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Action of the Structure¹

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

[93] Foreword

This text needs to be introduced with reference to its circumstances. On 27 June 1964, Jacques Lacan founded the *École freudienne de Paris*, opening it up to non-analysts. A few students of the *École Normale*, supporting the new school, grouped themselves, in keeping with its statutes, into a 'cartel' identified by the object of its interest: Theory of Discourse. The pages that you are about to read were initially written in order to justify the name the members of this group took on in order to inscribe their work, and to mark it as a tributary that originates in that same conceptual field. The initial plan was to publish them in the *Annuaire de l'École Freudienne*, but this turned out to be no more than a list of names, and so they were left stranded.

If I am publishing these pages now, it is because it seems to me that despite the time that has passed, despite the seminars of all kinds recently devoted to deciphering Freud, Marx and Lacan, in which hitherto difficult truths [*des vérités difficiles il y a peu*] have been made accessible for all and sundry, and despite all that the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* have already made known – what was articulated in this text concerning the relations between the structure of the subject and the structure of science has not yet been made generally available.

Preamble

Psychoanalysis, like Marxism, provides the principle for a new organization of the conceptual field. This is why it still isn't understood, and is reduced to silence, or else, through an interior repression, welcomed while being conjured away, narrated in theoretical terms that predate it, or that it opposes – the terms of psychology, biology, and the philosophy of mind. Its name is thus usurped, and its truth forced into exile.

To recall this today is a task that is as untimely as it has ever been.

For our part, we subscribe to this reorganization and aim to assess its implications. You might think that we have been blind to the limits that our ignorance of psychoanalytic practice necessarily sets on our discourse. But no: it seems to us that by recognizing our limits we do not abolish the legitimacy we attribute to psychoanalysis but on the contrary found it, and protect it from any possible intemperance in our presumptions. [94] The only vocation that the discourse whose project we are conceiving here can assume in the Freudian field will be a critical one, and experience itself will appear in it only through its concept. Our intervention thus hangs on the mediation of a discourse that precedes it, and which we have identified right from the beginning, since it is the only one to set out from an idea of the specificity of Freudian theory via the work of Jacques Lacan. Our first undertaking – and it is not the least ambitious of our undertakings – was to arrive at an understanding of this discourse, and to put it to the test by providing a systematic exposition of it. What we are trying to think through here is an extension of the consequences of this discourse, we are trying

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to join it up with other discourses that intersect with it and to elaborate their unitary theory, so as then to distribute the power of such a theory in various spaces, some of which will already be circumscribed in what follows. The whole of this conceptual labour will adopt as its slogan Georges Canguilhem's definition: 'To work a concept [*travailler un concept*] is to vary its extension and comprehension, to generalize it through the incorporation of exceptional traits, to export it beyond its region of origin, to take it as a model or on the contrary to seek a model for it – to work a concept, in short, is progressively to confer upon it, through regulated transformations, the function of a form.'²

Critique can no doubt lay claim to the freedom with which it establishes itself; the only tribunal to which it is summoned is that of its own rigour. When this happens, however, it receives the confession [*aveu*] and sanction of its discourse-object, and is quickly led to borrow from it the means of its progress, including the very concept of its exercise; critique soon realizes that it is not only authorized by but is already thought by what it thinks, that it is already called up and indeed already broached [*entamée*], that it is not adventitious in relation to its discourse-object: that it doubles it without exceeding it. Little by little, this discovery becomes its theme. What is proper to Jacques Lacan's discourse, for having been tutor to its critique, stems first and foremost from the concept he has created and put to work, the concept of structure.

Structure

As understood here, structure will not reserve a place for anything that might be above and beyond scientific discourse.

The distance from experience over which models prevail, while at the same time acting as its rigorous guardian (by including what is irreducible about it in their definition) – this distance must now disappear, and an exact integration of the lived into the structural must now be made to operate.

Structure no more subtracts an 'empirical' content from a 'natural' object than it adds 'the intelligible' to it. If we remain content with articulating objects within the dimension of a network in order to describe how its elements are combined, then we isolate the product from its production, we establish between them a relation of exteriority, and in order to pay no attention to the cause we end up understanding [95] it merely as the expedient guardian of its effects: only mechanistic thought authorizes such an approach.

