight, even of hearing, demonstrate anything to us at all, it is something that we should accept as it is, with, exactly, the coefficient of fabrication [*facticité*] with which it presents itself. In the light spectrum there is an ultraviolet that we have no perception of—and why wouldn't we have any? At the other, infrared end it's the same. The same goes for the ear—there are sounds that we stop hearing, and no one can tell very well why it stops there rather than further on.

As a matter of fact, through being illuminated in this way, nothing else is graspable than the fact that there are filters, and that we are able to manage with these filters. The function, they say, creates the organ. On the contrary, one makes use of the organ as best one can.

This is something about which, concerning the mechanisms of thought, an entire philosophical tradition has sought to reason—a tradition that has tried, by paths you are familiar with, by means of an account of what happens at the level of abstraction, of generalization, to construct this thing, on the basis of a sort of reduction, filtering, on the nature of sensation regarded as foundational—*Nihil fuerit in intellectu quod*, etc.—this subject is deducible in the name of the subject of knowledge [*connaissance*].<sup>6</sup> This subject is constructible in a manner that now strikes us as so artificial, on the basis of vital systems, organs which it is not clear, in effect, how we could do without. Is this what is at issue in this signifying articulation in which these initial terms, which we are starting to spell out and tender here, can begin to play a role? These are the most elementary of the terms that, as I've already said, knot one signifier to another signifier, and which already have an effect in that this signifier is only manipulable in its definition insofar as the following makes sense—that it represents a subject, and nothing but a subject,

<sup>5</sup> Henri Piéron, *The Sensations: Their Functions, Processes, and Mechanisms* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1952).

<sup>6</sup> "*Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*," or "Nothing is in the understanding that was not previously in the senses." The quotation comes from John Locke.

for another signifier. No, there is nothing in common between the subject of knowledge [*connaissance*] and the subject of the signifier.

There is no way of escaping this extraordinarily reduced formula that there is something underneath. But precisely, there is no term that we can designate this something by. It cannot be an *etwas*, it is simply an underneath, a subject, a *hypokeimenon*. Even for a thought so invested with the contemplation of the exigencies—primary and not at all constructed exigencies—of the idea of knowledge [*connaissance*], I mean Aristotle's thought, the logical approach alone, the fact alone that he introduced it into the circuit of knowledge, requires him to rigorously distinguish *hypokeimenon* from all *ousia* in itself, from anything that is essence.

The signifier becomes articulated, therefore, by representing a subject for another signifier. This is our starting point for giving meaning to this inaugural repetition that is repetition directed at *jouissance*.

At a certain level knowledge is dominated, articulated by purely formal necessities, the necessities of writing, and in our day this leads to a certain type of logic. Now, this type of knowledge to which we can give the support of an experience, the experience of modern logic, which is, in itself and above all, the manipulation of writing, is the same knowledge that is at work when it is a question of measuring the effect of repetition in the analytic clinic. In other words, knowledge that seems to us to be the most purified, even though it is quite clear that we could in no way extract it from empiricism through purification, is this same knowledge that one finds has been introduced from the outset.

This knowledge here reveals its roots in the fact that in repetition, and in the form of the unary trait to begin with, it is found to be the means of *jouissance*—precisely insofar as *jouissance* goes beyond the limits imposed, under the term of pleasure, on the usual tensions of life.

What becomes evident from this formalism, to keep following Lacan, is, as we were saying just before, that there is a loss of *jouissance*. And it is in the place of this loss introduced by repetition that we see the function of the lost object emerge, of what I am calling the *a*. What does this impose on us? If not this formula that at the most elementary level, that of the imposition of the unary trait, knowledge at work produces, let's say, an entropy.

That's spelled *e, n, t*. You could write it *a, n, t, h*, this would be a nice play on words.<sup>7</sup>

This shouldn't astonish us. Are you unaware that, whatever the ingenuous hearts of engineers believe, energetics is nothing other than the network of signifiers overlaying the world?

I defy you to prove in any way that descending 500 meters with a weight

<sup>7</sup> "*Entropie*" and "*anthropie*" sound the same in French.

of 80 kilos on your back and, once you have descended, going back up the 500 meters with it is zero, no work. Try it, have a go yourself, and you will find that you have proof of the contrary. But if you overlay signifiers, that is, if you enter the path of energetics, it is absolutely certain that there has been no work.

When the signifier is introduced as an apparatus of *jouissance*, we should thus not be surprised to see something related to entropy appear, since entropy is defined precisely once one has started to lay this apparatus of signifiers over the physical world.

Don't think I'm joking. Whenever you construct a factory somewhere, naturally you draw energy, you can even accumulate it. Well then, the apparatuses that have been installed so that these sorts of turbines function to the point where you can put energy in a bottle are built according to this same logic I am speaking about, namely the function of the signifier. Today, a machine has nothing to do with a tool. There is no genealogy between a bucket and a turbine. The proof is that you can quite legitimately call a little drawing you've done on a piece of paper a machine. It takes hardly anything. It is simply enough that you have conductible ink for it to be a very effective machine. And why shouldn't it be conductible, since the mark in itself already conducts pleasure [*volupté*]?

If there is anything that analytic experience teaches us it is what concerns the world of fantasy. In fact, if it does not seem to have been explored prior to analysis, it's because no one knew how to extricate themselves from it except through recourse to the bizarre, to the anomaly, which serves as the basis for these terms, these names that pin down *masochism* this, *sadism* that. When we give these *-isms* we are at the level of zoology. But there is nevertheless something altogether radical, which is the association, in what is at the base, at the very root of fantasy, with this glory of the mark, if I can put it like this.

I am speaking of the mark on the skin, which, in this fantasy, inspires nothing other than a subject identifying itself as the object of *jouissance*. In the erotic practice I am alluding to, which, to give it its name in case anyone is hard of hearing, is flagellation, the enjoying [*le jouir*] adopts the very ambiguity by means of which it is at its level and no other than the equivalence between the gesture of making a mark and the body, object of *jouissance*, can be reached.

Whose *jouissance*? Is it the *jouissance* of whosoever carries what I am calling the glory of the mark? Is it certain that this means the Other's *jouissance*? Certainly, this is one of the ways in which the Other enters one's world, and assuredly, it is an irrefutable one. But the mark's affinity with *jouissance* of the body itself is precisely where it is indicated that it is only through *jouissance*, and *jouissance* alone, that the division distinguishing narcissism from the relation with the object is established.



There's no ambiguity here. It's at the level of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that Freud strongly indicates that what in the end gives the specular image of the apparatus of the ego its real support, its consistency, is that it is sustained within by this lost object, which it merely dresses up, by which *jouissance* is introduced into the dimension of the subject's being.

56 In effect, if *jouissance* is forbidden, then it is clear that it only comes into play by chance, an initial contingency, an accident. The living being that ticks over normally purrs along with pleasure. If *jouissance* is unusual, and if it is ratified by having the sanction of the unary trait and repetition, which henceforth institutes it as a mark—if this happens, it can only originate in a very minor variation in the sense of *jouissance*. These variations, after all, will never be extreme, not even in the practices I raised before.

We are not dealing with a transgression, an irruption into some forbidden field through the wearing away of vital regulatory apparatuses. In fact, it is only through this effect of entropy, through this wasting, that *jouissance* acquires a status and shows itself. This is why I initially introduced it by the term "*Mehrlust*," surplus *jouissance*. It is precisely through being perceived in the dimension of loss—something necessitates compensation, if I can put it like this, for what is initially a negative number—that this something that has come and struck, resonated on the walls of the bell, has created *jouissance*, *jouissance* that is to be repeated. Only the dimension of entropy gives body to the fact that there is surplus *jouissance* there to be recovered.

And this is the dimension in which work, knowledge at work, becomes necessary, insofar as, whether it knows it or not, it initially stems from the unary trait and, in its wake, from everything that can possibly be articulated as signifier. This is the basis on which this dimension of *jouissance* is instituted, which is so ambiguous in the speaking being who can also theorize and make a religion of living in apathy, and apathy is hedonism. He can indeed turn it into a religion, and yet we all know that as a group—*Massenpsychologie* is the title of one of Freud's writings, from the same period—what animates him, what preoccupies him, what makes of him an order of knowledge different from these harmonizing knowledges that link the *Umwelt* to the *Innenwelt* is the function of surplus *jouissance* as such.

This is the hollow, the gap that no doubt a number of objects initially come and fill—objects that, in some way, are adapted in advance, designed to be used as stoppers. This is no doubt where a classical analytic practice stops, with its emphasis upon these various terms, oral, anal, scopic, not to mention vocal. These are various names by which we can designate, as an object, the *a*—but the *a*, as such, is strictly speaking what follows from the fact that, at its origin, knowledge is reduced to an articulation of signifiers.

57 This knowledge is a means of *jouissance*. And, I repeat, when it is at work, what it produces is entropy. This entropy, this point of loss, is the sole point,

the sole regular point at which we have access to the nature of *jouissance*. This is what the effect the signifier has upon the fate of the speaking being translates into, culminates in, and is motivated by.

This has little to do with his speaking. It has to do with structure, which gets fitted out. The subject, who is called human, no doubt because he is only the humus of language, has only to speechify himself to its fittings.<sup>8</sup>

With something as simple as my four little signs, I was able before to get you to sense that we only have to place this unary trait in the company of another trait,  $S_2$  after  $S_1$ , in order to situate, equally with licit signifiers, what its sense is and, on the other hand, the nature of its insertion into the Other's *jouissance*—this Other by virtue of which it is a means of *jouissance*.

This is where work begins. It is with knowledge as a means of *jouissance* that work that has a meaning, an obscure meaning, is produced. This obscure meaning is the meaning of truth.

## 4

No doubt, if I had not already been exploring these terms in various ways that enlighten us, I would certainly not have dared introduce them as I've done. But some work, a considerable amount of work, has already been accomplished.

When I speak of knowledge as having its initial locus in the master's discourse at the level of the slave, who apart from Hegel has shown that what the slave's work will yield is the master's truth? And, no doubt, the truth that refutes him. But, in truth, we are perhaps in a position to develop other forms of the schema for this discourse, and to perceive where the Hegelian construction gaps, remains gaping, and has been closed up in a forced way.

If there is one thing that our entire approach delimits, and that has surely been renewed by analytic experience, it is that the only way in which to evoke the truth is by indicating that it is only accessible through a half-saying [*mi-dire*], that it cannot be said completely, for the reason that beyond this half there is nothing to say. That is all that can be said. Here, consequently, discourse is abolished. One isn't speaking of the unsayable, whatever the pleasure that this seems to give certain people.

It remains no less true that I illustrated this knot of the half-saying last time through indicating how one has to emphasize what is properly speaking the nature of interpretation, what I expressed as an utterance without a

<sup>8</sup> The punning here is untranslatable: "Cela a à faire avec la structure, laquelle s'appareille. L'être humain, qu'on appelle ainsi sans doute parce qu'il n'est que l'humus du langage, n'a qu'à s'apparier à cet appareil-là."

statement, as a statement with the utterance in reserve. I indicated that these were the axis points, the points of balance, the axes of gravity, specific to interpretation, from which our developments must profoundly renew the question of truth.

What is the love of truth? It's something that mocks the lack in being [*manque à être*] of truth. We could call this lack in being something else—the lack of forgetting, which reminds us of its existence in formations of the unconscious. This is nothing of the order of being, of a being that is in any way full. What is this indestructible desire Freud speaks of at the end of his *Traumdeutung*? What is this desire that nothing can change or deflect when everything changes? The lack of forgetting is the same thing as the lack in being, since being is nothing other than forgetting. The love of truth is the love of this weakness whose veil we have lifted, it's the love of what truth hides, which is called castration.

I should not need these reminders, which are in some way so bookish. It seems that it is among analysts, particularly among them, that in the name of these few taboo words with which their discourse is soiled one is never made aware of what truth is, what knowledge is, what impotence is.

It is upon this that everything that has to do with truth is constructed. That there is a love of weakness is no doubt the essence of love. As I have said, love is giving what one doesn't have, namely what might make good [*réparer*] this original weakness.

And this role—I don't know whether I should call it mystical or mystifying—which since the birth of time, in a certain vein, has been given to love is immediately conceivable, half open. This love that they call universal, brandished on a piece of paper so as to calm us, is precisely what we make into a veil, a veil of obstruction, over what is the truth.

59 What is asked of the psychoanalyst, and this was already in my discourse last time, is certainly not what emerges from this subject supposed to know on which, by hearing it a little bit askew, as one usually does, it has been thought possible to found the transference. I have often insisted on the fact that we are not supposed to know very much at all. What analysis establishes is this, which is quite the opposite. The analyst says to whoever is about to begin—"Away you go, say whatever, it will be marvelous." He is the one that the analyst institutes as subject supposed to know.

This is after all not in such bad faith, because in the present case the analyst cannot put his trust in any other person. And the transference is founded on the fact that there is this character who tells me—me, the poor bastard—to act as if I knew what it was all about. I can say anything whatever, it will always produce something. This doesn't happen to you every day. There is a lot there to cause the transference.

What defines an analyst? I have said it. I have always said right from the

start, it's just that no one has ever understood anything, which moreover is natural, it's not my fault, that an analysis is what one expects from an analyst. But this "what one expects from an analyst"—we would obviously have to try to understand what it means.

It is very much there, just like that, within hand's reach—I nevertheless get the feeling, even now, that I am merely restating this—the work is mine, and the surplus pleasure is yours. What one expects from a psychoanalyst is, as I was saying last time, to get his knowledge to function in terms of truth. This is why he limits himself to a half-saying.

I said this last time, and I will have occasion to return to it, because it has consequences.

It is to the analyst and to him alone that this formula I have so often commented on, this "*Wo es war, soll Ich werden*," is addressed. If the analyst tries to occupy this place which determines his discourse at the top left, he is absolutely not there for himself. It is there where the surplus *jouissance*, the other's *jouissance*, was that I, as proffering the psychoanalytic act, must come.

14 January 1970

## Truth, the sister of *jouissance*

LOGIC AND TRUTH  
 WITTGENSTEIN'S PSYCHOSIS  
 POLITZER AND THE UNIVERSITY  
 DE SADE'S HUMOR

U	H	M
$S_1 \rightarrow a$	$\frac{\$}{a} \rightarrow \frac{S_1}{S_2}$	$S_1 \rightarrow S_2$
$S_1 \frac{\$}{S_2}$	$\frac{a}{S_2}$	$\$ \quad a$

At the level of structure we are trying to develop this year, the analytic discourse completes the three others, respectively named—I am recalling this for those of you who come here sporadically—the master's discourse, that of the hysteric, which today I've placed in the middle, and finally the discourse that interests us here to a high degree, since it is a question of the discourse situated as being that of the university.

But the fact that the analytic discourse completes the 90° displacement by which the three others are structured does not mean that it resolves them and enables one to pass to the other side. It doesn't resolve anything.

The inside does not explain the outside.<sup>1</sup> We are dealing with a relationship of weaving, of text—of fabric, if you like. It remains no less true that this material has a texture, that it captures something—not everything, to be sure, since language shows the limit of this word which only exists through language. It shows that even in the world of discourse nothing is everything, as I say—or better, that “everything” as such is self-refuting, finds itself, even, on having to be reduced in its employment.

This is by way of introduction to what will today form the object of an essential approach, with the aim of demonstrating what the other side, *l'envers*, is. *Envers* is assonant with *vérité*, “truth.”

<sup>1</sup> “L'envers n'explique nul endroit.” *L'envers* can mean “the lining,” as in the lining of a jacket, and *endroit* “the outside.” Thus, “The lining doesn't explain the outside.”

In truth, something worth being supported right from the start is that “truth” is not a word to be handled outside propositional logic, where it is made into a value, reduced to the inscription, to the handling of a symbol, usually a capital *T*, its initial. This usage, as we shall see, is most particularly bereft of hope. This is what is salubrious about it.

Nevertheless, everywhere else, and notably for analysts—I do have to say this, and with reason—for women analysts, it provokes a curious shiver, of the same order as the one that has, for some time now, been pushing them to confuse analytic truth with revolution.

I have already spoken of the ambiguity of this term “revolution,” which, in the use made of it in the mechanics of heavenly bodies, can mean return to the start. So much so that in certain respects what the analytic discourse, as I said initially, can accomplish with respect to the three other orders is situated in three other structures.

It is no accident that women are less enclosed than their partners in this cycle of discourses. Man, the male, the virile, such as we know him, is a creation of discourse—at least none of what is analyzable in him can be defined in any other way. The same cannot be said of woman. Nevertheless, no dialogue is possible unless it is situated at the level of discourse.

This is why, before she starts to shake, the woman animated by the revolutionary properties of analysis could tell herself that she will benefit much more than the man does from what we shall call a certain culture of discourse.

It is not that she has no gift for it, on the contrary. And once she becomes animated by it she becomes an eminent guide in this cycle. This is what defines the hysteric and this is why on the blackboard, breaking with the order of what I have been writing up there, I have placed her at the center.

It is, however, clearly not by chance that the word “truth” provokes this particular emotion in her.

Except that truth is not, in our context, easily accessible. Like certain birds that I used to be told about when I was little, you can only trap it by putting salt on its tail. This is not easy. My first reading book had as its first text a story that was called *The Story of Half a Chicken*. It is true, that was what it was about. It is not a bird that is any easier to catch than others when the requirement is to put salt on its tail.

What I have been teaching, ever since I have been developing something about psychoanalysis, could well be called *The Story of Half a Subject*.

Where is the truth in this relationship between the story of half a chicken and the story of half a subject? It can be taken from two angles. One might

say that the story in my first reading determined the development of my thought, as an academic thesis might put it. Or, from the point of view of the structure, the story of half a chicken could have represented, for the author who had written it, something in which there is some kind of presentiment, not of "sychnalisse" as it is said in *Paris Peasant*, but of the nature of the subject.<sup>2</sup>

What is clear is that there was also an image. The image of half a chicken was in profile, from its good side. You didn't see the other side, the cut one, the one where the truth probably was, since on the right-hand-side page you saw the half without the heart, but not without *liver* no doubt, in the two senses of the word.<sup>3</sup> What does that mean? It means that truth is hidden, but perhaps it is only absent.

This would settle everything if it were so. One would only have to know all that there is to know. After all, why not? When one says something there is no need to add that it is true.

An entire problematic of judgment turns on this. You know that Mr. Frege raises the question in the form of a horizontal stroke, and distinguishes it from how things are when one affirms that it is true, by putting a vertical stroke on the far left. Then it becomes an affirmation.<sup>4</sup>

However, what is it that is true? My God, it is what was said. What is it that was said? A sentence. But the only way of having a sentence supported is by signifiers, insofar as they do not involve objects. Unless, like a logician whose extremist views I will come to shortly, you claim that there are no objects, only pseudo-objects. As for us, we hold that signifiers are not concerned with objects but with sense.

64 The only subject of the sentence is the sense—thus this dialectic we started with, which we call the *pas-de-sens*, the no sense, with all the ambiguity of the word "*pas*."<sup>5</sup>

This begins with the non-sense forged by Husserl, "The green is one for." However, this may very well have a sense, if for instance it is about voting with green balls and red balls.

However, what leads us down the path where the nature of being derives from sense is that which has the most being. It is down this path, in any case, that the step-of-sense [*pas-de-sens*] has been taken of thinking that what has the most being cannot fail to exist.

Sense, if I may say so, is responsible for being. It does not even have any

<sup>2</sup> Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> The two senses are *foie*, "liver," and *foi*, "faith."

<sup>4</sup> See *Begriffsschrift*, in Jean Van Heijenoort, ed., *Frege and Gödel: Two Fundamental Texts in Mathematical Logic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> *Pas-de-sens* means both "no sense" and "the step of sense."

other sense. The only thing is that it was observed some time ago that this is insufficient for carrying the weight—the weight, precisely, of existence.

A curious thing that non-sense carries the weight. It grabs you by the stomach. And the discovery that Freud made is to have shown that this is what is exemplary about a witticism (*mot d'esprit*), a word with neither tip nor tail.

This doesn't make putting salt on its tail any easier. Precisely, the truth flies off. The truth flies off the very moment you no longer wanted to grab it.

Moreover, since it didn't have a tail, how could you have? Stupefaction and light.

As you will recall, a little story, a fairly dull one moreover, about responses over the Golden Calf (*veau d'or*) may suffice to wake up this calf that *sleeps* (*veau qui dort*) standing up. You can see then that it is, if I may say so, of *hard gold* (*d'or dur*).<sup>6</sup>

Enter Eluard's hard desire to endure (*dur désir de durer*) and the desire to sleep, which is indeed the greatest enigma, which no one seems to be aware of, that Freud proposes in the dream mechanism. Let's not forget it—"Wunsch zu schlafen," he says. He didn't say, "*schlafen Bedürfnis*," need to sleep, this is not what it's about. It's the *Wunsch zu schlafen* that determines the dream's operation.

It is curious that he complements this indication with the further one that a dream wakes you up just when it might let the truth drop, so that the only reason one wakes up is so as to continue dreaming—dreaming in the real or, to be more exact, in reality.

That is all very striking. It's striking because of a certain lack of sense, where truth, like nature, comes galloping back.<sup>7</sup> And even at such a gallop that it has scarcely crossed our field before it has already departed on the other side.

The absence I mentioned before has produced a curious contamination in French. If we take the *sans*, "without," supposedly derived from the Latin *sine*, which is highly unlikely since its initial form was something like *senz*, we can see that the *absentia*, in the ablative, used in legal documents and which this term *sans* with neither head nor tail comes from—we have already produced this little word right from the start of what we have been stating today.

And so what? *Senz* and then *sans*—aren't we dealing with a *puissance*, a "power"? One quite different from this *en puissance*, "potentiality," of an imaginary virtuality, which is a power only through being deceptive. It is rather what of being there is in sense, which is to be taken otherwise than

<sup>6</sup> Also *ordure*, "rubbish."

<sup>7</sup> "Changez le naturel, il revient au galop." French proverb.

being full sense, which is rather what escapes being, as happens in so-called witticisms.<sup>8</sup>

Just as, as we know, this always occurs in acts. In an act, of whatever kind, it is what escapes it that is important. And this is also the step that analysis has gone beyond, by introducing the bungled act, the parapraxis, as such, which is after all the only one that we know, with certainty, is always successful.

Around all this there is a play of litotes whose weight and emphasis I've tried to show you in what I am calling the "not-without." Anxiety is *not without* an object. We are *not without* a relationship with truth.

But is it certain that we should find it *intus*, within? Why not to one side? *Heimlich*, *unheimlich*—each of us, from our reading of Freud, has been able to recall what shelters in the ambiguity of this word which, through not being within and yet evokes it, accentuates precisely everything that is strange.

On this point languages themselves vary strangely. Have you noticed that "homeliness" in English means *sans façon*, without standing on ceremony? It is, however, just the same word as *Heimlichkeit*, but that doesn't have the same tone at all.

This is why *simlos* translates into English as "meaningless," that is, the same word which, in translating *Unsinn*, "nonsense," will give us *non-sensé*.

We all know that the ambiguity of the roots in English lend themselves to unusual avoidances. On the other hand, and in a way that is almost unique, English will call "without" the *sans-avec étant dehors*.<sup>9</sup>

66 Truth does in effect seem to be foreign to us, I mean our own truth. It is no doubt with us, but without concerning us to the point that one really wants to speak it.

All that can be said, and this is what I was saying before, is that we are *not without* it. A litotes, in short, of the fact that when we are within its reach we would happily do without it.

We go from "without" to "not-without," and from there to "without-past."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> "... comme il arrive dans le mot justement dit d'esprit." *Mot d'esprit*, literally "word with mind or spirit," translates the German *Witz*, and is closer to the English "witticism" than "joke," by which it is translated in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74), hereafter cited as SE.

<sup>9</sup> Lacan is referring to the fact that "without" (*sans* in French) is composed of "with" (*avec*) and "out" (*dehors*).

<sup>10</sup> *sans, pas-sans, sans-passé*. One can also hear *s'en passer*, "to do without."

## 2

Here I will make a little leap and move to the author who has given the most forceful formulation to what results from the enterprise of proposing that the only truth there is is inscribed in a proposition, and from articulating that which, in knowledge as such—knowledge being constituted on the basis of propositions—can in all strictness function as truth. That is to say, what results from articulating what, concerning whatever is proposed, can be said to be true and upheld as true.

I have in mind someone by the name of Wittgenstein who is, may I say, easy to read. Surely. Try him.

It requires that you know how to be content to move around in a world that is, strictly speaking, a world of cogitation without seeking any fruit in it, which is your bad habit. You are very keen on picking apples from an apple tree, even on gathering them from the ground. For you, anything is better than not gathering apples.

Dwelling for a time under this apple tree whose branches, I assure you, may suffice to capture your closest attention, provided you make an effort, will nevertheless have the characteristic that you will not be able to draw anything from it except the affirmation that nothing can be said to be true other than the agreement with a structure which I will not even situate, if I can place myself outside the shade of this apple tree for an instant, as logical, but, and the author puts this well, as grammatical.

For this author grammatical structure constitutes what he identifies with the world. Grammatical structure is the world. And all that is true is, in short, a composite proposition comprising the totality of facts that constitute the world.

If we choose to introduce, into the set, the element of negation that enables it to be articulated, we will have an entire set of rules which constitute a logic to disengage, but the set is, he says, tautological, that is to say, as stupid as the following—whatever you state is either true or false. Stating what is either true or false is necessarily true, but also it annuls sense.

Everything I have said, he concludes at propositions 6.51, 2, 3, 4, since he numbers them, everything I have just stated is strictly speaking *Unsinn*, that is, it annuls sense.

One cannot say anything that is not a tautology. What is at stake is that once the reader has passed through the long circuit of statements, and please believe me, all of them are extremely attractive, he will have risen above everything that has just been said and concluded that nothing else is sayable—but that everything that can be said is only nonsense.

I have perhaps been a bit swift in summing up Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.<sup>11</sup> Let us add just this remark, that nothing can be said, that nothing is true, except on the condition that one starts from the idea, on Wittgenstein's approach, that a fact is an attribute of an elementary proposition.<sup>12</sup>

What I am calling an elementary proposition will elsewhere be placed in quotation marks, in Quine for instance, who distinguishes between a statement and an utterance. This is an operation which, because I have constructed my graph precisely on its foundation, I have no hesitation in calling arbitrary. It is in effect clear that it is defensible to say, and this is Wittgenstein's position, that no sign of affirmation needs to be added to what is assertion pure and simple. An assertion declares itself to be the truth.

How then can one avoid Wittgenstein's conclusions, other than by following him exactly where he is led, namely toward the elementary proposition, whose notation as true or as false is what must, in every case, whether it be true or false, assure the truth of the composite proposition?

Whatever the facts in the world might be, I would go further, whatever we might say about them, the tautology of the totality of discourse is what makes the world.

68 Take the simplest proposition, I mean grammatically. It is not for nothing that the Stoics had already used it, introducing it into the simplest form of implication. I won't go that far, I will only take the first part of it, since, as you know, implication is a relation between two propositions. "It is day." That is the bare minimum. "It," in the impersonal. "It is," "that is"—in certain circumstances these have the same sense.

Thus, for Wittgenstein the world is supported only by facts. No things unless supported by a web of facts. No things, moreover, but that are inaccessible. Facts alone are articulable. This fact, that it is day, is only a fact by virtue of that, its being said.

The true depends only—this is where I have to reintroduce the dimension I am arbitrarily separating from it—on my utterance, namely on whether I state it appropriately. The true is not internal to the proposition, where only the fact, the factitious nature, of language is declared.

It is true that it is a fact, a fact constituted by my saying it, on those occasions when it's true. But that it is true is not a fact, unless I explicitly add that, moreover, it's true. It is just that, as Wittgenstein puts it very well, it's quite superfluous for me to add it.

Well, except that what I have to say in the place of this superfluity is that

<sup>11</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974).

<sup>12</sup> Proposition 4.21.

I have to have a reason for really saying it, and this will be explained by what follows.

But then, I don't say that I have a reason, I continue with the rest, namely my deduction, and I integrate "It is day," perhaps fallaciously—even if it's true—into my exhortation, which may be to take advantage of it so as to get someone to believe that he can clearly see what my intentions are.

The stupid thing, if I may say so, is to isolate the factitiousness of "It is day." It is a prodigiously rich piece of stupidity, for it gives rise to a leverage point, very precisely the following one, from which it results that what I have used as a leverage point myself, namely that there is no metalanguage, is pushed to its ultimate consequences.

There is no other metalanguage than all the forms of knavery, if we thereby designate these curious operations derivable from the fact that man's desire is the Other's desire. All acts of bastardry are based on the fact of wishing to be someone's Other, I mean someone's big Other, in which the figures by which his desire will be captivated are drawn.

Thus this Wittgensteinian operation is nothing but an extraordinary parade, the detection of philosophical skulduggery.

The only sense is the sense of desire. This is what one can say after having read Wittgenstein. The only truth is the truth of what the said desire for its lack hides, so as to make light of what he does find.

There is no more certain light under which what results from what logicians have always articulated appears, if only to dazzle us with the air of paradox contained in what has been called material implication.

You know what this is. It's simply implication. It has only recently been called material implication, because, all of a sudden, they have rubbed their eyes and begun to understand what a scandal implication is, I am speaking of the one that a certain Stoic upheld. That is to say, that the three following implications are legitimate, that, to be sure, the false implies the false, the true implies the true, but that it is not at all to be rejected that the false imply the true, since in total it is a matter of what is implied and that if what is implied is true the entire implication is also true.

However, this means something, why couldn't we, by slightly altering the word "implies," observe what is relevant in this—that it was well known in the Middle Ages, *ex falso sequitur quodlibet*—that the false sometimes also entails the true means that the true can be about anything.

But that if, on the other hand, we reject that the true entail the false, that it can have a false consequent—for this is what we are rejecting, in the absence of which there would be no possible articulation of propositional logic—we end up with this curious fact that the true has a genealogy, that it always goes back to an initial true, from which it is no longer able to fall.

This is such a strange indication, one that is so challenged by our entire life, I mean our life as a subject, that this alone would be sufficient to question whether truth could in any way be isolated as an attribute—as an attribute of anything capable of articulating with knowledge.

As for the analytic operation, it is distinguished by advancing into this field in a way that is distinct from what is, I would say, found embodied in Wittgenstein's discourse, that is, a psychotic ferocity, in comparison with which Ockham's well-known razor, which states that we must admit only notions that are necessary, is nothing.

## 3

Truth—we begin again from first principles—is certainly inseparable from the effects of language taken as such.

No truth can be localized except in the field in which it is stated—in which it is stated as best it can. Therefore, it is true that there is no true without the false, at least not in principle. This is true.

But that there is no false without the true, that is false.

I mean that the true can only be found outside all propositions. To say that the true is inseparable from the effects of language, considered as such, is to include the unconscious within them.

The claim, on the contrary, as I was saying last time, that the unconscious is the condition of language gets its sense here, by virtue of wishing that an absolute sense corresponds to language.

One of the authors of the discourse on "The Unconscious," subtitled, "A Psychoanalytic Study," once wrote it out by superimposing an *S* over itself, by placing it below and above a bar, arbitrarily treated moreover with respect to what I had done with it. The signifier thereby designated, the sense of which is supposedly absolute, is very easy to recognize, for there is only one capable of answering to this place—it is the *I*.

This is the *I* insofar as it is transcendental, but, equally, insofar as it is illusory. This is the ultimate root operation, the one that what I am describing as an elaboration of the university discourse guarantees for itself—and this is what shows that finding it here is no accident.

The transcendental *I* is what anyone who has stated knowledge in a certain way harbors as truth, the *S*<sub>1</sub>, the *I* of the master.

It is, very precisely, out of the *I* identical to itself that the *S*<sub>1</sub> of the pure imperative is constituted.

It is, very precisely, in imperatives that the *I* is displayed, for they are always in the second person.

The myth of the ideal *I*, of the *I* that masters, of the *I* whereby at least something is identical to itself, namely the speaker, is very precisely what the university discourse is unable to eliminate from the place in which its truth is found. From every academic statement by any philosophy whatsoever, even by a philosophy that strictly speaking could be pointed to as being the most opposed to philosophy, namely, if it were philosophy, Lacan's discourse—the *I-crazy* emerges, irreducibly.

Of course, no philosophy is ever reducible to this. For philosophers the question has been a lot more supple and pathetic. Remember what is in question, everyone acknowledges it more or less, and some of them, the most lucid, do so clearly—they want to save truth.

This has taken one of them, good heavens, a long way—to the point where, like Wittgenstein, by making it the rule and the foundation of knowledge, there is nothing left to say, at least nothing that concerns truth as such, so as to refuse, to avoid, this rock. Surely the author has something close to the analyst's position, namely, that he eliminates himself completely from his own discourse.

I mentioned psychosis before. Here, in effect, one of the most assured discourses and something or other that is strikingly suggestive of psychosis concur so much that I am saying this on the sole basis of feeling its effect. How remarkable it is that a university like the English university made a place for him. A place apart, it's appropriate to say, a place of isolation with which the author went along with perfectly well himself, so much so that he withdrew from time to time to a little house in the country and then returned to pursue this implacable discourse, of which, one can even say, the discourse of Russell's *Principia Mathematica* turns out to be a fabrication.

Wittgenstein wasn't interested in saving the truth. Nothing can be said about truth, as he said. This isn't certain, since we are dealing with it every day. But how, then, does Freud define the psychotic position in a letter I have quoted many times? Precisely by what he calls, strangely, *unglauben*, not wanting to know anything about the spot where truth is in question.

For the academic it is such a pathetic thing that one can say that Politzer's discourse entitled "Foundations of Concrete Psychology," which was instigated by his approaching psychoanalysis, is a fascinating example of it.<sup>13</sup>

Everything in this attempt at leaving behind this university discourse that has shaped him from head to toe is to be commended. He is well aware that there is some ramp there he could take to escape from it.

You must read this small work, republished in paperback without any

<sup>13</sup> This work had just been republished as vol. 2 of Politzer's *Ecrits* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1969), edited by Jacques Debouzy. Politzer was executed by the Gestapo in 1942. See his *Critique of the Foundations of Psychology: The Psychology of Psychoanalysis* (Pittsburgh, Penn.: Duquesne University Press, 1994).

evidence, to my knowledge, that the author has himself authorized this new edition, whereas everyone knows how much of a trial he found the accolades with which what was initially presented as a cry of revolt was covered.

These scathing pages on psychology, particularly academic psychology, are, curiously, followed by steps which in some way lead him right back again. But what enabled him to grasp where there might be hope for him to escape from this psychology was his emphasizing the fact—which nobody had done in his day—that what in Freud's method was essential for exploring formations of the unconscious was to trust the narrative [*récit*]. He emphasized this fact of language, from which everything, really, might have followed.

At the time there was no question—this is a piece of trivia—of anyone, not even at the *École normale*, having the slightest idea of what linguistics is, but it is extremely unusual that he should have thus come across the fact that this is the mainspring that gives some hope for what he curiously calls concrete psychology.

You must read this little book, and if I had it here I would read it with you. Perhaps one day I will make it the substance of our exchanges here, but I already have enough things to say for me not to have to dwell on something whose significant oddness each one of you can see for yourself—that in seeking to escape from the university discourse one implacably reenters it. One can follow this step by step.

What objections does he make to the statements, I mean to the terminology, concerning the mechanisms Freud proposes in his theoretical development? He declares, concerning facts isolable by formal abstraction, as he confusingly puts it, that what escapes Freud is for him essential to what is required in matters of psychology, namely that all scientific facts are utterable only if one preserves what he calls the act and, even better, the continuity of the I. This is what he writes—the continuity of the I.

This term is no doubt what made it possible for the editor I mentioned before to shine at Politzer's expense, to whom he makes a little reference—an episode, as it were, for enticing his audience such as it then was. An academic who in another connection has shown himself to be a hero—  
73 what a fitting occasion to evoke him. It is always good to have one from time to time, but that is not sufficient, if you benefit from it without managing to show what in the university discourse is irreducible in relation to analysis. This book testifies to a unique battle, however, for Politzer cannot fail to sense how close analytic practice is in fact to what he ideally sketched out as being completely outside the field of anything that had previously been done as psychology. But he cannot avoid falling back upon requiring the I.

Not, to be sure, that I see there anything that is irreducible. The editor

in question lets himself off too lightly when he states that the unconscious does not express itself in the first person, and arms himself for this with one of my remarks about the fact that the subject receives his message from the other in inverted form.

That is clearly not a sufficient reason. Elsewhere I have in fact said that truth speaks I. "I, truth, am speaking."<sup>14</sup> It's just that what doesn't occur either to the author in question or to Politzer is that the "I" in question is perhaps innumerable, that the I does not need to be continuous for it to multiply its acts.

This is not what is essential.

## 4

In the face of this use of propositions are we not, before we part, going to present the following? "A child is being beaten." This entire fantasy really is made up of a proposition. Are we able to attribute to it anything whatsoever that the terms "true" or "false" designate?

This case, exemplary in that there is no definition of a proposition that it cannot be eliminated from, makes us grasp the fact that if this proposition has the effect of being sustained by a subject, it's undoubtedly a subject, as Freud immediately analyzes, divided by *jouissance*. Divided, I mean that also he who states it, this child who, *becomes virtue, turns green* (*wird, vertu, verdit, verdoie*) through being beaten, *geschlagen*—let's play on this a bit longer—this child who becomes green [with fear], beaten, he jests—*vertu, virtue*, these are the misfortunes of the *vers-tu, toward-you*, that is, the one who is striking him, and who is unnamed, no matter how the sentence is stated.

The "You are beating me" is this half of the subject whose formula constitutes his liaison with *jouissance*. He receives, to be sure, his own message in inverted form—here this means his own *jouissance* in the form of the Other's *jouissance*. This is what is involved when the fantasy happens to join the father's image to what is initially another child. The fact is that the father gets *jouissance* from beating him, which here places the emphasis of the meaning, and also the emphasis of this truth that is a half-truth—for equally he who is identified with the other half, with the subject as child, was not this child, unless, as Freud says, one reconstitutes the intermediate stage—never, in any way, substantiated by memory—where it is him, in  
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<sup>14</sup> See Lacan, "The Freudian Thing," pp. 344–63 in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).



effect. It is he who makes this sentence the support of his fantasy, the beaten child.

Here we are led back to this fact that a body can be formless [*sans figure*]. The father or the other, whoever this may be, who here plays the role of *jouissance*, assures its function, gives it its place, is not named at all. A formless god—this is truly what it is. He nevertheless cannot be grasped except as a body.

