

*MY TEACHING,
ITS NATURE AND ITS ENDS*

I agreed to visit a psychiatric clinic because I had good cause to presume that it was not without reason that I had been asked to take part in what we call in modern jargon a *colloquium*.

Not bad, that term. I quite like it. We talk together, in the same place, I mean. That does not necessarily mean that we think. Each of us talks because we are in the same place: we co-loquate. 'Colloquium' is an unpretentious term, unlike the term 'dialogue'. Being in dialogue is one of the most enormous pretensions of our times. Have you ever seen people in dialogue? Occasions when we speak of dialogue are always a little bit like domestic quarrels.

So I was hoping to co-loquate. But given that there are so many of you, that will be much more difficult than I thought.

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The fact is that I have prepared nothing that is especially intended for you. If I had come here to say something in front of you and found only silence in your presence, I would feel that I was imitating the woman sowing seeds [*la semeuse*].¹² But just because you are sitting in rows does not mean that they are furrows, and nor does it mean that the seeds are sure to find soil where they can grow. That is why I would like some of the people who are sitting on the tiers in this room to be good enough to ask me a question.

It's highly unlikely, of course, but that is the request I am making, as I do whenever, and it is not that often, I happen to speak in a context that is, it has to be said, unfamiliar to me, because I do not think many of you have been following what I teach.

1

What I teach has caused something of a stir.

That dates from the day – and thank God I put it off for as long as I could – I collected together something I had to call *Écrits*, in the plural, because it seemed to me that that was the simplest term to designate what I was going to do.

12 [*La semeuse*: the female figure of the sower that appeared on some (pre-Éuro) French banknotes.]

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I brought together under that title the things I had written just to put down a few markers, a few milestones, like the posts they drive into the water to moor boats to, in what I had been teaching on a weekly basis for twenty years or so. I don't think I repeated myself much. I'm quite sure I didn't, because I made it a rule, a sort of imperative, never to say the same things more than once. That, I think you will agree, is quite a feat.

In the course of those long years of teaching, from time to time I composed an *écrit* and it seemed to me important to put it there like a pylon to mark a stage, the point we had reached in some year, some period in some year. Then I put it all together. It happened in a context in which things had gained ground since the time when I started out in teaching.

I was speaking for the benefit of people it concerned directly, for the specific people who call themselves psychoanalysts. It had to do with their most direct, most day-to-day, and most urgent experience. It was done expressly for them, and it's never been done for anyone else. But it is true that it had occurred to me that it might be of interest to people to whom it was not addressed and whom it did not concern at all. Any production of this nature always has an exemplary character to the extent that it faces up to a difficulty you can sense, a real thing, a concrete thing, to use another fashionable word. Even if

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you do not understand it very well, reading what I have written has an effect, holds your interest, is of interest. It is not that often that you read an *écrit* that is necessarily something urgent, and which is addressed to people who really have something to do, something it is not easy to do.

It is primarily for that reason, I suppose, that, if we approach them from a different angle, we can agree to consider these *Écrits* unreadable; people at least pretend to read them, or to have read them. Not, naturally, the people who supposedly do that for a living, or in other words the critics. Reading them would force them to prove their worth by writing something that might at least have something to do with what I am advancing, but at that point they become suspicious. As you may have noticed, this book has not had many reviews. Probably because it is very thick, difficult to read, obscure. It is not designed for everyday consumption at all. You might say to me that that remark might suggest I'm making excuses. It might mean that I'm saying I should have produced a book for everyday consumption, or even that I'm going to. Yes, it is possible. I might try to. But I am not used to that. And it is by no means certain that it would be a success. Perhaps it would be better if I did not try to force my talent. And I do not find it particularly desirable in itself, because what I teach will indeed

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eventually become common currency. There will be people who will get down to it, who will put it about. That is obviously not quite the same thing, and it will be a bit distorted. They'll try to introduce it into the hubbub. They will do all they can to reposition it in relation to a certain number of those very solid convictions that suit everyone in this society, as in any society.