When structuralist activity rejects temporality and subjectivity from the neutralized space of the cause, it obliges itself to guarantee its already-constituted objects by referring them back to the categories of 'social life', 'culture', 'anthropology', if not to biology, or to mind [*l'esprit*]. It makes an illegitimate appeal to linguistic structuralism: the latter, by opening its field of analysis through preliminary exclusion of any relation that the subject entertains with its speech, prohibits itself from saying anything about it. As long as the *alteration* brought about by this exclusion of the speaking subject is not annulled, linguistic structures do not apply beyond their region of origin. Psychoanalytic structuralism legitimately exports them, in our opinion, because its objects are experiences – or because an ineliminable subjectivity is situated in these experiences, and they unfold according to their own interior time, *indiscernible from the progress of their constitution*. The topology of the structure no longer contradicts its dynamic, which the displacement of its elements articulates [*scande*].

Structure, then: that which puts in place an experience for the subject that it includes.

² Georges Canguilhem, 'Dialectique et philosophie du non chez Gaston Bachelard', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 66 (1963), 452.

Two functions qualify our concept of structure: structuration, or the *action* of the structure, and subjectivity, *subjected* [*assujettie*].

Drawing the consequences of such a hypothesis generates [*engendre*] the structure.

It is clear, to begin with, that the first function requires that it be divided between, on the one hand, an actual plane, in which it is given to the observer, and which constitutes its state, and on the other hand, a virtual dimension, through which all its states are capable of being deduced. We must therefore distinguish between a *structuring* structure and a *structured* structure.

Up to this point, the first is related to the second as its immanent condition or clause [*clause*], which is to say: the point of view taken in an investigation which explicates itself [*se désimpliquant*] so as to pass from a description to a knowledge [*connaissance*]. The two orders are continuous with each other, their relation is simple, their division is merely relative to a method, there is no delay, and so no structural time, and a movement established in the structure will be only apparent.

But if we now assume the presence of an element that turns back on reality and perceives it, reflects it and signifies it, an element capable of redoubling itself on its own account, then a general distortion ensues, one which affects the whole structural economy and recomposes it according to new laws. From the moment that the structure involves the element we have mentioned,

- its actuality becomes an experience or experiment,
- the virtuality of the structuring [*le structurant*] is converted into an absence,
- this absence is produced in the real order of the structure: the action of the structure comes to be supported by a lack.

The structuring [*le structurant*], *by not being there*, governs the real. It is here that we find the driving discordance: for the introduction of this reflexive element, which suffices to institute the dimension of the structured-insofar-as-it-lives-it, as taking its effects only from itself, arranges an *imaginary* organization, contemporaneous with [96] and distinct from the real order yet nevertheless coordinated with it, and henceforth an intrinsic part of reality. A tertiary, imaginary structure constitutes itself in the real. As a result the reduplication of the structural system, which was merely ideal at the outset, is accomplished. This duplicity in turn afflicts the reflexive element which provokes it – insofar as at the structuring level there is no reflexivity –, which then defines it as a subject, reflexive in the imaginary, non-reflexive in the structuring.

In this second status [*statut*], its subjection reduces it to being nothing more than a support. The relation of the subject to the structure, a relation that is circular insofar as each of its terms owes its definition to the others, but that is dissymmetrical since it is an insertion, proves to be inconceivable without the mediation of an imaginary function of *miscognition* [*méconnaissance*], re-establishing reality in its continuity by means of the production of representations that respond to the absence in the structuring, and compensate for the production of lack. Structuration functions covertly, and in this sense the imaginary is its means. But it is at the same time its effect: the representations are put into play by what they conceal – by what they have the function of concealing, so that *they exist only in order to hide the reason for their existence*. It is their own structuring structure that they conceal, for what structures reality structures them. That their reflection in subjectivity grants them a coherence (another name for their inertia), constitutes them in systems, and incessantly works to make them independent of the

action of the structuring, implies that the lack that they ward off summons them inwardly.³

The cause is reflected among the effects that it determines and which are not understood as such [*qui s'ignorent comme tels*]. It follows that their subordination to the structuring transformations is necessarily indirect. The action of the structuring, depending on the resistance of representations or of systems of representations, is exercised unequally upon the imaginary, and thus upon the real, and differentiates and multiplies the levels of the structured in its totality. We call *overdetermination* the structuring determination which, by being exercised through the biases of the imaginary, becomes indirect, unequal and eccentric in relation to its effects.