What has a body and does not exist? Answer—the big Other. If we believe in this big Other, then it has a body, ineliminable from the substance of the one who has said “I am what I am,” which is another form of tautology altogether.

It is in this that, before leaving you, I will allow myself to advance this, which is so striking in history that, quite frankly, it is astonishing that it has not been emphasized enough or even not emphasized at all—materialists are the only authentic believers.

Experience has proved it—I am speaking of the time of the most recent historical eruption of materialism in the eighteenth century. Matter was their god. And indeed, why not? That stands up better than any other way of founding him.

It's just that this is not enough for the rest of us. Precisely because we have logical needs, if you will allow me this term. Because we are beings born of surplus *jouissance*, as a result of the use of language.

When I say, “the use of language,” I do not mean that we use it. It is language that uses us. Language employs us, and that is how it enjoys. This is why the only chance for the existence of God is that He—with a capital H—enjoys, that He is *jouissance*.

This is why it was clear to the most intelligent of the materialists, namely de Sade, that the aim of death is not at all the inanimate.

Read the propositions of Saint-Fond near the middle of *Juliette* and you will see what it's all about. When he says that death consists of nothing other than the invisible collaboration with the operation of nature, it is of course because for him, after death, everything remains animate—animated by the desire for *jouissance*. He can just as well call this *jouissance* nature, but it is obvious in the total context that it is *jouissance* that's at stake. *Jouissance* by what? By a unique being who has merely to say “I am what I am.”

Why is this so? How does de Sade sense this so well?

This is where the fact that in appearance he is sadistic is played out. It's because he refuses to be what he is, to be what he says he is. When he makes this furious appeal to give to nature in its murderous operation, from which forms are always being reborn, what is he doing, if not displaying his impotence to be anything other than the instrument of divine *jouissance*?

That's de Sade the theoretician. Why is he a theoretician? I perhaps have the time, at the last moment as I usually do it, to tell you why.

The practitioner is different. As you know from a number of stories, about which we have his testimony in his own hand moreover, the practitioner is simply a masochist.

This is the only astute and practical position where *jouissance* is concerned, for exhausting oneself at being the instrument of God is backbreaking work. The masochist is a fine humorist. He has no need of God, his lackey will do. He gets his kicks by enjoying within limits that are moreover discreet, naturally, and like any good masochist, as you can see, you just have to read him, he finds it funny. He is a humorous master. Why in the devil, then, is de Sade a theoretician? Why this exhausting wish, for it is completely out of his reach, this wish that is written, designated in this way? This wish that these particles, in which—following the most extraordinary imagined acts—fragments of broken, shredded, dismembered lives result, be struck down by a second death. Within whose reach is this?

Of course, it is within our reach. I stated this a long time ago on the subject of Antigone. It's just that, being a psychoanalyst, I can see that the second death is prior to the first, and not after, as de Sade dreams.

De Sade was a theoretician. And why? Because he loved truth.

It is not that he wants to save it—he loves it. The proof that he loves it is that he refuses it, that he does not appear to notice that by decreeing this God dead he exalts Him, he bears witness to Him, witness to the fact that he, de Sade, only achieves *jouissance* through the small means I mentioned before.

What can it mean to say that by loving truth one thus falls into a system that is so obviously symptomatic? Here one thing is becoming clear—by proposing itself as the residue of the effect of language, as what makes it that the effect of language only extracts, from enjoying, what last time I was saying about the entropy of a surplus *jouissance*—this is what one does not see—truth as external to discourse—but what—is the sister of that forbidden *jouissance*.

I say, “It's the sister,” because they are only related by this. If the most radical logical structures effectively attach themselves to this stem that is uprooted from *jouissance*, the inverse question arises of what corresponds to the enjoying of these conquests in logic that in our day are being made. There is this, for example, that a logical system is consistent, however “weak” it is, as they say, only by designating its force of effect of incompleteness, where its limit is marked. To what *jouissance* does this way in which the logical foundation itself proves to be opening up correspond? In other words, what is truth here?

It is not in vain, nor by chance, that I describe as sisterly the position of truth with respect to *jouissance*, apart from the fact that I am stating it in the hysteric's discourse.

Oddly enough, quite recently, someone gave a lecture to the Americans on something that everybody knows. Freud was having, with his sister-in-law, what is coyly called an affair. So what? We have known Minna Bernays' place in Freud's preoccupations for a very long time. Adding some Jungian gossip to it doesn't change a thing.

But I will hold onto this position of the sister-in-law. Isn't it because of his sister-in-law that de Sade, whom, as we all know, Oedipal prohibition had separated from his wife—as the theoreticians of courtly love have always said, there is no love in marriage—loved truth so much?

I will leave you with that question.

21 January 1970

## V

### The Lacanian field

FREUD MASKS HIS DISCOURSE

THE HAPPINESS OF THE PHALLUS

MEANS OF JOUISSANCE

HEGEL, MARX, AND THERMODYNAMICS

WEALTH, PROPERTY OF THE WEALTHY

$$\begin{array}{cc}
 M & U \\
 \frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a} & \frac{S_1}{S_2} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\$} \\
 \\ 
 \frac{\$}{a} \rightarrow \frac{S_1}{S_2} & \frac{a}{S_1} \rightarrow \frac{\$}{S_2} \\
 H & A
 \end{array}$$

We are going to push on, and perhaps so as to avoid one misunderstanding, among others, I would like to give you this rule of first approximation—the reference of a discourse is what it acknowledges it wants to master. That is sufficient to classify it in the kinship of the master's discourse.

This is the difficulty faced by anyone whom I try to bring as close as I am able to the analyst's discourse—and who has to be located at the opposite of any wish, at least any declared wish, for mastery. I say, "at least declared," not because one has to dissimulate the wish, but because it is easy after all to spin off into the discourse of mastery.

As a matter of fact, this is the starting point for teaching the discourse of consciousness, which has recommenced, recommences every day, indefinitely. One of my best friends, who is very close to me, in psychiatry of course, described it best—it is a discourse of synthesis, a discourse of the consciousness that masters.<sup>1</sup>

He was the one I was replying to in certain views that I put forward some time ago on psychical causality, and which are there to testify that well before I took the analytic discourse in hand I already had some orientation, in particular when I said to him, more or less, how could one grasp all that psychical activity other than as a dream, when thousands upon thousands

<sup>1</sup> See Lacan, "Presentation on Psychical Causality," pp. 123–58 in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (New York, W. W. Norton, 2006). The friend Lacan refers to is the psychiatrist Henri Ey.

of times over the course of the day one hears “this bastard chain of fate and inertia, of throws of the dice and astonishment, of false success and missed encounters, which make up the usual script of a human life”?<sup>1</sup>

Don't expect anything more subversive in my discourse than that I do not claim to have a solution.

## 1

Nevertheless, it is clear that there is no more burning question than what, in discourse, refers to *jouissance*.

Discourse is constantly touching on it, by virtue of the fact that this is where it originates. And discourse arouses it again whenever it attempts to return to this origin. It is in this respect that it challenges all appeasement.

Freud has an odd discourse, it has to be said, one that is most contrary to the coherence, to the consistency, of a discourse. The subject of discourse does not know himself as the subject holding the discourse. That he does not know what he is saying doesn't matter too much, one has always found a substitute [*suppléance*] for this. But what Freud says is that the subject does not know who it is that is saying it.

Knowledge—I think I have insisted upon this sufficiently to get it into your head—is something spoken, something that is said. Well then, knowledge that speaks all by itself—that's the unconscious.

This is the point at which it should have been attacked by what is more or less diffusely called phenomenology. It was not enough, to contradict Freud, to remind us that knowledge is known ineffably. The attack had to bear upon this, which is that Freud stresses what everyone is able to know—knowledge comes in bits, knowledge is enumerable, it comes in parcels, and—this is what isn't self-evident—what is said, the litany, is not said by anyone, it unfolds of its own accord.

81 With your permission, I wanted to start with an aphorism. You will see why I hesitated. I have hesitated, as I usually do, but fortunately I am doing it before twelve thirty-one and thus have not delayed the end of our seminar this time. If I started in the way I always feel like starting, I would start abruptly. It's because I feel like doing it that I don't do it, I am sparing you, I am avoiding shocks for you. I wanted to begin with an aphorism which, I hope, will strike you by its obviousness, because it's the reason that Freud has carried the

<sup>1</sup> “Presentation on Psychological Causality,” *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 130.

day despite the protestations that greeted his entry into the world of commerce of ideas. What carried the day is this—Freud doesn't bullshit [*décomme*].

This is what gives him this sort of priority he has in our day. It's probably also what makes it the case that there is another who, as we know, survives fairly well despite everything. What is characteristic of the two of them, Freud and Marx, is that they don't bullshit.

We can see it in the fact that in contradicting them there is always a risk of sliding, one slides very easily, into bullshitting. They throw into confusion the discourse of those who want to trip them up and very often freeze it into a sort of irreducibly conformist, retarded, academic recursion.

I am perfectly happy for these contradictors, if I may be so bold, to bullshit. They would be unpacking the consequences of Freud, they would be continuing a certain order, the order of what is at issue. After all, one does ask oneself why from time to time they say So-and-so is an idiot [*con*]. Is this so devaluing? Haven't you noticed that when one says that So-and-so is an idiot it actually means he is not so stupid? What depresses one is that one does not very well know in what way he deals with *jouissance*. And that's why he is called an idiot.

This is also what gives Freud's discourse its value. He is worthy of it. He is worthy of a discourse that maintains itself as close as possible to what refers to *jouissance*—as close as it was possible up till Freud. It is not very comfortable. It is not very comfortable to be situated at this point where discourse emerges, or even, when it returns there, when it falters, in the environs of *jouissance*.

Obviously, with respect to this Freud sometimes shies away, abandons us. He abandons the question of feminine *jouissance*. At the latest report Mr. Gillespie, an eminent character who has distinguished himself by all sorts of operations of horse-trading between the different currents that have permeated analysis these last fifty years, marks some kind of jubilation, an unusual liveliness, in the latest issue of the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* over the fact that, owing to a number of experiments on vaginal orgasm that have apparently been carried out at the University of Washington, much light has apparently been thrown on what was a matter of debate, namely the primacy or not, in woman's development, of a *jouissance* initially reduced to the equivalent of male *jouissance*.<sup>2</sup>

These studies by a certain Masters and Johnson are not, frankly, lacking in interest. Nevertheless, when, without having been able to refer directly to the text, but on the basis of certain quotations, I see it appear there that the greater orgasm, which is apparently the woman's orgasm, emanates from the total personality, I do wonder how a movie camera that takes

<sup>2</sup> William Gillespie, “Concepts of Vaginal Orgasm,” *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 50 (1969):495–7.

images in color, placed inside an appendage representing the penis, recording from the inside what takes place on the lining of what, on its being inserted, surrounds it, is capable of grasping the said total personality.

This is perhaps very interesting, as an accompaniment in the margin of what Freud's discourse enables us to propose. But it is what gives meaning to the word *déconner*, "to bullshit," like one says *déchanter*, to change one's tune. You know perhaps what *le déchant*, the descant, is—it's something that is written alongside plain chant, it can also be sung, it can be an accompaniment, but ultimately it is not at all what one expects from plain chant.

It is because there is so much descant here that one has to remind oneself of what emerges, in brutal outline, from what I could call the attempt at economic reduction that Freud gives his discourse on *jouissance*.

It is not without reason that he masks it in this way. You will see what effect this has when stated directly. But it is what I thought I should do today in a form that, I hope, you will find striking, even though it will teach you nothing but the right tone for Freud's discoveries.

We are not going to speak about *jouissance* in that way.

I have already said enough to you for you to know that *jouissance* is the jar of the Danaïdes, and that once you have started, you never know where it will end.<sup>3</sup> It begins with a tickle and ends in a blaze of petrol. That's always what *jouissance* is.

I will take these things up via another factor which cannot be said to be absent from analytic discourse.

If you read the veritable anniversary corpus that is this issue of the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* you will see the authors congratulating themselves on the solidity displayed over these past fifty years. I ask you to carry out this test—take any issue from these past fifty years, you will never be able to tell when it dates from. They all say the same thing. They are always equally insipid, and because analysis preserves, they are always the same authors. It's simply that, as fatigue sets in, they reduce their contributions from time to time. One of them expresses himself in a single page.

<sup>3</sup> The Danaïdes were daughters of Danaus, a mythical king regarded by the ancient Greeks as one of their progenitors. Forced to marry their cousins, the sons of Aegyptus, the Danaïdes, with one exception, stabbed their husbands to death on the wedding night, with daggers their father had provided; the murderers were punished in the Underworld by having to fill leaky jars with water.

They congratulate themselves on the fact that, in sum, these fifty years have indeed confirmed these fundamental truths, that the mainspring of analysis is goodness, and that what has fortunately become obvious over the course of these years, with the progressive effacing of Freud's discourse, is particularly the solidity and glory of a discovery that is called the autonomous ego, namely, the ego free of conflict.

This is the result of fifty years of experience, by virtue of the insertion of three psychoanalysts, who had blossomed in Berlin, into American society where this discourse of a solidly autonomous ego undoubtedly promised attractive results.<sup>4</sup> For a return to the master's discourse, in effect, one could do no better.

This gives us an idea of the consequences, retrogressive if you like, that rebound from any form of attempt at transgression, which, all the same, analysis was at one time.

Now, we are going to put things in a certain way, and concerning a word that you will easily find in turning to this issue [of the journal], since it's also one of the current themes of analytic propaganda—in English it's called "happiness," in French we call it *le bonheur*.

Unless we define happiness in a rather sad way, namely that it is to be like everyone else, which is what the autonomous ego could be resolved into—nobody, it has to be said, knows what it is. If we are to believe Saint-Just who said this himself, then since that time, his own day, happiness has become a political factor.

Let's try to give body to this notion by another abrupt statement which, I ask you to note, is central to Freudian theory—the only happiness is the happiness of the phallus.

Freud writes this in all sorts of ways, and even writes it in a naïve manner which consists in saying that nothing can come closer to the most perfect *jouissance* than that of the male orgasm.

However, where Freudian theory places the emphasis is on the fact that it is only the phallus that is happy—not the bearer of said. Even when, not out of oblativity, but out of desperation, he places it, the above said phallus, inside the womb of a partner, supposedly disappointed at not bearing one herself.

There you have what psychoanalytic experience teaches us positively. The bearer of the said phallus, as I put it, strives to get his partner to accept this privation, in the name of which all his efforts at love, his detailed caring and tender services, are in vain, since he reawakens the said wound of privation. There is no compensation for this wound in the satisfaction that

<sup>4</sup> The allusion is to Ernst Kris, Rudolf Loewenstein, and Heinz Hartmann.

its bearer purportedly derives from alleviating it. On the contrary, it is reawakened by its very presence, by the presence of that thing the regret for which causes this wound.

This is exactly what was revealed to us by what Freud was able to extract from the hysteric's discourse. It is the basis on which we can understand how the hysteric symbolizes the initial non-satisfaction. I have highlighted her promotion of unsatisfied desire supported by the minimal example that I have commented on in the article [*écrit*] that goes under the title of "The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power," namely, the dream of the butcher's beautiful wife.<sup>5</sup>

85 You will recall that there is the beautiful wife and her husband, who loves a fuck, who is a perfect idiot, because of which she has to show him that she does not value what he wants to satisfy her to excess with, which means that nothing is settled as to what is essential, even though she has what is essential. There you have it. What she does not see, because she too has limits to her own little horizon, is that by leaving what is essential to her husband to another woman, she would obtain surplus *jouissance*, for this is what is at stake in the dream. She doesn't see it in the dream, that's all one can say.

There are others that do see it. For example, Dora does. Through the adoration of the object of desire that woman has become on her horizon—the woman she envelops herself in and who in the case study is called Frau K., the woman she is going to contemplate in the figure of the Dresden Madonna—through this adoration, she plugs her penile claims [*revendications*]. And this is what makes it possible for me to say that the butcher's beautiful wife does not see that, like Dora, she would ultimately be happy to leave this object to another woman.

There are other solutions. If I take this one it's because it is the most scandalous.

There are many other refinements in the ways of finding a substitute for this *jouissance*, whose framework, which is that of the social, and which leads to the Oedipus complex, brings it about that by virtue of being the only *jouissance* that would bring happiness, precisely because of that, this *jouissance* is excluded. This is, strictly, the meaning of the Oedipus complex. And this is why it is interesting in analytic investigation to know how it is that by being substituted for the prohibition of phallic *jouissance* something is introduced whose origin we have defined by a thing that is quite different from phallic *jouissance*, one that is situated by, and as it were mapped out [*quadrillé*] by, the function of surplus *jouissance*.

I am only recalling here some outstanding features of Freudian discourse that I have highlighted many times before and that I want to insert

<sup>5</sup> See Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 489ff.; also Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE 4:147ff.

into their relationship of configuration—which is not central but it is related—with the situation I am trying to give of this discourse's relationships to *jouissance*. This is the respect in which I am recalling them and want to place renewed emphasis on them, with the intention of modifying any aura that the idea that the Freudian discourse is centered on the biological facts of sexuality may hold for you.

I will see how I measure up here, which is something that I must confess to you I did not discover very long ago. It is always the things that are most visible, the ones that display themselves, that one sees least. I suddenly asked myself, "But how does one say 'sex' in Greek?"

The worst of it is that I did not have a French-Greek dictionary, and anyway there aren't any—well, only small, ugly ones. I had found *genos*, which of course has nothing to do with sex, since it means a bunch of other things, race, lineage, engenderment, reproduction. Then another word appeared on the horizon, but its connotations are quite different—*phusis*, "nature."

This division of living beings, of one part of them, into two classes, with what one realizes that this entails, namely, most likely, the irruption of death, since the others, those that are not sexed, do not give the appearance of dying all that much—this is not what we are saying at all, it doesn't have this ring about it at all when we say "scx." The stress, of course, is not at all on this biological reference. This is clearly what shows that one has to be very, very careful before assuming that it is a reminder not just about organicism but even about a reference to biology that foregrounds the function of sex in Freudian discourse.

It is here that one notices that "sex," with the significance it has for us and its level of use, its meaningful diffusion, is *sexus*. In relation to Greek one would have to conduct the enquiry into other languages, but in Latin it is, very clearly, attached to *secare*. In Latin *sexus* is implicated in what I initially made evident, namely that the entire game revolves around the phallus.

Of course, it is not only the phallus that is present in sexual relations. However, what this organ has that is privileged is that in some way it is quite possible to isolate its *jouissance*. It is thinkable as excluded. To use violent words—I am not going to drown this in symbolism for you—it has, precisely, a property that, within the entire field of what constitutes sexual equipment, we may consider to be very local, very exceptional. There is not, in effect, a very large number of animals for whom the decisive organ for copulation is something as isolatable in its functions of tumescence and detumescence, determining a perfectly definable curve, called orgasmic—once it's over, it's over. *Post coitum animal triste*, as has already been said. This is no exaggeration, moreover. But it does clearly indicate that he feels himself to be frustrated. There is something there that does not concern him. He can take things differently, he can find it very cheerful, but ulti-

87 mately Horace found it to be rather sad—and this is proof that he had still retained illusions about the relationships with the Greek *physis*, with this bud that he thinks sexual desire constitutes.

That is putting things in their place, when one sees that this is, nevertheless, how Freud presents things. If there is something in biology that might echo, have a vague resemblance with but in no way be rooted in this position whose roots in discourse we are now going to indicate, if there is something which, so that we can say good-bye to the domain of biology, would give us an approximate idea of what it means to say that everything is played out around this stake, which one of them doesn't have and the other doesn't know what to do with, it would be more or less what takes place in certain animal species.

Just recently I saw—and this is why I mention it to you—some fish that were very pretty and monstrous, as a species has to be in which the female is about this size and the male is like this, tiny. He comes and latches onto her stomach, and he latches on so well that his own tissues are indiscernible—it is not possible, even under a microscope, to see where the tissues of one end and the tissues of the other begin. There he is, hooked on by his mouth, and there he fulfils, if it can be put like this, his male functions. It is not unthinkable that this greatly simplifies the problem of sexual relations, when in the end the weary male resorbs his heart, his liver, and none of it is left at all, there he is, suspended from the good place, reduced to what after a certain time remains in this little animal pocket, namely, principally the testicles.

The question is to elaborate the nature of this phallic exclusion in the great human game of our tradition, which is that of desire.

Desire has no immediately proximate relationship with this field. Our tradition states it for what it is, Eros, the making present of a lack.

And this is where one can ask how it is possible to desire anything. What is lacking? There was someone who one day said, "But don't wear yourself out, nothing is lacking, look at the lilies in the field, they do not weave nor do they spin, it is they who are in their place in the Kingdom of heaven."<sup>6</sup>

88 It is obvious that to make these claims of genuine defiance, one really would have had to be the very one who was identifying with the negation of this harmony. This at least is how he was understood, interpreted, when he was characterised as the Word. He had to be the Word itself if he was to negate the obvious to this extent. At least, this is the idea that formed around him. He didn't say as much. He said, if one of his disciples is to be believed, "I am the Way, the Truth, the Life."<sup>7</sup> But the fact that they made

<sup>6</sup> "Consider how the lilies grow in the fields; they do not work, they do not spin." Matt. 6:28.

<sup>7</sup> John 14:6.

this into the Word indicates where people nevertheless knew more or less what they were saying when they thought that only the Word was capable of repudiating itself to this extent.

It is true that we can well imagine the lily in the fields as a body entirely given over to *jouissance*—each stage of its growth identical to a formless sensation. The plant's *jouissance*. Nothing in any case makes it possible to escape it. It is perhaps infinitely painful to be a plant. Well, nobody amuses themselves by thinking about this, except me.

It is not the same for animals, who have what we interpret as an economy—the possibility of movement in order to obtain, above all, the minimum of *jouissance*. This is what is known as the pleasure principle. Let's not stay there where one enjoys, because God only knows where it might end, as I was already saying earlier.

Now, there is this thing, which is that we nevertheless know the means to *jouissance*. I was speaking to you just before about tickling and grilling. There, we know how to go about it. That's even what knowledge is. In principle nobody wants to overuse it, and yet it's tempting to.

This is actually what Freud discovered in fact around 1920, and here, in a way, is the point at which his discovery backtracks.

His discovery was to have spelled out the unconscious, and I defy anyone to say that this can be anything other than the remark that there is a perfectly articulated knowledge for which strictly speaking no subject is responsible. When a subject happens to encounter it all of a sudden, to come upon this knowledge he was not expecting, good God, he—he who speaks—finds himself very confused indeed.

This was the first discovery. Freud said to subjects, "Speak, speak then, do what the hysterics do, let's see what knowledge it is that you encounter, and the manner in which you have aspired to it or, on the other hand, in which you reject it, let's see what happens." And that necessarily led him to this discovery, which he called beyond the pleasure principle. And it was this, that the essential thing in determining what one is concerned with when exploring the unconscious is repetition.

89 Repetition. This does not mean that one redoes what one has finished, like digestion or some other physiological function. Repetition is the precise denotation of a trait that I have uncovered for you in Freud's text as being identical with the unary trait, with the little stick, with the element of writing, the element of a trait insofar as it is the commemoration of an irruption of *jouissance*.

This is why it is conceivable that the rule and the principle of pleasure are violated, why it succumbs to displeasure. There is nothing else to say—not to pain obviously, but to displeasure, which can only mean *jouissance*.

This is where inserting the generation, the genital, the genitive [*génésique*], into desire shows itself to be entirely distinct from sexual maturity.

There is no doubt that speaking of premature sexualization has its point. Certainly, what is called the early manifestation of sexuality in man is very obviously what it is said to be, namely, premature. But apart from the fact that this can imply, in effect, the presence of *jouissance*, it nevertheless remains the case that it is not merely organic autoerotism that introduces the division between libido and nature. There are other animals than men who are capable of stroking themselves, and that hasn't led them, monkeys, to a highly advanced elaboration of desire. On the contrary, we find favor here in the function of discourse.

It is not just a matter of talking about prohibitions, but simply about a dominance of the woman as mother, and as a mother who says, a mother of whom one makes demands, a mother who gives orders, and who thereby establishes the child's dependence.

Woman lends herself to *jouissance* by daring the mask of repetition. She presents herself here as what she is, as the institution of masquerade. She teaches her little one to parade. She tends towards surplus *jouissance*, because she, the woman, plunges her roots, like a flower, down into *jouissance* itself. The means of *jouissance* are open on the principle that he has renounced this closed, foreign *jouissance*, renounced the mother.

90 It is here that a vast social connivance will come and insert itself, inverting what we can call the differences between the sexes in nature into the sexualization of organic difference. This overturning implies as common denominator the exclusion of the specifically male organ. Henceforth the male is and is not what he is with respect to *jouissance*. And thereby, also, woman is produced as an object, precisely through not being what he is, sexual difference, on the one hand, and on the other through being what he renounces by way of *jouissance*.

These reminders are absolutely essential to make at a time when, in talking of the other side of psychoanalysis, the question arises of the place of psychoanalysis in politics.

### 3

The intrusion into the political can only be made by recognizing that the only discourse there is, and not just analytic discourse, is the discourse of *jouissance*, at least when one is hoping for the work of truth from it.

Characterizing the master's discourse as comprising a hidden truth does not mean that this discourse is hidden, that it is lying low. The word *caché*,

hidden, in French has its etymological virtues. It comes from *coactus*, from the verb *coactare*, *coactitare*, *coacticare*. This means that there is something that is compressed, that is like a superimposition, something that needs to be unfolded in order to be legible.

It is clear that his truth is hidden from him, and a certain Hegel stated that it is delivered to him by the work of the slave. There you have it, however, it is a master's discourse, this discourse of Hegel's, which relies on substituting the State for the master via the long pathway of culture, culminating in absolute knowledge. It does seem to have been definitively refuted by discoveries made by Marx. I am not here to comment on this, and I won't add an appendix here, but I will simply show the extent to which, from the perspective of our psychoanalytic belvedere, we are comfortable about casting doubt on whether work engenders absolute knowledge, or even any knowledge at all, on the horizon.

I have already developed this point for you, and I can go back over it again here. But it is one of the axes in which I beg you to locate yourselves so as to grasp what the analytic subversion is.

91 Whereas knowledge is a means of *jouissance*, work is something else. Even if work is accomplished by those who have knowledge, what it produces can certainly be truth, it is never knowledge—no work has ever produced knowledge. Something objects to this, which is given by a closer observation of the nature, in our culture, of the relations between the master's discourse and something that has emerged, something which has reestablished the examination of what, from Hegel's point of view, was wrapped around this discourse. This something is the avoidance of absolute *jouissance*, insofar as it is determined by the fact that in attaching the child to the mother social connivance makes her the privileged site of prohibitions.

Moreover, doesn't the formalization of a knowledge that renders all truth problematic suggest to us that, rather than progress having been made through the work of the slave—as if there has been the slightest progress in his condition, quite the contrary—it is a matter of the transference, plundering, spoliation of what, at the beginning of knowledge, was inscribed, hidden, in the slave's world? In this connection it was the master's discourse that had to impose itself. But also, by virtue of this fact, reentering into the mechanism of its repeated assertion, he had to apprehend the loss of his own entry into discourse and, in a word, see this object *a* emerge, which we have nailed down as surplus *jouissance*.

In short, this and nothing more than this is what the master had to make the slave, the sole possessor of the means of *jouissance*, pay for.

The master was satisfied with this little tithe, this surplus *jouissance*, such that, after all, there is no indication that in himself the slave was unhappy to be giving it. The case is quite different with respect to what is found, on

the horizon of the rise of the master subject, in a truth which asserts itself on the basis of his equality with himself, on the basis of this I-crazy I once spoke of, and which is, it seems, the essence of every affirmation in culture that has seen this master's discourse flourish over all others.

If we look at it more closely, what subtracts the slave's knowledge from him is the entire history whose stages Hegel follows step by step—something unusual, without having seen where it was leading, and for good reason. He was still in the field of Newton's discoveries, he hadn't seen the birth of thermodynamics. If he had been able to take on board formulas which, for the first time, unified this field that was designated as thermodynamics, perhaps he would have been able to recognize in it this reign of the signifier, of the signifier repeated at two levels,  $S_1$ ,  $S_1$  again.

92  $S_1$  is the dam. The second  $S_1$ , down below, is the pond that receives it and turns the turbine. There is no other meaning to the conservation of energy than this mark of an instrumentation that signifies the power of the master.

What is collected in the fall has to be conserved. This is the first of the laws. There is unfortunately something that disappears in the interval, or more exactly does not lend itself to a return to, to restoring, the starting point. This is the so-called Carnot-Clausius principle, although a certain Mayer contributed to it substantially.

Doesn't this discourse which, essentially, gives primacy to everything at the beginning and at the end and neglects everything in between, which may be of the order of something arising from knowledge, placing these pure numerical truths, that which is countable, on the horizon of a new world signify, all by itself, something completely different from the increasing role of absolute knowledge? Isn't this very ideal of a formalization in which henceforth everything is merely to be counted—where energy itself is nothing other than what is counted, than what, if you manipulate the formulas in a certain way, always turns out to add up to the same total—the rotation, the quarter turn, here? Doesn't this make it the case that in the place of the master an articulation of completely new knowledge, completely reducible formally, is established, and that in the slave's place there emerges, not something that might be inserted in no particular way into this order of knowledge, but something which is its product instead?

Marx denounces this process as spoliation. It's just that he does it without realizing that its secret lies in knowledge itself, just as the secret of the worker himself is to be reduced to being no longer anything but a value. Once a higher level has been passed, surplus *jouissance* is no longer surplus *jouissance* but is inscribed simply as a value to be inscribed in or deducted from the totality of whatever it is that is accumulating—what is accumulating from out

of an essentially transformed nature. The worker is merely a unit of value—an indication for those for whom this term produces an echo.\*

What Marx denounces in surplus value is the spoliation of *jouissance*. And yet, this surplus value is a memorial to surplus *jouissance*, its equivalent of surplus *jouissance*. "Consumer society" derives its meaning from the fact that what makes it the "element," in inverted commas, described as human is made the homogeneous equivalent of whatever surplus *jouissance* is produced by our industry—an imitation surplus *jouissance*, in a word.

Moreover, that can catch on. One can do a semblance of surplus *jouissance*—it draws quite a crowd.

## 4

If I wanted to give you matter for your dreams about where this process, of which our science is the status, begins I would tell you, since I reread it recently, to amuse yourselves with the *Satiricon*.

I didn't find what Fellini did with it bad. What he will never be forgiven for is having made a mistake in writing "Satyricon," whereas there is no "y," but apart from that, it's not bad. It's not as good as the text, because in the text you are serious, you don't stop at the images and you see what it's all about. In a word, it's a good example for drawing the distinction between what the master is and what the rich are.

What is marvelous in the discourses, whichever discourse it may be, even the most revolutionary, is that they never say things directly, as I have just been trying to—a bit. I do what I can.

From time to time I stick my nose into a stack of authors who are economists. And we can see the extent to which this is of interest for us analysts, because if there is something that remains to be done in analysis, it is to institute this other field of energetics, which would demand other structures than those of physics, and which is the field of *jouissance*.

You can unify the thermodynamic and the electromagnetic fields as much as you want, if you are a Maxwell. You nevertheless run into a difficulty with the field of gravitation, and it's fairly curious because it's with gravitation that everybody started—but, in the end, that doesn't matter. As for what comes from the field of *jouissance*—which, sadly, will never be called the Lacanian field, for I will surely not have the time even to sketch out the bases, but I have wanted to—there are some remarks to be made.

\* In France the number of courses or subjects that one takes for a degree are calculated in terms of *unités de valeur*.



94 One opens the book by a certain Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, and he is not alone, they are all there, Malthus, Ricardo, and others, racking their brains—what is the wealth of nations? There they are, trying to define use value, that must count, exchange value—it's not Marx who invented all that. Now, it is extraordinary that ever since there have been economists nobody, up till now, has—not even for an instant, I am not saying this in order to stop here—ever made this remark that wealth is the property of the wealthy. Just like psychoanalysis which, as I said one day, is done by psychoanalysts, this is its principal characteristic, you have to begin with the psychoanalyst. Why not, concerning wealth, begin with the wealthy?

I have to stop in two minutes time, but all the same I am going to make a remark to you that stems from an experience that is not particularly that of an analyst, but is one that anybody could have.

The wealthy have property. They buy, they buy everything, in short—well, they buy a lot. But I would like you to meditate on this fact, which is that they do not pay for it.

One imagines that they pay, for reasons of accounting that stem from the transformation of surplus *jouissance* into surplus value. But first, everyone knows that they very regularly add on surplus value. There is no circulation of surplus value. And, very much in particular, there is one thing that they never pay for, and that is knowledge.

In effect, not only is there the dimension of entropy in what takes place on the side of surplus *jouissance*. There is something else as well, as someone has noticed, which is that knowledge implies an equivalence between this entropy and information. Of course, it's not the same, it's not so simple, as M. Brillouin says.<sup>8</sup>

The wealthy are masters—and this is what I ask you to go and look for in the *Satiricon*—only because they have redeemed themselves. The masters in question on the horizon of ancient Greece are not businessmen. See how Aristotle speaks of them—they disgust him.

95 On the other hand, when a slave has redeemed [racheté] himself he is a master only in that he has begun to risk everything. Indeed this is how a character, who is none other than Trimalchio himself, puts it in the *Satiricon*. Why is it that once he has become rich he can buy everything without paying for it? Because he will have nothing to do with *jouissance*. That is not what he repeats. He repeats his purchase. He buys everything again or, rather, whatever turns up, he buys. He is cut out to be a Christian. He is, by destiny, the redeemed.

And why does one let oneself be bought by the wealthy? Because what

<sup>8</sup> Most likely Marcel Brillouin, French physicist and professor of mathematical physics at the Collège de France in the early twentieth century.

they give you stems from their essence of wealth. Buy from the wealthy, from a developed nation, you believe—and this is what the meaning of the wealth of nations is—that you are simply going to share in the level of a rich nation. However, in the process, what you lose is your knowledge, which gave you your status. The wealthy acquire this knowledge on top of everything else. It's simply that, precisely, they don't pay for it.

We have arrived at the limit today of what I am able to say before we vacate the auditorium. I will merely raise, and I will end with this, the question of what can happen with the promotion, the vocal reprise, of the nature of surplus *jouissance*, of *a*, at the level at which the function of the wealthy operates, the one for which knowledge is only a tool of exploitation. This is, in some way, what the analyst's function gives something like the dawn of.

I will try to explain to you next time what its essence is. It is certainly not to refashion this element into an element of mastery.

In effect, as I will explain to you, everything hinges on failure.

11 February 1970

BEYOND THE  
OEDIPUS COMPLEX

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## The castrated master

THE MASTER SIGNIFIER DETERMINES CASTRATION

SCIENCE, MYTH, THE UNCONSCIOUS

DORA AND HER FATHER

UNUSABLE OEDIPUS

It must be beginning to dawn on you that the other side of psychoanalysis is the very thing that I am putting forward this year under the title of master's discourse.

I am not doing this in an arbitrary way, this master's discourse already has its letters of credit in the philosophical tradition. Nevertheless, in the way I am trying to uncover it, it takes on, here, a new light by virtue of the fact that in our day it so happens that it can be uncovered in a sort of purity—and this, through something that we experience directly, and at the level of politics.

What I mean by this is that it embraces everything, even what thinks of itself as revolutionary, or more exactly as what is romantically called Revolution with a capital R. The master's discourse accomplishes its own revolution in the other sense of doing a complete circle.

This evaluation is a bit aphoristic, I agree, but it is made, as is the destiny of aphorisms, so as to illuminate in a simple flash. On its horizon there is the fact, which interests us, by which I mean you and me, that this master's discourse has only one counterpoint, the analytic discourse, which is still so inappropriate.

I call it counterpoint because its symmetry, if one exists—and one does—is not around a line, nor around a plane, but around a point. In other words, it is obtained by completing the circle of this master's discourse I was referring to a moment ago.

The layout of these four terms, the two numbered Ss,  $\$$ , and  $a$ , as I rewrote them last time, and whose transcription I hope that you more or less all still have in your notes, sufficiently displays this symmetry in relation to a point, which makes it the case that the psychoanalytic discourse is quite precisely located at the opposite pole from the master's discourse.

## 1

In psychoanalytic discourse it sometimes happens that we see certain terms that serve as a *filum* in an explanation, that of the father for instance. And it sometimes happens that we see someone try to draw the major elements together—a painstaking task when carried out from within what, at the point we have come to, one expects from a psychoanalytic utterance [énoncé] and statement [énonciation], that is to say, from within a genetic reference.

Concerning the father one thinks one is obliged to begin with childhood, with identifications, and then it's something that can tend toward extraordinary nonsense, a strange contradiction. One will speak about primary identification as what binds the child to the mother, and indeed this seems self-evident. However, if we refer to Freud, to his work of 1921 called *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, it is quite precisely the identification with the father that is given as primary.<sup>1</sup> This is certainly very odd. Freud indicates there that, completely primordially, the father happens to be the one who presides over the very first identification, precisely in that in a privileged way he is the one who deserves to be loved.

This is very odd, to be sure, and is to be placed in contradiction with everything that the development of analytic experience is found to have established concerning the primacy of the child's relationship with the mother. There is an odd discordance between Freudian discourse and the discourse of psychoanalysts.

Perhaps these discordances are the result of confusion, and the order I am trying to introduce by referring to configurations of discourse that are in some way primordial is there to remind us that it is strictly unthinkable to state anything that is at all ordered in analytic discourse unless one bears the following in mind. Our effort is, as we know perfectly well, a reconstructive collaboration with whoever is in the position of the analysand whom we are, in some way, enabling to embark upon his career. To be effective this effort, which we make to extract, in the form of imputed thought, what has in effect been lived by him who, on this occasion, well deserves the title of patient, must not make us forget that by virtue of the signifier connection the subjective configuration has a perfectly mappable objectivity which founds the very possibility of the assistance we bring in the form of interpretation.

There, at a given point of the link, namely the altogether initial one between  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ , it is possible for this fault we call the subject to open.

<sup>1</sup> See Sigmund Freud, SE 18 (1921):100.

There, the effects of the link, which as it happens is a signifier link, operate. Whether this lived experience [*vécu*] that is more or less correctly called thought is or is not produced somewhere, something is produced there that derives from a chain, exactly as though it were thought. Freud is never saying anything else when he speaks of the unconscious. This objectivity not only induces but determines this position, which is that of the subject, as the focus of what is called the defenses.