I have no intention of making criticisms of the society in which we live here. It is no better and no worse than any other. Human society has always been a folly. It's none the worse for that. It has always been like that, will always be like that. After all, it has to be admitted that a fair number of ideas are increasingly spineless. Everything is a continuation of everything else. It even ends up making each and every one of us feel a bit sick. At lunch just now, in the little circle of people who have given me such a kind welcome, we were talking about what they call TV, the thing that allows you to catch up with the world scene at any moment, to keep up with everything cultural. Nothing cultural will escape you any more.

While we're on the subject, I would like to draw your attention to a major difference, which has perhaps not been emphasized enough, between man and the animals. It is worth mentioning precisely because we forget about it. I am talking about a difference in the context of nature

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because I really do not want to dabble in cultural anthropology.

Unlike what happens at every level of the animal kingdom – which starts with elephants and hippos and ends with jellyfish – man is naturally characterized by the extraordinary embarrassment he feels about – what should we call it? By the simplest name we can find, by God – the evacuation of shit.

Man is the only animal for whom this is a problem, and it's a prodigious one. You don't realize, because you have little devices that evacuate it. You have no idea where it goes afterwards. It all goes through pipes and is collected in fantastic places you have no idea of, and then there are factories that take it in, transform it and make all sorts of things that go back into circulation through the intermediary of human industry, and human industry is a completely circular industry. It is striking that there is not, to my knowledge, any course on political economy that devotes a lesson or two to it. This is a phenomenon of repression which, like all phenomena of repression, is bound up with the need for decorum. Trouble is, we don't really know which decorum.

There is a man of wit I met a very long time ago, and I'm sorry I didn't know him better. He's quite well known. Aldous Huxley. He was a charming man, of good family, and he wasn't entirely stupid, not at all stupid in

fact. I don't know if he is still alive. Get hold of his *Adonis and the Alphabet*. There's a French translation, published by Stock, if memory serves. The title obviously does not announce the chapter it contains on what I've just been talking about: waste disposal.

Talking about this is always shocking, even though it has always been part of what we call civilization. A great civilization is first and foremost a civilization that has a waste-disposal system. So long as we do not take that as our starting point, we will not be able to say anything serious.

Amongst those people we have for some time called primitive, though I have no idea why we call them that because they have none of the characteristics of primitiveness at all, or let's say the societies that social anthropologists study – even though, now that the theoreticians have put their oar in and go on about the primitive, the archaic, the pre-logical and all that bullshit, no one understands them any more – well, there are few problems with waste disposal. I am not saying there aren't any. And perhaps it is because they have fewer of these problems that we call them savages, or even noble savages, and we regard them as people who are closer to nature.

But when it comes to the equation *great civilization = pipes and sewers*, there are no exceptions. There were

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sewers in Babylon, and Rome was all sewers. That's how the City began, with the *Cloaca maxima*. It was destined to rule the world. So we should be proud of it. The reason why we are not is that, if we gave this phenomenon what we might call its fundamental import, we would find the prodigious analogy that exists between sewage and culture.

Culture is no longer a privilege. The whole world is more than covered in it. Culture clots on you. Because we are cooped up in the great shell of waste that comes from the same place, we make vague efforts to give it a form. What does that come down to? To great ideas, as they say. History, for example.

It comes in handy, does history. It doesn't have just one meaning; it has a thousand and one meanings. There are people who look to it as a support. Not that they would bother to see what Hegel has to say on the subject, of course. There were others before him, Bossuet, for example. He put everything in the hands of Providence. That at least was clear. I have to say that I have a high opinion of the *Discourse on Universal History*. First, because it was that that inaugurated the genre, and it did so on the basis of clear principles. It is God who pushes the pawns across the board. That really does deserve to be called 'history' [*histoire*]. Everything revolves around the story [*histoire*] of what happened to a certain gentleman. Not

bad, it gave other people an appetite for it and made history much more profound. I'm not saying that all these ideas are unacceptable, but some funny use has been made of them.

