

that I am told that they were deemed "too beautiful" to be in need of confirmation?).

It was not only at *Le Monde* that it was maintained that the comments were indeed his.

Agreeing subsequently that it had been somewhat hasty in its investigation, did *Le Monde* not owe it to itself not to publish the declaration that had been received, this time, in Monsieur Flacelière's own name without asking him to specify with which thefts, and with what variety of stolen object, he intended to besmirch the presence in his home of individuals who were asking him for an explanation which he refused to give?

Monsieur Flacelière would thus justify his call to the police, followed by the immediate effect of their armed presence.

I call on Monsieur Flacelière through your channels to declare the extent of the thefts for which he is holding his indiscreet visitors accountable.

[Who said what: that is now the principal aspect of the polemic. We ourselves specified that the commentary on the incomprehensible character of Dr. Lacan's lectures did not emanate from the director of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, but from another member of its administration. Dr. Lacan's affirmation that we would be convinced of the contrary is entirely incorrect.

Moreover, we have not at all admitted to having been hasty in our investigation. We simply published in *Le Monde* of June 27 the declaration that a member of the Ecole's administration had made to us, and on June 28 a clarification by its director denying it.—B. G. A.]

July 5, 1969

Jacques Lacan: (a dog passing by the platform on which he is standing) I shall speak of my muse, who is of that sort. She is the only person I know who knows what she is speaking—I don't say: what she is saying—for it is not that she doesn't say anything: she doesn't say it in words. She says something when she is anxious—it happens—she places her head on my knees. She knows that I am going to die, a fact which a certain number of individuals know also. Her name is Justine . . .

Intervention: Hey! Is this possible? He's talking to us about his dog!

Jacques Lacan: She is my bitch, she is very beautiful and you would have heard her speak . . . the only thing she lacks relative to the individual strolling there is not to have gone to the University.

Here I am then, officially a guest at the Experimental Center of said University, an experience that seems to me to be rather exemplary. Since it is a question of experience, you might ask yourselves what use you are. If you ask me, I will make you a diagram—I will try to—because after all, you know, the University is very strong, it has deep foundations.

I have reserved for you the announcement of the title of one of the four discursive positions that I have announced elsewhere; I began my seminar with the discourse of the master, as I called it, since you are accustomed to hearing about him. And it's not easy to give an example, as someone quite intelligent remarked last night. I shall try, nevertheless: quite simply, that is the point I've reached, leaving the matter in suspense in my seminar. And to be sure, it is not a question of continuing here. An impromptu, I have said. You can see that that thing with the lowered tail provided me with one a few minutes ago. I shall continue in the same tone.

Secondly, the discourse of the hysteric. That one is very important, because with it the discourse of the psychoanalyst takes shape. Except that what is needed is that there be psychoanalysts . . . That is what I have made my business.

Intervention: There are no psychoanalysts at Vincennes, at any rate.

Jacques Lacan: You said it, not at Vincennes.

Intervention: Why is it that Vincennes students, at the conclusion of the teaching they are said to receive, can't become psychoanalysts?

Jacques Lacan (speaking in falsetto): That is precisely what I shall explain, Made-moiselle. That is precisely what is in question. Because psychoanalysis is not something that can be transmitted like any other form of knowledge.

The psychoanalyst has a position which happens to be able ultimately to be that of a discourse. He doesn't transmit a body of knowledge with it, not that there isn't anything to be known, contrary to what is imprudently advanced, since that is what is called into question: the function in society of a certain knowledge, one which is transmitted to you. It exists.

Intervention: Could you speak more slowly since some students are having trouble taking notes?

Intervention: You have to be weak in the head to take notes and to understand nothing about psychoanalysis nor about Lacan in particular.

Jacques Lacan (turning toward the blackboard): This is a sequence, an algebraic sequence . . .

Intervention: Man cannot be solved like an equation.

Jacques Lacan: . . . whose consistency lies in constituting a chain whose starting point is in this formula:

$$\begin{array}{l} \underline{S^2 a S S} \\ S^1 S S a \end{array}$$

A signifier is defined as representing a subject for another signifier. That is quite a fundamental notation. It can in any event be taken as such. Through my offices, an attempt has been elaborated, one to which I have devoted sufficient time to allow me to give it form, and which I am now bringing to completion, an attempt to institute what necessitated the manipulation of a notion while encouraging subjects to trust him, to work with it. That is called a psychoanalytic patient.