In order to reconstitute the totality of the structure, we must make these effects correspond with their lateral cause in this permanent space of distortions and general discrepancies [*décalages*], measure its incidence, and relate it back to lack [*manque*] as to its principle.

And yet lack is never apparent, since what is structured [*le structuré*] miscognizes the action which forms it, presenting instead what appears at first glance to be a form of coherence or homogeneity. We must deduce from this that, in this place where the lack of the cause is produced in the space of its effects, an element interposes itself that accomplishes its saturation.

Every structure, in our sense of the term, thus includes a lure or decoy [*leurre*] which takes the place of the lack, which is linked to what is perceived, but which is the weakest link of the given sequence, a vacillating point which belongs only in appearance to the plane of actuality: the whole virtual plane (the plane of the structuring space) *crushes* down at that point [*s'y écrase*]. This element [97], which is precisely *irrational* in [the domain of] reality, exposes, by inserting itself into it, the place of the lack.

We can further distinguish the function of this element that never tallies and that always misleads the eye, and by virtue of which all perception becomes miscognition, by naming as its place *the utopic point* [*le point utopique*] of the structure, its improper point, or its point *at infinity*.

A positivist investigation would no doubt be deluded and eluded by this point, since nothing can fall into the net of such an investigation that exceeds the flat surface over which its gaze roams. A conversion of perspective is necessary in order to perceive the utopic point. This place that is impossible to occupy then indicates itself by its singular and contradictory allure, unequal to the plane on which it appears; the element that masks it now indicates, by a certain bending of its configuration, that its presence is unjustified, and that it should not be there. But it is at this point, precisely there where the spread-out space of structure and the 'transcendental' space of the structuring interconnect and are articulated, that we must regulate our gaze, and adopt as our principle of organization the placeholder itself. We will then immediately see the space [*l'espace*] pivot around on itself, and through a complete rotation that accomplishes its division, expose the internal rule of its law, and the order that secretly adjusts what is offered to the gaze. The translation of the structure opens it up to a diagonal reading. The topology that might possibly figure it would have to be constructed in a space whose centre is united, in a punctual convergence, to the exteriority of its circumscription: its peripheral exterior is its central exterior. The outside passes into the inside.

Every activity that does not play out solely in the imaginary but which instead transforms a state of the structure, sets out from the utopic point, a strategic post,

³ TN: the French reads: 'Que leur réflexion dans la subjectivité leur assure une cohérence, autre nom de leur inertie, les constitue en systèmes, et s'emploie incessamment à les rendre indépendants de l'action du structurant, implique que c'est intérieurement que le manque auquel elles parent, les intime.'

specific to each of the levels in which the structuring lacks. It goes without saying that the subject which devises this efficacious practice is not thereby exempt from the miscognition pertaining to its place.

Subject

It is by starting from structure that we must enter into the theory of the subject, which takes its insertion for granted. It is essential to preserve the order here, which goes from structure to subject. This is enough to ruin the possibility of any discourse that seeks its foundation in the sphere of the immediately given, at the end – at the origin – of the historical or methodological journey of consciousness, its detour that is both preambular and essential. If on the contrary structure alone is ordinary, if no return of consciousness to itself allows it to discover its organization, then the immediate is no more ultimate than it is initial; it isn't then a matter of rediscovering or of waiting for the immediate, and reality isn't something to be 'disinterred' or overcome, it is something we must traverse, and force into its retreat that which puts it in place. If therefore, against the philosophy [98] of structuralism, we require a notion of subjectivity, this subjectivity will figure not as regent but as subjected [*sujette*]. Although it is required by representation, this subjectivity is not required to occupy the position of a foundation, with the function of a cause. Its gap or deficiency distributes its conscious being at each of the levels induced by the imaginary in structured reality; as for its unity, it depends on its localization, its localization in the structuring structure. The subject in the structure thus retains none of the attributes of the psychological subject, it escapes from the latter's definition, and is never stabilized between the theory of knowledge, morality, politics and law.