Don't let that make you believe that culture is a goal of which I disapprove. Far from it. It discharges. It completely discharges us from the function of thinking. It discharges us from the only thing that is of any minor interest in that function, which is quite inferior. I fail to see why we should confer any kind of nobility upon the phenomenon of thinking. What do we think about? About things over which we have absolutely no control, things that we have to turn over, over and over again, turn over seventy times in the same direction before we manage to understand them. That's what we call thinking. As I cogitate, I agitate, rummage around. It only begins to get interesting when it takes responsibility, when, in other words, it comes up with a solution, as formalized a solution as possible. If it does not come up with a formula, a formalization, as mathematical a solution as possible, we cannot see the interest, or the nobility. We don't see why it's worth dwelling on.

The point of history is to write the history of thought, I mean, to get rid of the little efforts, timid efforts but, truth to tell, they're often scrupulous – that's what survives best – that this one or that one has made to solve

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certain problems. As a result, our professors would be very embarrassed about having to draw a line and say what they think of the logic of Descartes or a few of those strays, to say whether it holds up – more to the point than whether its bloody time is up – but it's much easier to do the history of thought, which comes down to looking for what they have passed on from one to another. It's fascinating, especially when it's bullshit, and when you see the sort of thing that has survived.

The mechanism I am pointing out to you works in a very contemporary way. It is not theory, and I am not here to make a big thing of theory. You can see that with your own eyes, without going to university, where that is in fact what they teach when they say they're doing 'philosophy'.

You know the nonsense they've come up with now. There is structure, and there is history. The people they've put in the 'structure' category, which includes me – it wasn't me who put me there, they put me there, just like that – supposedly spit on history. That's absurd. There can obviously be no structure without reference to history. But first, you have to know what you are talking about when you talk about history. I will try to tell you something about it.

It is always difficult to pin down what is going on in the field of what we are really cogitating without any

misunderstandings. The words have often been surrounded by all sorts of confusion for a little too long. That is what now allows some people to use historical reduction, which has nothing to do with historical rights, so to speak, with the function of history. So they come out with questions that have to do with, not structure, but what they call structuralism.

For example, in the course of a conversation that preceded my appearance before you, someone, someone very respectable as it happens, said to me: 'Couldn't you say how you, what you do, what you advance, relates to structuralism?' I replied: 'Why not?' So let's set things out properly and trace the process.

The function of what we call a cultural trend is to mix and homogenize. Something emerges and has certain qualities, a certain freshness, a certain tip. It's a bud. The said cultural trend kneads it until it becomes completely reduced, despicable, and communicates with everything.

It has to be said that this is not satisfactory, despite everything. Not for reasons to do with any internal necessity, but for commercial reasons. When it has been uprooted, it becomes exhausted. Although I've been using bad language I think I can take the liberty of repeating the formula that occurred to me in this connection. Eating shit is all very well, but you can't

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always eat the same shit. So, I try to get hold of some new shit.

The origins of this new fashion, of what you call 'structuralism', lie in the attempts to lump together men who do not easily fit into their categories, who've stayed in the smallest room. You would have to study all the processes, all the resistance functions that left them isolated, and then associated, assimilated them, stuck them together. I've had the insane good luck to be one of them, and I feel fine about it. These are people who went about things a little more seriously. Well done, Lévi-Strauss. They won't be able to do as well as that in the future, that's for sure. It's overwhelming. And then there are others. They change them from time to time.

For the moment, they are making a serious effort to get all that into general circulation, really trying. Oh yes, it's not a bad solution. Until now I've held out against this operation, because they don't quite know what to make of what I'm saying. They don't know because, with good reason, they really have no idea of what it concerns, even though it seems to them that it's something like that. They have to struggle to resorb it like they do with everything else, but they don't know how to.