I initially wondered what the result might be for the psychoanalyst, where he was in all of this. For on that score, it is plain that the current notions are not

clear. Since Freud—who knew what he was saying—said that the psychoanalyst's was an impossible function—which was nevertheless fulfilled every day. If you reread the text you will see that it is not a question of the function but of the being of the psychoanalyst. What is it that happens such that one fine day a psychoanalytic patient commits himself to being one: a psychoanalyst?

That is what I attempted to articulate when I spoke of the psychoanalytic act. I interrupted my seminar that year (it was '68) before the end, like that, in order to show my sympathy for what was astir and which continues . . . moderately. Contestation makes me think of something that was invented one day, if my memory is right, by my (late) good friend, Marcel Duchamp: "the bachelor prepares his chocolate by himself." Watch out lest the demonstrator prepare his chocolate by himself. In brief, the psychoanalytic act was left out in the cold, if I may say so. And I have not had time to return to it—even less in that examples of what you get that way have been proliferating all around me.

Intervention: Namely, a bit of deafness.

Jacques Lacan: Something like that came out; it is called *Etudes Freudiennes*. I cannot recommend your reading it too highly, having never recoiled from proposing bad readings to you which themselves are in the nature of best-sellers. If I recommend it to you, it is because they are very, very good texts. These are not like that grotesque little text of comments about my style which had quite naturally found its place in the arena vacated by Polan's non-sense [*Polânerie*]. This is something else. You will derive the greatest profit from it. Aside from an article by the person directing it and about which I cannot say too much good, you have statements incontestably and universally contesting the institution of psychoanalysis. There is a charming, solid, and likable Canadian who says things, my Lord, that are quite pertinent; there is someone from the Institut Psychanalytique de Paris, holding a very important position there in the Educational Committee, who undertakes a critique of the psychoanalytic institution as such in so far as it is in strict contradiction with what is required by the very existence of the psychoanalyst, which is a marvel. I can't say that I would sign it, since I have already signed it: the comments are my own. In any event, in my case, the critique has a sequel, a certain proposal that draws conclusions from the impasse that is so magisterially demonstrated. One might say somewhere, in a very short article, that there is an extremist in a certain place who attempted to work that into a proposal which radically renews the selection process in psychoanalysis. It is clear that it is not being done. And this is really not to complain since in the opinion of the very individuals concerned, that act of contestation is up in the air, entirely gratuitous: there is absolutely no question of its modifying anything at all in the present functioning of the institute in which the authors are participants.

Intervention: Ah, he really speaks well!

Intervention: Up until now, I haven't understood a thing. So maybe we can begin by knowing what a psychoanalyst is. For me he is a kind of cop. People who get psychoanalyzed don't talk and are concerned only with themselves.

Intervention: We already had the priests, but with them, it didn't work. Now we have the psychoanalysts.

Intervention: Lacan, we have been waiting for an hour for what you have been announcing obliquely: a critique of psychoanalysis. That's why we're being quiet, because that would be your self-criticism as well.

Jacques Lacan: But I am not at all criticizing psychoanalysis; there is no question of criticizing it. He doesn't understand very well. I am not at all engaging in contestation.

Intervention: You said that at Vincennes they didn't train psychoanalysts and that it was a good thing. In point of fact, a body of knowledge is dispensed, but you haven't said what it is. In any event, it wouldn't be a body of knowledge. So?

Jacques Lacan: A little patience. I'll explain it to you. I am the guest, I'll have you know. All this is splendid, great, and generous. But I am the guest.

Intervention: Lacan, is psychoanalysis revolutionary?

Jacques Lacan: There's a good question.

Intervention: Is it a form of knowledge or isn't it? You're not the only paranoia here.

Jacques Lacan: I shall speak of a certain aspect of things where I am not today, namely, the Department of Psychoanalysis. There is the delicate question of course credits [*unités de valeurs*].

Intervention: The question of course credits is settled, and this is not the moment to bring it up. There has been a whole maneuver by the instructors in the Department of Psychoanalysis to drag them out over the whole year. But we don't give a damn about course credits. What we're talking about is psychoanalysis. You understand? We don't give a damn.

Jacques Lacan: I don't at all feel that nobody gives a damn about course credits.