What I am advancing, what I am going to announce that is new today, is that in expressing itself toward those means of *jouissance* that are what is called knowledge, the master signifier not only induces but determines castration.

I shall return to what one should understand by "master signifier," starting from what we have put forward on this topic.

At the outset, surely, there aren't any. All signifiers are in some sense equivalent, if we just play on the difference of each from all the others, through not being the other signifiers. But it's for the same reason that each is able to come to the position of master signifier, precisely because its potential function is to represent the subject for another signifier. This is how I have always defined it. However, the subject it represents is not univocal. It is represented, undoubtedly, but also it is not represented. At this level something remains hidden in relation to this very same signifier.

The game of the psychoanalytic discovery is played out around this. Like any other, it has been prepared for. It has been prepared for by this hesitation—which is more than a hesitation—this ambiguity, maintained under the name of dialectic by Hegel, when it was found to have been posited at the outset that the subject asserts himself as knowing himself.

Hegel has the courage to set out, in effect, from *Selbstbewusstsein* in its most naïve formulation [énonciation], namely that all consciousness knows that it is consciousness. And yet he interweaves this departure point with a series of crises—*Aufhebung*, as he puts it—from which it results that this very *Selbstbewusstsein*, the inaugural figure of the master, finds its truth in the work of the other *par excellence*, in the other who only knows himself through having lost this body, this very body he supports himself with, because he wanted to retain it for its access to *jouissance*—in other words, the slave.

How can one not try to break this Hegelian ambiguity? How can one not attempt to take a different path, starting out from what is given to us in analytic experience, which it is always a matter of returning to in order to grasp it better?

More simply, it concerns the fact that there is a use of the signifier that we can define by starting out from the master signifier's split from this body we have just mentioned, the body lost by the slave, which becomes nothing other than the body in which all the other signifiers are inscribed.

It is in this sort of way that we might illustrate the knowledge that Freud defines by placing it between the enigmatic parentheses of the *Urverdrängt*—which means precisely what has not had to be repressed because it has been repressed from the start. This headless knowledge, if I can put it like that, is indeed a politically definable fact, structurally definable. Consequently, everything that is produced through work—I mean this in the strict, full sense of the word “produced”—everything that is produced concerning the truth of the master, namely what he as subject hides, is going to join company with this knowledge insofar as it is split off, *urverdrängt*, insofar as it is split off and nobody understands a thing about it.

There you have what, I hope, rings true for you—without your knowing whether it’s ringing on the left or on the right. This is initially structured in what has been called the mythical support of certain societies. We can analyze them as ethnographic, that is to say, as escaping the master’s discourse, to the extent that the latter begins with the predominance of the subject as, in fact, tending to be supported only by this ultrareduced myth of being identical with his own signifier.

This is where I indicated to you last time what in mathematics has an affinity with this discourse, where A represents itself, without any need for a mythical discourse to give it its relations. This is how mathematics represents the master’s knowledge insofar as it is constituted on the basis of other laws than those of mythical knowledge.

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In short, the master’s knowledge is produced as knowledge that is entirely autonomous with respect to mythical knowledge, and this is what we call science.

Last time I sketched this out for you by briefly mentioning thermodynamics and, later, the total unification of the field of physics. This unification rests on the preservation of a unit that is nothing other than a constant that is always rediscovered in the calculation—I will not even say in the quantification—by an operation on figures, that is, one defined in such a way as to make this constant appear in the calculation every time. There you have what alone supports what is called, at the foundation of physical science, energy.

This support stems from the fact that mathematics is constructible only on the basis of the fact that the signifier is capable of signifying itself. The A that you have written down on one occasion can be signified by its repetition as A. Now, this position is strictly untenable, it constitutes a violation of the rules with respect to the function of the signifier, which can signify anything except, surely, itself. It is this initial postulate that one must throw off in order for the discourse of mathematics to get started.

Between the two, the original violation and the construction of the discourse of energetics, the discourse of science only sustains itself, in logic,

by making truth a play of values, by radically avoiding its entire dynamic power. In effect, the discourse of propositional logic is, as has been stressed, fundamentally tautological. It consists in ordering propositions composed in such a way that they are always true, whatever the value, true or false, of the elementary propositions. Isn’t this to rid oneself of what I have just been calling the dynamism of the work of truth?

Well then, the analytic discourse is specified, is distinguished by the fact that it raises the question of what the use is of this form of knowledge which rejects and excludes the dynamics of truth.

A first approximation—its use is to repress what inhabits mythical knowledge. But, excluding the latter at the same time, it knows [*connaît*] nothing more about it except in the form of what we rediscover under the species of the unconscious, that is, as the debris of this knowledge [*savoir*] in the form of disjointed knowledge. What is reconstructed out of this disjointed knowledge will in no way make its way back into the discourse of science, nor into its structural laws.

That is to say that here I am distancing myself from what Freud has said on this. This disconnected knowledge, such as we find it in the unconscious, is foreign to the discourse of science. And, precisely in this respect, it is striking that the discourse of the unconscious imposes itself. It imposes itself precisely by virtue of the fact I articulated the other day in this form—and you have to believe that, if I employed it, I didn’t find anything better—that it doesn’t bullshit. As stupid as this discourse of the unconscious is, it is responding to something that stems from the institution of the discourse of the master himself. This is what is called the unconscious. It imposes itself upon science as a fact [*fait*].

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This fabricated [*faite*], that is to say artificial [*factice*], science is unable to misrecognize what appears to it as an artifact, this is true. It’s just that it is prohibited, precisely because it is the master’s science, from raising the question of the artisan, and this will make the fact all that much more of a fact.

Very shortly after the last war—I had already been born quite some time before—I took into analysis three people from the high country of Togo, who had spent their childhood there.<sup>2</sup> Now, I was unable, in their analysis, to find any trace of their tribal customs and beliefs, which they had not forgotten, which they knew, but from the point of view of ethnography. It has to be said that everything was done to separate them from this, given what they were, these courageous little doctors who were trying to insert themselves into the medical hierarchy of the metropolis—these were still colo-

<sup>2</sup> Togo is a West African country that gained independence in 1960, having been a French-administered territory since 1922.

nial days. What they knew about this, then, at the level of the ethnographer was more or less that of journalism, but their unconscious functioned according to the good old rules of Oedipus. This was the unconscious that had been sold to them along with the laws of colonization, this exotic, regressive form of the master's discourse, in the face of the capitalism called imperialism. Their unconscious was not that of their childhood memories—you could sense it—but their childhood was retroactively lived out in our *famil-ial* categories—spell the word how I showed you to last year. I defy any analyst whatever, even one who has been out into the field, to contradict me.

It is not psychoanalysis that can be used to conduct an ethnographic inquiry. That said, the said inquiry has no chance of coinciding with autochthonous knowledge, unless it be through reference to the discourse of science. And unfortunately, the said inquiry has not the slightest idea about this reference, since it would be obliged to relativize it. When I say that one cannot understand an ethnographical inquiry through psycho-  
105 analysis, I certainly have the agreement of all ethnographers. I will have their agreement less if I say that, in order to have a bit of an idea about the relativization of the discourse of science, that is to say, in order to have perhaps a slight chance of conducting a correct ethnographical inquiry, one must, I repeat, not proceed by way of psychoanalysis, but perhaps, if there is such a thing, be a psychoanalyst.

Here, at this crossroads, we state that what psychoanalysis enables us to conceptualize is nothing other than this, which is in line with what Marxism has opened up, namely that discourse is bound up with the interests of the subject. This is what, from time to time, Marx calls the economy, because these interests are, in capitalist society, entirely commercial. It's just that since the market is linked to the master signifier, nothing is resolved by denouncing it in this way. For the market is no less linked to this signifier after the socialist revolution.

## 2

I am now going to spell out the essential [*propres*] functions of discourse, according to my way of stating them.

<u>master signifier</u>	<u>knowledge</u>
subject	<i>jouissance</i>

This putting into operation of discourse is defined by a split, precisely by differentiating out the master signifier with respect to knowledge.

In societies that are called primitive, insofar as I describe them as not being dominated by the master's discourse—I am saying this for the benefit of anyone who would like to know a bit more about it—it is quite likely that the master signifier can be located by means of a more complex economy. Indeed, the best sociological research in the field of these societies verges on doing this. We should be delighted, particularly as it is no accident that the master signifier functions more simply in the master's discourse.

It can be completely manipulated by means of this relation between  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  that you see written there. In this discourse the subject finds himself, along with all the illusions that this comprises, bound to the master signifier, whereas knowledge brings about his insertion into *jouissance*.  
106

Well then, this year I will make this contribution—these functions that are specific to discourse are able to find different sites. This is what their rotation around these four places defines, which as you see are in no way designated by letters here, but only by what, whenever necessary, I call “top,” “left-hand side,” “bottom,” and “right-hand side.”

I will add, a bit late in the piece, in order to enlighten those who will have designated them through the effect of a bit of nous, that here for instance we have desire, and on the other side the site of the Other. This represents what I spoke about, in an ancient register, at a time when I used to be happy with this sort of approximation, when I said that man's desire is the Other's desire.

The place underneath desire represents the place of truth. Under the Other it is the place where loss is produced, the loss of *jouissance* from which we extract the function of surplus *jouissance*.

<u>desire</u>	<u>Other</u>
truth	loss

This is where the hysteric's discourse gets its price from. It has the merit of maintaining in the discursive institution the question of what the sexual relation is, namely how a subject is able to maintain it or, to express it better, is unable to maintain it.

As a matter of fact, the answer to the question of how he is able to maintain it is the following—leave speech to the Other, and precisely as locus of repressed knowledge.

What is interesting is the truth that what is in sexual knowledge is entirely yielded up as foreign to the subject. This is what in Freudian discourse was originally called the repressed.

But this is not what matters. Taken in its pure form this has no other effect, if one can say this, than a justification of obscurantism—truths that are important to us, and more than slightly, are condemned to obscurity.

107 This is not the case at all. I mean that the hysteric's discourse does not testify to the fact that what is inferior is down below. On the contrary, as a battery of functions it is indistinguishable from those assigned to the master's discourse. And this is what enables the same letters that are in the service of the latter to appear there— $\$$ ,  $S_1$ ,  $S_2$ , and  $a$ .

$$\begin{array}{r} \$ \rightarrow S_1 \\ a \quad S_2 \end{array}$$

It's simply that the hysteric's discourse reveals the master's discourse's relation to *jouissance*, in the sense that in it knowledge occupies the place of *jouissance*. The subject himself, the hysteric, is alienated from the master signifier as he whom this signifier divides—"he," in the masculine, represents the subject—he who refuses to make himself its body. People speak about somatic compliance with respect to hysterics. Although the term is Freud's, can't we see that it is very odd, and that it's more a question of the body's refusal? In following the effect of the master signifier, the hysteric is not a slave.

Let's give him the gender under which this subject is most often embodied. She, in her own way, goes on a kind of strike. She doesn't give up her knowledge. She unmasks, however, the master's function, with which she remains united, by emphasizing what there is of the master in what is the One with a capital "O," which she evades in her capacity as object of his desire. This is his true function which a long time ago we located, at least in the field of my school, under the title of idealized father.

I won't beat about the bush. I'll mention *Dora*—one has to— which I presume everyone who has come here to listen to me is familiar with.<sup>3</sup>

You must read *Dora* and throughout all the convoluted interpretations—I use the very term Freud gives for the economy of her maneuvers—not lose sight of something that I would go so far as to say Freud covers with his prejudices.

108 I am making a little detour. Whether you have the text in your head or not, consult it, and you will see these sentences that for Freud seem to be self-evident—for instance, that a girl can sort out these little difficulties all on her own or, even, when a man throws himself at her, she still mustn't create a scene over it, when one is a nice girl, of course. And why? Because this is how Freud thinks. Or again, and this goes even further, that a normal girl should not be disgusted when someone puts the hard word on her. That seems to be self-evident. You have to recognize the operation of what

<sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria," SE 7:1-122.

I am calling a prejudice in a certain way of approaching what is revealed here by our *Dora*.

If this text has nevertheless retained some of the reference points I am trying to induct you into, you will see that it will not seem illegitimate to you yourselves to pronounce this word "convoluted" that I uttered just before. Perhaps the extraordinary subtlety, the astuteness, of these reversals, the multiple planes of which, as Freud explains, refract *Dora's* maneuvers, as I call them, in matters of love across three or four successive defenses, so as to echo what Freud himself designated in his text *Die Traumdeutung*, will make apparent to you that these convolutions depend on a particular approach.

Along the lines of what I announced at the start of my discourse today on the father, that the subjective conjuncture of its signifying articulation receives a certain kind of objectivity, why not begin with the fact that *Dora's* father, the pivotal point of the entire adventure, or misadventure, is strictly a castrated man, I mean as concerns his sexual potency? It is obvious that he has had it, that he is quite unwell.

In every case, from *Studien über Hysterie* onward, the father is himself made out of symbolic appreciation. After all, even an ill person or a dying person is what he is. To consider him as deficient in relation to a function in which he is not occupied is to give him, properly speaking, a symbolic affectation. It is implicitly to proffer that the father is not merely what he is, that it is a title like "ex-soldier"—he is an "ex-sire." He is a father, like the ex-soldier, until the end of his life. This implies that in the word "father" there is something that is always in fact potentially creating. And it is in relation to this fact that, in this symbolic field, it must be observed that it is the father, insofar as he plays this pivotal, major role, this master role in the hysteric's discourse, that, from this angle of the power of creation, sustains his position in relation to the woman, even as he is out of action. This is what is specific to the function from which the hysteric's relation to the father stems, and it is very precisely this that we designate as the idealized father.

I told you I wouldn't beat about the bush. I am taking *Dora* and I am asking you to reread the case after me in order to see whether what I am saying is true. Well then, how does what is organized within Herr K., whom I shall curiously call here the third man, suit *Dora*?

I have been saying it for a long time, but why don't we take it up again, cleaving to the structural definition such as we can give it with the help of the master's discourse? What suits *Dora* is the idea that he has the organ.

Freud sees this and he indicates very precisely that it's what plays the decisive role at the outset, in *Dora's* initial run-in, if I can put it like this, with Herr K. when she was fourteen, and when the other corners her in a

window recess.<sup>4</sup> In no way does this affect relations between the two families. Moreover, nobody thinks of being astonished by it. As Freud says, a girl works this sort of thing out on her own. What is curious is that, as it happens, she does not work it out on her own, she puts everyone else on the spot—though later.

Well, why “the third man”? To be sure, it’s the organ which gives him his price, not so that Dora can find happiness in it, if I can put it thus, but so that another woman should deprive him of it.

What Dora is interested in is not the jewel, even indiscreet. Recall this observation that lasts for three months, and which is entirely meant for serving as a cupule for two dreams. The first dream, the one called the dream of the jewel box, bears this out—it isn’t the jewel, it’s the box, the envelope of the precious organ, there you have the only thing she gets *jouissance* out of.

She knows very well how to get *jouissance* from it herself, as is borne out for us by the decisive importance of infantile masturbation, whose mode moreover is in no way indicated in the observation, unless it’s that it is probable that it had some relationship with what I will call the fluid, flowing rhythm, the model of which is enuresis. In her history her enuresis is given to us as belatedly induced by her brother’s, who, a year and a half older than her, had got to eight years of age affected by enuresis so that she, in a way, belatedly takes up the running.

This enuresis is completely characteristic and is like a stigma, as it were, of the imaginary substitution of the child for the father, specifically as  
110 impotent. Here I invoke everyone who, from their own experience with children, can gather such episodes, for which it is quite frequent to seek the intervention of an analyst.

Add to this the theoretical contemplation of Frau K., if I can put it this way, such as it unfolds in Dora’s resting, openmouthed, before the Dresden Madonna. It is Frau K. who knows how to sustain the idealized father’s desire, but also how to contain the respondent, if I can put it like this, and at the same time how to deprive Dora of it, who thus finds herself doubly removed from his grasp. Well then, by virtue of this, this complex is the mark of the identification with a *jouissance* qua the master’s *jouissance*.

A little aside. It is not nothing to recall the analogy that has been made between enuresis and ambition. But let us confirm the condition imposed upon Herr K.’s presents—they have to be a box. He never gives her anything else, a jewel box. For she is the jewel. His jewel, his indiscreet jewel as I was saying before, if only it would go and lodge itself elsewhere, and that this be known. Whence the rupture whose meaning I marked a long

<sup>4</sup> SE 7:28.

time ago, when Herr K. says to her, “My wife means nothing to me.” It is quite true that at this moment the Other’s *jouissance* is offered her, and she doesn’t want to have anything to do with it because what she wants is knowledge as the means of *jouissance*, but in order to place this knowledge in the service of truth, the truth of the master that she embodies as Dora.

And this truth, to say it at last, is that the master is castrated.

In effect, if the sole *jouissance* to represent happiness, which last time I defined as perfectly closed, the *jouissance* of the phallus, were to dominate this master—you see the term I am using, the master is only able to dominate by excluding her—then how would the master establish this relationship with knowledge—the knowledge held by the slave—the benefit of which is the buildup of surplus *jouissance*? The master can only dominate him through excluding this *jouissance*.

Moreover, the second dream indicates that the symbolic father is indeed the dead father, that one accedes to him only through an empty place that is without communication. Recall the structure of this dream, the manner in which she receives the announcement by her mother, “Come if you like,” the mother says, as if echoing the fact that Frau K. invited her, the other time, to come to the place where all the scenes that we have mentioned must have taken place with her husband. “Come if you like, your father is dead, and he is being buried”—and the manner in which she takes herself there, without it being possible to know in the dream by what means she manages to get to a place about which she has to wonder whether this is really the place where her father dwells, as if she didn’t know the answer.<sup>5</sup>

Well then, in this empty box of an apartment deserted by those who, having invited her, have for their part left to go to the cemetery, Dora easily finds her substitute for this father in a big book, the dictionary, the one where one learns about sex.<sup>6</sup> She indicates clearly there that what matters to her, even should this be beyond the death of her father, is that he produce knowledge. And not just any knowledge—knowledge about the truth.

This will be sufficient for her, in the psychoanalytic experience. She will get enough satisfaction from getting everybody to acknowledge this truth to which Freud carefully helps her—and this is what attaches her to him. The true state of affairs concerning her father’s relations with Frau K., and concerning her own relations with Frau K., everything that the others wanted to bury concerning episodes that were nevertheless perfectly authentic, and were episodes of which she makes herself the representative—all of that is necessary, which is sufficient for her to conclude, with

<sup>5</sup> SE 7:94.

<sup>6</sup> SE 7:100.



dignity, what has gone on in the analysis, even if Freud does not appear at all satisfied with its outcome concerning her destiny as a woman.

## 3

There would be a few minor remarks to make in passing, which won't be in vain.

For instance, concerning the jewelery dream, where Dora is leaving because of the threat of fire, Freud, pausing in the analysis, tells us that one must not forget that a dream stands on two feet, and that it is not sufficient that it represent a decision, a lively desire, by the subject as to the present. There must be something that gives it support in a desire from childhood. And here, he takes as his reference—this is usually taken as a display of elegance—the entrepreneur, the entrepreneur of decisions, in his relationship to the capitalist whose accumulated resources, the capital of libido, will enable this decision to pass into action.

These are things that look like they are a metaphor. Isn't it amusing to see how this takes on a different value after what I have been telling you concerning the relationship between capitalism and the function of the master—concerning the altogether distinct nature of what can be done with the process of accumulation in the presence of surplus *jouissance*—in the very presence of this surplus *jouissance*, to the exclusion of the big fat *jouissance*, plain *jouissance*, *jouissance* that is realized in copulation in the raw? Isn't this precisely where infantile desire gets its force from, its force of accumulation with respect to this object that constitutes the cause of desire, namely that which is accumulated as libido capital by virtue, precisely, of infantile non-maturity, the exclusion of *jouissance* that others will call normal? There you have what suddenly gives Freud's metaphor its proper connotation when he refers to the capitalist.

But on the other hand, if through his lucid courage Freud happened to carry a degree of success with Dora to term, nevertheless, I would say, his clumsiness as regards retaining his patient is no less clearly in evidence.

Read these few lines in which, in some way despite himself, Freud indicates the extraordinary lengths which are, good heavens, staggering, pathetic, he goes on to tell himself that perhaps, by showing more interest in her—and God knows he shows her plenty of it, the entire case demonstrates it—he would no doubt have succeeded in getting her to take further this exploration into which— it cannot be said on his own admission—he did not manage to lead her without making mistakes.

Thank heavens Freud didn't do this. Fortunately, in giving Dora these

satisfactions of being interested in what he felt as her demand, her demand for love, he didn't take, as is customary, the mother's place. For one thing is certain. Isn't it to this experience, however much it could have altered his attitude subsequently, that we owe the fact that Freud observed—and he drops his head, he is discouraged by it—that everything he was ever able to do for hysterics ends in nothing other than what he pins down as *Penisneid*? Which means, explicitly, when it is spelled out, that where this ends is in the girl's reproaching her mother for not having created her a boy, that is, in carrying forward onto the mother, in the form of frustration, what, in its meaningful essence, and in such a way that it gives the hysteric's discourse its place and its living function with respect to the master's discourse, is divided into, on the one hand, the castration of the idealized father, who yields the master's secret, and, on the other hand, privation, the assumption, by the subject, whether feminine or not, of the *jouissance* of being deprived.

And why did Freud fall into error at this point, whereas, if my analysis of today is to be believed, he only had literally to chew over what was being hand-fed to him? Why did he substitute this myth, the Oedipus complex, for the knowledge that he gathered from all these mouths of gold, Anna, Emma, Dora?

The Oedipus complex plays the role of knowledge with a claim to truth, that is to say knowledge that is located in the figure of the analyst's discourse in the site of what just before I was calling the site of truth.

$$\begin{array}{c} a \rightarrow \S \\ \bar{S}. \quad \bar{S}. \end{array}$$

If all analytic interpretation has taken the path of gratification or non-gratification, of a response or not to demand, in short, the path toward an ever-increasing eluding, in favor of demand, of what is the dialectic of desire, metonymic sliding when it is a question of assuring the constant object, it is probably a function of the strictly unusable character of the Oedipus complex. It is odd that this did not become clearer more quickly.

And in effect, who uses, what place is held by this reference to this famous Oedipus complex? I ask all those here who are analysts to reply. Those who are from the Institute never use it, to be sure. Those from my school make some small effort. Of course, this doesn't yield anything, it comes down to the same thing as for the others. It is strictly unusable, except as this coarse reminder of the mother's value as an obstacle to all investment in any object as the cause of desire.

Whence the extraordinary ruminations that analysts come to concerning the "combined parent," as they say. That means only one thing—construct-

ing an A as receiver of *jouissance*, one generally called God, with whom it is worth the effort of playing double or quits with surplus value, that is, this functioning called the superego.

I am spoiling you today. I hadn't produced this word before. I had my reasons. I had to get at least to the point I am at so that what I stated last year about Pascal's wager could become operative.

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Perhaps some of you will have guessed—the superego is exactly what I was beginning to spell out in telling you that life, this provisional life that is played out in favor of a chance of eternal life, is the *a*, but that it is only worth the effort if the A is not barred, in other words, if it is everything at once. However, just as the combined parent doesn't exist, there is the father on one side and the mother on the other, so the subject also doesn't exist, it is equally divided in two, as it is barred, as, in a word, it is the response designated in my graph to the utterance—this seriously calls into question whether one can play at doubling surplus enjoyment or nothing with eternal life.

Yes, this recourse to the myth of Oedipus is really quite sensational. It is worth making the effort to elaborate this. And I was thinking of getting you today to appreciate what is outrageous in the fact that Freud, for example, in the last of the *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, should think he had cut the question of the rejection of religion off from any acceptable horizon, should think that psychoanalysis has played a decisive role in this, and should believe that it was the end of the matter when he has told us that the support of religion is nothing other than this father whom the child has recourse to in its childhood, and who he knows is all loving, that he anticipates, forestalls what may manifest itself within him as malaise.

Isn't this an odd thing when one knows how things in fact are with the father's function? To be sure, this is not the only point at which Freud presents us with a paradox, namely, the idea of referring this function to some kind of *jouissance* of all the women, when it is a well-known fact that a father barely suffices for one of them, and even then—he mustn't boast about it. A father has, with the master—I speak of the master as we know him, as he functions—only the most distant of relationships since, in short, at least in the society Freud was familiar with, it is he who works for everybody. He has responsibility for the "famil" I was speaking of before. Isn't that sufficiently strange to suggest to us that after all what Freud retains in fact, if not in intention, is very precisely what he designates as being the most essential in religion, namely, the idea of an all-loving father? This is indeed what is designated by the first of the three forms of identification that he distinguishes in the article I mentioned before—the father is love, the first thing to be loved in this world is the father. Strange vestige. Freud believes

that this will make religion evaporate, whereas it is really the very substance of it that he preserves with this strangely composed myth of the father.

We shall come back to this, but you can all see the main thread—it all ends with the idea of the murder, namely that the original father is the one whom the sons have killed, after which it is through the love of this dead father that a certain order unfolds. In all its enormous contradictions, in its baroque and its superfluousness, doesn't this seem to be nothing but a defense against these truths that the abundance of all these myths clearly spells out, well before Freud diminishes these truths in opting for the myth of Oedipus? What is there to conceal? That, as soon as the father enters the field of the master's discourse where we are in the process of orientating ourselves, he is, from the origins, castrated.

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This is what Freud gives us the idealized version of, and it is completely masked. However, the experience with the hysteric, if not her sayings, at least the configurations she presented him with, should have guided him better here than the Oedipus complex does and led him to consider that this suggests that, at the level of analysis itself, everything is to be put back into question concerning what is necessary from knowledge, in order for this knowledge to be called into question in the site of truth.

There you have the aim of what I am trying to unpack for you here this year.

18 February 1970

## Oedipus and Moses and the father of the horde

THE MASTER'S PURE KNOWLEDGE

THE MALAISE OF THE ASTUDIED

GENEALOGY OF SURPLUS VALUE

THE FIELD OF BULLSHITTING

THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX, FREUD'S DREAM

The formulation I tried to give you of the discourse of analysis locates it on the basis of the master's discourse, which is what, via all sorts of traces, at first sight, it manifests itself as already related to.

Or rather analysis draws its importance from the fact that the truth of the master's discourse is masked.

### 1

Among the four places in which are situated the articulating elements on which I found the consistency that can emerge when these discourses are put into relationship with one another, the place I have designated as that of truth is only distinguishable if we look at how things function with what comes out of that articulation in that place. This is not peculiar to it, the same can be said of all the others.

The localization that consisted until now of designating the places as "upper right" or "upper left" and so forth are of course not satisfactory. It is question of a level of equivalence of functioning. For example, one could thus write that what is the  $S_1$  in the master's discourse can be said to be congruent with, or equivalent to, what comes and functions as  $S_2$  in the university discourse, in what I have qualified as such so as to focus the mind, or at least the mental accommodation.

$$M(S_1) \approx U(S_2)$$

The place in question will be said to function as the place of orders, of the command, whereas the place that is subjacent to it in my various little four-legged schemas is the place of truth, which does indeed pose its own problem.

At the level of the master's discourse, in effect, the place on the lower left can be occupied only by this  $\$$  which, in truth, initially nothing necessitates, occupied only by what in the first instance does not quietly place itself as identical with itself. I will say that this is the principle, not of mastered, but of "master-ized" discourse, with a hyphen, the principle of discourse insofar as acting the master is to think of oneself as univocal.

And surely it is psychoanalysis that leads us to say that the subject is not univocal. Two years ago, when I was trying to characterize the psychoanalytic act—a trajectory that has remained broken down and, like others, will never be taken up again—I gave you the resounding formulation, "Either I am not thinking or I am not." This alternative, simply through being produced, comes to play a role, and a fairly resounding one, as soon as the master's discourse is at issue.

Nevertheless, in order to justify this formulation, we still need to produce it, moreover, where it is simply evident. It has to be produced in the dominant place in the hysteric's discourse in order for it to be in effect quite certain that the subject is confronted by this "vel" that is expressed in the "either I am not thinking or I am not." There where I am thinking I do not recognize myself, I am not, this is the unconscious. There where I am, it is all too clear that I am lost.

In truth, presenting things in this way shows that, if this has remained obscure for such a long time at the level of the master's discourse, it is precisely because it has been in a place which, by virtue of its very structure, masked the division of the subject.

What have I said, in effect, about any possible saying [*dire*] in the place of truth? The truth, I have been saying, can only be stated via a half-saying [*mi-dire*], and I have given you a model for it in the enigma. For this is how it is always presented to us, and certainly not in the form of a question. The enigma is something that presses us for a response in the name of a mortal danger. Truth is a question, as has been known for a long time, only for the administrators. "What is truth?" We know by whom that was, on one good occasion, eminently pronounced.

But this form of half-saying that truth restricts itself to is one thing, and this division of the subject which takes advantage of this to mask itself is another. The division of the subject is something quite different. If "where he is not, he is thinking," if "where he is not thinking he is," it is indeed because he is in both places. And I would even say that this formulation of the *Spaltung* is improper. The subject partakes of the real precisely in that it is impossible, apparently. Or, to put it better, if I had to employ a figure that doesn't occur here by chance, I would say that the case with it is like that of the electron, where the latter is proposed to us as being at the intersection of the wave theory and the corpuscular theory. We are forced to

1 admit that it's as one and the same that it passes through two separate holes at the same time. The order, therefore, of what we characterize by the *Spaltung* of the subject is different from the one that commands that truth can only be figured through being stated in a half-saying.

Something appears here that it is important to stress. From this very ambivalence, taking the word up in another sense, through which truth is figured only as a half-saying, each of the formulas on the basis of which a discourse can be located takes singularly opposite senses.

Is this discourse good, is it bad? I pin it down as the university discourse intentionally, because it is, in a way, the university discourse that shows where it is capable of sinning, but in its fundamental disposition it is, equally, the one that shows what guarantees the discourse of science.

$$\frac{S_2}{S_1} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\bar{S}}$$

$S_2$  occupies the dominant place in that it is this place of the order, the command, the commandment, this place initially held by the master, that knowledge has come to occupy. Why does it come about that one finds nothing else at the level of its truth than the master signifier, insofar as it brings the master's order?

This is what the current movement of science depends on, after it hesitated for a moment, which we have evidence for in Gauss, for instance, when we see in his dairies that he had come close to the remarks that a Riemann subsequently put forward, and made the decision not to release them. "One doesn't go any further." Why put this knowledge into circulation, even though it's purely logical, if it seems that on this basis, much that is in a state of rest may effectively be disturbed by it?

120 It is clear that we are no longer at the same point. This stems from progress, from this seesaw that I describe as a quarter turn, which brings an unnatural knowledge out of its primitive localization at the level of the slave into the dominant place, by virtue of having become pure knowledge of the master, ruled by his command.

1 Who, in our day, is capable of dreaming even for an instant of arresting the movement of articulation of the discourse of science in the name of anything at all that could come out of it? Things are already at that stage, for heaven's sake. They have shown where we are headed, from molecular structure to atomic fission. Who can think for even one instant that it would be possible to stop that which, through an interplay of signs, and by over-throwing content in favor of changing combinatory places, incites the theoretical attempt to put oneself to the test of the real, in a manner which, through revealing the impossible, brings about a new power?

It is impossible not to obey the commandment there in the place of what is the truth of science, "Continue. March on. Keep on knowing more and more."

Very precisely, every question about the truth of this sign, about the fact that the sign of the master occupies this place, is properly speaking quashed, and in particular every question about what may be veiled by this sign, the  $S_1$  of the command, "Keep on knowing," about what this sign, through occupying this place, contains that is enigmatic, about what this sign that occupies this place is.

In the field of these sciences that courageously call themselves human sciences we see clearly that the command, "Continue to know," creates a bit of a stir. In effect, as in all the other little squares or schemas with four legs, it is always the one up here on the right that does the work—and thus gets the truth to emerge, for this is the meaning of work. In the master's discourse this place is occupied by the slave, in the discourse of science it is the  $a$  student.

One might play around with this word, perhaps it might revitalize the question a bit.

A while ago we saw him compelled to continue to know on the level of physical science. On the level of the human sciences we see something for which a word would have to be made. I don't know yet if this is the right one, but off the cuff, initially, instinctively, for its assonance, I would say, "astudied."

If I bring this word into our vocabulary, I would have more chance than when I wanted the name of the floor mop changed. "Astudied" has more justification at the level of the human sciences. The student feels "astudied." He is "astudied" because, like any worker—get your bearings from the other little orders—he has to produce something.

My discourse happens to give rise to responses that bear some relationship to him. It's a rare occurrence, but it happens from time to time, and it gives me pleasure. When I came to the *École normale* it so happened that there were some young people who started discoursing on the subject of science, which I had made the object of the first of my seminars in 1965. It was pertinent, this subject of science, but it is clearly not self-evident. They got rapped over the knuckles and it was explained to them that the subject of science doesn't exist, and not at the very point at which they thought they had made it emerge, namely in the relation between zero and one in Frege's discourse. It was demonstrated to them that the progress of mathematical logic had enabled the subject of science to be completely reduced—not sutured but vaporized.

The unease of the astudied is, however, not unrelated to the fact that they are nevertheless requested to constitute the subject of science with

their own skin—which, on the latest account, seems to present a number of difficulties in the zone of the human sciences. And it is thus that, for a science so well founded on the one hand, and so obviously triumphant on the other, triumphant enough for it to be qualified as human, no doubt because it takes humans for humus, things happen that land us on our feet again, and bring us into contact with what follows from the fact that the pure and simple command, that of the master, is substituted at the level of truth.

Don't think that the master is always there. It's the command that remains, the categorical imperative, "Keep on knowing." There is no longer any need for anybody to be present. We have, as Pascal says, all embarked upon the discourse of science. It remains the case that the half-saying nevertheless happens to be warranted by the obvious fact that, concerning the human sciences, nothing holds together.

122 I would like to arm myself against the idea that could emerge in some retarded little brain, that my propositions would imply that one should restrain this science and that, all things considered, if we return to Gauss's attitude, there may perhaps be some hope of salvation. These conclusions, if they were imputed to me, could be very correctly characterized as reactionary. I point them out because it is not unthinkable that, in zones that, in truth, I am not very disposed to frequent, one might deduce this sort of misunderstanding from what I am currently telling you. It would, however, be necessary to get into one's head the idea that in whatever it might be that I am articulating with a particular aim of clarification, there is not the slightest idea of progress, in the sense in which this term might imply a happy outcome.

What truth, when it emerges, has that is resolvent can from time to time be fortunate—and then disastrous in other cases. One fails to see why truth would always necessarily be beneficial. You would have to have the devil in you to imagine such a thing, when everything demonstrates the contrary.

## 2

Concerning the position called that of the analyst—in cases that are more-over improbable, for is there even a single analyst? Who knows? But one can raise it theoretically—it is the object *a* itself that comes to the place of the command. It's as identical with the object *a*, that is to say with what presents itself for the subject as the cause of desire, that the psychoanalyst offers himself as the end point for this insane operation, a psychoanalysis, insofar as it sets out on the trace left by the desire to know.

I said at the start that this desire to know, the "epistemological drive" is

the name they have invented for it, isn't self-evident. It was a matter of seeing where it could have emerged from. As I pointed out, it wasn't the master who invented that all on his own. Someone must have imposed it upon him. It wasn't the psychoanalyst, who, good heavens, has not always been in evidence. And moreover, it is not he that instigates it, he offers himself as the end point for anyone who gets bitten by this particularly problematic desire.

We shall return to this. In the meantime, let me point out that in the structure of what's called the analyst's discourse, the analyst, you see, says to the subject, "Off you go, say everything that comes into your head, however divided it might be, no matter how clearly it demonstrates that either you are not thinking or else you are nothing at all, it may work, what you produce will always be admissible [*recevable*]."

$$\begin{array}{ccc} a & \rightarrow & S \\ \bar{S} & & S \end{array}$$

Odd. Odd for reasons that we will have to punctuate, but which we can begin to sketch out now.

You have been able to see, on the upper line of the structure of the master's discourse, a fundamental relationship, which is, to state it quickly, the one that forms the link between master and slave, by means of which, Hegel *dixit*, the slave will over time demonstrate his truth to him—also by means of which, Marx *dixit*, he will have been occupied during all this time in fomenting his surplus *jouissance*.

Why does he owe this surplus *jouissance* to the master? This is what is masked. What is masked at the level of Marx is that the master to whom this surplus *jouissance* is owed has renounced everything, and *jouissance* first up, because he has exposed himself to death, and because he remains firmly fastened to this position whose Hegelian articulation is clear. He has deprived the slave of the disposal of his body, to be sure, but this is nothing, he has left him his *jouissance*.

How does *jouissance* come back within the master's reach and express his demand? I think I explained it well in its time, but I will pick it up again, because the things that are important cannot be repeated too often. The master in all this makes a small effort to make everything work, in other words, he gives an order. Simply by fulfilling his function as master he loses something. It's at least through this something lost that something of *jouissance* has to be rendered to him—specifically, surplus *jouissance*.

If, by means of this relentlessness to castrate himself that he had, he hadn't computed this surplus *jouissance*, if he hadn't converted it into surplus value, in other words if he hadn't founded capitalism, Marx would have

realized that surplus value is surplus *jouissance*. None of this, of course, prevents it being the case that capitalism is founded by him, and that the function of surplus value is designated with complete pertinence in its devastating consequences. Nevertheless, to get on top of it, one would perhaps need to know at least what the initial stage of its articulation is. It's not because one nationalizes the means of production at the level of socialism in one country that one has thereby done away with surplus value, if one doesn't know what it is.

In the master's discourse, since it is, all the same, there that surplus *jouissance* is situated, there is no relationship between what will more or less become the cause of desire for a character like the master who, as usual, fails to understand anything about it and what constitutes his truth. As a matter of fact, there is a barrier here, on the lower level.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} S_1 & \rightarrow & S_2 \\ \$ & \blacktriangle & a \end{array}$$

The barrier which we are within reach of naming at the level of the master's discourse is *jouissance*, quite simply insofar as it is prohibited, prohibited fundamentally. One takes *jouissance* by morsels, but as for going right to the end, I have already told you how that is embodied—no need to reactivate lethal fantasies.

This formula, as defining the master's discourse, has the interest of showing that it is the only one that makes possible this articulation that we have pointed out elsewhere as fantasy, insofar as it is a relationship *a* has with the division of the subject—( $\$ \diamond a$ ).