They'll find a way. Especially if I help them.

2

It is obvious that what I teach has to do with what we call the psychoanalytic experience.

They want to transport all that into, I don't know, something that doesn't put it in any position to know, what they call by a nice name that sounds like a sneeze, a *Weltanschauung*. Far be it from me to be so pretentious. That's what I hate most. I'll never indulge in that, thank God. No *Weltanschauung*. And all the rest of those *Weltanschauungen*, I loathe them.

What I teach has to do with something very different, with technical procedures and formal details concerning an experience that is either very serious, or an incredible errancy, something mad, demented. And that is what it looks like from the outside. The basic thing about analysis is that people finally realize that they've been talking nonsense at full volume for years.

For my part, I try to show, by starting out from what clarifies its *raison d'être*, why it lasts, why it goes on, why it ends up as something that is very often not at all what they think they have to announce to the outside world, what they claim to owe to the way it operates. It's obvious that this is a discursive operation, a discourse-operation. You'll say to me that some people go through their whole analysis without saying anything. If that's the case, it's an eloquent silence.

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We did not have to wait for analysis to take an interest in discourse. Indeed, discourse is the starting point for anything scientific. It's not enough to imagine philosophy in the register I was just telling you about, namely how beautiful thoughts were passed on down the ages. That is not what **this** is about. The purpose of philosophy is to specify the extent we can extract things that are certain enough to be described as science from a discourse-operation.

It's taken time for a science to emerge: our science, which has certainly proved its worth – though what it proves remains to be seen, though it has proved effective. It's all about perfecting the correct use of discourse, and nothing more.

And what about experience, you say? The whole point is that experience is constituted as such only if we start out by asking the right question. We call that a hypothesis. Why a hypothesis? A hypothesis is simply a question that has been asked in the right way. Something, in other words, begins to take a de facto form, and a fact [*fait*] always made up of [*fait de*] discourse. No one has ever seen a received fact. That is not a fact. It's a lump, something you bump into, all the things that can be said about something that is not already discursively articulated.

Psychoanalysis, which is an absolutely new example of discourse, leads us to take another little look at how we pose the problem of, for example, roots. It encourages

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us, for example, to investigate the phenomenon constituted by the appearance of a logic, its adventures and the strange things it ends up showing us.

There was a certain Aristotle, and his position – what you believe after this declaration is of little importance – was not dissimilar to mine. We don't really have much idea of what, of whom he had to deal with. They were called, in a vague, confused way, sophists. We naturally have to be suspicious of these terms, and we have to be very careful. There is in fact a black-out on what people got from the sophists' oracle. Probably something effective, because we know that they paid them very well, in the same way they pay psychoanalysts. Aristotle certainly got something out of it, but it had absolutely no effect on the people he was talking to. That's how it was for him, and how it is for me. It's the same. What I say makes no difference to psychoanalysts who are already very settled in their ways. But we can continue, continue, and hope.

All the wonderful things we find in the *Prior Analytics*, the *Posterior Analytics* and the *Categories* are what we call logic. It's been devalued now because we are the ones who do real, serious logic, though we've not been doing it for long; since the mid-nineteenth century, about 150 years.

Correct, strict, true logic is the logic that began with a certain Boole. It gives us the opportunity to revise a few ideas. We always believed that, when we had established

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a few good principles from the outset, everything we could derive from them would run smoothly and that we would always fall on our feet. The important thing was that a system should not be contradictory. That was all there was to logic. And then we notice that it is not like that at all. We discover lots of things that escape us. If by some chance a few people here and there have heard of a certain Gödel, they may know that even arithmetic turns out to be a basket; I'm not saying it is double-bottomed, but there are lots and lots of holes in the bottom. Everything disappears through the hole in the bottom.

