

*THE PLACE, ORIGIN
AND END OF MY TEACHING*

I do not think I will give you my teaching in the form of a pill; I think that would be difficult.

Perhaps that will come later. That is always how it ends. When you have been dead long enough, you find yourself being summed up in three lines of a textbook – though where I am concerned, I’m not too sure which textbook it will be. I cannot foresee which textbooks I will figure in because I cannot foresee anything to do with the future of my teaching, or in other words psychoanalysis. We don’t know what will become of this psychoanalysis. For my part, I do hope it becomes something, but it is not certain that that’s the way it is heading.

You can see from that that my title, ‘The Place, Origin and End of My Teaching’, can begin to take on a meaning that is more than just summative. What I am trying to do

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is to let you in on something that is under way, that is in train, something that is unfinished and that will probably be finished only when I am finished, if I don't have one of those annoying accidents that make you outlive yourself. There again, I'm telling you I'm not heading in that direction.

It's like a well-constructed dissertation, with a start, a beginning and an end. 'Place', because we really do have to begin at the beginning.

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In the beginning, there was not the origin. There was the place.

There are perhaps two or three people here who have some idea about this same old story of mine. Place is a term I often use, because there are often references to place in the field that my discourses – or my discourse, if you prefer – deal with. If you want to know where you are in that field, it is advisable to have what other and more self-assured domains call a topology, and to have some idea of how the support on which what is at stake is inscribed was constructed.

I certainly will not get that far this evening because I absolutely refuse to give you my teaching in the form of a little pill. 'Place' means something very different here

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from what it means in topology, in the sense of structure, where it is just a question of knowing whether a surface is a sphere or a ring, because what can be done with it is not at all the same. But that is not what this is about. 'Place' can have a very different meaning. It simply means the place I have come to, and which puts me in a position to teach, given that there is such a thing as teaching.

Well, that place has to be inscribed in the register of what is our common fate. You occupy the place where an act pushes you, just like that, from the right or the left, any old way. It so happens that circumstances were such that, truth to tell, I really did not think it was my destiny, and . . . well . . . I just had to grab hold of the thread.

It all revolves around the fact that the function of the psychoanalyst is not self-evident, that, when it comes to giving him his status, his habits, his reference, and even his place in the world, nothing is obvious, nothing is self-evident at all.

There are the places I talked about first: topological places, places that have to do with essence, and then there is your place in the world. You usually get to that place by pushing and shoving. In short, it leaves you some hope. No matter how many of you there are, you will always end up in a certain place, with a bit of luck. It goes no further than that.

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So far as my place is concerned, things go back to the year 1953. At that time, in psychoanalysis in France, we were in what might be called a moment of crisis. There was talk of setting up an institutional mechanism to settle the future status of psychoanalysts.

All accompanied by big election promises. If you go along with Mr So-and-so, we were told, the status of psychoanalysts will quickly be granted all sorts of official sanctions and blessings – especially medical sanctions and blessings.

As is the rule with promises of this kind, nothing came of them. And yet something was set up as a result.

It so happened that this change did not suit everyone, for extremely contingent reasons. So long as things had not been settled, there could be – were – frictions, what we call conflicts.

In the midst of this commotion, I found myself, along with a number of others, on a raft. For ten years, we lived on, well, on whatever came to hand. We weren't completely without resources, weren't completely down and out. And in the midst of all that, it so happened that what I had to say about psychoanalysis began to have a certain import.

These are not things that happen all by themselves. You can talk about psychoanalysis just like that, bah!, and it is very easy to verify that people do talk about it like

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that. It is not quite so easy to talk about it every week, making it a rule never to say the same thing twice, and not to say what is already familiar, even though you know that what is already familiar is not exactly unessential. But when what is already familiar seems to you to leave a lot to be desired, seems to you to be based on a false premise, then it has very different repercussions.

Everyone thinks they have an adequate idea of what psychoanalysis is. 'The unconscious . . . well . . . it's the unconscious.' Nowadays, everyone knows there is such a thing as an unconscious. There are no more problems, no more objections, no more obstacles. But what is this unconscious?

We've always known about the unconscious. Of course there are lots of things that are unconscious, and of course everyone has been talking about them for a long time in philosophy. But in psychoanalysis, the unconscious is an unconscious that thinks hard. It's crazy, what can be dreamed up in that unconscious. Thoughts, they say.

Just a minute, just a minute. 'If they are thoughts, it can't be unconscious. The moment the unconscious begins to think, it thinks that it's thinking. Thought is transparent to itself; you can't think without knowing you are thinking.'

Of course, that objection no longer carries any weight at all. Not that anyone has any real idea of what is

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refutable about it. It seems refutable, but it is irrefutable. And that is precisely what the unconscious is. It's a fact, a new fact. We have to begin to think up something that can explain it, can explain why there are such things as unconscious thoughts. It's not self-evident.

No one has in fact got down to doing that, and yet it is an eminently philosophical question.

I will tell you from the outset that that is not how I set about it. It so happens that the way I did set about it easily refutes that objection, but it is no longer really an objection because everyone now is absolutely convinced on that point.

Well then, the unconscious has been accepted, but there again we think that a lot of other things have been accepted – pre-packaged and just as they come – and the outcome is that everyone thinks they know what psychoanalysis is, apart from psychoanalysts, and that really is worrying. They are the only ones not to know.

It's not only that they do not know; up to a point, that is quite reassuring. If they thought they knew straight-away, just like that, matters would be serious and there would be no more psychoanalysis at all. Ultimately, everyone is in agreement. Psychoanalysis? The matter is closed. But it can't be for psychoanalysts.

And this is where things begin to get interesting. There are two ways of proceeding in such cases.

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The first is to try to be as *with it* as possible, and to call it into question. An operation, an experience, a technique about which the technicians are forced to admit that they have nothing to say when it comes to what is most central, most essential – now, that would be something to see, wouldn't it! That might stir up a lot of sympathy because there are, after all, a lot of things to do with our common fate that are like that, and they are precisely the things psychoanalysis is interested in.

The only problem is that, well, psychoanalysts have, as fate would have it, always adopted the opposite attitude. They do not say that they know in so many words, but they imply that they do. 'We know a bit about it, but let's keep quiet about that. Let's keep it between ourselves.' We enter this field of knowledge by way of a unique experience that consists, quite simply, in being psychoanalysed. After that, you can talk. Being able to talk does not mean that you do talk. You could. You could if you wanted to, and you would want to if you were talking to people like us, people who are in the know, but what's the point?

And so we remain silent with those who do know and with those who don't know, because those who don't know can't know.

After all, it is a tenable position. They adopt it, so that proves it's tenable. Even so, it's not to everyone's liking.