In its fundamental beginning the master's discourse excludes fantasy. And that's what makes him, fundamentally, completely blind.

The fact that fantasy can emerge elsewhere, and specially in analytic discourse where it stretches out along a horizontal line in a completely balanced way, tells us a bit more about the foundation of the master's discourse.

Be that as it may for the moment, taking things up again at the level of the analyst's discourse, notice that it's knowledge—that is to say the whole articulation of existing  $S_2$ , everything that can be known—that is, in my way of writing—I am not saying in the real—put in the place called the place of truth. What can be known is, in the analyst's discourse, invited to function in the register of truth.

We get the sense that this is of interest to us, but what on earth does it mean? I have not made this detour into what is current today for nothing. The low level of tolerance, let us say, for the fact that knowledge in the form known as science, modern science, has taken off at a gallop is what can per-

haps, without our always understanding much further than the end of our nose, make us sense that surely, if, somewhere, we have an opportunity for it to make sense to question knowledge in terms of truth, it must be in our little turnstile, at least if we are prepared to trust it.

I am saying this in passing. It's for instance what justifies my saying that since at one time they gagged me when I was about to speak about the names of the father I will never talk about them again. That seems to be teasing, not nice. And then—who knows?—there are even people, science fanatics, who tell me, "Keep on knowing. But what? But you have to say what you know about the names of the father!!" No, I will not say what the name of the father is, precisely because I am not part of the university discourse.

I am a little analyst, a rejected stone initially, even if in my analyses I become the cornerstone. As soon as I get up off my chair I have the right to go for a walk. That is reversed, the rejected stone which becomes a cornerstone. It may also be, inversely, that the cornerstone goes for a walk. It's even like that that I will perhaps have some chance that things will change. If the cornerstone left, the entire edifice would collapse. There are some who are tempted by this.

Well, let's not joke about it. I simply cannot see why I should speak about the name of the father, since, in my own way, where it is placed, that is to say at the level at which knowledge functions as truth, we are properly speaking condemned to only being able, even on this point, still vague for us, about the relationship between knowledge and truth, to declare anything at all—take note—through a half-saying.

I do not know whether you sense the import of this. It means that if we say something in a certain way in this field there will be another part of it which, by virtue of this saying itself, will become absolutely irreducible, completely obscure. In such a way that, in sum, there is a degree of arbitrariness, there is a choice that can be made about what is in need of clarification. If I do not speak about the name of the father, this will enable me to speak of other things. This will not be unrelated to the truth, but it's not as it is for the subject—it won't be the same.

## 3

Let's return to what we observe about what knowledge becomes in the place of truth, in the analyst's discourse.

I don't think you have been waiting for what I am going to tell you now for it to appear for you. You must all the same remember that what occurs there at the start has a name—it's myth.

To see this one hasn't had to wait for the master's discourse to fully develop and reveal its last word in the capitalist's discourse, with its curious copulation with science. This has always been observed and, in any case, it's the totality of what we see where truth is concerned, the first truth in any case, the one that is of some interest to us a bit all the same, even though science makes us renounce it by giving us only its imperative, "Keep on knowing in a certain field"—a curious thing, in a field that is in some discord with what concerns you, my good man. Well then, it's occupied by myth.

Myth has today been made a branch of linguistics. I mean that what one says that is most serious about myth comes out of linguistics.

I can only recommend on this, in *Structural Anthropology*, a collection of articles by my friend Claude Lévi-Strauss, that you refer to chapter 11, "The Structure of Myths."<sup>1</sup> You will see the same thing there obviously expressed as what I am telling you, namely that truth is supported only by a half-saying.

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The first serious examination that one makes of these large units, as he calls them, for they are mythemes, obviously yields this, which I do not impute to Lévi-Strauss, for I am leaving to one side what he writes literally. The impossibility of connecting groups of relations—it is a question of bundles of relations, as he defines myths—with one another is overcome, or, more exactly, replaced by the affirmation that two mutually contradictory relations are identical, this being so insofar as each is, like the other, self-contradictory. In short, half-saying is the internal law of every species of enunciation of the truth, and what incarnates it best is myth.

One can all the same declare oneself not to be altogether satisfied that we are still, in psychoanalysis, dealing with myth. Do you know what effect the use of the central typical myth of psychoanalytic discourse, the Oedipus myth, has had upon the mythographers? I think that you can all answer this question. It's quite amusing.

There are people who have been occupied with myths over a good period of time. No one had waited for our dear friend Claude Lévi-Strauss, who has contributed an exemplary clarity, in order to take a very lively interest in the function of myth. There are circles in which one knows what a myth is, even if one does not necessarily define it as I have just tried to situate it for you—even though it is difficult to admit that even the most obtuse operator does not see that everything that can be said about myth is this, that the truth reveals itself in an alternation of strictly opposite things, which have to be made to revolve around one another. This holds for what-

<sup>1</sup> "The Structural Study of Myth," pp. 206–31 in *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

ever has been constructed ever since the world has been the world, including the higher, very elaborate, myths like Yin and Yang.

One can bullshit a lot over myths, because it is precisely the field of bullshitting. And bullshitting, as I have always said, is truth. They are identical. Truth enables everything to be said. Everything is true—on condition that you exclude the contrary—except that it nevertheless plays a role that it be like that.

Well, the Oedipus myth such that Freud made it function—I can tell you for the sake of those who are unaware of this—makes the mythographers inclined to laugh. They find this completely baseless.

Why is this privilege being given to this myth in analysis? The first serious study that it has been possible to make of it shows that it is much more complicated, moreover. As if by chance, Claude Lévi-Strauss, who does not refuse the challenge, states the complete myth of Oedipus in this same article. One can see that it concerns something quite different from whether or not one is going to fuck one's mummy.

It is curious nevertheless that, for example, an altogether good mythographer, with a good head, from the right school, from the right stream that begins with Boas and has converged upon Lévi-Strauss, a certain Kroeber, after having written an inflammatory book on *Totem and Taboo* has, twenty years later, written something that makes it known that all the same this must indeed have its *raison d'être*, that there was something in it, he wasn't able to say what, moreover, and that in this myth of Oedipus there was a bone.<sup>2</sup> He doesn't say any more than this but, given the critique he made of *Totem and Taboo*, it's altogether noteworthy. It had been bothering him, having spoken so ill of it was plaguing him, above all when he saw that that was spreading, namely that the latest student believed he was able to join in the chorus—he couldn't bear that.

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*Totem and Taboo*. One would need—I don't know if you want me to do it this year—to study how it is composed, it is one of the most twisted things one can imagine. It's not at all the case that because I preach a return to Freud I cannot say that *Totem and Taboo* is twisted. It's even for this reason that one has to return to Freud—it's in order to perceive that if it's twisted in this way, given that he was a chap who knew how to write and think, there must be a good reason for it. I would not like to add, "*Moses and Monotheism*, don't even mention it!" because, on the contrary, we are going to talk about it.

You can see that all the same I am putting things in order for you, even though I have not begun by giving you any kind of well-worn path. I have

<sup>2</sup> See Alfred Louis Kroeber, "Totem and Taboo: An Ethnologic Psychoanalysis" (1920) and "Totem and Taboo in Retrospect" (1939) in his *The Nature of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952).

done it entirely by myself, to be sure—nobody helped me—so that we know what formations of the unconscious are, for example, or the object relation. One could think that now I am simply making little somersaults around Freud. That's not what it's about.

Let's try to cotton onto, ever so little, something of what the Oedipus myth is about in Freud. As I do not rush, I won't get to the end of it today. I don't see why I should wear myself out. I speak with you as it comes to me, and we shall see where, slowly, slowly, it leads us to.

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I will start at the end and give you my aim straightaway, because I don't see why I shouldn't lay down my cards. It wasn't quite like this that I was counting on speaking to you, but at least it will be clear.

I am not at all saying that the Oedipus complex is of no use, nor that it has no relationship with what we do. It is of no use for psychoanalysts, that's true, but as psychoanalysts are not clearly psychoanalysts, this doesn't prove anything. Psychoanalysts are becoming increasingly involved in something which is, in effect, excessively important, namely the mother's role. For heaven's sake, I have already begun to examine these things.

The mother's role is the mother's desire. That's fundamental. The mother's desire is not something that is bearable just like that, that you are indifferent to. It will always wreak havoc. A huge crocodile in whose jaws you are—that's the mother. One never knows what might suddenly come over her and make her shut her trap. That's what the mother's desire is.

Thus, I have tried to explain that there was something that was reassuring. I am telling you simple things, I am improvising, I have to say. There is a roller, made out of stone of course, which is there, potentially, at the level of her trap, and it acts as a restraint, as a wedge. It's what is called the phallus. It's the roller that shelters you, if, all of a sudden, she closes it.

These are things that I have expounded in their own time, at a time when I spoke to people one had to treat gently, psychoanalysts. They had to be told things crudely, like that, so that they would understand. Moreover, they didn't understand. I spoke therefore about this level of the paternal metaphor. I have only ever spoken of the Oedipus complex in that form. That should be a bit indicative, don't you think? I said that it was the paternal metaphor, whereas this is nevertheless not how Freud presents things to us. Above all he clings strongly to what actually happened, this blessed story of the murder of the father of the horde, this Darwinian buffoonery. The father of the horde—as if there has ever been the slightest trace of it,

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this father of the horde. We have seen orangutans. But not the slightest trace has ever been seen of the father of the human horde.

Freud holds that this was real. He clings to it. He wrote the entire *Totem and Taboo* in order to say it—it necessarily happened, and it's where everything began. Namely, all those little shitty things—including being a psychoanalyst.

It's striking—someone could have got a little bit excited about this paternal metaphor and known how to make a little hole. This is what I have always desired, that someone should make some progress, make a trace for me, begin to show a little path. Anyway, be that as it may, it has never happened, and the question of Oedipus is intact.

I am going to make some preliminary remarks for you, because the thing really does have to be hammered home. This history can't be whisked away. There's something that we are very used to, trained in, in analytic practice, which is these stories of manifest content and latent content. That's our experience.

For the analysand who is there, in the  $\$$ , the content is his knowledge. We are there in order to get to the point where he knows everything that he does not know even as he knows it. That's what the unconscious is. For the psychoanalyst the latent content is on the other side, in  $S_1$ . For him the latent content is the interpretation that he is going to give, insofar as it is, not this knowledge that we discover in the subject, but what is added on to it to give it a sense. This remark could be useful for some psychoanalysts.

Let's leave this manifest content and this latent content to one side for the moment, except for retaining the terms. What's a myth? Don't all answer at once. It's a manifest content.

This is not enough to define it, and we defined it differently before. But it is clear that, if it is possible to put a myth on index cards that one then stacks up to see what combinations unfold, this is the manifest order. Two myths are, one in relation to the other, exactly like these little machines that you can turn around through ninety degrees and get results. They are not latent, my little letters on the blackboard, they are manifest. Well, what's that doing there? The manifest content has to be put to the test. And, having done this, we shall see that it is not so manifest as all that.

Let's proceed like that—I am proceeding as best I can—let's recount the story.

The Oedipus complex as it is recounted by Freud when he refers to Sophocles is not at all treated like a myth. It's Sophocles' story minus, as you will see, its tragic component. According to Freud what Sophocles' play reveals is that one sleeps with one's mother when one has killed one's father—murder of the father and *jouissance* of the mother, to be understood in the objective and the subjective senses, one enjoys the mother and the

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mother enjoys. The fact that Oedipus absolutely does not know that he has killed his father, nor that he causes his mother to enjoy, nor that he enjoys her, changes nothing about the question, since, precisely, it is a fine example of the unconscious.

I think I have been pointing out the ambiguity that there is in the use of the term "unconscious" for long enough. As a substantive it's something that in effect has the repressed representative of representation as its support. One can say that this poor Oedipus was unconscious, in the adjectival sense. There is an equivocation there, the very least one can say. However that may be, this does not disturb us. But, in order for it not to disturb us one has to see what the things mean.

There is the myth of Oedipus, then, borrowed from Sophocles. And then there is this cock-and-bull story I was speaking about earlier, the murder of the father of the primal horde. It is quite curious that the result is exactly the contrary.

The old daddy had the women all to himself, which already is incredible—why would he have them all to himself?—whereas there are other blokes around, nevertheless, perhaps they too might have their own little idea. They kill him. The consequence is completely different from the myth of Oedipus—for having killed the old man, the old orang, two things happen. I place one of them in brackets, for it is incredible—they discover that they are brothers. Well, that may give you some idea of what brotherhood is about, I will give you a little elaboration, something temporary—we will have the time perhaps to return to it before we part this year.

The energy that we put into all being brothers very clearly proves that we are not brothers. Even with our brother by birth nothing proves that we are his brother—we can have a completely opposite batch of chromosomes. This pursuit of brotherhood, without counting the rest, liberty and equality, is something that's pretty extraordinary, and it is appropriate to realize what it covers.

I know only one single origin of brotherhood—I mean human, always humus brotherhood—segregation. We are of course in a period where segregation, ugh! There is no longer any segregation anywhere, it's unheard of when you read the newspapers. It's just that in society—I don't want to call it "human" because I use terms sparingly, I am careful about what I say, I am not a man of the left, I observe—everything that exists, and brotherhood first and foremost, is founded on segregation.

No other brotherhood is even conceivable or has the slightest foundation, as I have just said, the slightest scientific foundation, unless it's because people are isolated together, isolated from the rest. It is a matter of grasping its function, and of knowing why it is like this. But, in the end, that

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it is like this jumps out at you, and acting as if it weren't true must, necessarily, have drawbacks.

What I said just then was half-saying. I am not telling you why it is like this. Initially it's because, if I say this is how it is, I am unable to say why it's how it is. That's an example.

Be that as it may, they discover they are brothers, one wonders in the name of what segregation. This is to say that the myth is more like a fable. And then, they all decide, with one mind, that no one will touch the little mummies. Because there is more than one of them, to top it off. They could exchange, since the old father had them all. They could sleep with their brother's mother, specifically, since they are only brothers through their father.

No one ever seems to have been flabbergasted by this curious thing, the extent to which *Totem and Taboo* has nothing to do with the current use of the Sophoclean reference.

*Moses* is the limit. Why does Moses have to be killed? Freud gives an explanation, and it's the richest of them all—it's so that Moses will return among the prophets, via repression no doubt, via mnesic transmission through chromosomes, he is forced to admit.

The remark made by an imbecile like Jones that Freud does not appear to have read Darwin is accurate. He had read him, however, since it's on Darwin that he bases himself so as to carry *Totem and Taboo* off.

It's not for nothing that *Moses and Monotheism*, like everything else Freud writes, is absolutely fascinating. If one is independent-minded, one can say that it makes absolutely no sense at all. We will speak about it again. What is certain is that what the prophets are about does not have anything at all to do, this time around, with *jouissance*.

Let me point out to you—and, who knows? perhaps someone could do me this favor—that I went off in search of the book that serves as a basis for what Freud says, namely the work of a certain Sellin published in 1922, *Mose und seine Bedeutung für die israelitisch-jüdische Religionsgeschichte*.

This Sellin is not unknown. I obtained *Die Zwölf Propheten*. He begins with Hosea [*Osée*]. He's a minor one, but a daring one [*osé*]—so daring, it seems, that he is the one in whom one finds a trace of who is supposed to have murdered Moses.

I must tell you that I haven't waited to read Sellin before reading Hosea, but never in my entire life have I been able to procure this book for myself, and I am starting to become obsessed by it. It's not in the Bibliothèque nationale, it's not in the Alliance israélite universelle, and I have turned all Europe upside down to get it. I still believe, though, that I will manage to get my hands on it. If any of you had it in your pocket, you might bring it to me at the end of the seminar, I would return it to you.

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In Hosea there is one thing that is quite clear. This text Hosea is extraordinary. I don't know how many people there are here who read the Bible. I can't say that I was brought up on the Bible, because I was raised a Catholic. I regret it. But then, I don't regret it, in this sense that when I read it now—well, "now" is a fair while ago—it has a fantastic effect upon me. This familial delusion, these entreaties by Yahweh to his people, which contradict one another from one line to the next, it makes you sit up and take note.

One thing is certain, all relations with women are [ . . . ], as he says in his strong language. I will write it in Hebrew on the blackboard for you, in very beautiful letters. It's "prostitution," *znunim*.

זְנוּנִים

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Addressing Hosea, this is the only thing it's about—his people have prostituted themselves definitively. Prostitution covers more or less everything that surrounds him, the entire context. What the master's discourse uncovers is that there is no sexual relation, I have already put this to you in strong terms. Well then, one has the idea that our chosen people found themselves in a bit of a pickle where things were very probably different, where there were sexual relations. This is probably what Yahweh calls prostitution. In any case, it is quite clear that, if it's the spirit of Moses that returns here, it is not exactly an issue of a murder which has engendered access to *jouissance*.

All of this is so fascinating that no one has ever seemed to realize—it would doubtless have seemed too immediate, too stupid to make these objections, and moreover they are not objections, we are fully into our subject—that the prophets, in the final analysis, never mention Moses. One of my best students made this remark to me—it has to be said that she is a Protestant, to the point where she had noticed this a long time before I did. But above all, they absolutely do not speak of this thing that, for Freud, seems to be the key, namely that the god of Moses is the same god as the god of Akhenaton, a god who is supposed to be One.

As you know, very far from this being the case, the god of Moses simply says of the other gods that one must not have relations with them, but he does not say that they do not exist. He says that one must not hasten toward idols, but, after all, he's referring to idols that represent him, as was certainly the case of the Golden Calf. They were expecting a god, they made a Golden Calf, that was quite natural.

We can see that there is a completely different relationship there, which is a relationship with truth. I have already said that truth is the little sister of *jouissance*, we will have to come back to this.

What is certain is that the crude schema *murder of the father—jouissance of the mother* totally elides the tragic mainspring. To be sure, it's through murdering the father that Oedipus finds free access to Jocasta, and that this is granted to him, to popular acclaim. Jocasta, as I have always said, knew something about this, because women do not lack these little pieces of information. She had there a servant who had been present during the whole affair, and it would be curious if this servant, who returned to the palace and who is found at the end, hadn't said to Jocasta, "He's the one who blew your husband away." Be that as it may, it's not important. What's important is that Oedipus was admitted to Jocasta's side because he had triumphed at a trial of truth.

We shall come back to the enigma of the Sphinx. And then, if Oedipus comes to a very sticky end—we will see what this "comes to a very sticky end" means, and to what extent that's called coming to a sticky end—it's because he absolutely wanted to know the truth.

It is not possible seriously to examine the Freudian reference without bringing the dimension of truth to bear, along with murder and *jouissance*.

That's where I can leave you today.

It's simply that, seeing how Freud articulates this fundamental myth, it is clear that it is truly incorrect to put everything in the same basket as Oedipus. What in God's name, so to speak, does Moses have to do with Oedipus and the father of the primal horde? There really must be something there that stems from the manifest content and the latent content.

To finish up for today, I would say that what we propose is to analyze the Oedipus complex as being Freud's dream.

11 March 1970

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## From myth to structure

TRUTH, CASTRATION, AND DEATH  
 THE FATHER, A STRUCTURAL OPERATOR  
 THE DEAD FATHER IS JOUISSANCE  
 ACT AND AGENT  
 THE HYSTERIC WANTS A MASTER

A person in this audience saw fit, and I thank her for it, to be so kind as to season what I said last time with a certain disappointment. This person has, as she put it, given me the pleasure—pleasure, as you know, is the law of least effort—of having preceded me down a pathway that I am said to have opened.

The person in question—I can see she is smiling, she is present, why not name her, Marie-Claire Boons—sent me, then, a little offprint from a highly interesting journal called *L'Inconscient*. I have reasons for not having read her article before. This journal, in effect, in which there have been some very good things, I must say, is not even distributed to me, paradoxically perhaps because of this very fact that in principle, at least in its editorial committee, it used to base itself on [*s'autorisait de*] my teaching. My attention having been drawn to this issue on "Paternity," I first read the article by Marie-Claire Boons with great care, and then read another one by our friend Conrad Stein.<sup>1</sup>

I am quite prepared, if Marie-Claire Boons wants, to take her article today as a text for commentary, and a number of questions might arise concerning the path she takes over the father's murder in Freud. I believe, as a matter of fact, that it would easily appear that there is nothing in it that anticipates what I have already advanced concerning the Oedipus complex by the date at which she published this article—advanced, I said, very modestly.

138 There is another method, which is that today I try to go further by showing that this is already implied in the careful progress I have made up till now. Then, perhaps, at a second stage, on the occasion of one of our gatherings, what I would like to say will retroactively become clearer than if I

<sup>1</sup> Marie-Claire Boons, "Le meurtre du père chez Freud," *L'Inconscient* 5 (1968):101–31; Conrad Stein, "Le père mortel et le père immortel," *L'Inconscient* 5 (1968):59–100.

were just to leave you hanging concerning the different points in an article which, in effect, from many aspects presents a sort of introduction, questioning, and, if you will, preparation.

You may express a wish here for one or other of these two methods—I give the floor to Marie-Claire Boons.

I will proceed in the second way, then.

## 1

The father's death. In effect, everyone knows that this appears to be the key to, the vital point for everything that is stated, and not only in the name of myth, concerning what psychoanalysis is about.

By the end of her article Marie-Claire Boons would even give us to understand that many things flow from this death of the father and notably a certain something that would make it the case that in some way psychoanalysis frees us from the law.

Fat chance. I am well aware that this is the register in which a libertarian hook supposedly attaches itself to psychoanalysis.

I think that this is not at all the case, and this is the entire meaning of what I am calling the other side of psychoanalysis.

The father's death, insofar as it echoes this statement with its Nietzschean gravity, this statement, this good news, that God is dead, does not seem to me to be of a kind to liberate us, far from it. The first plank in the proof of this is indeed Freud's own utterance. Quite rightly, at the start of her article Marie-Claire Boons draws our attention to what I was already saying two seminars ago, that the announcement of the death of the father is far from incompatible with the motivation for religion that Freud proposes in the name of an analytic interpretation of the latter. Namely, religion itself reposes on something that Freud quite astonishingly puts forward as primary, which is that it is the father who is recognized as deserving of love. There is already the indication of a paradox here, which leaves the author I have just named in a certain difficulty concerning the fact that, in sum, psychoanalysis would prefer to maintain, to preserve, the field of religion.

Here, too, it can be said that this is not at all the case. The pinnacle of psychoanalysis is well and truly atheism, provided one gives this term another sense than that of "God is dead," where all the indications are that far from calling into question what is in play, namely the law, it is consolidated instead. A long time ago I observed that for the sentence of old father Karamazov, "If God is dead, then everything is permitted," the conclusion

that forces itself upon us in the text of our experience is that the response to "God is dead" is "Nothing is permitted anymore."

To clarify this point whose horizon I am announcing for you, let's start with the death of the father, allowing that Freud did declare it to be the key to *jouissance*, to *jouissance* of the supreme object identified with the mother, the mother as the object of incest.

It is certainly not as an attempt to explain what sleeping with the mother means that the murder of the father is introduced into Freudian doctrine. On the contrary it's on the basis of the father's death that the prohibition of this *jouissance* is established in the first place.

As a matter of fact, it is not just the father's death that is at issue, but the father's murder, as the person I am speaking of also put it very well in the title of her investigation. It's here, in the Oedipus myth as it is stated for us, that the key to *jouissance* is found. But if this is in fact how this myth—we are examining it closely—is presented to us in its statement [*énoncé*], I have already said that it is appropriate to treat the latter for what it is, namely manifest content. By virtue of this fact one has to begin by expounding it properly.

The Oedipus myth, at the tragic level at which Freud appropriates it, clearly shows that the father's murder is the condition of *jouissance*. If Laius is not brushed aside—in the course of a struggle in which, moreover, it is far from certain that by this step Oedipus is going to accede to *jouissance* of the mother—if Laius is not brushed aside then there will not be any *jouissance*. But does he obtain it at the price of this murder?

It's here that the principal thing is presented, and because the reference is taken from a myth enacted in tragedy, it becomes all important. He obtains it in the name of the fact that he has delivered the people from a question that is decimating its best by seeking to answer what presents itself as an enigma, that is to say, what is represented as being supported by this ambiguous being of the Sphinx, in whom strictly speaking a double disposition is incarnated, by virtue of being made, like the half-saying, from two half-bodies. By answering, Oedipus finds himself—this is the ambiguity—suppressing the suspense that the question of truth thus introduces among the people.

He has surely no idea of the extent to which the answer he gives to that question anticipates his own drama, nor of the extent to which, through his making a choice, this answer perhaps falls into the trap of truth. It's man. Who knows what man is? Is it to say everything about him to reduce him to the process—and how ambiguous it is in the case of Oedipus—which makes him go first on all fours, then on the two hind ones—in which Oedipus, like his entire line, is characterized, as Claude Lévi-Strauss has very well pointed out, by not walking straight—then, at the end, with the aid of

a stick which, while not the white cane of the blind man, was for Oedipus nonetheless of the most unusual character, this third element being, to give it its name, his daughter Antigone?

Truth has strayed? What does that mean? Is this so as to leave the way open to what for Oedipus will remain the path of return? For the truth will reemerge for him, as this will be because he will again want to intervene in the face of a misfortune that is twice as great this time, no longer decimating his people by the choice of those who volunteer for the Sphinx's question, but striking at all his people in this ambiguous form that is called the plague, and for which the Sphinx is responsible in the themes of Antiquity. This is where Freud points out for us that for Oedipus the question of truth is renewed, and that it ends with what? With this thing that we are able to identify, in a first approximation, with something that at least bears a relationship to the price paid in the form of castration.

Is that really saying everything—given that, in the end, what happens to him is not that the scales fall from his eyes, but that his eyes fall from him like scales? Don't we see Oedipus being reduced to this very object, not by being subject to castration but, as I would prefer to say, by being castration itself?—namely, being what remains when one of the privileged supports of the object, in the form of his eyes, disappears from him.

What does this mean? It can only mean that the question arises whether the price he has to pay is not to be mounted on the throne by the path of succession, but by way of being chosen as the master, for having effaced the question of truth? In other words, introduced to my statement, as you already are, that what constitutes the essence of the master's position is to be castrated, can't you see that here we find, veiled to be sure, but indicated, that what is properly called succession proceeds from castration also.

Given that fantasy is always very curiously indicated by, but never properly attached to, the fundamental myth of the father's murder, then, if castration is what strikes the son, is it not also what brings him to accede, by the right path, to what the function of the father is about? This is indicated in all our experience. And does it not indicate that castration is transmitted from father to son?

Henceforth, what about death, which presents itself as being there at the origin? Do we not have an indication here that it is perhaps a kind of mask? Even though it has emerged from, been experienced in, the analyst's position in the subjective process of the function of castration, isn't there something here that nevertheless hides it, veils it in a certain way, and places it, if one can put it this way, under its aegis?—and thereby saving us from going to the heart of what the analyst's position enables us to state in a final and rigorous manner?

How has this happened? It is not irrelevant to point out that the myth of

the father's murder, as essential, is initially encountered by Freud at the level of the interpretation of dreams, where a wish for death appears. Conrad Stein's article produces a remarkable critique of this by picking up the recrudescence of these death wishes with respect to the father at the very moment at which his death became real. In Freud's own words *The Interpretation of Dreams* emerged from his father's death. Freud thus wished to be guilty for his father's death.<sup>2</sup>

Is there equally here, as the author stresses, the mark of something hidden that might properly speaking be a wish that the father be immortal?

This interpretation is put forward along the lines of analytic psychology, where it is regarded as a basic presupposition that the essence of the child's position has its foundation in an idea of omnipotence that would place it beyond death. In the hands of an author who does not abandon his presuppositions, this interpretation is, if I may say so, predictable. On the contrary, by criticizing what is said about what the essence of the child's position is, it follows that these wishes for death and what they mask, if indeed they mask anything, have to be explored via another avenue.

And in the first place, in the observations we have to make concerning subjective structure as being dependant upon the introduction of the signifier, can we place at the head of that structure anything at all we could call knowledge [*connaissance*] of death?

For his line of interpretation, which is that of a denial of death in the name of omnipotence, Conrad Stein makes clever use of Freud's analyses concerning a number of his major dreams, such as the famous request to close the eyes, with the ambiguity of this "an eye" under a bar, which he also produces as the product of an alternative.<sup>3</sup>

But it can also be read in another sense.

## 2

It is, in effect, perhaps susceptible to another sense, if we take the last dream in the same series and make it the central one, which I have done in its day.

Freud himself puts the emphasis on a dream that is not his own, but one of his patient's, a dream which goes, "He didn't know he was dead."<sup>4</sup>

I broke this dream down to analyze it, lining it up along the two lines of

<sup>2</sup> See "Preface to the Second Edition," SE 4:xxvi.

<sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud, SE 4:317-8.

<sup>4</sup> SE 5:430-1.

utterance and statement. This was designed to remind us that one of two things must be true. Either death doesn't exist and there is something that survives, but this does not resolve the question whether the dead know that they are dead. Or there is nothing beyond death, and it is quite certain that, in this case, they do not know it. This is to say that no one knows, no living being in any case, what death is. It is remarkable that spontaneous productions formulated at the level of the unconscious are stated on the basis of this, that, for anyone, death is properly speaking unknowable.

In its day I emphasized that it is indispensable for life that something irreducible does not know—I won't say, "Doesn't know that we are dead," because that's not what we should say, in the name of "we," we are not dead, not all at once in any case, and that's our foundation—but, "Something does not know that I am dead." I am dead, very exactly, insofar as I am destined to die—but, in the name of this something that does not know it, I don't want to know either.

This is what makes it possible for us to place at the center of logic this "all men"—"all men are mortal"—the basis of which is precisely the non-knowledge of death, just as it is what makes us believe that "all men" means something, all men born of a father, who, we are told, insofar as they, the men, are dead do not enjoy what is there for them to enjoy. An equivalence is therefore drawn, in Freudian terms, between the dead father and *jouissance*. It is he who keeps it in reserve, if I can put it like that.

In the manner in which it is stated, not at the level of the tragic, with all its subtle suppleness, but in the statement of the myth of *Totem and Taboo*, the Freudian myth draws an equivalence between the dead father and *jouissance*. This is what we can describe with the term "structural operator."

Here the myth transcends itself through stating in the name of the real—for this is what Freud insists upon, that it actually happened, that it is the real—that the dead father is what guards *jouissance*, is where the prohibition of *jouissance* started, where it stemmed from.

The fact that the dead father is *jouissance* presents itself to us as the sign of the impossible itself. And in this way we rediscover here the terms that are those I define as fixing the category of the real, insofar as, in what I articulate, it is radically distinguished from the symbolic and the imaginary—the real is the impossible. Not in the name of a simple obstacle we hit our heads up against, but in the name of the logical obstacle of what, in the symbolic, declares itself to be impossible. This is where the real emerges from.

In effect, there beyond the Oedipus myth we recognize an operator, a structural operator, which is called the real father—with, I would say, this property that in the name of a paradigm, it is also the promotion, at the heart of the Freudian system, of what the father of the real is, which places a term for the impossible at the center of Freud's utterance [*énonciation*].

That is to say, Freud's utterance has nothing to do with psychology. No psychology of this original father is conceivable. However, in the way in which it is presented it evokes derision, and I don't need to repeat what I said about this at the last seminar—he who enjoys all the women is inconceivable to imagine, whereas it is fairly normally observable that being enough for one is already quite a lot. We are referred here to a completely different reference, that of castration, as soon as we have defined it as the principle of the master signifier. By the end of today's discourse I will have shown you what that can mean.

The master's discourse shows us *jouissance* as coming to the Other—it is he who has the means for it. Anything that is language only obtains *jouissance* by insisting to the point of producing the loss whereby surplus *jouissance* takes body.

First, language, including the language of the master, cannot be anything other than a demand, a demand that fails. It is not from its success, it is from its repetition that something of another dimension is engendered, which I have described as a loss—a loss whereby surplus *jouissance* takes body.

This repetitive creation, this inauguration of a dimension by which everything the analytic experience can be judged by is ordered, may equally well start out as an original impotence—to be explicit, the child's impotence, a far cry from its omnipotence. If it has been possible to see that psychoanalysis shows us that the child is the father of the man, it's very much because there has to be, somewhere, something that mediates them, and this is very precisely the instance of the master, insofar as it comes to produce, and this can be any signifier after all, the master signifier.

At a time when I formulated what is involved in the object relation in relation to Freudian structure, I suggested that the real father is the agent of castration.<sup>5</sup> But I only suggested it after I had first of all taken care to uncover what there is that is distinct in the essence of castration, frustration, and privation. Castration is an essentially symbolic function, that is, is conceivable from nowhere else than the articulation of signifiers, frustration is imaginary, privation, as is self-evident, is real.

145 What can one define as a result of these operations? We have to make the enigma that the phallus poses for us, insofar as it is manifestly imaginary, the object of the first of these operations, castration. It is—why not?—always a question of something very real in frustration, even if the only resource that the claim on which it is founded has is to imagine that one is owed this real, which is not self-evident. It is clear that privation can only

<sup>5</sup> See *Le Séminaire, Livre IV, La relation d'objet, 1956–1957* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994).

be situated with respect to the symbolic, for as far as anything real is concerned, nothing can be lacking—what is real is real, and it has to be from elsewhere that this introduction, which is nevertheless essential, be made, for without it we would not be in the real ourselves, namely that something in it is lacking—and this is what initially characterizes the subject.

I remained less explicit then about the level of the agents, though I did indicate it. The father, the real father, is none other than the agent of castration—and this is what affirming the real father as impossible is destined to mask from us.

What does “agent” mean? Initially, we slip into the fantasy that it is the father who is the castrator. It is very striking that none of the forms of the myth that Freud was attached to give any idea of this. It is not because at some initial hypothetical time, the sons, who were still animals, did not have access to the troop of women that, so far as I know, they are castrated. Castration as the statement [*énoncé*] of a prohibition can in any case only be founded at a second moment, that of the myth of the murder of the father of the horde, and as this actual myth states, it arises out of nothing other than a common accord, a singular *initium* whose problematic character I was showing last time.

Equally, the term “act” needs to be picked up here. If, when discussing the psychoanalytic act, what I was able to say about the level of the act is to be taken seriously, that is, if it is true that there can only be an act in a context already replete with everything involving the signifier's effect, its entry into the world, there can be no act in the beginning, at least none that could be described as murder. This myth can have no other sense here than the one I have reduced it to, a statement of the impossible. There can be no act outside a field which is already so completely articulated that the law is located within it. There are no other acts than those that refer to the effects of this signifying articulation and include its entire problematic—with on the one hand whatever loss [*chute*] the very existence of anything at all that can be articulated as subject entails, or rather is, and with on the other 146 whatever preexists it as a legislative function.

Does the real father's function, then, follow from the nature of the act concerning castration? This is exactly what the term “agent” that I have proposed enables us to put in suspense.

The verb *agir*, “to act,” has more than one resonance in our language, beginning with that of actor. *Actionnaire*, “shareholder,” also—why not, the word is made from *action*, and this shows you that *une action*, “a share,” is perhaps not quite what one thinks it is. *Activiste* also—doesn't the activist properly speaking define himself on the basis of the fact that he tends to consider himself to be rather the instrument of something? Actaeon, while we're at it—this would be a good example for anyone who knew what this

meant in terms of the Freudian thing. And finally, what one quite simply calls *mon agent*, "my agent." You can see what this means in general: "I pay him for that." Not even, "I compensate him for having nothing else to do," or "I honor him,"<sup>6</sup> as they say, pretending to begin from the fact that he is capable of doing something else.

This is the appropriate level of the term at which to take both this "real father" and this "agent of castration." The real father carries out the work of the master agency.

## 3

We are becoming increasingly familiar with the functions of an agent. We live at a time at which we know what this conveys—fake stuff, advertising stuff, things that are there to be sold. But we also know that it works this way, at the point we have come to in the expansion, the paroxysm, of the master's discourse in a society founded on it.

It is getting late.

I am going to be forced to leave something out here, which I will indicate to you in passing, because we might perhaps return to the matter at hand, which for me is of some value, and which for me does not seem unworthy of our making the effort to clarify. Since I am stressing, giving a very special mark to, the function of agent, some day I will have to show you all the elaborations it can lend itself to by introducing the notion of a double agent.

147 Everyone is aware that in our day this notion is one of the most indisputable, the most certain, objects of fascination. The agent who starts again. He doesn't just want the master's little market, which is the role of each. He thinks that what he is in contact with, namely that everything that has true worth, I mean in the order of *jouissance*, has nothing to do with the web of intrigues. In his little job it's ultimately this that he conserves.

It's a strange story, one with many implications. The true double agent is the one who thinks that what escapes the web would also have to be arranged [*agence*]. Because if that is true, the arrangement is going to become true, and by the same token the first arrangement, the one that was obviously fake, will also become true.

This is most likely what was guiding a character who placed himself, no one knows why, in the function of prototypical agent of this master's discourse, insofar as he allowed himself to keep something whose essence an

<sup>6</sup> As in "I pay him an honorarium."

author, Henri Massis, has profited by speaking these prophetic words, "Walls are good." Well, someone called Sorgue, with this so Heideggerian name, found a way to be with the Nazi agents, and to make himself a double agent—for whose benefit? For the benefit of the Father of the People, who everyone hopes, as you know, will bring it about that the true will also be arranged [*agence*].<sup>7</sup>

The reference I evoke concerning the Father of the People has many links with that of the real father as the agent of castration. As the Freudian statement cannot do otherwise than set out from the master's discourse, if only because it speaks of the unconscious, all Freud can make of this famous real father is the impossible. But then we actually do know this real father—he is something of a completely different order.

First, in general, everybody acknowledges that he is the one who works, and does so in order to feed his little family. If he is the agent of something, in a society that obviously does not give him a big role, it nevertheless remains the case that he has some exceedingly nice aspects. He works. And also he would very much like to be loved.

There is something that shows that the mystagogy that makes him into a tyrant is obviously lodged somewhere quite different. It's at the level of the real father as a construction of language, as Freud always pointed out moreover. The real father is nothing other than an effect of language and has no other real. I am not saying, "other reality," since reality is something quite different, it's what I was talking about a moment ago.