That is interesting, and it is not impossible that taking an interest in it might not be without a formative value for someone like a psychoanalyst. But for the moment it gets us nowhere, because we have here a very particular problem that I call the age question. If you want to do logic, or anything else to do with modern science, you have to start before you have been completely cretinized, by culture of course. Obviously, we are always a little cretinized because there is no escaping secondary school. Of course, secondary school may have its value too, because those who survive it and still have a real scientific vivacity are cases apart, as anyone will tell you. My good friend Leprince-Ringuet,¹³ who was cretinized at the

13 [Louis Leprince-Ringuet, French physicist (1901–2000).]

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same time as me at school, escaped immediately, brilliantly and in lively fashion. It took psychoanalysis to get me out. It has to be said that not many people have taken advantage of it the way I have.

Logic is a fairly precise thing and requires some mental resilience that has not been completely worn down by all the stupid things they force down your throat. So I must have had it at a very early age. The only problem is that being very young is not the best condition to make a good psychoanalyst either. And when someone with some experience does happen to enter the psychoanalyst's profession, it is too late to teach him the key things that would train him for its particular practice.

I mentioned logic to give you a target. There's more to it than that, but logic is exemplary if we take it at *Stotle's* level, because he obviously did try to inaugurate something. Of course those people, the sophists, were already using logic, and in quite astonishing, very brilliant, very effective ways, at one level of rationality. That they themselves did not give it its name obviously does not mean that that isn't what it was, that's for certain. They would not have been so good at enticing citizens, and non-citizens, and at giving them tips on how to win debates or on how to debate the eternal questions of being and non-being, if it didn't have a formative effect. *Stotle* tried to perfect a technique, what they call the

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Organon. He gave birth to a line, to a line of philosophers, and now you can see where that got him: his line has died out a little bit, now that philosophy has come down to meaning the history of thought. Which means we're having a bloody hard time of it. Fortunately there are still a few counterfeiters around to try to put you back on top of things. They're called phenomenologists.

Psychoanalysis gives us a chance, a chance to start again.

3

As I think I have got across to you, there is the closest relationship between the emergence of psychoanalysis and the truly regal extension of the functions of science. Although it may not be immediately apparent, there is a certain relationship of contemporaneity between the fact of what has been isolated and condensed within the analytic field, and the fact that, everywhere else, only science still has something to say.

That, you will tell me, is a scientific declaration. Of course it is, and why shouldn't it be? And yet, that is not quite what it is, because I do not add what we always find on the fringes of what is conventionally called scientism, namely a certain number of articles of faith to which I by no means subscribe. There is, for example, the idea that

all this represents progress. Progress in the name of what?

One objection was put forward to me just now, and it comes, it seems to me, from certain corners where they label themselves psychoanalysts. I have to say that it inspired me. It was passed on to me by a lady who had, I'm told, given a lecture on what Lacan is on about. Thanks, basically, to her, I can let myself go a little. If I understand rightly, the objection in question might be formulated thus: 'Why do you find it necessary to drag in the subject? Where is a trace of the subject in Freud?'

That was a terrible blow, I can tell you. The terrible thing is that after a time – time that I waste – there is a growing gulf between you and the effect of culture, of journalism. Now that I am in the public eye, I need an intermediary to tell me where some people might be at. So they think that dragging in the subject in connection with Freud is something new, an invention.

At this point, I am sincerely invoking anyone who is not a psychoanalyst, not that there can be many psychoanalysts here. Anybody who knows just a little about what we are talking about knows that Freud talks about three things.

The first is that it [*ça*] dreams.¹⁴ So it's a subject, isn't it? What are we all doing here? I have no illusions about

14 [The play is on *le ça: das Es*, the id.]

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this: an audience, even a qualified audience, is dreaming while I'm struggling away. Everyone is thinking about his own business, the girlfriend you're going to meet later, the piston rod that's just gone on your car, something that's gone wrong somewhere.