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And that means that, somewhere, the psychoanalyst has a weak spot, you know. A very big weak spot.

What I have said so far may seem comical to you, but these are not weaknesses. It is coherent. Only, there is something that makes the analyst change his attitude, and that is where it begins to become incoherent.

The psychoanalyst knows perfectly well that he has to be careful not to surrender to his temptation, to his penchant, and in his day-to-day practice he does watch his step. Psychoanalysis in the collective sense, on the other hand, or psychoanalysts, when there's a crowd of them, a host of them, want it to be known that they are there *for the good of all*.

They are very careful, however, not to move straight from this 'good of all' to the good [*bien*] of the individual, of a particular patient, because experience has taught them that wishing people well [*bien*] all too often brings about the opposite effect. It is rather in their dealings with the outside world that psychoanalysts become close to being real propagandists.

No, insofar as they are represented as a profession, psychoanalysts absolutely want to be on the right side, on the winning side. And so, in order to prove that they are, they have to demonstrate that what they do, what they say, has already been found somewhere, that it has already been said, that it is something you come across.

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When you come to the same crossroads in other sciences, you say something similar: namely, that it's not all that new, that you'd already thought of it.

And so we relate this unconscious to old rumours, and erase the line that would allow us to see that the Freudian unconscious has absolutely nothing to do with what was called the 'unconscious' before Freud.

The word had been used, but it is not the fact that the unconscious is unconscious that is characteristic of it. The unconscious is not a negative characteristic. There are lots of thing in my body of which I am not conscious, and that are absolutely not part of the Freudian unconscious. That the body takes an interest in it from time to time is not why the unconscious workings of the body are at stake in the Freudian unconscious.

I give you this example because I do not want to go too far. Let me simply add that they even go so far as to say that the sexuality they talk about is the same thing that biologists talk about. Absolutely not. That's sales patter [*boniment*].

Ever since Freud, the psychoanalytic crew have been propagandizing in a style that the word *boniment* captures very well. You have the good [*le bon*] and then you have the wishing them well [*le bien*] that I was telling you about just now. This really has become second nature for psychoanalysts. When they are amongst themselves, the issues

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that are really at stake, that really bother them and that can even lead to serious conflicts between them, are issues for those who know. But when they are talking to people who do not know, they tell them things that are intended to be a way in, an easy way in. It's standard practice, part of the psychoanalytic style.

It's a tenable position. It is not at all within the field of what we can call the coherent, but, after all, we know a lot of things in the world that survive on that basis. It is part of what has always been done in a certain register, and it is not for nothing that I have described it as 'propaganda'. This term has very specific origins in history and in the sociological structure. It is *Propaganda fidei*. It's the name of a building somewhere in Rome where anyone can come and go. So, that's what they do, and that's what they have always done. The question is whether or not it is tenable where psychoanalysis is concerned.

Is psychoanalysis purely and simply a therapy, a drug, a plaster, a magical cure or indeed something that can ever be described as a cure? At first sight, why not? The only problem is that is certainly not what psychoanalysis is.

We first have to admit that, if that is what it was, we would really have to ask why we force ourselves to put it on, because, of all plasters, this is one of the most fastidious to have to put up with. Despite that, if people

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do commit themselves to this hellish business of coming to see a guy three times a week for years, it must be because it is of some interest in itself. Using words you do not understand, such as 'transference', does not explain why it lasts.

We are just outside the door. So I really do have to begin at the beginning if I'm not to talk more sales patter or pretend I thought you knew something about psychoanalysis. Nothing I am saying here is new. Not only is it not new, it's staring you in the face. Everyone quickly notices that everything that is said about psychoanalysis by way of explanation *ad usum publicum* is sales patter. No one can be in any doubt about that because, after a while, you can recognize sales patter when you hear it.

Well, you know the funny thing is that this is 1967, and the thing that began, roughly speaking, at the beginning of the century, or let's say four or five years earlier if we want to go a little further back, if we really want to call what Freud was doing when he was on his own 'psychoanalysis' – well, it's still here.

Despite all the patter, psychoanalysis is alive and well, and even enjoys a kind of respect, of prestige, a sort of presence-effect that is quite unusual, if we think of the demands made by the scientific mind. From time to time, those who are scientists get annoyed, protest and shrug their shoulders. But something still remains, so much so

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that people who are capable of making the most disparaging comments about psychoanalysis will at other times invoke some fact or other, some psychoanalytic principle or precept, cite a psychoanalyst, or invoke what is known about a certain experience, as though that were the psychoanalytic experience. It makes you think all the same.

There has been a lot of sales patter in history but, if we look very closely, none of it has gone for this long. There really must be something to it, something, something that psychoanalysis keeps to itself, something that gives it this dignity, gives it some weight. This is something that it keeps very much to itself, and in a position that I have sometimes called by the name it deserves: 'extraterritorial'.

It is worth thinking about. It is in any case the main entrance to the question I am trying to introduce here.

There are in fact still people who have no idea at all what psychoanalysis is, who are not part of it, but who have heard of it and who have heard such bad things about it that they use the term when they want to find a name for a certain way of operating. They'll turn out books for you called *The Psychoanalysis of Alsace-Lorraine* or *of the Common Market*.

That is a really introductory step, but it does have the virtue of stating very clearly, and with no more reference

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than is required, the mystery surrounding some of the words we use, words that have their own shock-effect, that make sense. The word 'truth', for example. What is 'the truth'?

Well, 'psychoanalysis' is one of those words. At first, everyone feels that it means something very special, and above all that truth is, in this case, articulated with a mode of representation that gives the word 'psychoanalysis' its style, and gives it its second job, if I can put it that way.

The truth in question is exactly the same as in the mythical image that represents it. It is something hidden in nature, and then it comes out quite naturally, emerges from the well. *It comes out*, but that isn't enough. *It speaks*. It says things, usually things we were not expecting. That's what we hear when we say: 'At last we know the truth about this business. Someone is beginning to come clean.' When we talk about 'psychoanalysis', I mean when we refer to this thing that lends it some weight, that is what we are talking about, including the appropriate correlative effect, which is what we call the surprise-effect.

One of my students said to me one day when he was drunk – he's been perpetually drunk for some time now because, from time to time in his life, there are things that get nailed to the cross – that I was like Jesus Christ. He was obviously taking the piss, wasn't he? Goes

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without saying. I have nothing at all in common with that incarnation. I'm more the Pontius Pilate type.

Pontius Pilate had no luck, and nor do I. He said a thing that is really commonplace and easy to say: 'What is truth?' He had no luck, he asked the question of Truth itself. That got him into all kinds of bother, and he does not have a good reputation.