The tasks of the theory of the subject are as follows. It must first of all refute the phenomenological attempt to rediscover the naïve or primitive state of the world by means of an archaeological investigation of perception. Phenomenology hopes that by reducing the visible to the visible it can secure the donation of a secret unchanging and ahistorical foundation for knowledge and history; anything invisible that it would encounter would only be the underside of an ultimately miraculous visibility. But if, on the contrary, the invisible accommodates a structure that systematizes the visible that hides it, if it is the invisible that varies and transforms the visible, then this is the basis for a truly radical archaeology of perceptions that are historical through and through, that are absolutely specified, that are structured like a discourse, an archaeology that returns seeing and saying to their essential identity. The work of Michel Foucault today gives us the first example of such an archaeology.⁴

We must also treat in detail the psychological analyses of the subject. What is common to such analyses is that they assign it, in the end, a statutorily identical position before the objects of the world, and they reduce its function to that of collecting these objects within a parenthesis in order to constitute their consistent unity under the name of reality – this latter serving, in turn, as the corrective measure of subjective functioning. The discourse of overdetermination, on the contrary, leads us to the point where we can recognize as spontaneous the subject's orientation towards the decoy [*leurre*]. Fundamentally, the subject is deceived: *its misunderstanding or mistake is constitutive*. This does not prevent it from registering and capitalizing its experiences, and of having at its disposal, in reality, a system of reference [*repérage*] by means of which its existence adapts and perseveres. But nothing can render this adaptation to the

⁴ This is the explicit theme of *The Birth of the Clinic*. Our aim is less to discredit phenomenological discourse (that of Maurice Merleau-Ponty in particular), which remains positivistic insofar as it blinds itself to all mutation of invisible structures, than to take it up again so as to give it a new foundation: as rigorous discourse, in the imaginary, of the imaginary.

real natural or innate. It cannot be thought according to models which hold good for the animal world, it proceeds through the secondary intervention of a corrective system. We must then distinguish between an adequate miscognition, necessary to the action of the structure, and an inadequate miscognition, which damages the subject's subsistence; from the standpoint of our current perspective, all perception and ideology, as well as everything we might call sensibility, are gathered together in the sole concept of miscognition.

Miscognition [*méconnaissance*] is not the exact opposite of cognition or knowledge [*connaissance*], and 'coming [99] to consciousness' – i.e. the operation through which what is lived is made explicit – does not end miscognition. On the contrary: miscognition is a part of knowledge, and the formation of any conceptual system, closed or as good as closed, continues the dimension of the imaginary. The psychological sphere, that of volitions and appetites, in other words of motivations, is derived from the functional miscognition of the structuring, with the result that people always act in light of an end, i.e. in light of what they perceive as useful. Since the adequate systems that elaborate this miscognition of the cause form, for Claude Lévi-Strauss, the object of ethnology, this latter remains a psychology, and we must rely on psychoanalysis to delimit the field of psychology.

The theory of the subject prepares the way for a doctrine of intersubjectivity, which we already know cannot be articulated in simply reciprocal terms. The relation established between one subject and another is no more reversible than it is exclusively dependent on either one of them: this simple alterity, twin-like or fissiparous [*scissipare*], inhabits the imaginary, and the hopeless impossibility of deducing its configuration from one of the terms leads to its description as miraculous. That which unites them, and arranges their relations, of which we only perceive the effects, is tied up and decided on an Other Scene, and refers them to an absolute alterity in absence that is, so to speak, exponentialized.⁵ This alterity is never given in the present, and yet there is no presence which does not pass through it, or that is not constituted in it.

No relationship between a subject and another subject, or between a subject and an object, fills the lack, except by an imaginary formation that sutures it; the lack persists inside the subject [*il se retrouve en son intérieur*]. Contestation of the moment of reciprocity affirmed in the psychologies of intersubjectivity should be correlative to a refutation of all liberal or humanist politics; we are entitled to say that such politics are derived from reciprocity, and they search indefinitely for that object that might come to fill in what they conceive as human 'dissatisfaction' (such is Lockean *uneasiness*), and guarantee the transparency of interhuman relations. Once we know that it is no longer in accordance with a 'having' [*avoir*] that man has anything, but according to his 'being' [*être*], or, without recourse to metaphor, once we know that the imaginary is the means of determining a structure that includes a subject, then we must consider any notion of a politics of happiness, i.e. of adjustment, as the surest way of reinforcing the inadequation of the subject to the structure.

