

THE SEMINAR OF JACQUES LACAN
BOOK XVIII

On a discourse that might not be a semblance

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I am going to try today to fix the meaning of this road along which I have led you this year under the title of *Of a discourse which might not be a semblance*. This hypothesis – because this title is presented to you in the conditional – this hypothesis is the one by which every discourse is justified. Do not forget that last year I tried to articulate in four typical discourses, these discourses which are the ones that you have to deal with, in a certain established order, which of course is itself only justified from history. If I broke them into four, this is something I believe I justified from the development that I gave them and from the form that in a writing paradoxically described as *Radiophonie*, not all that paradoxical if you heard what I was saying the last time, a certain order then whose terms this writing recalls to you and the slippage, the always syncopated slippage, of the slippage of the four terms among which there are always two which create a gap. This discourse that I designated specifically as the discourse of the Master, of the University discourse, of the discourse that I privileged with the term of Hysteric and the discourse of the Analyst, if I used them, these discourses have the property of always having their organising point, which is also moreover the one with which I pinpoint them, of starting with a semblance. What is privileged about analytic discourse because it is the one that allows us, in short, in articulating them in this way, to also divide them up into four fundamental arrangements. It is paradoxical, it is curious, that such a statement is presented as being at the end of what the one who found

himself to be at the origin of analytic discourse, namely Freud, permitted. He did not permit it starting from nothing. He permitted it starting from what is presented; I articulated it clearly (160) on several occasions as being the principle of this discourse of the Master, namely, of what is privileged by a certain knowledge that illuminates the articulation of the truth with knowledge. It is properly speaking prodigious that those very people who, caught up in certain perspectives, those that we might define as putting themselves forward, as it were, with respect to society, those therefore who, in this perspective, present themselves as infirm, let us be kinder, as limping, and we know that beauty limps, namely, the neurotics, and specifically the hysterics and the obsessionals, that it was from them that there started, this overwhelming flash of light that travels the length and breadth of the *demansion* that conditions language. The function that is the truth, indeed, on this occasion indeed, everyone knows the place it holds in Freud's statements, indeed this crystallisation which is the one we know in its modern form, what we know about religion, and specifically the Judeo-Christian tradition on which everything that Freud stated about religions is brought to bear.

This is consistent, I remind you, with this subversive operation of what up to then had been sustained throughout a whole tradition under the title of knowledge (*connaissance*), and this operation originates from the notion of symptom. It is historically important to note that it is not in this that there resides the novelty of the introduction of psychoanalysis brought about by Freud. The notion of symptom, as I indicated on several occasions, and it is very easy to locate by reading the one who is responsible for it, namely, Marx. The fundamental dupery that is contained in the theory of knowledge, this dimension of semblance that introduces the dupery exposed as such by Marxist subversion, the fact that what is exposed in it is precisely still in a certain tradition that reached its acme with the Hegelian discourse that some semblance is established in function of weight and measure, as I might say, as being the genuine article

(*argent comptant*), and it is not for nothing that I use these metaphors, because it is around money, around capital as such that there operates the pivot of this exposure that makes the fetish reside in this something, a turning back of thinking, to put it back in its place, and very precisely *qua* semblance.

The curious thing about this remark is all the same also designed to make us notice that it is not enough for something to be stated in this exposure which puts itself forward as truth, in the name of which there emerges, there is promoted, surplus value as being the mainspring of what reduced to its semblance, what up to then was sustained by a certain number of deliberate oversights. It is not (161) enough, I remarked, and history proves it, for this irruption of truth to be produced for what is sustained by this discourse to be laid low. This discourse that we could call on this occasion that of the Capitalist, in so far as it is a determination of the discourse of the Master, finds itself at ease there, in fact, and is rather indeed its complement. It appears that, far from this discourse suffering from this recognition as such of the function of surplus value, it subsists no less, since moreover a capitalism caught up in the discourse of the Master is indeed what seems to distinguish the political consequences that resulted, under the form of a political revolution, that resulted from the Marxist exposure of what is involved in a certain discourse about semblance.

This indeed is why I am not going to dwell here on what is involved in the historic mission devoted in Marxism, or at least in its manifestos, devoted to the proletariat. There is, I would say, a left-over of humanist entification which, in a way, proliferates on what guarantees what in capitalism finds itself more and more stripped down to essentials, shows no less that something subsists, that makes it subsist effectively in this state of deprivation. And the fact that it is the support, the support of what is produced under the species of

surplus value, is not for all that something that will in any way free us from the articulation of this discourse.

This indeed is why this exposure reverts back to a questioning about this something which may be more original and which might find itself at the very origin of every discourse in so far as it is a discourse of semblance. This is also why that what I articulated under the term of surplus enjoying, refers you to what is questioned in the Freudian discourse as putting in question the relationship of something which is articulated properly speaking and anew as a truth, in opposition to a semblance. And this truth is this opposition, and this dialectic of the truth and of the semblance is found, if what Freud has said has a meaning, is situated at the level of what I designated by the term of sexual relationship.

In short, I dared to articulate, to encourage people to notice, that if this revelation that is bestowed on us by the knowledge of the neurotic about something, is nothing other than something which is articulated as *there is no sexual relationship*, what does that mean? Certainly not that language, since already, already I am saying, there is no sexual relationship, is something that can be said since now, it is said, but of course it is not enough to say it, it still has to (162) be justified. And we take the justifications from our experience obtained from the unbroken thread of what is hooked onto this fundamental gap and this unbroken thread is knotted, this is its central starting place, entwined around this void, in what I call the discourse of the neurotic.

The last time, I sufficiently made you sense, sufficiently underlined, attempted to begin from a writing, how there can be situated what is involved as the starting point of this thread. My intention today - not at all of course, the thing is beyond, at the limit of anything that can be said in this limited space of a seminar - not at all about what the neurotic indicates about his relationship to this distance, but about

what the myths, the myths from which there are formed, as I might say, not always under the dictation, but as an echo of the discourse of the neurotic, the myth that Freud forged. In order to do it in such a brief period, we have to start from the central point, which is also the enigmatic point of the psychoanalytic discourse, of the psychoanalytic discourse in so far as it is here only listening to this final discourse, the one which might not be the discourse of semblance. It is listening to a discourse which might not be and which moreover is not. I mean that what is indicated is only the limit imposed on discourse, when the sexual relationship is at stake. I tried, for my part, at the point that I have got to, where I am going ahead of everything that may be formulated later, to tell you that it is its failure at the level of a logic, of a logic which is sustained from what every logic is sustained by, namely, writing. The letter of Freud's work is a written work. But moreover also that what it outlines from these writings, is something that surrounds a veiled, obscure truth, one that is stated by the fact that, a sexual relationship, as it happens in some accomplishment or other, can only be sustained, can only be established, from this composition between enjoyment and the semblance called castration. That we see it re-emerging at every instant in the discourse of the neurotic, but in the form of a fear, of an avoidance, is precisely the reason why castration remains enigmatic. That none of its realisations, in fact, is as changeable, as shimmering. Or moreover the exploration of the psychopathology of analysable phenomena, at least of this psychopathology, that excursions into ethnology allow, it nevertheless remains that something from which there is distinguished everything that is evoked as castration, we see it, in what form, always in the form of an avoidance. If the neurotic, as I might say, bears witness to the necessary intrusion of what I called just now this composition of enjoyment and the semblance that is presented as castration, it is precisely because of the fact that he (163) shows himself to be inapt for it in some way. And if everything that is involved in rituals of initiation which, as you know, or if you do

not know, consult the technical works, and to take two of them which were produced within the analytic field itself, I designate for you respectively the *Problems of bisexuality as reflected in circumcision*, namely, *Problèmes de la bisexualité en tant que réfléchis dans la circoncision*, by Herman Nunberg, published by Englewoods, namely, when all is said and done, by the Imago publications of London, and on the other hand, the work entitled *Symbolic wounds*, *Blessures symboliques* by Bruno Bettelheim. You will see in them deployed in its whole ambiguity, in its fundamental vacillation, hesitation, in a way, of analytic thinking between explicatory ordering which leaves the fear of castration completely opaque and in a way to good or bad fortune as you wish, the accidents through which there is presented something which in this register is only supposed to be the effect of some misunderstanding or other. On this tangle of prejudices, of blunders, of something that can be rectified, or on the contrary of a thinking which notices that there is indeed here something of the constancy, at the very least, an immense number of productions that we can record on every register, even though the catalogues have been more or less done, whether those of ethnology or of psychopathology, that I evoked earlier, there are others confronting us with the fact that it is from – and Freud expresses it on occasion, it is very well said in *Civilisation and its discontents* – it is in connection with something which after all does not make all that new what I formulated in terms of *there is no sexual relationship*. He says that, he indicates of course as I did, in quite clear terms, that no doubt, on this point, very precisely in connection with sexual relationships, some fatality is inscribed that makes necessary in it what then appear as being the means, the bridges, the passerels, the buildings, the constructions, in a word, which at the deficiency, at the deficiency of this sexual relationship inasmuch as after all, in a sort of respective inversion, any possible discourse will only appear as a symptom, within this sexual relationship, arranged in conditions that as usual we refer to pre-history, to extra-historical domains, that in these conditions, gives a kind of success to what can

be established as artificial, as a supplement, as supplying for what is lacking, is inscribed in short in the speaking being without one being able to know whether it is because he is speaking that it is like this, or on the contrary because the origin is that the relationship is not speakable. It is necessary for all of those who (164) inhabit language, it is necessary that for them there should be developed this something which makes possible in the form of castration, the gap left in this something that is nevertheless essential, biologically essential, biologically essential for the reproduction of these beings as living beings, for their race to remain fruitful. Such indeed, in effect, is the problem that is confronted by everything that is involved in the rituals of initiation. That these rituals of initiation comprise... let us call them manipulations, operations, incisions, circumcisions, that are aimed at and put their mark very precisely on the organ that we see functioning as a symbol in that which through psychoanalytic experience is presented to us as going well beyond the privilege of the organ, since it is the phallus, and that the phallus, in so far as it is to this third that there is ordered everything which, in short, creates an impasse in enjoyment, which makes of the man and of the woman, in so far as we might define them by a simple biological pinpointing, these beings who very precisely are with a sexual enjoyment and in an elective way among all other enjoyments, in difficulty with it, this indeed is what is at stake and it is from this that we have to start again if we want there to be maintained a correct meaning to what is inaugurated from analytic discourse.

And that if it is, as is supposed, something defined, this is what we call castration, which is supposed to have the privilege of warding off this something whose undecideability forms the basis of the sexual relationship, in so far as it presents enjoyment as organised, with regard to something that seems to me to be not avoidable. I am talking about the statements, the theatricals, about constraint which are a daily experience in analytic discourse is quite the opposite – this, it is a remark which gives its value to the second book, that of

Bruno Bettelheim, that I highlighted for you – which is obviously altogether contrary to something which is the only important thing. It is not a matter of pushing back into prehistory what is involved in rituals of initiation, rituals of initiation, like everything that we would like to reject into prehistory, are there, they still exist, they are alive throughout the world, there are still Australians who have themselves circumscribed or subincised, there are entire zones of civilisation that submit to it, and to fail to recognise in a century described as illuminated that these practices not only subsist but flourish, are very healthy, and it is obviously from that that we must start in order to notice that it is not from any conceivable theatricality of constraint whatsoever, there is no example that it is simply constraint, it is still a matter of knowing (165) what a constraint means. A constraint is never just the production of something that the so-called prevalence of a so-called physical superiority or other, it is supported precisely by signifiers. And if it is the law, the rule, that is such here, that a particular subject wants to submit to it, it is indeed for reasons, and these reasons are what are important for us. And what is important for us, and it is here that we ought to question what is the compliance, to use a word which, by leading us straight to the hysteric, and which no less has an extremely general range, this compliance which ensures that there subsists well and truly and in times that are quite historical what is involved and what is presented as something whose image all by itself would be intolerable, it is perhaps intolerable as such, this is what is at stake, it is to know why.

This is where I take up my thread again, it is in following this thread that we give a meaning to what is articulated in language in what I will call this unpublished (*inédite*) word, because it was unpublished up to a certain epoch, a well and truly historical one within our reach, this unpublished word, and which is presented, in short, as having always partly to remain so. There is no other definition to be given to the unconscious. Let us come now to the hysteric because I like to start from the hysteric, to see where the thread leads us. The hysteric,

we have asked ourselves, have we not, what it is, but precisely, this is the meaning, it is to such a question: “What is it?”, what is it, what does it mean, the hysteric in person? It seems to me that I have worked for a long enough time starting from the imaginary, to indicate “that in person”, to recall simply, what is already...inscribed in the terms “in person”...in a mask (*en masque*), no reply can be given at the start to this meaning. To the question “what is the hysteric?”, the answer of the discourse of the analyst is: “You’ll see”. You will indeed see, precisely, by following where she leads us. Without the hysteric, of course, there would never have come to light what is involved in what I am writing, of what I am writing, anyway, I am trying to give you the first logical step of what is now at stake, of what I write as phi of x ($\phi(x)$), which is, namely, that enjoyment, this variable in the function written in x, is not situated from this relationship with the capital Φ that here designates the phallus, the central discovery, or rather rediscovery or as you wish re-baptism, since I indicated to you why it is from the phallus as an unveiled semblance in the mysteries that the term is taken up again, not by (166) chance. That it is very precisely, in effect, that it is to the semblance of the phallus that there is referred the pivotal point, the centre of everything that can be organised, be contained in terms of sexual enjoyment, that from the first approaches to hysterics, from the *Studien über Hysterie* Freud leads us. The last time I articulated the following, that in short, in taking things from the point that could in effect be questioned, about what is involved in the most common discourse, that if we wish, not to push to its term what linguistics indicates to us, but simply to extrapolate it. Namely, to notice that nothing of what language allows us to do is ever anything but metaphor, or indeed metonymy. That the something that every word, whatever it may be, claims to name for an instant can only ever refer back to a connotation. And that if there is something that may in the final term be indicated as that which is denoted by any function apperelled in language, I already said it the last time, there is only one *Bedeutung, die Bedeutung des Phallus*. It is there alone what is

involved in language, denoted, of course, but without ever anything corresponding to it, since, if there is something that characterises the phallus, it is not, not to be the signifier of lack, as some people thought they understood some of my words, but to be assuredly in any case that from which no word emerges. *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, it is from there, I recalled the last time, it is from this opposition articulated by the really inaugurating logician who is Frege, *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, define the models that go further than those of connotation and denotation. Many things in this article in which Frege establishes the two aspects of *Sinn* and of *Bedeutung*, many things are to be retained and especially for an analyst.

Because undoubtedly, without a reference to logic which of course cannot just be to classical logic, to Aristotelian logic, without a reference to logic, it is impossible to find the correct point in the subjects that I am putting forward. Frege's remark turns entirely around the fact that when we are brought to a certain point of scientific discourse what we note, is, for example, facts like the following. Is it the same thing to say Venus or to call it in the two ways that it was for a long time designated the Morning Star and the Evening Star? Is it the same thing to say *Sir Walter Scott* and to say *the author of the Waverley novels*? I inform those who might be unaware of it that he is effectively the author of this work that is called *Waverley*. It is in examining this distinction that Frege notices that it is not possible in any case to replace *Sir Walter Scott* by *the author of the Waverley novels*. This is how he distinguishes the fact that *the author of the Waverley novels* conveys a sense, a (167) *Sinn*, and that *Sir Walter Scott* designates a *Bedeutung*. It is clear that if one posits with Leibnitz that, *salva veritate*, to save the truth, it must be posited that everything that is designated as having an equivalent *Bedeutung* and which can be replaced indifferently, and if one puts the thing to the test as I am doing right away put it to the test along the paths traced out by Frege himself, that, it does not matter whether it was George III or George IV, on this occasion that has little

importance, was asking, was informing himself, as to whether Sir Walter was the author of the Waverley novels. If we replace “the author of the Waverley novels” by “Sir Walter Scott” we obtain the following sentence: “George III was enquiring whether Sir Walter Scott was Sir Walter Scott”, which quite obviously has absolutely not the same sense. It is starting from this simple remark, a logical operation, that Frege establishes, inaugurates his fundamental distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. It is quite clear that this *Bedeutung* refers of course to an always more distant *Bedeutung*, which refers of course to the distinction between what he calls oblique discourse and direct discourse. It is inasmuch as it is in a subordinate clause that it is King George III who asks, that we ought to maintain here the rights of *Sinn* and in no way replace *the author of the Waverley novels* by *Sir Walter Scott*.

But this of course is an artifice which, for us, leads us onto the path of the following, namely, that Sir Walter Scott, on this occasion, is a name. And moreover when Mr. Carnap takes up again the question of *Bedeutung*, it is by the term *nominatum* that he translates it. And thus, precisely, he slips here into what he should not have slipped.

Because the thing that I am giving a commentary on, may allow us to go further, but certainly not in the same direction as Mr. Carnap. It is the matter of what is meant by a name, I repeat, like the last time. It is very easy for us to make the connection here with what I pointed out earlier. I pointed out to you that the phallus is something that puts us on the path of this point that I am designating here in an accentuated way, the fact is that the *nom*, the name and the noun, but one only sees things clearly at the level of the proper name, as someone or other has said. The name, is what summons, no doubt, but to what? It is what summons you to speak. And this indeed is what constitutes the privilege of the phallus, it is that you can summon it as much as you like, it will always say nothing.

Only this then gives its sense, gives its sense to what I called at one time the paternal metaphor and this is what the hysteric leads to.

(168) The paternal metaphor, of course, when I introduced it, namely, in my article on *A question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis*, I inserted it into the general schema extracted from the rapprochement between what linguistics tells us about metaphor and what the experience of the unconscious tells us about condensation. I wrote S over S₁, multiplied by S₁ over a small s, I relied heavily, as I also wrote in *The agency of the letter*, on this aspect of the metaphor, which is to generate a sense. If *the author of the Waverley novels*, is a *Sinn*, it is very precisely because *the author of the Waverley novels*, replaces something else, which is a special *Bedeutung*, the one that Frege thinks he should pinpoint with the name of *Sir Walter Scott*. But still it is not only from this angle that I envisaged the paternal metaphor. If I wrote somewhere that the Name of the Father is the phallus – God knows what tremor of horror this evoked among some pious souls – it is precisely because at that date I could not articulate it better. What is sure is that it is the phallus, of course, but that it is all the same the Name of the Father. What is named Father, the Name of the Father, if it is a name which, for its part, is efficacious, it is because someone stands up to answer. From the angle of what happened in the psychotic determination of Schreber, it is *qua* signifier, signifier capable of giving a sense to the desire of the mother, that I could in a correct manner situate the Name of the Father. But at the level of what is at stake when it is, let us say, the hysteric who summons him, what matters is that someone should speak. I would like here to point out to you that if Freud sometimes tried to approach a little bit more closely this function of the Father which is so essential to analytic discourse, that one can say in a certain way that it is the product of it, if I write the analytic discourse for you as \mathfrak{o}/S_2 , namely, the analyst over the knowledge he has from the neurotic, who questions the subject to produce something, one can say that the master signifier, up to the present, of the analytic discourse, is indeed the Name of the Father. It is extremely curious

that the analytic discourse was necessary for questions to be posed about this. What is a Father? Freud does not hesitate to articulate that it is the name in essence which implies faith (or the law; *foi/loi*). That is how he expresses himself. We might perhaps all the same have desired a little bit more from him. After all, taking things at the fundamental biological level, one might perfectly well conceive that the reproduction of the human species – this has already been done, it has already emerged from the imagination of a novelist - might (169) happen without any kind of intervention designating itself under the Name of the Father, artificial insemination is not there for nothing. What in short constitutes presence – and this did not come from today or yesterday – is it not this essence of the Father, and after all, do not we analysts ourselves really know what it is? I would like all the same to point out to you that in analytic experience, the Father is only ever a referent (*référential*) (?). We interpret one or other relation with the Father. Do we ever analyse anyone *qua* Father? Let someone bring me a case-study. The Father is a term of analytic interpretation. To him something is referred.

It is in the light of these remarks – I have to cut things short – that I would all the same like to situate for you what is involved in the myth of the Oedipus complex. The myth of the Oedipus complex causes trouble in some way, is that not so, because supposedly it establishes the primacy of the Father, which is supposed to be a kind of reflection of patriarchy. I would like to make you sense something which, through which, for me at least, it appears to me to be not at all a patriarchal reflection. Far from it. It shows us simply this: a point first of all through which castration might be circumscribed, through a logical approach and, in the way that I will designate as being numeral.

The Father is not alone castrated, but is precisely castrated to the point of being nothing but a number. This is indicated quite clearly in dynasties. Earlier I was talking about a king, I no longer knew

what to call him, George III or George IV....you should be under no illusion that this is precisely what seems most typical to me, in this presentation of paternity, namely, that in reality, this is how it happens, George I, George II, George III, George IV. But still, it is quite obvious that this does not exhaust the question, because...there is not simply the numeral (*numéro*), there is a number (*nombre*). In a word, I see in it the apperception point of the series of natural numbers (*nombres*), as it is put. And as it is not put too badly, because after all it is very close to nature, I would like to point out to you that because people always evoke at the horizon of history something that, of course, is an extremely suspicious reason, I would simply point out the following to you. That matriarchy, as it is put, has no need to be pushed back to the limit of history.

Matriarchy consists essentially in the following, the fact is for what is involved in the mother as production, there is no doubt. One can on occasion lose one's mother in the Metro, of course, but still there is no doubt about *who* is the mother. There is also no doubt about (170) who is the mother of the mother. And so on. The mother, in her line of descent, I would say, is innumerable. She is innumerable in all the proper senses of the term, she is not to be numbered, because there is no starting point. The maternal line of descent may well necessarily be in order, one cannot make it start from any point. I could point out to you on the other hand the following which appears to be the thing that one most usually puts one's finger on, because it is after all not rare, it is not at all rare that one may have as father one's grandfather. I mean as a true father. Or even one's great-grandfather. Yes! Because...people lived as we are told in the first line of descent of patriarchs, for around 900 years. I looked over that again recently, it is very pithy, it is absolutely sensational fakery. Everything is designed so that the two most direct ancestors of Noah died there just at the moment that the flood happened. That is what you see, it is titillating, anyway let us put that to one side, it is simply to put you in the perspective of what is involved in the Father.

From this, you see, what results – I am forced to go a little quickly, because time is passing – is that if we define the hysteric by the following, a definition that is not particular to him, the neurotic, namely, the avoidance of castration, there are several ways to avoid it. The hysteric has this simple procedure, the fact is that she unilateralises it on the other side, the side of the partner. Let us say that for the hysteric, a castrated partner is necessary. That he should be castrated, it is clear that this is at the source of the possibility of the enjoyment of the hysteric. But it is still too much. If he were castrated, there would perhaps be a little chance, since castration is precisely what I put forward earlier as being what allows the sexual relationship, it is necessary that he should be simply *what answers* in the *place* of the phallus.

So then, since Freud himself indicates to us, I will not tell you, all the same at what page, indicates himself that everything he elaborates as a myth – this is in connection with Moses: “I will not here criticise”, he says about what he had written himself, at the date when he published it in 1938, about his historical hypothesis, namely, the one from Sellin that he had renovated, “because all the results that have been required”, says the translator, “constitute psychological deductions which flow from it and ceaselessly refer to it”. As you see that means nothing. In German that does mean something, it is “*denn sie bilden die Voraussetzung*”, because they form the supposition, “*der psychologischen Erörterungen*”, of psychological manifestations which, from these data, “*von ihnen ausgehen*”, there flow and always anew “*auf sie zurück-kommen*”, (171) and come back to them. It is indeed in effect under the dictation of the hysteric that, there is not developed, because the Oedipus complex was never really developed by Freud, it is indicated in a way, at the horizon, in the smoke, as one might say, of what raises itself up as a sacrifice of the hysteric. But let us clearly observe what is now meant by this

nomination, this response to the summoning of the father in the Oedipus complex.

If I told you earlier that this introduces the series of natural numbers, it is because there, we have, what is the most recent logical development of this series, namely, that of Peano, proved necessary, namely, not simply the fact of succession, when one tries to axiomatise the possibility of such a series, one encounters the necessity of zero in order to posit the successor. The minimal axioms of Peano – I am not insisting on what may have been produced as a commentary, in the margin, in order to perfect it – but the final formula, is the one that posits zero as necessary for this series, without which it would then be innumerable, as I said earlier. The logical equivalence of the function is very precisely that this function that I have made use of is too often linked, I can only do it in the margin and very rapidly, I would point out to you that we will enter into the second millennium in the year 2000, as far as I know. If you simply admit that – on the other hand, you could moreover not admit it – but if simply you admit it, I would point out to you that this makes it necessary for there to have been a year zero, after the birth of Christ. This is what the authors of the Republican Calendar forgot. They called the first year, year 1 of the Republic. This zero is absolutely essential for any natural chronological mapping out. And then we understand what is meant by the murder of the Father. It is curious, singular, is it not, that this murder of the Father never appears even in dramas, as has been very relevantly been pointed out by someone who has written on this a chapter that is not bad at all, that even in dramas, no playwright has dared, the author says, to present, to manifest, the deliberate murder of a father by a son. Pay careful attention to that, even in Greek theatre this does not exist, a Father *qua* Father. On the contrary, it is all the same the term “murder of the Father” which appears at the centre of what Freud develops starting from the data constituted by, because of the hysteric, and those around him, the refusal of castration. Is it (172)

not precisely in so far as the murder of the Father, here, is the substitute for this rejected castration, that the Oedipus complex was able to impose itself on Freud's thinking as he worked his way through these approaches to the hysteric? It is clear that in the hysterical perspective it is the phallus that fecundates, and that what it engenders, is itself, as one might say. Fecundity is phallic forgery, and it is indeed in this way that every child is a reproduction of the phallus, in so far as he is pregnant (*gros*), if I can express myself in this way, from his engendering.

But then, we also glimpse, since it is from the *papludun* that I have inscribed the logicised possibility of the choice in this unsatisfied relation of sexual relationship, that it is from the no more than one that I designated it for you. It is through this that the unbelievable complicity of Freud in a monotheism whose model he is going to seek, a very curious thing, quite elsewhere than in his tradition, it is necessary for him that it should be Akhenaton. There is nothing more ambiguous, I would say, on the sexual plane, than this solar monotheism, when you see it radiating with all its rays provided with little hands which are going to tickle the nostrils of innumerable little humans, children, of one sex and the other. And it is quite striking, in this imagery of the Oedipus structure, that, make no mistake, they resemble one another like brothers, and even more like sisters. If the word sublime can have an ambiguous meaning, it is indeed here. Since moreover it is not for nothing that the last monumental images, those that I was able to see the last time that I left Egyptian soil, of Akhenaton, are images that are not simply castrated but quite bluntly feminine.

It is altogether clear that if castration has a relationship to the phallus, this is not the place where we are going to be able to designate it. I mean that if I made the little schema which is supposed to correspond to the *pas tous* or the *pas toutes*, as designating a certain type of the relation to the x , it is indeed in this sense it is to the x that all

the same the elect refer themselves to. The passage to “mediation”, is indeed nothing other than this *au moins un* that I underlined and that we rediscover in Peano through this $n+1$ always repeated, the one that in a way presupposes that the n which precedes it is reduced to zero. In what way? Precisely, by the murder of the Father. By this ...this mapping out of, as one might, the detour, to use the term of Frege himself, make no mistake, oblique, *ungerade* way, whose *sense* of the murder of the Father is referred to a different *Bedeutung*, this indeed is what I have to limit myself to today, while apologising for not having been able to push things further. So that will be for next (173) year. I regret that things were this year, were necessarily truncated, but you will be able to see that *Totem and Taboo* on the contrary, namely, what I put on the side of the Father in terms of original enjoyment, is something to which there corresponds a no less strictly equivalent avoidance of what is involved in castration, strictly equivalent. And this is what clearly marks that fact that the obsessional, the obsessional who corresponds to the formula: *there is no x that exists that can be inscribed in the variable of x* , the obsessional, how the obsessional slips away. He slips away simply by not existing. It is this something to which, why not, we will link up what follows in our discourse, the obsessional in so far as, he is in the debt of not existing with respect to this no less mythical Father who is the one of *Totem and Taboo*, how? It is to this that there is attached, that there is really attached everything that is involved in a certain religious construction, and the reason why it is not, alas, reducible, and not even by what Freud hooks on to his second myth, that of *Totem and Taboo*, namely, neither more nor less than his second topography. This is what we will subsequently develop. Because you should note, the second topography, his great innovation, is the superego.

What is the essence of the superego? It is on this that I can finish by putting something into the hollow of your hand, that you can try to manipulate for yourselves, what is the general order of the superego?

Precisely, it originates from this more than mythical original father, from this summons as such to pure enjoyment, namely, also to non-castration. And what does this father say in effect, at the dissolution of the Oedipus complex? He says what the superego says. What the superego says – it is not for nothing that I have never really tackled it yet – what the superego says is: “Enjoy!”

Such is the order, the impossible to satisfy order, and as such it is at the origin of everything that is elaborated there, however paradoxical that may appear to you, in terms of moral conscience. To really sense the operation of the definition, you will have to read in *Ecclesiastes*, under the title: ‘Enjoy as long as you can, enjoy’, says the enigmatic author of this astonishing text, ‘Enjoy with the wife you love’. This indeed is the height of paradox, because it is precisely loving her that creates the obstacle.

Seminar 1: Wednesday 13 January 1971

[Lacan writes on the board]

D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant
(On a discourse that might not be a semblance)

A discourse, it is not mine that is at stake. I think I made you sense well enough last year what should be understood by this term *discourse*. I remind you of the discourse of the Master and what we could call its four positions, the displacements of its terms with

respect to a structure, reduced to being tetrahedral. I left whoever wanted to work on it to specify what motivates... these ...slidings (*glissements*) which could have been more diversified, I reduced them to four. If no one has worked on it, I will perhaps this year give an indication in passing about the privileged status of these four.

I only took up these references with respect to what was my end, stated under the title of *The reverse side of psychoanalysis*. The discourse of the Master is not the reverse side of psychoanalysis, it is where there is demonstrated the torsion that is proper, I would say, to the discourse of psychoanalysis, what ensures that this discourse poses the question of a front and a back (*un endroit et un envers*) because you know the importance, the emphasis, that is put in the theory, ever since Freud stated it, the importance and the stress that is put on the notion of double inscription. Now what I wanted you to put your finger on, is the possibility of a double inscription, on the front, on the back, without an edge being crossed. It is the structure well known for a long time, that I only had to use, which is called the Moebius strip.

(10) These places and these elements, are where there is outlined that what is properly speaking discourse, can in no way be referred from a subject, even though it determines him. This, no doubt, is the ambiguity of that through which I introduced what I thought I should make understood within psychoanalytic discourse. Remember my terms, at the period that I entitled a certain report as the function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis. At that time I wrote *intersubjectivity*, and God knows the number of false tracks that the statement of terms like that can give rise to. I hope I will be excused for having been the first to make these tracks. I was not able to go ahead except through a misunderstanding. *Inter*, certainly, in effect, is the only thing that subsequently allowed me to talk about an inter-significance (*intersignifiance*), subjectivity from its consequences, the signifier being what represents a subject for another signifier

where the subject is not. This indeed is how it is, because of the fact that where he is represented he is absent, that nevertheless being represented, he thus finds himself divided. As for discourse, it is not simply that it can henceforth only be judged in the light of its unconscious sources, it is also the fact that it can no longer be stated as anything else than what is articulated from a structure where somewhere he finds himself alienated in an irreducible fashion. Hence my introductory statement: *On a discourse* – I stop – it is not mine. It is from this statement, a discourse not being able, as such, to be a discourse of any particular person, but being founded from a structure, and from the emphasis that is given by the division, the sliding of certain of its terms, it is from this that I am starting this year for what is entitled “*On a discourse that will not be a semblance*”.

For those who were not able last year to follow these statements which were made previously, I indicate that the appearance, which dates already for more than a month, of *Scilicet 2/3*, will give them the written references. *Scilicet 2/3*, because it is a writing, it is an event, if not an advent of discourse. First of all by the fact, that it is the one that I find myself to be the instrument of, without avoiding the fact that it requires the pressure of your numbers, in other words that you should be there and very precisely, under this aspect, a singular aspect of which creates this pressure, undoubtedly with, let us say, the incidences of our history which is something that can be touched, which renews the question of what is involved in discourse in so far as it is the discourse of the Master, this something that can only be made of something that one questions oneself about in naming it. Do not go on too quickly to make use of the word revolution. But it is clear that it is necessary to discern what it is in (11) short that allows me to pursue my statements, with this formula *On a discourse which will not be a semblance*. Two features are to be noted here in this number of *Scilicet*. I put to the test, after all, more or less, something which is moreover my discourse of last year,

in a setting which precisely is characterised by the absence of what I called this pressure of your presence. And to give it its full emphasis, I will say it in these terms, what this presence signifies, I would pinpoint as a pressurised surplus enjoying (*plus-de-jouir pressé*). Because it is precisely from this figure that there can be judged, if it goes beyond a discomfort, as they say, as regards too much semblance in the discourse in which you are inscribed, the University discourse, the one that is easy to denounce for neutrality, for example, that this discourse cannot claim to be sustained by a competitive selection when all that is at stake are signs that are addressed to those who are in the know, in terms of a formation of the subject, when it is something quite different that is at stake. Nothing allows us to go beyond this kind of discomfort of semblances - so that something can be hoped for which allows us to get out of it - than to posit that a certain style, that a certain style that is required in the advancement of a discourse, does not split, in a dominant position in this discourse, what is involved in this triage, these globules of surplus enjoying, in the name of which you find yourselves caught up in the University discourse. It is precisely that someone, starting from the analytic discourse, places himself with respect to you in the position of an analysand. This is not new, I already said it but no one paid any attention to it. This is what constitutes the originality of this teaching. This is what justifies what you contribute to it by your pressure and that is why in speaking on the radio, I put to the test this subtraction precisely of this presence, of this space into which you press yourselves, cancelled out and replaced by the pure It exists (*Il existe*) of this inter-significance that I spoke about earlier in order that the subject can vacillate in it. It is simply a switching of points towards something whose possible import we will learn in the future.

There is another feature of what I called this event, this advent of discourse, it is this printed thing that is called *Scilicet*, it is, as a certain number already know, that people write in it without signing.

What does that mean? That each of these names that are put in a column on the last page of these three issues that constitute one year, can be permuted with each of the others, affirming in this way that no discourse can be that of an author. This is a wager. Here, it speaks (*ça parle*). In the other case, it is... here the future will tell if it is the formula that, let us say, in five or six years all the other journals will adopt. I mean the good journals. It is a gamble, we shall see!

(12) I am not trying in what I am saying to escape from what is experienced, sensed in my statements, as accentuating, as sticking to the *artefact* of discourse. This means of course, it is the least that can be said, that doing this rules out my claiming to cover all of it, it cannot be a system and in this regard it is not a philosophy. It is clear that for whoever takes from the angle that analysis allows us to renew what is involved in discourse, this implies that one moves around, I would say, in a *désunivers*, it is not the same thing as *divers* (diverse). But I would not even reject this diverse and not simply because of what it implies in terms of diversity, but of what it also implies in terms of diversion. It is very clear also that I am not talking about everything. It is even in what I state, it resists anyone saying everything about it. You can put your finger on that every day. Even on the fact that I state that I am not saying everything, that is something different, as I already said, that comes from the fact that the truth is only a half-saying.

