

Seminar of November 19, 1974

There isn't a microphone. So you'll have to tell me if you can hear me.¹

There are people—I know it because they have told me—who go on strike (*vivent la grève*) as if it were a holiday (*fête*). I know it, of course, through analysis. We find things out in analysis. We even know that there are people twisted enough for that. But why not? It's subjective, as one says. That means that there are some people who can make all kinds of things turn out all right. Nonetheless, I'm not one of them. As analyst, I can only take a strike as a symptom, perhaps in the sense that I'll arrive at with you this year, by convincing you that the symptom, when it's referred to one of the three categories, is real. The troubling thing—and this is what makes me have reservations—is that it's an organized symptom. That's what's malignant, at least from the point of view of the analyst.

Well, if I'm going to strike all the same, it's not that it will be a holiday for me. It happens that this strike is for me like a ball and chain. I mean that it happens that today, namely at the beginning of the 74-75 [academic] year, I didn't have the slightest desire (*envie*) to do a seminar for you—as is shown by the fact you never saw a poster advertising the title of it as in previous years. Nevertheless, I must say that your numbers here today have shaken me.² You know that each year I ask myself what could be the reason for such large numbers. I haven't figured it out yet, but all the same, I consider it an appeal, an appeal based on the fact that what I wrote—nothing more than wrote, I mean what is written on the board in little signs, the *a*, the S1, the S2, the *§* of the subject, namely the analytic discourse—is something that riles you up. I say riles *you* up. It's not a “you,” a “riles you up” in a neutral sense. It's true that to have written it, as an approximate attempt, means that perhaps one could do better. I hope that we will do better.

But finally, this year I really have to tell you that I have other concerns. I'll only be given credit for that—in your eyes, I hope—if I continue to pursue my seminar here. I have other concerns, and I wonder if it is necessary that I put them first. I mean that among you—and I see that you are numerous here—there are people who belong to my School. And perhaps, after all, my weariness comes from what is eating away at me, namely that this seminar keeps me from being more being more closely involved with the School.

This year, I'm taking a stand, to energize this School, of which certain of you have heard an echo. I'm not going to place this concern that I have in a public forum. Not, of course, that it's anything private, quite the contrary, since what's involved is the fact that elsewhere, there are other teachings besides mine. It's strange, strange in the specifically Freudian sense, *unheimlich*, that it is from those who still aren't in a position, properly speaking, to be authorizing any analysis, but who are on the way to it, from them comes the resistance to the reasons why I energize them. I energize them to make effective—what? In a testimony that they give from whatever point they're at, to make effective the pass that, as some of you know, I am trying to introduce in my School. And in the pass it's simply a matter of each making a contribution to the analytic discourse by testifying about how one enters it.

It is strange that among them there are those who are trained analysts and who when I literally—this is what I did in the area where I would like certain teachings to take place—when I literally beg for their help—and that's what I did—refuse it in the most categorical way, going so far as to oppose me with insults that make their way into journals, for example—that's not what has any effect on me—but who, as if it isn't already bad enough to have this insult dragged into a journal, namely *Le Monde*, as if by chance, then blow it all out of proportion and add to it. Yeah!

¹ Lacan's seminar for the year was scheduled to begin on this day, but there was a strike called.

If I speak to you this year, I'll take things from the angle of an identity of self to self. The question is to know whether that applies to the analyst. Could the analyst be considered an element? In other words, could he make a set? Make a set, that's something I'll try to explain to you. It's not the same as forming a union (*syndicat*). Those are two different terms. To make a set could mean, does mean, to be able to make a series. And the question I want to ask is, where does that series stop? In other words, could an analyst, taking the example of that to which I just alluded concerning the insult, act like an imbecile? It's a very important question. How are we to determine what I call imbecility? Surely it has a meaning, even in analytic discourse. Elsewhere too, of course. Within each discourse, nobody slips up: one is in imbecile or not. In relation to the discourse of the master, the discourse of the university, and the scientific discourse, I say that there can be no doubt about this. But how do we define imbecility in the analytic discourse? There's a question, a question that I introduced, my goodness, as long ago as the first year of my seminar by stating that analysis is certainly a remedy against ignorance, but it has no effect on stupidity (*connerie*). Pay attention for a minute! I already said that stupidity isn't imbecility. How do we situate imbecility and distinguish it from stupidity?

The troubling and difficult thing about this question that I raise is perhaps the thing you keep quiet about. I don't insist on it too heavily, but even so, we have to admit that there are subjects for whom analysis, I mean the analytic experience, doesn't succeed when they submit themselves to it. And I'll say explicitly that this makes them imbeciles. At the start there has to be something to seek out. Maybe that means that they would be more useful elsewhere, utilizable elsewhere. I mean that elsewhere they have obvious talents. This leads us back to the ethics of each discourse, and it's not for nothing that I advanced the term "ethics of psychoanalysis." That

² With a possible pun on *se branler*, 'to masturbate'.

ethics isn't the same, and maybe those people that ethics makes a huge success elsewhere are the ones who don't succeed in analysis. A simple hypothesis, but one that maybe—and it may not be without detours—maybe if I bring myself to do it, we will finally put to the test—that's a manner of speaking, really I will put it to the test—starting from what I told you, that there is no other ethics than that of playing the game according to the structure of a discourse, and there we will rediscover the meaning of my title from last year: they are not duped, those who don't play the game of a discourse, and thus they find themselves in error. They're not necessarily any the worse for all that. Only it's at their own risk.. Those who err in each discourse aren't necessarily useless to it—far from it! It's just that it would be better if to lay the foundation for a new one starting out from these discourses, one were a little bit duped by them.

There! So all the same it would be pointless to tell you that I'm going to hang it up, that I wonder what I'm going to do this year. That would be pointless to do for two hours well you listen to it. Ah, well, I'm not going to do it. I'm going to stop here, and ask of you only that you trust in the knowledge that if you return here on December 10, the second Tuesday, you can rely on the little posters on which will be written the title of this year's seminar, if I do it. It is completely unnecessary—and I will say even counter-indicated—that you bombard Gloria with phone calls. The poor thing can't handle any more. One of two things will happen. Either the poster will be put up there, and then I'll also have to think, the poster will be there in the corridor two days ahead of time, or it won't be. And if it isn't, well, you can say I'm taking a year's sabbatical. If it is, I'll count on your being as numerous as you are today.