I really like Claudel.³ It's one of my weaknesses, because I'm no Catholic [*thala*].⁴ Claudel, with the incredible divinatory genius he always had, gave Pontius Pilate a few more years of life.⁵

When Pilate went for a walk, he says, whenever Pilate walked in front of what we call, in Claudelian language of course, an idol – as though an idol were something repugnant, ugh! – well, because, I suppose, he had raised the question of the truth precisely where he shouldn't have done, in truth, every time he walked in front of an idol – pouf! – the idol's belly opened, and you could see that it was just a piggy bank.

Well, much the same thing happened to me. You have no idea what effect I have on psychoanalytic idols.

3 [Paul Claudel (1868–1955) was a famous French poet, playwright, essayist, diplomat and member of the Académie française.]

4 [Slang term for 'Catholic' derived from *ceux qui vont à la messe* ('those who go to mass').]

5 [The allusion is to Paul Claudel's play *La Mort de Judas; Le Point de vue de Ponce Pilate* (1934).]

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Let's start again.

We obviously have to take things one step at a time. The first step is that of the truth. After what psychoanalysis has said about truth, or what they think it has said, since it began to talk, it no longer impresses anyone. Naturally.

When something has been said and said again enough times, it becomes part of a general awareness. As Max Jacob used to say, and I tried to reproduce it at the end of one of my *écrits*, 'the truth is always new', and if it is to be true, it has to be new. So you have to believe that what truth says is not said in quite the same way when everyday discourse repeats it.

And then there are some things that have changed.

The psychoanalytic truth was that there was something terribly important at the bottom of it, in everything that gets hatched up when it comes to the interpretation of the truth, namely sexual life.

Is that true or not true?

If it is true, we need to know if that was only because this was at the height of the Victorian age, when sexuality was as important a part of the life of each and every one as it now is of everyone's life.

But, all the same, something has changed. Sexuality is something much more public. In truth, I do not think that psychoanalysis had much to do with that. Well, let's

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argue that if psychoanalysis did have something to do with it, and that is precisely what I am saying, then this is not really psychoanalysis.

For the moment, the reference to sexuality is not at all in itself something that can constitute the revelation of the hidden I was talking about. Sexuality means all sorts of things, the papers, clothes, the way we behave, the way boys and girls do it one fine day, in the open air, in the marketplace.

Sa vie sexuelle should be written using a special orthography. I strongly recommend the exercise that consists in trying to transform the way we write things. *Ça vice exuelle*. It's come to that.

It's quite a revealing exercise, and it's also very topical. Monsieur Derrida has invented grammatology to entice people who are partial to such things, the ones who at the moment think that, just because linguistics has flung everything out, it's been a failure. We have to find applications for it. Try playing around with spelling; it's one way of dealing with ambiguities, and it's not entirely pointless. If you write the formula *ça visse exuelle*, you can get a long way, you'll see. That will shed some light on certain things, and it might spark something in people's minds.

The fact that *ça visse sexuelle* means that there is a lot of confusion about the subject of psychoanalytic truth.

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Psychoanalysts are well aware of that, I must say, and that is why they concern themselves with other things. You never hear talk of sexuality in psychoanalytic circles any more. If you open them, psychoanalytic journals are the chastest things in the world. They no longer tell stories about fucking. They leave that to the dailies. They deal with things that have far-reaching implications for the domain of ethics, like the life instinct. Ah, let's take a very life-instinctual view of things, and don't trust the death instinct. You see, we are entering the great performance, a higher mythology.

There are people who really believe they're in control of all that, and they talk about it as though these were objects we handle every day, in which case the point is to strike a good balance between them, between tangency and the right intersection, and with the greatest possible economy of effort.

And do you know what the ultimate goal is? Gaining what they pompously call a strong ego, ego strength in the midst of all that and all the scientific instances that go with it.

And they succeed. They make good employees. That's what the strong ego is. You obviously have to have a resistant ego to be a good employee. They do it at every level, at the level of patients, and then at the level of psychoanalysts.

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Even so, you have to ask yourself if the ideal end of the psychoanalytic cure really is to get some gentleman to earn a bit more money than before and, when it comes to his sex life, to supplement the moderate help he asks from his conjugal partner with the help he gets from his secretary. When a guy had had a few problems in that domain, or was just leading a hellish life, or had some of those little inhibitions you can have at various levels, in the office, at work and even – why not? – in bed, that was usually considered to be a good outcome.

When all that has been removed, when the ego is strong and at peace, when the obsession with tits and bums has signed its little peace treaty with the superego, as they say, and when the itch isn't too bad, well, everything is fine. Sexuality is very much a secondary issue in all that.

My dear friend Alexander⁶ – and he was a friend, and he wasn't stupid, but given that he was living in the Americas, he answered the call – even said, basically, that sexuality should be regarded as a surplus activity. You understand: when you've done everything properly and when you pay your taxes regularly, then what's left is sexuality's share.

6 [Franz Alexander (1891–1964), Hungarian-born analyst and founder, in 1932, of the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute.]

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There must have been a mistake somewhere for things to have reached that point. Otherwise, there is no real explanation as to why it took such a huge theoretical facilitation before psychoanalysis could settle in, even set up its world headquarters there, and then inaugurate this extravagant therapeutic fashion. Why all the discourses, if that's what it was all about? Something really must be wrong. Perhaps we should be looking for something else.

We might begin by saying to ourselves that there really must be a reason why sexuality once took on the function of truth – if it was just once, the whole point being that it was not just once. After all, sexuality is not all that unacceptable. And once it took on that function, it kept it.

What it's all about really is within reach, or at least within the psychoanalyst's reach, and he bears witness to that fact when he talks about something serious and not about his therapeutic results. What is within reach is the fact that sexuality makes a hole in truth.

Sexuality is precisely the domain, if I can put it that way, where no one knows what to do about what is true. And when it comes to sexual relations, the question of what we are really doing always comes up – I won't say when we say to someone 'I love you', because everyone knows that only idiots say that, but when we have a sexual relationship with someone, when that leads to something, when it takes the form of what we call an act.

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An act is not just something that happens to you just like that, a motor discharge, as analytic theory says all too quickly and all too often – even if, with the help of a certain number of artifices, various facilitations, or even thanks to the establishment of a certain promiscuity, we succeed in turning the sexual act into something that has, they say, no more importance than drinking a nice glass of water.

That is not true, as you quickly realize. Because the whole point is that sometimes you drink a glass of water and then get diarrhoea. It's not straightforward, for reasons that have to do with the essence of the thing. In this relationship, we ask ourselves, in other words, if you are really a man, if you are a man, or if you really are a woman, if you are a woman. It is not only your partner who asks him- or herself that question; you ask it too, everyone asks it, and it matters, it matters right away.