This discourse then, which limits itself to acting only in the artefact, is in short only the prolongation of the position of the analyst, in so far as it is defined by putting the weight of its surplus enjoying at a certain place. It is nevertheless the position that here I cannot sustain, very precisely by not being in this position of the analyst. As I said earlier, except for the fact that you lack knowledge about it, it is rather you who will be in it, by the pressure of your numbers. This having been said, what can be the import of what, in this reference, I am stating?

On a discourse which might not be a semblance, that can be stated from my place and in function of what I previously stated. It is a fact in any case that I am stating it. Note that it is a fact also *because* I state it. You may be completely hoodwinked by it, namely, think that there is nothing more than the fact that I am stating it. Only, if I spoke in connection with discourse about the artefact, it is because for discourse, there is no fact, as I might say, already there, there is only a fact from the fact of saying it, the stated fact is entirely a fact of discourse. This is what I am designating by the term artefact, and of course, this is what has to be reduced. Because if I speak about artefact, it is not to give rise in it to the idea of something that might be different, a nature, that you would be wrong to get engaged in with a view to tackling its obstacles, because you would never get out of it. The question is not set up in the terms: is it or is it not discourse, but in the following: it is said or it is not said. I start from what is said, in a discourse whose artefact is supposed to be sufficient for you to be there; a cut here, because I am not adding, that you should be (13) here in the state of *pressurised surplus enjoying*. I said a cut because it is questionable whether it is already as pressurised surplus enjoying that my discourse gathers you together. It is not decided, whatever one or other may think, that it is this discourse, the one made up of the series of statements that I present you, that places you where? In this position from which it can be questioned by the “not talking” of the discourse which might not be a semblance.

D'un semblant, what does that mean in this statement? A semblance of discourse, for example. You know that this is the position described as logical positivism. The fact is that if starting from a signifier, to be put to the test of something that decides by yes or no, what cannot present itself for this test, this is what is defined as meaning nothing. And with that, people think they have finished with a certain number of questions described as metaphysical. This is certainly not what I hold to. I want to point out to you that the

position of logical positivism is untenable, in any case starting from analytic experience in particular.

If analytic experience finds itself implicated by taking its claims to nobility from the Oedipal myth, it is indeed because it preserves the cutting edge of the oracle's enunciation, and I would say more, that in its interpretation always remains at the same level. It is only true by its consequences, like every oracle. Interpretation is not put to the test of a truth that can be settled by a yes or a no, it unleashes truth as such. It is true only in so far as it is truly followed. We will see later that the schemas of implication, I mean of logical implication, in their most classical form, these schemas themselves require the foundation of this truthfulness in so far as it belongs to the word, even if it is properly speaking senseless. The passage from the moment where the truth is settled by its simple unleashing, to that of a logic that is going to try to embody this truth, is precisely the moment when discourse, *qua* representative of representation, is dismissed, disqualified. But if it can be so, it is because some part of it is always there, and this is what is called repression. It is no longer a representation that it represents, it is this continuation of discourse that is characterised as effect of truth.

The effect of truth is not a semblance. The Oedipus complex is there to teach us, if you will allow me, to teach us that it is red blood. Only there you are, red blood does not reject the semblance, it colours it, it makes it re-semble (*re-semblant*), it propagates it. A little bit of sawdust and the circus starts up again. This indeed it is why it is at (14) the level of the artefact of the structure of discourse, that the question can be raised about a discourse that might not be a semblance. In the meantime, there is no semblance of discourse, there is no meta-language to judge it, there is no Other of the Other, there is no true of the true.

I amused myself one day by making the truth speak. I ask where is the paradox, what could be more true than stating 'I am lying'? The classical quibbling that is stated under the term of paradox is only embodied if you put this *I am lying* on paper, as something written. Everyone knows that there is nothing truer that one can say on some occasions than to say: 'I am lying'. It is even very certainly the only truth that in this case is not broken (*brisée*). Everyone knows that in saying: 'I am not lying', one is absolutely not protected from saying something false. What does that mean? The truth that is at stake, when it speaks, the one that I said speaks I, which states itself as an oracle, *who* speaks?

This semblance is the signifier in itself. Who can fail to see that what characterises this signifier that, as far as linguists are concerned, I use in a way that embarrasses them, there were some who wrote these lines designed to clearly warn that undoubtedly Ferdinand de Saussure did not have the slightest idea about it. What do we know about it? Ferdinand de Saussure was like me, he did not say everything; the proof is that people found in his papers, things that were never said in his classes. People think that the signifier is a nice little thing that has been tamed by structuralism, people think that it is the Other, *qua* Other, and the battery of signifiers, and everything that I explain, of course. Naturally it comes down from heaven, because from time to time I am an idealist!

Artefact, I said initially; naturally, the artefact, it is absolutely certain that it is our everyday fate that we find it at every street corner, within reach of the slightest gestures of our hands. If there is something that is a sustainable, or at least sustained discourse, specifically that of science, it is perhaps no harm to remember that it started very specially from the consideration of semblances. The start of scientific thinking, I am talking about history, what is it? The observation of the stars, what is it if not the constellation, namely, the very type of a semblance. What do the first steps of modern physics

turn around at the start? Not, as is believed, elements, because the elements, the four and even if you wish to add a fifth essence, are already discourse, philosophical discourse, and how! They are (15) atmospheric phenomena (*météores*). Descartes wrote a *Traité des Météores*. The decisive step, one of the decisive steps turned around the theory of the rainbow, and when I talk about a meteor, it is something that is defined by being qualified as such as a semblance. No one has ever believed that the rainbow, even among the most primitive people, that the rainbow was something there, set up in a curve. It is questioned as an atmospheric phenomenon. The most characteristic atmospheric phenomenon, the most original one, the one that without any doubt is linked to, has the very structure of discourse, is thunder. If I ended my Rome discourse on the evocation of thunder, it is absolutely not like that, by fantasy, no *Name of the Father* is tenable without thunder, and everyone knows very well that we do not even know what thunder is the sign of. It is the very figure of the semblance. This is why there is no semblance of discourse, everything that is discourse, can only present itself as semblance, and nothing is built on it that is not at the basis of this something that is called signifier, which, in the light in which I put it forward for you today, is identical to this status as such of the semblance.

On a discourse that will not be a semblance; for it to be stated, it is necessary then that this *a semblance* can in no way be completed by reference to discourse. It is something else that is at stake, the referent no doubt! Restrain yourselves a little bit. This referent is probably not immediately an object, because precisely what that means, is that this referent, is precisely what is walking around. The semblance in which the discourse is identical to itself, is at the level of the term *semblance*, it is the semblance in nature. It is not for nothing that I reminded you that no discourse that evokes nature ever did anything other than start from what in nature is a semblance. Because nature is full of them. I am not talking about animal nature, which quite obviously superabounds with them. This is even what

ensures that there are gentle dreamers who think that the entire animal nature, from fish to birds, sings divine praises, it is self-evident. Every time they open like that, something, a mouth, an operculum, it is a manifest semblance, nothing requires there to be gaps. When we go into something whose efficacy has not been settled, for the simple reason that we do not know how it has come about that there were, as I might say, an accumulation of signifiers, because signifiers, huh, I can tell you, are scattered throughout the world, in nature, they are there by the shovelful. For language to come to birth, it is already something to initiate that, for language to be born, it was necessary that there should be established somewhere (16) this something that I already indicated to you in connection with the wager, it was Pascal's wager, we do not remember it. In presupposing this, the trouble is that this already presupposes the functioning of language because what is at stake is the unconscious. The unconscious and its operation, means that among the numerous signifiers that travel the world there is going to be in addition the fragmented body. There are, all the same, things from which one can start by thinking that they already exist. They already exist in a certain functioning in which we would not be forced to consider the accumulation of the signifier. It is this business about territory. If the signifier 'your right arm' enters the territory of your neighbour to pick up something – these are things that happen all the time – naturally your neighbour grasps your signifier 'right arm' and throws it back over the dividing wall. This is what you very curiously call *projection*, do you not, it is the way of understanding one another! It is from a phenomenon like that that we have to start. If your right arm, in your neighbour's property, was not entirely occupied in picking apples, for example, if it had stayed quiet, it is fairly probable that your neighbour would have adored it, it is the origin of the master signifier, a right arm, the sceptre. The master signifier only needs to begin like that, right at the beginning.

Unfortunately it requires a little bit more, it is an unsatisfactory schema. Going a little further, that gives you the sceptre, right away you see the thing materialising as signifier. The process of history shows itself according to every testimony, in the ones that we have, a little more complicated. It is certain that the little parable, the one with which I first began, the arm that is thrown back from one territory into another, it is not necessarily your arm that comes back to you, because signifiers are not individual, one does not know who owns which. So there you see, here we enter into a different kind of original operation as regards the function of chance and that of myths. You construct a world, on this occasion let us say a schema, a support divided like that into a certain number of territorial cells. This happens at a certain level, the one at which it is a matter of putting forward, where it is a matter of understanding a little what has happened.

After all, not alone can one get an arm that is not one's own, in the process of expulsion that you have called, I do not know why, *projection*, if it is only that, you are projected, of course, not simply an arm which is not yours, but several other arms, so then from that moment on, it is no longer important whether it is yours or whether it (17) is not yours. But anyway, since after all, inside a territory, one only knows one's own frontiers, one does not have to know that on this frontier there are six other territories. You throw it a little bit as you wish, so then it can happen that there is a whole shower of territories. The idea of the relationship that may exist between the rejection of something and the birth of what I earlier called the master signifier, is certainly an idea to remember. But for it to have its whole value, it is certainly necessary that there should have been, by a process of chance, at certain points, an accumulation of signifiers. Starting from there it is possible to conceive something that might be the birth of a language. What we see properly speaking being built up as a first way of supporting in writing what serves as language, gives in any case a certain idea. Everyone knows that the letter A is a

bull's head turned upside down, and that a certain number of elements like this, movable, still leave their trace. What is important, is not to go too fast and to see where holes continue to remain. For example, it is quite obvious that the start of this outline was already linked to something marking the body with a possibility of ectopia and of excursion (*d'ectopie et de balade*) that obviously remains problematic. After all here again, everything is still there. We have finally, this is a very sensitive point, that we can still test every day. Not too long ago, again this week, something, very pretty photos in the newspaper, that everyone was delighted with, the possibilities of the practice of cutting up a human being on another human being are quite impressive. It is from there that everything started.

There remains another hole. As you know, people have tormented themselves about it, people have noted that Hegel is all very well, but there is all the same something that he did not explain. He explains the dialectic of the master and the slave, he does not explain how there can be a society of masters. It is quite clear that what I have just explained to you is certainly interesting in that, by the simple operation of projection, of retort (*rétorsion*), it is clear that at the end of a certain number of throws, there will certainly be, I would say, a greater average of signifiers in certain territories than in others. Anyway, it still remains to be seen how the signifier is going to be able to construct a society of signifiers in this territory. One should never leave in the shadows what one does not explain, under the pretext that one has succeeded in giving some little beginning of explanation.

(18) In any case, the statement of our title this year, *On a discourse that is not a semblance*, concerns something that deals with an economy. Here we will hide (*nous tairons*) the *a semblance* from itself, it is not a semblance of something else, it is to be taken in the sense of the objective genitive, what is at stake is the semblance as proper object by which there is ruled the economy of discourse. Are

we going to say that it is also a subjective genitive? Does *du semblant* concern also what gives the discourse? The word subjective is the only one to be rejected here for the simple reason that the subject only appears once there has been established somewhere this liaison of signifiers. A subject can only be the product of signifying articulation. A subject as such never masters in any case this articulation but is properly speaking determined by it.

A discourse, by its nature, appears (*fait semblant*) as one might say to be a success, or to be light, or to be chic. If what is stated in words is precisely true by always being very authentically what it is, at the level we are at, of the objective and of articulation, it is then very precisely as object of what is only produced in this aforesaid discourse that the semblance is posited. Hence the properly senseless character of what is articulated and it must be said that it is here indeed that there is revealed what is involved in the richness of language, namely, that it contains a logic that surpasses by far everything that we succeed in crystallising of it, in detaching from it.

I employed the hypothetical form of a discourse which might not be (*ne serait pas*) a semblance. Everyone knows the developments that logic took on after Aristotle, by putting the emphasis on the hypothetical function. Everything that is articulated by giving the value True or False to the articulation of the hypothesis, and combining what results from the implication of a term within this hypothesis, as being signalled as true. This is the inauguration of what is called the *modus ponens*, and of still many other modes and everyone knows what was made of them. It is striking, at least as far as I know, that no one has ever formalised the resource involved in the use of this hypothetical in the negative.

A striking thing, if one refers for example to what is collected about it in my *Ecrits*, when someone at the epoch, a heroic epoch at which I began to clear up the terrain of analysis, when someone came to

contribute to the deciphering of the *Verneinung*. Even though in commenting Freud letter by letter, he noticed very clearly – because Freud says it quite literally – that the *Bejahung* only involves a judgement of attribution, which means that Freud ... shows a finesse (19) and a competence that are quite exceptional at the time he wrote this – because only some logician who is not widely known was able at that time to underline it – the judgement of attribution, in no way prejudges existence. The simple positing of a *Verneinung*, implies the existence of something which is very precisely what is denied. A *discourse which might not be a semblance* posits that the discourse, as I have just stated, *is* a semblance.

The great advantage in putting it like that is that one does not say a semblance of what. Now, it is here of course, it is around this that I propose to advance our statements, namely, to get to know what is involved where it *might not be* a semblance. Naturally, the terrain is prepared by a singular even though timid step, which is the one that Freud took in *Beyond the pleasure principle*.

Here I do not want, because I cannot do any more than indicate the knot formed in this statement, by repetition and enjoyment. It is in function of this that repetition goes against the pleasure principle which, I would say, does not recover from it. Hedonism, in the light of analytic experience, can only go back to what it is, namely, a philosophical myth. I mean, a myth of a perfectly defined (and clear) class. And I stated last year the help that they have given to a certain process of the master, by permitting the discourse of the master as such to build up a knowledge. This knowledge is the knowledge of the master. This knowledge has supposed, since the philosophical discourse still carries its trace, the existence over against the master of another knowledge and, thank God, philosophical discourse did not disappear without first pinpointing that there ought to be at the origin a relationship between this knowledge and enjoyment. The one who thus closed philosophical discourse, Hegel to give him his

name, naturally only sees the way in which, through work, slavery comes to accomplish what? Nothing other than the knowledge of the master.

And what is introduced, what is introduced anew by what I will call the Freudian hypothesis? It is, in an extraordinarily prudent, but all the same a syllogistic form, the following: if we call *pleasure principle* the fact that always, by the behaviour of the living being, he comes back to a level which is that of minimal excitation, and that this rules his economy; if it proves to be the case that repetition is exercised in such a way that a dangerous enjoyment, an enjoyment that goes beyond this minimal excitation, is brought back – is it possible, it is in this way that Freud states the question – that it could be imagined that life, caught up itself in its cycle – it is a novelty with (20) respect to this world which does not universally comprise it – that life includes this possibility of repetition which would be the return to this world in so far as it is a semblance?

high point

I can point out to you by a drawing on the board that this involves, instead of the series of ascending and descending curves of excitation, all close to a limit, which is an upper limit, the possibility

of an intensity of excitation that can moreover go to infinity, what is conceived as enjoyment not involving in itself, in principle, any other limit than this lower tangential point, this point that we will call high (*supreme*), in giving its proper sense to this word which means the lowest point of a higher limit, in the same way as the lowest (*infime*) is the highest point of a lower limit. The coherence given of the mortal point, then conceived without Freud underlining it, as a characteristic of life but in truth, what people do not think of is, in effect, the fact that we confuse what is non-life, and which is far, my word, from not stirring up the eternal silence of the infinite spaces that dazed Decartes. They talk, they sing, they move about in every (21) way, now when we look at them. What is called the inanimate world is not dead. Death is a point, is designated as a terminal point, a point at the term of what? Of the enjoyment of life.

This is precisely what is introduced by the Freudian statement, one that we could qualify as hyper-hedonism, if I can express myself in this way. Who can fail to see that the economy, even that of nature, is always a fact of discourse. It cannot grasp that this indicates that nothing else could be at stake here but enjoyment in so far as it is itself not only a fact, but an effect of discourse.

If something that is called the unconscious can be half-said as a language structure, it is so that finally there can appear to us the relief of this effect of discourse that up to then appeared to us as impossible, namely, surplus enjoying. Does that mean, to follow one of my formulae, that in so far as it was impossible, it functioned as real? I am opening up the question, because in truth, nothing implies that the irruption of the discourse of the unconscious, however stammering it remains, implies anything whatsoever, in what preceded it, that was subjected to its structure. The discourse of the unconscious is an emerging, it is the emerging of a certain function of the signifier. That it existed up to then as a token, is indeed the reason why I put it at the source of the semblance.

But the consequences of its emerging, is what ought to be introduced so that something may change, which cannot change, because it is not possible. It is on the contrary because a discourse is centred from its effect as impossible that it will have some chance of being a discourse that might not be a semblance.

Seminar 2: Wednesday 20 January 1971

If I was looking through these sheets, it was not to assure myself, but to reassure myself about what I said the last time, the text of which I do not have at the moment. I have just been complaining about it. Remarks of this kind come back to me - I do not have to go to any trouble for that - it happens that some people were asking themselves at certain points of my discourse the last time as they express it, what I was getting at (*où je veux en venir*). Other remarks came to me from elsewhere, that it is very hard to hear at the back of the room. I will try – I was absolutely unaware of it the last time, I thought that the acoustics were just as good as in the previous amphitheatre – if you don't mind giving me a sign when my voice lowers despite myself, I will try to do my best.

So then, at certain turning points, people may have asked themselves the last time what I was getting at. In truth, this sort of question seems to me to be too premature to be significant, namely, that it is people who are far from being insignificant, people who are very well

informed from whom this remark was reported, and sometimes quite calmly by themselves. It would perhaps have a greater implication, given precisely what I put forward the last time, if they were to ask where I am starting from or even where I want you to start from. Already, this has two meanings, this perhaps means, to go somewhere, and again this may also mean, to get a move on from where you are. This 'what I am getting at' is in any case a very good example of what I put forward about the desire of the Other: *che vuoi?* What does he want? Obviously when you can say it right away, you are much more comfortable. This is an opportunity to note the factor of inertia that is constituted by this *che vuoi*, at least when (24) you can answer it. This indeed is why in analysis one strives to leave this question in suspense.

Nevertheless, I clearly specified the last time that here I am not in the position of the analyst. So that in short, I believe I am obliged to answer this question, and in saying this I ought to give the reason why I have spoken. I spoke about the semblance and I said something that is not common knowledge; first of all, I insisted, I laid stress on the fact that the semblance that presents itself as what it is, is the primary function of truth. There is a certain *I speak* that brings this about, and it is not superfluous to recall it in order to give to this truth, which gives rise to so many logical difficulties, its correct positioning. This is all the more important to recall in that, if there is in Freud, to designate like that a certain tone, if there is in Freud something revolutionary - I already warned about the excessive use of this word - but it is certain that, if there was a moment when Freud was revolutionary, it is in the measure that he put in the foreground a function which is also the one, it is the only common element moreover, which is also this element that Marx contributed, namely, to consider a certain number of facts as symptoms. The dimension of the symptom is that it speaks, it speaks even to those who do not know how to hear; it does not say everything, even to those who know it. This promotion of the symptom, is the turning point that we

are living through in a certain register which, let us say, was pursued, rumbling quietly throughout the centuries, around the theme of knowledge. It cannot all the same be said that from the point of view of knowledge we are completely lacking, and we clearly sense what is outmoded in the theory of knowledge when it is a matter of explaining the order of a process constituted by the formulations of science. Physical science gives models of it today. The fact that we are, in parallel to this revolution of science, in a position that one can qualify as being on the path of a certain truth, is what shows a certain heterogeneity of status between the two registers. Except for the fact that, in my teaching, and only there, an attempt is made to show their coherence, which is not obvious, or which is not obvious for those who, in this practice of analysis, go on about the semblance. This is what I will try to articulate today.

I said a second thing. The semblance is not only locatable, essential, to designate the primary function of truth, it is impossible without this reference to qualify what is involved in discourse. What defines discourse, this at least is the way I tried last year to give some weight (25) to this term by defining four of them whose titles I was only able to recall last time, to hastily recall, at which point certain people found that they were out of their depth. What is to be done? I am not going to go through, even rapidly, an account of what is involved, even though of course I will have to come back to it and to show what is involved in it. I pointed out that you could refer in the answers described as *Radiophonie* in the last *Scilicet*, to what is involved in them, in what there consists this function of discourse as I announced it last year. It is supported by four privileged places among which one precisely remained unnamed, and precisely the one which, gives the title of each of these discourses, by the function of its occupant. It is when the master signifier is at a certain place that I speak about the discourse of the Master; when a certain knowledge also occupies it, I speak of that of the University; when the subject in its division, fundamental for the unconscious, is in place there, I

speak about the discourse of the Hysteric, and finally when *surplus enjoying* occupies it, I speak about the discourse of the Analyst. This place, which in a way is sensitive, that of the top left, for those who were there and who still remember, this place which is here occupied in the discourse of the Master by the signifier as master, S_1 , this place still not designated, I am designating by its name, by the name that it deserves, it is very precisely the place of the *semblance*. This shows, after what I stated the last time, the degree to which the signifier, as I might say, is here at its place. Hence the success of the discourse of the Master, the success all the same that makes it worth while to pay attention to it for an instant, because after all, who can believe that any master ever ruled by force? Especially at the start, because after all, as Hegel reminds us in this admirable sleight of hand, one man is worth another. And if the discourse of the Master gives the basis, the structure, the strong point around which several civilisations are organised, it is indeed because its mainspring is all the same of a different order to violence.

This does not mean that we are in any way sure that, in these facts, which it must be said we can only articulate with the most extreme caution, that once we pinpoint them by some term or other, as primitive, pre-logical, archaic, and anything whatsoever of whatever order it may be, archaic, *archè*, are the beginning, why? And why would this not also be a waste product, these primitive societies? But nothing settles it. What is certain, is that they show us that it is not necessary for things to be established in function of the discourse of the Master; first of all the mytho-ritual configuration, which is the best way of pinpointing them, does not necessarily imply the (26) articulation of the discourse of the Master. Nevertheless, it must be said, it is a certain form of alibi to interest ourselves so much in what is not the discourse of the Master, in most cases it is a way of confusing things completely; while you busy yourself with that, you are not looking after something else. And nevertheless the discourse of the Master is an essential articulation, and the way I expressed it

ought to be something that some people, I am not saying everyone, some people, should try to get their heads around. Because what is at stake, and this I also clearly stressed the last time, what is at stake, anything new that can happen and is called, I have always said it, insisting on the tempering that should be applied to it, because what is called revolutionary can only consist in a change, in a displacement of discourse, namely, of each of these places. I would like in a way, to give an image – but you know the sort of cretinising that an image can lead to – to represent by what one might call four bowls, each of which would have its name, the way that into these bowls there slide a certain number of terms, specifically what I have distinguished by S_1 , S_2 in so far as, at the point that we are at, S_2 constitutes a certain body of knowledge, the \mathfrak{o} , in so far as it is directly a consequence of the discourse of the master, the $\$$ which in the discourse of the master, occupies this place which is a place that we are going to talk about today, that for its part I have already named, which is that of the truth.

Truth is not the contrary of semblance, the truth as I might say is this dimension, or this *demansion*, if you will allow me to make up a new word, to designate these bowls, this *demansion* which is strictly correlative to that of the semblance. This *demansion*, I told you that the latter, that of the semblance, supports it. So then, something is indicated all the same about what this semblance is getting at. It is clear that there is a question that is a little inexact, I mean the one that came back to me along quite indirect paths. Two young sages, whom I greet if they are here again to day, I hope they will not be offended that they were overheard in passing, gravely nodding their heads, it appears, asking one another: ‘Is he a dangerous idealist?’ Am I a dangerous idealist? That seems to me to be completely beside the point! Because I began – and with what emphasis, I would say that I said the opposite of what exactly I wanted to say – by putting the emphasis on the fact that discourse is an artefact. What I am initiating with that, is exactly the contrary, because the semblance is

the contrary of an artefact. As I pointed out, semblances flourish in (27) nature. The question, once knowledge is no longer at stake, once we no longer believes that it is along the path of perception, from which we are supposed to extract some quintessence or other, that we know something, but by means of an apparatus which is discourse, there is no longer any question of the idea.

The first time, moreover, that the idea made its appearance, it was a little better positioned than after the exploits of Bishop Berkeley. It was Plato who was involved, and he asked himself where was the real of what was called a horse. His idea of the idea, was the importance of this naming. In this multiple and transitory thing which was moreover perfectly obscure in his epoch more than in ours, is not the whole reality of a horse in this idea in so far as that means the signifier, *a horse*. You must not believe that because Aristotle put the emphasis of reality on the individual, that he got any further. The individual means exactly what one cannot say. And precisely at a certain point, if Aristotle had not been the marvellous logician that he was, who took the unique step, the decisive step, thanks to which we have a reference point about what an articulated sequence of signifiers is, one could say that in his way of highlighting what *ousia* is, in other words the real, he behaves like a mystic. What is proper to *ousia*, he says it himself, is that it cannot in any way be attributed, it is not sayable. What is not sayable, is precisely what is mystical. Only it appears, he is not of that opinion, but he leaves the place to the mystic. It is obvious that the solution to the question of the idea could not come to Plato. It is from the angle of the function and of the variable that all of that finds its solution.

If it is clear that if there is something that I am, it is not a nominalist, I mean that I do not start from the fact that the name is something that is stuck like that onto the real. And you have to choose; if one is a nominalist, one must completely renounce dialectical materialism, so that in short the nominalist tradition, which is properly speaking the

only danger of idealism that can be put forward here in a discourse like mine, is very obviously rejected. It is not a matter of being realist in the sense that people were in the Middle Ages, the realism of universals. But it is a matter of designating, of highlighting the fact that our discourse, our scientific discourse, only discovers the real because of the fact that it depends on the function of the semblance.

The effects of what I call the algebraic articulation of the semblance and as such it is only letters that are at stake, is the only system by (28) means of which we designate what is real; what is real, is what makes a hole in this semblance. In this articulated semblance which is scientific discourse, scientific discourse progresses without even asking itself any more whether or not it is semblance. It is simply a question of whether its network, its net, its *lattice*, as they say, makes the holes appear in the right place. The only reference is the impossible at which these deductions culminate; this impossible, is the real. The apparatus of discourse in so far as it is what, in its rigor, encounters the limits of its consistency – it is with this that we aim, in physics, at something that is real.

What is important for us in what concerns us, namely, the field of truth – and why it is the field of truth, only qualified as such, that concerns us, I am going to try to articulate today – in what concerns us, we are dealing with something that takes into account that it differs from this position of the real in physics, this something that resists, that is not permeable to every meaning, which is a consequence of our discourse, and which is called phantasy. And what has to be tested are its limits, its structure, the function, the relationship in a discourse of one of the terms, of the \mathfrak{o} , the surplus enjoying, the $\$$ of the subject, or precisely the point which is broken (*rompu*) in the discourse of the master. This is what we have to test in its functioning, when in the completely opposite position, that in which the \mathfrak{o} occupies this place, it is the subject that is opposite, this

place where it is questioned, it is here that the phantasy must take on its status, its status which is defined by the very part of impossibility that there is in analytic questioning.

To illuminate what is involved in *where I want to get to*, I will go to what I want to mark today, about what is involved in analytic theory. Because of this, I am not coming back, I am skipping over a function that is expressed in a certain way of speaking that I use here when I address you. Nevertheless, I cannot but draw your attention to the fact that, if the last time, I challenged you with a term which might have appeared impertinent, and rightly so, to many, of *plus de jouir pressé* (a pressurised surplus enjoying) ought I then talk about some kind of pressurised...? Nevertheless this has a meaning, a meaning which is one from which I preserve my discourse, that in any case has not the character of what Freud designated as the discourse of the leader. It is indeed at the level of discourse, at the beginning of the 20's, that Freud articulated in *Massenpsychologie und Ichanalyse* something which curiously was found to be at the source of the Nazi phenomenon. Consult the schema that he gives in this article, at the (29) end of the chapter on *Identification*; you will see indicated there almost open to view the relations between capital I and small o. Truly, the schema seems to be designed for the Lacanian signs to be imposed on it.

That which, in a discourse, is addressed to the Other as a Thou, gives rise to an identification to something that one can call the human idol. If I spoke the last time about red blood as being the blood that is most useless to propel against the semblance, it is indeed because, as you have seen, one cannot advance and overthrow the idol without immediately afterwards taking its place, and we know that this is what has happened to a certain type of martyr! It is indeed in the measure that something in every discourse that appeals to the Thou provokes a camouflaged, secret identification, which is only one to this enigmatic object that may seem to be nothing, the tiny little

surplus enjoying of Hitler, that went no further perhaps than his moustache, this was enough to crystallise people who...who had nothing mystical about them! Who were the most committed to the process of the discourse of the capitalist, with what that involves in terms of a questioning of surplus enjoying in its form of surplus value. It was a matter of seeing whether, at a certain level, one would still have one's little bit (*son petit bout*) and indeed this was enough to provoke this effect of identification. It is amusing simply that this should have taken the form of an idealisation of the race, namely, of the thing which on that occasion was least involved. But one can find where this character of fiction comes from, one can find it. What must be simply said, is that there is no need for this ideology for a racism to be constituted, and that all that is needed is a surplus enjoying that recognises itself as such. And that whoever is a little bit interested in what may happen would do well to tell himself that every form of racism, in so far as a surplus enjoying is very well capable of supporting it, is now what is on the agenda. This is what is in store for us in the years to come.

You will understand why better, when I tell you what the theory, the authentic exercise of analytic theory, allows us to formulate as regards what is involved in surplus enjoying. People imagine, people imagine they are saying something when they say that what Freud has contributed, is the underlay of sexuality in everything involved in discourse. People say that when they have been touched a little by what I state about the importance of discourse to define the unconscious. And then when they do not pay attention to the fact that I have not yet for my part, tackled what is involved in this term sexuality, sexual relationship. It is certainly strange – it is only strange from one point of view, the point of view of the charlatanism (30) that presides over every therapeutic action in our society – it is strange that people have not noticed the world there is between this term sexuality, wherever it is beginning, where it is only beginning, to take on a biological substance - and I would point out to you that,

if there is somewhere that one can begin to notice the sense that this has, it is rather on the side of bacteria - of the world that there is between that and what is involved concerning what Freud states about the relations that the unconscious reveals. Whatever stumblings he himself may have succumbed to in this order, what Freud reveals about the functioning of the unconscious has nothing biological about it. This only has the right to be called sexuality because of what is called the sexual relationship. It is completely legitimate, moreover, until the moment when one makes use of sexuality to designate something else, namely, what is studied in biology, namely, the chromosome and its combination XY or XX, or XX, XY. This has absolutely nothing to do with what is at stake, and has a name that can be perfectly well stated, called the relationships of man and woman. It is necessary to start from these two terms with their full sense, with what that involves in terms of *relation*. Because it is very strange when one sees the little timid attempts that people make at thinking within the framework of a certain system which is that of the psychoanalytic institution. They notice that not everything is regulated by the frolics that are presented as conflictual, and they would really like something different, the non-conflictual, that is more restful. And so then they notice for example, that there is no need to wait for the phallic phase to distinguish a little girl from a little boy, they are not at all the same. They marvel at this! And then – I am pointing it out to you because between now and when we meet again, it will be only in the month of February, the second Wednesday of February, you will perhaps have the time to read something, because once I recommend a book, that improves its circulation, which is called *Sex und Gender, and Gender*, it is in English, pardon me! It is by someone called Stoller, very interesting to read, because this gives on an important subject, that of transsexuals, a certain number of very well observed cases with their familial correlates. You know perhaps that transsexualism consists very precisely in a very forceful desire to cross over by every means to the other sex, even by having oneself operated on, when you are

male. There you are! With the co-ordinates, the observations that are there you will certainly learn a lot about this transsexualism because these are observations that are quite usable. You will also learn the (31) complete...the completely invalid character of the dialectical apparatus with which the author of this book treats these questions, and which means that there arise quite directly the great difficulties he encounters in explaining his cases. One of the most surprising things, is that the psychotic aspect of these cases is completely eluded by him, because he has no reference points, Lacanian foreclosure never having reached his ears, which immediately and very easily explains the form of these cases. But what matter! The important thing is this, that to speak about gender identity, which is nothing other than what I have just expressed as this term, man and woman, it is clear that the question is posed of what emerges precociously from the fact that at adult age, it is the destiny of speaking beings to divide themselves up between men and women and that to understand the emphasis that is put on these things, on this agency, one has to take into account that what defines the man, is his relationship with the woman, and inversely. That nothing allows us in these definitions of man and woman, to abstract them from the complete speaking experience, up to and including in the institutions where they are expressed, namely marriage.

If one does not understand that in adult age, what is at stake is to be-a-man (*de faire-homme*), that this is what constitutes the relation to the other party, that it is in the light, at the start, starting from something that constitutes a fundamental relation, that there is questioned everything that in the behaviour of the child can be interpreted as being oriented towards this being-a-man, for example and that one of the essential correlates of this being-a-man, is to indicate to the girl that one is so, that we find ourselves, in a word, put right away into the dimension of the semblance. But besides, everything bears witness to it, including references that are common, that one finds everywhere, to sexual display principally in the higher

mammals, but also among ... in a very great number of insights that we can have very, very far into the animal phylum, which shows the essential character, in the sexual relationship, of something that should be clearly limited to the level at which we touch it, that has nothing to do either with a cellular level, whether it is chromosomic or not, nor with an organic level, whether it is a matter or not of the ambiguity of one or other tract involving the gonad, namely, an ethological level which is properly one of a semblance. It is in so far as the male, most often the male, the female is not absent from it because she is precisely the subject affected by this display, it is in so far as there is a display that something which is called sexual (32) copulation, no doubt, in its function, but which finds its status in particular elements of identity, it is certain that human sexual behaviour easily finds its reference in this display as it is defined at the animal level. It is certain that human sexual behaviour consists in a certain maintenance of this animal semblance. The only thing which differentiates it from it, is that this semblance is conveyed in a discourse, and that it is at this level of discourse, at this level of discourse alone, that it is carried towards, allow me, some effect that might not be a semblance. That means that instead of having exquisite animal courtesy, it can happen, it can happen that a man rapes a woman, or inversely. At the limits of discourse, in so far as it strives to make the same semblance hold up, there is from time to time something real, this is what is called the *passage à l'acte*, I see no better place to designate what that means. Note that in most cases, the *passage à l'acte* is carefully avoided. It only happens by accident; and this is also an occasion to illuminate what is involved in what I have long differentiated from the *passage à l'acte*, namely, acting out, to bring the semblance onto the stage, to put it on the stage, to make an example of it, this is what in this order is called acting out. Or again, it can be called passion. But, I am forced to go quickly, you will notice that it is in this connection, and here as I have just illuminated things, that one can clearly highlight, clearly designate what I am always saying: it is that discourse is there in so

far as it allows the stake of what is involved in surplus enjoying, namely, I am giving it the full treatment, it is very precisely what is forbidden to sexual discourse.