On the contrary, course credits are something people care a lot about . . . It's a habit. Since I have put on the blackboard the diagram of the fourth discourse, the one that I didn't name last time and that is called academic discourse, here it is. Here, in the master position, as it's called, S^2 , knowledge. I explained . . .

Intervention: Whom are you taking for a ride here? Academic discourse is in course credits. That is a myth and what you are asking for is for us to believe in a myth. The people who invoke the rules of the game that you are imposing, they stink. So don't try to make us believe that academic discourse is on the board. Because that is just not true.

Jacques Lacan: Academic discourse is on the board because it occupies, on the board, the upper left-hand space . . .

Intervention: Up there to the right of God, that's Lacan.

Jacques Lacan: . . . already designated in a previous discourse. For what is important in what is written are the relations; that is where it gets across or doesn't. If you begin by putting in its place what essentially constitutes the discourse of the Master . . .

Intervention: What is a Master? It's Lacan.

Jacques Lacan: . . . to wit: that he orders, that he intervenes in the system of knowledge. You may ask yourselves what it means when the discourse of knowledge, through this displacement of a quarter of a circle, does not need to be on the board because it is in the real. In that displacement, when knowledge gets hold of the handle, at the very moment at which you are, there is where the result, fruit and fallout of the relations of the master and the slave have been defined. Namely, in my algebra, what is designated by a letter, the object *petit a*. The object *petit a*, last year, when I took the trouble to announce something called "from an other to the Other." I said that it was the place revealed and designated by Marx as surplus value.

You are the products of the University and you prove that you are surplus value, if only in this: what you not only consent to but actually applaud — and I don't see why I would object to it — is that you yourselves emerge from it, equal to more or less credits [*unités de valeur*]. You come here to turn yourselves into units of credit: you leave here stamped "Units of Credit."

Intervention: The moral being that one would do better to come out of here stamped by Lacan.

Jacques Lacan: I don't stamp anyone. What is this? Why do you presume that I want to stamp you. What a story!

Intervention: No, you won't stamp us, don't worry. What I mean is that the people here are stamped by the fact that although they want to sustain the discourse that you sustain for them, they cannot do it in a way compatible with their presence here. Some people want to speak in the name of a contestation that you describe as vain. Others go play Tralala, Boom-Boom in their corner; that's what makes for trends of public opinion. No one says this, pretending that it is for you to say it. What I would like is for you to have the desire to keep quiet.

Jacques Lacan: But they are really very good! They think that I would say it much better than they (*resorting, as is his wont, to a high-pitched voice*). As for me, I'm going back home. That's what they reproach me with.

Intervention: Oh! Lacan, stop making fun of people, O.K.!

Jacques Lacan: You bring to bear a discourse with such demands . . .

Intervention: For my part, what I propose is that people not be made fun of when they ask a question. One doesn't adopt a high-pitched voice as you just did on three occasions: one answers and that's it. So then, what was the question you asked?

And then, there's something else. Since some people here think that psychoanalysis is about getting enough ass, all we have to do is stage a love-in. Anyone want to turn this into a wild love-in? (beginning to undress, he stops after taking off his shirt).

Jacques Lacan: Listen, my friend, I already saw that last night; I was at the Open Theater; there is a guy who did that, but he had a little more nerve than you. He stripped till he was completely naked. Go ahead, I mean why don't you continue! Shit!

Intervention: All the same, let's not kid ourselves. Why is Lacan satisfied with so limited a criticism of the comrade's practice. To bang on the table and say of the comrade that he can't undress may be very funny, but it's also very simplistic.

Jacques Lacan: But I am simplistic!

Intervention: And that makes them laugh. It's interesting.

Jacques Lacan: But I don't see why all of a sudden they wouldn't laugh.

Intervention: As for me, I'd like them to laugh at that moment.

Jacques Lacan: This is sad!

Intervention: Just as it's sad to see people coming out of here as though out of a subway at six P.M.

Jacques Lacan: So where are we now? It appears that people can't talk about psychoanalysis, because they're waiting for me to be the one to do it. Well, let me tell you they're right, because I can do it much better than they can.

Intervention: That's not exactly it, since they feel the need to speak among themselves.

Jacques Lacan: That's been demonstrated.

Intervention: There are a certain number of individuals, the same ones who are taking notes and laughing, who, whenever Lacan gets hold of his audience, tell each other a certain number of things without rising from their seats, and what is at stake here is a certain topology. Well those are the people I'd like to hear.

Intervention: Come on, let Lacan speak!