So when I talk about a hole in truth, it is not, naturally, a crude metaphor. It is not a hole in a jacket, it is the negative aspect that appears in anything to do with the sexual, namely its inability to aver. That is what a psychoanalysis is all about.

When things get off to that kind of start, we obviously can't leave it at that. If we start with a question like that, a question that is really topical and pressing for everyone, we can feel that what Freud called 'sexuality' takes on a new meaning from the very beginning.

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Freud's terms come back to life, take on a different import. We even notice that they have a literary import, which is one way of saying how well they lend themselves, as letters, to manipulating what is at stake. The ideal is, of course, to take thing as far as I have begun to push them, by God. I've pushed the literary specialists to the point where they finally admit that you can succeed in creating language when you want to avoid ambiguity, or, in other words, when you reduce it to the literal, to algebra's little letters.

This brings us straight to my second chapter: the origin of my teaching.

2

So you see, it's the opposite of what I was just saying.

I told you that its place was an accident. At the end of the day, I was pushed into the hole we are talking about, and no one wants to stumble into that. The reason why I fight so seriously is that, once it has started, you can't stop just like that.

Now, on the subject of the origin, well it certainly does not mean what it might suggest to you on first hearing, namely when and why it began.

I am not talking to you about what they nobly call the origins of my thought or even my practice in theses

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from the Sorbonne and other Faculties of Arts. One well-intentioned individual wanted me to talk to you about Monsieur de Clérambault, but I won't talk to you about him, because that really would not do.⁷

Clérambault taught me things. He simply taught me to see what I had in front of me: a madman. As befits a psychiatrist, he taught me that by interposing a very pretty little theory between me and him, the madman: mechanism, and that is the most worrying thing in the world when you think about it. When you are a psychiatrist, you always interpose something.

So, what we have in front of us is a guy who has what Clérambault called 'mental automatism', or in other words a guy who cannot make a gesture without being ordered to, without being told: 'Look, he's doing that, the little rascal.' If you are not a psychiatrist, if you simply have, let's say, a human, intersubjective, sympathetic attitude, it really must give you a hell of a shock when a guy comes along and tells you something like that.

A guy who lives that way, who cannot make a gesture without someone saying: 'Look, he's stretching his arm out, silly bugger', well that really is something fabulous,

7 [Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault (1872–1934), French psychiatrist. Lacan worked under him in the later 1920s, and his studies of erotomania and mental automatism were a significant influence on his early work.]

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but if you decree that it's the effect of a mechanism somewhere, of something that tickles your convolutions and, besides, something that no one has ever seen, you just see how you calm down. Clérambault taught me a lot about the status of psychiatrists.

I've naturally retained what he taught me about what he called mental automatism. A lot of people have noticed the phenomenon since, and have described it in much the same terms, but that does not mean that it's not priceless when you hear it from the horse's mouth. Having said that, Clérambault was very clear-sighted because the fact remains that no one before him had noticed the nature of this mental automatism. Why? Because psychiatrists veiled it even more heavily than. They sometimes even put so many 'faculties of arts' between themselves and their madmen that they could not even see the phenomenon.

Even today, we might see more, might describe hallucination in very different terms. Not really being a psychoanalyst is all it takes, and they are not psychoanalysts. And they are not exactly psychoanalysts to the extent that, even though they are psychoanalysts, they keep that noble distance between themselves and what even psychoanalysts still call mental patients. Oh, let's drop it.

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As for the origin of my teaching, well, we can no more talk about that than we can about any other question of origins.

The origin of my teaching is very simple. It has always been there because time was born at the same time as what we are talking about. My teaching is in fact quite simply language, and absolutely nothing else.

For most of you, this is probably the first time you've heard anything to do with this, because I think, really, that a lot of people here have yet to enter the Age of Enlightenment. A lot of people here probably believe that language is a superstructure. Even Mr Stalin did not believe that.⁸ He explained very clearly that, if they started out that way, things could get nasty, and that in a country I would not dare to describe as advanced – I probably will not have time to tell you why – that could have certain repercussions. It is very unusual for anything that happens in the university to have repercussions, because the university is designed to ensure that thought never has any repercussions. But when you've got the bit between your teeth, as happened somewhere in 1917, and when Marr stated that language was a superstructure,⁹ that could have had certain repercussions and could, for example, have begun to change Russian. Just a minute,

8 [See J.V. Stalin, *Marxism and the Problems of Linguistics* (1950).]

9 [Nikolay Yakovlevich Marr (1865–1934), Russian linguist.]

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Father Stalin sensed that all hell would break loose if they did that. You can see what kind of confusion they might get into. 'Not another word about it. Language is not a superstructure,' said Stalin – and on that point he was in agreement with Heidegger: 'In language man dwells.'

What Heidegger meant by saying that is not what I am going to talk to you about this evening but, as you can see, I have to sweep up in front of the monument. 'In language man dwells' . . . even when it's extracted from Heidegger's text, it speaks for itself. It means that language was there before man, and that is obvious. Not only is man born into language in precisely the way he is born into the world; he is born through language.

That has to designate the origin of what we are talking about. No one before me seems to have attached the least importance to the fact that, in Freud's first books, the essential books on dreams, on what they call the psychopathology of everyday life, on jokes, we find one common factor, and it derives from stumbling over words, holes in discourses, wordplay, puns, ambiguities. That is what backs up the first interpretations and the inaugural discoveries of what is involved in the psychoanalytic experience, in the field that it determines.

Open the book on dreams, which came first, at any page and you will see that it talks about nothing but things to do with words. You will see that Freud talks about

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them in such a way that the structural laws Mr de Saussure disseminated all over the world are written out there in full. He wasn't the first to discover them, but he was eager to transmit them, to provide a basis for the most solid work that is now being done under the rubric of linguistics.

In Freud, a dream is not a nature that dreams, an archetype that stirs, a matrix for the world, a divine dream, or the heart of the world. Freud describes a dream as a certain knot, an associative network of analysed verbal forms that intersect as such, not because of what they signify, but thanks to a sort of homonymy. It is when you come across a single word at the intersection of three of the ideas that come to the subject that you notice that the important thing is that word and not something else. It is when you have found the word that concentrates around it the greatest number of threads in the mycellum that you know it is the hidden centre of gravity of the desire in question. That, in a word, is the point I was talking about just now, the nodal point where discourse forms a hole.

I allow myself this prosopopoeia simply to make what I am saying comprehensible to those of you who have not heard it before.

When I express myself by saying that the unconscious is structured like a language, I am trying to restore the

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true function of everything that structures under the aegis of Freud, and that in itself allows us to see our first step.