There is no sexual act [or relationship?], I already expressed this on several occasions, I am tackling it here from a different angle. And this is made quite tangible in a massive way by the economy of analytic theory, namely, what Freud encountered, first of all so innocently, as I might say, that this is why it is a symptom, namely, that he advances things to the point that they concern us on the plane of truth. Who can fail to see that the myth of Oedipus is necessary to designate the real, because this indeed is what it pretends to do, and more exactly what the theoretician is reduced to, when he formulates this hyper-myth, the fact is that the real properly speaking is incarnated...by what? By sexual enjoyment, as what? As impossible, since what the Oedipus complex designates, is the mythical being whose enjoyment – his enjoyment – is supposed to be that of what? Of all the women. That such ... a system is here in a way imposed by discourse itself, does this not provide the surest (33) cross-check in terms of what I state as theory, concerning the prevalence of discourse, concerning everything that is precisely involved in enjoyment? What analytic theory articulates is something whose character, graspable as an object, is what I designate by the *o*-object, in so far as through a certain number of favourable organic contingencies - breast, excrement, look or voice – it comes to fill the place defined as that of surplus enjoying.

What does the theory state if not the following: something that tends, this relationship of surplus enjoying, a relationship in the name of which the function of the mother comes to such a predominant point in all our analytic observation, surplus enjoying is only normalised from a relationship that one establishes to sexual enjoyment, except for the fact that this enjoyment, this sexual enjoyment is only formulated, is only articulated from the phallus in so far as the

phallus is its signifier. Someone one day wrote that it is the signifier that designates the lack of signifier. This is absurd, I never articulated such a thing. The phallus is very properly sexual enjoyment in so far as it is co-ordinated, is solidary with a semblance.

This indeed is what happens and this is what it is rather strange to see all the analysts striving to turn their gaze from. Far from having insisted more and more on this turning point, this crisis of the phallic phase, they use every opportunity to elude the crisis, the truth, to which not one of these young speaking beings does not have to face up to, which is that there are some of them who do not have the phallus. A double intrusion into lack, because there are those who do not have one, and then this truth was lacking up to the present. Sexual identification does not consist in believing oneself to be a man or a woman, but in taking account of the fact that there are women, for the boy, and that there are men, for the girl. And what is important, is not so much what they experience, it is a real situation, if you allow me, the fact is that for men, the girl is the phallus. And this is what castrates them. That for women, the boy, is the same thing, the phallus and this is what castrates them also, because all they acquire is a penis and that spoils things. Neither the boy nor the girl initially run risks except through the dramas that they unleash, they are the phallus for a moment. This is the real, the real of sexual enjoyment in so far as it is detached as such, it is the phallus, in other words the Name of the Father, the identification of these two terms having in its time scandalised some [pious?] people.

(34) But there is something that is worth insisting on a little more. What is the fundamentally foundational part in this operation of the semblance, such as the one that we have just defined at the level of the relationship of man and woman, what is the place of the semblance, of the archaic semblance? This assuredly is why it is worth the trouble to hold on a little more to the moment of what the woman represents. The woman is precisely in this relation, this

relationship, for man, the moment of truth. The woman is in a position, with respect to sexual enjoyment, to punctuate the equivalence of enjoyment and the semblance. In this indeed lies the distance that man finds himself from her. If I spoke about a moment of truth, it is because she is the one that the whole formation of man is designed to respond to, and now over and against everything, the whole status of her semblance. It is certainly easier for a man to confront any enemy on the plain of rivalry than to confront the woman in so far as she is the support of this truth, of the semblance in the relationship of man to woman.

In truth, that the semblance is here enjoyment, for the man, is sufficiently indicated by the fact that enjoyment is semblance. It is because it [he?] is at the intersection of two enjoyments that man suffers in the highest way the malaise of this relationship that is designated as sexual. As someone or other said, these pleasures that are called physical.

On the contrary, no one other than the woman, because it is in this that she is Other, no one other than the woman knows better what is disjunctive between enjoyment and the semblance, because she is the presence of this something that she knows, namely, that enjoyment and semblance, if they are equivalent, in a dimension of discourse, are nonetheless distinct in the test, that the woman represents for man the truth, quite simply, namely, the only one that can give its place as such to the semblance. It has to be said, everything we have been told as being the mainspring of the unconscious represents nothing but the horror of this truth. It is this, of course, that today I am trying, I am attempting to develop for you just as one makes Japanese flowers. It is not particularly agreeable to listen to, because this is what is usually packaged under the register of the castration complex. By means of which, in that case, with this label, one is at peace, one can leave it to one side, one has no longer anything else to say about

it, except that it is there and that one makes a little genuflection to it from time to time.

But that the woman is the truth of man, that this old proverbial business, when it is a matter of understanding something, the *cherchez la femme*, to which people naturally give a police-style (35) interpretation, is something completely different, namely, that to grasp the truth of a man, one would do well to know who his wife is. I mean his spouse in this instance, and why not? This is the only situation that can give a meaning to something that one day someone in my entourage called the *pèse-personne*. To weigh a person, there is nothing like weighing his wife. When the woman is at stake it is not the same thing! Because the woman has a very great liberty....

Louder!

What's that?

We can't hear!

You can't hear?

No.

I said: the woman has very great freedom with respect to the semblance! She will manage to give weight even to a man who has none. These are...these are truths, of course, that in the course of the centuries, have been perfectly well noted for a long time, but which are never said except from mouth to mouth, as I might say. And a whole literature has been constructed, exists, it would be a matter of getting to know its breadth, naturally it is only of interest if one takes the best.

Someone, for example, that someone must take responsibility for one day, is Baltazar Gracian, who was an eminent Jesuit, who wrote some of the most intelligent things that could be written. They are absolutely prodigiously intelligent in that everything that is involved, namely, to establish what one could call the sanctity of man, he

resumes in one word, resumes it in what? His book on the *Courtier*, in a word, two points: to be a saint. It is the only point of western civilisation where the word *saint* has the same sense as in Chinese, *Tchen-Tchen*. Note this point, because, this reference, because all the same it is late, today, I am not going to introduce it today, I will give you this year some little references to the origins of Chinese thinking.

In any case, yes, I have noticed one thing, which is that perhaps I am a Lacanian because I formerly did Chinese. I mean by that that I notice that in re-reading things like that, that I had gone over, but mumbled through anyway like a like a simpleton, with donkeys ears, I notice in re-reading them now that, it is on all fours with what I am (36) telling you.

I don't know, I will give an example; in Mencius, which is one of the fundamental, canonical books of Chinese thought, there is a chap who is his disciple moreover, not him, but who begins to state things like the following: "What you do not find on the side of *yen*, this is discourse, do not look for on the side of your spirit". I translate it for you as *spirit*, it is *hsin*, but that means, that by *hsin* which means heart, what he designated was well and truly the spirit, the *Geist* of Hegel. But anyway that would demand a little bit more development. "And if you do not find it on the side of your spirit, do not look for it on the side of your *tchi*", namely, of what the Jesuits translated like that, as best they could, losing breath a little, your sensibility. I am only indicating these stages to tell you the distinction which is very strict between what is articulated, what belongs to discourse, and what belongs to the spirit, namely, the essential, if you have not already found it at the level of the word, it is hopeless, do not try to find it elsewhere at the level of feelings. *Meng-tseu, Mencius*, contradicts himself, it is true, but it is a matter of knowing along what path and why.

This to tell you that a certain way of putting discourse right in the forefront is not at all something that makes us go back to archaisms because discourse at that epoch, and the epoch of Mencius, was already perfectly well articulated and constituted. It is not through references to primitive thinking that one can understand it. In truth, I do not know what primitive thinking is. Something much more concrete that we have within our reach, is what is called underdevelopment. But that underdevelopment is not archaic, everyone knows that it is produced by the extension of the capitalist reign. I would even say more, what one notices, and what will be noticed more and more, is that underdevelopment is precisely the condition for capitalistic progress. From a certain angle, the October Revolution itself is a proof of it.

But what must be seen, is that what we have to confront is an underdevelopment that is going to be more and more patent, more and more widespread. Only what in short is at stake, is that we should put the following to the test: if the key of the different problems that are going to propose themselves to us is not to put us at the level of this effect of capitalist articulation that I left in the shadows last year by simply giving you its root in the discourse of the master, I will perhaps give you a little more of it this year. It would be well....we must see what we can draw from what I would call an underdeveloped logic. This is what I will try to articulate before you, as the Chinese texts say, “for your better use”.

Seminar 3: Wednesday 10 February 1971

I was asked if I was going to give my seminar because of the strike. There were two or perhaps just one, but perhaps two of these people who asked me what I thought of the strike, more exactly they asked my secretary. Well I for my part ask you! Nobody has anything to bring up in favour of the strike? At least in connection with this seminar? I will not absent myself from you...from your presence. Nevertheless this morning I was myself rather inclined to go on strike. I was led to this because the person that I have just spoken about, my secretary, showed me a little rubric in a newspaper about the aforesaid strike. The slogan of the strike, to which there was added, given the newspaper in question, a communiqué from the Ministry of National Education about everything that had been done for the University; the averages of the teachers employed per number of students, etc. Naturally, I am not going to dispute these statistics. Nevertheless the conclusion that is drawn from them, of this very extensive effort which ought in any case to satisfy people, I will say that it does not agree with my information which nevertheless comes from a good source. So that...because of this, I was rather inclined to go on strike. Your presence will force me, let us say by a fact which counts, it is what is called in our tongue courtesy, and in another that I announced like that, as a sort of come-along, that I would refer to, namely, the Chinese tongue about which I went as far as to confide to you that there was a time, when I learned a little bit of it, it is called *yi*.

The *yi*, in the grand tradition, is one of the four fundamental virtues, (40) of whom? Of what? Of a man at a certain date. And if I speak about it like that, as it comes to me, because I thought I was going to have to make some casual remarks to you, it is moreover on this plane that I am going to give this discourse today. It will not be, properly speaking, what I had prepared. In my own way all the same

I will take account of this strike and it is in a way - you are going to see, the level at which I am going to put things - it is in a more familiar way to reply in a fair-minded way. This is more or less the best sense that can be given to this *yi*, to reply in a fair-minded way to this presence. You will see that I shall take advantage of it to tackle a certain number of points that have given rise to an equivocation for some time. Namely, that since moreover there is something in question in the University, it is also at the level of the University - the movements of which in many cases I disdain to remark on when I hear about them - that today I think I should respond.

As perhaps you know – how can we know whether your presence bears witness to it or not - in my relationship to the aforesaid University I am only in what could be called a marginal position. It believes it should give me some shelter, for which certainly I pay it homage, even though for some time something has manifested itself that I cannot but take into account, given the field in which I find myself teaching. It is a certain number of echoes, of rumours, of murmurs that come to me from a quarter of a field defined in a university fashion and which is called linguistics.

When I speak, of course about disdain, I do not mean a feeling; what is at stake is a way of behaving. At a time which already, precisely, if I remember correctly, is something like...how long ago is it, two years, it is not enormous, there came out in a journal that nobody reads any more, whose very name seems out of date, *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, there appeared a certain article called *Exercices de style de Jacques Lacan*. It was an article that I signalled, moreover, at that time I was under the roof of the *Ecole Normale*, anyway under the roof!...under the porch roof, at the door. I said: “You should read that, it will give you a laugh”. It proved, as you saw subsequently, that it was perhaps a little less funny than it seemed, because it was in a way the bell in which I was rather, even though I was deaf, to hear the confirmation of what had already been announced to me: that my

place was no longer under that porch roof. It is a confirmation that I could have heard, because there was written in the article, there was written something that I must say is rather crude, that one might (41) hope, now that I am no longer under the porch roof of the *Ecole Normale*, for the introduction into the aforesaid Ecole, of linguistics, I am not sure of exactly quoting the terms, you can well imagine that I did not refer to it this morning, because all this is improvised, high quality, high tension linguistics, something or other of this kind, perhaps, something that designated the fact that something was besmirching the name of linguistics, good God, within this *Ecole Normale*. In the name of what, great God, I had no responsibility in the *Ecole Normale* for any teaching, but if the *Ecole Normale* found itself, according to this author, so little initiated in linguistics, it was certainly not I who should have been blamed for it.

This indicates to you the point on which I intend all the same to specify something this morning. It is in effect the following, something which is raised and for some time with a sort of insistence, the theme is taken up in a more or less frivolous way in a certain number of interviews, there is a question which is raised about something: is one a structuralist or not when one is a linguist? And people tend to demarcate themselves and say: I am a functionalist. Why am I a functionalist? Because structuralism, is something, moreover, that is a purely journalistic invention. I am saying, structuralism is something which serves as a label and which of course, given what it comprises, namely, a certain seriousness, does not fail to be disturbing, so that, of course, people want to stake out their own preserve. [*André Martinet interviewed in Le Monde, 5 January 1971.*]

The question of the relationships of linguistics to what I teach, is, in other words, what I want to put in the forefront in order, in a way, to dissipate, dissipate I hope in a way that will mark an epoch, a certain equivocation. Linguists, the university linguists, would like in

short to reserve to themselves the privilege of speaking about language. And the fact that it is around the development of linguistics that the axis of my teaching operates, is attached to, is supposed to be excessive in some way and is denounced in different formulae the principal one of which is the following, in any case it seem to me to be the most consistent one. That of linguistics there is made - in the field which happens to be the one that I am inserted into, in the one also in which someone who certainly, on occasion, would deserve to be looked at a little more closely, much more as regards what comes from me, because...which people might have only a rather vague idea of, at least it is proved, Levi- Strauss for example, and so then Levi-Strauss and then some others again, Roland Barthes - we also are supposed to be making of linguistics a use, I quote, "a metaphorical use". Well now! It is in effect about (42) this that I would like to clearly make some points. First of all there is something from which we should start because all the same it is written, written in something that counts, the fact that I am still here sustaining this discourse, the fact that you are also here to listen to it, the fact is, we have to believe that a formula is not altogether displaced as regards this discourse, in so far as I pronounce it, the fact is in a certain way finally, let us say that I know...I know what? Let us try to be exact, it seems to be proven that *I know what I should keep to (je sais à quoi m'en tenir)*. Holding a certain place, I am underlining this, this place is no other – I am underlining it because I am not stating it for the first time, I spend my time clearly repeating that this is what I hold onto – than the place that I identified as that of a psychoanalyst – the question can after all be debated, because many psychoanalysts debate it – but in any case this is what I hold to.

It is not quite the same as if I were to state, *I know where I stand (je sais où je me tiens)*, not because the I is repeated in the second part of the sentence, but this is where language always shows its resources, it is because to say *I know where I stand*, it is on the *where* that the emphasis would be put as regards what I was priding myself

knowing. I would have, as I might say, I would have the map, the *mapping* of the thing. And why after all would I have it?

There is a strong reason why I could not even sustain that I know where I stand. This is truly the axis of what I have to tell you this year. The fact is that the principle of science in so far as the process is engaged for us, I am talking about what I refer to when I give its centre as Newtonian science, the introduction of the Newtonian field, the fact is that in no domain of science, does one have this *mapping* this map, to tell us where we are. And what is more, everyone agrees with this, but whatever the worth of the ell, of the objection that may be raised once one begins to speak precisely of a map, of its chance and of its necessity, well then, anyone at all is in a position to object to you that you are no longer doing science, but philosophy. That does not mean that anyone at all knows what he is saying when he says it. But anyway, it is a very strong position.

The discourse of science rejects this *where we have got to* (*où nous en sommes*) it is not with this that it operates. As regards the hypothesis, remember Newton affirming that he did not claim to construct any, the hypothesis, although used, never concerns the foundation of things. A hypothesis, in the scientific field, and whatever anyone may think, a hypothesis is, above all, something to do with logic. There is an *if*, the conditional of a truth that is never (43) articulated except logically; so then, *apodosis*: a consequent ought to be verifiable. It is verifiable at its level, as it is articulated. This in no way proves the truth of the hypothesis. I am absolutely not in the process of saying that science is swimming about there like a pure construction, that it does not engage with the real. To say that it does not prove the truth of the hypothesis, is simply to recall what I have just said, namely, that implication in logic in no way implies that a true conclusion cannot be drawn from a false premise. It nevertheless remains that the truth of a hypothesis in an established scientific field is recognised from the order that it bestows on the

totality of the field in so far as it has its status and its status cannot be defined otherwise than by the consent of all those who are authorised in this field, in other words the status of the scientific field is of a university kind (*universitaire*).

These are things that may appear crude. It nevertheless remains that this is what justifies situating the level of the articulation of the University discourse, as I tried to do last year. Now it is clear that the way that I articulated it is the only one that allows it to be noticed why it is not accidental, out of date, linked to some accident or other. The status of the development of science involves the presence, the subvention of other social entities that are well known, the Army for example, or again the Navy, and of some other elements for a certain provisioning. It is quite legitimate if we see that radically the University discourse can only be articulated if it starts from the discourse of the Master.

The distribution of domains in a field whose status is university-like, is the only place where there can be posed the question of what is happening and first of all of whether it is possible for a discourse to be entitled differently. Here there is introduced in its massiveness – I apologise for starting again from such a basic point, but after all since there are directed at me, and from people authorised as being linguists, objections like the one that I only make a metaphorical use of linguistics, I ought to recall, I ought to respond whatever may be the occasion I do so, and I am doing it this morning because of the fact that I was expecting to meet a more combative atmosphere – well then, I ought to recall here then, that if I can say decently that I know, I know what? Because after all perhaps I put myself somewhere in a place that the person called Mencius, whose name I introduced to you the last time, the person called Mencius, may perhaps allow us to (44) define, good, it remains that if – may Mencius protect me! – *I know what to limit myself to*, I have to say at the same time that I do not know what I am saying. I know that what I am saying, in other

words, is what I cannot say. This is the date, the date that marks the fact there is Freud and that he introduced the unconscious. The unconscious means nothing if it does not mean that whatever I say, or wherever I stand, even if I behave correctly, well then, I do not know what I am saying, and that none of the discourses, as I defined them last year, leave any hope, allows anyone to put forward anything at all, to claim, to hope even in any way to know what he is saying.

I say, even if I do not know what I am saying; only I know that I do not know it. And I am not the first to say something in these conditions. It has already been heard. I say that the cause of this is only to be sought in language itself and that what I am adding, what I am adding to Freud, even if in Freud it is already there, open to view, because whatever he demonstrates about the unconscious is never anything but language material, I add this: *that the unconscious is structured like a language*. Which one? Well then, precisely, look for it!

I will talk to you (*je vous causerai*) about French and about Chinese. At least I would like to. It is only too clear that at a certain level, what I cause is bitterness, especially on the side of linguists. This is of a nature rather to make one think that the university status is only too obvious in the developments that force linguistics to turn into a funny mixture; from what one sees of it, there is no doubt about it. That I should be denounced on that occasion, good God, is not that important. That people will not debate with me, is not very surprising either, because I do not take my stand from a certain definition of the university domain, nor could I do so.

The amusing thing is, since it is obvious that it is not our fault, a certain number of people among whom I ranked myself earlier, adding to it two other names and one could add a few more, it is obviously starting from us that linguistics sees there increasing the number of posts, those counted out this morning in the review of the

Ministry of National Education, and then also the number of students.
Good!

The interest, the wave of interest that I contributed to bringing to linguistics, is, it appears, an interest that comes from the ignorant. Well then! That already is not too bad! They were ignorant before, now they are interested. I succeeded in interesting the ignorant in (45) something that, in addition, was not my goal, because linguistics, I can tell you, I don't give a damn about it! What interests me directly, is language, because I think that this is what I am dealing with, that that is what I am dealing with when I am dealing with a psychoanalysis.

It is up to the linguists to define the linguistic object. In the field of science, every domain progresses by defining its object. They define it as they wish and they add that I am making a metaphorical usage of it. It is curious all the same that linguists do not see that every use of language, whatever it may be, moves around in metaphor, and that the only language is metaphorical, as is demonstrated by every attempt at metalanguage, if I can express myself in this way, which can do nothing other than to try to start from what has always been defined, every time people advance onto an effort described as logical (*logicien*), to define first of all an object-language in which it is clear, in which one puts one's finger, in the statements of any one of these logical efforts, that this language-object is ungraspable. It is of the nature of language, I am not saying of speech, I am saying of language itself, that as regards approaching anything whatsoever that is signified in it, the referent is never the right one, and this is what makes a language.

Every designation is metaphorical; it can only be done through the mediation of something else. Even if I say: that! That and pointing at it, well then, I already imply, by calling it that, that I chose to make it nothing but that. Even though that is not that, the proof is that

when I light it, it is something different, even at the level of that, this famous that (*ça*) which is supposed to be the redoubt of the particular, of the individual, we cannot omit that it is an event of language to say: 'that'. What I have just designated as that is not my cigar, it is so when I smoke it, but when I am smoking it, I do not talk about it. The signifier to which the discourse refers to on occasion, when there is discourse – it appears that we can scarcely escape from what is discourse – is what the discourse about something refers to and this signifier may be the only support. Of its nature it evokes a referent. Only this cannot be the right one and that is why the referent is always real, because it is impossible to designate it. In consideration of which, the only thing that remains is to construct it. And one constructs it if one can.

There is no reason why I should deprive myself, anyway I am not going to remind you all the same of what you all know about because you have read it in a pile of occult thrash that you drink in as (46) everyone knows, do you not, I am speaking about the *yang* and the *yin*. Like everyone else you know that, huh, the male and the female. They are drawn like that. They form very beautiful little characters. Here is the first as *yang* and as for the *yin*, I will make it for you another time.

I will make it for you another time because...in this connection...I do not see why I should misuse...these characters that count so little for you. I am going to make use of them all the same. We are not here either to do conjuring tricks. If I speak to you about it, it is because it is quite obvious that...here is the example of unfindable referents. That does not mean, damn it, that they are not real. The proof is that we are still encumbered with them.

If I make a metaphorical use of linguistics, it is starting from the fact that the unconscious cannot adapt itself to a research, I mean linguistics, that is unsustainable. This does not prevent it continuing,

of course, it is a wager. But I have already made enough use of the wager to know, for you to know rather, that you should suspect that it can be of some use; it is just as important to lose as to win.

Linguistics can only be a metaphor that is fabricated in order not to work. But when all is said and done, it is of great interest to us, because you are going to see - I am announcing it to you, this is what I have to tell you this year - is that psychoanalysis for its part, moves about in this same metaphor under full sail; this indeed is what suggested to me this return, like that, after all, we know what it is, to the Chinese I learned in the past. After all, why would I not have understood it too badly when I learned it from my dear master Demiéville? I was already a psychoanalyst.

So then, for there to be a tongue all the same in which the following, this is read *wei* and it functions both in the formula *wu wei* which means inaction, so then it means to act, and then you see *wei* used as *like*, it means like, namely, that it acts as a conjunction to make a metaphor. Or again it means, *in so far as that refers to something* which is even more into metaphor, in so far as it refers to something, (47) namely, precisely, it is not one because one is forced to refer to it. When one thing refers to another, the greatest possible breadth, the greatest possible flexibility is given to the eventual use of this term *wei* which nevertheless means *to act*. It is not bad, a tongue like that! A tongue where the verbs and the plus-verbs – to act, what is more of a plus-verb, what more active plus-verb is there? – is transformed into tiny conjunctions. That is the usual thing. This helped me a lot all the same to generalise the function of the signifier, even if it fits in badly with some linguists who do not know Chinese. For my part I would really like to ask a particular one, for example how for him the double articulation that he keeps talking about for some years – I tell you this double articulation is killing us – what does he make of the double articulation in Chinese? Huh? In Chinese, you see, it is the first that is all alone, and then finds itself

like that producing a meaning which from time to time means that, since all the words are monosyllabic, one cannot say that there is a phoneme which means nothing, and then the word that means something, two articulations, two levels. Well then, yes, even at the level of the phoneme, that means something. This does not prevent when you put several phonemes together, which mean the same thing, this gives a big word of several syllables, just like with us, which has a meaning that has no relationship with what each of the phonemes mean. So the double articulation looks rather funny there! It is funny that it is not remembered that there is a tongue like that, when one states as general a function of the double articulation as characteristic of language. I don't mind if all I'm saying is pure stupidity, but explain it to me! Let a linguist come here who can tell me how the double articulation holds up in Chinese [cf. André Martinet, *Eléments de linguistique général*, new edition, Paris 1967.]

So then, this *wei* like that, to get you used to it I am introducing it, but very gently. I will bring you a minimum of other things, which may in fact be of some use. It illuminates many things moreover that this verb is at the same time to act and the conjunction of the metaphor. Perhaps the *Im Anfang war die Tat*, as your man says, there where the act was right at the beginning it is perhaps exactly the same thing as to say *en arché*, in the beginning was the word. There is perhaps no other act than this. The terrible thing is, is that I can lead you like that for a long time with metaphor and the further I go, the more you will go astray because precisely, what is proper to the metaphor is not to be all alone. There is also metonymy which functions at this time and even while I am speaking to you, because it is after all the metaphor, as very competent, very friendly people called linguists tell us; they are even so competent that they have been forced to invent the notion of competence. The tongue is competence in itself. What is more it is true. One is competent in nothing else. Only, since they have also perceived, there is only one way to prove it, which is performance. They are the ones who call it

that, performance. I don't, I have no need of it. I am in the process of giving it, the performance, giving the performance of speaking to you about metaphor, naturally I confuse you, because the only interesting thing, is what happens in the performance, it is the production of surplus enjoying, of yours and of the one that you impute to me when you reflect. That happens to you. That happens to you especially when you ask yourselves what I am doing here. It must be that this gives you some pleasure, at the level of this surplus enjoying that pressurises you; as I already explained to you, it is at that level that the operation of metonymy is carried out, thanks to which you can be more or less led anywhere at all, led by the nose, naturally not simply to go along the corridor. But this is not what is interesting, to lead you into the corridor, nor even to beat you in the public square. The important thing, is to keep you there, well arranged, close together, well pressed against one another. As long as you are there, you are doing nobody any harm! This will take us rather far, this little banter, because it is all the same starting from there that we are going to try to articulate the function of *yin*.

You understand, I remind you of this business of the surplus enjoying, I remind you of it anyway as I am able; it is quite certain that it was only definable by me starting from what? From a serious construction, that of object relations as it can be separated out from the experience described as Freudian. That is not enough. I had to scupper these relations to make them the bowl of Marx's surplus value, which nobody had ever dreamt of as having this use. Marx's surplus value cannot be imagined just like that. If it is invented, it is in the sense that the word invention means that one finds a good thing already well established in a little corner, in other words that one makes a lucky discovery. To make a lucky discovery, it was necessary that it should be there already well polished, grounded, by what, by a discourse. So then, surplus enjoying, like surplus value, is only detectable in a developed discourse, that there is no question of debating whether it can be defined as the discourse of the capitalist.

(49) You are not very curious, and then especially not very interventionist, so that last year, when I spoke to you about the discourse of the Master, no one pushed me to ask me how the discourse of the Capitalist was situated within it. For my part I was expecting that, I was only waiting to explain it to you, especially because it is the simplest thing possible. A tiny little contraption that turns and your discourse of the master shows everything that is highly transformable into the discourse of the capitalist. That is not what is important, the reference to Marx was enough to show you that it had the closest relationship with the discourse of the master. What I am trying to get to is the following, it is to catch hold of something as essential as what is here, let us say the support – the support, everyone knows that I do not pile it on for you, it is indeed the thing that I am most distrustful of in the world, because it is indeed with that of course that people make the worst extrapolations, it is with this in a word that people construct psychology, psychology, this is what is necessary to be able to manage to think out the function of language – so then when I realise that the support of surplus enjoying is metonymy, it is because here I am entirely justified, this is what ensures that you follow me, through the fact that this surplus enjoying is essentially a sliding object. Impossible to stop this slide at any point of the sentence.

Nevertheless, why should we refuse to notice that the fact that it is useable in a discourse - a linguistic one or not, as I already told you, it is all the same to me - in a discourse which is my own, and that it is only such by being borrowed not from the discourse, but from the logic of the capitalist, something that introduces us, or rather brings us back to what I contributed the last time and which left some people a little bit perplexed. Everyone knows that I always finish what I have to tell you in a little gallop, because perhaps I dragged things out too much, dawdled along earlier, some people tell me, what matter, everyone has his own rhythm. That is how I make love.

I spoke to you about an under-developed logic. That left some people scratching their heads. What could that be, this under-developed logic?

Let us start from this. I had clearly marked out beforehand that what carries along the extension of capitalism, is under-development. Anyway I am going to say it now because someone that I met on the way out and to whom I confided something, I told him “I would really like to have illustrated the thing by saying that Mr Nixon, is in fact *Houphouet-Boigny* in person”, “Oh”, he told me, “you should have said it”. Well then I am saying it. The only difference between (50) the two, is that Mr Nixon is supposed to have been psychoanalysed! You see the result! When someone has been psychoanalysed in a certain way, and *this is always true* in every case, when he has been psychoanalysed in a particular way, in a certain field, in a certain school, by people that one can name, well then, he is incurable. All the same you have to say things the way they are. He is incurable. It even goes very far. It is for example obvious that it is ruled out that someone who has been psychoanalysed somewhere, in a certain place, by certain people specifically, not by just anyone, well then, he can understand nothing of what I am saying. That has been seen and there are proofs. Books even come out every day to prove it. Just by itself, that gives rise all the same to questions about what is involved in the possibility of performance, namely, of functioning in a certain discourse.

So then, if the discourse is sufficiently developed, there is something, let us say no more, this something as it happens is you, but that is a pure accident, nobody knows your relationship to this something, it is a something that interests you all the same.

You see this is how this is written. That can be read, in a classical French transcription *sing*. If you put an *h* in front – *hsing* – this is the English transcription, and the most recent Chinese transcription, if I

am not mistaken, because after all it is purely conventional, is written like that: *xing*. Naturally that is not pronounced *xing*, it is pronounced 'sing. It is nature. It is this nature which you have been able to see I am far from ruling out of the affair. If you were not completely deaf, you were able to notice all the same that the first thing that was worth retaining in what I told you in our first talk, is that the signifier – I strongly insisted – can be found everywhere in nature. I spoke to you about stars, more exactly of constellations, because there is a star and a star; for centuries all the same that is what the sky is: it is the first feature, what is above, that is important. It is a tray, a blackboard. I am reproached for using a blackboard. It is the only thing that remains to us to serve as a sky, my good friends, that is why I use it, to put on it what ought to be your constellations.

(51) So then, a sufficiently developed discourse. From this discourse the result is that all of you no matter how many of you there are, and whether you are from here or from the USA, it is the same thing, and even elsewhere, you are underdeveloped with respect to this discourse. I am talking about this thing, this something by which people are interested but which is certainly what people speak about when they speak about your underdevelopment. Where is it to be situated exactly? What can be said about it? It is not doing philosophy to ask where it comes from, what is its substance. There are things in this dear Meng-Tzu, I do not see, after all, any reason to drug you, I really have no hope that you will make the effort to stick your nose into it, so then I will go moreover, why not, to what I have to set out in three stages, especially since he tells us extraordinarily interesting things. There is one thing, there is no knowing how it came out moreover, because it is made God knows how, it is a collage, this book of Meng-Tzu, things follow one another, as they say, and are not alike. Anyway! Alongside this notion of *hsing*, of nature, there emerges all of a sudden that of *ming*, the decree of the heavens.

Obviously, I could very easily stick with the *ming*, with the decree of the heavens, namely, continue my discourse, which means in short: that is how it is because that is how it is, one day, science will grow on our terrain. At the same time capitalism did its own thing, and then there was a chap, God knows why, heaven's decree, there is Marx who has, in short, ensured a rather long survival for capitalism. And then there is Freud who all of a sudden was disturbed by something which obviously became the only element of interest that still had some relationship with this thing that people had previously dreamt about and which was called knowledge. At an epoch when there was no longer the slightest trace of something which had a meaning of this kind, he noticed that there was the symptom.

(52) This is where we have got to. It is around the symptom that there turns everything that we can, as they say, if the word still had a meaning, have an idea of. It is around the symptom that you orient yourselves, as many of you as are here. The only thing that interest you, and which does not fall flat, which is not simply inept as information, are the things that have the appearance of a symptom, namely, in principle, things that make a sign to you, but that you understand nothing about. It is the only sure thing, that there are things that make signs to you that you know nothing about.

I will tell you how man, it is untranslatable, that is how it is, he is a good chap, made up of curious little turns of juggling and exchange between *hsing* and *ming*. It is obviously much too subtle for me to speak about it to you today, but I put it at the horizon, at the point, in order to tell you that this is where we have to get to, because in any case, this *xin*, is something that does not work out, that is underdeveloped; we really have to know where to put it. That it can mean nature, is not very satisfactory given the state that things are at as regards natural history. This *hsing*, there is no kind of chance that we will find it in this thing that requires great cunning to get, to get a close hold of, which is called the surplus enjoying. If it is so

slippery, that does not make it easy to get one's hands on it. It is all the same not, certainly not to this that we refer when we talk about underdevelopment.

I know well that by ending now, because time is passing, I am going to leave you perhaps a little bit in suspense. All the same, I am going to go back, onto the plane of metaphorical acting and to tell you how, because today that was my pivot, linguistics properly filtered, criticised, focussed, in a word, on condition that we make of it exactly what we want and what linguists do, good God, why not take advantage of it? They may happen to do something useful. If linguistics is what I was saying earlier, a metaphor that is deliberately fabricated in order not to work, this may perhaps give you ideas about what may well be for us the goal. From where we situate ourselves with Meng-Tzu and then some other people at his epoch who knew what they were talking about, because you must not confuse all the same underdevelopment with the return to an archaic state, it is not because Meng-Tzu lived in the 3rd Century before Jesus Christ that I am presenting him to you as a primitive mentality. I am presenting him to you as someone who, in what he said, probably (53) knew part of the things that we do not know when we are saying the same thing. So then, this is what may serve to teach us with him to sustain a metaphor, not fabricated in order not to work, but whose action we suspend. It is here perhaps that we will try to show the necessary path.

I will remain there today for a discourse that might not be a semblance.

Seminar 4: Wednesday 17 February 1971

[Before the seminar Lacan writes on the board a quotation from Meng-Tzu: probably the following.]

“Everywhere under the heavens, when one speaks about nature, what is meant are natural effects”

- This is the name of the author of this little formula...
- *Louder!*
- This is the name of the author of this little formula!
- *Thank you.*
- this little formula to which, despite the fact that it was written around 250BC, in China as you see, in chapter 2 of Book IV, the second part, sometimes it is classified in a different way, so that in that case it would be part VIII, of Book IV, the second part of paragraph 26 of Meng-Tzu, whom the Jesuits called Mencius, because they are the ones who took a step forward, well before the epoch when there were sinologists, namely, at the beginning of the 19th Century. I had the pleasure of acquiring the first book on which there are found conjointly a plaque of Chinese printing, it is not quite the same thing as the first book in which there were at the same time Chinese characters and European characters, it is the first book in which there was a Chinese printing plate with things written, with things printed, from our part of the world. It is a translation of Aesop's fables. This appeared in 1840, and it prides itself, quite rightly in being the first book in which this conjunction was realised. (56) 1840, you can say that it is more or less, precisely, the notice of the moment when sinologists came on the scene. The Jesuits were in China for a very long time, as perhaps some of you may remember. They almost made the connection between China and what they represented as missionaries. Only they allowed themselves to be a

little, a little bit impressed by the Chinese rites, and as you know perhaps, in the middle of the 18th Century, that created some difficulties for them with Rome, which did not show on this occasion particular political acuity. That happens sometimes in Rome. Anyway in Voltaire, if you read Voltaire, but of course no one reads Voltaire anymore, you are making a great mistake, it is full of all kinds of things. In Voltaire, there is, very exactly in *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, an appendix, I think that it forms a particular lampoon, a long elaboration about this Quarrel of the Rites, of which many things in history now find themselves in a position of filiation.