Jacques Lacan: In the meanwhile, you are not saying a thing.

Intervention: L-A-C-A-N with us!

Jacques Lacan: I am with you.

Well, the hour is getting late. Let's try, nevertheless, to give you some idea of what I'm trying to do.

It is a matter of articulating a logic, which, however feeble it may appear to be (my four little letters that don't look like anything except that the rules according to which they function must be known) is still strong enough to include the sign of that logical strength, to wit: incompleteness . . .

It makes them laugh! Except that it has a very important consequence, particularly for revolutionaries, which is that No Thing is All.

Intervention: Oh! Fine!

Jacques Lacan: From whatever angle you take things, and however you may turn them, the property of each of these four-legged little diagrams is to allow

each its cleft. At the level of the discourse of the master, it's precisely that of the retrieval of surplus value; at the level of academic discourse, it's another one. And that's the one that torments you. Not that the knowledge transmitted to you is not structured and solid and you have but one thing to do, which is to weave yourselves in with those who are working—that is, those who are teaching you—as means of production and, as a result, of surplus value.

At the level of the discourse of the hysteric, which is the one that enabled a decisive transition by giving its meaning to what Marx articulated historically. Namely, that there are historical events that can be judged only in terms of symptoms. No one saw how far that went until the day there appeared the discourse of the hysteric in order to effect the transition to something else, which is the discourse of the psychoanalyst. The psychoanalyst at first had but to listen to the discourse of the hysteric.

Intervention: Consequently, the hysteric is the master of the psychoanalyst . . .

Jacques Lacan: I want a man who knows how to make love . . . Well, indeed, that's where man stops. He stops in that he is indeed someone who knows. As for making love, we'll get back to you later on that. No Thing is All, and you can always indulge in your little jokes, but there is one that is not funny, and it's castration.

Intervention: While this lecture is droning peacefully on, there are 150 comrades from Beaux-Arts who have been arrested by the cops, and who have been at Beaujon since yesterday, because *they* don't teach courses about the object *petit a*, like the mandarin in our presence about whom nobody gives a damn. They went to teach a "wild cat" seminar at the Ministry of Equipment on the subject of slums and the policies of Monsieur Chalandon. So I think that the drone of this magisterial lecture conveys rather well the present state of decay of the University.

Intervention: Because frankly, everything that he says is bullshit, no?

Jacques Lacan: You bet!

Intervention: If nobody wants to let me speak, plainly, it's because nobody knows just how loud I can yell. Lacan, I'd like to tell you some things.

It seems to me that we have come to the point where it is clear that some form of contestation can possibly take shape in this auditorium. It is clear that we can sound a few shrill cries, make a few good puns, but it is also clear—and perhaps quite evidently so today—that we can never arrive at a critique of the University if we remain within it, within its courses and within the rules that it established prior to our intervention.

I think that what the comrade just said about the Beaux-Arts students who went to teach a "wild cat" seminar on the subject of slums and Chalandon's policies outside the University is a very important example. It allows 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 opinion on that in a little while. For the University will not be destroyed by a majority of students working within it, but more likely on the basis of a union that we students should forge, on revolutionary grounds, with the workers and the peasants. I am well aware that no relation exists between this and what Lacan was just saying . . .

Jacques Lacan: But not at all, not at all. It does exist . . .

Intervention: It may perhaps exist, but not in any clear fashion. The relation between the actions that we ought to take on the outside and Lacan's discourse (if that's what it is) is manifestly implicit. And it would be good if Lacan told us now what he thinks of the necessity of stepping out of the University and stopped screwing around with words, challenging some professor about one quotation or another from Marx. Because we have had it up to here with academic Marxism. We've been hearing people drool over the subject on this campus for a year now. We know that it's shit. To do academic Marxism is to serve the bourgeois University. If we are to overthrow the University, it will be from the outside, with others who are on the outside.

Intervention: So why are you inside?

Intervention: I am inside, comrade, because if I want people to leave, I have to come in and tell them.

Jacques Lacan: Ah! you see . . . everything is there, my friend, in order to get them to go out, you come in . . .

Intervention: Lacan, let me finish. Everything is *not* there, because certain students still think that by listening to the discourse of Monsieur Lacan they will find in it the elements that will allow them to contest his discourse. I say that they are letting themselves be had.

Jacques Lacan: Quite right.