I can even immediately go a little bit further and point out that the notion of real father is scientifically unsustainable. There is only one real father, which is the spermatozoon, and at least up till now, nobody has ever thought to say that he was the son of this or that spermatozoon. Naturally, one can lodge objections, aided by a number of examinations of blood groups, of rhesus factors. But this is quite recent, and it has absolutely nothing to do with anything that up till now has been said to be the function of the father. I sense that I am entering dangerous territory, but too bad—it is, after all, not only in the Aruntas tribes that one could raise the question of what the father really is on an occasion when a woman finds she is pregnant.<sup>8</sup> If there is one question that analysis could raise, it's that one. Why, in a psychoanalysis, would it not be—one suspects that this is the case from time to time—the psychoanalyst who is the real father even if he is in no way the one who has done it, there, on the level of the spermatozoon?

<sup>7</sup> Henri Massis (1886–1970) was a right-wing intellectual who, despite his support for Pétain during the war, was elected to the Académie française in 1960. The "Father of the People" referred to is Marshall Pétain.

<sup>8</sup> An allusion to Ernest Jones, "Mother-Right and the Sexual Ignorance of Savages," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 6 (1925):109–30.

From time to time one has the suspicion when it concerns a woman patient's relationship with, to be modest about it, the analytic situation that she has finally become a mother. There is no need to be an Arunta to ask oneself questions about what the father's function is.

By the same token we are aware, because this gives a broader perspective, that there is no need to take the reference to analysis, which I have taken as the most burning one, for the same question to arise. One can very well give one's husband a baby, and yet this be someone else's child, even if one hasn't fucked with him, someone, precisely, whom one would have liked to be the father. Yet, it's for that reason that one has had the child.

This takes us, as you see, a little way into the dream, as it were. I am only doing this to wake you up. If I said that what Freud has lucubrated—not, to be sure, at the level of myth, nor at that of the recognition of death wishes in patients' dreams—is a dream of Freud's, it's because, in my opinion, the analyst should tear himself away from the plane of dreams a little.

149 What analysts have encountered when guided by what is shocking in what Freud introduced, what they have learned from this encounter, has not yet been decanted at all. Last Friday at my patient interviews I presented an ill patient—I don't see why I should say he was ill—to whom certain things had happened, which meant that his encephalogram, as the technician told me, is always on the border of sleep and a waking state, oscillating in such a way that one never knows when he is going to pass from one to the other, and that is where things stand. This is a little bit how I see all our analyst colleagues, and perhaps myself too, in the end. The shock, the traumatism of the birth of analysis leaves them like that. And this is why they spread their wings to try and extract something more precise from the Freudian articulation.

This is not to say that they don't get any closer to it, but what they see is this, for example. It is the position of the real father as articulated by Freud, namely, as impossible, that makes the father necessarily imagined as a depriver. It is not you, nor him, nor me who imagines, it arises from the position itself. It is not at all surprising that we always encounter the imaginary father. It necessarily, structurally depends on something that evades us, which is the real father. And it is strictly out of the question that the real father be defined in any assured manner unless it's as the agent of castration.

Castration is not what every person who psychologizes necessarily defines it as. We saw this appear, it seems, not so long ago at a thesis defense when someone who has decisively chosen the approach of making psychoanalysis the psychopedia we all know said, "For me, you know, castration is only a fantasy." Not so. Castration is a real operation that is introduced through the incidence of a signifier, no matter which, into the sexual rela-

tion [*rapport du sexe*]. And it goes without saying that it determines the father as this impossible real that we have been talking about.

It is now a question of knowing what is meant by this castration, which is not a fantasy, and the result of which is that the only cause of desire is produced by this operation and that fantasy dominates the entire reality of desire, that is to say, the law.

As for dreams, everyone now knows that they are a demand, that they are signifiers at liberty, which insist, which squawk and stamp their feet, which have absolutely no idea what they want. The idea of putting the omnipotent father at the origin of desire is very adequately refuted by the fact that Freud extracted its master signifiers from the hysteric's desire. It must not be forgotten, in effect, that this is where Freud began and that he acknowledged what it is that remains at the center of his question. The fact it has been recorded is made all the more valuable for having been repeated by an ass who had no idea what it meant. It's the question, "What does a woman want?"<sup>9</sup>

A woman. Not just any woman. Merely raising the question means that she wants something. Freud didn't say, "What does *woman* want?" Because after all it is not written down anywhere that woman wants anything at all. I won't say that she will put up with every circumstance. She is put out by every circumstance, *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*, but there are many others, *Culture, Kilowatt, Culbute* [*somersault, tumble*], as someone puts it, *Cru et Cuit*,<sup>10</sup> all of that suits her equally well. She absorbs them. But as soon as you ask the question, "What does a woman want?" you locate the question at the level of desire, and everyone knows that, for woman, to locate the question at the level of desire is to question the hysteric.

What the hysteric wants—I say this for those who do not have this vocation, there must be a lot—is a master. This is absolutely clear—so much so that you have to wonder whether this isn't where the invention of the master began. This would elegantly bring to a close what we are in the process of tracing out.

She wants a master. That is what resides in the top right-hand little corner, for want of giving it another name. She wants the other to be a master, and to know lots of things, but at the same time she doesn't want him to know so much that he does not believe she is the supreme price of all his knowledge. In other words, she wants a master she can reign over. She reigns, and he does not govern.

<sup>9</sup> The reference is to Marie Bonaparte.

<sup>10</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked* (New York: Octagon Books, 1969).



This is where Freud set out from. "She" is the hysteric, but this is not necessarily specific to one sex. As soon as you raise the question, "What does So-and-so want?" you enter the function of desire, and you produce the master signifier.

151 Freud produced a number of master signifiers, which he covered with the name of Freud. A name can also be used to plug something up. I am astounded that it is possible to associate the idea that at this level there can be some murder or other with this plug of a name of the father, whatever it may be. And how can one believe that analysts are what they are by virtue of a devotion to Freud's name? They are unable to untangle themselves from Freud's master signifiers, that's all. It's not so much to Freud that they adhere as to a number of signifiers—the unconscious, seduction, traumatism, fantasy, the ego, the id, and whatever else you like—there's no question of their leaving that order. They have no father to kill at this level. One is not the father of signifiers, at the very most one is "because of." No problem at this level.

The real mainspring is the following—*jouissance* separates the master signifier, insofar as one would like to attribute it to the father, from knowledge qua truth. If we take the schema of the analyst's discourse, the obstacle raised by *jouissance* is found there where I have drawn the triangle, namely, between what can be produced as master signifier, whatever form it may take, and the field that knowledge has at its disposal insofar as it poses as truth.



And there you have what enables how it truly is with castration to be articulated—it is that even for the child, whatever one might think, the father is he who knows nothing about truth.

I will recommence at this point next time.

18 March 1970

## Supplement

*The following session: Radiophonic*

152 I do not know what you have been doing over the time that has kept us apart. You have in any case benefited from it in some way. For my part, I indicate to the person who so kindly wanted to indicate to me that they

were an astudied of the Sorbonne, that I got the Sellin I spoke to you about from Copenhagen, that is, this little book of 1922 which subsequently underwent a degree of rejection, and which is this book around which Freud makes his assurance that Moses was *tudied* revolve.<sup>11</sup>

I am not aware that many psychoanalysts, apart from Jones and perhaps one or two others, have taken any interest in it.<sup>12</sup> This Sellin, in his text, does deserve to be examined, however, since Freud considered that he carried weight, and it is suitable, naturally, to follow him and put this consideration to the test. It seems to me that this is in line with what I am advancing this year concerning the other side of psychoanalysis. But as I have only had this book for roughly five days, written in a very robust [*corsé*] German, you will understand that despite the assistance that a number of greater and lesser rabbis—actually, greater, there are no lesser rabbis—have been kind enough to give me, I am not yet ready to give you an account of it today, at least not one that would satisfy me.

Moreover, it so happens that I have been requested—not for the first time, this is an extended request—to reply on Belgian radio, and this by a man, M. Georin, who, frankly, has evoked my esteem by providing me with a long text which gives at least this proof that he, contrary to many others, has read my *Écrits*. Good Lord, he got what he could out of it, but it was not nothing, all things considered. Truthfully, then, I was rather flattered. To be sure, this doesn't make me any the more inclined toward this practice that consists in having oneself recorded on the radio—it always wastes a lot of time. However, since it appears that he has taken care to ensure that it takes as little time as possible, I might perhaps agree to it.

The one who will perhaps not agree to it, on the other hand, is he, given that, in order to answer these questions which I will give you three examples of, I did not think I could do any better than reply in writing and not yield to the inspiration of the moment, to this groundbreaking work that I perform here every time I stand before you, which is nourished by plenty of notes, and which works because you see that I am prey to this groundbreaking. This is even the one thing, perhaps, that justifies your presence here.

The circumstances are different when it comes to speaking for some tens, even hundreds, of thousands of listeners, for whom the abrupt test of presenting oneself without the support of the person can produce other effects.

<sup>11</sup> Ernst Sellin, *Mose und seine Bedeutung für die israelitisch-jüdische Religionsgeschichte* [*Moses and his Meaning for Israelite and Jewish History of Religion*] (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1922).

<sup>12</sup> See Ernest Jones, "The Birth and Death of Moses," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 39 (1958):1-4.

In any case I will refuse to give anything but these texts that have already been written out. I am, then, placing a lot of trust in this condition since, as you will see, the questions put to me necessarily lie in the interval between what a constructed articulation produces and what I shall call a common consciousness expects. A common consciousness also means a series of common formulas. The Ancients, the Greeks, had already called this language, in their own language, the *koine*. This can be immediately translated into French—the *couinée*.<sup>13</sup> It squawks.

I don't despise the *koine*. It is just that I believe that the *koine* isn't undisposed to certain effects of precipitation being produced within it, to precisely the most abrupt discourse that there is being introduced.

There you are. This is why today I am going to share my replies to three of these questions with you. It is not merely to compensate myself for the effort, for it will be a far greater effort, believe me, to read these texts to you than to proceed as I usually do.

Without any further delay, I will give you the first of these questions, which is this: "In your *Écrits* you state that Freud anticipated, without being aware of it, the researches of Saussure as well as those of the Prague Circle. Can you explain what you meant?"

That is what I will do, then, not by improvising but, as I warned you, by replying as follows.

[The text of these three replies was published as "Radiophonie" in the journal *Scilicet*, nos. 2/3, pp. 55-99 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970). See also *Autres écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001), 403-47.]

8 April 1970

<sup>13</sup> *Couïner*, "to squeak," "squeal," "squawk."

## IX

### Yahweh's ferocious ignorance

FREUD AND SELLIN  
FALSE INTERPRETATION  
MAKING PERFUME  
MOSES SLAIN  
THE MARITAL ALLEGORY

I will not say I am introducing Professor André Caquot, Director of Studies in the Fifth Section of Sciences of Religion of the Hautes Études, where as you know I am Chargé de Conférences.

I will not say I am introducing him because he needs no introduction. I present myself as having been, thanks to his grace and kindness, completely dependent on him over the time that has passed since two days prior to our last meeting, that is, from the moment I decided I wanted to know a thing or two about Sellin's book.

#### 1

I have said enough about this book for you to be aware of its importance. For the sake of those who by chance have come here for the first time I will repeat that this book turned up at just the right moment, or again, as I put it, like a gift from the gods, for Freud who was then able to maintain the theme of the death of Moses according to which he was murdered. Moses is said to have been killed.

Thanks to Monsieur Caquot I have learned about the situation of this book with respect to exegesis, namely its being located within the efflorescence of what can be called textual technique, as it was instituted, particularly beginning in the nineteenth century, in German universities. I was able to situate Sellin in relation to those who came before him and those who came after him, Edouard Meyer and Gressman, as well as many others.

It was not without difficulty, as I indicated last time, that I managed to get hold of this book, since it was completely unfindable in Europe. Through the efforts of the French-Israelite Alliance, I was finally able to obtain it from Copenhagen. I brought it to Monsieur Caquot's attention,

who was one of the rare people not only to have had wind of it, but to have already had it in his hands some time before I went to him with my request. And we examined this text, particularly concerning the point at which it enabled Freud to situate what he had his heart set on, and not necessarily for the same reasons as Sellin.

This obliged us to turn to this field in which my ignorance is profound. You cannot know all that I am ignorant of—fortunately, because if you knew everything I was ignorant of, you would know everything. In the ordeal of the attempt I made at putting order into what I myself had managed to learn from Monsieur Caquot, I suddenly realized that there is a big difference between knowledge, knowing what one is talking about, what one believes one is capable of talking about, and then what I will presently give a name to, using a term that will serve to explain what we are going to do here.

There will therefore be a break for a second time in the manner in which I address you. Last time you were subjected to a difficult trial, to the point where some of you advanced the hypothesis that it was done in order to air out the room a bit—with a mediocre result, seeing how many of you are here. This time I believe that on the contrary you will have reason to stay. And if, subsequently, I were to offer you again what I am able to do today thanks to Monsieur Caquot, I would do it differently. Let's say that all things considered I felt myself drawing away from the thought of handling again today what we have been obliged to handle, namely the Hebrew letters.

In the text I read out to you last time I inserted a definition from Midrash. It was about a relationship to the written that is subject to certain laws that are of enormous interest to us. In effect, as I was saying to you, it is a question of placing oneself in the interval of a certain relationship between the written and a spoken presentation that draws on it and makes reference to it.

157 Analysis in its entirety, I mean analytic technique, can, in a certain manner, elucidate this reference, to be considered as a "game"—in inverted commas—of interpretation. This term has been used indiscriminately ever since people have been talking about conflicts of interpretation, for instance—as if you could have any conflict between interpretations.<sup>1</sup> At the very most interpretations complement one another, indeed, they play with this reference. What matters here is what I was saying last time, the *falsum*, with the ambiguity that the fall of the false, I mean the contrary of the true, can establish for itself around this word.<sup>2</sup> On occasions this false of interpretation may even have its impact of displacing a discourse. This is actu-

<sup>1</sup> The allusion is to Paul Ricoeur's book, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> "Falsum," a range of punishable wrongdoing including perjury, bearing false witness, forgery, falsifying documents, etc.

ally what we will see. I could not wish for better than this for conveying to you what this is about.

For me, in this field, this can in no way correspond to a form of knowledge, but rather it corresponds to what I have called putting [someone] on the scent [*mise-au-parfum*]. I am going to continue the operation in your presence, that is, continue trying to put myself on the scent, in the form, which has nothing fictive about it, of questions that necessarily remain unexhausted, and which are those that I have been putting to Monsieur Caquot over the last few days. I will, in this respect, like you, be in a relationship of putting myself on the scent concerning a certain form of knowledge, that of biblical exegesis.

Need I tell you that Monsieur Caquot is in this Fifth Section under the heading of Comparative Semitic Religions? Through the experience I have had of it I have come to believe that in this domain nobody can more adequately, in the sense in which I found it myself, get you to feel what the approach of a Sellin is about, when from the texts of Hosea, you will see by what procedures, he extracts a thing that he himself really wants to bring out. He has his reasons for this, and these reasons matter to us. What Monsieur Caquot conveyed to me on this is equally valuable.

I mentioned ignorance just before. To be a father, I mean not only a real father but a father of the real, there are things that one must ferociously ignore. One would, in a certain way, have to ignore everything that is not what last time I tried to set into my text as being of the level of structure, this level having to be defined as the order of the effects of language. This is where one falls, if I can put it this way, upon truth—the "upon" could equally well be replaced by "from." One falls upon truth, that is to say, a remarkable thing, if we envisage this reference to be absolute, it could be said that anyone who adhered to it—but, of course, it is impossible to adhere to it—would not know what he is saying.

In no way is this saying anything that might in any way serve to specify the analyst. This would be to place him—or, more precisely, you are ready to tell me that this would be to place him—on the same rung as everybody else. Who knows, in effect, what he is saying? This would be a mistake. It is not because everybody speaks that everybody says something. It could be a question of an entirely different reference, of knowing what discourse one is inserted into, at the limit of this position that is in some sense fictitious.

Here is someone who satisfies that position, and whom I am going to name without hesitation, because he seems to me to be essential to the interest that we analysts should bring to Hebraic history. It is, perhaps, inconceivable that psychoanalysis could have been born anywhere else than in this tradition. Freud was born into it, and he insists on this fact, as I have stressed, that for making advances in the field he has discovered he only

truly has confidence in these Jews who have known how to read for quite a long time and who live—this is the Talmud—on the reference to a text. He whom I am going to name, who, or which, actualizes this radical position of ferocious ignorance, has a name—it's Yahweh himself.

In interpellating this chosen people, it is characteristic of Yahweh, when he announces himself, that he is ferociously ignorant of everything that exists of certain religious practices that were rife at the time, and that are founded on a certain type of knowledge—sexual knowledge.

When we talk about Hosea in a moment, we will see the extent to which this is the basis on which he inveighs. He has in his sights a relationship that blends supernatural agencies in with nature itself which, in a way, is itself dependent on them. What right do we have to say that this has no basis? That the manner of moving the Baal who, in return, fertilized the earth, didn't correspond to something that may well have worked? Why not? Simply because there was Yahweh and because a certain discourse was inaugurated that this year I am trying to isolate as the other side of analytic discourse, namely the master's discourse—for precisely this reason we no longer know anything about it.

159 Is this the position the analyst has to have? Surely not. The analyst—would I go so far as to say that I have been able to experience it on myself?—the analyst does not have this ferocious passion that surprises us so much where Yahweh is concerned. Yahweh is located at the most paradoxical point with respect to another perspective that might, for example, be that of Buddhism, where it is recommended that one purify oneself of the three fundamental passions, love, hatred, and ignorance. What is the most striking thing about this unique religious manifestation is that Yahweh lacks none of them. Love, hatred, and ignorance—there, in any case, are passions that are not absent from his discourse.

What characterizes the analyst's position—I won't go and write it up on the blackboard today with the help of my little schema, where the analyst's position is indicated by the object *a* on the top left-hand side—and this is the only sense that one can give to analytic neutrality, is not to partake of these passions. This constantly places him in an uncertain zone where he is vaguely in quest of being put on the path, of being put on the scent, of knowledge, which he has, however, repudiated.

Today we are concerned with one approach to Yahweh's dialogue with his people, with what Sellin might have had in mind, and also with what can be revealed to us by the encounter that happens to take place with what grabs Freud's attention—which is properly speaking along these lines, but he stops, he fails, and makes the thematics of the father a sort of mythical knot, a short circuit, or, to be precise, a failure. This is what I am now going to spell out for you.

As I have said to you, the Oedipus complex is Freud's dream. Like any dream it needs to be interpreted. We have to see where this displacement effect is produced, an effect which is to be understood as one that can be produced by that which is out of phase [*décalage*] in a writing.

The real father, if one can try to reconstitute it from Freud's elaboration, is properly articulated with what only concerns the imaginary father, namely the prohibition of *jouissance*. On the other hand, what makes him essential is noted, namely, the castration that I was alluding to just before when I said that there was an order of ferocious ignorance there, I mean in the place of the real father. This is what I hope to be able to demonstrate to you all the more easily once, today, concerning Monsieur Sellin, we have clarified a few things.

This is why I will allow myself to put a few questions to Monsieur Caquot first of all. He is well aware, since I have expressed it to him in a thousand different ways, of the heart of our problem on this point—how, 160 why did Freud need Moses?

It is obvious that it is essential for the audience to have a bit of an idea of what Moses means. Sellin's text in fact begins by raising this question, "What was Moses?," summarizing the various positions of those who preceded him, and those who are there working alongside him.

There is no question that these positions can only be clarified in relation to knowing how long Yahweh had been around.

Was Yahweh already the god of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Is there a tradition there that we can be certain about? Or is it possible that this tradition was retroactively reconstituted by the founder of the religion, who is supposedly Moses insofar as, at the foot of the Horeb, or more precisely on the Horeb itself, he is supposed to have received, take note, already written out, the Tablets of the Law? These are obviously quite different.

Sellin's book revolves, properly speaking, around this—*Mose und seine Bedeutung für die israelitisch-jüdische Religionsgeschichte*.

Why was it necessary for Sellin to present Moses to us as killed? It's a question I do not even want to begin to answer, so as to leave the field completely open to Monsieur Caquot. It is certain that this is closely linked to the fact that Moses is regarded as a prophet. Why does he have to be killed in his capacity as a prophet? More precisely, Sellin thinks he has undergone a martyr's death in his capacity as a prophet.

This is already something Monsieur Caquot will be so kind as to elucidate for us.

[*Monsieur Caquot's presentation follows. See Appendix, p. 209.*]

Something astounds me in Sellin's thought. Naturally, we are unable to penetrate Sellin's thought, but if we assume that what is written has the meaning he deciphers in it when he reconstitutes a text with a certain sense, there's no guarantee anywhere that this text, if one can call it a text, or this vocalization could be understood by anyone. In saying, for instance, that Numbers chapter 25 hides the event of *Moses' murder*, one is right in the midst of ambiguity.

161 In the register of Sellin's thought, which I do not believe brings the categories of the unconscious into play, the fact of hiding the event of Shittim by such an absurd story is altogether unsustainable.

This is obviously where it gets interesting—the extraordinary latency that such a way of proceeding comprises.

One can understand, up to a point, how Freud derives reinforcement here for the idea that it is a question of a memory, supposed in his register, that stands out despite all the intentions, despite a strong resistance. It remains very odd nevertheless that it is supported by writings, and that it is with the aid of writings that it can be redeciphered.

Jones attests that Freud would have had, apparently, according to Sellin himself, communicated to him that he was not so confident as all that.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, as you indicated just before, he takes the question up again in the second edition.

*Monsieur Caquot: In the second edition Sellin left the exegesis of 1922 for chapters 5 and 9. However, on the other hand, he gave up promoting his hypothesis of Moses' death in his works on the famous dead servant of the Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>4</sup> He perhaps retained the idea of Moses' death, but he abandoned the idea of using it to interpret the chapter on the servant. I wonder whether Freud didn't fall victim to Sellin's academic prestige.*

The question I wonder about is whether Freud read very closely.

*Monsieur Caquot: I think he did. The book is clear and rigorous. It's false, but clear.*

That's true. But Freud doesn't build anything on this construction. He simply indicates that a certain Sellin has recently expressed as defensible the

<sup>3</sup> See Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Works* 3:400–1 (London: Hogarth Press, 1957).

<sup>4</sup> Caquot seems to be referring to Sellin, *Das Rätsel des deuterojesajamischen Buches* (Leipzig, 1908).

hypothesis that Moses had been killed. The note is very brief, and gives a reference to the work that we have a photocopy of, nothing more.<sup>5</sup> I pointed out just before that Jones mentions that, in a work of 1935, which is later than we have been able to verify ourselves, Sellin maintained his position.<sup>6</sup>

If, really, I have not up till now already overabused the effort that I have led you to make, for which I thank you, it would be interesting, for what I will subsequently have to say, if you could give us some idea of how Hosea has a meaning which has nothing to do with these minutiae.

The important point is the use of the 'ich we were talking about the other day. The novelty of Hosea, if I have understood correctly, is in sum this appeal of a very special kind. I hope that everyone will get out a little Bible to obtain some idea of the tone of Hosea. It has a type of invective ferocity, really terrifying, which is that of Yahweh speaking to his people in a lengthy discourse. When I spoke of Hosea before obtaining Sellin's book, I said, "I have read nothing in Hosea that is close to resembling what Sellin finds," but on the other hand I pointed out in passing the importance of invective, of the imputation of a rite of sacred prostitution that extends from start to finish, and, in opposition, advances of some kind whereby Yahweh declares himself to be the spouse. It is possible to say that this is the beginning of the long tradition—in itself quite mysterious, and it does not seem to me to be obvious that we can really locate its meaning—which makes Christ the spouse of the Church and the Church the spouse of Christ. It begins here, there is no trace of it prior to Hosea.

The term used for spouse, 'ich, is the very one which, in the second chapter of Genesis, is used to name Adam's partner. The first time that anyone speaks, that is to say, in verse 27 of the first chapter in which God creates them man and woman, is, if I read it properly, *zakhar* and *nekevah*. The second time—since things are always repeated twice in the Bible—'ich is the name for being, object, the rib, in the form 'ichá. As if by chance, one only needs to add a little *a* to it.

If you could testify to its usage to designate the term where it concerns something even more divested of sexuality.

<sup>5</sup> Freud actually makes several references to Sellin, and in one place quotes him at length. See *Moses and Monotheism*, SE 23:51–2.

<sup>6</sup> Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Works* 3:400. The book is *Geschichte des israelitisch-jüdischen Volkes* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1935); see pp. 76–8. Jones says he was told by Jewish scholars of the day that Sellin subsequently "withdrew his suggestion and apologized for having made it." However, Jones goes on to say that he could never find any support for this in any of Sellin's later writings. He claims that in a work published some thirteen years later Sellin maintains he has found "further confirmation" for his thesis "in the writings of other prophets" (Jones, 3:400).

*Monsieur Caquot: The conjugal uses are only a minor part of the acceptations of the word "ich, which designates man in general. It is no more surprising than when one says "my man" for "my husband." In French mon homme, "my man," is more familiar.*

The following verse says, "I would like to be called your spouse." It is to be compared to the term *Baal*, which can have the same meaning on occasions, namely lord and master, in the sense of spouse.

163 *Monsieur Caquot: The terminology is extremely fluid. In Hosea the acceptations are restricted in such a way as to play upon "Yahweh" in opposition to "Baal."*

An extremely sharp difference is accentuated here, a difference that in short remains quite opaque, despite centuries of commentaries. It's quite curious.

*Monsieur Caquot: This is the first time that this conjugal metaphor makes its appearance in the Bible. It is what makes possible, much later, the allegorization of The Song of Songs. It's Hosea that makes this allegory possible. I wondered whether there were not a kind of demythification, of transference onto the Israel collectivity of the goddess who is the wife of Baal in the Semitic religions. There are at times several traits by which Israel is described as a goddess. But that has never been said.*

That's very important. Ultimately something of what I was beginning to announce before hinges on that. You hadn't indicated that to me at all.

*Monsieur Caquot: One has the impression that the prophetic religion replaces the goddess with Israel. This would be the case with Hosea—it replaces her with the people.*

Given the hour, I think we can leave it there.

15 April 1970

## THE OTHER SIDE OF CONTEMPORARY LIFE

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## Interview on the steps of the Pantheon

AFFECTS

PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

SCIENCE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

THE STUDENT AND THE PROLETARIAN

[As the Law Faculty in rue Saint-Jacques was closed, an exchange with a small number of participants took place on the steps of the Pantheon. Several questions, inaudible on the recording, are missing.]

I would like an explanation for the disagreeable process that has brought us here. In the circumstances I will await your questions.

X: [*On Hegel's dialectic.*]

I have become aware lately that I have already spoken quite precisely about the functions of master and slave, extracted from Hegel's discourse, and much more than I am doing now.

I only ever give things that come to me in advance, and I had therefore already assumed this was the case. But this is not the same as going back and checking the text of my seminar, which is always taken down in stenography, as you know.

In November 1962, when I commenced my seminar on anxiety at Sainte-Anne and, I think, from the second session on, I clarified, in an extremely precise manner, something which is, in short, identical with what I am now developing concerning the master's discourse.<sup>1</sup> I indicated how the positions of the master and the slave, formulated in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, differ. This is Kojève's starting point, and he always evaded what was there prior to their coming to be—but this is not what I emphasize.

What I find myself developing at the moment, under the heading "master's discourse," was already motivating the way in which I approached anxiety.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Le Séminaire, Livre X, L'Angoisse, 1962–1963* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004).

Someone whose intentions I don't need to describe is doing an entire report, to be published in two days time, so as to denounce in a note the fact that I put affect in the background, that I ignore it. It's a mistake to think I neglect affects—as if already everyone's behavior was not enough to affect me. My entire seminar that year was, on the contrary, structured around anxiety, insofar as it is the central affect, the one around which everything is organized. Since I was able to introduce anxiety as the fundamental affect, it was a good thing all the same that already, for a good length of time, I had not been neglecting affects.

I have simply given its full importance, in the determinism of *die Verneinung* [negation], to what Freud has explicitly stated, that it's not affect that is repressed. Freud has recourse to this famous *Repräsentanz* which I translate as *représentant de la représentation*, and which others, and moreover not without some basis, persist in calling *représentant-représentatif*, which absolutely does not mean the same thing.<sup>2</sup> In one case the representative is not a representation, in the other case the representative is just one representation among others. These translations are radically different from one another. My translation implies that affect, through the fact of displacement, is effectively displaced, unidentified, broken off from its roots—it eludes us.

This is what is essential in repression. It's not that the affect is suppressed, it's that it is displaced and unrecognizable.

X: [On the relations between existentialism and structuralism.]

Yes, it's as if existential thought was the only guarantee of a recourse to affects.

X: What do you think of the relations that exist between you and Kierkegaard concerning anxiety?

No one can yet imagine the extent to which people attribute thoughts to me. I only have to mention someone and I am said to be condescending. It's the very model of academic vertigo. Why in fact wouldn't I speak about Kierkegaard? It's clear that if I place all this emphasis on anxiety in the economy, for it's a question of economy, it's obviously not in order to neglect the fact that at a certain moment there was someone who represents

<sup>2</sup> Lacan has in mind Freud's term "*Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*," which Strachey renders as "ideational representative" in SE. Lacan's translation, *représentant de la représentation*, comes out as the "representation's representative," while the alternative rendering, *représentant-représentatif*, would give, in English, the equally awkward "representative representative." See Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire, "The Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Study," *Yale French Studies* 48 (1972):118-75; and also Michel Tort, "À propos du concept freudien de 'Repräsentanz' (Repräsentanz)," *Cahiers pour l'analyse* 5 (1966):41-67.

the emergence, the coming into being, not of anxiety but of the concept of anxiety, as Kierkegaard himself explicitly calls one of his works. It's not for nothing that historically this concept emerged at a certain moment. This is what I was counting on expounding for you this morning.

I am not alone in making this comparison with Kierkegaard. Yesterday I received a book by Manuel de Diéguez.<sup>3</sup> Well, the things he says about me! As I had to prepare my stuff for you and because it is all done at the very last minute—what I have to tell you is never ready until the final hour, everything I write down and recount to you is generally noted down between five and eleven in the morning—I haven't had the time to locate myself in all this great to-do I am inserted into, in relation not only to Kierkegaard, but to Ockham and Gorgias too. It's all there, as are huge chunks of what I recount. It's fairly extraordinary, because without quoting me half of the book is called "Lacan and"—I'll give you three guesses—"transcendental psychoanalysis." Read it. To me it seems to be pretty overwhelming. I hadn't thought of myself as all that transcendental, but then, you can never be very certain. Someone once said to me, concerning books that were published about him, "Ah! We do have ideas, my friend, we do have ideas!" Let's move on.

X: Do you think, then, that the ideas you get from the practice of psychoanalysis give you something that cannot be found outside it?

It's precisely because I do think that that I have gone to all this effort for the past eighteen or nineteen years. Otherwise I can't see why I would do it. And I can't see what would lead to my name's being added precisely to a list of philosophers, which doesn't seem to me to be entirely judicious.

X: Can you go back to what you started saying about Hegel?

I certainly won't be giving this morning's seminar here. This is not why I am here. I am using the occasion to learn a bit about what some of you might have to say to me, which doesn't easily occur when we are in a lecture theater.

X: You spoke about the Other as the treasure trove of signifiers, and you said that there was no confronting it. Might it include incoherent things? The signifier is not necessarily coherent.

Are you sure that I have said what you are imputing to me? Where did I say that there was no confronting the Other? I do not think I have said that at

<sup>3</sup> The book in question is *Science et nescience* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970).



all. I would be surprised. If I did say it, it was out of clumsiness, but I would be just as surprised to have committed such a blunder.

X: [Inaudible.]

I will try to give you the essential part at my next seminar, if it takes place.

X: [Inaudible.]

I am attacking philosophy? That's greatly exaggerated.

X: *That's an impression.*

Yes, that is an impression. I was asked just a minute ago whether I believed that things I recount may not be problematic. I said that I did. My sole motivation for advancing them is because of a precise experience, the psychoanalytic experience. If it weren't for that I would consider that I had neither the right nor above all the desire to extend the philosophical discourse very much beyond the point at which it was most properly effaced.

X: *That transforms it.*

That doesn't transform it. It's a different discourse. This is what I am trying to show you by reminding those who have no idea about analytic experience, to the entire extent that I believe it to be so, that this is, all the same, its currency. This is where I start from. Otherwise this discourse would not have an aspect that is philosophically so problematic, which was pointed out just before by the person over there, who spoke first, when he translated it into sophisticated terms. I don't think this is right. The person I was talking about before places me as a kind of point of emphasis, locates me at the center of some kind of mixture, of fracturing, opening up of philosophical discourse. It's not badly done, it's done in an extremely sympathetic manner, but my initial response—perhaps I will change my views on it—I said to myself, "And yet, to place me in that heritage is quite some *Entstellung*, quite some displacement, away from the import of what I am capable of saying."

X: *What you say is always decentered in relation to sense, you shun sense.*

This is perhaps precisely why my discourse is an analytic discourse. It's the structure of analytic discourse to be like that. Let's say that I adhere to it as much as I can, without daring to say that I strictly identify myself with it, if I am successful.

Yesterday I read quite an amazing article in a review that, for personal reasons, I had never opened, which is called *L'Inconscient*. In the latest issue to be published a certain Cornelius Castoriadis, no less, has this question about my discourse, supposedly with reference to science.<sup>4</sup> What does he say? He says what I find myself repeating, namely that this discourse has an extremely precise reference to science. What he denounces as the essential difficulty of this discourse, namely—I will spell it out for you—this displacement that never ceases, is the very condition of analytic discourse, and it's in this respect that one can say that it is, I won't say totally the discourse of science, but conditioned by it, in that the discourse of science leaves no place for man.

I was counting on emphasizing this for you this morning. I won't spoil what I am going to say about it next week.

X: *Concerning anxiety, I thought it was the opposite of jouissance.*

What I insist upon when I address the affects is the affect that is different from all the others, that of anxiety, in that it's said to have no object. Look at everything that has ever been written about anxiety, it's always this that is insisted upon—fear has a reference to an object, whereas anxiety is said to have no object. I say on the contrary that anxiety is not without an object. I have already stated this, I did so a long time ago, and it's quite obvious that I will still have to explain it to you again.

At the time I did not designate this object as surplus *jouissance*, which proves that there was something to construct before I could name it as such. It's very precisely the . . . I am unable to say the name, because, precisely, it's not a name. It's surplus *jouissance*, but it's not nameable, even if it's approximately nameable, translatable, in this way. This is why it has been translated by the term "surplus value." This object without which anxiety is not can still be addressed in some other way. It's precisely this that over the course of the years I have given more and more form to. I have in particular given many chatterboxes the opportunity to rush hastily into print on the subject of what I may have had to say with the term "object *a*."

X: [Inaudible.]

In the articulation that I describe as the university discourse the *a* is in the place of what? In the place, let's say, of the exploited in the university dis-

<sup>4</sup> "Epilegomena to a Theory of the Soul Which Has Been Presented as a Science," pp. 3–45 in *Crossroads in the Labyrinth* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984).

course, who are easy to recognize—they are students. In focusing one's reflection on this place in the notation many things can be explained in these singular phenomena that, for the moment, are happening around the world. To be sure, one has to differentiate between the emergence of its radicality—this is what is happening—and the way in which the university's function has become clogged up, blocked, maintained—this can last for a very long time. The university has an extremely precise function, in effect, one that at every moment is related to the state we are in with respect to the master's discourse—namely, its elucidation. As a matter of fact, this discourse has been a masked discourse for a very long time. Through its internal necessity it will become less and less masked.

What use has the university been? This can be read according to each epoch. By virtue of the increasingly extreme denudation of the master's discourse, the university discourse finds itself displaying—all the same, don't think it's shaken or finished—that for the moment it's encountering a heap of difficulties. These difficulties can be approached at the level of the close relationship that exists between the student's position of always being, in the university discourse, in a more or less masked manner, identified with this object *a*, which is charged with producing what? The barred *S* that comes next on the lower right-hand side.

That is the problem. A subject has emerged, from out of this product. Subject of what? A divided subject in any case. That it should be less and less tolerable for this reduction to be limited to producing teachers is brought completely into the light of day in the present epoch, and this requires a study that is all the more improvised for being in the process of becoming a fact. What is being produced, and this is called the crisis of the university, can be inscribed in this formula. It requires it, because it's founded at an altogether radical level. It's not possible to limit oneself to treating it in the way it's being treated. It's uniquely on the basis of the rotating relationship, which is revolutionary, as I say in a slightly different sense from the usual one, between the university position and the three other discourse positions that what is currently happening in the university can be illuminated.

*X: [On revolutionaries and the proletariat.]*

The proletariat? When did I mention the proletariat? At the level of the master's discourse his place is altogether clear.

In its origins the master's discourse has to do with everything that initially happened as being the proletariat, who was initially the slave. We fall back here on the Hegelian term. The slave, as I have stressed, was knowledge at the outset. The evolution of the master's discourse is here. Philosophy has played the role of constituting a master's knowledge, extracted

[*soustrait*] from the slave's knowledge. Science as it has currently come to light properly consists in this transmutation of the function, if one can put it like that—one is always more or less led at some moment to grasp at an archaic theme, and, as you know, I incite you to be prudent.

Be that as it may, there is certainly a difficulty in knowledge, which resides in the opposition between know-how and what is *episteme* in the strict sense. The *episteme* was constituted out of an interrogation, a purification of knowledge. The philosophical discourse shows the philosopher making reference to it at every turn. It's not for nothing that he questioned the slave, and that he demonstrates that the latter knows—that he knows what he doesn't know, moreover. One shows that he knows only because one asks the right questions. This is the path by which the displacement was brought about that makes it the case that our scientific discourse is currently on the side of the master. It's precisely this that cannot be mastered.

*X: Where do you place the proletariat, then?*

He can only be in the place that he has to be in, on the top right-hand side. In the place of the big Other, don't you think? Very precisely, there knowledge no longer has any weight. The proletariat is not simply exploited, he has been stripped of his function of knowledge. The so-called liberation of the slave has had, as always, other corollaries. It's not merely progressive. It's progressive only at the price of a deprivation.

I won't risk going into this, I would only go into it cautiously, but if there is something whose tone strikes me in the thematics called Maoist, it's the reference to the knowledge of manual labor. I do not claim to have an adequate view on this, but I will make one observation that struck me. The renewed emphasis on the knowledge of the exploited seems to me to be very profoundly motivated structurally. The question is knowing whether this is not something that is entirely dreamed up. In a world in which there has emerged, in a way that actually does exist, that is a presence in the world, not the thought of science, but science objectified in some way, I mean these things entirely forged by science, simply these little things, gadgets and things, which at the moment occupy the same space as us—in a world in which this emergence has taken place, can know-how at the level of manual labor carry enough weight to be a subversive factor? This is how, for me, the question arises.