In any case then, we are talking about Mencius, and Mencius wrote this – because I wrote it on the board....to begin with that does not form properly speaking a part of my discourse today, that is why I finished it before the exact hour of 12.30 – I will tell you, or I am going to try to make you sense what it means, and then this will get us into the swing of what, properly speaking, is the object of what I want to state today, it is namely that....in what preoccupies us, what is the function of writing (*l'écriture*).

Since writing, exists in China since...time immemorial, I mean that well before we have to properly speak of works, writing already existed for an extremely long time, and one cannot evaluate how long it did exist. This writing has, in China, an altogether pivotal role, in a certain number of things that happened, and it is rather...it is quite illuminating as regards what we may think about the function of writing. It is certain that writing has played a quite decisive role in supporting something, something to which we have... this particular access and no other, namely, a type of social structure that was sustained for a very long time and from which, until a recent epoch, one could conclude that there was a completely different filiation as regards what was supported in China, than what was engendered among us, and specifically by one of these phyla that interest us particularly, namely, the philosophical phylum in so far as, I

highlighted it last year, it is nodal to understand what is at stake as regards the discourse of the Master.

(57) So then this is how this exergue is stated. As I showed you on the board the last time this designates the heavens, it is called *tien*. *T'ien hsia*, is under the heavens, everything that is under the heavens. Here there is a determinative *tchih*, what is at stake is something that is beneath the heavens; what is beneath the heavens, is what comes afterwards. What you see there is nothing other than the designation of the word that on this occasion we will state as *yen*. *Yen hsing*, I already put it on the board the last time, in signalling to you that this *hsing*, was precisely one of the elements that will preoccupy us this year, in so far as the term that gets closest to it is nature. And *yeh* is something that concludes a sentence without saying, properly speaking, that what is at stake is something of the order that what we are stating here *is, being*, it is a conclusion. It is a conclusion or let us say a punctuation, because the sentence continues here since things are written from right to left, the sentence continues here with a certain *tse* which means *consequently*, or which in any case indicates the consequence. So then let us see what is at stake. *Yen* means nothing other than language, but like all the terms stated in the Chinese tongue, it is liable also to be used in the sense of a verb. So then that can mean both the word and the one who speaks, and who speaks what? In this case that would be what follows, namely *hsing*, nature, what speaks about nature under the heavens, and *yeh* would be a punctuation.

Nevertheless, and this is why it is interesting to take an interest in a sentence of the written tongue, you see that you can cut things up differently and say: the word, indeed the language, because if it was a matter of specifying the word, we would have another character that is slightly different. At this level, as it is written here, this character can just as well mean word as language. These sorts of ambiguities are altogether fundamental in the use of what is written, very

(58) precisely, and this is the importance of what I am writing. As I pointed out to you, as I pointed out to you at the start of my discourse this year, and especially the last time, it is very precisely in so far as the reference as regards everything involved in language is always indirect that language takes on its import.

We could then also say: language, in so far as it is in the world, as it is under the heavens, language, is what makes *hsing*, nature, because this nature is not, at least in Meng-Tzu, just any nature, what is at stake is precisely the nature of the speaking being, which, in another passage, he is careful to specify is the difference between this nature and the nature of the animal, a difference, he adds, he highlights in two terms which mean what they mean, “an infinite difference.” And which perhaps is the one that is defined there. You will see, moreover, whether we take one or other of these interpretations, the axis of what is going to be said as a consequence will not be changed.

Tse therefore, is the consequence. In consequence, *ku*, is here *ku*, in consequence, relates to the cause – because cause means nothing else, whatever may be the ambiguity that in a certain book, a certain book called *Mencius on the mind*, namely, a book produced by someone called Richards, who was certainly not a newcomer – Richards and Ogden are two leaders of a position originating in England and altogether in agreement with the best tradition of English philosophy, who established at the beginning of this century the doctrine described as logical positivism, whose major work is entitled *The meaning of meaning*. It is a book to which you will already find an allusion in my *Ecrits* where I take up a certain disparaging position with regard to it. *The meaning of meaning* means *le sens du sens*. Logical-positivism proceeds from this requirement that a text should have a graspable meaning, which leads it to a position which is the following: a certain number of philosophical statements find themselves in a way devalorised in principle by the fact that they are not...that they give no graspable result as regards a search for

meaning. In other words, if a philosophical text is caught red handed in non-sense, it is ruled out for that very reason. It is only too clear (59) that this is a way of pruning away the things that scarcely allows us to find our way, because if we start from the principle that something that has no meaning cannot be essential in the development of a discourse, we quite simply lose our bearings. I am not saying of course, that such a requirement is not a procedure, but that this procedure forbids us in a way any articulation whose meaning is not graspable, this is something which, for example, may culminate in the fact, for example, that we can no longer make use of mathematical discourse, which, on the admission of the most qualified logicians, is characterised by the fact that it may be that at one or other of its points, we can no longer give it any meaning - which does not prevent it from being precisely, among all the discourses, the one that is developed with most rigor. We find ourselves moreover, because of this fact, at a point that is quite essential to highlight concerning the function of writing.

So then, it is *ku* that is at stake, it is *ku* that is at stake and as *i wei*, because I already told you that this *wei* that can in certain senses mean *to act* indeed something that is of the order of *to do* even though it is not just anything whatsoever, *i* here has the sense of something like *with*, it is with that we are going to proceed like, like what? Like *li*, this is the word about which I point out to you, I am highlighting for you the fact that *li*, I repeat, that this *li* which means *reward, interest, profit*, and the thing is all the more remarkable in that precisely Mencius, Mencius in his first chapter, in presenting himself to a certain prince, it does not matter who, of what made up the kingdoms described, described afterwards, as the warring kingdoms, finds himself with this prince who demands his advice, with this prince, pointing out that, he is not there to teach him what constitutes our law which is present to everyone, namely, what is appropriate for the increase of the wealth of the kingdom, and specifically what we would call surplus value. If there is a meaning

that one can give retroactively to *li*, this indeed is what is at stake. (60) Now, it is indeed here that it is remarkable to see that what Mencius points out on this occasion, is that starting then from this word which is nature, or if you wish from the word that concerns nature, what is going to be at stake, is to arrive at the cause, in so far as the aforesaid cause, is *li, erh, i i*, which means the *li, erh* is something that means at the same time like and, and like but, *erh i*, is simply that, and so that there can be no doubt about it, the *i* that ends, which is a conclusive *i*, this *i* has the same accent as *simply*. It is *li*, and that is enough. Here I am allowing myself in short to recognise that, as regards the effects of discourse, as regards what is under the heavens, what emerges from it is nothing other than the function of the cause, in so far as it is surplus enjoying.

You will see, if you refer to the text of Meng-Tzu, you have two ways of doing it, you can find it on the one hand in an edition that in short is very good which was produced by a Jesuit at the end of the 19th Century, someone called Wieger, in an edition of the *Four fundamental books of Confucianism*. You have another way, which is to get hold of this *Mencius on the mind*, which was published by Kegan Paul in London. I do not know if nowadays there are a lot of copies still *available*, as they say, but after all it is worth the trouble, why not, to try to get it for those who might be curious to consult something that is so fundamental, for a certain illumination of a reflection on language which is the work of a neo-positivist and which is certainly not negligible. *Mencius on the mind*, therefore, by Richards, can be found in London at Kegan Paul. And those who find it worthwhile to take the trouble of getting a copy, if they cannot get the book, could get perhaps a photocopy, and they will understand all the better a certain number of references that I will make to it this year because I will come back to it.

It is one thing then to speak about the origin of language, and another thing of its link to what I am teaching, to what I am teaching in

conformity with what I articulate, what last year I articulated, as the discourse of the analyst. Because you are well aware, linguistics began with Humboldt with this sort of prohibition, not to ask oneself the question of the origin of language, otherwise one would certainly go astray. It is no small thing that someone should have noticed at the height of the period of developmental mythmaking, this was the style at the beginning of the 19th Century, should have posited that nothing would ever be situated, established, articulated, about language, if one did not start first of all by forbidding the questions of (61) origin. It is an example which might well have been followed elsewhere, this would have avoided us a lot of lucubrations of the type called primitivist. There is nothing like a reference to the primitive to...make thinking more primitive. It is what regularly regresses to the very measure of what it claims to discover as primitive.

The discourse of the Analyst, I have to tell you, because in short you have not heard it, the discourse of the Analyst is nothing other than the logic of action. Why have you not heard it? Because in what I articulated last year with these little letters on the board, in this form, the small **o** over the S_2 and of what happens at the level of the analysand, namely, the function of the subject in so far as he is barred and in so far as what he produces as signifiers, and not just any ones, master signifiers. It is because it was written like that, because I wrote it down on many occasions, it is for that very reason that you did not hear it. It is in this way that writing is differentiated from speaking, and it is necessary to put the word back into it and to butter it up seriously, but naturally not without fundamental drawbacks for it to be heard. One can write then a whole pile of things without them reaching any ear. It is nevertheless written. That is even the reason that I called my *Ecrits* as I did. That scandalised, like that, sensitive people and not just anyone. It is very curious that the person that this literally threw into convulsions was a Japanese woman. I will deal with that later. Naturally here, it did not give

anyone convulsions, the Japanese woman that I spoke about is not here. And anybody at all, who comes from that tradition, will be able I think on this occasion to understand why this kind of effect of insurrection was produced. It is through the word of course that the path towards writing is opened up. If I entitled my *Ecrits* that, it is because they represented an attempt, an attempt at writing, which is very sufficiently marked by the fact that it culminated in graphs. The trouble, is that, is that people who claim to give a commentary on me start immediately from the graphs. They are wrong, the graphs are only understandable in function, I would say, of the slightest effect of style of the aforesaid *Ecrits*, which are in a way the steps to reach it. As a result of this the written, the written taken up all by itself, whether it is a matter of one or other schema, the one that is called L or any other one whatsoever, or the big graph itself, presents an opportunity for all sorts of misunderstandings. What is at stake is a (62) word, in so far as, of course, and why, it tends to clear the way to these graphs that is at stake. But it would be well not to forget this word, for the reason that it is the very one that is reflected by the analytic rule which is as you know, speak, speak, speak. It is enough for you to speak, here is the box from which there come all the gifts of language, it is a Pandora's box. What is the relationship then with these graphs? These graphs of course, no one has yet dared to go that far, these graphs in no way show you anything whatsoever that allow you to return to the origin of language. If there is something that appears there immediately, it is that not alone do they not give it, but they do not promise it either.

What is going to be at stake today is the situation with respect to the truth that results from what is called free association, in other words a free use of the word. I have never spoken about it except with irony. There is no more free association than one could say that a variable linked to a mathematical function is free, and the function defined by analytic discourse is obviously not free, it is bound, it is bound by conditions that I will rapidly designate as those of the analytic

consulting room. At what distance is my analytic discourse as it is here defined by this written arrangement, at what distance is it from the analytic consulting room, this is precisely what constitutes what we will call my disagreement with a certain number of analytic consulting rooms. So then this definition of analytic discourse, to highlight where I am, does not appear to them to be adapted to the conditions of the psychoanalytic consulting room. Now, what my discourse outlines, or at least delivers, is one part of the conditions that constitute the analytic consulting room. Just measure what one does when one goes into analysis, it is something that indeed has its importance, but in any case as far as I am concerned, is indicated by the fact that I always undertake numerous of preliminary conversations.

A pious person that I will not designate otherwise found, it appears, according to the latest news, anyway news three months old, at least it was an unsustainable wager for her to ground transference on *the subject supposed to know*, because moreover the method implies that it is sustained by a total absence of prejudice as regards a case. *The subject supposed to know* what, then? I would allow myself to ask this person, if the psychoanalyst should be supposed to know what he is doing, and if he effectively does it? Starting from there, starting from there one will understand that I pose my questions on transference in a certain way, in *The direction of the treatment* for example, which is a text to which I see with pleasure in my school (63) something new is happening. The fact is that in my school people are starting to work as a school, this is all the same a step that is new enough to be noted. I was able to note not without pleasure that people had seen that in this text, I do not in any way settle what is involved in transference. It is very precisely by saying *the subject supposed to know*, as I define it, that the question is...remains untouched as to whether the analyst can be supposed to know what he is doing.

To take it up in a way at the start, the start of what today is going to be stated, and for which this little Chinese character because this is one, it is one of them, I greatly regret that the chalk did not allow me to put in the accents that the brush would allow, it is one of them which has a meaning, to satisfy the requirement of the logical positivists, a meaning which you are going to see is completely ambiguous because it means at the same time *twisted (retors)* that it also means *personal* in the sense of private. And then there are still other ones. But what appears remarkable to me, is its written form, and its written form is going to allow me to tell you immediately where there are placed the terms around which my discourse today is going to turn.

If we place here somewhere (1) what I am calling in the broadest sense – you are going to see that it is broad...I should say that I have no need, it seems to me, to underline it – the effects of language, it is here (2) that we will have to put what is involved, where they find their source. Where they find their source, is in the fact that analytic discourse reveals something which, which is a step, I tried to recall it, even though what is at stake for analysis is primary truth. It is with this that I am going to begin right away. We would have here then (3) the fact of writing.

(64) It is very important at our epoch, and starting from certain statements that have been made and that tend to establish very regrettable confusions, to recall that all the same writing is not the first step but the second with respect to a whole function of language, and that nevertheless without writing, it is in no way possible to come back and question what results in the first place from the effect of

language as such, in other words the symbolic order, namely the dimension, to please you, but you know that I introduced the term of *demansion* the *demansion*, the residence, the locus of the Other of truth. I know that this *demansion* raised a question for some people, echoes have come back to me, well then, if *demansion* is in effect a term, a new term that I fabricated and if it still has no meaning, well then, that means that it is up to you to give it one. To question the *demansion* of the truth, of the truth in its dwelling place, is something, here is the term, the novelty of what I am introducing today, which can only be done by writing, and by writing in so far as it is only from writing that logic is established. This is what I am introducing at this point of my discourse this year. There is no logical question unless it starts from writing, in so far as writing is precisely not language. And this is why I stated that there is no meta-language, that writing itself in so far as it is distinguished from language is there to show us that, if it is from writing that language is questioned, it is precisely in so far as writing is not it, but that it only constructs itself, only fabricates itself from its reference to language.

After having posited this which has the advantage of opening up to you my perspective, my project, I start again from something which concerns this point, this point which is of the order of this surprise to which there is signalled the effect of retrogression by which I have tried to define the junction between truth and knowledge, and that I stated in these terms that there is no sexual relationship in the speaking being. There was a first condition which could have immediately allowed us to see it, which is that the sexual relationship, like every other relationship when all is said and done, only subsists from the written. What is essential in the relationship, is an application, a applied onto b ($a \rightarrow b$), and if you do not write this a and b , you do not sustain the relationship as such. This does not mean that things are not happening in the real. But by what right would you call it a relationship? Something as crude as that would be already enough, let us say, to make it conceivable, that there is no

sexual relationship, but it would in no way settle the fact that one cannot manage to write it. I would even say more, there is something that has been done for some time, which is to write it like this: ♂ ♀, (65) using little planetary signs, namely, the relationship of what is male to what is female. I would even say that for some time, thanks to the progress that the use of the microscope allows, because let us not forget that before Swammerdam, one could have no kind of idea of it, this...may seem to articulate the fact that the relationship, however complex it may be, however meiotic the process may be by which cells described as gonadic give a model of fecundation from which proceeds reproduction, well then, it seems that in effect something is founded, established there, that allows there to be situated at a certain level described as biological what is involved in the sexual relationship. The strange thing assuredly – and after all, good God, not all that much so, but I would like to evoke for you the dimension of strangeness of the thing – is that the duality and the sufficiency of this relationship have from all time had their model, I evoked it for you the last time in connection with little Chinese signs, they are those whose signs, all of a sudden I became impatient to show you, this seemed to be done simply to startle you, well then, the *yin* that I did not make for you the last time here it is – and the *yang*, here it is. I am repeating myself am I not, right! Another little feature here. The *yin* and the *yang*, the male and female principles, are things which after all are not special to the Chinese tradition. This is something that you will find in every kind of cogitation about the relationships of action and passion, about the formal and the substantial, about Purusha, the spirit, and Prakriti some feminised matter or other. The general model of this relationship of the male to the female is indeed what has always haunted for all time the mapping out, the mapping out of the speaking being as regards the forces of the world, those which are *t'ien hsia*, under the heavens.

It would be well to mark something completely new, what I called the effect of surprise, to understand what has emerged, whatever it

may be worth, from analytic discourse. It is that it is untenable to (66) remain in any way with this duality as sufficient, the fact is that the function described as the phallus, which is to tell the truth very awkwardly handled, but which is there, which functions in what is involved, not simply in an experience, linked to something or other that would be considered as deviant, as pathological, but which is essential as such for the establishment of analytic discourse. This function of the phallus renders henceforth untenable this sexual bipolarity, and untenable in a way that literally makes vanish into thin air anything involved about what can be written about this relationship.

It is necessary to distinguish what is involved in this intrusion of the phallus, from what some people thought they could express by the term of “lack of signifier”. It is not the lack of signifier that is at stake, but the obstacle raised to a relationship. The phallus, by emphasising an organ, does not designate, does not in any way designate the organ described as the penis with its physiology, nor even the function that one may, faith, attribute to it with some verisimilitude, as being that of copulation. It aims in the least ambiguous way, if one refers to analytic texts, at its relationship to enjoyment. And this is how they distinguish it from the physiological function. There is, this is what is posited as constituting the function of the phallus, there is an enjoyment which constitutes in this relationship, different from the sexual relationship, what, what we will call its condition of truth. The angle from which the organ is taken which, with respect to what is involved for the totality of living beings, is in no way linked to this particular form; if you knew the variety of organs of copulation that exist in insects, you could, which is after all the source of what is still wearing well, namely, astonishment, to question the real, you could certainly, in effect, be astonished that it is like that in particular that it functions in vertebrates. What is at stake here is the organ in so far – I have to go quickly here, because I am not after all going to go on forever and

take up everything again, people can consult the text that I spoke about earlier, *The direction of the treatment and the principles of its power* – the phallus is the organ in so far as it *is*, it is being that is at stake, in so far as it *is* ...feminine enjoyment. This is where and in what there resides the incompatibility of being and having. In this text, this is repeated with a certain insistence, and putting into it certain emphases of style, which I repeat are just as important to make one's way as the graphs at which they culminate. And behold, I had in front of me, like that, at the famous Congrès de Royaumont, some people who laughed derisively, if everything is there, if it is a matter of being and having, that did not seem to them to have any great importance, being and having. One makes one's choice, huh! (67) This is nevertheless what is called castration.

What I am proposing is the following, it is to posit that we will put language here (1), in its reserved field in this gap of the sexual relationship, as the phallus leaves it open, by positing that what it introduces here, is not, not two terms that are defined as male and female, but this choice between these terms of a quite different nature and function that are called being and having. What proves, what supports, what renders this distance absolutely obvious, definitive, is the following, something whose difference it does not seem people have noticed, is the substitution for the sexual relationship of what is called *sexual law*. It is here that there is this distance in which it is inscribed that there is nothing in common between what can be stated as a relationship which lays down the law in so far as it derives, in some form or other, from the application that a mathematical function circumscribes most closely, and a law that is coherent to the whole register of what is called desire, of what is called prohibition, of what underlines that it is from the very gap of the inscribed prohibition that there derives the conjunction, indeed the identity, as I dared state, of this desire and of this law, and what is posited correlatively for everything that derives from the effect of language, from everything that establishes the *demansion* of the truth from a structure of fiction.

The correlation that has always been made between ritual and myth, whose ridiculous weakness is to say that myth is supposed to be simply a commentary on the ritual, what is done to sustain it, to explain it, while it is, in accordance with a topology that I have already for long enough given a destiny not to have to recall it, ritual and myth are like the front and the back (*l'endroit et l'envers*), on condition that this front and this back are in continuity. The maintaining, the maintaining in analytic discourse of this residual myth that is called the Oedipus complex, God knows why, which is in fact that of *Totem and taboo*, in which there is inscribed this myth that is entirely invented by Freud, of the primordial father in so far as he enjoys all the women, it is all the same here that we ought to question a little further from the point of view of logic and of writing, what it means.

It is a long time since I introduced here the schema of Peirce about propositions in so far as they are divided into four, universal, particular, affirmative and negative, the two terms, the two couples of terms interchanging. Everyone knows that to say that: *every x is y*, if the schema of Peirce, Charles Sanders, has an interest, it is to show, it is to define as necessary that *every something* is provided with such an attribute, is a perfectly acceptable universal position without there being for all that any *x*. In Peirce's little formula, little schema, I remind you, here we have a certain number of vertical strokes, here we have none, here we have a little mixture of the two, and that it is from the overlapping of two of these boxes that there results the specificity of one or other of these propositions. And that it is by bringing together these two quadrants that one can say: every stroke is vertical. There is no stroke if it is not vertical. To give the negative, it is these two that must be brought together. Either there is no stroke, or there are none that are vertical. What the myth of the enjoyment of *all the women* designates, is that there are not *all the women*. There is no universal of the woman. Here is what is posed

by a questioning of the phallus, and not of sexual relationship, as regards what is involved in the enjoyment it constitutes, because I said that it was feminine enjoyment.

It is starting from these statements that a certain number of questions can be radically displaced. After all, but it is possible that there is a knowledge of the enjoyment that is called sexual which is attributable to this *particular woman*. This is not unthinkable, there are like that, mythical traces of it in certain corners. The things called *Tantra*, it is said that this is practised. It is all the same clear that for a good while, if you will allow me to express my thinking in this way, the skill of female flute players is much more open to view. It is not to ... play with obscenity that I am putting forward that at this point. The fact is, there is here, and I suppose there is at least one person who knows what it is to play the flute, it is the person who recently, pointed out to me in connection with this flute playing, but one can (69) say it also with respect to any use of an instrument, what division from the body the use of an instrument, whatever it may be, makes necessary. I mean a breakdown of synergy. It is enough to play any instrument whatsoever. Get onto a pair of skis, and you will see immediately that your synergies have to be broken. Take up a golf club, I do this from time to time, I started again, it's the same thing, huh? There are two types of movement that you have to make at the same time, at the beginning you will absolutely not succeed in doing it, because synergetically, it is not arranged like that. The person who reminded me about the thing in connection with the flute, also pointed out to me that for singing, where in appearance there is no instrument, this is why singing is particularly interesting, it is because here too you have to divide your body, that you divide two things which are quite distinct, in order to be able to sing, but which usually are absolutely synergetic, namely, the placing of the voice and breathing. Good! These primary truths which I did not need to be reminded of, because moreover I told you that I had my last experience of it with a golf club, this is what leaves open, as a

question, whether there is still somewhere a knowledge of the instrument phallus.

Only the phallus instrument is not an instrument like the others, it is like singing, the phallus instrument, I already told you that it is not at all to be confused with the penis. The penis, for its part, is regulated by law, namely, by desire, namely, by surplus enjoying, namely, by the cause of desire, namely, by phantasy. And this, the supposed knowledge of the woman who is supposed to know encounters a problem (*un os*) precisely the one that the organ is lacking, if you will allow me to continue in the same vein. Because in certain animals there is one of bone. Yes! Here there is a lack, it is a missing bone, it is not the phallus, it is desire or its functioning. The result is that a woman has the testimony of her insertion into the law, of what supplies for the relationship, only through the desire of the man. Here it is enough to have a tiny little bit of analytic experience to be certain of it, the desire of the man, as I have just said, is linked to its cause, which is surplus enjoying, or again as I put it on several occasions, if it has its source in the field of...from which everything starts, the effect of language, in the desire then of the Other, and the woman, on this occasion, one sees that it is she who is the Other. Only she is the Other from a completely different source, from a completely different register than her knowledge, whatever it may be.

(70) Here then the phallic instrument is posited, with inverted commas, as “cause” of language, I did not say the origin. And here, despite the late hour, good God, I will go quickly, I will point out the trace that one can have of it, namely, the maintaining, whatever you may wish, of a prohibition on obscene words. And because I know that there are people who are waiting for this something that I promised them, to make an allusion to Eden, Eden, Eden, ah! And to say why I do not sign, what are they called, these things, these petitions, in this connection, the fact is, it is certainly not because my esteem for this attempt is lukewarm. In its way, it is comparable to

my *Ecrits*. Except that it is much more despairing; it is completely hopeless to language the phallic instrument. And it is because I consider it as being hopeless at this point that I also think that nothing but misunderstandings can develop around such an attempt. You see that my rejection is placed at a highly theoretical point on this occasion.

What I want to get to is this: from where does one question the truth? Because the truth can say whatever it wants. It is the oracle. That has always existed, and after that, we can only do the best we can. Only there is a new fact, huh? The first new fact ever since the oracle has been functioning, namely, from all time. The new event is one of my writings called *The Freudian thing* where I indicated something that no one had ever said, huh? Only since it is written, naturally you have not heard it. I said that “the truth speaks I, *la vérité parle Je*.” If you had given its weight to this kind of polemical luxuriance that I carried out to present the truth as that, I no longer even know what I wrote, like coming into a room to the sound of a shattering mirror, that would perhaps have opened your ears. This sound of breaking mirrors does not strike you in something written. It is nevertheless rather well written, this is what is called an effect of style. This would certainly have helped you to understand what is meant by “the truth speaks I”.

That means that you can say thou to it and I am going to explain what use that is to you. You are going to think of course that I am going to tell you that it can be used for a dialogue. It is a long time now since I said that there was no dialogue. And with the truth, naturally, still less. Nevertheless, if you read something *La Métamathématique* by Lorenzen, I brought it along, it is published by Gauthier-Villars et Mouton. Good! And then I am even going to indicate the page where you will see some very clever things. They are dialogues, they (71) are written dialogues, namely, that it is the same person who writes the two rejoinders. It is a quite particular dialogue, only it is

very instructive. Look at page 22. It is very instructive and I could translate it in more ways than one, including making use of my earlier being and having. But I will tackle things more simply in order to recall to you something that I already emphasised, namely, that none of the so-called paradoxes that classical logic dwells on, specifically the one of *I am lying*, hold up except from the moment they are written. It is quite clear that to say *I am lying* is something that creates no obstacle, because we do nothing but that, so then why would it not be said? What can that mean? That it is only when it is written that here there is a paradox, because people say: “Well here, either you are lying or you are telling the truth?” It is exactly the same thing that I pointed out to you at one time, as to write: “The smallest number that can be written in more than 15 words”. You see no obstacle to it when you say it. If it is written, you count them, you see that there are only 13 of them, in what I have just said. But that is only counted when it is written. Because if it is written in Japanese, I would defy you to count them. Because here you ask yourself the question all the same, there are little bits of wailing like that, little *o*’s and little *oua*’s, about which you ask whether they must be stuck to the word, or whether they must be detached and counted as a word, it is not even a word, it is eh, it is like that. Only when it is written, it is countable.

So then the truth, you will notice that exactly as in the metamathematics of Lorenzen, if you posit that one cannot at the same time say *yes* and *no* on the same point, there you win. You will see later what you win. But if you bet that it is either *yes* or *no*, there you lose. Consult Lorenzen, but I am going to illustrate it immediately. I posit: it is not true, I say to the truth, that you are telling the truth and that you are lying at the same time. The truth can answer many things. Because it is you who make it answer, it costs you nothing. In any case, this is going to culminate at the same result, but I will detail it for you to remain close to Lorenzen. She says: “I am telling the truth!”; you answer her: “I am not making

you tell it!”. So then to piss you off, she says to you: “I am lying.” To which you reply: “Now I have won, I know that you are contradicting yourself!” It is exactly what you discover with the unconscious, it is no more important. That the unconscious always tells the truth and that it lies, is, from its point of view, perfectly (72) sustainable. It is simply up to you to know it. What does that teach you? That you do not know something about the truth until it is unleashed; because it is unleashed, it has broken your leash, it has told you the two things, moreover, when you said that the conjunction was not sustainable.

But suppose on the contrary, that you had said to her: “Either you are telling the truth, or you are lying”. Well in this case you have had all your trouble for nothing. Because what is she going to answer you: “I grant it to you, I put myself in chains; you tell me: either you are telling the truth or you are lying and in effect that is quite true.” Only in that case then, you for your part know nothing. You know nothing about what she has told you, since either she tells the truth or she lies, so that you lose out. I do not know whether you see the relevance of this, but it means something that we have constant experience of, which is that if the truth refuses itself, in that case it is of some use to me. This is what we have to deal with all the time in analysis and that, that she gives up, that she accepts the chain, whatever it may be, well then, it’s all Greek to me. In other words that...that leaves me desiring. That leaves me desiring and that leaves me my position of demanding, since I am wrong to think that I can only deal with the truth that I can only recognise when it is unchained, showing you in what un-chaining you are participating.

There is something that deserves to be highlighted in this relationship, it is the function of this something that for a long time I have been putting like that on the mat, and which is called freedom. It happens that through the phantasy, there are people who lucubrate about certain ways in which if not the truth itself, at least the phallus

could be tamed. I am not going to tell you about all the variety of details in which these lucubrations can be laid out. But there is one striking thing. It is that, apart from a certain kind of lack of seriousness which is perhaps the most solid way to define perversion, well then these elegant solutions, it is clear that the people for whom that ... it is serious, this whole little affair, because good God, language counts for them and so does writing, if only because it allows for a logical questioning, because when all is said and done, what is logic if not this absolutely fabulous paradox that only allows writing to take the truth as a referent? It is obviously through this that one communes, when one begins by giving the first, the very first formulae of propositional logic, one takes as a reference that there are propositions that can be marked as True and others that can be marked as False. It is with this that there begins the reference to (73) truth. To refer oneself to the truth, is to posit an absolute false, namely, a false to which one could refer oneself as such.

Serious people, I take up again what I am in the process of saying, to whom there are proposed these elegant solutions which might bring about the taming of the phallus, you know it is very curious, it is they who reject them. And why, if not to preserve what they call liberty, in so far as it is precisely identical to this non-existence of the sexual relationship. Because after all, do we need to point out that this relationship of man and woman, in so far as it is radically falsified by the law, the law described as sexual, is all the same something that leaves it to be desired that each man has his woman (*qu'à chacun il y ait sa chacune*) to respond to it. If this happens what can we say? Certainly not that this is something natural, because in this respect there is no nature, since The woman does not exist – that she exists is the dream of a woman, and it is the dream from which Don Juan emerged, if there were A man for whom The woman existed, it would be marvellous, one would be sure of one's desire. It is a feminine lucubration. For a man to find *his* woman, what else if not the romantic formula: it was destined, it was written.

Once again, we have come to this crossroads at which I told you I would tip over what is involved in the true lord, this chap who is translated, very badly, faith, by man, like that a little bit above the common, it is this see-saw, between the *hsing*, this nature as it is inscribed by the effect of language, inscribed in this disjunction between a man and a woman. And on the other hand this: “it is written”, this *ming*, this other character, whose shape I already once showed you here, which is the one before which freedom retreats.

Seminar 5: Wednesday 10 March 1971

Lacan writes on the board:

“*L’achose*”

Am I, am I present when I am speaking to you? It is necessary that the thing I am addressing you about should be there. Now, it is enough to say that the thing (*la chose*) can only be written as *l’achose* as I have just written it on the board, which means that it is absent there where it holds its place. Or more exactly, that the **o**-object which holds that place, when it is removed – when this **o**-object is removed – only leaves, in this place, only leaves the sexual act as I emphasise it, namely, castration. I cannot bear witness from there, if you will allow me, that *la-na-lyse* is anything whatsoever, but only by this, what concerns it (*la*) I am saying concerns it, *la*, castration. Make no mistake: Oh-la-la! The philosophical patter which is not nothing – patters, churns, it does no harm – was of some use for a

long time, but for some time it wearies us. It ended up with producing a *being-there*, that is sometimes translated more modestly in French as *presence*, whether or not one adds living to it, anyway, what for the learned is called *Dasein*. I rediscovered with pleasure, in a text, I will tell you which one later, and so that the moment that I reread it, a text of my own, I noticed with surprise that it goes back a long way, this formula that I had stated at one time for people, like that, a little hard of hearing: “Eat your *Dasein*.” What matter! We will come back to it later. The philosophical patter is not so incoherent. It only incarnates this presence, the ‘being there’, in a discourse that begins (80) precisely by disincarnating through an *epoché*. You know that, the *epoché*, putting in brackets, that is simply what it means, it is all the same better, because it does not have quite the same structure, it is all the same better in Greek. So that...it is obvious that the only way to be there takes place by putting oneself in brackets. We are approaching what I have essentially to tell you today.

If there is a hole at the level of *l'achose*, this allows you already to have a presentiment that it was a way of representing this hole, that this only happens in the shape of what? Let us take a quite derisory comparison, in the shape of this retinal stain that the eye has not the slightest desire to become entangled with, when after it has fixed the sun, first of all, it looks around the landscape. It does not see in it its being-there, this eye is no fool. There are for all of you a whole lot of Klein bottles...of the eye [*Klein d'oeil = clin d'oeil*, a wink?] There is no philosophical patter, which does not, as you clearly see, fulfil here its university office, whose limits I tried to give you last year, at the same time moreover as the limits of what you can do from inside, even if it is revolution.

To denounce, as has been done, to denounce as logocentric the aforesaid presence, the idea as they say of the inspired word, in the name of the fact that the inspired word, of course one could laugh at it, to make the word responsible for all the kinds of foolishness into

which a certain discourse has strayed and to lead us towards a mythical archi-writing, uniquely constituted in short from what is perceived, quite correctly, as a certain blind point, that one can expose in everything that has been cogitated about writing, all of this scarcely marks an advance. One only ever speaks about something else in speaking about *l'achose*. What I said, for my part, at one time, one should not be exaggerated. I am not always talking about the full word and I think all the same that the great majority of you have never heard me in any way taking it into account. What I said about the full word, is that it fills (*elle remplit*). This is one of the lucky finds of language; they are always rather pretty, it fulfils (*remplit*) the function of *l'achose* which is on the board. The word, in other words, goes beyond the speaker, always, the speaker is someone spoken, this is all the same what I have been stating for some time. How can this be seen? This is what I would like to indicate in this year's seminar. Can you imagine, I am still at ... "I would like". After the 20 years that this has been going on.

Naturally, that is how things are because, after all, I did not say it, it has been clear for a long time, it has been clear first of all by the fact that you are there for me to show it to you, only there you are, if what (81) I am saying is true, your being there is no more convincing than my own. What I have been showing (*montrer*) you for some time is not sufficient for you to see it, I have *to prove* (*démontrer*) it to you. To prove on this occasion, is to say what I was showing, naturally not just anything, but I did not show you *l'achose*, like that, *l'achose* precisely cannot be shown, it is proved. So then I will draw your attention to the things that I showed, in so far as you have not seen them, so that they can be proved. To play the card that is at stake today, we will call it, with all the ambiguity that it may represent, writing (*l'écrit*).