Intervention: If we think that it's by listening to the discourse of Lacan, Foucault, Doummegues, Terray, or anyone else that we'll be able to criticize the ideology that they're making us swallow, we're looking up our own asses. I say that we have to look outside for the means to overthrow the University.

Jacques Lacan: I didn't say that knowledge was king. I didn't say that. No?

Intervention: So?

Jacques Lacan: And so that has certain consequences, that is, my dear follow, you would not be very comfortable there.

Intervention: We asked a question concerning one society and you answer about another society. What you have to say is why you think it's inevitable.

Jacques Lacan: I quite agree. For there are limits that shouldn't be transgressed in a certain logic which I have called feeble, though it's still strong enough to allow you a bit of incompleteness, to which you are attesting quite perfectly.

Intervention: As for me, I wonder why this amphitheater is jammed with 800 people. It's true that you are a fine and famous clown, and that you have come to speak. A comrade also spoke for ten minutes in order to say that militant groups couldn't work their own way out of the University. And everyone recognizing that there is nothing to be said, speaks in order to say nothing. Well, if there is nothing to be said, nothing to understand, nothing to know, nothing to do, why is there this crowd here? And why, Lacan, are you staying here?

Intervention: We are a bit lost here amidst a false problem. And all because the comrade said that he came to the University in order to leave again with other comrades.

Intervention: There is talk of a new society. Will psychoanalysis play a role in that society, and what will it be?

Jacques Lacan: A society is not something that can be defined just like that. What I am attempting to articulate, because analysis gives me the evidence, is what dominates it—to wit: the practice of language. Aphasia means that there is something that has broken down in that area. Imagine that there are guys to whom stuff happens in their brain and who can no longer in any way manage to make do with language. It leaves them rather infirm.

Intervention: One could say that Lenin almost became an aphasiac.

Jacques Lacan: If you had a little patience, and if you were willing for our impromptus to continue, I would tell you that the aspiration to revolution has but one conceivable issue, always, the discourse of the master. That is what experience has proved. What you, as revolutionaries, aspire to is a Master. You will have one.

Jacques Lacan: I didn't say that I

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Erratum
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Intervention: We already have him. We've got Pompidou.

Jacques Lacan: You actually think you have a master with Pompidou! Well? But what are you talking about . . . I too would like to ask some questions. For whom here does the word "liberal" have a meaning?

Intervention: Pompidou is a liberal, Lacan too.

Jacques Lacan: I am liberal, like everyone else, only in so far as I am anti-progressive. With the single modification that I am caught in a movement which deserves to be called progressive, for it is progressive to see the discourse of psychoanalysis achieve its foundation in so far as it completes the circle that might perhaps allow you to situate what precisely is at stake, what it is that you are rebelling against. Which will not at all prevent it from continuing, smashingly well. And the first to collaborate with it, and right here at Vincennes, are you, for you fulfill the role of the helots of this regime. You don't know what that means either? The regime puts you on display; it says: "Watch them fuck . . ."

Well. There it is. So long for today. Bye.
It's over.

December 3, 1969

I speak without the slightest hope—specifically of making myself understood.

I know that I do so—by adding thereto whatever it entails of the unconscious

That is my advantage over the man who thinks and does not perceive that, to start with, he speaks. An advantage which I owe solely to my experience.

For in the interval between the word that he misconstrues and what he believes he renders as thought, man gets bogged down in confusion, which is no encouragement to him.

So that man thinks *feebly*, and all the more feebly in that he rages . . . precisely at getting bogged down in confusion.

There is a problem with the Ecole. It's no mystery. Consequently, I am addressing it, none too early.

The problem is revealed as such, at having a solution: which is a *dis*—a dissolution.

To be understood as from the Association which gives that Ecole its juridical status.

That it be enough for one to go away for all to be free is, according to my Borromean knot, true of each, but must be so of myself in my Ecole.¹

I resolve myself to it since it would function, were I not to put myself in its way, contrary to that for which I founded it.

Namely for a labor, I have said as much—which in the field opened up by Freud restores the cutting edge of his truth—which brings the original praxis he instituted under the name of psychoanalysis back to the duty incumbent upon it in our world—which, through an assiduous critique, denounces the deviations and compromises blunting its progress while degrading its use. An objective that I maintain.

1. The Borromean knot is a topological structure on which Lacan speculated toward the end of his career: three rings are interconnected in such manner that if one is broken, the other two are set free.