What do you do with all I tell you? You record it on a little machine, and afterward, you give parties which you hand out invitations to—that's a Lacan tape for you.

13 May 1970

## Furrows in the alethosphere

THERE'S ONLY ONE AFFECT  
THE OBJECT *A* AND THE COGITO  
SCIENCE AND PERCEPTION  
THE MULTIPLICATION OF LATHOUSES

A lot of water has passed under the bridge since our last meeting, I am speaking of the one in April, and not the most recent one, which took place elsewhere, and only with some of you.

The exchange of remarks on the steps of the Pantheon was not of a bad level, since it enabled me to go over a number of points that deserved to be made precise, in response to questions that were not at all inept. That is what I think with the lapse of a week. But my first reaction immediately afterward when I was with someone who was accompanying me was, however, of a certain inadequacy.

Even the best of those who spoke, and who were not unjustified in their questions, seemed to me, except at the start, to be lagging behind a bit. This seems to me to have been reflected in the fact that, at least in this friendly interpellation that was still not a questioning, they situated me within a number of references.

These references are not all to be rejected, certainly. I recall that the first was to Gorgias, of whom I am supposed to be conducting some sort of repetition. Why not? But what was inappropriate is that in the mouth of the person who evoked this character whose effectiveness we, in our days, cannot evaluate very well it was about someone from the history of thought. This is the distancing that seems disturbing to me—this term enables a sort of sampling of views from a distance concerning this person and that person whom one has bracketed together under “function of thought.”

176 It seems to me that there is nothing less homogeneous here—if I can put it like that—nothing that would enable one to define a species. It is not legitimate to give some people, in whatever capacity one might imagine them, the function of a species representing thought. Thought is not a category. I would almost say it is an affect. Although, this is not to say that it is at its most fundamental under the aspect of affect.

There is only one affect—this constitutes a certain position, a new one

to be introduced into the world, which, I am saying, is to be referred to what I am giving you a schema of, transcribed onto the blackboard, when I speak of the psychoanalytic discourse.

As a matter of fact, transcribing it onto the blackboard is distinct from talking about it. I remember that at Vincennes, when I appeared there for the first time which hasn't been repeated since, but which will be repeated, it occurred to someone to call out to me that there were real things that were truly preoccupying the assembly. Namely, that there was a brawl going on at a place at some distance from where we were gathered, that this was what we should be thinking about, that the blackboard had nothing to do with this real. That's where the error is.

I would say that, if there is any chance of grasping something called the real, it is nowhere other than on the blackboard. And even, whatever commentary I am able to give it, which will take the form of speech, relates only to what is written on the blackboard.

That's a fact. And it is demonstrated by this fact, by this artifice that is science, whose emergence one would be completely wrong to inscribe as arising solely out of a philosophical concoction. Metaphysical, rather than physical, science, perhaps. Does our scientific physics deserve to be called metaphysical? This is what would need to be spelled out.

Spelling it out seems possible to me, namely on the basis of the psychoanalytic discourse. In effect, from the perspective of this discourse, there is only one affect, which is, namely, the product of the speaking being's capture in a discourse, where this discourse determines its status as object.

This is where the Cartesian cogito derives its exemplary value from, provided that one examine it and revise it, as I will do once again, today, to start with.

I mentioned that affect by which the speaking being of a discourse finds itself determined as an object. It has to be said that this object is not nameable. If I try to call it surplus *jouissance*, this is only a device of nomenclature.

What object is it that results from this effect of a certain discourse? We know nothing about this object, except that it is the cause of desire, that is to say that strictly speaking it manifests itself as want-to-be. There is therefore no being that is thereby determined.

Certainly, what the effect of a given discourse bears upon may well be a being that one may call man, for example, or else a living being to which one can add that it is sexed and mortal, and one will fearlessly advance

toward thinking that what the discourse of psychoanalysis bears upon is here, under the pretext that sex and death are constantly at issue here. But from our perspective, if it is true that we start at the level of what reveals itself initially, and as the prime fact, to be *structured like a language*, we are not yet at this point. It is not a question of beings [*étant*] in the effect of language. It is only a question of a speaking Being [*être*]. At the outset we are not at the level of beings, but at the level of Being.

We must, however, beware of the mirage here of thinking that Being is thereby settled, and beware of the error, which lies in wait for us, of assimilating this to everything that has been worked out as the dialectic of an initial position of being and nothingness.

The initial affect of this effect, let's now put this in inverted commas, of "Being" only appears at the level of what makes itself the cause of desire, that is to say, at the level of what we situate, of this initial effect of the setting [*appareil*], of the analyst—the analyst as the place that I am trying to grasp with these little letters on the blackboard. This is where the analyst positions himself. He positions himself as the cause of desire. This is an eminently unprecedented position, if not a paradoxical one, one that is validated by a practice.

The importance of this practice can be measured by taking what has been designated as the master's discourse as a reference point. It is not a question here of a distant relationship, or of an overview, but of a fundamental relationship—the analytic practice is, properly speaking, initiated by this master's discourse.

178 There is something that becomes present by virtue of the fact that all determination of the subject, and therefore of thought, depends on discourse. In this discourse, in effect, there arises the moment at which the master becomes differentiated. It would be quite false to think that this occurs at the level of a risk. This risk is, despite everything, quite mythical. It's the trace of a myth that still remains in Hegelian phenomenology. Isn't this master nothing other than the one who is the strongest? This is certainly not what Hegel records. The struggle for pure prestige at the risk of death still belongs to the realm of the imaginary. What does the master do? This is what the articulation I am giving you of discourse shows. He plays upon what I have called, in different terms, the crystal of language.

Why not use in this respect what can be designated in French by the homonym *m'être*, *m'être à moi-même*? It's from this that the *m'être* signifier emerges, whose second term I leave to you to write as you will.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *m'être*, a construction of Lacan's, is homophonic with *maître*, "master." Having the grammatical form of a quasi pronominal construction, it can be taken roughly to suggest being as an activity, thus, "I am being."

This unique signifier operates by means of its relation with what is already there, already articulated, in such a way that we can only conceive of it against the presence of a signifier that is already there, that, I would say, has always been there. In effect, if this unique signifier, the signifier "the master," write it as you wish, is articulated to some part of a practice that it orders, then this practice is already shot through, woven through, with what, to be sure, does not yet emerge from it, namely, the signifying articulation. The latter is at the heart of all knowledge, even if it could only have been approached through know-how.

We find the trace of the initial presence of this knowledge where it is already some distance off, by virtue of having been fiddled with for a long time in what is called the philosophical tradition—a judgment about the grip that the signifier of the master has on this knowledge.

Let's not forget that when Descartes asserts his "I am thinking therefore I am," it's by virtue of having for some time sustained his "I am thinking" by calling into question, putting in doubt, this knowledge that I am saying is "fiddled with," which is the knowledge already elaborated at length through the master's intervention.

What can we say about contemporary science that will give us a reference point? I will mention three stages here because, poor teacher that I am, I am not sure that you are cottoning onto my sentences. Three stages—science—behind, philosophy—and beyond, something of which we have a notion if only through biblical anathemas.

This year I have given a large place to the text Hosea, with reference to what Freud extracts from it, according to Sellin. The greatest benefit of it is perhaps not, though it does exist on this level, calling the Oedipus complex into question, which I have called this "residue of myth," in psychoanalytic theory. Surely, if there were something necessary here to make present some ocean of mythical knowledge regulating the life of men—and how do we know whether it was harmonious or not?—the best reference could well be what Yahweh condemns, with what I called his ferocious ignorance, with the term "prostitution."

This is enough of a foothold [*bias*], to my mind, and surely a better one than the common reference to the fruits of ethnography. Ethnography conceals all kinds of confusion within itself, through adhering to what it gathers as if it were natural. And how is it gathered? It is gathered in writing, that is to say, detailed, extracted, distorted forever from the supposed terrain on which one is supposedly uncovering it.

This is certainly not to say that mythical knowledge could inform us at greater length, or inform us better, about the essence of the sexual relation.

If psychoanalysis makes sex and, as a dependency, death present for us—even though here nothing is certain, except a general apprehension of a link

between sexual difference and death, it's by demonstrating, in a way that I wouldn't call lively but merely articulated, that concerning the capture of this being—whatever it may be, which is to say that it is not even a being—in discourse the articulation in which the sexual relation is expressed only ever appears in a complex manner. This complex manner is one that cannot even be said to be mediated, even though there are *medii—media*, if you prefer—one of which is this real effect that I am calling surplus pleasure, which is the little *a*.

What does experience indicate to us, in point of fact? That it is only when this little *a* is substituted for woman that man desires her. That, inversely, what a woman has to deal with, insofar as we are able to speak about this, is this *jouissance* that is her own and is represented somewhere by a man's omnipotence, which is precisely where man, when he speaks, when he speaks as master, discovers that he is a failure [*en défaut*].

180 This is where one has to start from in analytic experience—what could be called man, that is to say the male as speaking being, disappears, vanishes through the very effect of the master's discourse—spell it as you will—through being inscribed solely in castration, which, by this very fact, is properly to be defined as being deprived of woman—of woman insofar as she would be realized in a suitably congruent signifier.

Being deprived of woman—this, expressed in terms of the failure [*défaut*] of discourse, is what castration means. It is indeed because this is not thinkable that the speaking order institutes this desire, constituted as impossible, as an intermediary and that makes the mother, insofar as she is prohibited, the privileged feminine object.

This is the wrapping established by the fundamental fact that in a mythical union between man and woman there is no possible place that could be defined as sexual.

This is, indeed, where what we grasp in the psychoanalytic discourse—the unifying One, the whole One—is not what is involved in identification. The pivotal identification, the major identification, is the unary trait. It is Being, marked *one*.

Prior to the promotion of any being, by virtue of a singular *one*, of what bears the mark from this moment forward, the effect of language arises, as does the first affect. This is what the formulas I wrote on the blackboard are saying.

$$\frac{1}{1+1} = ? \frac{\text{I am one}}{\text{I am thinking} = \text{therefore I am one}}$$

Somewhere this something that the cogito only marks is isolated, also with the unary trait, that one can suppose the "I am thinking" has in order

to say, "Therefore, I am." Here the effect of division is already marked by an "I am" which elides the "I am marked by the one"—for Descartes is, to be sure, inscribed in a scholastic tradition, which he wriggles out of acrobatically, which is not at all to be disdained as a means of escape.

Moreover, it is as a function of this initial position of the "I am" that the "I am thinking" can be even so much as written. You will recall how I have been writing it for a long time now—"I am thinking, 'Therefore I am.'" This "Therefore I am" is a thought.

It supports itself infinitely better by carrying its characteristic of knowledge, which does not go beyond the "I am marked by the one," by the singular, by the unique, by what?—by this effect which is, "I am thinking."

181 But here again, there is an error in the punctuation, which a long time ago I expressed thus—the "ergo," which is nothing other than the "ego" in play, should be put alongside the "cogito." The "I am thinking, therefore, 'I am'" gives the formula its real significance. The cause, the "ergo," is thought. The point of departure to take is the effect of what is involved in the simplest order, from which the language effect comes into play at the level of the emergence of the unary trait.

To be sure, the unary trait is never alone. Therefore, the fact that it repeats itself—that it repeats itself in never being the same—is properly speaking the order itself, the order in question because language is present and already there, already efficacious.

## 2

Our first rule is never to seek the origins of language, if only because they are demonstrated well enough through their effects.

The further back we push their effects, the more these origins emerge. The effects of language are retroactive, precisely in that it is as language develops that it manifests what it is qua want-to-be.

Moreover, I will indicate—in passing, for today we have to move on—that we can write it like this, and that we can bring into play here, in its strictest form, something that right from the origins of a rigorous use of the symbolic appeared in the Greek tradition, namely at the level of mathematics.

Euclid is the fundamental reference here, and the definition he gives us of proportion is primary, it had never been given before him, I mean before what remains as having been written in his name—of course, who knows from where he might have borrowed this strict definition? The one that gives the only true foundation of geometrical demonstration can be found, if I remember correctly, in book five.

The term "demonstration" is ambiguous here. By constantly highlighting the intuitive elements that are here in the figure, he makes it possible for you to miss the fact that, very formally, the requirement in Euclid is one of symbolic demonstration, of an order that is grouped into equalities and inequalities, which alone enable proportion to be assured in a way that is not an approximation but is properly demonstrable, in this term "logos," in the sense of proportion.

182 It is curious and indicative that we had to wait for the Fibonacci series to see what is given in the apprehension of this proportion which is called the proportional mean. I will write it out here—you will be aware that I made use of it when I discussed *From an Other to the other*.<sup>2</sup>

$$\frac{\frac{1}{1+1}}{\frac{1+1}{1+1}} = \gamma$$

A romanticism still continues to call this the golden number and goes astray in finding it on the surface of everything that has been possible to paint or draw over the ages, as if it were not certain that this is only about being able to visualize it. One only has to open a work of aesthetics that makes a case for this reference in order to realize that, while it may be possible to superimpose it, it is certainly not because the painter had drawn the diagonals in advance, but because there is in effect a kind of intuitive harmony, which means that it is always this that sings most sweetly.

Except that there is also something else, which it will not be easy for you to grasp. By taking each of these terms and starting to calculate from the bottom up, you will quickly see that you are dealing first with 1/2, then with 2/3, next with 3/5. You will thus find the numbers the sequence of which constitutes the Fibonacci series, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, . . . , each being the sum of the two preceding numbers, as I pointed out to you at the time. This relation of two terms we can write for instance as  $u_{(n+1)} = u_{(n-1)} + u_n$ . The result of the division  $u_{n+1} / u_n$  will be equal, if the series is continued long enough, to the effectively ideal proportion that is called the proportional mean, or again, the golden number.

If we now take this proportion as an image of what affect is, insofar as there is repetition of this "I am one" on the next line, this retroactively results in what causes it—the affect.

We can momentarily write this affect as "equal to  $a$ ," and we can see that we rediscover the same  $a$  at the level of the effect.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Séminaire, Livre XVI, D'un Autre à l'autre, 1968-1969* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2006).

$$\frac{1}{a+1} = a$$

This  $a$ , the effect of repeating the 1, is at the level of what is designated here by a bar. The bar is precisely only this, that there is something to get past in order for the 1 to affect. In short, it is this bar that is equal to  $a$ . And there's nothing astonishing in the fact that we can legitimately write the affect below the bar, as that which is the effect that is here thought, overturned, when the cause is made to emerge. It is in the initial effect that the cause, as thought cause, emerges.

This is what is motivating me to find a more certain articulation of what the effect of discourse is in this initial tentative use of mathematics. It's at the level of the cause, insofar as it emerges as thought, the reflection of the effect, that we attain the initial order of what the want-to-be is. Initially Being only affirms itself with the mark of the 1, and everything that follows is a dream—notably, the mark of the 1 insofar as it supposedly encompasses, could supposedly combine, anything at all. It can combine nothing at all, unless it is, precisely, the confrontation, the addition of the thought of the cause with the initial repetition of the 1.

This repetition already costs and institutes, at the level of the  $a$ , the debt of language. Something has to be paid to the one who introduces its sign. This year I have designated this something, using a nomenclature that tries to give it its historical weight—strictly speaking it was not this year, but let's say that for you it was this year—with the term *Mehrlust*.

What does this infinite articulation reproduce? As the little  $a$  is the same here as it is there, it is self-evident that repetition of the formula cannot be the infinite repetition of the "I am thinking" within the "I am thinking," which is the mistake the phenomenologists never fail to make, but only the following: "I am thinking," were it to be done, is only able to be replaced by "I am, 'I am thinking, therefore I am.'" I am he who is thinking, "Therefore I am," and so on indefinitely. You will observe that the small  $a$  always gets farther and farther away in a series that reproduces exactly the same order of 1s, such as they are here deployed on the right, with the sole difference that the final term will be a small  $a$ .

$$\frac{1}{\frac{a+1}{a+1}} = a$$

Notice that it's a remarkable thing, this small  $a$ . It is sufficient that it subsist, however far down you take it, for equality to be the same as in the for-

mula I first wrote up, namely that the multiple and repeated proportion equals, in total, the result of the small  $a$ .

In what way is this series marked off? In sum, it does nothing other, if I am not mistaken, than mark the order of the converging series which has the largest intervals while remaining constant. Namely, still the object  $a$ .

## 3

In a certain sense, this is only a local articulation. It certainly does not pretend to solve, with a fixed and guaranteed proportion, the question of the effectiveness of the most primary manifestation of number, namely the unary trait. I only did it to remind you what science is such as we have it now, if I can put it like this, on our hands—I mean, present in our world in a manner that goes well beyond anything that an effect of knowledge [*connaissance*] may lead us to speculate about.

In effect, it is, all the same, necessary not to forget that it is characteristic of our science not to have introduced a better and more extensive knowledge of the world but to have brought into existence, in the world, things that did not in any way exist at the level of our perception.

Attempts have been made to organize science according to some mythical genesis that begins with perception, under the pretext that such and such a philosophical meditation had supposedly come to a standstill for a long time over the question of knowing what guarantees that perception is not illusory. This is not where science emerged from. Science emerged from what was embryonic in the Euclidean demonstrations. Nevertheless, these still remain very suspect because they still contain that attachment to the figure, the self-evidence of which serves as a pretext. The entire evolution of Greek mathematics proves to us that what rises to the highest point is the manipulation of numbers as such.

Consider the method of exhaustion which, already in Archimedes, prefigures what leads to what is essential, to what for us is, as it happens, structure, namely the calculus, the infinitesimal calculus. There is no need to wait until Leibniz, who, moreover, at his first attempt shows himself to have been a little awkward. It had already been started by Cavalieri, simply by reproducing Archimedes' exploit on the parabola, in the seventeenth century, but well before Leibniz.

What is the result of this? No doubt you can say of science that *nihil fuerit in intellectu quod non prius fuit in sensu*, what does that prove? The *sensus* has nothing to do, as people nevertheless know, with perception. The *sensus* is

only there in the manner of what can be counted, and the actual counting rapidly dissolves. Taking what is our *sensus* at the level of the ear or eye, for example, leads to counting vibrations. And it was owing to this play of numbers that we in fact set about producing vibrations that had nothing to do either with our senses or with our perception.

As I was saying the other day on the steps of the Pantheon, the world that is assumed to have always been ours is now populated, in the very place where we are, without your having the slightest suspicion of it, by a considerable and intersecting number of what are called waves. This is not to be neglected as the manifestation, presence, existence, of science, and to describe what is around our Earth would require that one not be satisfied with speaking of atmosphere, of stratosphere, of whatever you would like to spherize, however distant the particles we can apprehend. It would be necessary to take account also of what in our day goes well beyond, and which is the effect of what? Of a knowledge that has progressed less through its own filtering, through its own critique as we say, than through an audacious leap from an artifice, no doubt that of Descartes—others will choose different ones—the artifice of giving the guarantee of truth back to God. If truth there be, that he take responsibility for it. We take it at face value.

Solely by means of the play of a truth that is not abstract but purely logical, solely by the play of a strict combinatory that is subject only to the requirement that rules, under the name of axioms, must always be given—this is where a science is constructed, one that no longer has anything to do with the presuppositions that the idea of knowledge [*connaissance*] has always implied—namely, the mute polarization, the imagined ideal unification of that which is knowledge [*connaissance*], where one can always find, whatever the name one dresses them up in, “endosunia,” for instance, the reflection, the image, which is moreover always ambiguous, of two principles, the male principle and the female principle.

The space in which the creations of science are deployed can only be qualified henceforth as the *in-substance*, as the *a-thing*, *l'achose* with an apostrophe—a fact that entirely changes the meaning of our materialism.

It is the oldest figure of the master's infatuation—write “master” as you will—for man to imagine that he shapes woman. I think you all have experienced enough to have encountered this comical story at one stage of your life or another. Form, substance, content, call it what you will—this is the myth scientific thought must detach itself from.

I figure that I am allowed to plow on fairly crudely in order to express my thought well. I am failing to act as if I had had a thought, whereas, precisely, this is not the issue, but, as everyone knows, it's thought that communicates itself, by means of misunderstanding, of course. Well, let's communicate and

say what this conversion consists in, the conversion by which science is shown to be distinct from any theory of knowledge [*connaissance*].

This doesn't make sense, in fact, because it is precisely in the light of the apparatus of science, to the extent that we can grasp it, that it is possible to found the nature of the errors, the obstacles [*les butées*], the confusions that in effect didn't fail to be present in what was being articulated as knowledge [*connaissance*], with this undercurrent that there were two principles to cleave apart—one that forms and one that is formed. This is what science makes quite clear for us, and this is confirmed by the fact that we find an echo of it in analytic experience.

To express myself in these large-scale, approximate terms, take the male principle for example—what effect does the incidence of discourse have on it? It is that, as a speaking being, he is summoned to give an explanation of his "essence"—irony, inverted commas. It is very precisely and solely because of the affect that this discourse effect subjects him to—that is, insofar as he receives this feminizing effect of the small *a*—that he recognizes what makes him, that he recognizes the cause of his desire.

Conversely, at the level of the so-called natural principle, where it is not for nothing that it has always been symbolized, in the bad sense of the word, by a female reference, it is, on the contrary, from out of the insubstance, as I was saying just before, that this void appears. Void of what? Let's say that the something in question, if we want, very much from a distance, from a very long way away, to give it the horizon of woman, is in what is in question as unformed *jouissance*, precisely without any form, that we can find the place, in the "operceive" in which science comes to be constructed.<sup>3</sup> What I perceive, which is claimed to be original, must, in effect, be replaced by an operceive.

Insofar as science only refers to an articulation that only takes form in the signifying order, it is constructed out of something where there was nothing beforehand.

This is what it is important to grasp if we wish to understand something that has to do with—what?—with the forgetting of this very effect. Being what we are, all of us, to the extent that the field increases by virtue of the fact that science perhaps functions as the master's discourse, we do not know how far—for the reason that we have never known at any point—each one of us is initially determined as object small *a*.

I was speaking before of these spheres with which the extension of science—which, curiously, is found to be very effective at determining what a being is—encircles the earth, a series of zones that science describes as

<sup>3</sup> The word is a construction by Lacan comprising "operate," as in "operational," and "perceive."

being what it finds. Why not also take account of the place in which these fabrications of science are located, if they are nothing more than the effect of formalized truth? What are we going to call this place?

Here again I am overly emphasizing what I want to say, and I am not necessarily very proud of what I am putting forward on this occasion, but I think that it is useful, you will see why, to raise this question which is not a question of nomenclature.

It is a question about a place that is well and truly occupied—by what? I was speaking just before about waves. This is what is at issue. Hertzian waves or other waves—no phenomenology of perception has ever given us the slightest idea of them and it would certainly never have led us to them.

We certainly won't be calling this place the noosphere, which we ourselves supposedly populate.<sup>4</sup> If indeed there is anything that as it happens is in the background, twenty-five rows back, of everything that may be of interest to us, it is this. But in using *aletheia* in a way which, I agree, has nothing emotionally philosophical about it you could, unless you find something better, call it the althosphere.

Don't get too excited. The althosphere gets recorded. If you have a little microphone here, you are plugged into the althosphere. What is really something is that if you are in a little vehicle that is transporting you toward Mars you can still plug into the althosphere. And, even, this surprising effect of structure which meant that two or three people have gone wandering around on the moon, you must think that, concerning their exploit, it was certainly not for no reason that they always stayed within the althosphere.

These astronauts, as they are called, who had some minor problems at the last minute, would probably not have overcome them so well—I am not even talking about their relations with their little machine, for they would perhaps have overcome that on their own—if they had not been accompanied the entire time by this little *a* that is the human voice. By virtue of this they could allow themselves to say nothing but bullshit [*conneries*], such as for example that everything was going well when everything was going poorly. But that's beside the point. The point is that they stayed within the althosphere.

It takes time to observe all the things that populate it, and this is going to oblige us to introduce another word.

The althosphere—it sounds good. That's because we suppose that what I have been calling formalized truth already has, sufficiently, the status of truth at the level at which it operates, at which it operceives. But at the level of the operated-on, of what moves around, the truth is not at all unveiled.

<sup>4</sup> Neologism by Teilhard de Chardin from the Greek *noos*, "mind."



The proof of this is that the human voice, with its effect of grabbing you by the perineum, as it were, does not unveil its truth at all.

We shall name that with the help of the aorist of the same verb that, as a famous philosopher pointed out, *aletheia* came from. Only philosophers would ever notice such things, and perhaps the odd linguist. I'm going to call that the "lathouses."

The world is increasingly populated by lathouses. Since you seem to find that amusing, I am going to show you how it is spelled.

You will notice that I could have called that "lathouses." That would have gone better with *ousia*, this participle with all its ambiguity.<sup>5</sup> *Ousia* is not the Other, it's not a being, it's between the two. It is not altogether Being either, but, ultimately, it's pretty close.

As far as the feminine unsubstace is concerned, I would go as far as "parousia." And these tiny objects little *a* that you will encounter when you leave, there on the footpath at the corner of every street, behind every window, in this abundance of these objects designed to be the cause of your desire, insofar as it is now science that governs it—think of them as lathouses.

I notice a bit late, since it's not long since I invented it, that it rhymes with *ventouse*.<sup>6</sup> There is *vent*, "wind," inside, lots of wind, the wind of the human voice. It is quite comical to find that at the end of our gathering.

If man had less often played the spokesman of God in order to believe that he forms a union with a woman, this word "lathouse" would have perhaps been found a long time ago.

Be that as it may, this little emergence is designed to make you ill at ease in your relations with the lathouse.

It is quite certain that everyone has to deal with two or three of this species. The lathouse has absolutely no reason to limit its multiplication. What is important is to know what happens when one really enters into relationship with the lathouse as such.

The ideal psychoanalyst would be one who commits this absolutely radical act, and the least that one can say is that seeing it done causes anxiety.

One day, at a time when it was a question of my being traded, I tried, because it was part of the ritual, to advance a few little things on this subject. In effect, while I was being traded, people were very keen to pretend to be interested in what I might have to say about the training of analysts, and I put forward, in a spirit of absolute indifference, since everyone was only interested in what was happening in the corridors, that there was no reason why a psychoanalysis should cause anxiety. It is certain that if the

<sup>5</sup> *Ousia* in Plato is usually rendered into English as "essence" or "being," and in Aristotle as "substance."

<sup>6</sup> A *ventouse* is a sucker (of an octopus), a suction cap (on the tip of a toy arrow), or a cupping glass (for the bleeding of a patient).

lathouse exists, anxiety—since that is what we are dealing with—is not without an object. That is what I started with. A better approach to lathouse must calm us a little bit.

The question is to put oneself in a position where there is someone whom you have taken charge of with respect to his anxiety, who wishes to come and hold the same position that you occupy, or that you do not occupy, or that you barely occupy, who wishes to come to know how you occupy it, and how you do not occupy it, and why you occupy it, and why you do not occupy it.

This will be the object of our next seminar, whose title I can already give you—it will be on the relations, still supported by our little schemas, between impotence and impossibility.

It is clear that it is completely impossible to hold the position of the lathouse. However, that's not all that is impossible, there are many other things as well, provided one gives this word "impossible" a strict meaning—that is to say, provided one determines them only at the level of our formalized truth—namely, that in every formalized field of truth there are truths that one can never demonstrate.

It's at the level of the impossible, as you know, that I define what is real. If it is real that there are analysts, it's precisely because this is impossible. This forms part of the position of the lathouse.

What's annoying is that, in order to be in the position of the lathouse, it is really necessary to have established that it is impossible. It is for this reason that one loves to emphasize impotence so much more, which also exists, but which is, as I will show you, in another place than strict impossibility.

I know that there are some people here who are distressed from time to time by seeing me, as one says—how does one say?—abuse, interpellate, vociferate against analysts. These are young people who are not analysts. They do not realize that I am doing something nice, that these are little signs of acknowledgment that I am giving them.

I do not want to put them through too difficult a trial. And when I allude to their impotence, which is therefore my own, it means that at that level we are all brothers and sisters, and that one has to extricate oneself as best one can.

I hope this will calm them down before I talk to them about the impossibility of the analyst's position.

20 May 1970

## XII

## The impotence of truth

FREUD AND THE FOUR DISCOURSES

CAPITALISM AND THE UNIVERSITY

HEGEL'S PRACTICAL JOKES

IMPOTENCE AND IMPOSSIBILITY

WHAT CAN A MISCARRIAGE DO?

We are at that time of the year when final examinations happen. I am going to try to lighten things up a bit.

Fortunately, it's drawing to a close, *ça se tire*, as we say. I would even be inclined to leave it at that, if I didn't have to give you, all the same, two little complements that are intended to bring out the essential of what I hope to have got across this year—two little points for the future, which may give you a glimpse, by drawing you a bit closer to it, of the way in which there are perhaps notions that are fairly new, and that have, in every case, this mark that I am always emphasizing, which those who find themselves working with me at a more practical level can confirm, of operating on a level with an experience.

It is not impossible that this will be of use elsewhere, at the level of something that is taking place now, without, for the moment, our knowing quite what. Naturally, when things happen, one never quite knows at the time they are happening what they are, especially when one covers them over with the news. But ultimately something is happening in the university.

In various places people are surprised. What's eating them, these students, the little dears, our favorites, the darlings of civilization? What's up with them? Those who are saying this are playing the fool, this is what they are paid to do.

It should nevertheless be possible that something of what I am elaborating about the relationship between the analyst's discourse and the master's discourse should show people a way to enable them, in some way, to explain themselves to one another and to understand one another.

192 What is happening at the moment is that everyone is competing with everyone else in an attempt to minimize the seriousness of failed, suppressed little demonstrations, increasingly confining them to a street, a corner. To explain it, to make it understood at the very moment at which I say I could do it, I would like you to understand this, which is that to the

extent to which I managed to do this, to the extent to which I succeeded in getting you to understand something, you could be certain that to that extent I would have made you make a big mistake. For it is ultimately limited to this.

Today I would like to spell out, as simply as I can, the relationship between what is happening and the things I have been daring to manipulate for a while, which, by virtue of this fact, gives a kind of guarantee that this discourse hangs together. I have dared manipulate them in a way which is, ultimately, completely wild.

I have not hesitated to speak about the real, and not for some time, since it is even where I took the first step in this teaching. Then, years later, this little formula emerged, the impossible is the real. Heavens knows that no one abused it at first. Then I happened to trot out some reference to truth, which is more common. There are nevertheless some very important observations to make, and I think I am under an obligation to make a number of them today, before leaving all that within the reach of innocents to use without rhyme or reason, which is really par for the course, sometimes, in my entourage.

## I

I made a trip to Vincennes last week—this succinctly tells the tale that I had replied to an invitation from that place. Besides, I announced this to you here last time, to set you off on the right path for a reference I began with, one that is far from innocent—this is even the reason why one must read Freud.

In effect, in "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" we can read the lines concerning what an analyst is.

It is observed there that one would be very mistaken to require of analysts a large dose of mental normality and correctness, they would become too rare, and then, it must not be forgotten that the analytic relation, "*unendlich ist nicht zu vergessen, dass die analytische Beziehung auf Wahrheit-sliebe,*" is founded on the love of truth, and "*d. h. auf die Anerkennung der Realität gegründet ist,*" that is to say, on the recognition of realities.

"*Realität*" is a word you will recognize since it is copied from our Latin. It is in competition, in the way Freud uses it, with the word "*Wirklichkeit*" which also can sometimes signify what the translators, without looking any further, translate quite consistently, in both cases, as "reality."

I have on this issue a little recollection of the truly frothing rage that overcame a couple, or more particularly one of them—I really do have to

call him by his name, it is not an accident, it's a certain Laplanche, who has had a certain role in the avatars of my relations with analysis—at the thought that another—whom I am also going to name, since I named the former, a certain [Pierre] Kaufmann—had put forward the idea that it was necessary to distinguish between this *Wirklichkeit* and this *Realität*. The fact that he had been beaten by the other to make this remark, which was, in fact, altogether primary, had unleashed a kind of passion in the former of these two characters.

The pseudocontempt displayed by this fussing about is, actually, something quite interesting.

The sentence finishes thus, "*gegründet ist und jeden Schein und Trug ausschliesst,*" excludes from this analytic relationship all false appearances, all deception.<sup>1</sup> A sentence like that is very rich. And immediately, in the following lines, it appears—despite the friendly little greeting that Freud gives the analyst on the way—that in sum there is no *Analysieren*. We are quite close here to truly having, we have all the appearances of, this function that is the analytic act. "*Das Analysieren*" does not mean anything other than this term that I employed as the title of one of my seminars.<sup>2</sup> The analytic act would be the third impossible profession, in inverted commas, "*unmöglichen* Berufe."

Freud quotes himself here, making reference to the fact that he has already mentioned—Where did he say it? My research is incomplete, perhaps it is in the letters to Fliess—the three professions in question, which in this previous passage he had called *Regieren*, *Erziehen*, *Kurieren*, and in which he is obviously following common usage. Analysis is new, and Freud inserts it into this series by substitution. The three professions, if indeed they really are professions, are therefore *Regieren*, *Erziehen*, *Analysieren*, that is, governing, educating, and analyzing.<sup>3</sup>

You can't miss the overlap between these three terms and what this year I am identifying as forming the radical of the four discourses.

The discourses in question are nothing other than the signifying articulation, the apparatus whose presence, whose existing status alone dominates and governs anything that at any given moment is capable of emerging as speech. They are discourses without speech, which subsequently comes and lodges itself within them. Thus I can say to myself, concerning this intoxicating phenomenon called speaking out, that certain

<sup>1</sup> SE 23:248. The English translation reads, "And finally we must not forget that the analytic relationship is based on a love of truth—that is, on a recognition of reality—and that it precludes any kind of sham or deceit."

<sup>2</sup> *Le Séminaire, Livre XV, L'Acte psychanalytique, 1967–1968* (unpublished).

<sup>3</sup> Not Freud but Strachey indicates that a similar passage occurs in Freud's "Preface to Aichhorn's *Wayward Youth*," SE 19:273.

reference points in the discourse in which this is inserted would perhaps be of such a nature that, occasionally, one does not start to speak without knowing what one is doing.

Given a certain style of speech, in use in the month of May, the idea cannot fail to occur to me that one of the representatives of the little *a*, at a level that was not instituted in historical but rather in prehistoric times is, surely, the domestic animal. One can no longer employ the same letters in this case, but it is quite clear that a particular knowledge was required to domesticate what corresponds to our  $\$$ —a dog, for instance, is its barking.

One cannot fail to form the idea that if an animal that barks is indeed what barking is then  $S_1$  takes on a meaning that there would be nothing abnormal in discovering at the level at which we are situating it, at the level of language. Everyone knows that the domestic animal is merely implicated in language by primitive knowledge, and that it does not have one. It is, obviously, only open to it to pick over what it has been given that comes closest to the signifier  $S_1$ —that is, carrion.

You will know this if you have had a good dog, whether a guard dog or some other kind, one you have had as a good friend. They are incapable of resisting carrion, they adore it. Look at the Bathory, a charming woman, a Hungarian, who every now and then liked to carve up her servants, which, of course, is the least of things one can offer oneself in a certain position. If she ever placed the said morsels a bit too close to the ground, her dogs would return them to her immediately.

This is a somewhat neglected aspect of the dog. If you didn't keep stuffing him full, at lunch or dinner, by giving him things he only likes because they come from your plate, this is what he would mainly bring you.

You have to pay very close attention to the fact that at a higher level—that of an object little *a*, and that of another species, which we will try to define later and which will bring us back to what I have already said—speech can very easily play the role of carrion. In any case, it is no more appetizing.

This has contributed a great deal to the fact that it has been poorly understood what the importance of language has been. The deployment of speech, which has no other symbolic value, has been confused with what discourse is. As a result it is never just in any old way or at just any old time that speech functions as carrion.

The aim of these remarks is to get you to wonder over, and at least to ponder this question concerning the master's discourse. How can this discourse, which is so wonderfully well understood, have maintained its name—as is proven by the fact that workers work, whether they are exploited or not?

Work has never been given such credit ever since humanity has existed. It is even out of the question that one not work.

This is surely an accomplishment of what I am calling the master's discourse.

For this to be the case it needed to go beyond certain limits. In a word, it comes down to something whose mutation I have tried to point out for you. I hope you remember it, and in case you can't—which is quite possible—I am going to go back over it straight away. I am speaking of this capital mutation, also, which gives the master's discourse its capitalist style.

Why, good heavens, is this taking place, and why is it not taking place by chance?

You would be wrong to think that there are knowledgeable politicians somewhere who are calculating exactly how everything has to be done. You would be equally wrong to think that there are none—there are some. It is not clear that they are always in a place where one can engage in suitable action. But, ultimately, it is perhaps not this that is so important. That they exist, even if in another place, suffices for what is of the order of the displacement of discourse to be transmitted nevertheless.

196 Let's now ask how this society called capitalist society can afford to allow itself a relaxation of the university discourse.

This discourse is nevertheless merely one of these transformations that I have been expounding all along. It's the quarter turn in relation to the master's discourse. Hence a question which it is worth making the effort to envisage—if we embrace this relaxation which, it has to be said, has been offered, aren't we falling into a trap? The idea is not new.

As it happens, I have written a short article on university reform, which I had been invited to write for a newspaper, the only one to have a reputation for balance and honesty, by the name of *Le Monde*. They had insisted that I write this little page concerning the reorganization of psychiatry, concerning reform. Now, it is quite striking that despite this insistence this little article, which I will publish some day, did not get through.

In it I speak of "a reform in its hole." Precisely, it was obviously a matter of using this whirlwind of a hole to take a number of measures concerning the university. And good heavens, by correctly referring to the terms of certain fundamental discourses one might have certain scruples, let's say, about acting, one might look twice before jumping in to profit from the lines that have opened up. It is quite some responsibility to transport car- rion down these corridors.

That is what our remarks today, which are not usually, not commonly said, must be linked up with.

2

$$\frac{S_2}{S_1} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\$}$$

$$\frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}$$

$$\frac{a}{S_2} \rightarrow \frac{\$}{S_1} \quad \frac{\text{agent}}{\text{truth}} \rightarrow \frac{\text{work}}{\text{production}}$$

This is like an apparatus. You should, at least, get the idea that it could be used as a lever, as a pair of pliers, that it can be screwed down, assembled in one way or another.