Writing all the same, you cannot say that I have overburdened you with it. I mean that there really had to be extracted from me those

that I collected one fine day, because of my total incapacity to make myself understood by psychoanalysts, I mean even those who remained tied in, like that, because they were not able to get on board elsewhere. Finally, it appeared to me that there were so many other people than they who for their part were interested in what I was saying, a little beginning of an absent being-there, that I let these *Ecrits* out. And then, faith, they were consumed like that, in a much larger circle than, in short, you represent, if I am to believe the figures that my editor gives me. It is a funny phenomenon that is worthwhile dwelling on, if indeed, to stick with what I always do. It is very exactly in terms of an experience that can be clearly fixed and that in any case I strove to articulate, specifically in recent times, last year, in trying to situate in its structure what characterises the discourse of the analyst. It is then by reason of this use of mine - which has no pretension to providing a conception of the world, but simply of saying what it seems self-evident to me to be able to say to analysts - about this, I gave for 10 years, in a rather well known place that is called Sainte-Anne, a discourse that did not claim certainly in any way to use writing otherwise than in a very precise way, which is the one that I am going to try to define today. Those who constitute, or who remain as witnesses of this epoch cannot protest against it, there are all the same not many in this room, of course, but all the same some. Anyway they could be counted on the fingers of one hand, those who were there the first months, can bear witness that what I did, with patience, tact, sweetness, bowing and scraping, I (81) constructed for them bit by bit, and fragment by fragment, things that are called *graphs*. There are some of them still sailing on, you can find them very easily thanks to the work of someone whose devotion I pay homage to, and whom I allowed to make, just as he wished, a reasoned index, in the text of which you can easily find the pages on which these graphs are to be found. That will avoid you having to search. But it can be seen, by simply doing that, one can already note that there are things which are not like the rest of the printed text. These graphs that you see here do not fail, of course, to

set a little difficulty of what? Of interpretation, of course. You should know that for whom I constructed them, were not able to win even a single trick. Before putting forward the direction of a line, its crossing with a particular other, the indication of the little letter that I put at this crossing point, I spoke for a half an hour, three quarters of an hour, to justify what was at stake.

I insist, of course, not to make a merit out of what I did, fundamentally I liked doing it, no one asked me to do it, it was rather the contrary. But because we are entering here, with that, into the heart of what is involved in *l'écrit*, indeed even *l'écriture*, so now imagine it is the same thing, people speak about *l'écriture*, like that, as if it were independent of *l'écrit*. This is what sometimes greatly embarrasses discourse. Moreover this term, “*ure*”, like that, that is added on, allows you to clearly sense the funny sort of drunkenness (*biture*) that is involved on this occasion. What is certain, is that to speak about *l'achose*, as it is here, well then, that ought already, just by itself, enlighten you that I had to take, let us say no more, as apparatus, the support of writing (*l'écrit*) in the form of the graph.

It is worthwhile looking at the shape of the graph. Let us take here – I don't know - any one of them, the last one, here, the big one that you are going to find, I no longer know myself where it is, where it can be found, I think it is in *Subversion of the subject and dialectic of desire*. It is a thing that looks like that, in which there are here letters added in brackets, \$ ◇ D of demand, and here is the S of the signifier, the signifier bearer of the function of O barred, Ø. You clearly understand that if writing can be of some use, it is precisely because it is different to the word. Who can take support on the word. The word cannot express S(Ø) for example. Only if it is based on that, even if it were only this shape, of course, it ought to remember that this shape does not work without there being here the other line (83) cutting the first, marked at these points of intersection of s(O) and of O itself. That there is here a capital I – I apologise for these

infringements, but after all some people have this figure enough in their heads for this to be enough for them and for the others, good God, let them consult the proper page – what is certain, is that one cannot but, at least through this, through this figure, feel oneself, let us say, called on to answer the requirement of what it commands, when you begin to interpret it. Everything depends, of course, on the sense that you are going to give to capital O. There was one proposed in the writing where I happened to insert it. And then the sense that is imposed for all the others is not all that free.

What is certain, is that what is proper to what anyway, I think, is certainly sufficiently specified for you since. Namely, that this graph, this one like all the others, and not simply mine, I will tell you that in a moment, that this graph, what it represents, is what is called, in the evolved language that has been given to us little by little by the questioning of mathematics by logic, is what is called a topology. There is no topology without writing. You have even perhaps been able to notice, if ever you really opened the *Analytics* of Mr Aristotle, that in it there is a little beginning of topology which consists precisely in making holes in what is written. “All animals are mortal”. You say “animals” and you say “mortal” and you put in their place, the high point of writing, namely, a quite simple letter. So it is perhaps true, huh, that this was facilitated for them by some particular affinity or other that they had with the letter, one cannot really say how. On this you can consult things that are very...very attractive, as Mr James Février said, about some artifice, fakery, forcing, involved in the invention of logic with regard to what can rather sanely be called the norms of writing – *les normes*, not *l'énorme*, even though both are true. I am suggesting in passing to you today that this has something to do with, let us say, the fact of Euclid.

There you are, because I can only throw that out in passing, since after all it has to be checked out. I do not see why I also, why from

time to time, I would not give, even to people very experienced in a certain area, a little suggestion that they will perhaps laugh at because they have noticed it a long time ago. I do not see why in effect they would not have noticed, they would not have noticed the fact that a triangle, because this is the start, that a triangle, is nothing other than, nothing else than a writing (*écriture*) or an *écrit*, precisely. And that the fact that you define *equal* in it as *metrically superimposable* that goes against it. It is a writing, where the metrically superimposable can be talked about. This does absolutely not depend on the separation, it depends on you the talker. No matter how you write the triangle, even if you do it like that, you will demonstrate the history of the isosceles triangle, namely, that if there are two equal sides, the two other angles are equal. It is enough for you to have made this little writing, because it is never much better than the way in which I have just written it, the figure of an isosceles triangle. They were people who had gifts for writing, huh! That does not take them very far!

One could perhaps go a little bit further. For the moment let us record, let us record the following in any case, which is that they very clearly perceived what a postulate was, and that this has no other definition than the following, which is that...in the demand, in the demand that one makes to the listener, in order not to say right away a hook (*crochet*), in this demand, this is what *is not required* of discourse, by the simple fact of the graph.

The Greeks seem then to have possessed a very clever handling, a subtle reduction of what already existed in the world under the species of writing. It was extremely useful. It is quite clear that there is no question of empire, if you will allow me the word, even the slightest empiricism, without the support of writing. If you will allow me here, an extrapolation with respect to the line that I am going along, I mean that, I am going to indicate the horizon, the distant perspective that guides all of this. Naturally, this is only

justified if the lines of perspective prove effectively to converge.
(85) What follows will show it to you. At the beginning, *en arché*, huh, as they say, which has nothing to do with any temporality whatsoever, because what flows from it is, in the beginning was the word. But the word, there is a good chance that during times that were still not centuries, imagine, they are only centuries for us, thanks to radioactive carbon and some other retroactive affairs of this kind, which start from writing, anyway throughout a whole part of something that one can call, not time – *l'aion*, *l'aion* of *aion* as they say - there was a time when people had great fun with things like that. They had their reasons, they were closer than us. Anyway the word made things. Things that were certainly less and less discernible from it, because they were its effects.

What is meant by writing? It is necessary all the same to circumscribe it a little. It is quite clear and certain when one sees what it is usual to call writing, that it is something that in a way rebounds on the word. About the dwelling place of the word, we have I think, said enough the last few times, to see that our discovery is, at the very least, closely articulated with the fact that there is no sexual relationship, as I defined it. Or if you wish, that the sexual relationship, is the word itself. You must admit that all the same, that leaves something to be desired, moreover, I think that you know something about it.

The fact that there is no sexual relationship, I already fixed under this form that there is not for the relation any way at present of writing it. Who knows, there are people who dream that one day this will be written; why not, huh? The progress of biology, M. Jacob is all the same there, huh? Perhaps one day, there will be no longer the slightest question about the sperm and the ovum, they are made for one another, it will be written, as they say, it is on this that I ended the lecture the last time. When that happens you will tell me about it,

won't you? One could make science fiction, huh? Try it, it is difficult to write. Why not, that is how we push things forward.

Whatever about the present, this is what I mean, the fact is that this cannot be written without bringing into play something a little funny - because precisely, one knows nothing about its sex - which is called the phallus. If everything one manages to write – I thank the person who told me the page where in my *Ecrits* there is what is involved in the desire of man, written as (\bullet) , is the signifier phallus, this for people who believe that the phallus is the lack of the signifier, I know (86) that that is debated in the cafes. There you are, and the desire of the woman....I don't give a damn about the *Ecrits*, huh? The desire of the woman is written \emptyset (), which is the phallus where people imagine it is, the little wee-wee.

Here is something that we are able to write better after, good God, something that we will simply call, like that, the fact of having arrived at, at a certain scientific moment. A scientific moment, is characterised by a certain number of written co-ordinates in the first rank of which is the formula that Mr Newton wrote, concerning what was at stake under the name of the gravitational field, which is simply a pure writing. No one has yet managed to give any substantial support, a shadow of verisimilitude to what this writing states, which seems up to the present a little hard, because people cannot manage to resorb it into the schema of other fields where, like that, people have more substantial ideas. The electromagnetic field gives you an image, huh? Magnetism, is always a little bit animal; the gravitational field for its part is not. It is a funny contraption. When I think of these gentlemen and soon these ladies and gentlemen who stroll around in this absolutely sublime place, which is certainly one of the incarnations of the sexual object, the moon, when I think that they go there simply carried by a writing, there is much to hope for. Even in the field where it might be of use to us, namely, desire.

Anyway, it is not for tomorrow, huh! Despite psychoanalysis it is not for tomorrow or the day after.

Here then is writing in so far as it is something one can speak about. How? There is something that surprises me, even though it comes from the pen of a very special book that has been published by Armand Colin, anyway it is something that is very easy to find, it is in I don't know what number of the *Congrès de Synthèse*, and it is called, quite simply and nicely, *L'écriture*. It is a series of reports that begins with one by Métraux, this dear and now dead Métraux who was an excellent and really clever man. It begins with something by Métraux where he talks a lot about the writing of Easter Island. Anyway it is delightful. He starts simply from the fact that he, for his part, really understood absolutely nothing about it, but that there are some other people who succeeded a little better, that naturally it is debatable but anyway that his efforts, which obviously were absolutely unsuccessful, are here what authorise people to speak in effect about what the others were able to get from it with a questionable success. It is a quite marvellous introduction and well (87) designed to make you feel very modest, after which, innumerable papers deal with each of these writings. And after all, good God, it is rather sensible. It is rather sensible, anyway, it did not immediately happen, and we are going to see why it did not happen immediately that people started to say sensible things about writing. There was surely required, during this time, serious effects of intimidation, those which resulted from this blessed adventure that we call science, and none of us in this room, me included, of course, can have the slightest idea of what is going to come of it. Good, anyway let's leave it. People are going to get worked up a little bit like they do about pollution, about the future, a certain number of stupidities like that. And science plays its little tricks, and it would be no harm to see, for example, what its relationship with writing is, that may be of some use.

In any case, to read this large collection which is already a good ten years old, on writing, is something, compared to what is produced in linguistics, something fresh, you can breathe in it. It is not absolutely stupid. It is even very salubrious. There is even no question, when you come out of it, of you thinking that the business of writing only consists in something which seems to be nothing, but since it is written everywhere and no one reads it, it is all the same worth saying, that writing is the representation of words. That ought all the same mean something to you, *Wortvorstellung*. Freud wrote that, and he said that – but naturally everyone giggles, and people see clearly that Freud does not agree with Lacan – it is the secondary process. It is annoying all the same that, like that, in the circulation perhaps of your thoughts, of course you have thoughts, you even have, some of you who are a little bit backward, knowledge (*connaissances*). So then you imagine that you represent words for yourselves...it's hilarious! Because let's be serious! The representation of words, is writing.

And from this thing that is as simple as 'good day', it seems that people have not drawn the consequences which are nevertheless visible there, which is that every tongue that uses something that can be taken as figures, and that are called something or other, pictograms, ideograms, it is unbelievable, this ended up with absolutely mad consequences. There are people who imagined that with logic, namely the manipulation of writing, one would find the means for what? "New ideas", *de nouvelles idées*. As if we didn't have enough of them already. Whatever it may be, this pictogram, (88) this ideogram, if we study a writing, it is only because of this, there is no exception, it is because of the fact because it seems to represent, it is *pronounced* like that. Because of the fact that it seems to represent your mammy with two teats, it is pronounced *wu*. And after that, you can make whatever you want of it. Everything that is then pronounced *wu*, what the hell does it matter, whether there are two teats and that it represents your mammy? There is someone

called, I no longer know what, Fu-hsien, that does not date from today or yesterday, you understand, you will find that more or less at the beginning of the Christian era, it is called the *Chouo-wen*, namely, precisely, *what is said qua written*. Because *wen*, is 'written', huh? There you are, try to write it all the same, because for the Chinese it is the sign of civilisation. And what is more it is true. So then, representation of a word, means something, it means that the word is already there before you make the written representation of it, with everything that it involves. What it involves, is that the gentleman from *Chouo-wen* had already discovered, at the beginning of our era, that one of the most essential sources of writing, is what is called, what he believes he has to call, because he still has prejudices the little darling, he imagines that there are written signs that resemble the thing that the word designates. I need room to write that, for example. That's it isn't it? What is it? It's a man. Ah! the people who knew that! They have been taught things! It is obvious that this for you is a man. What is represented? What I mean is how is it the image of a man? There is the head and the legs. I completely agree! And why not? There are dreamers. For my part what I see there is rather an inner leg...why not?

There is something funny, huh? The fact is all the same that we have signs since the *yin*. The *yin*, there is some little time, huh, this has lasted at least 2000 years, but before? And we still have these signs. (89) Which proves that all the same they knew something about writing. They are found on tortoise shells, there were people, fortune-tellers, people like us, who scribbled that, like that, alongside other things that were put on the tortoise shell, in order to give a commentary on it in writing. This probably created a greater effect than you believe. Anyway what matter. But there is something in effect that vaguely resembles – I do not know why I am telling you this, I am telling you this because I am letting myself be drawn along, I still have things to tell you, I am allowing myself to be drawn along all the same; anyway, too bad! It's done. Good – so then there is

something that you see like that, that is good enough, right? Ah, it's pretty! Good, we will follow it because as you know writing, does not let go from one day to the next, if you are depending on the audio-visual, you can stick around, right! You will still have writing for a while because I tell you that it is the support of science, science is going to abandon its support like that. It is all the same in these little scribblings that your fate is going to be played out, just as at the time of the *yin*, the little scribblings that these guys did in their little corners, guys like me, and there are a lot of them. So then you follow me, you follow me epoch by epoch, you go down to the Tchou, to the Tchou, right, and after that, you have the Tsin, right, the epoch when they burned the books. He was someone. He had the books burned. This Tsin had understood things, he was an emperor, it did not last twenty years. Right away writing started up again, and all the more painstakingly, anyway I will spare you the different forms of Chinese writing because the essential relationship of the writing with what was used to inscribe it, the quill, is absolutely superb. Anyway, I do not want to anticipate what this gives us as regards the value of the instrument, the quill. Well, you follow that, right, and then after a while, what do you find? You do not find at all what you are expecting, the dear little darling, here, which is called the *jen*. I am pronouncing it right or I am pronouncing it wrong, in any case I did not put in the tone, I apologise if there is a Chinese here, they are very sensitive to that, the tone, this is even what proves the...one of the ways of proving the primacy of the word, it is that in the four contemporary present ways, huh, this does not mean that in the Chinese world, the four usual ways of saying – precisely, this comes (90) at the right moment – of saying *i*, well that means four things at once, and which are not at all unrelated. Anyway I am going to let myself be carried along, perhaps I will tell you, I will often take it into account, when I have carefully practised the four pronunciations of *yi*, there is *i*, *i*, there is *i*, there you are. And this has not at all the same meaning, but I have learned from a very learned man that this has its place in linguistic consciousness. I mean that the tone itself,

and that is why it is necessary to look at this more than once, before talking about arbitrariness, that the tone itself – can you hear me, Jenny? – that the tone itself has for them an indicative substantial value, and why reject that, when there is a tongue much more within our reach, English, whose modulatory effects are obviously quite seductive.

Naturally of course, it would be completely exaggerated to say that it has a relationship with the meaning, only for that you have to give to the word meaning a weight that it does not have. Because the miracle, the marvel of something that proves that from language, there is something to be made. I mean the witticism; that depends precisely on non-sense. Because anyway, if one refers to some other writings which have been published (*poubelliqueés*), one might have said to oneself that it is all the same not for nothing that I wrote *The agency of the letter in the unconscious*. I did not say the agency of the signifier, this dear Lacanian signifier, that people say, that people say, that people say, when people mean that I wrongly stole it from Saussure. Yes! The fact that the dream is a rebus, as Freud says, is naturally not something that will make me yield for a single instant on the fact that the unconscious is structured like a language, only it is a language in the midst of which there appeared its writing. That does not mean, of course, that one should put the slightest faith - and when indeed would we do so - in these figures that stroll around in dreams, once we know that they are representations of words. Because it is a rebus, it can be translated, *überträgt*, into what Freud calls thoughts. The thoughts, *die Gedanken*, of the unconscious.

And what is meant by the fact, what is meant by the fact that a lapse, a blunder, a mistake in some psychopathology of everyday life, no but what can that mean that you call at least three times in the same five minutes... I do not know why I am saying this to you, because it is not all the same an example in which I am revealing one of my patients, but anyway, in effect, not long ago, one of my patients, for

five minutes, and every time correcting himself and laughing, but he (91) was not particularly worried about it, right, called his mother “my wife”. “It is not my wife, because my wife...” etc and he went on for five minutes, he repeated it at least 20 times. But what is missing in this word, when what I am killing myself telling you, is that it is really a successful word, all the same! And it was like that because his mother was his wife! He called her what he should have called her. So then there is only a lapse with respect to what? With respect to what the authors of *archiécriture*, the writing that is in the world from all time prefigures the word. A funny exercise, right? I don’t mind ...it is a function of the university discourse, to confuse things like that. So then everyone fulfils his function, so I also do mine, it also has its effects ... so then we are going to have a new figure of progress which is the coming into the world, the emergence, it is a substitute given to this idea of evolution which ends up as you know, at the top of the animal scale, with this conscience that characterises us, thanks to which we shine with a brilliance that you know all about. So then, it appears in the world of programming, I will only take up this remark, in effect, that there would be no conceivable programming without writing, in order to remark from another angle that the symptom, lapse, faulty action, psychopathology of every day life, does not have, cannot be sustained, has no meaning, unless you start from the idea that what you have to say is programmed, namely, written. Naturally if he writes “my wife” instead of “my mother”, there is no doubt that it is a lapse, but there is no lapse except *calami*, even when it is a *lapsus linguae*. Because the tongue for its part, knows very well what it has to do. It is a little phallus that tickles nice and gently. When it has something to say, well then, it says it. There was already someone called Aesop who said that it was at once the best and the worst. That means many things.

In any case, you can believe me if you wish, given the state of weariness in which you certainly find me, after having tackled these

things on writing, from one end to the other, right, because I do that, right? I believe myself obliged to do it, the only thing that I have never dealt with, is the superego. I believe myself obliged to read this stuff from one end to the other. That's how things are! To be sure, to be sure of the things that are affirmed or demonstrated by my experience of everyday life, but anyway all the same, I respect learned people. There are some perhaps who might well have unearthed something here, which might go against, and in effect why not, an experience that is so limited, so narrow, so short, limited to an (92) analytic consulting room, when all is said and done, there is perhaps all the same a certain need to know. Anyway, all that, I must say, I cannot impose on anyone, but on the whole, it is not appreciated.

There is something else, *The debate on writing and hieroglyphs in the 17th and 18th Century*. I hope you are going to rush. But you would perhaps not find it because for my part, I had to order it from a library, the general library of the *Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes*, 6th section, and I see the indication S.E.V.P.E.N., so that this must be some sort of publishing organisation, 13 rue du Four, Paris, if it exists. Well then! This work by Madeleine David – you should all the same from time to time take the trouble to read something, you could read that, anyway let us go on – because for what I am going to end up by telling you, what I am going to end up telling you, that writing, this is where we will remain for today, that writing in short is something which is found, because of being this representation of the word on which, as you clearly see, I did not insist, representation, that also signifies repercussion, because it is not at all sure that without writing there would be words. It is perhaps the representation as such that makes these words.

When you have tinkered a little with a tongue like the one that I am in the process of learning here, and in effect I am not after all sure that in this case it is an effect of the superego, the Japanese tongue,

well then, you will notice then the degree to which a writing can work upon a tongue. And as it is constructed, this melodious tongue, which is a marvel of subtlety and ingenuity, when I think that it is a tongue in which the adjectives are conjugated, and that I had to wait to be my age to have that at my disposition, I really do not know what I was doing up to now. For my part I aspired to nothing but that, that adjectives could be conjugated. And a tongue in which the inflections had this absolutely marvellous quality that they go off on their own. What is called the moneme, here, in the middle, is something you can change. You give it a Chinese pronunciation, quite different to a Japanese pronunciation, so that, when you are in the presence of a Chinese character, you have, if you are initiated, but naturally only the naturals know it, when you pronounce it *oniomo* or *kuniomi* depending on the case, which are always very precise, and for the chap who arrives there, like me, there is no question of knowing which of the two must be chosen; furthermore, you can have two Chinese characters. If you pronounce them *kuniomi*, namely, the (93) Japanese way, you are absolutely incapable of saying to which of these Chinese characters the first syllable of what you are saying belongs, and to which the second belongs, the one in the middle, of course, still less. It is the totality of the two Chinese characters that dictates to you the Japanese pronunciation in several syllables, that can be perfectly well understood, a pronunciation that corresponds to the two characters at once, because you must not imagine, on the pretext that a Chinese character corresponds in principle to a syllable, that when you pronounce it in the Chinese way, *oniomi*, if you read it in the Japanese way, one does not see in effect why one should be obliged to decompose this representation of words into syllables. Anyway, that teaches you a lot. That teaches you a lot about the fact that the Japanese tongue is nourished by its writing. How is it nourished by it? In a linguistic way of course, namely, at the point at which linguistics affects the tongue, namely, always in writing.

Because you have to admit naturally, that something that leaps to the eye, is that if M de Saussure found himself relatively in a position to qualify signifiers as arbitrary, it is uniquely by reason of the fact that what is at stake were written representations. How could he have done his little bar with this thing underneath and these things above, that I have sufficiently used and abused, if there were no writing? All of this to remind you that, when I say that there is no metalanguage, this leaps to the eye. It would be enough for me to give you a mathematical proof, you would see that I am forced to talk about it because it is something written, otherwise nothing would get across. If I speak about it, it is not at all metalanguage, it is what is called, what the mathematicians themselves, when they present a logical theory, call discourse, the common discourse the ordinary discourse. It is the function of the word, in so far as it is applied, not in an altogether unlimited, undisciplined way, this is what I earlier called “to prove”, of course, but language, this is what is at stake, writing is what is at stake, what one is speaking about. There is no metalanguage in this sense that you never speak about language unless you start from writing.

So then, I am telling you all of this, all of this, I must say that this does not weary me, if you wish, it wearies me a little bit all the same. You can believe me if you wish, what I said to myself this morning, as I woke up, having read Madeline David until one o'clock, I said to myself that all the same it was not for nothing that my *Ecrits* began (94) with the seminar on the *Purloined Letter*. The letter is taken there in a different sense than that of *The agency of the letter in the unconscious*, the letter, the epistle. I am not very fresh, I went to bed late, after midnight; anyway, Gloria will bear witness to you that I spent from eight o'clock to half past nine re-reading the seminar on the *Purloined Letter*. It was worth the trouble, it is something that is quite clever. I never re-read myself but when I do re-read myself, you cannot imagine how much I admire myself! Obviously I had taken the trouble, I did something that was worked out with great

difficulty, which was not too bad, which got across, which got across, when I did it, I no longer know at what date, it was still in front of the rabble at Sainte-Anne. Anyway I laboured at that in a place that I put at the end, I am conscientious, San Casciano, in the neighbourhood of Florence, and it really spoiled my holiday. Anyway, you know I have a tendency for that, for spoiling my holidays. Listen, it is getting late, and after all, I think it would be better for me to talk to you about it the next time.

But anyway, perhaps, who knows, that may tempt you to read it, and after all, it would be better not to tell you where you should go right away, I am going to tell you all the same, because, there are some people who may not notice, that at the end, in speaking about the *Purloined Letter*, when I speak about that, the function of the letter, you will remember perhaps, this letter that the Queen receives, you have perhaps read the story by Poe that is in question, the Queen receives..., it is a rather funny letter all the same. We will never know what was in it. This is precisely what is essential, it is that one will never know what is in it. And all the same nothing contradicts the fact that she is the only one who knows it when all is said and done. Moreover, to set the police on it, you understand, it is all the same necessary, she clearly has the idea that in any case, this would give no information to anyone. There is something, which is that it is certain that it has a meaning. And since it comes from a certain Duke of something or other who has addressed himself to her, if the King her good Master, gets his hands on it, even if he understands nothing either, he will say: "All the same! There is something funny going on!" and God knows where that might lead. I regret the old business that this led to in the past. It led the Queen to the scaffold, things like that. Good! So then at this point, at this point, I cannot do for you the thing I did on what Poe did, under the title the *Purloined Letter*, that I translated like that, approximately, *la lettre en souffrance*. Well then, read that between now and the next time, right? Because that will perhaps allow me to continue to bring out, to support you, what

you see converging in my discourse today, from page 31 of the *Ecrits* (95) to the end.

What I am talking about, in speaking about what is at stake, you have perhaps vaguely heard talk of the effect of the displacements of this letter, of the way it changed hands, as you know, the minister pinched it from the Queen, after which Dupin, Dupin, Poe's genius, right, the most cunning of the cunning, who is not as cunning as all that; but Poe for his part is cunning, namely, that Poe for his part is the narrator of the story... I put a little question to you, here I am opening a parenthesis, the narrator of the story, this is of general importance, is he the one who writes it? Ask yourself this question for example when you read Proust. It is very necessary to pose it, because otherwise you are screwed, you think that the narrator of the story is a simple someone, like that, a little asthmatic, and after all a bit of a dope in his adventures! That has to be said, right! Only you do not at all have the impression, when you have worked on Proust, that it is in any way stupid. It is not what Proust says about the narrator, it is something different that he writes, anyway let us go on. From page 31, at a particular page, you will see when I speak about the letter, of its conveyancing, of the way in which the Minister took it from the Queen or when Dupin takes the baton from the Minister, and the consequences that result from being the one who holds (*le détenteur*) this letter; it's a funny word, right? That means perhaps: to have the possibility of *détente* (relaxation), this letter, you will see that from this page to this page, what I am talking about, I am the one who wrote it, did I know what I was doing? Well, I will not tell you. What I am talking about, is the phallus. And I would even say more, no one has ever spoken better about it. That is why I am asking you to consult it. It will teach you something.

Seminar 6: Wednesday 17 March 1971

As regards this seminar on *The purloined letter*, then...I do not know yet what it may yield. Can you hear me there, in the fourth row? Wonderful! At least we can breath. That may allow more effective relationships. For example, in one case, I might ask someone to leave. In the extreme case I might have an attack of nerves, and leave myself. Anyway in the other one, in the other amphitheatre, it was a bit too much like the majority of cases where people think a sexual relationship exists. Because you are stuck together in a sardine tin. This is going to allow me to ask you to raise your hand. Who are the people who, following my explicit suggestion, made the effort to re-read pages 31-40 of what is called my *Ecrits*? Anyway, lift your hand all the same! Here you can raise your hand. There are not as many as all that. I don't know if I might not have an attack of nerves. Simply to leave, because in short it is necessary to have some minimal resources to ask someone what relationship he was eventually able to sense in these pages, in these pages, to what I said I was speaking about there, namely, the phallus. Who feels in the mood – you see I am very nice, I am not challenging anyone – who feels himself in the mood to say something, even that, why not, that there is scarcely any way of seeing it. Would someone be kind enough to communicate to me some of the reflections that may have been inspired in him, I am not saying by these pages but by what I said the last time about what they consisted of, according to me. X, listen, you, have you re-read these pages?

X:

You haven't re-read them? Get the hell out of here! Anyway, it's very annoying. You don't expect me to read them for you. That (98) really is asking too much of me. But anyway, I take it as it comes. I am a little bit astonished all the same, I am a little bit astonished, not to be able to get an answer unless I take a teasing line. Yes! All the same it is very annoying. In these pages, I am very precisely only speaking about the function of the phallus in so far as it is articulated, as it is articulated in a certain discourse. And this was nevertheless not a time at which I had even sketched out the construction of this whole variety, this tetrahedric combination, with four vertices, that I presented to you last year. And I note nevertheless, from this level one cannot say, from this level, I mean, of my construction, from this time if you also wish, I directed my attack, as I might say, I directed my attack – this is saying a lot - to being able to shoot (*tirer*), it is already that, in such a way that it seems to me now not to be misleading. I mean in a further stage of this construction. Naturally, when I said the last time, I let myself go like that, especially when it is necessary to pretend one is breathing, I said the last time that I admired myself, I hope that you did not take that literally. What I was admiring, was in effect rather the outline that I had created at a time when I was simply beginning to plough a certain furrow as a reference point, which is not now to be completely rejected, which does not make me feel ashamed. It was on this that I ended last year, and it is rather remarkable. One might even perhaps take something from it, an outline, like that, some encouragement to continue. That it is altogether striking that everything that can be caught in it (*y est péchable*), as I might say, in terms of the signifier, is there. This indeed is what is at stake. I started to fish from this seminar on the *Purloined Letter* on, and I think that after all this time, the fact that I put it in first place, in spite of any chronology, showed perhaps that it was necessary, that I had the idea, that it was in short the best way to give an introduction to my *Ecrits*. So then the remark that I make about this famous man *who dares all things, those unbecoming as well as those becoming a*

man, it is quite certain that if I insisted at that moment to say that not to translate it literally “*ce qui est indigne aussi bien que ce qui est digne d’un homme*” shows that it is in a block that the unsayable, shameful aspect, what is not said, as regards what concerns a man, is indeed there, in a word, the phallus. And it is clear that to translate it by fragmenting it in two: “*Ce qui est digne d’un homme aussi bien que ce qui est indigne de lui*”, that what I am insisting on here, is that (99) it is not the same thing to say “*the robber’s knowledge of the loser’s knowledge of the robber*”, that this element of knowing who knows, namely, by having imposed a certain phantasy of oneself, precisely the man who dares everything, is here as Dupin says right away, the key to the situation. I am saying that, I am saying that and I am going to come back to it. Because to tell the truth, what I indicated to you could have - for someone who would have taken the trouble - allowed there to be advanced directly in a text like this, most of the articulations that I will perhaps have to develop, to unfold, to construct today. As you are going to see, if you do not mind, in a second phase, after having heard what I will more or less have succeeded in saying. It was in fact well and truly written there, and not simply written there, with all and the same necessary articulations, those that I believe I have to take you through. So then everything that is there is not simply sieved and bound, it is clearly made up of signifiers that are available for a more elaborate meaning. That, in short, of a teaching - my own - that I can say is without precedent, other than that of Freud himself. And precisely in so far as it defines the previous one in such a way that one must read its structure in its impossibilities.

Can one say that properly speaking, for example, Freud formulated this impossibility of sexual relationships? Not as such. I am doing it simply because, and after all it is very simple to say, it is written everywhere. It is written in what Freud wrote. It only has to be read. Only you are going to see later why you cannot read it. I am trying to say it. To say why I for my part do read it. The letter then,

purloined, not stolen, but as I explain, I begin with that, which makes a detour, or as I translate it for my part, the letter *en souffrance*, it begins like that and it ends, this little *écrit*, with the fact that it arrives nevertheless at its destination. And if you read it, I hope that there will be a few more who will read it between now and the time I am going to see you again, which will not be in the near future. Because all of this is very well calculated. The second and third Wednesday, I chose them because during the month of April, they fall during the Easter holidays. So then, you will only see me in May. You will have the time to read the 40 pages of *The purloined letter*. At the end I try to underline what is essential in it, and why the translation of “*la lettre volée*” is not a good one. The *purloined letter*, this all the same means, this all the same means, that it reaches its destination. And I give the destination. I give it as the fundamental destination of every (100) letter, I mean epistle. It reaches, let us say, not even him or her or those that can understand nothing about it, including the police on this occasion. Naturally they are completely incapable of understanding anything whatsoever, as I underline and explain for a number of pages – precisely that is even why they were not able to find it – about this substratum, this material of the letter. This is very prettily said, this invention, this magnificent fabrication of Poe, the letter is of course beyond the reach of explanation by space, since this is what is at stake. This is what the Prefect has come to say, indeed what the police first of all came to say, which is that everything in the Minister’s house, given that they know that the letter is there, that it is there so that he always has it within hand’s reach, they say why, that the space had literally been cross-ruled.