The final task is to unite all these analyses in a doctrine of alienation, in open conflict with Hegel and neo-Hegelianism. For a subjectivity that cannot be defined in terms of reflexivity, alienation cannot be treated as that hell from which it should liberate itself so as to possess itself and enjoy its own activity – this is something that could only be conceived for an autonomous sphere of self-consciousness, and not for a reduplicated and therefore lacunary subject, the imaginary subject-agent of the structured, the subject-support, element, of the structuring, which only appears as a subject in the real by miscognizing itself in the imaginary as element in the structuring.

⁵ TN: the French reads: 'Ce qui les unit et arrange leurs liens, et dont nous voyons uniquement les effets, se noue et se décide sur une Autre Scène, et les réfère à une altérité absolue en absence, pour ainsi dire exponentielle.'

But an alienation is essential to the subject since it can only be effectuated as an agent in the imaginary [100], by taking account of the effects of the structuring, in which he or she is already accounted for [*compté*]. An actor, the subject is a director in his fantasy.⁶

Science

Now, once the undertakings of the subject are restored to their radical dependence with regard to the action of the structuring, and once alienation is defined as constitutive of the subjected subject, how are we to understand the possibility of a discourse that gives itself an adequate object, and that develops its own norms? And first: how is a discourse of overdetermination itself even possible? The sole fact that it is exposed to encountering (or rather necessarily invokes in its advance), beyond the problem of scientificity in general, the problem of its own possibility, makes manifest the singular circuit of a reflected implication: the status of this discourse is the concern of a doctrine of science through which its reason is grounded, but in which the discourse alone is entitled to assign its own place, to constrain the concept, and to dictate the categorical terms. It is from this problem that is precisely ultimate and primary, that we intend to make the thematic departure on the basis of which we will order our procedure.

If we might agree to call the field of the statement [*énoncé*] the field where logic establishes itself, and the field of speech [*parole*] that of psychoanalysis – then, anticipating our future knowledge, we will declare the need for a new position in the space of language, and will produce this proposition: that any field in which the question 'is it scientific or not?' has cardinal importance is to be constituted as a field of discourse.

When logic constructs a formalized system, it expresses the alphabet of its symbols, an initial set of formulas and rules for their formation and their deduction, such that the statements it produces do not double themselves with any virtual dimension; when a logical activity is attached to systems that it has not itself engendered, this dimension remains always reducible in principle. By contrast, statements isolated in the linguistic field are referred back to a code whose virtuality is essential, and which defines them as messages. But communication itself is not taken into account, and both the emission as well as the reception [of messages] serve more to fix the limits of the field, rather than form a part of it.

If now we try to derive from the linguistic relation a subject that would be capable of sustaining it, it cannot be the indivisible medium or support [*support*] of the message and of the code, it will not entertain the same relation with the one and the other: the code, necessary to the production of speech but absent from the speech enunciated by the subject, does not belong to the emitting subject, and cannot be situated in his place; reception requires it as well, and it is necessary to situate it in the exponentialized dimension of alterity that we evoked above. The topological distribution that is thus sketched disconnects the plane on which the subject is effectuated in the first [101] person, and the place of that code to which he is rendered [*rendu*], but where as subject-agent, precisely, he is elided, and from where his speech originates, only to be inverted as soon as it is uttered, and to where it ultimately returns, since it is the place which guarantees its intellection and its truth. The lack of the code at the level of speech, and the lack of the subject-agent in the place of the code, which are correlative to each other, open up the splitting [*refente*] of the unconscious within the interior of language. We can now say: *the subject is capable of an unconscious.*

In this splitting, psychoanalysis articulates this Other scene in which the speech of the subject is decided and structured, where this latter figures in a passive function,

⁶ TN: 'Acteur, il est metteur en scène dans son fantasme.'

like an element whose transitivity is ruled by a quaternary combination – another Scene that draws the human animal into language, and towards which its speech (left to its own devices) returns, as if towards its most primordial and generative dependency.

But other circuits branch out of this splitting. As for us, we attend to this speech constrained by the conscious aim of its goal as veracity [*véridicité*], which we name discourse. The topology remains, but the connection is only established here through a secondary selection from the primordial Other scene, or in other words: depending on the mode of language, the connection can be made with *other Other scenes*, grafted upon the place of the code. For example: the Other scene of the class struggle, whose combinatory deals with 'class-interests'. A specification of lacks [*manques*] gets under away.

