

## Foreword, volume 5: The concept of punctuation

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

[3] We consider the concept of punctuation to be central to the theory of reading, if this theory is to be con-scious or con-scientious with the science [*consciente avec la science*] of structure that progresses here, on the basis of the signifying chain.

To state that the structure is to be grasped within the time of its action obliges us to follow that which *perpetuates* itself of the structuring operation in that which *results* from it.

The difference between these two terms comes down to nothing in classical physics, which takes the exhaustion of a cause in its effect to be the necessary condition of the rationality of the real. To a full cause corresponds a total effect, says Leibniz, refuting Descartes in principle.

Yet, when we acknowledge a surplus of force in the cause, by which it signs its product, splitting it through its mark, what happens to the rational real? It must reconcile itself to an effect that is, if you like, irrational.

If we then misjudge or miscognize [*méconnaître*] the disparity that results, this is because it falls in the zero of the chain, which identifies it with insignificance as far as signification is concerned.

To point to this place in a text is not to deny the rigour of explicit deductions. But, by returning to the dead letter the accent that eludes it, the new punctuation sometimes discovers the principles [that are] the effects of their consequences. Michel Foucault's work on [Descartes'] *First Meditation* is exemplary in this respect (*History of Madness* [1961], pp. 54-57). No doubt he calls Descartes' rigour *into question*, but certainly not in the way that metaphysicians might want.

– We invite [our readers] here to read what Freud read, and to read Freud, as Freud would read [*lisait*]: by transferring the accent to the annulled excess.

Jacques-Alain Miller.