It is because language exists that truth exists, as everyone can come to see.

Why should something that manifests itself as a living pulsation and that can happen at as vegetative a level as you like be more true than everything else? The dimension of truth is nowhere, for the very good reason that we are not just talking about a biological scuffle. Even if we introduce the dimension that is intended to deceive an adversary, what does an animal's display add to it? It is as true as anything else, precisely because the point is to get a real result, namely to catch out the other. Truth begins to be established only once language exists. If the unconscious were not language, what might be called the unconscious in the Freudian sense would have no privilege, would be of no interest.

Firstly, because, if the unconscious were not language, there would be no unconscious in the Freudian sense. Would there be something unconscious? Well, yes, the unconscious is all very well. So let's talk about it. This table is something unconscious too.

These are things that have been quite forgotten by the so-called evolutionist perspective. In that perspective, they find it quite normal to say that the mineral scale leads naturally to a sort of higher point where we really

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see consciousness coming into play, rather as though consciousness stood out against what I have just evoked. If all we have to do is think consciousness only in the form of the cognitive function that makes it possible for very highly evolved beings to reflect something of the world, why should it, of all the other functions attendant upon the biological species as such, have the least privilege? The idealists, who are people who have been called various pejorative names, have made the point very clearly.

It is not as though we didn't have serious terms to make the comparison. We have a science organized on a basis that is not at all what you think it is. Nothing to do with a genesis. We did not create our science by entering into the pulsation of nature. No. We played around with little letters and little figures, and they are what we use to build machines that work, that fly, that move around the world, that travel long distances. That has absolutely nothing to do with anything that has been dreamed up on the register of knowledge. This is a thing that has its own organization. Which finally emerges as its very essence, namely our famous little computers of all kinds, electronic or not. That's what the organization of science is.

It doesn't work all by itself, of course, but I can point out to you that for the moment, and until further notice, there is no way we can build a bridge between the most

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highly evolved forms of a living organism's organs, and this organization of science.

And yet, it's not entirely unrelated. There are lines, tubes and connections there too. But a human brain is so much richer than any of the machines we have managed to build so far. Why shouldn't we raise the question of why it does not function in the same manner?

Why can't we perform three billion operations, additions and multiplications, and other standard operations in twenty seconds the way a machine does, when so many more things are being moved around in our brains? Curiously enough, our brains sometimes do work like that for a brief moment. On the basis of everything we know, the brains of the retarded do work like that. The phenomenon of *idiots savants* who can calculate like machines is well known.

This suggests that everything to do with the way we think is, perhaps, the result of a certain number of language-effects, and that they are such that we can operate on them. I mean that we can build machines that are in some way an equivalent, but on a much shorter register than we might expect from a comparable productivity if we really were talking about a brain that functioned in the same way.

I am not saying all this in order to base anything firm on it, but just to suggest to you the need for a little caution,

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particularly where the function might seem to operate thanks to what they call 'parallelism'. Not so as to refute the famous psycho-physical parallelism which was, as we all know, shown to be bullshit a long time ago, but to suggest that the break should not be between the physical and the psychical, but between the psychical and the logical.

Now that we've reached this point, we begin to get at least some idea of what I mean when I say that it is imperative to call into question how things stand with language if we wish to begin to shed some light on what is going on with respect to the function of the unconscious.

Indeed, it may very well be true that the unconscious does not function in accordance with the same logic as conscious thought. In which case, the question is: which logic?

It still functions logically, and this is not a pre-logic. No, but it's a logic that is more supple, weaker, as the logicians say. 'Weaker' indicates the presence or absence of certain basic correlations on which the tolerance of that logic is based. A weaker logic is not less interesting than a stronger logic, in fact it is much more interesting because it is much more difficult to make it stick, but it holds up all the same. That logic may be of interest, and taking an interest in it may even be our express object as psychoanalysts, always assuming that there are a few psychoanalysts here.

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Think about it in very crude terms for a bit. The language apparatus is there somewhere in the brain, like a spider. It has a hold.

That might shock you, and you might ask 'Oh come on, really, what are you talking about, where does this language come from?' I have no idea. I'm under no obligation to know everything. And besides, you don't know anything about it either.

Do not imagine that man invented language. You're not sure about that, you have no proof, and you've seen no human animal become *Homo sapiens* just like that, in front of your very eyes. When he is *Homo sapiens*, he already has that language. When they, and especially a certain Helmholtz, were good enough to take an interest in how things stood with linguistics, they refused to raise the question of origins. That was a wise decision. It does not mean that this is a prohibition we have to maintain for ever, but it is wise not to talk too much rubbish, and one always talks rubbish when it comes to origins.

That does not mean that there are not whole piles of praiseworthy books from which we can gain some highly amusing insights. Rousseau wrote about this, and some of my dear new friends of the *École Normale* generation, who are kind enough to lend me an ear from time to time, have published a certain *Essay on the Origins of Languages* by him. Great fun, I recommend it to you.

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But you have to be careful about anything to do with psychoanalysis. Once you have an idea of the sort of dissociation I've tried to make you feel this evening, perhaps you will see the futility of Piaget's child psychology.

If you ask a child questions based on a logical apparatus, especially if you yourself are a logician – and Piaget was a good one – then it is scarcely surprising that you find this logical apparatus in the child you are questioning. You observe it there the moment it begins to bite, rises to the bait in the child, but to deduce from this that it is the child's development that constructs the logical categories is a *petitio principii*, pure and simple. You ask the child questions in the register of logic, and the child answers you in the register of logic. But don't imagine children enter the field of language that way at every level. They need time, that's for sure.

There is a gentleman, not a psychoanalyst at all, who has quite rightly pulled Monsieur Piaget up over this point. He was called Vygotsky, and he operated somewhere around St Petersburg.¹⁰ He even survived the revolutionary ordeals for a few years but, given that he was a bit tubercular, he left us before he finished all he had to do. He noticed that, curiously enough, the child's

10 [Lev S. Vygotsky (1896–1934), Russian psychologist.]

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entry into the apparatus of logic should not be seen as the result of some inner psychical development, but that, on the contrary, it should be seen as something similar to the way children learn to play, if we can put it that way.

He noted, for example, that children have no access to the notion of a concept, to what corresponds to a concept, before they reach puberty. Now, why should that be the case? Puberty does indeed seem to designate a category of a different kind to some harebrained idea of how cerebral circumvolutions begin to function. Vygotsky saw that very clearly in his experiment.

I cannot advance the function of the subject here, despite what they told in advance. They are exaggerating. Personally, I think you're listening to me very well. You're kind, more than kind, because kindness alone would not be enough to get you to listen properly.