It’s amusing, right?, to let myself go, like that, I don’t know, every time I allow myself a little, from time to time, to follow a certain slope, why not, to certain considerations, like that, about space. This famous space which has been indeed for our logic, for a good while, since Descartes, the most bothersome thing in the world. This is all the same a good occasion to talk about it, even if it is necessary to

add it on as a sort of note in the margin, like something that I isolate, like something that I distinguish as the dimension of the imaginary. There are all the same people who worry themselves, not necessarily about that *écrit*, about others, or even also sometimes who kept notes of what I may have said at a certain time, for example on identification. It was the year, 1961/62, I must say that all my listeners were thinking about something else, except, I do not know, one or two who came from outside, who did not know what exactly was happening. I spoke there about the unary trait and people worry themselves now, it seems that this is legitimate, about where this unary trait should be put. On the side of the Symbolic, or of the Imaginary? And why not of the Real? In any case just like, because this is how it is passed on, a baton, *ein einziger Zug*, because it is of course in Freud that I picked that out. This poses some questions, since I introduced it to you a little the last time, by this remark that it was completely impossible to think about anything whatsoever that holds up about this bipartition that is so difficult, so problematic for mathematicians. This is, namely, whether everything can be reduced to pure logic, namely, to a discourse that is sustained by a well-determined structure. Is there not an absolutely essential element that (101) remains, whatever we do to insert it into this structure, to reduce it, that all the same remains as a final kernel and that is called intuition. Assuredly, it is the question from which Descartes started. I mean, I would point out to you, that mathematical reasoning, as he saw it, extracted nothing efficacious, creative, anything whatsoever that was of the order of reasoning, but simply its start, namely, an original intuition, the one that is posited, established by its original distinction between space and thinking. Naturally, this Cartesian opposition, having been constructed more by a thinker than by a mathematician – one who was certainly not incapable of producing things in mathematics, as the effects have proved – was of course much more enriched by the mathematicians themselves. It is indeed the first time that something came to mathematics by way of philosophy. Because I would ask you to note something which seems

to me to be very certain – let people contradict me if they can, it would be easy to find someone more competent than I on this matter – it is all the same very striking that the mathematicians of antiquity should have, for their part, pursued their progress without paying the slightest attention to everything that might have been happening in the schools of wisdom, in any of the schools of philosophy whatever they may have been. It is not the same in our day in which assuredly the Cartesian impulse concerning the distinction between intuiting and reasoning is something which has really tormented mathematics itself. This is indeed the reason why I cannot fail to find in it a vein, an effect of something that has a certain relationship with what here, in the field that is at stake and that I am struggling with. And that it seems to me that the remark that I can make, from the point that I am at, about the relationships between the word and writing, about what there is, at least in this first line, about what there is special about the function of writing with respect to any discourse, is of a nature perhaps to ensure that the mathematicians notice what I indicated the last time, that the very intuition of Euclidean space owes something to writing. On the other hand, if as I am going to try to push it a little further for you, what is called in mathematics logical research, logical reduction, a mathematical operation, is something that in any case is not going, cannot have any other support – to notice it, it is enough to follow history – than the manipulation of small or big letters, diverse alphabetical lots, I mean Greek letters or German letters, several alphabetical lots. Any manipulation by which logistical reduction in mathematical reasoning is advanced requires this support. As I am repeating to you, I do not see the essential difference between it and (102) what was, for a long time, for a whole epoch, the 17th and 18th centuries, the difficulty of mathematical thinking. Namely, the necessity of a drawing for Euclidean proof, that at least one of these triangles should be traced out. And at this point everyone gets frantic. This triangle that has been traced out, is it the triangle in general or a particular triangle? Because it is quite clear that it is always particular, and that what you prove for the triangle in general,

namely, always the same story, namely, that the three angles made by two straight lines, well it is quite clear that you must not say that this triangle has not the right to be at once an isosceles rectangle at the same time as being equilateral. So then it is always particular. This worried mathematicians a great deal. I pass over, of course, this is not the place to recall it here, I am not here to show my erudition, through what and from what this flows since Descartes, Leibnitz or others. It goes up as far as Husserl. They seem to me, all the same, never to have seen the real problem, that writing is there on both sides. It is indeed homogenising intuiting and reasoning, that writing, in other words little letters, has no less of an intuitive function than the one outlined by our friend Euclid. What is at stake all the same is to know why people think that this makes a difference. I do not know whether I ought to point out to you that the consistency of space, of Euclidean space that ends with its three dimensions, should, it seems to me, be defined in a quite different way. If you take two points, they are at equal distance from one another, as I might say, the distance is the same from the first to the second as from the second to the first. You can take three of them and arrange for it to be still true, namely, that each one is equidistant from the two others. You can take four of them and organise it so that it is still true. I don't know, I have never heard that being explicitly highlighted. You can take five, don't rush into saying that here also you can put them at equal distance from each of the other four because, all the same in our Euclidean space, you will not manage it. It is necessary, in order to have five points at equal distance, you hear what I am saying, from each of all the others, for you to fabricate a fourth dimension. There you are! Naturally, it is very easy, to the letter, and then it holds up well, it can be proved that a four dimensional space is perfectly coherent in the whole measure that one can show the link between its coherence and the coherence of real numbers. It is in this very measure that it can be sustained. But anyway, it is a fact, that beyond the tetrahedron, already, intuition has to be supported by the letter. I got into this in order to tell you, because I said that the letter that

(103) reaches its destination is the letter that reaches the police, who understand nothing about it, and that the police as you know, did not come to birth today or yesterday, three pikes like that in the earth, three pikes in the campus, provided you know a little bit about what Hegel wrote, you will know that it is the State. The State and the police, for anyone who has reflected a little, one cannot say that Hegel takes up such a bad position in this regard, is exactly the same thing. It is based on a tetrahedric structure, in other words, once we put in question something like the letter, we have to leave my little schemas of last year, which were constructed as you remember like that:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \underline{S_1} & \longrightarrow & \underline{S_2} \\ \$ & & \mathbf{o} \end{array}$$

Here is the discourse of the Master, as you perhaps remember, characterised by the fact that of the six lines (*arêtes*) of the tetrahedron, one is broken. It is in the measure that one makes these structures turn on the four lines of the circuit that follow one another in the tetrahedron, this is a condition, are fitted in the same direction, in this direction that turns around one, it does not matter which of the two others, of the three others, that the variation is established about what is involved in the structure of discourse, very precisely in so far as it remains at a certain level of construction which is the tetrahedric one, this tetrahedric one that we cannot be satisfied with once the agency of the letter is brought out. It is even because one cannot be satisfied with it, that to remain at its level, there is always one of the sides of what makes the circle which is broken. So then, it is from this that it results that in the world as it is structured by a certain tetrahedron, the letter only reaches its destination by finding the one who in my discourse on *The purloined letter*, I designated by the term Subject which is not at all to be eliminated in any way or to be withdrawn, on the pretext that we are making some steps in structure,

and as regards which it is all the same necessary to start from the fact that if what we have discovered under the term unconscious has a meaning, the Subject, I repeat, which is irreducible - we cannot, even at this level, not take it into account - but the Subject is distinguished by its very special imbecility. This is what counts in Poe's text, because of the fact it is not for nothing that the one whom he jokes (104) about on this occasion is the king, who here manifests this function of Subject. He understands absolutely nothing and his whole police structure will not prevent, nevertheless, the letter coming within his reach, given that it is the police that are holding onto it and that they can do nothing about it. I even underline that, even if it were found in their files, it would be of no use to the historian. In one or other page of what I wrote in connection with this letter, one can say that very probably only the Queen knows what it means, and that what gives it its weight, is the fact that, if the only person that it involves, namely the Subject, the King, got his hands on it, the only thing he would understand is that it surely has a meaning and this is the scandal, that it has a meaning that escapes him the Subject. The term of scandal, or again of contradiction, is in the right place in these last four little pages that I gave you to read, I underline.

It is clear that it is uniquely in function of the circulation of the letter that the Minister – because there must have been all the same some people here who have read Poe sometime, you ought to know that there is a Minister involved, the one who had nicked the letter – that the Minister shows us in the course of the displacement of the aforesaid letter, variations, like a fish going through variations of colour and in truth that its essential function, that my whole text plays on a little bit too much – but one cannot insist too much in order to make oneself understood – plays on the fact that the letter has a feminising effect. But once he no longer has the letter, because he knows nothing about it himself, once he no longer has it, we find him in a way restored to the dimension, precisely that his whole plan was

designed to give to himself, that of a man who dares all things. And I emphasise this turn of events. It is on this that this statement of Poe ends. It is that at this moment that the thing appears, *monstrum horrendum*, and it is put in the text, what he wanted to be for the Queen, who naturally had taken account of it, because she tried to recover it, this letter, but anyway the game was played out with him. This is for our Dupin, namely, the cutest of the cute, the one to whom Poe gives the role, the role of throwing something that I would be quite happy to call, I underline it in the text, some dust in our eyes. Namely, that we believe that the cutest of the cute exists, namely, that he really understands, knows everything, that being in the tetrahedron, he can understand how it is made.

I have sufficiently ironised about these certainly very clever things, namely the play on words around *ambitus*, of *religio* or of *honesti homines*, to show and to say simply, in my own regard, that I went (105) further in seeking out the little beast, is that not so, and that in truth it is somewhere; it is somewhere to follow Poe, one can ask the question of whether Poe really noticed it. Namely, that the simple fact of the letter passing through the hands of Dupin, feminised him in his turn, enough to ensure that, with respect to the Minister, even though he nevertheless knows that he has deprived him of what might allow him to continue to play his role if ever he has to show his hand – it is precisely at this moment that Dupin cannot contain himself and manifests with respect to the one who is believed to be already sufficiently at his mercy in order to no longer leave a trace, sends him this message in the piece of paper that he substitutes for the stolen letter, “*un destin si funeste.....*”, anyway you know the text, “*s’il n’est digne d’Atrée, est digne de Thyeste*”.

The question, as I might say, is to notice, as I might say, whether Poe on this occasion clearly sees the import of the fact that Dupin, in this sort of message that goes beyond all possibilities because, God knows, if the Minister ever took out his letter, and found himself at

the same time deflated, this to tell you that castration is here, like it, suspended, perfectly realised.

I am also indicating this perspective which seems to me anyway not to be determined in advance. This only gives a greater value to what Dupin writes as a message to the person that he has just deprived of what he thinks is his power. This little *billet doux*, which makes him exult at the thought of what will happen when the person involved, before whom, to what end, will have to make use of it, what one can say is that Dupin enjoys (*jouit*). So then, here is the question, the question that I opened up the last time by asking you, whether the narrator and the one who writes are the same thing? What is incontestable, is that the narrator, the subject of the statement, the one who speaks, is Poe. Does Poe enjoy the enjoyment of Dupin or is it from elsewhere? This is what I am going to try to show you today.

I am speaking to you about *The purloined letter* as I articulated it myself, this is an illustration that I can give to the question that I asked the last time. Is the one who writes not radically different from the one who speaks in his own name as the narrator in a writing? At this level it is tangible. Because what happens at the level of the narrator, when all is said and done, is what I could call, I apologise for insisting on the demonstrative character of this little essay, is that when all is said and done, it is the most perfect castration that is demonstrated. Everyone is equally cuckolded, and no one knows (106) anything about it. It is certain that the King, of course, is asleep from the beginning and will sleep to the end of his days without noticing anything; the Queen does not realise that she is almost fated to become mad about this Minister, now that she has him in her grasp. Now that she has castrated him, right, it is love! The Minister has really been had, but when all is said and done it does not matter to him. Because as I very clearly explained somewhere, it is either one thing or another: either he will be happy to become the Queen's lover and that ought to be agreeable, in

principle, people say that. Not everybody likes it, or if really he has for her one of these feelings which are of the order of what I for my part call the only lucid feeling, namely hatred, as I very clearly explained to you, if he hates her, she will only love him all the more, and that will allow him to go so far, that he will end up all the same by becoming sure that the letter has not been there for a long time. Because he will surely make a mistake. He will tell himself that if she goes that far with him, it is because she is sure of things, so then, he will open his little paper in time, but in no case will he get back to what he wished for, the fact is that the Minister will end up by making himself ridiculous. He will not be so! Good! Well then, there you are, here is what I succeeded in saying in connection with what I wrote, and what I wanted to tell you, is that it takes on its importance from the fact that it is unreadable.

That is the point, which if you would not mind listening to me again I am going to try to develop. Like many people, I am saying it to you right away because there are worldly people, the only people who are capable of telling me what they think about what I palm off on them. It was at a time when my *Ecrits* had not yet appeared, they gave me their point of view as technicians, “we can’t understand anything in it” they told me. Note that this is quite something. Something that one understands nothing about, is full of hope, it is the sign that one is affected by it. It is a good thing that they understood nothing about it! Because one can never understand anything except what of course one has already in one’s head. But anyway, I would like to articulate it a little better. It is not enough to write something that is deliberately incomprehensible, but to see why the unreadable has a meaning. I would point out to you first of all that...our whole business, which is the story of sexual relationships, is it not, revolves around the fact that you may think that it is written because in short, this is what was discovered in psychoanalysis, we were all the same clearly referred to a writing. The Oedipus complex, is a written myth and I would even say more, this is very exactly the thing that

specifies it. One could have taken precisely any one at all, provided it was written. What is proper to a myth that is written, as Claude (107) Lévi-Strauss has already pointed out, is that by writing it, it has only a single form. While what is proper to myth, as the whole work of Lévi-Strauss tries to demonstrate, is to have a great deal of them. This is what a written myth constitutes as myth.

So then this written myth might very well seem to be the inscription of what is involved in sexual relationships. I would like all the same to point out a certain number of things to you. There you are! The fact is, that for that it is not a matter of indifference that I started from this text, the fact is that if this letter, this letter on this occasion may have this function, this feminising function, is that not so, it is with respect to what I told you about the fact that the written myth, the Oedipus complex is designed very exactly to highlight for us that it is unthinkable to say: the woman (*la femme*). Why is it unthinkable? Because one cannot say: *all the women*. One cannot say *all the women* because it is only introduced into the myth because of the fact that the Father possesses *all the women*, which is manifestly a sign of an impossibility. On the other hand, what I underline in connection with this purloined letter, is that there is only one woman, that in other words the function of the woman is only deployed in what the great mathematician Brouwer in the context of what I stated for you, put forward earlier about the mathematical discussion called multiunity(?) (*multinunité*), namely, that there is a function which is very properly speaking that the Father is there, the Father is there because he makes himself recognised in his radical function, in the one he has always manifested, every time for example monotheism was at stake. It is not for nothing that Freud landed on this, because there is an altogether essential function that should be reserved as being at the origin very properly speaking of writing. This is what I will call the *not more than one* (*pas plus d'un*). Aristotle, of course, makes altogether entrancing, considerable efforts, as he usually does, to make this accessible to us by stages, in the name of his principle

that can be described as the principle of climbing the ladder from cause to cause and from being to being, etc. You really do have to stop somewhere, anyway what is very nice is that he really spoke for imbeciles. Hence the development of the function of the subject. The *not more than one* is posited in an altogether original way. Without the *not more than one*, you could not even begin to write the series of whole numbers. I will show you that on the board the next time. There must be a one, and then all you have to do subsequently is purse your lips anytime you want to start again, so that each time (108) this gives a further one, but not the same one. On the contrary, all those that are repeated in this way are the same, they can be added up. That is called an arithmetical series. But let us come back to what seems to us essential for this subject as regards sexual enjoyment. It is that, from experience, there is only one structure, whatever may have to be the particular conditionings, it is that sexual enjoyment is found not to be able to be written, and it is from this that there results the structural multiplicity, and first of all the tetrahedron in which something is outlined that situates it, but is inseparable from a certain number of functions that have nothing to do, in short, that can specify in the general case the sexual partner. The structure is such that man as such in so far as he functions is castrated, and on the other hand, something exists at the level of the feminine partner that one can simply trace out by this feature, whose importance I highlight, the whole function of this letter on this occasion, that the woman has nothing to do with it, if she exists – now, that is why she does not exist, it is in so far as *the woman*, has nothing to do with the law.

So then, how are we to conceive of what has happened? All the same we make love, right? All the same we make love and people have noticed from the time they became interested in it, for a long time, and people have perhaps always been interested in it, only we have lost the key to the way in which people were previously interested, but for us, at the heart, in the efflorescence of the scientific era, we

learn what is involved in it through Freud. What is it? When what is at stake is to structure, to make function by means of symbols the sexual relationship, what creates an obstacle to it? It is that enjoyment gets mixed up in it. Can sexual enjoyment be treated directly? It cannot be, and it is for this reason, let us say, let us say no more, that there is the word. Discourse begins from the fact that here there is a gap. We cannot remain at that, I mean that I reject any position of origin, and after all, nothing prevents us from saying that it is because discourse begins that the gap is produced. It is a matter of complete indifference for the result. What is certain is that discourse is implied in the gap and since there is no metalanguage, it cannot get out of it. The symbolisation of sexual enjoyment, as is made obvious by what I am in the process of articulating, is the fact that it borrows all its symbolism from what? From what does not concern it, namely, from enjoyment in so far as it is prohibited by certain confused things, confused but not all that much, because we have managed to articulate it perfectly under the name of pleasure (109) principle. Which can only have one meaning, *not too much enjoyment*. Because the stuff of every enjoyment is close to suffering, this is even how we recognise how it is dressed up. If the plant was not manifestly suffering, we would not know that it was alive. It is clear then that the fact that sexual enjoyment only found as a way to structure itself the reference to prohibition, as named, of enjoyment, but an enjoyment which is not the one, which is this dimension of enjoyment, which is properly speaking a fatal enjoyment, in other words that sexual enjoyment takes on its structure from the prohibition laid on the enjoyment directed at one's own body, namely, very precisely at this crunch point, the frontier where it is close to mortal enjoyment. And it only reconnects with the dimension of the sexual by bringing a prohibition to bear on the body, from which one's own body emerges, namely the body of the mother. It is only in this way that there is structured, that there is connected up in discourse, what alone the law can contribute to it, what is involved in sexual enjoyment. The partner on this occasion is

indeed in effect reduced to one, but not just anyone whatsoever, the one who gave birth to you. And it is around this that there is constructed everything that can be articulated once we enter the field in a way that can be verbalised. When we shall have advanced further, I will come back to the way in which knowledge comes to function as enjoying. We can skip it here. The woman as such finds herself in this position uniquely assembled because of the fact that she is, I would say, subject to the word. Naturally, I am sparing you the detours. That the word is what establishes a dimension of truth, the impossibility of this sexual relationship, is indeed also what gives its import to the word in the fact of course that it can do everything, except be of use at the point where it happens. The word strives to reduce the woman to subjection, namely, to make of her something from which one expects signs of intelligence, if I can put it this way. But naturally, we are not dealing with any real being here, to say the word, the woman on this occasion, as this text is designed to prove, the woman, I mean the woman in herself, the woman – as if one could say *all the women* – the woman – I insist, who does not exist – is precisely the letter. The letter, in so far as she is the signifier that there is no Other: S(O) (*sic*).

And it is about this that I would like, before leaving you, all the same to make a remark to you that outlines the logical configuration of what I am in the process of putting forward. In Aristotelian logic, you have the affirmatives, I am not going to put them in the usual (110) letters of formal logic. I am not writing A, I am writing the universal affirmative, and I am writing this as universal negative, this is what that means. I write here particular affirmative and particular negative. I would like to point out that at the level of Aristotelian articulation, it is between these two poles – because it is from Aristotle that these propositional categories are borrowed – it is between these two poles that logical discrimination is carried out. The universal affirmative states an essence. I insisted often enough in the past about what is involved in the statement *every stroke is*

vertical and that it is perfectly compatible with the fact that no stroke exists, the essence is essentially situated in logic. It is a pure statement of discourse. Logical discrimination, its essential axis in this articulation, is very exactly this oblique axis that I have just noted here. Nothing runs contrary to any identifiable logical statement whatsoever, nothing, except the remark that: “There are some that...do not” A particular negative, there are some strokes that are not vertical. This is the only contradiction that can be made against the affirmation that it is a matter of the essence. And the two other terms are, in the functioning of Aristotelian logic, quite secondary. Namely, “there are those that...”, a particular affirmative, and afterwards how can we know if it is necessary or not, this proves nothing, and to say “there are none that” which is not the same thing as to say: “there are some who are not”, namely, the universal negative. *There are none that*, well that proves nothing either. It is a fact. What I can point out to you, is what happens when, from this Aristotelian logic, we pass to their transposition in mathematical logic, the one that is constructed by means of what are called quantifiers. Don’t complain that you cannot hear me for a while, first of all I am going to write it and precisely this is what is at stake. The universal, I was saying, the universal affirmative is now going to be written in this unverbalisable notation: it is an ‘A’ upside down; I say an ‘A’ upside down, anyway it is not part of discourse, it is writing. But it is a signal as you are going to see, in order to be able to babble on. $\forall x.F(x)$, the universal affirmative, $\exists x.F(x)$ here particular affirmative. $\exists x.F(x)$, I want to express that this is a negative. How can I do so? I am struck by the fact that it has never been really articulated the way I am going to do it. What you have to do is to put a bar of negation above the $F(x)$ and not at all, as is usually done above both. You are going to see why. And here, it is on the x that you have to put the bar. I am putting here now myself a bar (111) equivalent to the one that was here, and since the one that was there separated out in two zones the group of fours, here, it divides up by two in a different way.

What I am putting forward, is that in this way of writing, precisely, everything depends on what one can say about writing, and that the distinction in two terms united by a point from what is written in this way has the value of saying that one can say about every 'x' – it is the signal of the upside down 'A' – that it satisfies what is written, $F(x)$, that it is not displaced into it. In the same way, but with a different accent, the fact that there is something unwriteable, namely that it is here that the emphasis of writing is brought to bear, there exist x's that you can make function in $F(x)$, of which you then speak, that what is at stake, in what is here called a quantifying transposition by means of the quantifiers of the particular. On the other hand, it is so true that it is around writing that there pivots the displacement of the distribution, namely, that for what is put in the foreground, is acceptable, nothing is changed for the universal. It still has its value, even though it is not the same value. On the contrary what is at stake here, the cleavage consists in noticing the non-value of the universal negative, since here, the fact is that whatever 'x' you speak about, cannot be written as $F(x)$. And that just as for the particular negative, there is the fact, that just as here the 'x' could be written, was acceptable, inscribable in this formula, here simply, what is said, is that it is not inscribable. What does that mean? The fact is, what has been neglected in a way, without value, in these two structurings, namely, the universal negative, the universal negative in so far as it is what allows there to be said that you must not write this if you are speaking about any 'x' whatsoever, in other words that it is here that there functions an essential cut. Well then, it is the very one around which there is articulated what is involved in the sexual relationship. The question concerns what cannot be written in the function $F(x)$, from the moment when this, the function $F(x)$, is itself not to be written, namely, that it is what I said, stated, a little earlier, which is the point around which there is

going to revolve what we will take up when I see you in two months time, namely, that it is properly speaking what is called unreadable.

x.Fx x.Fx

x.Fx x.F

Seminar 7: Wednesday 12 May 1971

Lituraterre

This word that I have just written gives its title to what I am going to offer you today. Because needs must, since you have been summoned here, that I should throw out something to you. It is obviously inspired by current events. It is the title with which I strove to respond to a demand that was addressed to me to introduce an issue that is going to appear on *Literature and psychoanalysis*.

This word, *lituraterre*, which I invented, is legitimised by *Ernout et Meillet*, since there are perhaps some people here who know what it is; it is a Latin dictionary that is described as etymological. Look up *lino*, *litura*, and then *liturarius*. It is clearly specified that this has nothing to do with *littera*, the letter. I don't give a damn about the fact that it has nothing to do with it. I do not necessarily submit to etymology when I let myself go in this word play with which from

time to time one constructs a witticism, the art of the spoonerism, which is obvious on occasion, coming to my lips and upsetting the ear. It is not for nothing that when you learn a foreign tongue, you put the first consonant of what you hear second, and the second first.

So then this dictionary, you should consult it, is a lucky omen for me, because of being grounded on the same starting point that I took in a first movement. You should understand starting point in the sense of restart, a starting point from an equivocation with which Joyce, I am talking about James Joyce, slips from *a letter* to *a litter*, from a *lettre*, I am translating, to *ordure*.

(114) There was, perhaps you remember, but very probably you know nothing about it, there was a rich patron who wanting, to do him a good turn, offered him a psychoanalysis, and she even offered to pay for him to do it with Jung. From the word play that we are recalling, he would have gained nothing from it because he went straight away, with this *a letter*, *a litter*, straight to the best thing that one can expect at the end of an analysis.

By making stable litter of the letter, is it St Thomas again - you remember perhaps, if you ever knew it, *sicut palea* - St Thomas again, who comes back to Joyce, as his work bears witness throughout its whole length? Or indeed is it psychoanalysis that bears witness to his convergence with what our epoch shows up in terms of an undoing of the link, of the ancient link by which pollution is contained in culture?

I had embroidered on this, as it happens, a little while before May 1968, in order not to disappoint, on that day, the wretches among the crowds that I now find come to see me when I visit somewhere. It was at Bordeaux. Civilisation, I recalled as a premise, is a sewer. It should no doubt be said, that it was a little while after my proposition of October '67 had been welcomed in the way you know, to tell you

no doubt that, in playing on that, I was a little weary of the dustbin with which I had thrown in my lot. Still, you know that I am not the only one, in order to share things around, to admit it, *l'avouère*, to pronounce it in the old way, the 'having' that Beckett puts in the balance with the deficit that makes rubbish of our 'being'. This *avouère* saves the honour of literature and, which pleases me a great deal, relieves me of the privilege that I might believe I hold in my own place.

The question is whether, what the manuals seem to display ever since they have existed, I am talking about manuals of literature, that literature is only a way of accommodating oneself to leftovers. Is it a matter of collecting in a writing, what was first of all, primitively, song, spoken myth, dramatic procession?

As regards psychoanalysis, the fact that it is appended to Oedipus, to the Oedipus of the myth, in no way qualifies it to find its way in Sophocles' text. It is not the same thing. The evocation by Freud of a text by Dostoyevsky is not enough to say that textual criticism, up to now the preserve of university discourse, has received any more fresh air from psychoanalysis.

Here, nevertheless, my teaching takes its place in a change of configuration that, currently, under the heading of actuality, currently is promoted in terms of slogans that promote the written (*l'écrit*). But, this change, including this testimony, for example, that it is in our day that Rabelais is finally being read, shows that it (115) is based perhaps on a literary shift that suits me better.

As an author I am less implicated than people might imagine. My *Ecrits*, a title that is more ironic than people might believe because what is at stake in short are reports produced in function of congresses. Or let us say, I would really like them to be heard like

that, as open letters, in which no doubt I bring into question every time a slice of my teaching, anyway, that gives their tone.

Far in any case from my committing myself to this literary brou-ha-ha, which a psychoanalysis short of alibis is attaching itself to, I expose in it an unfailing tendency, by demonstrating the incapacity of its practice to justify the slightest literary judgement.

It is nevertheless striking that I opened this collection of my *Ecrits*, with an article that I isolated by extracting it from its chronology - chronology was the guiding principle there - and that here, what is at stake is a story that one must say is quite curious because it cannot be entered into the organised list - you know that this has been made - of dramatic situations.

Anyway let us leave that. The story for its part, is constructed from what happens with the posting of a letter, a missive, without knowing what is going to happen. It is about following it and from what terminus there can be based the fact that I for my part can say about this letter, say in connection with it, that a letter always reaches its destination. And this, after the detours that it underwent in the story, renders a final account, as I might say, without having any recourse to the contents of the letter. This is what renders remarkable the effect that it brings to bear on those who one after another come into possession of it, however ardent they may be about the power that it confers. And to claim that this effect of illusion can only be articulated, which is what I did, as an effect of feminisation. This means - I apologise for coming back to it - clearly distinguishing, I am talking about what I am doing, the letter and the master signifier in so far as here it carries it. It carries it in its envelope, since here what is at stake is a letter in the sense of an epistle. Now, I claim that I am not making here a metaphorical use of the word letter, since precisely the story consists in the fact that there passes in it like 'Hey

presto!' the message of which it is the writing (*l'écrit*), the letter itself then, which makes the journey.

My critique, if there is any reason to take it as literary, can only be brought to bear then, and this is what I try to do, on what Poe does, being a writer himself, in formulating such a message about the letter. It is clear that in not saying it as such, in the way that I for my part say it, he is not avowing it inadequately but all the more rigorously.

(116) Nevertheless, the elision, the elision of this message can in no way be elucidated by any trait whatsoever of his psycho-biography; this elision would rather be filled in by it. A psychoanalyst who, perhaps you remember, scoured the other texts of Poe, here abandons her dishcloths! Marie does not even touch it! So much for Poe's text.

But as regards my text, could it not be solved by my own psycho-biography? The wish that I might formulate, for example, of being one day properly read. But, for that, for that to be worthwhile, it would be first of all necessary to develop, that whoever undertakes this interpretation, should develop what I mean by the fact that the letter carries far enough to always arrive, as I say, at its destination.

It is there perhaps that I am for the moment closely linked with those devoted to writing (*l'écriture*). It is certain that as usual psychoanalysis here is on the receiving end from literature and it might first of all take from it the line which would make of resorting to repression a less psycho-biographical idea. For my part, if I propose the text of Poe, with what is behind it, to psychoanalysis, it is precisely because it is unable to tackle it without showing its failure. It is in that way that I illuminate psychoanalysis, and you know, you know what I am invoking in this way, it is at the back of my book, in this way I am invoking those who seek enlightenment (*les lumières*). Nevertheless I illuminate psychoanalysis by demonstrating where the

hole is in it. There is nothing illegitimate in that. It has already borne fruit, as has been known for a long time, in optics, and the most recent physics, that of the photon, makes use of it. It is by this method that psychoanalysis may better justify its intrusion into literary criticism. This means that literary criticism may effectively renew itself from the fact that psychoanalysis is there so that texts can measure themselves against it, precisely from the fact that the riddle is on its side, and that it remains coy about it. But those, those psychoanalysts about whom it is no lie to say that rather than they exercising psychoanalysis, they are exercised by it, badly understand my remarks, at least when they are taken as a body.

As a way of getting to them, I oppose truth and knowledge. It is the first, in which immediately they recognise that their office is put in the dock, it is their truth that I am waiting for. I insist, correcting my aim, by saying a knowledge that is checkmated (*en échec*), this is where psychoanalysis shows itself at its best. A knowledge that is checkmated as one might say a shape that is damaged, that does not mean a failure of knowledge (*échec du savoir*). And forthwith I learn that people feel themselves dispensed from showing that they have any knowledge.

Is it supposed to be a dead letter that I put as a title to one of these (117) pieces that I call *Ecrits, The letter the agency (La lettre l'instance)* as reason of the unconscious? Does this not sufficiently designate what in the letter, by having to insist, is not there of right, if it is with the force of reason that it advances. To say that this reason is mean or extreme, I have already done it on occasion, shows clearly the bifidity in which any measure is engaged. But is there nothing in the real, which can do without this mediation? This might be perhaps a frontier. A frontier, by separating two territories, has only one defect, but it is an important one. It symbolises that they are the same, as I might say, in any case for whoever crosses it. I do not know whether you have thought about it, but it is the principle for

which one day a man called von Uxküll made up the term *Umwelt*. This is done on the principle that it is the reflection of the *Innenwelt*, it is the promotion of the frontier to ideology. It is obviously an unfortunate starting point that a biology, because it was a biology that von Uxküll wanted to found with that, a biology which already gives itself right at the beginning, the fact of adaptation, in particular, which forms the basis of this coupling *Umwelt-Innenwelt*. Obviously, selection, selection is no better when it is an ideology. It is in canonising itself as natural that it is shown to be all the less so.

I am going to propose something, like that, quite bluntly to come after *a letter, a litter*. For my part I am going to say, is not the letter the literal because it is founded on the littoral? Because that is something different to a frontier. Moreover you have perhaps noticed that they are never confused. The littoral, is something that posits a domain, as being entirely making with another, if you wish, a frontier, but precisely because they have absolutely nothing in common, not even a reciprocal relation. Is the letter not properly speaking littoral? The edge of the hole in knowledge that psychoanalysis designates precisely, when it tackles it, from the letter, is this not what it designates?

The funny thing, is to note how psychoanalysis is obliged in a way by its own movement to fail to recognise the sense of what nevertheless the letter says *literally (à la lettre)*, make no mistake, when all its interpretations can be summed up in enjoyment. Between enjoyment and knowledge, the letter might be the littoral. All of this does not prevent that what I said about the unconscious remaining there, all the same taking precedence, otherwise what I am putting forward would have absolutely no sense. We still have to know how the unconscious, which I say is the effect of language because it presupposes its structure as necessary and sufficient, how it commands this function of the letter.

(118) The fact that it is the instrument proper for the inscription of discourse does not make it in any way inappropriate to serve for what I make of it, when in the agency of the letter, for example, that I spoke about just now, I use it to show the operation of what your man, someone called Jean Tardieu, called one word taken for another, indeed the word taken by another, in other words metaphor and metonymy, as an effect of the sentence. So that it easily symbolises then all the effects of signifiers, but this does absolutely not require that the letter, in these very effects, for which it serves me as an instrument, should be primary. An examination is required less about this primary character, which is not even to be supposed, but about what in language calls the littoral to the literal.

Nothing of what I inscribed with the help of letters about the formations of the unconscious in order to rescue them from the way Freud formulates, states them, more simply as facts of language, nothing allows there to be confused, as has been done, the letter with the signifier. What I inscribed with the help of letters about the formations of the unconscious does not authorise making a signifier of the letter and of granting it, what is more, a primacy with regard to the signifier.

Such a confusing discourse could only arise from the discourse that is important to me, and precisely, which is important to me in another discourse that I pinpointed when the time had come as University discourse. In other words, as I have underlined sufficiently for a year and a half, I think, in other words knowledge put to use starting from the semblance.

The slightest feeling for the experience that I am warding off, can only be situated from a different discourse than that one. I should have protected the product of this discourse which I designated, no more, without admitting it, as mine. I was spared it, thank God, even

though by bringing it to me, in the sense I mentioned earlier, I am being pestered.

If I found acceptable the models that Freud articulates in a project about how to describe the clearing, the drilling of imprecise routes, I would not for all that have taken up the metaphor of writing. And precisely, it is on this point of the *Project* that I do not find it acceptable. Writing is not an impression, despite everything that is being said in terms of a blah-blah about the famous *Wunderblock*.

When I took advantage of Letter 52, it was in order to read there what Freud was able to state under the term that he forges of WZ, *Wahrnehmungszeichen*, and to note that it was what he was able to find closest to the signifier at a time when Saussure had still not (119) brought to birth this famous signifier, which, all the same, does not date from him, because it dates from the Stoics. That Freud writes it there with two letters, since I moreover only write it with one, in no way proves that the letter is primary.

So then I am going to try to indicate to you today the core of what for us the letter appears to produce as a consequence, and of language, precisely from the fact that I say, that it dwells in whoever speaks. I will borrow its features from what in an economy of language allows to be outlined what advances, to my way of thinking, that literature may be in the process of turning towards *lituraterre*. You must not be surprised to see me setting about a literal demonstration because this means marching in step with the way in which the question is advanced. One might perhaps see in it, indeed see there being affirmed what a demonstration that I call literary might be. I am still a little bit at the edge. Why not, this time, throw myself into it?

I have just come back from a trip that I had wanted to make to Japan, because on a first, a first trip, I had experienced the littoral. You can understand me from what I said a little earlier about the *Umwelt*

which I repudiated, precisely because of that, because of making the trip impossible, which, if you follow my formulae, would be to guarantee its real. Only there you are, it was premature. It is the departure that this makes impossible, unless we sing: "Let's go, let's go!" That is done a lot moreover. I would only note one moment of this trip, the one that as it happens I gathered, from what, from a new route, which as it happens I took simply because of the fact that the first time that I went there, it was simply prohibited. I have to admit that it was not on the outward journey, along the Arctic Circle, which traces this route for the aeroplane, that I managed to read what? What I was seeing of the Siberian plain.

I am in the process of proposing for you a Siberian trial (*un essai de sibériétique*). This trial would not have seen the light of day if the distrust of the Soviets, not in my regard, but with regard to aeroplanes, had allowed me to see the industries, the military installations which makes Siberia important. But anyway, this distrust, is a condition that we will call accidental. Why not even occidental, if one puts a little killing (*occire*) into it; what is being piled up in southern Siberia is what we are in for!

The only decisive condition is here precisely the condition of littoral. For me, because I am a little hard of hearing, it only operated on the return journey as being literally what Japan, from its letter, had no doubt done to me, a little bit too much tickling, which is just what is necessary for me to experience it. I say that I am (120) experiencing it because of course, in order to locate it, to anticipate it, I had already done it here, when I spoke to you a little bit about the Japanese tongue. About the fact that what properly creates this tongue, is writing, I already told you that.

What was required no doubt for that, was just this little bit too much that I needed in terms of what is called art should represent something. This stems from the fact of what Japanese painting shows

here about its marriage to the letter, and very precisely in the form of calligraphy. I am fascinated by things that are suspended, *kakemono*, that is how it is said, things that are suspended on the wall of every museum over there, bearing the inscription of characters, Chinese information, that I know a little, very little about. But inasmuch as I knew it, it allowed me to measure what is elided in cursive writing where the particularity of each hand crushes the universal, in other words, taking up what I teach you, only takes its value from the signifier. You remember? The stroke is always vertical. It is still true even if there is no stroke.