There are several terms. It's no accident if I have given only these little letters here. It's because I do not want to put things up that might give the appearance of signifying. I do not at all want to signify them, but to authorize them. Writing them is already to authorize them a bit more.

I have already discussed what constitutes the places in which these non-signifying things are inscribed, and I have already spelt out what it is that is the agent.

This term carries a connotation as if it were a sort of enigma of the French language—the agent is not at all necessarily someone who does but someone who is caused to act.

As a consequence, and as you may already suspect, it is not at all clear that the master functions. This, in all probability, defines the place of the master. This is the best thing one can ask oneself concerning him, and naturally people didn't wait for me to do it. A certain Hegel had a go at it, though you have to take a closer look.

It is very irritating to think that there are perhaps not five people here who have fully read *The Phenomenology of Spirit* since I have been talking about it. I won't ask them to raise their hand.

It pisses me off that I have until now only come across two people who have read it completely, since I too, I have to confess, have not peered into every corner. I have in mind my master, Alexandre Kojève, who has demonstrated this a thousand times over, and one other person, of a kind that you won't believe. The latter has truly read *The Phenomenology of Spirit* in an illuminating manner, to the extent that everything that might be in Kojève's notes, which I had and which I passed onto him, was truly superfluous.

What is unheard of is that, even though at one stage I wore myself out making people aware of the fact that *The Critique of Practical Reason* is manifestly a book of eroticism that is extraordinarily more amusing than what Eric Losfeld has published, it has had no kind of effect, and that, if I say to

you that *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is hysterically funny, well then, this won't fare any better.<sup>4</sup> And yet, that is what it is.

It is truly the most extraordinary thing there is. It is also a cold, I won't say black, humor. There is one thing you can be absolutely convinced of, which is that he knows perfectly well what he is doing. What he is doing is sleight of hand and he takes the whole world in. And this, on the basis of the fact that what he says is true.

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There is obviously no better way to pin down the master signifier  $S_1$ , which is up there on the board, than by identifying it with death. And so, what is involved? It involves showing in a dialectic, as Hegel puts it, what it is that is the zenith, the highest point, the thought of this term's function.

What, in sum, is the point of entry of this brute, the master, into the phenomenology of mind, as Hegel puts it? The truth of what he articulates is absolutely seductive and sensational. We can actually read it there, opposite us, provided we allow ourselves to be taken in by it, since I assert, precisely, that it cannot be read off directly. The truth of what he articulates is this—the relationship to this real insofar as it is, properly speaking, impossible.

It's not at all clear why there should be a master who emerges from the struggle to death of pure prestige. And this is despite the fact that Hegel himself says that it would result in this strange outcome at the start.

To cap it off, Hegel finds a way—it is true, in a conception of history that touches on what emerges from it, namely the succession of phases of dominance, of composition of the play of the mind [*esprit*], which runs the length of this thread that is not nothing, which up until his day was called philosophical thought—Hegel finds a way to show that what results from this is that in the end it is the slave who, through his work, produces the master's truth, by pushing him down underneath. By virtue of this forced labor, as you can see from the outset, the slave ends up, at the end of history, at this point called absolute knowledge.

Nothing is said about what happens next, because in truth, in the Hegelian proposition, there were not four terms, but initially the master and then the slave. I call this slave  $S_2$ , but you can also identify him here by way of the term *jouissance*, which, first, he did not want to renounce and which, secondly, he did indeed want to, since he substitutes work for it, which is not at all its equivalent.

Owing to what? Owing to the series of dialectical mutations, to the ballet, the minuet that is established on the basis of this initial moment and that traverses the entire development of culture from start to finish, thread by thread, history finally compensates us with this knowledge that is not described as completed—there are good reasons for this—but as absolute,

<sup>4</sup> Eric Losfeld was a French publisher of comic books.

as indisputable. And the master subsequently appears only as the instrument, the magnificent Cuckold of history.

It is sublime that this quite remarkable dialectical deduction was undertaken, and that it should have succeeded, if one can say this. All the way through—take as an example what Hegel is able to say about culture—the most pertinent remarks concerning the play of events and exercises of wit abound. I repeat, there is nothing more amusing.

The cunning of reason is, he tells us, what directed the entire game.

This is a very fine term which has a lot of value for us, analysts, and we can follow it at the level of our ABC, whether reasonable or not, for we are dealing with something very cunning in speech where the unconscious is concerned. However, the high point of this cunning is not where one thinks it is. It is the cunning of reason, no doubt, but one has to recognize the cunning of the reasoner, and take one's hat off to him.

Had it been possible that at the beginning of the last century, at the time of the battle of Iéna, this extraordinary dirty trick called *The Phenomenology of Spirit* should have subjugated anyone, the trick would have succeeded.

It is in effect quite evident that not for a single instant can one hold that we are in any way approaching the ascendancy of the slave. This unbelievable way of giving him the credit—giving his work the credit—for any kind of progress, as we say, of knowledge is, truly, extraordinarily futile.

But what I am calling the cunning of the reasoner is there to make us aware of an essential dimension, which one has to be careful about. If we designate the agent's place—whoever it is, this place is not always that of the master signifier, since all the other signifiers are going to pass through there in turn—the question is as follows. What makes this agent act? How is it possible to produce this extraordinary circuit around which what deserves, strictly speaking, to be designated by the term “revolution” revolves?

Here, at a certain level, we rediscover Hegel's expression, “putting work back into the world.”

Which is truth? It is located there, with a question mark. What inaugurates this agent, what brings him into play? For, in the end, it has not been there forever, it has been there ever since historical time.

A good thing to appreciate concerning such a brilliant case, so dazzling that precisely for that reason it doesn't occur to one, one is unable to see it, is this. Hegel is the sublime representative of the discourse of knowledge [*savoir*] and of university knowledge.

We others in France only ever have as philosophers people who travel the highways and byways, little members of provincial societies, such as Maine de Biran, or else characters like Descartes, who wander all over Europe. You nevertheless have to know how to read him, too, and listen to his tone—he

speaks of what he can expect from his birth. One sees what sort of a fellow he was. This doesn't mean he was an idiot, far from it.

Here in France, you won't find the philosophers in the universities. We can claim this as an advantage. But in Germany they are in the university. And people are capable, at a certain level of university status, of thinking that these poor fellows, these dear little chaps, the ones who at that time were only just entering the industrial era, the great era of hard labor, of exploitation unto death, will be captivated by the revelation of this truth that they are the ones who make history, and that the master is only there to get the show on the road.

This is a valuable remark, and it is my intention to emphasize it forcefully, because of Freud's phrase that the analytic relationship must be founded on the love of truth.

He really was a charming character, this Freud. He really was all fire, all flame. He also had his weaknesses. His relationship with his wife, for example, is something unimaginable. To have tolerated such a trollop his entire existence is quite something.

Anyway, take note of the following—if there is something that truth must inspire you with, if you want to uphold *Analysieren*, it is certainly not love. For truth, as it happens, makes this signifier “death” appear. And even, there is every appearance that if there is one thing that gives a completely different sense to what Hegel proposed, it is what Freud had nevertheless discovered at that time, which he characterized as best he could, as the death instinct, namely the radical character of repetition, this repetition that insists, and which characterizes the psychical reality, if there is such a thing, of this being inscribed in language.

201 It's perhaps the case that truth has no other face. That's no reason to go mad over it.

This isn't exact either. Truth has more than one face. But that's the point, what could be the first line of conduct to maintain as far as analysts are concerned is to be a little suspicious of it, and not to become all of a sudden mad about a truth, about the first pretty face encountered at the first turn in the road.

This is precisely where we encounter this remark of Freud's in which we find “reality” accompanied by this *Analysieren*. It is indeed the sort of remark to make us say that, in effect, there is perhaps, just like that, a completely naïve real—this is how people generally speak—that passes itself off as the truth. Truth is experienced, this does not at all mean that it thereby knows [*connaît*] any more about the real, especially if one speaks about knowing, and if one bears in mind the features of the real that I point out.

If the real is defined as the impossible the real is placed at the stage at which the register of a symbolic articulation was found to be defined as the

impossible to demonstrate to be true. This may help us take the measure of our love for truth—and it may also enable us to put our finger on why governing, educating, analyzing also, and why not, causing desire, so as to complete the series with a definition of what the hysteric's discourse might be, are operations that, strictly speaking, are impossible.

These operations exist, they are robust, very much so, in so far as they raise for us the question of what their truth is—that is to say, how they are produced—these mad things which are defined in the real as only being able to be articulated, when one nears them, as impossible. It is clear that their full articulation as impossible is precisely what gives us the risk, the barely glimpsed opportunity, that their real, if I can put it like this, breaks out.

If we are obliged to swan around at such length in the corridors, the labyrinths of truth, it's because there is precisely something that prevents us from concluding. And why be astonished by this when it concerns those discourses that for us are brand new? It is not as if one has not yet had a good three-quarters of a century to envisage things from this angle, but then, being seated in an armchair is perhaps not the best position from which to come to grips with the impossible.

Be that as it may, we are forever wandering about in the dimension of the love of truth, and everything indicates that this dimension makes the impossibility of that which maintains itself as real slide between our fingers, at the level, quite precisely, of the master's discourse, as Hegel has said. This fact necessitates the reference to what analytic discourse, fortunately, enables us to glimpse and articulate exactly. And this is why it is important that I articulate it.

202

## 3

I am persuaded that there are five or six people here who will be very well able to displace what I am saying in such a way that it will have a chance of reemerging.

I won't say that this is Archimedes' lever. I will not tell you that this makes the slightest claim to a renewal of the world system, or of thinking about history. I am only indicating how it is that analysis places us on a footing to accept, through chance encounters, a number of things that may appear to be illuminating.

Myself, for example, I might easily have never encountered Kojève. If I had never encountered him, it is highly likely that, like all French people educated over a certain period, I would never have suspected that there was anything in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

It would not be a bad thing if analysis enabled you to realize what the impossibility is due to, that is to say, what it is that stands in the way of grasping, of seizing the only thing that could perhaps ultimately introduce a mutation, namely, the naked real, without truth.

But there's the rub. Between us and the real, there is truth. Truth, as I once told you one day in a flight of lyricism, is the dear little sister of jouissance. I hope that this has come back to mind, at least for some of you, at the moment when I am stressing the contrast between the first line and the second in each of the four formulas that I have given you.

203 The first line comprises a relation, indicated here by an arrow, which is always defined as impossible. In the master's discourse, for instance, it is effectively impossible that there be a master who makes the entire world function. Getting people to work is even more tiring, if one really has to do it, than working oneself. The master never does it. He gives a sign, the master signifier, and everybody jumps. That's where you have to start, which is, in effect, completely impossible. It's tangible every day.

With impossibility written on the first line, it is now a matter of seeing, as is already indicated by the place given to the term "truth," whether it might be at the level of the second line that one would have the last word.

However, at the level of the second line there is no suggestion of an arrow. And not only is there no communication, but there is something that acts as a block.

What is it that is blocking? It is what results from the work. And what a certain Marx's discovery accomplished was to give full weight to a term that was already known prior to him and that designates what work occupies itself with—it's called production.

Whatever the signs, whatever the master signifiers that come to be inscribed in the place of the agent, under no circumstances will production have a relationship to truth. One can do all one wants, one can say all one wants, one can try to conjoin this production with needs, which are the needs one fashions—there is nothing doing. Between the existence of a master and a production's relation with truth, there is no way of getting it to work.

Each impossibility, whatever it may be, between the terms that we put in play here is always linked to this—if it leaves us in suspense over its truth, it is because something is protecting it, which we shall call impotence.

Take, for instance, in the university discourse, the initial term, the one that is articulated here under the term  $S_2$  and is in this position of unheard-of pretension of having a thinking being, a subject, as its production. As subject, in its production, there is no question of it being able to see itself for a single instant as the master of knowledge.

This can be detected here, tangibly, but it extends much further back,

back to the level of the master's discourse which, thanks to Hegel, I allow myself to presuppose since, as you will see, we no longer know it now except in a considerably modified form.

This surplus *jouissance* that I have articulated this year is a construction, even a reconstruction, and I am putting it at the start as a support. It is a truer support. Let's be careful, this is indeed what is dangerous about it, but all the same it does have the strength to be articulated in this way, as one can see by reading people like Aristotle, principally, who have not read Hegel. 204

When we read Aristotle we have the suspicion that the master's relation to the slave really presented him with a problem. He was looking for the slave's truth, and it is really magnificent to see the way in which he tries to extricate himself in the three or four passages in which he deals with it—he only goes in a single direction, that of an essential difference from which the slave's good would emerge.

He is not an academic. He is not a clever little fellow like Hegel. He senses that when he utters this or that, it gets away from him, it slides all over the place. He is neither very sure nor very passionate. He does not impose his own opinion. But then, he feels that this is where there might well be something that motivates the relationship between master and slave. Ah! If they were not the same sex, if they were man and woman, this would be truly sublime, and he hints that there would be some hope. Unfortunately, that's not how it is, they are not of different sexes, and he shrugs his shoulders. We can see clearly what is going on, it's what, in the name of surplus *jouissance*, the master receives from the slave's work.

It would seem that this has to be self-evident. And what is unheard of is that nobody seems to notice that there is, precisely, a lesson to be learned from the fact that it is not self-evident. The problems of ethics here, suddenly, start to abound—the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *Eudemian Ethics*, and several other works of moral reflection.

It's irresolvable. Nobody knows what to do with this surplus *jouissance*. In order to successfully place a sovereign good at the heart of the world, you need to be as embarrassed as a fish with an apple. And yet the surplus *jouissance* that the slave brings us lies within arm's reach.

What is demonstrated, attested to, by all the thought of Antiquity that Hegel makes us revisit with his wonderful sleight of hand and other acts, including the politicized masochism of the Stoics, is that to calmly set oneself up as the master's subject cannot be done qua surplus *jouissance*.

Let's now take the hysteric's discourse as it is articulated—place the  $\$$  on the top left-hand corner, the  $S_1$  on the right, the  $S_2$  underneath, the small  $a$  in the place of truth. It cannot be the case, either, that the hysteric's division, symptomatic tearing apart, is motivated as the production of 205

knowledge [*savoir*]. Her truth is that she has to be the object *a* in order to be desired. The object *a* is a bit thin, at the end of the day, although, of course, men go crazy about it and they are unable even to suspect that they could get by with anything else—another sign of the impotence that covers the most subtle of all impossibilities.

Let's move on to the level of the analyst's discourse. Naturally, nobody has made the observation that it is fairly curious that what he produces is nothing other than the master's discourse, since it's  $S_1$  which comes to occupy the place of production. And, as I was saying last time when I was leaving Vincennes, perhaps it's from the analyst's discourse that there can emerge another style of master signifier.

In truth, whether it is another style or not, it is not in two days' time that we will learn what it is, and at least for the moment we are completely impotent when it comes to referring it to what is at play in the analyst's position, namely, this seduction of truth that he presents in the fact that he would know a bit about what, in principle, he represents.

Am I adequately stressing the features of the impossibility of his situation?—insofar as the analyst puts himself in the position of representing, through being the agent, the cause of desire?

## 4

This, then, is the relationship between these terms that are four in number. The one I have not named is the unnamable one, because the entire structure is founded upon its prohibition—that is to say, *jouissance*.

This is where the little perspective, the little window, the way of looking that analysis has contributed introduces us to what may be a fertile step, not of thought, but of act. And it is in this that it appears to be revolutionary.

It is not situated around the subject. Whatever fertility the hysteric's questioning has displayed, questioning which, as I have said, is the first to introduce the subject into history, and although the entry of the subject as agent of discourse has had very surprising results, the foremost of which is that of science, it is not here, for all that, that the key to all the mainsprings is to be found. The key lies in raising the question of what *jouissance* is.

It could be said that *jouissance* is limited by natural processes. But, actually, we have no idea whether they are natural processes. We simply know that we have ended up considering to be natural the mollicoddling that a society that is more or less orderly maintains us in, except that everyone is

dying to know what would happen if things went really bad. Hence this sadomasochistic dread that characterizes our nice sexual ambiance.

That is completely futile, even secondary. What is important is that, whether natural or not, it is well and truly as bound to the very origin of the signifier's coming into play that it is possible to speak of *jouissance*. Nobody will ever know anything about what the oyster or the beaver enjoys, because, in the absence of the signifier, there is no distance between *jouissance* and the body. The oyster and the beaver are at the same level as the plant, which, after all, perhaps may have *jouissance* at this level.

*Jouissance* is very precisely correlated with the initial form of the entry into play of what I am calling the mark, the unary trait, which is a mark toward death, if you want to give it its meaning. Observe that nothing takes on any meaning except when death comes into play.

It is on the basis of the split, the separation, between *jouissance* and the henceforth mortified body, it is from the moment that there is a play of inscriptions, a mark of the unary trait, that the question arises. There is no need to wait until the subject has shown itself to have been well hidden, at the level of the master's truth. The subject's division is without doubt nothing other than the radical ambiguity that attaches itself to the very term, "truth."

It is insofar as language, everything that institutes the order of discourse, leaves things in a gap that, in sum, we can be confident that in following our thread we are always doing nothing other than following a contour. But it does bring us something extra, and it is the minimum that it would be really necessary for us to know for a reply to the question with which I began, namely, what is currently going on at the level of the university discourse.

We have to begin by seeing why it is that the master's discourse is so solidly established, to the point where few of you, it seems, judge how stable it is. This stems from something Marx demonstrated—without, I have to say, emphasizing it—concerning production and which he calls surplus value, not surplus *jouissance*.

Something changed in the master's discourse at a certain point in history. We are not going to break our backs finding out if it was because of Luther, or Calvin, or some unknown traffic of ships around Genoa, or in the Mediterranean Sea, or anywhere else, for the important point is that on a certain day surplus *jouissance* became calculable, could be counted, totalized. This is where what is called the accumulation of capital begins.

Don't you feel, in relation to what I said before on the impotence of conjoining surplus value with the master's truth, that ground is being won here? I am not saying that it is the most recent step that is the decisive one,



but the impotence of this conjunction is all of a sudden emptied. Surplus value combines with capital—not a problem, they are homogeneous, we are in the field of values. Moreover, we are all up to our necks in it, in these blessed times in which we live.

What is striking, and what no one seems to see, is that from that moment on, by virtue of the fact that the clouds of impotence have been aired, the master signifier only appears even more unassailable, precisely in its impossibility. Where is it? How can it be named? How can it be located?—other than through its murderous effects, of course. Denounce imperialism? But how can this little mechanism be stopped?

Where do things stand now with the university discourse? Nowhere else can there be any possibility that things should move a bit. How can they move? I reserve the right to point this out to you later since, as you can see, I am going slowly. But I can already tell you that at the level of the university discourse the object *a* comes to occupy a place that is in play each time it moves, the place of more or less tolerable exploitation.

The object *a* is what makes it possible to introduce a little bit of air into the function of surplus *jouissance*. You are all an object *a*, insofar as you are lined up there—so many miscarriages of what has been, for those who engendered you, the cause of desire. And this is where you have to get your bearings from—psychoanalysis teaches you this.

Please don't bore me stupid telling me that I would do well to point out to those who are agitating here and there that there is a world of difference between the miscarriage of the high bourgeoisie and that of the proletariat. After all, the miscarriage of the high bourgeoisie, as miscarriage, is not obliged constantly to carry its incubator around with it.

The fact remains that the claim to situate oneself at a point that would all of a sudden be particularly illuminated, illuminable, and that would manage to make these relations move, must not, all the same, be elevated to the point to which things were pushed by a person—a little recollection that I give to you—who accompanied me for two or three months of what it is customary to call the folly of youth. This delightful person said to me, "I am of pure proletarian race."

We are never finally done with segregation. I can tell you that it will only ever continue to increase. Nothing can function without it—what is happening here, as the *a*, the *a* in living form, miscarriage that it is, displays the fact that it is an effect of language.

Be that as it may, there is in every case a level at which things do not work out. It's the level of those who have produced the effects of language, since no child is born without having to deal with this traffic by the intermediary of his beloved so-called progenitors, who were themselves caught up in the entire problem of discourse, with the previous generation behind

them also. And this is the level at which it would really be necessary to have made enquiries.

If it's one's wish that something turn—of course, ultimately, no one can ever turn, as I have emphasized enough—it is certainly not by being progressive, it is simply because it can't prevent itself from turning. If it doesn't turn, it will grind away, there where things raise questions, that is, at the level of putting something into place that can be written as *a*.

Has that ever existed? Yes, no doubt, and it is the Ancients who, in the end, give us its strongest proof and, subsequently, over the course of ages, the formal, classical things that in some way were copied from them.

For us, at the level at which things are happening for the moment, what can this point of auscultation, everything that in the body remains alive, remains as knowledge, this nursling, why not, this look, this cry, this squawking, it barks—what can this hope for? What can it do?

I will try to tell you next time what that which I call "the strike of culture" signifies.<sup>5</sup>

10 June 1970

<sup>5</sup> *Grève de la culture*. "Strike," as in "Go on strike."

## The power of the impossibles

A BIT OF SHAME IN THE SAUCE  
 THE MILK OF TRUTH PUTS ONE TO SLEEP  
 THE LUSTER OF THE REAL  
 THE STUDENT, BROTHER OF THE LUMPEN-PROLETARIAT  
 A LITTLE SHELTER

It does have to be said that it is unusual to die of shame.

Yet it is the one sign—I have been talking about this for a while, how a signifier becomes a sign—the one sign whose genealogy one can be certain of, namely that it is descended from a signifier. After all, any sign can fall under the suspicion of being a pure sign, that is to say, obscene [*obscène*], Vincennes [*vinscène*], dare I say, a good example to make you laugh.<sup>1</sup>

Dying of shame, then. Here, the degeneration of the signifier is certain—certain to be produced by the signifier's failure, namely, being toward death, insofar as it concerns the subject—and who else could it concern? Being toward death, that is, the visiting card by which a signifier represents a subject for another signifier—you are beginning to know this off by heart, I hope.

This visiting card never arrives at the right destination, the reason being that for it to bear the address of death, the card has to be torn up. "It's a shame [*une honte*]," as they say, which should produce a (h)ontology [*hontologie*] spelled properly at last.

In the meantime, to die of shame is the only affect of death that deserves—deserves what?—that deserves to die.

210 People have been quiet about this for a long time. Speaking about it, in effect, is to open this redoubt, which is not the last, the only one that what can be said honestly of the honest partakes in, "honest," which stems from the honor—that is all shame and companion—of making no mention of shame. Precisely, of the fact that it is impossible for the honest to die of shame. You know from me that this means the real.

"He doesn't deserve to die for that!" people say about anything and

<sup>1</sup> Vincennes was the site of the University of Paris VIII campus. The university was founded in 1969 and included the Department of Psychoanalysis headed at that time by Serge Leclaire. Lacan is playing on "vain scene."

everything, thus bringing everything down to being futile. Said as it is said, with that end in mind, it elides the fact that death can be deserved.

Now, it should not be a matter of eliding the impossible, as it happens, but of being its agent. To say that death is deserved—the time at least to die of shame that it's not so, that it's deserved.

If it happens now, well then, it was the only way to deserve it. You were lucky. If it doesn't happen, which, with respect to the preceding surprise, is bad luck, then you're left with a life of shame by the bucketful, by virtue of the fact that it is not worth dying for.

Is it worth my speaking about it in this way?—when, as soon as one speaks about it, the twenty scenes [*vingt-scènes*] I mentioned above are only asking to be taken up again in the form of buffoonery.

### 1

Vincennes, precisely.

They were, it seems, pleased with what I said there, pleased with me. It wasn't reciprocal. I was not very pleased with Vincennes.

Despite there being one nice person who tried to fill up the first row, to make a Vincennes [*faire Vincennes*], there was clearly no one from Vincennes there, or hardly anyone, only the ears of those most worthy of awarding me a good mark. It was not quite what I had been expecting, especially as my teaching, it seems, has been propagated there. There are times when I can be aware of a certain slack.

But then, there was nonetheless just what was needed to indicate to us the point of agreement that there can be between *La Minute* and *Les Temps modernes*. I only mention it because, as you will see, this touches on today's topic—how to behave in the face of culture?

Sometimes something minor is enough to throw a glimmer of light, a recollection which nobody knows how I myself became aware of. Once you recall the publication of a certain tape recording in *Les Temps modernes*, the relationship with *La Minute* is striking.<sup>2</sup> Try this, it's fascinating, I have done it. You cut out paragraphs from the two newspapers, you mix them up together somewhere, and you draw them out. I assure you that, except for the paper, it won't be so easy to work out which is which.

This is what must make it possible for us to take the question in another way than on the basis of the objection I made just before to touching on

<sup>2</sup> *Les Temps modernes* caused a scandal when it published the transcript of an analytic session secretly recorded by the analysand.

things in a certain tone, with a certain word, out of fear that they might get carried away by buffoonery. Begin, instead, with the following fact, that the buffoonery is already present. Perhaps, by adding a bit of shame to the mix, who knows, this might keep it in check.

In short, I am playing the game of "You hear me because I am talking to you." Otherwise, there would, rather, be an objection to your hearing me, since in many cases this prevents you from hearing what I am saying. And it's a pity, for at least the younger ones among you have for a fair while now also been capable of saying it without me. You lack for that, precisely, a bit of shame. It might come to you.

Obviously, you do not find it under the hooves of horses, of a hobby-horse even less, but the furrows of the aethosphere, as I said, that take care of you, and even careful you [*soyousenz*] all alive already, would perhaps already be quite a sufficient load of shame.

Appreciate why it was that Pascal and Kant fidgeted about like two valets in the process of acting like Vatel with respect to you. There has been a lack of truth up above for three centuries. The service has arrived nevertheless, reheating on demand, even as the musician has from time to time, as you know. Don't make such a long face, you are being served, you can say that there is no longer any shame.

These boxes about which, when I say that they are empty of chatter, you wonder what is bothering me—well then, quickly make provision in them for enough shame so that when the festivities begin, there is no lack of seasoning.

You will say to me, "What's the use of shame? If that is what the other side of psychoanalysis is, we don't want any." My reply to you is, "You've got enough to open a shop." If you are not yet aware of this, then do a bit of analysis, as they say. You will see this vapid air of yours run up against an outlandish shame of living.

That's what psychoanalysis discovers. Be a bit serious and you will notice that this shame is justified by the fact that you do not die of shame, that is, by your maintaining with all your force a discourse of the perverted master—which is the university discourse. *Rhegel yourselves!* I say.

On Sunday I returned to this damned satire called *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, wondering whether I wasn't misleading you last time when I dragged you through those reminiscences I was indulging myself in. Not at all. It's staggering.

You will see this, for example, "Ignoble consciousness is the truth of noble consciousness."<sup>3</sup> And it's dispatched in a way that draws you up

<sup>3</sup> See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 316-7.

short. The more unworthy you are—I won't say obscene, that's been out of the question for a long time—the better off you are. That really clarifies the recent reforms of the university, for instance. Everything, credit points—to have the makings of culture, of a hell of a general, in your rucksack, plus some medals besides, just like an agricultural show, that will pin onto you what people dare call mastery. Wonderful! You'll have it coming out of your ears.

Being ashamed of not dying from this would perhaps introduce another tone to it, that with which the real is concerned. I said the real and not the truth for, as I already explained to you last time, it's a temptation to suck the milk of truth, but it's toxic. It will put you to sleep, and that's all that is expected of you.

I recommended to one charming person that he reread Baltasar Gracián, who, as you know, was a Jesuit living at the turn of the sixteenth century. He wrote his great pieces at the start of the seventeenth century. All things considered, this is where the view of the world that suits us was born. Even before science climbed to our zenith people sensed it coming. It's curious, but that's how it is. It's even to be recorded for any truly experimental appreciation of history that the Baroque, which suits us so well—and modern art, whether figurative or not, is the same—began before, or at just the same time as, the initial steps of science.

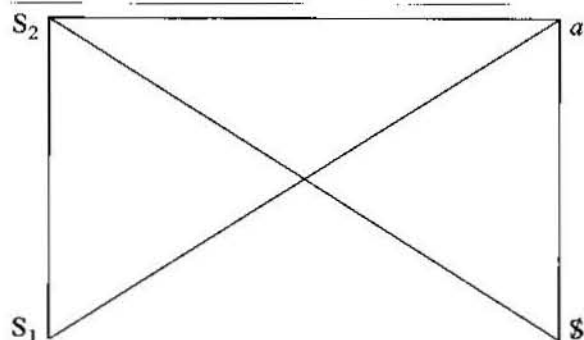
In *El Criticón*, which is a sort of fable in which the plot of Robinson Crusoe, for example, is already found to be included—the majority of masterpieces are the crumbs of other unknown masterpieces—in the third part, on the dimension of old age—since he takes this graph of ages—we find something called "truth in labor" in the second chapter.

Truth is in labor in a town that is only inhabited by beings of the highest purity. This doesn't stop them from taking flight, and under the influence of a hell of a fear, when they are told that truth is like having a child.

I wonder why they asked me to explain this, when this discovery was made for me—for, in truth, it wasn't me that located it—unless they didn't come to my last seminar, for this is precisely what I said then.

It's here that one has to hold firm, for if you want your remarks to be subversive, you must take great care that they don't get too bogged down on the path to truth.

What I wanted to spell out last time in putting on the board these things that I can't keep drawing every time is that the  $S_1$ , the master signifier which holds the secret to knowledge in its university situation, is very tempting to stick to. You remain caught up in it.



What I am indicating, and perhaps it's this alone that a number of you will be able to retain from this year, is that one should focus on the level of production—of the production of the university system. A certain production is expected of you. It is perhaps a matter of obtaining this effect, of substituting another for it.

## 2

On this matter, simply as a stage, a relay, and because I presented them as an indicator of what I had declared to you last time, I will read you three pages. I apologize to those few people with whom I have already been through this.

These three pages are a reply to this inquisitive Belgian who asked me some questions that hold my interest sufficiently for me to wonder whether I hadn't dictated them myself without knowing it. He deserves credit for them.

214 Here, then, is the sixth one, charmingly naïve, "In what respect are knowledge and truth"—everyone knows that I have tried to show that they are stitched together, these two virtues—"incompatible?"<sup>4</sup>

I say to him, "Speaking off the cuff, nothing is incompatible with truth: we piss on it, we spit on it. It is a thoroughfare or, to put it better, a place for the evacuation of knowledge and all the rest. It is possible to cleave to it permanently, even to be driven mad by it.

"It is worth noting that I put psychoanalysts on their guard, by connoting this locus they are engaged to through their knowledge as 'love.' I would say to them straight away: one does not marry truth; there can be no contract with her, and even less can there be any open liaison. She won't stand

<sup>4</sup> "Radiophonie," *Autres écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001), 440.

for any of that. Truth is firstly a seduction, intended to deceive you. If you are not to be taken in, you must be strong. *This is not the case with you.*

"This is how I spoke to psychoanalysts, this ghost that I hail, even that I haul, against the joy of rushing at the invariable hour and day ever since the times when I upheld the wager for you that psychoanalysts understand me. It is therefore not you that I am informing; you do not run the risk of being bitten by truth; but—who knows?—should what I am fashioning ever come alive, should the psychoanalyst ever take over from me, at the limits of the hope that this is not encountered, it's them that I am alerting; that one has everything to learn from truth, this common place destines each one to get lost in it. It will be enough that each knows something about it, and he would do well to leave it at that. It would be even better were he to do nothing. There is no more treacherous an instrument.

"We know how a—not *the*—psychoanalyst typically extracts himself; he leaves the thread of this truth to the one who already has his worries with it and who, in this capacity, really does become his patient, as a result of which he worries about it like a curse.

"Nevertheless, it is a fact that for some time some people have been making it their business to feel themselves more concerned about it. This is perhaps due to my influence. I have perhaps played some part in this correction. And this is precisely what makes it my duty to warn them not to go too far, because if I have obtained it, it's through not giving the appearance of having laid a finger on it. But this is precisely what is serious, besides, of course, one pretends to be somewhat terrified by it. It is a refusal. But a refusal doesn't exclude collaboration. A refusal can itself be a collaboration."

For those who listen to me on the radio and who do not, as I was saying before, have any impediment to hearing what I am saying, which is to understand me, I will go on. It is for this reason that I am reading it to you, since, if I can speak it at a particular level of the mass media, why not give it a trial run here?

And then, these initial responses that have so bewildered you here, and that, it seems, went across over the radio much better than people think, have confirmed the principle that I have adopted, and that is in the line of things that today I would like to pass on to you. This is one of the methods by which it would be possible to take action upon culture.

When one is caught by chance at the level of a large public, of one of these masses that a type of medium presents you with, why not precisely raise the level, in proportion to the assumed ineptitude—which is a pure assumption—of this field? Why lower the tone? Who do you have to rope in? It is precisely the game of culture to engage you in this system, namely, once the aim is reached, you can't tell head from tail.

Here, then, and even though it is still altogether possible to say it in this

room, I am saying what is remarkable, for not having been remarked upon, in my formula of the subject supposed to know, as the mainspring of the transference.

"I have not said that the psychoanalyst is moreover supposed to know the truth about the supposed knowledge out of which, according to me, the psychoanalysis makes the transference. Think about it, and you will understand how adding this complement to it would be fatal for the transference. But equally, do not think about it if understanding this would, precisely, prevent its effect from remaining true.

"I suffer indignation over the fact that one person dresses up what I am denouncing in the little knowledge from which the transference draws its material. It's only up to him to furnish that with something besides the chair he says he is ready to sell if I am right. He leaves no way out of the affair only because he doesn't restrict himself to his means. The psychoanalyst only insists upon not having a bone to pick in his being. The famous non-knowledge for which people mock us is only dear to his heart because, for him, he knows nothing. He repudiates the mode of unearthing a shadow and then pretending it is carrion, repudiates being valued as a hunting dog. His discipline steeps him in the fact that the real is not initially there to be known—this is the only dam that can hold idealism back.

"Knowledge gets added to the real; indeed, it is for this reason that it can bring the false into being, and even into being there a bit.<sup>5</sup> *I dasein* with all my force on this occasion, one needs help for this.

"To be truthful, it is only from where knowledge is false that it is concerned with the truth. All knowledge that is not false couldn't give a damn about it. In becoming known, only its form is a surprise, a surprise in dubious taste, moreover, when by the grace of Freud it speaks to us of language, since it is nothing but its product.

216 "This is where the political impact takes place. It concerns, here, this question in act: Out of what knowledge is the law made? Once one has uncovered this knowledge, it may happen that that changes. Knowledge falls to the rank of symptom, seen from another perspective. And this is where truth comes in.

"For truth one fights, which is, however, only produced through its relations with the real. But that it is produced is much less important than what that produces. The effect of truth is only a collapse of knowledge. It is this collapse that creates a production, soon to be taken up again.

"The real is neither better nor worse off as a result. In general it dusts itself off until the next crisis. Its momentary benefit is that it has refound

<sup>5</sup> *être-là*, "being there," is the French for *Dasein*, picked up in the following sentence.

its gloss. This would even be the benefit that one might expect from any revolution, this gloss that would shine for a long time in this always murky locus of truth. But there's the rub. This shine never again throws light on anything."

That is what I had cast into a corner the day after the last seminar—for you, apparently, since there is no longer any question of adding it to my little radiological raft.

What has to be understood in this respect is the following—what is frightening about truth is what it puts in its place.

The locus of the Other, as I have always said, is made for truth to be inscribed there, that is, everything of that order, the false, even lies—which only exist on the foundation of truth. This is in the free play speech [*parole*] and language.

But what about truth in this quadrupedal structure, which presupposes language and takes a discourse to be structured, that is, which conditions any speech able to be produced therein? What does the truth in question, the truth of this discourse, that is what it conditions, put in its place? How is it that the master's discourse holds firm? This is the other face of the function of truth, not the visible face, but the dimension in which it is necessitated by something hidden.

Our furrows in the alethosphere are traced out on the surface of the longtime deserted heavens. But at issue is what one day I called—using this word which titillated some of you enough to the point of wondering what had come over me—the lathouse.

It wasn't I who invented this dimension of truth which makes it the case that it is hidden. It is *Verborgenheit*<sup>6</sup> that constitutes it. In short, things are such that it makes one think it has something in its belly.

Very early on there were some clever people who observed that if this were to emerge, it would be dreadful. Probably winged as well, so as to improve the landscape. Nowadays, it is equally possible that this is the whole thing, that it would be terrible if it were to emerge. If you spend your time waiting, then you are done for. In sum, one mustn't tease the lathouse too much. What does undertaking this always assure? What I am forever explaining to you—it assures the impossible by virtue of the fact that this relationship is effectively real. The more your quest is located on the side of truth, the more you uphold the power of the impossibles which are those that I respectively enumerated for you last time—governing, educating, analyzing on occasion. For analysis, in any case, this is obvious.

The subject supposed to know scandalizes, when I am simply approaching the truth.

<sup>6</sup> "Concealment." The term is Heidegger's.

My little quadrupedal schemas—I am telling you this today to alert you to it—are not the Ouija boards of history. It is not necessarily the case that things always happen this way, and that things rotate in the same direction. This is only an appeal for you to locate yourselves in relation to what one can call radical functions, in the mathematical sense of the term.

Concerning functions, the decisive step was taken somewhere around this epoch that I designated some time ago, around what there is in common between Galileo's initial step, the emergence of the integrals and differentials in Leibniz, and then also the emergence of logarithms.

A function is this something that entered the real, that had never entered it beforehand, and that does not correspond to discovering, experimenting, seizing, detaching, disclosing, no, but to writing—writing two orders of relations.

218 Let me illustrate where logarithms arose. In one case the first relation is addition. Addition is nevertheless intuitive. There are some things here, some things there, you put them together, and you get a new collection. Multiplying loaves is not the same as collecting loaves. It is a matter of applying one of these relations to the other. You invent the logarithm. It starts to run wild in the world, on the basis of little rules that seem to be insignificant. But do not think that the fact that they exist leaves you, any of you who are here, in the same state as before they appeared. Their presence is all that matters.

Well then, let me tell you that these more or less winged little terms— $S_1$ ,  $S_2$ ,  $a$ ,  $\$$ —can be of use in a very large number of relations. One only needs to become accustomed to how to manipulate them.

For example, starting with the unary trait, though one can restrict oneself to it, one can still try to investigate the functioning of the master signifier. Well then, it is altogether usable, if you notice that, provided you make it structurally well founded, there is no need to add a thing to it, none of this grand comedy of the struggle to death of pure prestige and its outcome. Contrary to what people have concluded from their questioning of things at the level of what is true by nature, there is no contingency in the slave's position. There is the necessity that something be produced that functions in knowledge as a master signifier.

