

Foreword, volume 2: What is Psychology?

[**Editorial note: this manuscript file will be replaced by a definitive pdf in early 2013**]

[73] If consciousness constitutes itself by excluding desire from its field, and by reducing its subjective correlate to something with the impact of a punctuality, then experimental psychology is a paradoxical enterprise, insofar as it seeks to return to what it grasps as the site of the excluded, so as thereby to submit it to the very laws that cut it away – that is, the person and its equation, source of error and of passion.

If we are right to recognize that the scientific knowledge claimed by experimental psychology applies to a world in which truth can only be said of things, is it surprising that, on the terms of such knowledge, in order to obtain the truth of he who questions things, one must first make of him a thing that answers questions?

Georges Canguilhem guides us here, by showing what psychology intends: to lend to the object of things – man is a tool – function and permanence: man is a fixed place in the network of exchanges.

These include exchanges with the biological environment, but also exchanges with his social partners: this nucleus that is gripped ever more tightly by the interlocking tests, mustn't we recognize in it the deductible element [*l'élément décomptable*] of a rationalized politics, regulated in line with the grid of needs and capacities? We are then better placed to understand that, from the beginning, experimentation is indissolubly tied in a double rapport, whereby, as psychology provides a subject to a rational politics, politics will prove itself rational by securing for psychology its means to progress (Alain Grosrichard).

To this conjunction, psychology cannot help but lend its support, confirming the efficacy of its practices through the self-evidence of an apparatus that guarantees the permanence and usability of its object: what's at stake [74] here is the position of an ego [*un moi*] of mastery and synthesis, the basis of all instrumental servitudes (since as Marx demonstrated, in order for man to become a tool he must become master of himself): the subject of science, condensed, is rendered fit to be handled by science itself, science that is henceforth assured that there is nothing it cannot know about what it excludes.

There is no better way for psychoanalysis to mark its position here than by situating this ego as a function of misunderstanding and mirage, as the ransom that science, returning to its own *subjectum*, must pay to the imaginary as the price of the exclusion through which it circumscribes it [this ego].

It is hard to see how one might demonstrate the point more clearly than at the level of the drive, introduced by Freud precisely in terms of stimulus and response, so as to understand all the better that there are stimuli in relation to which the subject, far from experiencing itself as a synthetic nucleus, or as possessing an organism with denumerable faculties, instead can only respond – as Dr. Serge Leclaire shows us – by barring itself from the lack of a difference [*se barrer du manque d'une différence*].

It is hard to see how one might better demonstrate the point than at this level where all those deviations that re-centre the subject on a nuclear ego appear. This, then, is where the singular relation that psychoanalysis maintains with psychology is formed: if in fact the latter is indeed this strange return of science to what it excludes, then for psychoanalysis it must trace the geometric place of its wanderings or aberrations [*égarements*], a place that receives its unity by roaming the borders of that hole of exclusion into which psychoanalysis must insert its relation with science – a relation on

which Freud, thanks to his 'scientism', never ceases to insist, albeit only in order that we might discover its eccentricity.

Perhaps in this way we can better understand the necessity with which anyone who tries to speak rigorously of psychology must locate in it the dimension of a silence: the silence that experimental psychology must keep with respect to the statement that founds it, the silence of a social psychology that, while stating clearly what is hidden from a philosophy that rejects it, thereby says nothing about the link that unites them insolubly (Thomas Herbert).

In this silence, unknown or disregarded as such, we are summoned to recognize psychology as a discourse. To analyse this discourse would be to delimit in it the element that induces silence, and that disguises it; to specify this element as the ego of synthesis and mastery has now become a necessary task, and the reader will find here the means to accomplish it.

For the editorial board, Jean-Claude Milner – 1 March 1966.