And there again, it gets things wrong. Think of the slips of the tongue, the bungled actions, the very text of your existence. They make a grotesque farce of what they've always trotted out to you about the ideal functions of consciousness and all that implies about the person who has to gain control. I don't know what it's about. You can see in my *Écrits* my stupor when I read the things that my dear friend Henri Ey,¹⁵ and I love him, has dreamed up. He wanted to civilize psychiatrists, so he invented organo-dynamism, and it's a complete shambles that makes no sense at all. I defy anyone to see any connection between what we are dealing with, the text of the subject, and whatever it is that he has dreamed up about this so-called synthesis, the construction of the personality, and I don't know what else. Where are they, these constructed personalities? I don't know, I'm looking for them with a lighted lamp, like Diogenes. The beautiful thing about it is that, despite all the appeals that are made to these constructs, they actually fail. That

15 [Henri Ey (1900–1972), French psychiatrist.]

means something. It's always the others who succeed. There are even people in the room who have got to their feet. For my part, I've succeeded in going to bed.

Third, it [ça] dreams, it fails, and it laughs. And are those three things subjective, or are they not, I ask you? We have to know what we are talking about. People who wonder why I needed to drag in the subject when we are dealing with Freud have absolutely no idea what they are saying. I have to conclude that that's where they are at, though I thought the resistance was based on something more sophisticated.

The subject in question has nothing to do with what we call the subjective in the vague sense, in a sense that muddles everything up, and nor does it have anything to do with the individual. The subject is what I define in the strict sense as an effect of the signifier. That is what a subject is, before it can be situated in, for example, one or another of the people who are there in an individual state, even before they exist as living beings.

Of course we can say in conventional terms, 'It's a good or bad subject, it's a moral subject, it's the subject of consciousness', or whatever you like. This idea of a subject of knowledge really is a load of nonsense, and one wonders how they can go on talking about it in philosophy classes at school. It can mean only one thing: that anything that is alive knows enough, just enough to

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survive. But there's nothing more to be said about it. That can be extended to the animal kingdom or – and why not? – the vegetable kingdom.

As for the idea of relating what they call man to what they call the world, that would mean regarding that world as an object and turning the subject into a correlative function. If we think of the world as an *ob-ject*, we assume the existence of a *sub-ject*. That relationship can only become substance, essence, thanks to a great image of contemplation whose completely mythical character is obvious. We imagine that there were people who contemplated the world. There are obviously things like that in Aristotle, for instance when he is talking about the spheres, but this simply means that there is no theory of the celestial spheres that does not involve a contemplative movement.

We know what a science is. None of us can master the whole of science. It steams ahead at full speed under its own impetus, does science, so much so that there is nothing we can do about it. Those who are most in the know are also those who are the most embarrassed about it.

All possible enlightened experience indicates that the subject is dependent on the articulated chain represented by science's acquired knowledge. The subject has to take his place there, situate himself as best he can in the

implications of that chain. He constantly has to revise all the little intuitive representations he has come up with, and which becomes part of the world, and even the so-called intuitive categories. He's always having to make some improvements to the apparatus, just to find somewhere to live. It's a wonder he hasn't been kicked out of the system by now.

And that is in fact the goal of the system. In other words, the system fails. That is why the subject lasts. If something gives us the feeling that there is a place where we can lay hands on it, where it's the subject we are dealing with, then it's at the level known as the unconscious. Because it all fails, laughs and dreams.

It only dreams, fails and laughs in a perfectly articulated way. What is Freud constantly doing in his approach, his discovery, his revelation of what the unconscious is all about? What does he spend his time on? What is he dealing with? No matter whether it is the text of the dream, the text of the joke or the form of the slip, he is manipulating articulations of language, of discourse.

In the margins of a small etching by Goya, we find written: 'The sleep of reason produces monsters.' It's beautiful and, as it's by Goya, it is even more beautiful – we can see the monsters.