So I don't see why I shouldn't tell you a few things that are a little more difficult.

3

Why have I introduced the function of the subject as something distinct from anything to do with the psyche?

I cannot really give you a theoretical explanation, but I can show you how this has to do with the subject's function in language, and that is a double function.

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There is the subject of the utterance [*énoncé*]. That subject is quite easy to identify. *I* means the person who is actually speaking at the moment I say *I*. But the subject is not always the subject of the utterance, because not all utterances contain *I*. Even when there is no *I* – even when you say, ‘It’s raining’ – there is a subject of the enunciation [*énonciation*], and there is a subject even when it can no longer be grasped in the sentence.

All this allow us to represent a lot of things. The subject that concerns us here, the subject not insofar as it produces discourse but insofar as it is produced [*fait*], cornered even [*fait comme un rat*], by discourse, is the subject of the enunciation.

This allows me to put forward a formula that I present to you as one of the most primordial. It is a definition of what we call the ‘element’ in language. It has always been called the ‘element’, even in Greek. The Stoics called it ‘the signifier’. I state that what distinguishes it from the sign is that ‘the signifier is that which represents the subject for another signifier’, not for another subject.

All I am thinking of doing this evening is to try to get you a bit interested. I don’t think I can do anything more than plonk it in your hand and say to you: ‘You try to make it function.’ Besides, you have been given a few clues here and there, because I have pupils who, from time to time, show how it functions.

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The important point is that it requires the formal, topological admission, not that it matters much where it hangs out, of a certain table, if you like, that we will call 'Table O'. They sometimes also call it 'the Other' around here, when they know what I'm talking about: the Other, which takes a capital 'O' too. To the extent that we can identify it in terms of the workings of the subject, this Other is to be defined as the site of speech. This is not where speech is uttered, but where it takes on the value of speech, or in other words where it inaugurates the dimension of truth. It is absolutely indispensable to the workings of what we are talking about.

So we quickly notice that none of this can happen all by itself, for all sorts of reasons. The main one being that it so happens that the Other I am telling you about is represented by a living being of whom you may have things to ask, but there's no obligation. It suffices that the Other is the one to whom you say 'Pleasc God that . . .', or whatever it may be, and that you use the optative or even the subjunctive. Well, this site of truth takes on a very different meaning. Just the utterance I have just spoken to you is enough to make you feel that.

This introduces us to the reference to a verry special truth, namely that of desire. The logic of desire, a logic that is not in the indicative, has never been taken so far.

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They've begun things they call 'modal logics', but they've never got very far with them, probably because they did not notice that the register of desire must of necessity be constituted at the level of Table O, or in other words that desire is always what is inscribed as a repercussion of the articulation of language at the level of the Other.

Man's desire, I said one day when I had to make myself understood – why shouldn't I say 'man', though it's not really the right word? – desire full stop is always the desire of the Other. Which basically means that we are always asking the Other what he desires.

What I am telling you is quite easy to handle and is not incomprehensible. When you leave here, you will notice that this is true. You simply have to think about it and formulate it as such. And besides, such formulae are always very practical, you know, because you can invert them.

A certain subject whose desire is for the Other to ask him – it's simple, we invert it, turn it upside down – well, there you have the definition of the neurotic. See how handy that can be when it comes to finding your direction. The only problem is that you have to look at it very, very closely. And that takes time.

You can go further, and you will immediately see why the religious [*le religieux*] has been compared to the neurotic.

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The religious is not neurotic at all. He is religious. But he looks like a neurotic, because he too combines things around what really is the desire of the Other. The only difference is that, because this is an Other that does not exist, because it is God, we need proof. So we pretend the Other is asking for something. Victims, for example. That is why this gradually becomes confused with the attitude of the neurotic, and especially the obsessional neurotic. It looks terribly like all the techniques used in victimary ceremonies.

This is my way of telling you that these things are quite easy to handle, and that not only do they not go against what Freud said, they even make him quite readable.

That emerges from just a simple reading of Freud, so long as we are prepared not to read him through the perfectly opaque glasses psychoanalysts normally wear to set their own minds at rest. You just have to take things just a little bit further to see that we are getting on to very scabrous ground, and that sheds some new light.

The fact that we can see a link between the neurotic and the religious is no reason to jump to what might be a rather hasty conclusion by bracketing them together. You have to see that there is after all a nuance, know why it's true, how far it is true, why it isn't quite true. Poor Freud, there he was, he said, digging holes and trenches

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and collecting objects like an archaeologist. Perhaps he was not very sure about what he was meant to be doing: should he leave things *in situ* or carry everything off right away for his shelf? This shows that there really is something veracious about the question for a new-style truth that began with Freud.

Let us go back to the desire of the Other.

If you have taken the time to construct desire properly, that is, on a language basis, relating it to what is its fundamental linguistic basis, which is what we call metonymy, you'll progress much more rigorously into the field to be explored: namely, the field of psychoanalysis. You may well even notice the true sinew of something in psychoanalytic theory that is still so opaque, so obtuse and so obstructed.

Whilst it is in the field of the Other that desire is constituted, and whilst 'man's desire is the desire of the Other', man sometimes fails to live up to his desire, meaning his own desire. Well, now that you have had some practice, you are in a position to see things less precipitously than at first, in ways that are less intent upon immediately finding anecdotal explanations. When man's desire has to be extracted from the field of the Other and has to be my desire, well, something very funny happens. Now that it is his turn to desire, he notices, well, that he is castrated.

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That is what the castration complex is. It means that something necessarily happens in significance, and it is that sort of loss which means that, when man enters the field of his own desire insofar as it is sexual desire, he can do so only through the medium of a symbol that represents the loss of an organ insofar as it takes on, in the circumstances, a signifying function, the function of the lost object.

You will say that I am now advancing something that is no more transparent for that. But I'm not looking for transparency, I am trying, first of all, to stick to what we find in our experience, and if it is not transparent, well that's too bad.

First, we have to accept castration. We're obviously not used to doing so. It makes it difficult to recover that transparency, to get it back. And so we make up all sorts of cock and bull stories, including stories about the threats made by our parents, who are supposedly to blame. As though the fact that our parents said something of the kind were all it took to give rise to a structure as fundamental and as universal as the castration complex.

It's reached such a point that women are inventing one for themselves, inventing a phallus they can demand, just so as to be able to consider themselves castrated, which is precisely what they are not, poor little things, at least

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where the organ – the penis – is concerned, because they do not have one at all.

Even so, I'm going to say something that will calm you down, make it a little more comprehensible for you.