So then, in cursive writing I cannot find the character, because I am still a novice; but this is not the important thing, because what I am calling this particularity can be based on a firmer shape. The important thing is what it adds to it. It is a dimension, or again, as I taught you to play on that, a *demansion*, where there dwells what I have already introduced to you in the last or the second last seminar, a word that I write to amuse myself as *papludun*. It is the *demansion* which you know allows me, it is all very well to say all that, from the little mathematical game of Peano, etc., and the way in which Frege has to tackle it to reduce the series of natural numbers, in inverted commas, to logic, the one then, from which I establish the subject in what I am going to call again today, because I am doing literature and I am happy, you are going to recognise it, I had written it in a form, in recent times, as the *Hun-en-peluçe*. The Hun is of great use, it can be put in the place of what I call *l'Achose*, and that puts a stopper in it with the small **o** (*petit a*) which not by chance can be reduced like that, as I designate it, to a letter. At the level of calligraphy, this is the letter that is at stake in a wager, but which one? That is won with ink and a brush.

There you are, this is how it invincibly appeared to me in a circumstance that must be remembered, by the fact that it is necessary then that there should be distinguished erasure. Namely, that between

the clouds, there appeared to me the trickling down which is the only trace to appear by operating in it still more than indicating the relief at this latitude in what one could call the Siberian plain. A plain that is really desolate, in the proper sense of (121) the word, of any vegetation, except the reflections, the reflections of this streaming which push into a shadow what does not reflect.

What is this trickling? It is a bouquet. It acts like a bouquet, in the fact that elsewhere I distinguished by its first feature and from the fact that it effaces. I said it one time, but people always forget a part of the thing, I said it in connection with the unary stroke, it is from the effacing of the stroke that the subject is designated. This is noticed then in two phases. It is necessary therefore that erasing should be distinguished from it.

Litura, Lituraterre. The erasing of any trace that was there before, this is what makes a land of the littoral. *Litura pure*, is the literal. Here, to produce this erasing, is to reproduce this half by which the subject subsists. Those who have been here for some time, but there must be fewer and fewer, ought to remember what one day I narrated about the adventures of half a chicken. To produce the only, definitive erasure, this is the exploit of calligraphy. You can always try, try to do simply what I am not going to do because I would fail, first of all because I have no brush. Try to make this horizontal bar, which is traced out from left to right, to represent by a stroke the unary one as a character, frankly. You will spend a long time finding out what erasure that is attacking and what is the suspense that arrests it, so that what you will do will be lamentable, it is hopeless for an Westerner. A different movement is necessary that can only be caught by being detached, from whatever you cross out.

Between centre and absence, between knowledge and enjoyment, there is littoral which only veers towards the literal from the fact that this bend is one you can take in the same way at every instant. It is

only from that that you can hold yourself to be the agent who sustains it.

What is revealed by my vision of streaming, by what dominates the erasure, is that by being produced between the clouds, it is conjugated at its source. It is indeed in Aristophanes' clouds that I am called to find what is involved in the signifier, I mean the semblance *par excellence*, since it is from its rupture that there rains down this effect from the fact that there is precipitated from it something that was a material in suspension.

It has to be said that the Japanese painting which I told you earlier mixed in calligraphy so very well, why? And that here there is no lack of clouds. It is from where I was at that moment that I really clearly understood the function of these golden clouds which literally block, hide a whole part of the scenes which in places, (122) places which are things which unfold in a different sense, the ones that are called *makemono*. They preside over the distribution of little scenes. Why? How can it be that these people who know how to draw, experience the need to mix them into this pile of clouds, if not precisely that this is what introduces the dimension of the signifier. And the letter which erases, is distinguished by being a rupture then, of the semblance, which dissolves whatever pretended to be a form, a phenomenon, a meteor. That's it, I already told you, that science operates at the start in the most tangible way on perceptible forms. But at the same time it must also be that in ridding them of what from this rupture constitutes enjoyment, namely, by dissipating from them what they sustain from this hypothesis, if I can express myself in this way, of enjoyment, which in fact constitutes the world, because the idea of the world, is that. To think that it is made up of such drives that moreover represent its void?

Well then, what is evoked in terms of enjoyment because of the fact that a semblance is broken, this is what in the real - this is the

important point - presents itself in the real as furrowing (*ravinement*). This defines for you the way in which writing can be said to be in the real the furrowing of the signified, in other words the amount of semblance that has rained down in so far as it is what makes the signified. Writing does not trace out the signifier. It only goes back to it by taking a name, but exactly in the same way as this happens to all the things that have been named by the signifying battery after it has numbered them. Since, of course, I am not sure that my discourse is being understood, I am going, all the same, to have to pin it down by an opposition. Writing, the letter, is in the real, and the signifier, in the symbolic. Like that, this can act as a little jingle for you.

I come back to a later moment in the aeroplane. We are going to advance a little like that: I told you that it was on the return journey. So then there, what is striking is to see them appearing. There are other traces that one sees for their part being sustained in isobars; obviously, traces that are of the order of an embankment, anyway, in general, isobars. This makes them normal to those whose slope, one could say, stands out in the clearest relief, and is marked by curves.

Where I was, it was very clear, I had already seen at Osaka how the auto-routes seemed to come down from the sky, that is the only place that they were able to set them up like that, one above the other. There is a certain Japanese architecture, the most modern one, which is very well able to recapture the ancient. Japanese architecture consists essentially in the flapping of a bird's wing. This helped me to understand, to see right away that the shortest path between one point and another, would never have shown itself (123) to anyone, if there were not the cloud that quite frankly takes on the appearance of a road? Nobody in the world ever follows a straight line, neither man, nor the amoeba, nor the fly, nor the branch, nor anything at all. According to the latest news, we know that a beam of light does not

follow it either, completely solidary as it is with the universal curvature.

The straight line in all of this all the same inscribes something. It inscribes distance, but distance, according to Newton's laws, is absolutely nothing but an effective factor of a dynamic that we will call a cascade, the one that ensures that everything that falls follows a parabola.

So then, there is no straight line except in writing, of surveying except from the sky.

But they are both one and the other, in so far as they are such to sustain the straight line, they are artefacts because they only dwell in language. This all the same should not be forgotten. Our science is only operational from a streaming down of combined little letters and drawings.

Sous le pont Mirabeau, like under that of a journal that was mine in which I had put up as an ensign a bridge-ear borrowed from Horus Apollo, *sous le pont Mirabeau coule la Seine*, a primal scene, it is a scene such, do not forget, in re-reading Freud that there may beat in it the Roman V of five o'clock. It is in the *Wolfman*. But moreover that one does not enjoy it, is the misfortune of the interpretation.

That the symptom sets up the order on which our politics proves to be established - this is the step that it took - implies on the other hand that everything that is articulated of this order is open to interpretation. That is why we are quite right to put psychoanalysis under the heading of politics. And this may not be a very peaceful situation, if psychoanalysis proved to be more aware of what figured in politics up to now.

It would perhaps be enough, to put our hope elsewhere, which is what my men of letters do, if I can make them my companions. It would be enough for us to make a different use of writing than that of a tribune or tribunal in order for there to operate in it other words that we have to make up ourselves, that we would have to make our tribute.

I said, and I never forget it: there is no meta-language. Any logic is falsified by starting from a language-object, as it does not fail to do up to today. There is then no meta-language, but the writing that is fabricated from language might perhaps be the material that would bring about a strain and make me change my remarks. I see no other hope for those who are writing today.

(124) Is it possible in short to constitute from the littoral a discourse such that it is characterised, as I am putting the question this year, by not being emitted by a semblance? This is obviously the question that is only proposed in what is called *avant-garde* literature, which itself is a littoral fact and, therefore, is not sustained by a semblance, but for all that proves nothing, except, by showing the break that a discourse alone can produce. I say produce, put forward with a production effect, this is the schema of my quadrupeds of last year.

What a literature seems to claim in its ambition, is what I pinpoint as *lituraterrir*, it is to organise itself by a movement that it calls scientific. It is a fact that in science, writing has done marvels, and that everything shows that this marvel is not ready to run dry. Nevertheless, physical science finds itself, is going to find itself led to the consideration of the symptom in events by pollution. There are already scientists who are sensitive to it by the pollution of the part of the terrestrial that is called without any further critique, environment. This is the idea of Uxküll: *Umwelt*, but behaviourised, namely, completely cretinised.

In order to *litturaterrir* myself, I point out that in furrowing I created here images certainly but no metaphor: writing is this furrowing. What I wrote is included in it. When I talk about enjoyment, I legitimately invoke the audience I accumulate, and no less naturally the one I deprive myself of; the crowd you are keeps me busy. I prepared the furrowing.

That there should be included in the Japanese tongue, this is where I take things up again, a writing-effect, this is the important thing, offers us some resources to give an example of *lituratterrir*. The important thing is that the effect of writing remains attached to writing. That what conveys the writing effect in it is a specialised writing by the fact that in Japanese, this specialised writing can be read in two different pronunciations. In *oniomi* – I am not trying to bluff you, I will say as little Japanese as possible – *on-yomi* that is how it is called, and its pronunciation in character, is pronounced as such distinctly in *kun-yomi*, the way in which one says in Japanese what the character means.

But naturally you are going to walk straight into it, namely, that under the pretext that the character is a letter, you are going to believe that I am in the process of saying that in Japanese, the wreckage of the signifier flows on the river of the signified. It is the (125) letter and not the sign that here acts as a support to the signifier. But like anything else, by following the law of metaphor which I reminded you in recent times constitutes the essence of language, it is always moreover through it that language, discourse, catches anything whatsoever in the net of the signifier, therefore writing itself.

Only there you are! It is promoted from this to the function of a referent, just as essential as any things and this is what changes the status of the subject. It is through this that it takes its support from a constellated heaven and not simply from the unary trait for its fundamental identification. Well then! Precisely, there are too many

of them, too many supports, it is the same thing as not to have any. That is why it takes its support, elsewhere, on 'thou'. The fact is in Japanese, you see all the grammatical forms for the slightest statement; to say something like that, anything whatsoever, there are more or less polite ways of saying it, according to the way I implicate him in the thou. I implicate him if I am Japanese. Since I am not Japanese, I do not do it, it would wear me out.

When you have seen - it is really within everyone's reach to learn Japanese - that the slightest thing is subject in it to variations in the statement, which are variations of politeness, you will have learned something. You will have learned that in Japanese, the truth reinforces the structure of fiction that I denote in it, precisely, by adding to it the laws of politeness.

Curiously, this seems to have as a result that there is nothing to defend against the repressed, because the repressed finds itself lodging in this reference to the letter.

In other words, the subject is divided by language, but one of its registers may be satisfied with the reference to writing and the other to the exercise of speech.

This no doubt is what gave my dear friend Roland Barthes this intoxicating feeling that with all his good manners, the Japanese subject envelops nothing, at least this is what he says in a way that I recommend to you, because it is a sensational work, *L'empire des signes*, he entitles it. In titles, people often make an incorrect use of terms. That is done for the editors. Which means obviously that it is the empire of semblances. It is enough to read the text to notice it.

The mythical Japanese, the little commonplace Japanese, I have been told, does not think much of it, at least that is what I heard over there. And in effect, however excellent this writing of Roland Barthes may

be, I would oppose to it what I am saying today (126) namely, that nothing is more distinct from the void hollowed out by writing than the semblance. First of all by the fact that it is the first of my bowls that are always ready to give enjoyment a welcome, or at least to invoke it by its artifice. From our practices, nothing communicates less of itself than a particular subject who, when all is said and done, hides nothing. He only has to manipulate you, and I assure you that he does not fail to do so. For me it is a delight, because I adore that. You are an element among others of the ceremonial in which the subject is composed precisely by being able to decompose himself. The *bunraku*, perhaps some of you saw that sometime ago when they came to Paris. I went to see it again over there, I had already seen it the first time. Well then, the *bunraku* is the mainspring, it shows the very ordinary structure for those to whom it gives their very customs. You know that you see alongside the puppet clearly in view the people who are operating it, moreover as in the *bunraku*, everything that is said in a Japanese conversation may be read by a reciter. This is what must have relieved Barthes. Japan is the place where it is most natural to be supported by an interpreter, one is very happy, one can duplicate oneself with an interpreter, this does not require in any case an interpretation. You can imagine how relieved I was! Japanese, is the perpetual translation of the events of language.

What I love, is that the only communication that I had, outside the Europeans of course that I am able to understand with our usual misunderstanding, the only one that I had with a Japanese is also the only one which, there as elsewhere, might possibly be a communication, by not being a dialogue, it is the scientific paper (*communication*).

I went to see an eminent biologist whom I will not name, by reason of the Japanese rules of politeness, this encouraged him to show me his works, naturally, where they are done, on the blackboard. The fact that for lack of information I understood nothing about it, in no

way rules out that what he wrote, his formulae, by being entirely valid, valid for the molecules of which my descendants will make themselves the subject without me ever having to know how I will transmit them to them which made it likely that for my part I classify them among living beings.

An asceticism of writing takes nothing away from the advantages that we can find in literary criticism. This seems to me, to close the loop on something more coherent, because of what I already put forward, this it seems to me can only get across by joining up with this impossible “it is written” from which there will be established perhaps one day the sexual relationship.

Seminar 8: Wednesday 19 May 1971

If I begin with the abruptness, in short, of what I have to tell you, it could be explained as follows. The fact is that in what we are exploring, starting from a certain discourse, mine as it happens, mine in so far as it is that of the analyst, let us say that this determines functions, in other words, that the functions are only determined starting from a certain discourse. So then, at this level of functions determined by a certain discourse, I can establish the equivalence that writing is enjoyment (*l'écrit, c'est la jouissance*). Naturally, that can only be situated within this first articulation of functions determined by a discourse. Let us say that it holds exactly the same place within these functions.

This being stated quite abruptly, why? In order that you may put it to the test. You will see that it will always lead you somewhere. And even by preference to something exact. This of course does not dispense me from taking care to introduce you into it along suitable paths, namely, not those which justify it for me, given from where I speak to you, but those by which it can be explained. I suppose, I do not necessarily suppose, that I am addressing myself here always to analysts, besides, this is what accounts for the fact that my discourse is not easily followed. It is very precisely in so far as there is something that, in the discourse of the analyst, creates an obstacle to a certain type of inscription. This inscription, nevertheless, is what I leave, it is what I propose, it is what I hope will get across, will get across from a point, from which, as one might say, the analytic discourse takes on a new energy.

(128) So then, it is a matter then of making tangible how the transmission of a letter has a relationship with something essential, fundamental in the organisation of discourse whatever it may be, namely, enjoyment. For that of course, it is necessary that each time I get you into tune with the thing. How to do it, if not by recalling the basic example from which I started, namely, that it is very explicitly by studying the letter as such, in so far as what?, in so far as, as I said, it has a feminising effect, that I open my *Ecrits*. This letter in short, I underlined it again the last time functions very specifically in the fact that no one knows anything about its content, and that up to the end, when all is said and done, no one will know anything about it.

It is very exemplary. It is very exemplary in the fact that, naturally, it is only to the simpleton and even there, I think all the same it is only to the simpleton that the idea has not come, that this letter is something as summary, as crude, as something that might bear witness to what is commonly called a sexual relationship. Even

though it may have been written by a man and it is said and it is underlined by a nobleman, by a nobleman and to a Queen, it is obvious that it is...that this is not what creates the drama, and that this letter, is in the style of the Court, as I might say, namely, something well grounded, is the best definition that can be given about the distribution of enjoyment. It is in the style of the Court that in this distribution, it puts what one can call properly speaking the sexual relationship in its place, namely, quite obviously, the lowest one. No one picks out as remarkable the services that a great lady may in this respect receive from a lackey.

With the Queen, of course, and precisely because it is the Queen, things ought to have a different emphasis. But first of all, then, it is posited, what we know from experience, is that a man born if I might say from a certain ancestry is one who cannot take umbrage at a liaison of his wife except in the measure of decency, namely, of respecting the proper forms. The only thing that could raise an objection to it is of course the introduction of bastards into the line of descent, but even that, after all, may serve to rejuvenate the bloodline. We see ourselves here obviously, in the framework that, even though it is not especially present in contemporary society, is nonetheless exemplary and fundamental in order to think out what is involved in social relationships. By this it can be seen, I am saying in short that, there is nothing like an order founded on artifice to make there appear this element which here, in appearance, is precisely the (129) one which must appear irreducible in the real, namely, the function of need. If I have told you that, there is an order in which it is altogether put in its place, that a subject however highly placed, reserves for himself this irreducible share of enjoyment, the minimal share that cannot be sublimated, as Freud explicitly puts it, only an order founded on artifice, I specified the Court, the Court in so far as it duplicates the artefact of nobility with this second artefact of an organised distribution of enjoyment, and it is only there that need can

decently find its place. The need explicitly specified as such is sexual need.

Only what appears on the one hand to specify the natural, as what, from a point of view that is a biological theorising of the sexual relationship, might make of need the starting point for what must result from it, namely, reproduction, we note that if the artefact is satisfying for a certain limited type of theorising on the one hand, on the other, it obviously yields to the fact that reproduction may moreover in this case not be, in quotes, a 'legitimate' reproduction. This need, this irreducibility in the sexual relationship, one can admit, of course, that it always exists, and Freud affirms it. But what is certain, is that it is not measurable - as long as it is not explicitly, and it can only be so in an artefact, in the artefact of the relation to the Other with a capital O – it is not measurable, and it is indeed in this element of indetermination that there is signed what is fundamental, which is very precisely that the sexual relationship is not inscribable, cannot be grounded as a relationship.

This indeed is why the letter, the letter from which I start to open my *Ecrits*, is designated by the fact that it is, and by the fact of how it indicates everything that Freud himself develops, which is that if, if it can be used for something that is of the order of sex, it is certainly not a sexual relationship, but a relationship, let us say, that is sexed (*sexué*). The difference between the two is the following. It is that, this is what Freud proved, the decisive thing he contributed, the fact is that by the mediation of the unconscious, we glimpse that everything that belongs to language has to deal with sex, is in a certain relationship with sex, but very specifically in that the sexual relationship cannot, at least up to the present moment, in any way be inscribed in it. The so called sexualisation by Freudian doctrine of what is involved in functions that are called subjective, provided one situates them clearly, situates them in the order of language, the so-called sexualisation consists essentially in the fact that what ought to

result from language, namely, that the sexual relation in some way or (130) other should be able to be inscribed in it, shows precisely, and this in fact, shows its failure, it is not inscribable. You already see functioning here something that forms part of this effect of setting aside, this effect of division which is the one with which we still regularly have to deal, and it is indeed for that reason that you must in a way form yourself in it. The fact is that I state for example that for the sexual relationship, it is precisely in the measure that something fails (*échoue*), fails because it is – is it stated in language? - but precisely what I said is not ‘stated’, it is ‘inscribable’, inscribable in that what is required, that what is required for it to have a function, is that from language, something can be produced which is explicitly a writing as such of the function. Namely, this something that I already once symbolised for you in the simplest fashion, namely, f , in a certain relationship with x ($f \quad x$).

So then, at the moment of saying that language is this something that does not take into account the sexual relationship, how does it not take it into account? By the fact that the inscription that it is able to comment, there is no way that this inscription can be, because it is in this that it consists, can be what I define as an effective inscription of something which is supposed to be the sexual relationship in so far as it would put into relationship the two poles, the two terms which would be entitled man and woman, in so far as this man and this woman are sexes respectively specified as masculine and feminine, in whom, in what? – in a being *who speaks*. In other words, who dwelling in language, draws from it this usage which is that of the word.

That is why, that is why that here it is not unimportant to put forward the letter, properly speaking, as being in a certain relationship, a relationship of a woman with what in terms of written law, is inscribed in the context where the thing happens. Namely, because of the fact that she is, under the title of Queen, the image of the woman

as conjoined to the King. It is in as far as something is incorrectly symbolised here, and typically around the relationship as sexual – and it is not indifferent that precisely it can only be incarnated in beings of fiction – it is in this measure that the fact that a letter, that a letter should be addressed to her, takes on its value, takes on the value that I designate to read myself, to state myself in my own remarks, *this sign*, this sign, I mean the letter, is indeed that of the woman “because she valorises her being in it, by establishing it outside the law, which still contains her through the effect of its origins, in a position of signifier, indeed of fetish”. It is clear that without the introduction of psychoanalysis, such a statement, which (131) is nevertheless the one from which there proceeds, I would say, the revolt of the woman, such a statement saying that the law always contains her through the effect of her origins in a position of signifier, even of fetish, could not of course, I repeat, be stated outside the introduction of psychoanalysis.

So then, it is precisely in this that the sexual relationship is, as I might say, made into an affair of state (*étatisé*), namely, by being incarnated in that of the King and the Queen, highlighting the fictional structure of the truth, it is starting from there that the letter takes on its function, its effect, which is surely posited by being in relationship with deficiency, the deficiency marked by a certain arbitrary and fictive promotion of the sexual relationship, and that it is here that, taking on its value, it poses its question. It is all the same an opportunity here – you should not consider that this is connected in some way in a direct fashion with what I have just recalled, but this sort of jump, of change of phase, is properly required by the point to which I want to lead you, it is an opportunity to mark that here there is confirmed, of course, there is confirmed the fact that the truth only progresses, only progresses from a structure of fiction. Namely, that precisely, in its essence, it is from the fact that there is promoted somewhere a structure of fiction, which is properly the very essence of language, that something can be produced which is what? But

precisely, this sort of questioning, this sort of pressure, of circumscribing, which puts the truth, as I might say, up against the wall of verification.

That is nothing other than the dimension of science. This is what shows precisely that as regards the path by which there is motivated, the path by which we see science progressing, the fact is that logic plays no small part in it. Whatever may be the originally, fundamentally, basically fictitious character of what makes up the material by which language is articulated, it is clear that there is a path that is called verification. It is what is attached to grasping where the fiction, as I might say, comes up short, and what brings it to a halt. It is clear that here, whatever it may be that has allowed us to write, and you will later see what that means, the progress of logic, I mean the written path along which it has progressed, it is clear that this checking is quite efficacious because it is inscribed within the very system of a fiction. It is called contradiction.

That if science apparently has progressed quite differently than along the path of tautology, this in no way changes the import of my remark, namely, that the summoning, brought to bear from a certain point, on truth to be verifiable, is precisely what has forced the (132) abandonment of all sorts of other supposedly intuitive premises, and that if – I am not going to go back on it today, I have sufficiently insisted on the characteristic of everything that preceded, opened up the path to the Newtonian discovery, for example – it is quite precisely from the fact that no fiction will prove to be satisfying other than one of them which precisely had to abandon any recourse to intuition and limit itself to something that can be inscribed. This therefore is why we have to attach ourselves to what is involved in the inscribable in the relationship to verification. In order to finish, of course, with what I said about the effect of the letter in *The purloined letter*, what did I explicitly say? That it feminises those who find themselves in the position of being in its shadow.

Of course, it is here that we touch on the importance of this notion, the function of the shadow, in as much as already the last time I stated to you what precisely a writing is, I mean something that presented itself in a literal, or literary, form. The shadow, in order to be produced, needs a source of light. Yes, and what I did was only tangible for you because of what is involved in the *Aufklärung*, from something that preserves the structure of fiction. I am speaking about the historical epoch, of course, which was not short, and it may be of use to us, it is so here, and this is what I am doing, to retrace its paths, or to take them up again. But in themselves, it is clear that what creates the light, is precisely what, starting from this field, defines itself as being that of the truth. And it is as such, as such a way, that the light that it spreads at every instant, even if it has this effect, effective by the fact that what is opaque in it projects a shadow, and that it is this shadow which carries the effect, that we always have to question this truth itself about its structure as fiction.

It is in this way that when all is said and done it emerges that, as it is stated, stated explicitly in this *écrit*, the letter, of course, it is not the woman, the woman whose address it bears, that it satisfies in reaching its destination, but the subject, namely, very precisely, to redefine it, what is divided in the phantasy. Namely, reality in so far as it is generated by a structure of fiction. This indeed is how the tale ends, at least in the way that in a second text, my one, I redo it, and it is from that that we should start to further question again what is involved in the letter. It is very precisely in the measure that this has never been done that, in order to do it, I ought to prolong in the same way this discourse on the letter.

(133) There you are! What we have to start from is all the same the fact that it is not for nothing that I summon you, that I call on you, to neglect nothing that is produced in the domain of logic. It is certainly not that you should oblige yourselves, as one might say, to follow its

constructions and its detours. It is in the fact that, nowhere like in these constructions that entitle themselves “symbolic logic”, nowhere does there better appear a deficit of any possibility of reflection. I mean that nothing is more embarrassed, this is well known is it not, than the introduction of a treatise of logic, the impossibility of logic to posit itself in a justifiable way is something that is quite striking. This is why the experience of reading these treatises, and they are all the more striking, of course, in the measure that they are more modern, as they are more in the vanguard of what effectively and very effectively constitutes a progress of logic. This is a project of the inscription of what is called logical articulation, the articulation of logic itself being incapable of defining itself or its goals, or its source, nor anything whatsoever that even resembles a [scientific] subject. It is very strange. It is very strange and it is precisely this that makes it very suggestive, because this indeed is what makes it worthwhile to touch, to explore, to explore what is involved in it, what is involved in something which only situates itself undoubtedly with respect to language. And to grasp that if perhaps in this language, nothing that is only ever put forward in an awkward way as not being a correct usage of this language, can very precisely not be stated except by not being able to justify itself, or by only being able to justify itself in a most confused way, by all sorts of attempts like, for example, those which consist in dividing language into an object language and a metalanguage. This is completely contrary to what is immediately demonstrated, namely, that there is no way for a single instant of speaking about this so called object language without using of course, not a metalanguage, but well and truly a language which is an everyday language. But in this very failure there can be exposed what is involved in the articulation that specifically has the closest relationship with the functioning of language, namely, the following articulation, which is, namely, that the relationship, the sexual relationship, cannot be written.

So then, in this respect, and with the goal only, as I might say, of making some movements that recall to us the dimension in which we move around, I will recall how first of all there is presented, there is presented what inaugurates the outline of logic, as formal logic, in (134) Aristotle. Naturally I am not going to take up again for you – even though it would be very instructive, it would be very instructive but after all, each one of you can simply take the trouble to open the *Prior analytics*, you can test yourself against this reprise. Open then the *Prior analytics*, and you will see what a syllogism is. And after all it is from the syllogism that we must start, at least it is from there that I am taking things up again, since at our second last meeting, it was on this that I ended.

I do not want to take it up by giving examples, because we are limited by time for that, by giving examples of all the forms of the syllogism. Let it be enough for us to highlight rapidly what is involved in the Universal and the Particular, and quite simply in their affirmative form. I am going to take the syllogism described as *Darii*, namely, made up of one Universal affirmative and two Particulars, and I am going to recall to you everything that is involved in a certain way of presenting things. Well then, it is simply that, here nothing in any case can function, can function except by substituting into the texture of discourse, to substitute for the signifier the hole made by replacing it by the letter. Because, if we state the following, just taking *Darii*, that, to use Aristotle's terms, "*every man is good*", the "every man" is the Universal and I have sufficiently underlined for you, sufficiently prepared you in any case to understand the fact that I can with nothing else recall, that the Universal does not have, in order to stand up, the need for the existence of any man. "*Every man is good*" may mean that there is no man who is not good, everything that is not good is not a man, right? Second articulation: "*Some animals are men*", and third articulation, which is called the conclusion, the second being the minor, "*therefore some animals are good*".

It is clear that this specifically only holds up from the usage of the letter for the reason that, it is clear that, unless they are supported by a letter, there is no equivalence between the “every man”, the “every man” subject of the Universal, which here plays the role of what is called the middle term, and this same middle term at the place where it is employed as an attribute, namely, that “some animals are men”. Because in truth, this distinction, which deserves to be made, nevertheless demands a lot of care. The man of “every man”, when he is the subject, implies a function of a Universal which very precisely only its symbolic status gives it as a support. Namely, that something is stated as “man”.

(135) Under the species of the attribute and to sustain that some animals are men, it is necessary of course, it is the only thing that distinguishes them, to state that what we call “man” among the animals, is very precisely this type of animal which happens to inhabit language. Of course, it is justifiable in that case to posit that man is good. It is a limitation, it is a limitation very precisely by the fact that the thing on which there can be grounded that man is good depends on the fact, brought out a long time ago, and before Aristotle, that the idea of *good* can only be established from language. For Plato, it is at the foundation of it; there is no language, possible articulation, since for Plato, language is the world of ideas, there is no articulation possible without this primary idea of the good. It is quite possible to question differently what is involved in the good in language, and simply in this case, to have to deduce the consequences which will result from it for the universal position of the fact that “man is good”. As you know, this is what Meng-Tzu does, and it was not for nothing that I put him forward in my previous lectures. Good, what does that mean? Good for what? Or is it simply to say, as has been said for some time “you are very kind, *vous êtes bon*”. If things have got to a certain point that, in the putting in question of what is truth and, moreover, discourse, it is

indeed perhaps in effect this change of emphasis that has come about as regards the use of the word “good”. Good, good! No need to specify: good for the services, good for war, is saying too much about it. The “you are good” has its absolute value. In fact, this is the central link that there is good in discourse; once you dwell in a certain type of discourse, well then you are ready (*bon*) for it to command you.

This indeed is how we are led to the function of the master signifier, which I underlined is not inherent in language in itself, and that language only requires, anyway....I mean, only makes possible a certain determined number of discourses and that all of those at least up to the present, I articulated especially for you last year, that none of them eliminates the function of the master signifier.

To say that some animals are good, is obviously in these conditions not at all a simply formal conclusion. And this was why I underlined earlier that the use of logic, whatever it may state itself, cannot in any way be reduced to a tautology. That some animals are good precisely, is not limited to those who are men, as the existence of (136) those that are called domestic animals implies. And it is not for nothing that for some time I have underlined that you cannot say that they do not have some speech. If they lack language, and, of course, much more the resources of discourse, that does not render them any less subject of the word. It is even this that distinguishes them and that makes them means of production. This, as you see opens a door for us that might lead us a little bit further. I would point out to you that...I leave it to your meditation that in the commandments described as the Decalogue, the woman is assimilated to the aforesaid in the following form: “You shall not covet the wife of your neighbour nor his ox, nor his ass”, and anyway there is an enumeration which is very precisely that of the means of production. This is not to give you an opportunity to snigger but to reflect by bringing together what I am pointing out to you here in passing, with

what formerly, formerly I wanted to say about what was expressed in the commandments, namely, nothing other than the laws of the word, which limits their interest. But it is very important precisely to limit the interest of things in order to know why, really, they have an effect.

Good! Well then, this having been said, faith, as well as I could, namely, by a clearing of the way which is as usual, is that not so, the one I am forced to make of the inverted A, of the buffalo head, I pass on to the next stage, namely what allows us to inscribe the progress of logic. You know that something happened which moreover is very, very beautiful, like that, a little bit more than 2000 years ago, something happened that is called a reinscription of this first attempt made by means of holes in the right place. Namely, by the replacing of terms by letters, terms described as major, minor and middle terms, the terms described as extreme and middle terms, major and minor being the proposition, I apologise for this lapse. You know that with the logic inaugurated by de Morgan and Boole, we have come, it was only inaugurated by them and not pushed to its final point, we arrived at the formulae described as quantifiers.

- Who cannot hear? Nobody? How long have you not been able to hear me?

- When you were at the board.

- So then up to then it was OK? I am grateful to you for telling me when it's not working out. So then listen, I am going to write it rapidly and I'll come back here.

(137) Good. So then I have made these little circles to show you that the bar is not a bar between two $f(x)$, which would besides mean absolutely nothing, and that the bar that you find in the right hand column between each one, each one of the pairs of $f(x)$, this bar is

uniquely linked to the $f(x)$ which is below, namely, signifies its negation. Time is passing quicker than I had imagined, so that this may force me to shorten things a little. The fruit of the operation of complete inscription, the one that was allowed, suggested, by the progress of mathematics, it is because mathematics managed through algebra to be entirely written, that the idea of making use of the letter for something other than for making holes came. Namely, of writing in a different way our four kinds of propositions, in so far as they are centred on the All, on some, namely, on words that it would really not be difficult to show what ambiguities they supported. So then, starting from that idea, people wrote what presented itself first of all as subject. On condition of affecting it with this inverted A, we could take it as the equivalent of “every x ” and that henceforth, what was at stake, was to know in what measure a certain “every x ” could satisfy a relationship of function.

I think that I do not need to underline here – nevertheless I have to, otherwise all of this will appear empty – that the thing has altogether its full sense in mathematics, namely, that precisely in so far as we remain on the letter where there lies the power of mathematics, this x on the right, in so far as it is unknown, can legitimately be posited, or not posited, as being able to find its place in what happens to be the function that corresponds to it; namely, where the same x is taken as a variable. To go quickly, because I told you that it was getting late, I am going to illustrate it. I underlined, I said, I stated, that the x at the left, in the of x specifically, is an unknown. Let us take, for example, the root of a second-degree equation. Can I write, for every root of a second-degree equation, that it can be inscribed in this (138) function that defines x as a variable, the one from which real numbers are established? For those who might be completely like that, for whom this is really a language they have never heard, I underlined that real numbers, are in any case, for them, all the numbers they know. Namely, including irrational numbers even if they do not know what they are. They should simply know that real

numbers, anyway, are done with, they have been given a status; since they do not suspect what imaginary numbers are, I am only giving them an indication to give them an idea that it is worthwhile making a function of real numbers. Good! Well then, it is quite clear that it is not true that for any x , namely, any root of a second-degree equation, one can say that every root of a second-degree equation satisfies the function on which real numbers are founded. Quite simply because there are roots of second-degree equations that are imaginary numbers, which do not form part of the function of real numbers.

Good! What I want to underline for you is the following, it is that with that, people think they have said enough. Well then, no. Enough has not been said, because moreover for everything that is involved in the relationships of every x as well as the relationship that people think they can substitute for some – with which one can be satisfied on occasion – namely, that there exist roots of the second-degree equation which satisfy the function of the real number, and also, that there exist roots of the second-degree equation that do not satisfy it. But in one case as in the other, what results, far from us being able to see here the purely formal transposition, the complete homology of Universal and Particular affirmatives and negatives respectively, the fact is, that what this means, is not that the function is not true. What can be meant by the fact that a function is not true? From the moment that you write a function, this function is what it is. Even if it goes way beyond the function of real numbers. This means that as regards the unknown that constitutes the root of the second-degree equation, I cannot write to lodge in it the function of real numbers. This is something quite different to the Universal negative, whose properties moreover were well designed for us to put it in suspense, as I sufficiently underlined at one time. It is exactly the same at the level of *there exists an x* , there exists an x in connection with which, there exist certain x 's, certain roots of the second-degree equations in connection with which I can write the function described

as real numbers by saying that they satisfy it. There are others in (139) connection with which – it is not a matter of denying the function of real numbers – but in connection with which I cannot write the function of real numbers.

Well then, this is going to introduce us into the third stage which is the one, in short, that everything that I have said to you today is designed, of course, to introduce you to. The fact is, as you have clearly seen, I slipped quite naturally, by trusting the memory of what it is a matter of re-articulating, I slipped over to writing, namely, that the function, with its little bar above, symbolised something completely inept with respect to what I had effectively to say. You have perhaps noticed that, it never entered my head, at least up to the present, nor yours either, to think that the bar of negation perhaps had something to do, to say, not in the right-hand column but in the left. Let us try, what advantage can we draw from it? What can we have to say about the fact that the function did not vary, let us call it x , as it happens, and to put, which we have never had to do up to the present, the bar of negation. It can be said or indeed written. Let us begin by saying it: “It is not about every x that the function of x can be written; it is not from an existing x that the function of x can be written”.