You see, when you are talking, you always have to know when to stop. Adding 'produces monsters' sounds

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good, doesn't it? It's the beginning of a biological dream. It took biology a long time to give birth to science too. They spent a long time dwelling on the calf with six hooves. Oh! Monsters, all that, the imagination! We love it. Oh, it's so fine. You know, the psychiatrists tell us that it's teeming, swarming with psychopaths, that it invents and imagines things. It's fantastic. They are the only ones to imagine that. I cannot tell you how it is for the psychopath – I'm not enough of a psychopath – but it is certainly not the way the psychiatrists imagine it to be, especially when they talk about, I don't know, the physiology of sensation, or of perception, and then move on to constructs and then generalizations, all so they can think about what they will come up against, poor things. That has absolutely nothing to do with their constructs. That much should be obvious.

So you have to know when to stop. *The sleep of reason* – that's all. So what does that mean? It means that reason encourages us to go on sleeping. Once again, I don't know if there is any danger of you understanding a little declaration of irrationalism on my part. No, no, quite the opposite. What we would like to get rid of, to exclude, namely the reign of sleep, finds itself annexed by reason, its empire, its function, by the hold of discourse, by the fact that man dwells in language, as someone said. Is it irrationalism to notice that, or to follow reason's line of

thought in the text of the dream itself? It's possible for a whole psychoanalysis to go by before what might well happen does happen: we've reached the point where we wake up.

Somewhere Freud writes *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*. Even if we remain at the level of his second topography, what is this, if not a certain way of defining the subject? Where the reign of sleep was, I must come, become, with the special accent the verb *werden* takes in German, and we have to give it its import of becoming in the future. What does that mean? That the subject is already at home at the level of the *Es*.

There is no point in quibbling and saying that, in his second topography, Freud calls a certain system the perception-consciousness system, *das Ich*, with the article because there are no words in German that function the way *moi* and *je* function in French. *Das Ich* is something like the other two agencies, to use that vague term, he associates it with: the *Es* and the *Überich*. What is it, if not, strictly speaking, the core of the subject?

It might even have to do with that grotesque, ridiculous function all those who were for a while my fellow-travellers pounced upon, and they came from God knows where, and full of psychology, which is no preparation for psychoanalysis. I am talking about the function of intersubjectivity. Ah! Lacan, the 'Rome Discourse', 'Function

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and Field of Speech and Language', intersubjectivity! There is you and there is me, and we say so to each other, send each other things, and so we are intersubjective. All that is purely confusional.

I think you know my position on this point but, if you don't, I am in a position to get it across to you better. Confusing the subject with the message is one of the great characteristics of all the stupid things that are said about the so-called reduction of language to communication. The communication function has never been the most important aspect of language. That was my starting point.

Von Frisch thinks that bees have a language because they communicate things to one another. That is just the sort of thing that people say from time to time when the fancy takes them: namely, that the fact that something comes to us from them proves that we receive messages from starry bodies. In what sense is that a 'message'? If we give the word 'message' a meaning, there must be a difference between that and the transmission of whatever it might be. If there wasn't, everything in the world would be a message. And besides, there's a sense in which everything is a message, given what makes the functions of the transmission and conveying of information fashionable, as they say. It is not difficult to see that this information can be so formalized as to inscribe it as the very opposite of signification. That in itself is enough

to show that information, understood in that sense, is not to be confused with the result of what is conveyed in the use of language.

The articulation of language calls into question, first of all, the issue of the subject of the enunciation. The subject of the enunciation is definitely not to be confused with the one who takes the opportunity to say of himself *I*, as subject of the utterance. When he has to talk about himself, he calls himself *I*. It simply means *I who am speaking*. The *I*, as it appears in any utterance, is nothing more than what we call a *shifter*. Linguists claim that it is also the subject of the enunciation. That is quite wrong, whatever they may say. It is so wrong that it has obviously been untrue ever since we have known it. You can always try to find the subject of some enunciations. It is not, in any case, there for anyone who can say *I*.