The fundamental articulation that structures discourses as instances of constrained speech prescribes a reading of them which is neither a commentary nor an interpretation. It is not a commentary because it is not in search of a meaning that might abstain from the text by virtue of a misfortune inseparable from the word, but which the text nevertheless invokes and necessarily implies, and which we might restore and multiply indefinitely through recourse to the tacit ground of speech, which no amount of exploitation can exhaust. Nor is it a question of making a meaning pass from one text to another, and, for example, of translating it into the vocabulary of an already constituted philosophy, without excluding possibilities for other interpretations; such a discourse would be like a neutral element in relation to the first discourse, established upon it like a parasite. To take up a statement by referring it to other statements closer to the mystery of its meaning presupposes the kind of relation to the letter that Spinoza criticized in biblical exegesis. Lastly, it is not enough to restore to a text its continuity, its logical simultaneity, spelling out its surface. 'Structuralism' at the level of the statement should only be a moment for a reading which searches throughout its place-holding [*tenant-lieu*] for the specific lack that supports the structuring function. For this transgressive reading that traverses the statement towards the enunciation, the name of *analysis* strikes us as appropriate.

The lack at issue here is not a silent speech that it might suffice to bring to light, it is not some impotence of the word or a ruse of the author; it is silence, the defect [*défaut*] that organizes enunciated speech, it is the hidden place that [102] cannot be illuminated because it is on the basis of its absence that the text was possible, and that discourses were uttered: that Other scene where the eclipsed subject situates himself, from where he speaks, for which he speaks. The exteriority of discourse is central, this distance is interior. We must break the reciprocal determination whereby the elements of an object are orchestrated into a structured network: we seek a univocal determination – we seek not only what it [*ça*] means to say, but above all what it does not say, to the degree that it *means* not to say it.⁷ We will therefore consider the whole of a text as the circling of a lack, principle of the action of the structure, which thus bears the marks of the action that it accomplishes: *the suture*. Starting from the placeholder towards which the disorders of the statement of its contradictions converge, pivoting [*faire pivoter*] the plane of the statement must reveal the discourse of the subject as the discourse of the miscognition pertaining to the place where, as an element, or support, he [*il*] is situated in the structuring structure. The discourse that the subject emits, he also receives, and the determination inverts itself through being made in the first person [*la détermination s'inverse de se faire en première personne*]. We will thus explore the space of the determination's displacement. At once univocal, repressed and interior, withdrawn and declared, only *metonymic* causality might qualify it. The

⁷ TN: '... nous cherchons une détermination univoque, – non seulement ce que ça veut dire, mais surtout ce que ça ne dit pas, dans la mesure où ça veut ne pas le dire.' 'Ça', French for Freud's *Id* [*das Es*], may also denote the unconscious.

cause is metaphorized in a discourse, and in general in any structure – for the necessary condition of the functioning of structural causality is that the subject takes the effect *for the cause*. Fundamental law of the action of the structure.

So how, then, is such a discourse possible, a discourse which only takes orders from itself, a flat discourse, without unconscious, adequate to its object? It is clear that it is not the return to a reality beyond discourse, an explicit [*désimpliquée*] and simply positive attention, that opens up its field; rather, it is again a singular state of the structuring, a particular position of the subject in relation to the place of truth, that closes speech upon itself. This closing of scientific discourse should not be confused with the suture of non-scientific discourse, because it actually expels lack, reduces its central exteriority, disconnects it from every other Scene. Thought from within the field it circumscribes, this closing [*fermeture*] will be given the name: *closure* [*clôture*]. But the limit of this circumscription has a density, it has an exterior; in other words, scientific discourse is not stricken with a simple lack – *rather the lack of a lack is also a lack*.

Double negation confers a positivity to its field, but at the periphery of this field one must acknowledge the structure that makes it possible, and from which its development is nevertheless not independent. The lack of the lack leaves open in every scientific discourse the place of the miscognition, and of the ideology that accompanies it, without being intrinsic to it: a scientific discourse as such includes no utopic element. We would need to envisage two superposed spaces, without quilting point [*point de capiton*], without slippage (lapsus) from the one to the other. The closure proper to science therefore operates a redistribution between a closed field, on the one hand, of which one perceives no limit if one considers it from the inside, and a foreclosed space on the other. *Foreclosure* is the other side of closure. [103] This term will suffice to indicate that every science is structured like a psychosis: the foreclosed returns under the form of the impossible.