There you are! I still have not said whether it was *inscribable* or not. But in expressing myself in this way, I am stating something whose only reference is the existence of writing. In a word, there is a world between the two negations, the one which ensures that I do not write it, that I exclude it, and, as someone who was a rather subtle grammarian formerly expressed it, it is *forclusive*. The function will not be written. *I want to know nothing about it*. The other is *discordant*. It is not in so far as there is a whole x that I can write or

not write of x; it is not in so far as there exists an x that I can write or not write of x.

This is very properly what puts us at the heart of the impossibility of writing what is involved in the sexual relationship. Because after there has subsisted for some time as regards this relationship, the well known structures of fiction, those on which there repose all religions in particular, we have come, and this through analytic experience, to the foundation of the fact that this relationship cannot work without a third term, which is properly speaking the phallus. Naturally I mean, (140) as I might say, a certain little understanding being formulated that this third term, is self-evident; precisely there is a third term, and this is why there must be a relationship! It is very difficult, of course, to image that, to show that there is something unknown there, man. There is something unknown here, woman. And that the third term *qua* third term, is precisely characterised by the fact, which is precisely, that it is not a middle term (*médium*), that if one links it to one of the two terms, the term of man for example, one can be certain that it will not communicate with the other, and inversely. That it is specifically this which is the characteristic of the third term. That naturally, even if the function of attribute was one day invented, why would it not be in relationship, in the first ridiculous steps of the structure of the semblance, that every man is phallic, every woman is not so. Now what has to be established, is something quite different. It is that *some man* is, starting from something that the second formula expresses here, starting from the fact that it is not as a particular that he is so. Man is a phallic function in so far as he is every man. But as you know, there are the greatest doubts to be had about the fact that *every man* exists. That is what is at stake: it is that he can only be so under the heading of *every man*, namely, of a signifier, nothing more.

And that on the contrary, what I stated, what I told you, is that for the woman, what is at stake is exactly the contrary. Namely, what is expressed by the discordant statement above, the one that I only wrote as I might say by not writing it. Because I am underlining that what is at stake is a discordant which is only sustained by the statement, it is that the woman, the woman can only fill her place in the sexual relationship, she can only be it under the heading of *a-woman, d'une-femme*. As I strongly emphasised, there is no *every woman*.

What I wanted to open up today, to illustrate for you, is that logic carries the mark of the sexual impasse, and that by following it in its (141) movement, in its progress, namely, in the field where it appears to have least to do with what is at stake in what is articulated as regards our experience, namely, analytic experience, you will discover in it the same impasses, the same obstacles, the same gaps, and in a word the same absence of the closure of a fundamental triangle.

I am astonished that things, I mean time, has gone so quickly, with what I had to open out for you today and that I now have to interrupt myself. I think that it will be easy for you perhaps before we meet again on the second Wednesday of the month of June, to notice for yourselves the appropriateness of this, from which it results, from which it results, for example, that nothing can be grounded about the status of man, I mean seen from analytic experience, except by constructing artificially, mythically, this *every man* with this presumed one, the mythical father of *Totem and Taboo*, namely, the one who is capable of satisfying the enjoyment of *all the women*.

But inversely, there are consequences in the position of the woman, in the fact, that it is only, starting from being *a-woman* that she can be established in what is inscribable by not being so. Namely, what is involved in the sexual relationship remaining gaping open, and that

there arrives the following, so easy to read in what is involved in the so precious function of hysterics. The hysterics are the ones who, as regards what is involved in the sexual relationship, *tell the truth*. It is difficult to see how this path of psychoanalysis could have opened up if we had not had them. That neurosis – that one neurosis at the very least, I will demonstrate it also for the other – that one neurosis should not be strictly the point at which there is articulated the truth of a failure, which is no less true anywhere else than where the truth is told. This is where we should start from to give its meaning to the Freudian discovery. What the hysteric articulates is, of course, that as regards constructing the *every man*, she is just as capable as the *every man* himself, namely, by imagination. So then because of that, she does not need him. But if by chance the phallus interests her, namely, what she sees herself as castrated of, as Freud sufficiently underlined, only by the progress of the treatment, of analytic treatment, she only has to put up with it. Because we have to believe that she has this enjoyment, that she has it herself, and that if by chance sexual relationships interest her, she has to be interested in this third element, the phallus. And since she can only be interested in it through the relationship to the man, in so far as it is not sure that he even has one, her whole policy will be turned towards what I call having *at least one* of them.

(142) This notion of *at least one*, it is on this, good God, that I end, because the time shows me my limit. You will see that I will subsequently, of course, have to put it in function with what, of course, you already see there, already articulated, namely, that of the *un en peluce*, which does not come only from here, is that not so, as I wrote it last time: *un en peluce*. It is not for nothing that I wrote it like that. I think that this may all the same have some echoes for some people. We will write the *au-moins-un* as essential function of the relationship, in so far as it situates the woman with respect to the key third point of the phallic function, in this way because it is inaugural. It inaugurates a dimension which is very precisely the one

on which I insisted for a discourse which might not be a semblance, the *hommoinzin*.

Seminar 9: Wednesday 9 June 1971

I am going to dwell today on something that I took the trouble to write out. There you are. I am not saying this, simply like that, in passing. It is not superfluous. I will allow myself, like that eventually, to hum something about some term or other of writing (*l'écrit*). But if you have sufficiently heard what I have been tackling this year about the function of writing, well then I will have no need to justify any more that it is effectively an act. In effect it is not a matter of indifference that what I am going to say now is written. It has absolutely not the same import if I simply say or if I tell you that *I wrote*.....

- We can't hear you!

A man – can you hear me? – and a woman can understand one another, I am not saying no to that; they can as such hear one another crying out. That would be a jest if I had not *written* it. The written supposes that at least you have some hint, at least some of you, of what I said at another time about the cry. I cannot go back on it. It can happen that they cry out, in the case where they do not otherwise succeed in understanding one another, otherwise, namely, about an affair which is the test of their understanding. There is no lack of these affairs, including on occasion - this is the best of them - understanding in bed. There is no lack of these affairs, certainly,

then, and this is why they lack something, namely, that to make oneself understood as man, as woman, which means sexually, would the man and the woman only understand one another by saying nothing? There is no question of that, because the man, the woman, have no need to speak to be caught up in a discourse. As such, as such, drawing on the same term as I used earlier, as such, they are facts of discourse. A smile here would be enough, it would seem, to (144) posit that they are not just that. No doubt, and who does not agree. But that they are also that, effects of discourse, fixates the smile and it is only in this way, fixated by this remark, that the smile on ancient statues finds its meaning. Infatuation, for its part, sniggers. It is in a discourse, then, that natural men and women, as one might say, have to valorise themselves as such.

There is no discourse except a semblance. If that was not self-evident, I exposed it, and I will recall how it is articulated. The semblance is only stated starting from the truth. This truth, no doubt, is never evoked in science. That is no reason for us to be any more concerned about it. It can do quite well without us. In order to make itself heard, it is enough to say, "I speak", and people believe it because it is true: whoever speaks, speaks. The only wager, I am recalling what I said about the wager, illustrating it with Pascal, the only wager is about what it says. As truth it can only say the semblance about enjoyment, and it wins over sexual enjoyment on every occasion.

I would like here, to put on the board for the eventual use of those who have not come these last times, the algebraic figures with which I thought I could punctuate what was at stake in the bind (*coinçage*) to which one is led, by writing what is involved in the sexual relationship.

The two bars put on the symbols on the left and with which there are respectively situated everything that is capable of answering to the semblance of sexual enjoyment, the two bars of negation, as they say, are such kind that precisely they are not to be written because what cannot be written, one quite simply does not write. One can say that they are not to be written, that the function of x cannot be written about *every* x , and that it is from *this is not all* that the woman establishes herself. There does not exist an x which satisfies the function from which there is defined the variable of being the function of x , that it does not exist, it is from this that there can be formulated what is involved in the man, in the male I mean. But precisely here the negation only has the function which is described as the *Verneinung*, namely, that it is only posited by having first of all put forward that there exists *some man*, and that it is with respect to *every woman* that a woman is situated. This is a reminder. That does not form part of what I have written which I am now taking up again.

(145) That I am taking up again. Which means that – I see that it is rather widespread, you are quite right in fact to be taking notes, the only important thing about writing is that afterwards you can situate yourself with respect to it. Good! Well then! You would do well to follow me in my discipline of the name, *n.o.m.* I will have to come back to it, especially the next time which will be the session with which we will conclude this year. What is proper to a name, is to be a proper name, even for a drop (*tombé*) among others for the use of a common noun, it is not a waste of time to find a proper use for it. And when a name has remained sufficiently proper, have no hesitation, take the example, and call the thing by its name, *the Freudian thing* for example, as I did, as I like to imagine you know. I will come back to it the next time. To name something is a summons, moreover in what I wrote, the Freudian thing in question, stands up and struts its stuff. I am not the one who dictates to it. It would even be perfect peace. Like the perfect peace of the semblance to which so many lives tie themselves. If I were not as a

man, in the masculine, exposed here to the wind of castration. Re-read my text. The truth for its part, my unscrewable (*imbaisable*), partner is certainly exposed to the same wind. It even carries it: to be up to date (*dans le vent*) is that. But this wind does not make the slightest difference to it. For the reason that enjoyment is of little account to it. Because it leaves truth to the semblance. This semblance, for its part, also has a name, taken up from the mysterious times when the mysteries were being played out, nothing more, where it named the knowledge presupposed by fecundity and as such offered to adoration in the figure of the semblance of an organ. This semblance exposed by pure truth is, we have to recognise, rather phallic (*assez phalle*), rather involved in what for us is initiated by the virtue of coitus, namely, the selection of genotypes, with the reproduction of the phenotype and everything that results from it, sufficiently involved then to merit this ancient name of phallus. Even though it is clear that the inheritance that it covers nowadays is reduced to the acephalic nature of this selection, in other words the impossibility of subordinating the enjoyment described as sexual to that which *sub rosa* is supposed to specify the choice of the man and the woman taken as carriers each one of a precise batch of genotypes. Because in the best of cases, it is the phenotype that guides this choice. In truth, make no mistake, a proper name, because the phallus is still one, is only completely stable on the map where it designates a desert. These are the only things on a map that do not change their name. It is remarkable that even the deserts produced in the name of a religion, which is not rare, are never designated by the (146) name that was devastating for them. A desert is only re-baptised by being fecundated. This is not the case for sexual enjoyment, which the progress of science does not seem to be able to conquer for knowledge. It is on the contrary by means of the dam that it constitutes to the advent of the sexual relationship in discourse that its place was emptied out until, in psychoanalysis, it became obvious.

Such is, in the sense that this word has in Frege's logic *die Bedeutung des Phallus*. This indeed is why – I have my little tricks, huh? – it was in German, because it was in Germany, that I carried the message to which this title corresponds in my *Ecrits*, and it was to honour the centenary of the birth of Freud. It was a lovely thing in this country that was chosen out to be the place where this message had its resonance, the bewilderment that it produced. You cannot have the slightest idea, now that you are all strolling around with something like that under your arm. At that time, *die Bedeutung des Phallus* produced an effect. To say that I was expecting it would mean nothing, at least in my tongue. My strength is to know what it means to wait. As regards the bewilderment I am talking about, I am not taking blaming here the 25 years of racial cretinisation. This would only be to sanction that these 25 years have triumphed everywhere. I would insist rather that this *die Bedeutung des Phallus* is in reality a pleonasm. In language there is no *Bedeutung* other than the phallus. Language in its function as an existent, only connotes, in the final analysis, I said connote, huh, the impossibility of symbolising the sexual relationship among the beings that inhabit it, that inhabit language, by reason of the fact that it is from this habitat that they are able to speak. And let no one forget what I said, because speech, henceforth, is not the privilege of these beings that inhabit it that they evoke speech in everything that they dominate by the effect of discourse. It begins with my dog, for example, the one that I have been speaking about for a long time, and extends very far. The eternal silence, as someone or other has said, of infinite space, will not, like many others, other eternities, have lasted more than an instant. There is a hell of a lot of talk in the zone of the new astronomy, the one that was opened up immediately after this little remark by Pascal. It is because language is only constituted from a single *Bedeutung* that it borrows its structure, which consists in the fact that one can only, once one inhabits it, make use of it for metaphor, from which there result all these mythical insanities on which its inhabitants live, for metonymy, from which they take the

little bit of reality that remains to them, under the form of surplus enjoying.

(147) Now this, what I have just said, only gets its stamp in history, once writing has appeared, and this is never simply an inscription, even if it takes on the appearance of what is put forward in the audio-visual. Writing from its origins, up to its last protean techniques, is only something that is articulated as bone (*os*) of which language is the flesh. And this indeed is how it proves that enjoyment, sexual enjoyment, has no bone, which we were already left in no doubt about by the habits of the organ which cuts such a comical figure in the speaking male. But writing, for its part, not language, writing provides a bone for all the enjoyments which, through discourse, open up for the speaking being; giving them bones, it underlines what was certainly accessible, but masked. Namely, that the sexual relationship is missing in the field of truth, in that the discourse that establishes it only proceeds from a semblance by only clearing the way for enjoyment that parody – this is the correct word – the one that is effective there but that remains foreign to it. Such is the Other of enjoyment, forever prohibited, the one that language will only allow a habitation for by providing it – why would I not use this image - with a diving suit.

Perhaps that means something to you, this image, huh? There are, all the same, some of you who are not so occupied by the function of trade unions that you cannot all the same be moved by our lunar exploits. Man has been dreaming about the moon for a long time. Now he has set foot on it. To really take account of what that means, you should do what I did before returning from Japan. That is a place where you can realise that dreaming about the moon was really a function. A person, whose name I will not mention, I do not want to indulge in erudition here, who is still there, locked up in fact, him, the very one. You realise what is meant by *persona*, it is the person

himself, it is his mask that is locked in a little Japanese cupboard. It is shown to visitors.

We know that it is him, that the place to put him can be seen there, it is found in the place that is called the Silver Pavilion, at Kyoto. He dreamt about the moon. We like to believe that he contemplated it rather phallically. We like to believe it, but anyway, that leaves us somewhat embarrassed all the same. We no longer know what to make of it. The path that has been taken - is that not so? - to inscribe it, to get out of this embarrassment, you should understand that it is the achievement of the barred O of my graph, S(\emptyset).

All of this is only banter. It is a banter that gives a signal, a signal to (148) me of course. It warns me that I am touching on structuralism. I am forced to touch on it, like that, naturally, it is not my fault. It is for you to judge, but I blame it on the situation that I am undergoing. Time is passing and naturally I am going to have to shorten things a little, so that it is going to become more difficult to follow what I have written. But this situation that I am undergoing, I am going to pinpoint, pinpoint it by something that is not going to appear to you right away but that I have to say between now and the time that we leave one another, in a week's time. It is what I would pinpoint as a refusal of performance. It is a sickness, a sickness of our epoch, through whose 'Fork' one has to pass, because this refusal constitutes the cult of competence. Namely, of a certain idealness (*idéalité*) to which I am reduced, like, moreover, many fields of science, to authorise myself before you. The result - these are anecdotes you know - my *Ecrits* are for example.....one of them is translated into English, *Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage* has been translated as *The language of the self*. I have just learned that in Spanish, there is also something of this type, the translation of a certain number of them is entitled: *Structuralist aspects of Freud*, something like that. Good, anyway, let's leave it! Competence overlooks the fact that it is based on incompetence, by proposing that

its idealness should be worshipped, that is how it leads to concessions, and I am going to give you an example of this. The sentence with which I began: *a man and a woman can understand one another, I am not saying no*. Well there you are, it was to sugar the pill for you, but the pill does not fix anything. The notion forged in the term *structuralism* tends to extend the delegating that occurred for some time to certain specialists, the specialists of truth, the delegating of a certain void that is noticed in the rarefying of enjoyment. This is what existentialism had flawlessly picked up, after phenomenology, much more hypocritical, had thrown down the gauntlet of its breathing exercises. It occupied the places left deserted by philosophy because they were not appropriate places. At the present time, they are just about suitable as a memorial for its contribution - which is no little thing - to philosophy, to the discourse of the master which it definitively stabilised with the support of science. Marx or not, whether he put philosophy on its feet or on its head, philosophy, it is certain that philosophy in any case, for its part, was not sufficiently phallic (*pas assez phalle*). Let no one count on me to structuralise this business of the impossible life, as if it were not from there that life had a chance to give proof of its real. My jocund prosopopea, "*I speak*", in the article quoted earlier, the (149) *Freudian thing*, even though it was attributed in a rhetorical way to the truth in person, did not make me fall into what I drew it from. Nothing is said there except what speaking means, the irremediable division between enjoyment and the semblance. The truth is to enjoy being a semblance, and in no way to admit that the reality of each of these two halves only predominate by affirming itself as being from the other, or by lying (*mentir*) in alternate jets. Such is the half-saying of the truth. Its astronomy is equatorial, in other words already completely out of date when it was born from the couple night-day. An astronomy is made reasonable by submitting itself to the seasons, by being seasoned. This is an allusion to Chinese astronomy, which, for its part, was equatorial and produced nothing.

It was not his competence as a linguist, and for good reason, that allowed Freud to trace out the paths of the thing we are dealing with. What I, for my part, remind you of is that he was only able to follow these paths by demonstrating a performance in language that was nothing short of acrobatic. And that here, only linguistics allows them to be situated in a structure, in so far as it is concerned for its part with a competence that is called linguistic consciousness, which is all the same quite remarkable, precisely by never shying away from its enquiry. Hence my formula that the *unconscious is structured like a language* implies that at the very least, the condition of the unconscious is language. But this takes nothing away from the impact of the enigma which consists in the fact that the unconscious knows more about it than it appears to, since it is because of this surprise that I started to name it as I did. It knows about things. Naturally, right away, the aforesaid unconscious was brought up short by attributing to it all the instincts, which moreover are still there like a wet blanket. Read anything at all that is published outside my school. The whole business was sewn up, there was nothing more to be done than to put on the label addressed to the truth, precisely, which skips over it sufficiently in our time, as I might say, not to disdain the black market. I put sticks in the hinge of clandestinity by hammering out that the knowledge in question could only be analysed by being formulated as a language, indeed in a particular tongue, even if this suffers from cross-breeding, which means moreover that it does no more than these aforesaid tongues permit themselves frequently, by their own authority.

No one challenged me about what language knows, namely *die Bedeutung des Phallus*, I said it but no one noticed it because it was the truth. So then, who is interested in the truth? Well, people.

(150) People for whom I drew the structure of this crude image that is found in family-friendly topology. That's how it is drawn, huh? In this family-friendly topology, this is how the Klein bottle is drawn.

There is no – I am coming back to it - point of its surface, that is not a topological part of the retrogression which is figured here by the circle, drawn here, of the circle which alone can properly give to this bottle the bottom that the other bottles are too proud of, because they have a bottom, God knows why!

So then it is not where people think it is, but in its structure as subject that the hysteric – I am coming to some of the people that I designated just now – conjugates the truth of her enjoyment with the implacable knowledge that she has that the Other proper to cause it, is the phallus, in other words a semblance. Who could fail to understand Freud's disappointment in grasping that the no-cure at which he arrived with the hysteric resulted in nothing more than making him claim the aforesaid semblance suddenly provided with real virtues, by having hung it at this point of retrogression which since it is not unfindable on the body, is a quite incorrect topological figuration of enjoyment in the woman. But did Freud know that? We may well ask. In the impossible solution of her problem, it is by measuring the cause in the most accurate way, in other words by making of it a just cause that the hysteric comes to agree about what she feigns to be the holder of this semblance, at least one, (*au moins un*) that I write - do I need to write it again? - as *l'hommoizin*, in conformity with the problem (*l'os*) that her enjoyment requires for her to gnaw on it. Her approaches to the *hommoizin* - there are three ways of writing it. There is the usual way of spelling it, huh, because (151) after all I really have to explain it to you, (1). And then there is this, there is this expressive value that I am always able to give to a scriptural operation, (2). Then on occasion you can all the same bring it together and write it *a (u moins un)* like that, (3), so as not to forget that occasionally it can function as the **o**-object (*objet a*) *au moins un*

hommoizin

a (u moinzin)

Since his approaches to the *au moins un*, can only be made by admitting to the aforesaid cynosure which captures him, depending on his tendencies, the deliberate castration that she reserves for him, his chances are limited. You must not believe that his success passes by way of one of these men, men in the masculine, that the semblance rather embarrasses, or who prefer it to be more frank. Those that I am designating in this way are the wise men, the masochists. That situates the wise men. They have to be brought back to their correct place. To judge the result in this way is to fail to recognise what can be expected from the hysteric if only she is willing to inscribe herself in a discourse, because her destiny is to bring the master to heel (*mater le maître*), so that thanks to her, he falls back on knowledge.

There you are! I am not contributing here anything more am I? What is interesting in this *écrit*, is that it generates a whole lot of things, but you really have to know where the points are that have to be remembered. Nothing other than to mark that the danger is the same at this crossroads as in the one that I have just pinpointed by having been warned by it that it is from there that I started earlier, I have come back to the same point, huh? I am going around in circles.

To love the truth, even that which the hysteric incarnates as one might say, in other words to give her what one does not have on the pretext that she designates it, is very specifically to commit oneself to a theatre which it is very clear can no longer be anything than a parish fête (*fête de charité*). I am not just talking about the hysteric. I am talking about this something which is expressed in, I will tell you like Freud, the *malaise* of the theatre. For it still to be able to hold up, you have to have.....you have to have Brecht, do you not,

who understood that that could not hold up without a certain distance, a certain cooling down. This *it is clear*, as I have just said, *which can no longer be, etc.*, is properly speaking precisely, an effect of the *Aufklärung*, which is scarcely believable, is it not, linked to the coming onto the scene, however awkwardly it was done, of the discourse of the analyst. It was enough that the hysteric, the qualified (152) hysteric, I am in the process, as you can clearly see, of approaching the function for you, it was enough for the hysteric to renounce the extravagant clinic with which she furnished the gap in the sexual relationship. It is to be taken, it is to be taken as the sign, it is perhaps to be taken as the sign made to someone, I am talking about the hysteric, huh, that she is going to do better than this clinic. The only important thing here is what goes unnoticed, namely, that I am talking about the hysteric as something that supports quantification. In listening to me something might be written as an upside down A of x, and that is why I wrote it on the board, since it is always apt, while unknown, to function in of x, as a variable. This indeed is what I write and it would be easy in re-reading Aristotle to disclose what relationship to the woman, precisely identified by him to the hysteric – which rather gives the women of his epoch a very good ranking, at least they were stimulating for the men – to disclose what relationship to the woman identified to the hysteric allowed him - this is a jump - allowed him to establish his logic in the form, in the form of *pan*, the choice of *pas*, *pasa*, *pan*, the choice of this vocable rather than *ekastos*, to designate the proposition of the universal affirmative, and also the negative. Anyway the whole pantaloony of the first great formal logic, is absolutely essentially linked to the idea that Aristotle had of the woman. This does not prevent, precisely, that the only universal formula that he did not allow himself to pronounce was *all women (toutes les femmes)*. There is no trace of it. Open the *Prior Analytics*. No more than he, even though his successors rushed into it headfirst, would have allowed himself to write this incredible enormity, on which formal logic has lived ever since, *all men are mortal*. Which is something that completely

prejudges the future fate of humanity. *All men are mortal*, that means that all men, because what is at stake is something that is stated in extension, all men *qua* all, are destined to death, that is that the human race is going to be extinguished, which to say the least is rather daring. That \times requires the passage to a being, to an *every woman* (*toute femme*) that an individual as sensitive as Aristotle never in fact wrote this *every woman*, is precisely what allows it to be advanced that *every woman* is the statement by which there is decided the hysteric as subject, and that it is for this reason that a woman is solidary with a *papludun* which properly lodges her in this logic of the successor that Peano gave us as a model. The hysteric is not *a woman* (*une femme*).

It is a matter of knowing whether psychoanalysis as I define it gives access to *a woman* or whether, for *a woman* to come to pass, is the business of *doxa*. Namely, if it is like virtue, to listen to the people who were dialoguing in *Meno* – you remember *Meno*, but no (*mais non*) – like this virtue, and this is what gives its value, its meaning, to this dialogue, this virtue is what cannot be taught. This can be expressed, that what can be about her, about a woman, as I have defined the step, be known in the unconscious, i.e., in an articulated fashion. Because after all – I will stop there – someone who precisely puts it up on the stage again, as if this were a question worthy of absorbing great deal of activity – it is a book that is very well done - a great amount of activity on the part of the analyst, as if it were really what an analyst should specialise in, someone accords me the merit, in a note, of having introduced the distinction between truth and knowledge. Outrageous! Outrageous! I have just been talking to you about *Meno*, have I not? Naturally, he never read it, he only reads theatre. Anyway it was with *Meno* that I began to open up the first phases of a crisis that a certain analytic system has confronted me with. The distinction between truth and knowledge,

the opposition between *episteme* and the true *doxa*, the one that can ground virtue, you will find written, quite crudely, in *Meno*. What I highlighted, is precisely the contrary, it is their junction. Namely, that there, there where they are knotted together in appearance, in a particular circle, the knowledge that is at stake in the unconscious is the one that slides, that is prolonged, which at every instant proves to be a knowledge of the truth.

And this is where just now I am putting the question. Does this knowledge effectively allow us to make progress with respect to *Meno*? Namely, is this truth, in so far as it is incarnated in the hysteric effectively capable of a subtle enough sliding to be the introduction to *a woman*. I know well, the question has risen by a notch since I proved that there is something that can be articulated in language which cannot for all that be articulated in words, and that it is on that simply that desire is based. It is nevertheless easy to settle, it is precisely because what is at stake is desire, in so far as it puts the emphasis on the invariance of the unknown, of the unknown which is on the left (*à gauche*), the one that is only produced under the heading of a *Verneinung*. It is precisely because it puts the emphasis on the invariance of the unknown, that obviously what belongs to desire cannot be inscribed by analysis in any function of a variable. This is the stumbling block by which there is separated as such the desire of the hysteric, from what nevertheless is produced, and allows innumerable women to function as such, namely, by playing the function of the *papludun* of their being for all their situational variations.

(154) The hysteric here plays the role of functional schema, if you know what that means. This is the import of my formula of desire described as *unsatisfied*. It can be deduced from this that the hysteric

is situated by introducing the *papludun* by which each one of the women is established along the path of *it is not of every woman that it can be said that she is a function of the phallus (ce n'est pas de toute femme que se peut dire qu'elle soit fonction du phallus)*. That this is the case with every woman is what constructs her desire and that is why this desire is sustained by being unsatisfied. The fact is that *a woman* results from it, but one who cannot be the hysteric in person. This indeed is how she incarnates my earlier truth, the one that after having made it speak I restored to its structural function.

The psychoanalytic discourse is established by this restoration of her truth to the hysteric. It was enough to dissipate the theatre in hysteria. This is why I say that it is not without a relationship to something that changes the appearance of things in our epoch. I had insisted on the fact that when I began to state things that carried all of that in potency, I immediately had as an echo the *splash* of an article on *Le théâtre chez l'hystérique*. Present day psychoanalysis is only dealing with a hysteric who is not up to date. When the hysteric proves that even when the page that has been turned, she continues to write on the back and even on the next one, people do not understand. She is a logician. This poses the question of the reference to the theatre made by Freudian theory, the Oedipus complex no less. It is time to attack that aspect of theatre that it has appeared necessary to maintain in order to sustain the Other scene, the one that I speak about, that I was the first to speak about. After all, sleep is enough perhaps, and that it shelters on occasion, this sleep, the *gésine* (?) of Fuchsian functions, as you know, perhaps, has happened, may justify a desire being constructed for it to be continued. It may happen that the signifying representatives of the subject always get across more easily when borrowed from imaginary representation. We have the signs of it in our epoch. It is certain that the enjoyment that one has by being castrated only has systemic relationships (*rappports*

d'appareil) with representation. This indeed is why the Sophoclean Oedipus, which only has its privilege for us because the other Oedipus' are incomplete, and more often than not lost, is still much too rich and too diffuse for the articulation that we need. The genealogy of desire, in so far as what is in question is how it is caused, relates to a more complex combinatorial than that of myth.

That is why we have no need to dream about what myth was used for in olden times, as they say. To engage oneself along that path is metalanguage, and in this respect, the *Mythologiques* of Lévi-Strauss make a decisive contribution. They show that the combination of the (155) nameable forms of mythem, many of which have disappeared, operate according to laws of transformation that are precise but very short on logic. Or at the very least what we must say about them, this is the least that can be said, is that our mathematics enriches this combinatorial. Perhaps we would do well to question whether the psychoanalytic discourse does not have better things to do than to devote itself to interpreting these myths in a style which does not go beyond ordinary commentary, which besides is completely superfluous. Because what interests the ethnologist is the collection of the myths, pinpointing its collation and its re-collation with other functions, of ritual, of production, registered just as in a writing whose articulated isomorphisms are enough for him. No trace of any supposition, I was going to say, about the enjoyment that is circumscribed there. This quite true, even taking into account the efforts made to suggest to us the eventual operation of obscure knowledge which is supposed to be lodged in them. The note given by Lévi-Strauss in the *Structures* about the display-action exercised by these structures with respect to love luckily settles things here. This did not prevent it passing well over the heads of the analysts who were in favour at the time.

In short the Oedipus complex has the advantage of showing how man can respond to the requirement of the *papludun* that is in the being of a woman. He himself is supposed not to love *papludune* of them. Unfortunately it is not the same one; it is always the same rendezvous, when the masks are removed, it was neither he nor she. Nevertheless this fable is only supported by the fact that the man is never anything but a little boy. And that the hysteric is unable to let go of this is something that casts doubt on the function of her truth as being the last word.

A step towards seriousness could, it seems to me, be taken here by engaging with the man, and you will have noted that up to this point of my presentation I have given him the more modest part. Even though it is one of them, your servant, who forms part here of this beautiful world. It seems to me *impossible* - it is not for nothing that I come up against this word from the start - not to grasp the split that separates the Oedipus myth from *Totem and taboo*. I am showing my hand right away. The first is dictated to Freud by the dissatisfaction of the hysteric, the second by his own impasses. There is no trace in the second myth of the little boy, or of the mother, or of the tragic passage from the father to the son – passage of what, if not the phallus – of what is the very stuff of the first myth. Here, *Totem and taboo*, the father enjoys, a term that is veiled in the first myth by power. The father enjoys all the women until his sons slay him, which they only set about after a prior agreement, according to which (156) no one would succeed to him in his gluttony for enjoyment. The term is required by what comes in return, because the sons devour him, each one necessarily only having a part of him and by this very fact the whole making a communion. It is starting from that that there is produced the social contract. No one will touch, not the mother here, it is clearly specified, in *Moses and monotheism*, in Freud's own writing, that among the sons only the younger ones are

still listed in the harem. So then it is no longer the mothers but the wives of the father, as such, who are concerned in the prohibition. The mother only comes into play precisely for her babies which are the grain of heroes. But if this is how there is constructed, according to Freud, the origin of law, it is not the law described as that of maternal incest, which is nevertheless given as inaugural in psychoanalysis. While in fact, this is a remark, apart from a certain law of Manou which punished it by a real castration, you will go to the west with your balls in your hand, etc., this law of maternal incest is everywhere more or less elided. I am not at all disputing here the prophylactic grounds for the analytic prohibition. I am underlining that at the level at which Freud articulates something about it, *Totem and taboo*, and God knows he stuck by it, he does not justify this prohibition mythically. The strangeness begins with the fact that neither Freud, nor moreover any other person either, seems to have noticed this.

I stride on. Enjoyment is promoted by Freud to the rank of an absolute which brings back to the care of the man, I am talking about *Totem and taboo*, of the original man - and this is all admitted - of the Father of the primitive horde, it is simple to recognise here the phallus, the totality of what 'femininely' can be subject to enjoyment. This enjoyment, I have just noted, remains veiled in the royal couple of the Oedipus complex, but it is not only from the first myth that it is absent. The royal couple is not even put in question until something which is stated in the drama, that they are the guarantors of the enjoyment of the people, which moreover agrees with what we know about all royalties, whether ancient or modern. And the castration of Oedipus has no other end than to end the Theban plague. Namely, to render to the people the enjoyment of which others are going to be the guarantors, which of course, given where it has started from, will not happen without some bitter adventures being experienced by all.

Must I underline that the key function of myth is strictly opposed in the two? The law first of all in the first, so primordial that it exercises its retortions even when the guilty have only contravened it innocently, and it is from the law that the profusion of enjoyment has (157) emerged. In the second, enjoyment at the origin, then law, whose correlates with perversion you will spare me having to underline. Since it is, when all is said and done, with the promotion, sufficiently insisted on, of sacred cannibalism, that all the women are prohibited, in principle, for the community of males, which has been transcended as such in this communion. This indeed is the sense of the other primordial law, otherwise, what grounds it? Eteocles and Polynices are there, I think, to show that there are other resources. It is true that they proceed from the genealogy of desire. It must be that the murder of the father has constituted – for whom, for Freud, for his readers? – such a supreme fascination, that no one has ever even dreamt of underlining that in the first myth this murder happens without the knowledge of the murderer, who not only does not recognise that he is attacking the father, but who cannot recognise him because he has another, who, from all antiquity is his father, since he adopted him. It was even explicitly in order not to run the risk of attacking the aforesaid father that he exiled himself. What the myth is suggestive of, is to show the place that the generating father has at an epoch in which Freud underlines that, just like our own, this father is problematic.

Because, moreover, Oedipus would be absolved, if he were not of royal blood, namely, if Oedipus did not have to function as the phallus, the phallus of his people, and not of his mother. And that for a time, what is most surprising is that it worked, namely, that the Thebans were so implicated that it is from Jocasta that the turn-about had to come. Is it because of what she knew or of what she was

unaware of? What is there in common in any case with the murder of the second myth which we are led to believe is one of revolt, of need, that in truth is unthinkable, indeed unthought, except as proceeding from a conspiracy.

It is obvious that all I have done there is to approach the terrain on which, in any case, let us say, a conspiracy also prevented me from ridding myself of my problem, namely, in *Moses and monotheism*, namely, from the point at which everything that Freud articulated becomes truly significant. I cannot even indicate to you what is necessary to bring you back to Freud. But I can say that in revealing to us here his contribution to the analytic discourse, he proceeds no less from neurosis than from what he picked up from the hysteric in the form of the Oedipus complex. It is curious that I have had to wait until now in order that such an assertion, namely that *Totem and taboo* is a neurotic product, for me to be able to put it forward, which is absolutely indisputable, without for all that my questioning in any (158) way the truth of the construction. That is even how it bears witness to the truth. One does not psychoanalyse an *oeuvre*, and that of Freud less than any other, is that not so? One criticises it, and far from a neurosis making its solidity suspect, it is the very thing that solders it in this case. It is to the testimony that the obessional contributes about his structure, to the aspect of the sexual relationship that proves to be impossible to formulate in discourse, that we owe the myth of Freud.

I will stop there for today. The next time I will give to this its exact import, because I would not like there to be any misunderstanding. The fact of articulating in a certain way what the contribution of Freud is to the fundamental myth of psychoanalysis, I underline, is not at all rendered suspect because its origin is underlined in this

way. Quite the contrary, it is simply a matter of knowing where it can lead us.