One cannot prevent oneself from dreaming, to be sure, or from trying to find out who was the first to do it, and then, one discovers the beauty of this ball that goes back and forth between the master and the slave. But perhaps it was simply someone who was ashamed, who put himself forward like that.

Today I have brought you the dimension of shame. It is not a comfortable thing to put forward. It is not one of the easiest things to speak about. This is perhaps what it really is, the hole from which the master signifier arises. If it were, it might perhaps not be useless for measuring how close one has to get to it if one wants to have anything to do with the subversion, or even just the rotation, of the master's discourse.

Be that as it may, one thing is certain, you have this introduction of  $S_1$ , the master signifier, within your grasp in the merest of discourses—it is what defines its readability.

There is, in effect, language and speech and knowledge, and all that seems to have worked in Neolithic times, but we have no trace that any dimension called reading existed. There is not yet any need of any writings [*écrit*], nor of any impression—not that writings haven't been there for a long time, but, in some way, through a retroactive effect. What makes it the case that when we read any text we can always ask ourselves what characterizes it as readable? We have to search for the joint in the direction of what it is that makes the master signifier.

I will point out to you that, as literary works, everything that one has ever read is off in cloud-cuckoo-land. Why does that hang together?

In my latest blunder—I adore these—I happened to read Balzac's *L'Envers de la vie contemporaine*.<sup>7</sup> It really is off in cloud-cuckoo-land. If you haven't read it, you can still have read everything you might like to read on the history of the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth—the French Revolution, to call it by its name. You can even have read Marx. You won't understand a thing, and there will always be something that escapes you, which is only there, in this story that will bore you stiff, *L'Envers de la vie contemporaine*.

Please have a look at it. I am sure not many of you will have read it. It is one of the least read of Balzac's. Read it, and do the following exercise.

Do exactly the same as the one which, about one hundred years ago, I had tried to give to the people I was speaking to at Sainte-Anne concerning the first scene of Act 1 of *Athalie*. All they heard were the quilting points. I am not saying that it was an excellent metaphor. In the end, it was this  $S_1$ , the master signifier.

Heaven knows what they made of this quilting point, they even took it off to *Les Temps modernes*—all things considered, this is not *La Minute*.<sup>8</sup>

It was a master signifier. It was a way of asking them to notice how something that spreads throughout language like wildfire is readable, that is to say, how it hooks on, creates a discourse.

<sup>7</sup> Available as *The Wrong Side of Paris* (New York: Modern Library, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> *Minute-La France*, a right-wing, anti-Semitic weekly established in 1962.

I still maintain that there is no metalanguage. Anything that one might think is of the order of a search for the meta in language is simply, always, a question about reading.

Let us suppose—pure supposition—that I am asked for my advice on something I have not been involved in except on the basis of my place in this location—a place that is, it has to be said, quite an unusual one—and I would be astonished if today that would make an open book of my place with respect to the university. But then, if there are others who, from where they are, and for reasons which are not at all negligible but which appear all the more clearly when one refers to my little letters, find themselves in the position of wanting to subvert something in the order of the university, where should they look?

They can look on the other side, where everything can be threaded onto a little stick, where one can place them, the little pile that they are, along with others who are, as is the nature of the progression of knowledge, dominated.

On that side it is intimated to them that one might find a way to live with this. For ages this has been like a myth. I am not here to preach this to you. Myself, I have spoken of the shame of living.

If they search on that side, they may find that with my little schemas they can find a way of justifying that the student is not displaced in feeling a brother, as they say, not of the proletariat but of the lumpen-proletariat.

The proletariat are like the Roman plebs—these were very distinguished people. The class struggle perhaps contains this little source of error at the start, that it absolutely doesn't take place at the level of the true dialectic of the master's discourse—it is located on the level of identification. *Senatus Populusque Romanus*. They are on the same side. And the entire Empire includes all the rest.

The question is why students feel that they belong with all the rest. They don't at all seem to be able to see clearly how to resolve it.

I would like to point out to them that production is one essential point of the system—the production of shame. This translates as—it's impudence.

This is why it would perhaps not be a very bad means not to go in that direction.

## 4

In effect, and to designate something that is very easily recorded in these little letters, what does one produce? One produces something cultural.

And when one thinks like the university, what one produces is a thesis.

This order of production is always related to the master signifier—not simply because that discerns it for you, but quite simply because it forms a part of the presuppositions according to which everything in this order is related to the author's name.

It is very refined. There is a sort of preliminary step, which lies at the threshold of the university. You will have the right to speak there, subject to the altogether strict convention that you will forever have your thesis pinned onto you. This gives your name its weight. Nevertheless, you are in no way subsequently bound by what is in your thesis. Normally, in any case, you content yourself with that. But that doesn't matter, you will always be able to say whatever you want if you have already become a name. This is what plays the role of a master signifier.

May I say it? I would not like to give too much importance to what I have done. This is how the idea came to me of a thing which you haven't heard much about for a while, *Scilicet*. Some people have nevertheless been struck by the fact that I said it would be a place in which unsigned things should be written.

You mustn't think that mine are more unsigned. See what I have written—a solo voice singing of a painful experience, the one I had with what is called a school, to which I had contributed propositions so that something would be inscribed there, something that has not failed to be inscribed there, moreover—some effect of catalepsy.

The fact that it is signed by me would only be of interest if I were an author. I am in no way an author. Nobody even dreams of this when they read my *Écrits*. For a very long time this had remained carefully confined to an organ that had no other interest than to be as close as possible to what I am trying to define as calling knowledge into question. What sort of a disaster does analytic knowledge produce? That is what was in question, what has been in question for as long as it has not made them all itching to become authors. It is very curious that the non-signed should appear paradoxical, whereas of course over the centuries all the honest men there have been have always at least acted as if someone had torn their manuscript from their hands, as if someone had played a dirty trick on them. No one expected to be sent a note of congratulations on publication.

In short, if it were possible for something to come out of seriously calling into question knowledge that is lavished about and propagated within the established framework of the university, there is no reason why this couldn't be done under a bit of shelter, a type of place, that would adopt the same law for itself, that is to say, not to present something to make someone important, but in order to say something structurally rigorous,

whatever might become of it. This could have a greater impact than one might initially expect from it.

A character called Diderot published *Rameau's Nephew*, let it fall from his pocket.<sup>9</sup> Someone else took it to Schiller, who knew very well it was by Diderot. Diderot never worried about it. In 1804 Schiller passed it on to Goethe, who immediately translated it and, up until 1891—I can tell you this, because here is the tome, which I brought from my own library—we only had a French retranslation of the German translation by Goethe, who, moreover, had completely forgotten about it one year after it appeared, and who perhaps never saw it, for they were in the midst of that Franco-Prussian brawl, and the people didn't take well to this revolutionary intrusion. In short, this translation went unnoticed, Goethe himself was no doubt unaware that it had appeared, and yet this did not stop Hegel from making it one of the main threads of this booklet so full of humor to which I have been referring lately, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

As you can see, there is not much reason for you to worry that what comes out of you carries the label of what concerns you. This is such an obstacle, let me assure you, to the publication of anything decent—if only because of the fact that even within what you might be naturally interested in you believe that you are obliged, in the name of the laws of a thesis, to refer it to the author—he is talented, it's unconvincing, he hasn't got any ideas, what he says is not totally stupid. And if he has contributed something important that may not concern him in any way, you are absolutely obliged to think that this is a mind that thinks. And with that, you've had it for a long time.

As for psychology, it is striking that there is not even a shadow of it in the order of things that are enlightening, like *L'Envers de la vie contemporaine* I was speaking to you about just before. It is a little montage whose entire value comes through its master signifiers, it is valuable because it is readable. No need of the slightest psychology.

To spell it out for you, to clear my own name, what saves *Écrits* from the accident that befell it, namely that people immediately read it, is that it is a "worst-seller" nevertheless.

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I am not going to prolong this discourse any further today in this heat. This is the last I am going to give this year.

There are clearly many things missing, but it would not be pointless to add the following—if, to speak as Hegel would, there are some slightly less than ignoble reasons for your presence here in such numbers, which has so often been an inconvenience for me—this is obviously a question of tact as

<sup>9</sup> Denis Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew*, in *Rameau's Nephew; and, D'Alembert's Dream* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976).

Goethe would say, I make of it, it would seem, not too much but just enough—if this phenomenon takes place, which is frankly incomprehensible, given what it is that I put forward for the majority of you, it is because I happen to make you ashamed, not too much, but just enough.

17 June 1970



## APPENDIXES

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## A

## Analyticon

AN AGITATOR PREPARES HIS OWN CHOCOLATE

THE IMPASSE OF PSYCHOANALYTIC SELECTION

CREDIT POINTS

NOTHING IS EVERYTHING

LOOK AT THEM DOING IT

[This session took place at Vincennes, an experimental university, on 3 December 1969. It was announced as the first of four under the title "Analyticon, four impromptus."]

I will be talking about my Egeria, who is one of those [a dog walks across the podium].

She is the only person I know who knows what she is speaking—I am not saying, "what she is saying."

It's not that she doesn't say anything—she doesn't say it in words. She says something when she is anxious—which happens—she puts her head on my knee. She knows that I am going to die, which a number of people also know. She's called Justine, she's my dog, she is very beautiful, and you would have heard her speak . . .

The only thing she lacks by comparison with that person wandering around is that she hasn't been to university.

## I

Here I am then, an invited guest, at the experimental center of the said university, an experiment which seems rather exemplary to me.

Since it is a question of an experiment, you might wonder what your use is. If you ask me, I will do a diagram for you—I will try to—because after all the university is very strong, it has deep foundations.

I have kept for you the announcement of the title of one of the four discourse positions I have announced elsewhere—where I started my seminar.

"The master's discourse," as I said, since you are accustomed to hearing about this. And it is not easy to give an example, as someone who is very

intelligent observed last night. I shall try all the same. This is where I have got to, having left the thing unfinished at my seminar. And, to be sure, there is no question of continuing it here. "An impromptu," I said. You can see that that thing with its lowered tail provided me with one a minute ago. I shall continue in the same tone.

Secondly, hysteric's discourse. This one is very important because it is what the psychoanalyst's discourse takes shape with. Except that there would need to be psychoanalysts. I'm making this my business.

*INTERVENTION: There aren't any psychoanalysts at Vincennes, at any rate.*

As you say, not at Vincennes.

*INTERVENTION: Why is it that Vincennes students, at the conclusion of the teaching they are supposed to have received, can't become psychoanalysts?*

This is precisely what I am going to explain, Mademoiselle. This is precisely what is in question. Psychoanalysis is not something that can be transmitted like other forms of knowledge.

The psychoanalyst has a position that sometimes manages to be that of a discourse. He doesn't thereby transmit a body of knowledge, not that there is nothing for him to know, contrary to what is foolishly asserted. This is what is called into question—the function in society of a certain form of knowledge, the one that is conveyed to you. It exists.

There is an algebraic sequence that essentially constitutes a chain whose starting point is in this formula—

$$\frac{S_1}{S} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}$$

A signifier is defined as representing a subject for another signifier. This is an altogether fundamental notation. It can be taken as one at any rate. Through my offices, an attempt has been developed, which is the one I am coming to now, having put the necessary time into putting it into shape. This is an attempt to found what would be decently required to manipulate a notion by encouraging subjects to trust it and to work with it. This is what is called the psychoanalysis.

I initially wondered what could come of it for the psychoanalyst, and where he, the analyst, was in all this. For on this point it is very obvious that the notions are not clear, since Freud, who knew what he was saying, said that it was an impossible function—and yet fulfilled every day. If you reread his text closely you will see that it is not the function that is in question but the being of the psychoanalyst.

How does it happen that one fine day a psychoanalyst commits himself to being a psychoanalyst? This is what I tried to articulate when I spoke of the psychoanalytic act. I stopped my seminar before the end that year, it was '68, like that, in order to show my sympathy for what was astir and which continues—moderately. The agitating makes me think of something that was invented one day, if I recall correctly, by my good, late friend Marcel Duchamp, "A bachelor prepares his own chocolate." Take care that the agitator is not preparing his own chocolate.

In short, this psychoanalytic act was left for dead, as it were. And I have not had the time to return to it, especially as examples of what that leads to are breaking out all around me.

An issue of a journal called *Études freudiennes* has appeared.<sup>1</sup> I cannot recommend reading it too highly, never having hesitated to suggest to you bad readings which themselves are in the nature of best-sellers. If I recommend it to you, it is because they are very, very good texts. This is not like that grotesque little text on the remarks about my style that came naturally to find its place in the site vacated by the asinine [*Paulhânerie*].<sup>2</sup> This is different. You will draw the greatest benefit from it.

Apart from an article by its editor, of whom I could never speak too highly, you have statements that are indisputably and universally agitating against psychoanalytic institutions. There is a charming, solid, and very likable Canadian who, good heavens, makes some highly pertinent remarks. There is someone from the Institut psychanalytique de Paris, occupying a very important position there on the education committee, who gives a critique of the psychoanalytic institution as such, as being in strict contradiction with everything that the very existence of the psychoanalyst calls for—it's really marvelous. I cannot say that I would sign it myself, for I already have signed it—the remarks are my own.

In any case, for me, this has a sequel, namely a certain proposition that draws conclusions from this impasse that is so masterly demonstrated. It would have been possible to say, in a tiny little note somewhere, that in a certain place there is an extremist who has tried to work this into a proposition that radically renews the meaning of the entire psychoanalytic selection process. It is clear that this hasn't been done.<sup>3</sup>

I am not really complaining about it, since according to the very people concerned, this agitation is in a state of complete disarray, gratuitous. There

<sup>1</sup> *Études freudiennes* nos. 1–2 appeared in November 1969, with articles by André Lussier, Jean-Luc Donnet, and Robert Barande on the organization of psychoanalytic societies.

<sup>2</sup> A pun on the name of the French writer Jean Paulhan.

<sup>3</sup> See "Proposition of 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School," *Analysis* 6 (1995).

is absolutely no question of this modifying anything at all concerning the present functioning of the Institute that the authors belong to.

## 2

*INTERVENTION: I haven't understood a word yet. So, one could start by saying what a psychoanalyst is. For me he is a kind of cop. The people who go into psychoanalysis don't talk and are only concerned about themselves.*

*INTERVENTION: We already have priests, but since that was no longer working, we now have psychoanalysts.*

*INTERVENTION: Lacan, we have been waiting for over an hour now for what you have been stating obliquely, a critique of psychoanalysis. That's why we are silent, because this would also be your own self-criticism.*

But I am not criticizing psychoanalysis in the slightest. There is no question of criticizing it. He's hard of hearing. I am not at all an agitator.

*INTERVENTION: You said that psychoanalysts were not trained at Vincennes, and that this was a good thing. In fact a body of knowledge is dispensed, but you haven't said what it is. It, in any case, is apparently not a body of knowledge. And so what?*

231 Be a bit patient. I will explain it to you. I am your guest, let me remind you. This is beautiful, it's big, it's generous, but I am your guest.

*INTERVENTION: Lacan, is psychoanalysis revolutionary?*

Now, there's a good question!

*INTERVENTION: Is it a body of knowledge or isn't it a body of knowledge? You're not the only paranoid around here.*

I will speak about a certain aspect of things where I won't be today, namely the Department of Psychoanalysis. There is the difficult question of credit points.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Unités de valeur*, units or courses that are credited toward a degree.

*INTERVENTION: The question of credit points is settled, and this is not the place to throw it into the ring. There was all this scheming on the part of the academics in the Department of Psychoanalysis, so as to drag them out over the year. We couldn't care less about credit points. It is psychoanalysis that is at stake. Do you understand? We couldn't care less.*

Personally, I do not get the sense that no one could care less about credit points. On the contrary people care a lot about credit points. It's customary to. I have put the schema for the fourth discourse on the board, the one I didn't name last time, and which is called the university discourse. Here it is. And here, in the master position, as we say, is  $S_2$ , knowledge.

*INTERVENTION: Who are you kidding here? The university discourse is in the credit points. That up there is a myth and what you are asking is that we believe in a myth. The people who invoke the rules of the game that you are imposing are stymied by that. So, don't have us think that the university discourse is up on the board. Because that is just not true.*

The university discourse is on the board, and knowledge occupies, on the board, the top left-hand corner, already designated in a previous discourse. For what is important in what is written up are the relations, where this works and where it doesn't work. If you begin by putting in its place what essentially constitutes the master's discourse, namely, that he commands, that he intervenes in the system of knowledge, you can ask yourselves what it means when the discourse of knowledge, through this ninety-degree displacement, does not need to be on the board because it is in the real. In this displacement, when knowledge takes the helm, at this moment in which you are located, it is here that the result, the fruit, the fallout of the relations between master and slave has been defined—namely, what in my algebra is designated by a letter, the object *a*. Last year, when I made the effort to announce something called *D'un Autre à l'autre*, I said that the object *a* was the place Marx revealed, uncovered, as surplus value.

You are the product of the university, and you prove that you are the surplus value, even if only in this respect—which you not only consent to, but which you also applaud—and I see no reason to object—which is that you leave here, yourselves equivalent to more or fewer credit points. You come here to gain credit points for yourselves. You leave here stamped, “credit points.”

*INTERVENTION: Moral—it would be better to leave here stamped “Lacan.”*

I am not stamping anyone. Why do you presume that I want to stamp you? What rot!

*INTERVENTION: No, you won't stamp us, rest assured. What I mean is that the people here are stamped with the fact that, wanting to maintain the discourse that you maintain for them, they are unable to maintain it in a way that is compatible with their presence here. Some people want to speak in the name of an agitation that you describe as vain. There are others who go "Tiddly tiddly bom bom" in their corner, and that is what forms public opinion. No one says this, pretending that it's for you to say it. What I would like is that you have the desire to keep quiet.*

Ah, they're wonderful! They think that I would say it much better than they. As for me, I am going back home—that's what they reproach me for.

233 *INTERVENTION: Oh, Lacan, don't make fun of people, okay?*

You contribute a discourse which makes such demands that. . . .

*INTERVENTION: What I propose is that people not be made fun of when they ask a question, that you don't speak in a high voice as you've already done three times now. You give a reply, and that's it. Now, what was the question you asked? And then there is something else, since there are people here who think that psychoanalysis is all about problems of arse, all we have to do is have a love-in. Are there any people here who would like to transform this into a wild love-in?*

[He takes off his shirt.]

Listen, my friend, I've seen this before. I was at the Open Theatre last night, there was a bloke who did that, but he had more cheek than you do, he took everything off. Away you go, come on. Shit!

*INTERVENTION: You shouldn't poke fun at him all the same. Why does Lacan confine himself to such a limited criticism of the comrade's practice? To say of the comrade that he cannot undress, while you bang on the table, is perhaps very funny, but it's also very simplistic.*

But I am simplistic!

*INTERVENTION: And that makes them laugh, which is interesting.*

But I don't see why they should stop laughing all of a sudden.

*INTERVENTION: Well, I would really like it if they didn't laugh at that point.*

That's sad.

*INTERVENTION: Just as it is sad to see people leaving here as if to catch the six-o'clock Metro.*

So, where are we? It seems that people cannot speak about psychoanalysis because they expect me to. Well then, they are right. I will do it much better than they would.

*INTERVENTION: That's not quite right, since they feel the need to speak among themselves.*

That's been proved.

*INTERVENTION: There are a number of people, the same ones who are taking notes and who are laughing, who, when Lacan takes the audience in hand, say a number of things to one another, without so much as rising from their seats, for this is the order of a certain topology. Well then, it is these people that I would like to hear.*

*INTERVENTION: Come on, let Lacan speak!*

In the meantime you say nothing.

*INTERVENTION: Lacan with us!*

I am with you.

Time is getting on. Let me try, nevertheless, to give you some idea of what my project is.

It is a matter of articulating a logic which, no matter how feeble it may seem to be—my four little letters that are almost nothing except that you have to know the rules according to which they function—is still strong enough to comprise what is the sign of this logical force, namely incompleteness.

That makes them laugh. Except that it has a very important consequence, especially for the revolutionaries, which is that nothing is everything [*rien n'est tout*].

Whatever way you come at things, whatever way you turn them, each of these little four-legged schemas has the property of leaving its own gap.

At the level of the master's discourse, the gap is precisely that of the recuperation of surplus value.

At the level of the university discourse, it's a different gap. And that's the one that torments you. Not that the knowledge that you are given is not structured and solid. On the contrary, you have only one thing to do, which

is to weave yourselves into it along with those who work, that is with those who teach you, under the banner of the means of production and, consequently, of surplus value.

As to the hysteric's discourse, it is what made the decisive shift possible by giving its meaning to what was historically elaborated by Marx. That is, that there are historical events that can only be judged in terms of symptoms. No one saw where that was heading, not till the day when one had the hysteric's discourse to bring about the shift to something else, which was the psychoanalyst's discourse.

At first, the psychoanalyst only had to listen to what the hysteric was saying. "I want a man who knows how to make love."

Ah, yes, that's where man stops. He stops at the fact that he actually is someone who knows. As to making love, we'll get back to you on that later. Nothing is everything and you can always make your little jokes, there is one that is not funny, and it's castration.

## 3

*INTERVENTION: While this little class is purring along peacefully there are 150 comrades at Beaux-Arts who are being arrested by the cops and who have been at Beaujon since yesterday, because they are not giving classes on the object a like this Mandarin here in our presence, and who no one could care less about. They went to hold a spontaneous seminar at the Ministry of Equipment on the slums and on the politics of Monsieur Chalandon. So I think that the smooth running of this magisterial lecture is a fairly good translation of the current state of decay in the university.*

*INTERVENTION: If people don't want me to speak it's obviously because no one knows how loud I can shout. Lacan, I would like to tell you a few things.*

*It strikes me that we have reached the point where it is obvious that some form of agitation is more or less a possibility in this auditorium. It is clear that one can utter a few shrill words, make a few good jokes, but it is also clear, and perhaps in an obvious way today, that we will never manage to make a critique of the university if we remain within it, in its classes and within the rules that it established before we intervened in it.*

*I think that what the comrade has just said concerning the Beaux-Arts students who went outside the university to hold a spontaneous class on the slums and on the politics of Chalandon is a very important example. It makes it possible for us to find an outlet for our will to change society and, among other things, to destroy the university. And I would like Lacan to give us his point of view on this*

*in a moment. For the university will not be destroyed by a majority of students who are on the inside, but it is much more likely with an alliance over revolutionary positions that we students must make with the laborers, with the peasants and with the workers. I am well aware that this has no relationship with what Lacan was saying before, but. . . .*

But not at all, one does exist.

*INTERVENTION: Perhaps it does exist, but it is not obvious. The relationship between the actions that we must have toward the exterior and Lacan's discourse, if that's what it is, is obviously implicit. And it would be good if Lacan now said what he thinks of the necessity to leave the university and stopped nit-picking over words, challenging academics over this or that quotation from Marx. Because we're fed up to here with the academic Marx. We've been hearing drivel on this in this university for a year now. We know it's shit. Going on about the academic Marx serves the bourgeois university. If the university is to be overthrown, it will be from the outside, with others who are on the outside.*

*INTERVENTION: So why are you on the inside?*

*INTERVENTION: I am inside, comrade, because I want people to leave, I have to come in and tell them.*

You see! It's all there, my friend. To get them to leave, you enter.

*INTERVENTION: Lacan, let me finish. No, it's not all there, because some students still think that by listening to Monsieur Lacan's discourse they will find elements in it that will enable them to challenge his discourse. I claim that this is to let yourselves get caught in a trap.*

Quite true.

*INTERVENTION: If we think that by listening to Lacan's discourse, or Foucault's, or someone else's we will obtain the means to criticize the ideology that they are making us swallow, we're making a big mistake. I claim that we have to look outside to find the means to overthrow the university.*

But outside what? Because when you leave here you become aphasic? When you leave here you continue to speak, consequently you continue to be inside.

*INTERVENTION: I don't know what aphasic is.*

You don't know what aphasic is? That's extremely revolting. You don't know what an aphasic is? There is a minimum one has to know, nevertheless.

*INTERVENTION: I am not at the university twenty-four hours a day.*

Still, you don't know what an aphasic is?

*INTERVENTION: When some people leave the university it is so as to carry out their own personal buggerizing around. Others leave to militate outside. That's what leaving the university means. Now, Lacan, briefly give us your own point of view.*

Create a critical university in short? That is what is happening here? Is that it? You don't know what a critical university is either. Nobody has ever spoken to you.

Okay. I would like to make a small remark. The configuration of workers—peasants has nevertheless led to a form of society in which it is precisely the university that occupies the driving seat. For what reigns in what is commonly called the Soviet Union of Socialist Republics is the university.

238 *INTERVENTION: Who gives a damn? We're not talking about revisionism but Marxism-Leninism.*

That's enough. You ask me to speak, so I will speak. I am not saying things that are up in the stratosphere, I am saying something precise.

*INTERVENTION: You are not saying anything.*

Haven't I just said how I construe the organization of the USSR?

*INTERVENTION: Absolutely not.*

I didn't say that knowledge was king? I didn't say that? Did I?

*INTERVENTION: So?*

So, that has a number of consequences. You, my friend, would not be very comfortable there.

*INTERVENTION: You have been asked a question concerning a certain society and you answer by speaking about another society. What you have to say is why you think it is inevitable.*

I agree totally. The fact is that there are unsurpassable limits to a certain logic, which I have called a weak logic, but still strong enough to leave you a bit of incompleteness, which you effectively bear out perfectly.

*INTERVENTION: I wonder why this amphitheater is packed full with 800 people. It is true that you are a good clown, famous, and that you have come here to speak. A comrade also spoke for ten minutes to say that groups were unable to get themselves out of the university. And everyone, recognizing that there is nothing to be said, is speaking but saying nothing. So, if there is nothing to say, nothing to understand, nothing to know, nothing to do, why are so many people here? And Lacan, why do you stay?*

*INTERVENTION: We have strayed into a bit of a false problem. All because the comrade said that he was coming to the university in order to leave again with other comrades.*

*INTERVENTION: People speak about a New Society. Will psychoanalysis have a function in that society and what will it be?*

A society is not something that can be defined just like that. What I am trying to spell out, because psychoanalysis gives me the evidence for it, is what dominates it, namely, the practice of language. Aphasia means that there is something that has broken down in this respect. Just think that there are people who happen to have things in their brain and who no longer have any idea how to manage with language. That makes them somewhat crippled.

*INTERVENTION: One could say that Lenin almost became aphasic.*

If you had a bit of patience, and if you really wanted our impromptu to continue, I would tell you that, always, the revolutionary aspiration has only a single possible outcome—of ending up as the master's discourse. This is what experience has proved.

What you aspire to as revolutionaries is a master. You will get one.

*INTERVENTION: We've already got one, we have Pompidou.*

Do you believe that you have got a master in Pompidou? What's all that about?

I, too, would like to ask you some questions. For whom, here, does the word "liberal" have a meaning?

*INTERVENTION: Pompidou is a liberal, so is Lacan.*

240 I am, like everybody is, liberal only to the extent that I am antiprogressive. With the caveat that I am caught up in a movement that deserves to be called progressive, since it is progressive to see the psychoanalytic discourse founded, insofar as the latter completes the circle that could perhaps enable you to locate what it is exactly that you are rebelling against—which doesn't stop that thing from continuing incredibly well.

And the first to collaborate with this, right here at Vincennes, are you, for you fulfill the role of hclots of this regime. You don't know what that means either? The regime is putting you on display. It says, "Look at them enjoying!"

Good-bye for today. Bye. It's over.

3 December 1969

## B

### Monsieur Caquot's presentation

In suggesting that Moses may have been put to death by his own people, S. Freud appeals to the authority of Ernst Sellin. This biblical scholar, born in 1867, was one of the most productive representatives of the German exegetical school. In 1922, the date of publication of his book *Mose und seine Bedeutung für die israelitisch-jüdische Religionsgeschichte* [*Moses and his Meaning for Israelite and Jewish History of Religion*], he was Ordinary Professor of the Old Testament at the University of Berlin. As with many of his contemporaries, one can detect, in his work as a historian and exegete, a certain ideology and a methodological option that it is worth discussing if we are to understand the explanations he gives of the Bible.

The ideology is that of liberal Protestantism which sees the high point of biblical revelation in a form of moral preaching that is summed up in the Ten Commandments and developed by the prophets of the eighth century BC, the proto-Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Micah. Less skeptical than some of his friends, E. Sellin held Moses to be the founder of the religion of Israel, the author of the Ten Commandments and the initiator of the moral preaching that the great prophets were merely furthering. The prophets not only adopted Moses' teaching, they also preserved, within their tradition, a record of his life. This is why, according to E. Sellin, Hosea makes, in a passage I will refer you to, allusions to Moses' violent death, which the "historical" literature of the Bible does not mention (Deut. 34:5-6 mentions Moses' death and burial; but it adds that no one knows the location of his tomb, and this somewhat mysterious indication has given birth to the legend of Moses' ascension to heaven). Sellin thinks that the tradition of Moses' violent death was censored by historians from the circle of priests.

The methodological option consists of not trusting the traditional Hebrew text, called "the masoretic." One usually prefers the doyen of translations, the Greek version called the "Septuagint," in which manuscript testimonies are most often earlier than the Hebrew text. But even without the



slightest support from the versions of Antiquity (Greek, Syriac, or Latin), recourse is readily made to corrections in the received Hebrew text, with the aim of giving it a sense that is judged to be more satisfactory. It is supposed that over the course of time the received text, or the Hebrew underlying such a version, has undergone "corruptions" in the oral or written transmission. Exegesis thus understood has sometimes been an exercise in arbitrary virtuosity. E. Sellin's work on Hosea offers a number of examples of this.

It was probably while composing the first edition of his commentary on Hosea, also published in 1922 in the series entitled *Kommentar zum Alten Testament*, that Ernst Sellin thought he had found allusions to the murder of Moses in the prophet's text. The passages he picks out with the help of his hypothesis will be treated briefly as they were understood before or after Sellin and as he interpreted them and what arguments he used.

1. Hos. 5:2a. The hemistich appears in an invective by the prophet against the priests and against the "house of Israel." It consists of three words, not very clear, which would literally translate as "And the massacre, the strayed deepened [it]." The name translated by "strayed" has been understood best, it would seem, by the Jewish tradition which uses "the idolaters" there. But in the first half of the nineteenth century, F. W. Umbreit proposed that this word be replaced by the toponymous "Shittim," which is the same but for the initial hushing, aspirate consonant, which is different, as is the vocalization of the first syllable. This correction led to others: by substituting a simple *t* for the emphatic *t* in writing the first word, and by detaching the final *h*, to form the article belonging to the toponym, one obtained a sentence judged to be more satisfactory as an accusation: "They deepened the pit at Shittim."

243 E. Sellin welcomes this conjecture enthusiastically, for the toponym "Shittim" presents him with a reference point in the historical literature that plays an essential role in his reasoning in favor of the assassination of Moses. This is the famous passage of Numbers 25 where the straying of the Israelites into the sanctuary of Baal of Peor, which occurred while they were staying at Shittim, is recounted. The Israelites were led into temptation by the Moabite women. God became irritated and sent down a plague. The priest Phinehas put an end to it when he transfixes an Israelite caught in adulterous flagrante delicto with a Moabite woman. A bit further on it is said that the man's name was Zimri and the Moabite's was Cozbi.

Sellin would no doubt not have been led to understand the passage in Numbers as he did if his interpretation of Hosea had not conveyed to him his intuition about the assassination of Moses. What he says concerning the episode of Shittim and Baal of Peor indicates an excessive imagination. He reconstitutes an entire scenario in which the Israelite put to death was none other than Moses, who as we know had a Moabite wife (Exod. 2:15-22),

and the violent death of the guide of Israel originally has the value of an expiatory sacrifice that brought the plague to an end. Later, the sacerdotal tradition supposedly recomposes the episode entirely to the glory of the clergy (represented by Phinehas whose zeal is remunerated by the "alliance" granted him by God) and effaces the name of Moses. He is, according to Sellin, the primitive hero of the story the authentic record of whom the prophetic tradition has maintained; they have substituted the name of the insignificant Zimri for his and replaced the name of the Midianite Zipporah by that of Cozbi, constructed on the basis of the root, signifying "to lie."

2. Hos. 9:9. Again, a prophetic indictment against "Ephraim." As in 5:2 this name "the house of Israel" alludes to the kingdom of the North, separated from Judah in 922 and the constant object of Hosea's polemic. 9:8 concerns a "prophet" for whom Ephraim sets a trap. Sellin supposes that it was Moses. The hemistich 8b ending by "he [finds] an adversary in the house of his god" enables Sellin to rediscover the toponym Shittim with which the Hebrew name for the adversary (*mastemah*) has some resemblance. He restitutes, as the primitive text, "At Shittim, in the house of his god." At verse 9 one rediscovers words close to those of 5:2, and just as difficult to understand, for the translation would literally be "They have deepened, they have corrupted as in the days of Gibeah." It is likely that the word commonly translated as "deepen" has a modal value and serves to indicate that the corruption "Ephraim" is accused of has been continuous and systematic. The allusion to the "days of Gibeah" concerns a memorable crime committed in this place, according to the Book of Judges 19. Sellin once again corrects the text to bring it into line with 5:2 as he reads it; by changing the vowels of the verb "they have corrupted," he obtains the substantive "his grave" and translates ". . . Shittim, in the house of his god, they have deeply dug his pit."

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3. Hos. 12:13-13:1. The end of chapter 12 (verse 14) is the sole passage of Hosea in which "the prophet" undeniably refers to Moses: "It was by the intermediary of a prophet that YHWH brought Israel up from Egypt and it was by a prophet that [Israel] was tended [*gardé*]." The text of Hosea 14 can be paraphrased as follows, to bring out the value of the pronominal suffixes that are often equivocal in Hebrew: "Ephraim [= Israel] irritated [YHWH] bitterly, but his blood [= the blood that Ephraim has spilled] will come back upon him [Ephraim] and the Lord will bring the opprobrium that he has committed back upon him."<sup>1</sup> Israel is here accused of crimes of blood, and her punishment by God is announced without any equivocation. The

<sup>1</sup> *The Revised English Bible* gives "Ephraim gave bitter provocation; he will be left to suffer for the blood he has shed; his Lord will punish him for all his blasphemy." (Hos. 12:14).

difficulty lies in 13:1, which could be literally translated as "While Ephraim was speaking [there was] a tremor; it arose in Israel. But he became guilty because of Baal, and he is dead." In all probability this is a satire on the grandeur and decadence of the tribe which, according to Hosea, most directly represents the schismatic royalty, since it is the Ephraimite Jeroboam who in 922 brought about the separation of Israel (in the restricted sense, designating the kingdom of the North) from the kingdom of Judah.

245 Sellin's conjecture consists of substituting the name "my law" (whose consonants would be *trt*) for the name "tremor" (whose consonants are *rtt*); reading the substantive *nasi* ("prince") in place of the verb *nasa* ("to rise"); giving the verb "make oneself guilty" the acceptation "expiate" which he believes possible because the name of the same root designates an expiatory sacrifice; and, finally, displacing the hemistich 12:15b after the verse 13:1. This would give (12:14) "It was by a prophet [Moses] that YHWH brought Israel up from Egypt and it was by a prophet that [Israel] was tended." (12:15a) "But Ephraim irritated [YHWH] bitterly." (13:1) "While Ephraim was speaking my law, he was prince in Israel. He [the prophet] expiated because of Baal [the sin of Baal of Peor] and he is dead." (12:15b) "But his blood [the blood of the prophet] will come back upon him [Ephraim] and the Lord will bring back upon him the opprobrium that he has committed." Sellin finds here the clearest expression of the meaning he wants to give to the alleged murder of the prophet: Moses was put to death by his own people as an expiatory victim following the collective sin of Baal of Peor. He justifies this strange hypothesis by a declaration by Moses in Exod. 32:32 where the hero pleads for a divine pardon for the people for their sin of the Golden Calf, even if it should be he who is to be effaced from the book of God. But it is not possible to ignore the Christian roots of Sellin's ideas, which in this way found in Moses the prototype of the mysterious suffering characters of whom the prophetic literature speaks: the "servant of YHWH" of Deutero-Isaiah (see in particular Isa. 52:13-53:12 and the "transfixing" of Zech. 12:10).

Sellin was aware of the fragility of his hypotheses of 1922. In 1928, in an article in the *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* (46:261-3) entitled "Hosea und das Martyrium des Mose," he returns to the study of Hos. 12:14-13:1, proposing some new corrections to the text of 13:1a: "While Ephraim was uttering these rebellious words [reading *rbt* in place of *rtt*], he [namely the prophet, that is, Moses] took [it] upon himself and he expiated." It is in the second edition of his commentary on Hosea, published in 1929, that he shows himself to be the most skeptical with respect to his initial intuition. He still believes that Hosea contains the record of an expiatory death of Moses, but he no longer reads 13:1 as he had interpreted it in 1928. In Hos. 5:2 he rejects F. W. Umbreit's correction, even contests the

relevance of the alleged reference to Shittim for evoking the affair of Baal of Peor, and translates 5:2 as "Deeply have they dug the tomb of the strayed." In 9:8-9 he no longer corrects *mastemah* as "Shittim," and while he does retain his translation of 9:9a, "Deeply have they dug his pit," he no longer thinks that the "prophet" that the possessive refers to is Moses. This would be a personification of the prophetic function as Sellin conceives it; the vehicle of the divine word is destined to be a martyr.

246 As K. Budde points out in 1932 ("Goethe zu Moses Tod," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 50:300-03), Goethe had imagined the violent death of Moses a century and a half before E. Sellin. In one of his *Noten und Abhandlungen zu besseren Verständnis des west-östlichen Diwans* (in the Hempel IV edition, p. 320 ff.), he supposes that Joshua and Caleb, tired of Moses' indecision over crossing Jordan to get to the promised land, assassinated the elderly guide in order to take control of Israel. This is a more simple conjecture than Sellin's, but no less gratuitous, for the laconic information of Deut. 34:5-6 on Moses' unknown tomb can certainly stir one's imagination, but it justifies no hypothesis about Moses' death. One might wonder whether S. Freud might not owe this idea of Moses' violent death to a distant recollection of his reading of Goethe and whether he might not have wanted to give it a justification judged to be more scholarly by evoking the sole authority of E. Sellin.

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