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## The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis

### Report on the 1964 Seminar

The hospitality received from the École normale supérieure, and a much larger audience, indicated a change of front for our discourse.

For ten years it had been calibrated to the capacities of specialists; no doubt the only admissible witnesses to the action par excellence that psychoanalysis offers them, but, equally, whose conditions of recruitment leave them quite shut off from the dialectical order that governs this action.

We developed an ὄργανον for their use, putting it forward in accordance with a propaedeutics that did not introduce any one of its stages before they had been able to gauge how well-founded was the preceding stage.

The presentation was what had to be overturned – so it appeared to us – finding in crisis less the occasion for a synthesis than the duty to clarify the abruptness of the real that we were reinstating in the field left in our care by Freud.

Far from being a Hegelian reduction of this real (except to reaffirm it as rational), our effort had furnished the subversion produced in the subject of knowledge with its status. Our talk from this year chose the four concepts that play an originating function in this subversion: the unconscious, repetition, transference, and the drive – so as to redefine each one of them and show them as being knotted together by the topology that sustains them in a common function.

The question that goes to make up our radical project therefore remained a permanent one: the question that goes from: *is psychoanalysis a science?* to: *what is a science that includes psychoanalysis?*

The *unconscious* maintained in accordance with our inaugural proposition as the effect of the signifier, and as structured like a language, was taken up there as a temporal pulsation.

In *repetition* the function of *τύχη* that shelters behind its aspect of *αὐτόματος* was brought to light: the wanting encounter is singled out here as relation to the real.

*Transference* as the period of closure linked to love's trickery was integrated into this pulsation.

Of the *drive* we gave a theory that, here mid-way through 1965 when suddenly we are being urged to deliver this summary, cannot as yet be demarcated.

The reason for its constancy, a topology termed "rim-like", accounting for the privilege of the orifices, the return-action status, and the dissociation of goal and object, appeared there for the very first time.

This hunt tally does not spell out the twists and turns that are necessary to ensure such a knot, nor what it clasps.

There we marked once again the pre-emption of the Cartesian subject in so far as it is distinct from the subject of cognition [*connaissance*] as subject of certainty – and how, given new value by the unconscious, it passes to the rank of being a precondition to psychoanalytic action.

Likewise, the scopic drive, in order to serve us as a paradigm, underwent a particular development. Demonstrating the antinomy therein between vision and the gaze had the goal of reaching the register of lost object here, a fundamental register for Freud's thought.

We formulated this object as the cause of this position of subject that the fantasy subordinates.

But the simultaneous publication, in a devout collation, of the book *The Visible and The Invisible*, where Merleau-Ponty's examination was broken off just as it was clearly in the process of converting, would call upon us to insist on the priority that falls to structural features in any attempt to breach ontics. We suspended this line of approach while at the same time announcing "the subjective positions of Being" for the coming year.

With time one will be able to read the limits into which, through the involvement of our enunciation, we steered the slackening effect that our thematic suffered due to a dissemination that came as a surprise for us at that turning point. This corrective concerns the lot of everything that rallies, too widely now, under the structuralist banner.

Once again there is confirmation here, in the progress of science, of the ethical correlation to which psychoanalysis possesses the keys, and whose lot is therefore a precarious one.

This is why our last part came back to a fundament of greater logic by challenging, based on this locus of the Big Other which we promote as being constitutive of the subject, the notion of alienation; a notion that is being vilified by a political criticism that has been going awry.

1965

**Translated from the French by Adrian Price**

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