The reason why castration exists is, perhaps, quite simply that desire – when it really is a question of our desire – cannot have been, cannot be, something we have, cannot be an organ we can handle. It cannot be both being and having. So, the organ serves, perhaps, a purpose that functions at the level of desire. It is the lost object because it stands in for the subject *qua* desire. Well, it's a suggestion.

On this point, you can set your minds at rest. Above all, don't imagine that there is something daring about this. The point is to try to formalize correctly what is no more than the experience we have to verify day by day.

We have students who come to tell us stories about their parents, and who finally notice not only that we can understand patients with this language of Lacan's as easily as we can with the language that is spread and diffused by institutions established on a different basis; we actually understand them better.

Patients sometimes say some very clever things, and it is Lacan's own discourse that they are speaking. Only, if psychoanalystis hadn't heard Lacan first, they wouldn't

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even have listened to the patient, and would have said: 'Just another mental patient talking more nonsense'.

Right. Let's turn to the end.

4

The end of my teaching. When I use the word 'end', I do not mean the end of the world. I am not talking about the day it snuffs it; no, the end is the *telos*, why I do it.

The end of my teaching is, well, to train psychoanalysts who are capable of fulfilling the function known as the subject, because it so happens that it is only from this point of view that we can really see what is at stake in psychoanalysis.

'Psychoanalysts who are capable of fulfilling the function of the subject' may not seem all that clear to you, but it's true. I will try to outline to you what we can deduce about it from the theory of the training analysis.

Doing a bit of mathematics would not be bad training for psychoanalysts. In mathematics, the subject is fluid and pure, and it isn't stuck or trapped anywhere. It would help them, and they would see that there are cases in which it no longer circulates, precisely because, as you saw just a moment ago, the Other seems to be split between the site of truth and the site of the desire of the Other. It's the same with the subject.

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A post-language subject; that is the subject we can purify so elegantly in mathematical logic. Only, there is still always something to be cited, something that was already there. The subject is manufactured by a certain number of articulations that have taken place, and falls from the signifying chain in the way that ripe fruit falls. As soon as he comes into the world he falls from a signifying chain, which may well be complicated or at least elaborate, and what we call the desire of his parents is subjacent to that very chain. It would be difficult not to take that into account in the fact of his birth, even, and especially, when it was, precisely, a desire for him not to be born.

The least we can ask might be for psychoanalysts to notice that they are poets. That's what's funny, very funny, about it. I will take the first example that comes to mind.

I'm making some use of the notes I made on the train for your benefit. My paper wasn't the only one on the train. There was a copy of *France-Soir* lying around, so I glanced at it.

Claudine, you know, that pretty French girl, I don't know if she was strangled or stabbed, but in any case there was an American who quickly disappeared, and now he's in a mental home, much good that will do him.

Let's think about it. He's in a mental home, and a psychoanalyst goes to see him. It does happen, because he

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is a member of a very good society. So what do we find? We find LSD. Seems he was as high as a kite when it happened.

LSD, but even so, even so, LSD can't completely mess up the signifying chains. Or at least let's hope we find something acceptable. We find what they call a murderous impulse, and we find that it is perfectly articulated with a certain number of signifying chains that were quite decisive at one moment or other in his past.

Oh come on, it's the psychoanalyst who is saying that. Why not just say he bumped the girl off, and be done with it? It is true we notice that there were causes somewhere at the level of the signifying chain. The psychoanalyst says so, and the really funny thing is that we believe him.

I beg your pardon, they believe him. If we don't believe him, we're poorly thought of, we're out of touch. We just have to understand what believing him means. I am not of course counting on the kindness of English judges. That should at least encourage the psychoanalysts to be somewhat critical of something quite analogous when it comes to, for instance, the transference. The psychoanalyst says that the transference reflects something that happened in the past. That's what he says. The rules of the game say that we have to believe him. But why should we, when all's said and done? Why shouldn't what is now

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happening in the transference have its own value? Perhaps we should find another mode of reference to justify the preference that is given to the psychoanalyst's point of view when it comes to what actually happened.

I'm not the one who came up with that idea. An American psychoanalyst – they are not all stupid – has just made exactly these comments in a relatively recent issue of the *Psychoanalytic Gazette* [*Journal officiel de la psychanalyse*].

I want to end with living things, as they say. So here is a little example. 'If I'd known', said one of my patients, 'I'd have wet the bed more than twice a week.'

I'll spare you what led up to him coming out with that. It came after a whole series of considerations about various privations, and after he had cleared some of the debts he felt he was burdened with. He felt quite at ease, and rather oddly regretted the fact that he had not done so earlier.

So, you see, one thing in particular strikes me: the psychoanalyst does not realize the decisive position he holds by articulating, *nachträglich*, as Freud puts it, a deferred action that establishes the truth of what came earlier. He does not really know what he is doing in doing that.

'Retroactively' [*après-coup*] . . . you can find it in the first pages of a certain vocabulary that came out not so

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long ago. I needn't tell you that no one would ever have included this 'deferred action' in a Freudian vocabulary if I hadn't brought it out in my teaching.¹¹ No one before me had ever noticed the importance of this *nachträglich*, even though it is there on every page of Freud. And yet it is very important to detach the 'retroactively' in this case.

No psychoanalyst had thought of this, I mean ever written this, even though it is directly in line with what he does as a psychoanalyst. When someone tells us 'God in heaven, why didn't I wet the bed more than twice a week?', if you know how to listen, it means that the fact of only wetting the bed twice a week has to be taken into consideration, and that we have to take into account that the figure 2 is introduced in correlation with the neurotic symptom.

Perhaps knowing how to use what is nothing more than an effect of thought's internal coherence is enough. When thought is not too empirical, it does not consist in standing and gaping, and waiting for inspiration to come from the facts.

And besides, how can we even say that we are dealing with facts, with facts pure and simple, in a situation as articulated, as interventionist, and as artificial as

11 [See the entry on 'Deferred action; Deferred' in J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London, 1973). The French original was published in 1967.]

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psychoanalysis? The fact that the psychoanalyst never moves and keeps quiet three-quarters of the time, or ninety-nine point nine per cent of the time, does not mean we have to see it as an exercise in observation. It is an experiment in which the psychoanalyst is involved, and no psychoanalysts would ever dare to try to deny it. Only, you have to know what is going on. Less so here than anywhere else, we cannot fail to recognize that the real mechanism behind a scientific structure is its logic, and not its empirical side.

Once we realize that, we might perhaps begin to see something. And perhaps the psychoanalyst would be all the more keen on feeling good about himself if he could be more than just a psychiatrist.

It so happens that there is no reason why we should restrict O's famous little *d* – that desire of the Other – to the field of analytic practice alone. Whilst there is no such thing as a collective consciousness, we might perhaps note that the function of the desire of the Other really does have to be taken into consideration when it comes to the organization of societies, especially these days.