This means, all the same, that we have to reconstruct the so-called communications schema a little bit. If there is one thing that has to be called into question, it is the simple function of intersubjectivity, as though it were a simple dual relationship between a sender and a receiver that worked all by itself. It's not that at all.

The first thing involved in communication is knowing what it means. Everybody knows that. You don't need much experience to show that what the other is saying obviously never coincides with what he says.

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That is also why you work yourself to death trying to construct a logic for the same. So that there will be no doubts surrounding the little signs you can put on the board. Precisely: you are trying to eliminate the subject. And once you have put down some little letters, the subject is indeed eliminated for a moment. You will naturally find the subject once more when you get to the end, in the shape of all sorts of paradoxes. That is the demonstrative and fascinating thing about logic's attempts to study things closely.

Someone will object that, if we want to speak of something that is absolutely not psychical, but that is a real metapsychology, or in other words something very different from a psychology, we have to talk about the id, the ego or the superego. We act as though all that were obvious, self-evident, quite natural, something we could see coming a mile off. Nothing of the kind. Not only is it different from all the old waffle; if there is something that we can legitimately call an intersubjectivity, an intersubjectivity that is not just dramatic but tragic, then it has nothing to do with the order of communication, with an intersubjectivity of people who push and shove, get jammed up against each other and suffocate each other -- well, it takes the form of the id, the ego and the superego, and it can easily do without what you would call a subject.

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They ask me why I talk about the subject, why I supposedly add that to Freud. That is all that gets talked about in Freud. But it gets talked about in a brutal, imperative way. It is a sort of bulldozer operation, and it brings back to life everything that they have been trying to cover up about the subject for thousands of years of the philosophical tradition.

As I was telling you just now, it is in just that order of things that they are now up to something. What I have stressed, and I cannot claim to be doing anything more than suggesting a dimension here, has indeed a counterpart, and it is supplied by philosophers. There is, for example, one to whom I make a brief allusion in the first issue of my journal *Scilicet*, a very talented boy who still has a few rehashes in store for us when it comes to great classical themes, and I knew of their existence long before I first met him at a congress. So, he said to me: 'All that's very well, I agree with what you say' – and indeed it was obvious that he did agree, since in his article on Freud he wrote nothing that I had not said already – but what I've said, 'But why, why, do you insist on calling it the subject?'

That's the way it is when you touch on certain topics, you find that someone has already laid claim to them. One of the people who is just learning that lesson dared to write a book on Racine one day. The trouble was, he

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wasn't the only one, because there was someone else who thought he was the expert on Racine. How dare he? And so on. In this case, the philosopher was quite prepared to say to me: 'Why do you keep calling the unconscious – an unconscious you say is structured like a language – the subject?'

When analysts ask me questions like that, I'm shocked but I can't say that I am surprised. But coming from philosophers, they are so disconcerting I can't find any answer, except to say: 'I keep the subject . . . to get you talking.'

And yet, it would be quite insane not to retain the term. Some happy accident in the philosophical tradition has perpetuated the line that began with Aristotle's *Organon*, which I was talking about just now. Read, or reread, the *Categories*, my little friends, or those of you who from time to time get it into your heads to read something other than textbooks, and you will see from the start the difference between the subject and substance.

This is something that is so crucial that the two thousand years of philosophical tradition I was talking about have been trying to do just one thing, trying to resorb that. The man who is regarded as the pinnacle of the philosophical tradition – Hegel – suggests with, I have to say, dazzling brilliance, something that negates what

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we touch upon in dreams, namely that substance is already the subject, before it becomes the subject, as we saw just now with Freud's formula.

It all starts with the initial trauma of Aristotle's assertion, which introduced the most rigorous divorce between subject and substance. That has been completely forgotten.

That the subject has outlived the philosophical tradition demonstrates, if we can put it that way, that we really are behaving like intellectual failures.

Is that not a reason not to abandon the term 'subject', now that the time has finally come to invert its usage?