This outcome results from the institution of what is usually called communism, namely a desire of/for [*de*] the Other based upon justice in the redistributive sense of the word. We might note more than one correlation, with the subject of science on the one hand, and, on the

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other, with what happens at the level of the relationship with truth. Wouldn't it be interesting to try to see the correlation between putting the desire of the Other in charge of a regime, and the fact that the done thing is to obstinately defend an ever-growing number of outright lies?

Don't get the idea that my remarks are directed against the commies. That's not what I mean at all. And I am going to give you another riddle. Do you think that things are any better on the other side, where the desire of the Other is based upon what they call freedom, or in other words injustice? In a country where you can say anything, even the truth, the outcome is that, no matter what they say, it has no kind of effect whatsoever.

I would like to end there, in order to tell you that there may come a time when we find that being a psychoanalyst means having a place in society.

That place will, I hope, I am sure, be taken, even if it is for the moment occupied only by psychoanalysts who have lurched into their little joke shop.

Psychoanalysis obviously might be a mode, a scientific mode of approach concerning things to do with the subject. It will, however, become more and more useful to preserve it in the midst of the ever-accelerating movement in which our world is entering.

DISCUSSION

Henri Maldiney: How can we discuss your discourse? We would have to do so via a plurality of points and slip into its articulations, and we cannot do that for everything. I will ask you a simple question about the distinction between your two subjects.

It seems to me that you over-simplify the first, the one that, precisely, has no lexical meaning, the one that is determined solely by the act of speaking, the one that is not simply determined by all the word's possible semantemes, which are never pure, as it happens, nor by the set of morphemes, but by the possibilities inherent in a situation:

It seems to me that, because you overlook that, you find yourself in disagreement with Heidegger, whom you just cited, because Heidegger's *archè* is basically a presence or articulation that exists prior to any morphological structure, before it becomes a meaning. It is primarily sovereign in the concrete and outside the understanding, in the situation itself. So long as the *I* that speaks and the *you*, the alterity it needs, requires . . . because if everything is clear, there is nothing left. What I mean is that, if the other does not resist, the *I* cannot locate itself.

Now, the *I* that is so instituted escapes the legislation

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of language, except in the logic of preaching, and it appears to me that, because of the logic of your exposé, and by defining the subject of the enunciation, you do enter into a logic of preaching. Now, the logic of preaching is after all no more than one form of logic, and it is surely a logic of the object rather than of the subject/object relationship.

More specifically, the objectivation present in that logic seems to me to be quite the opposite of any notion of *insight* because it is no more than the second stage in the singularization of a much more fundamental function, namely that of being-in-the-world. Now, being at the very heart of this logic and being-in-the-world are not the same thing at all. You are in danger of remaining within the field of the taken-for-granted, to talk like Husserl.

And in relation to the thing, the very articulation of things, which is always present in Heidegger, I don't really see what presence it can have, if language really does become the sign, or what I would call the very form of the absolute, beyond the reality principle, which is the opposite of Freud's *Verneinung*, which you make . . .

J.L.: I've not said a single word about *Verneinung* today.

Henri Maldiney: No, and yes, given that the repression is not removed by the intellectual meaning of the

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representation, and that it is meaning we obtain through language. It seems to me that language itself is not contemporary, and is not just born of time. In general, language does without time, and meaning is basically reversible. And it is only in the present that you can recuperate that something that is not simply in meaning . . .

J.L.: Say no more, please. I claim to follow Heidegger only to the extent that I allow myself to cite him in order to find a striking formula. Even assuming that some people in my audience even thought of that connection, I immediately said that I was borrowing that formula, and that's what I did here. What Heidegger does with it is a different matter.

On the other hand, and to respond to what appears to me to be the real point you are making, I don't really see why you say that I sacrifice the subject of the articulation, of the *archè*, of the situation of the subject insofar as it speaks and hears to the extent that it enters into the present situation *qua* being-in-the-world, as you say, because that is precisely why I speak of the 'division of the subject'.

I am saying that the subject, whilst it remains the subject, functions only when divided. Indeed, that is the whole import of what I establish. I have to tell you that I consecrate this division of the subject, denounce

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it and demonstrate it in very different ways than reductive way I have used here and which, as it happens, certainly does not correspond to the division itself. I would have to have done something I absolutely refuse to supply the reference this evening, because you must not think that I have been talking about what, with your permission, I will call, to save time, not just my teaching but my doctrine, and everything that follows from it. I have not been able to do that.

There is a causal element in this division, and it is what I call *objet petit a*. There are those who have already heard about this, and there are those who have not. It may look like a strange thing to those who have not heard about it, especially as I have not really had time to evoke the order it might belong to, and because it is closely related to the structure of desire. At all events, this *objet petit a* is in the very place where that singular phallic absence is revealed, at the root of what I have tried here to put in the centre because it is the centre of the analytic experience, namely what I, like everyone else, call castration.

So in order to say that the subject was divided, I simply indicated its two positions in relation to the subject of language. Our subject as such, the subject that speaks, if you like, may well claim primacy, but it

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will never be possible to regard it purely and simply as the free initiator of its discourse, simply because, being divided, it is bound up with that other subject – the subject of the unconscious, which happens to exist independently of any linguistic structure. That is what the discovery of the unconscious is.

Either this is true, or it is not true. If it is true, that should stop even M. Heidegger from always talking about how matters stand with the subject in the same way. And besides, if we get involved in the Heideggerian controversy, I would be so bold as to suggest that Heidegger's use of the term 'subject' is far from being homogeneous.

Henri Maldiney: He hardly ever uses it.

J.L.: Precisely. I do.

Henri Maldiney: You have your reasons.

J.L.: I have my reasons, and I am trying to articulate them for you now. Along the same lines, you raised a certain number of objections by introducing a few registers of Freudian doctrine, repression, *Verneinung*, and a lot of other things. It is quite obvious that all that has played its role, and has been sifted through my thinking for the last seventeen years, I'm sorry, ever since it's been going on . . . what I came here to introduce, or rather evoke by way of the three references I call, successively, the 'place, origin and

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end of my teaching'. The objections that you might raise, and which are naturally still very present, arise from a certain perspective. I am well aware of what you intend to preserve by raising them, if only because demonstrating that to you would surely require a much longer dialogue than the one we can have here.

Henri Maldiney: I am not denying what you say about the unconscious. In the same way that you turn it into a language, Husserl turns it into 'inactualities'. We therefore cannot have a dialogue, but, let's call it just a double monologue.

J.L.: That's not specific to what goes on between philosophers. It's the same between husband and wife.