It is in fact the epistemological break that we rediscover here, but by approaching it from its exterior side we should recognize the privilege and novel scientific status of a discourse of overdetermination which constitutes its field at the exterior limit of all science in general, whose theoretical as well as practical (therapeutic or political) injunction is given by the Freudian '*Wo es war, soll ich werden*', which for us summons the scientific subject to pull himself together.

We know of two discourses of overdetermination: the Marxist discourse and the Freudian discourse. Since the first has today been liberated by Louis Althusser of the obstacle that burdened it with a conception of society as historical subject, just as the second has been liberated by Jacques Lacan from the interpretation of the individual as psychological subject, – we think that it is now possible to join these two discourses. We maintain that the discourses of Marx and Freud might communicate with each other via regulated transformations, and might reflect one another in a unitary theoretical discourse.

September 1964.

Note on the Causes of Science

The crucial problem for the Doctrine of science, the very problem that defines it, concerns its own status.

It is indeed alone in its ability to provide this status, since unlike any particular science it has no exterior: the principles that govern it fall under their own jurisdiction. The Doctrine cannot then posit that it should not be counted among the number of its

objects; if it has no outside it is internal to itself. The introjection that it suffers as soon as it establishes itself condemns it to all the phenomena of self-reflexivity.

The consequences of this property are as follows: the Doctrine has no meaning [*sens*], or at least it does not have any that can be stated. As such, it cannot be said, because it cannot be constructed. From the outset, to expound it, that is to say, to explicate it, unfold it, spread it out, is, by right, impossible. And if nothing can be that cannot be said, that is because if *nothing is without a name* (this is our version of the principle of reason, and there are two ways of understanding it according to its punctuation – Heidegger demonstrates it in the case of Leibniz), [then] the project of a Doctrine of science is impossible, it has the name of the unnameable: the *Anonymous Doctrine*.⁸

Consequently, every statement which aims at it will be preambular and peripheral, and [104] at the same time, this Doctrine is itself nothing but preambular and peripheral: it is sucked [*aspirée*] into its surroundings. The discourse adequate to it is always to one side of it, because it is nowhere, and thus everywhere.

These marvellous properties ensue from one alone: its self-reflexivity, which, by forbidding the division of its enunciation, renders meta-language indiscernible from the language-object in its field.⁹ It would therefore contradict the concept of the Anonymous Doctrine if one could isolate it in any given place of the Universe of discourse. To expound it, in other words to miss it [*la manquer*], so as to produce its absence in language by providing it with surroundings, is an infinite enterprise.

This is no doubt why Fichte, who wanted what I have just described, is first of all a philosopher who speaks, and for whom books constitute nothing more than the residue of speech. In a certain sense, his discourse should not be conserved, it is proffered with a view to its own disappearance, and always bears the clause of annulment laid down by Wittgenstein in 6.54 of the *Tractatus*:¹⁰ Fichte's *Principles of the Doctrine of Science* of 1794¹¹ is a 'manual for auditors', and the various expositions of the Doctrine rework his lectures. We should not doubt that the internal failure of the Doctrine is not accidental: dispersion is its sole possible form. There is no meta-language of the Doctrine, and so what is essential is never said, or it is said at each moment, always present, but never there. And those who listen to it do not amount to an audience [*un public*], rather each, confronted with it, is self-confiding and solitary. Discourse does not do the thinking for those who listen to it, in their place, from outside of them; but each listener must, on his own account and each time as if for the first time, bring about the annulment of the process of enunciation, for the process only terminates at the moment it is found to be interminable, when the operator sees that he did not construct the Doctrine in himself, but rather that it was constructing itself in him. So it is the same thing to say that the Doctrine is impossible, or that its exposition is infinite, or that it precedes everything that bears on it, or that it envelops everything that wants to envelop it. And we can see that, to whoever lives and moves in it, and who wants to

⁸ TN: 'Et si rien n'est qui ne peut être dit, c'est si *rien n'est sans nom* (c'est là notre version du principe de raison, et il y a deux façons de l'entendre selon la ponctuation – Heidegger le démontre pour Leibniz), le projet d'une Doctrine de la science est impossible, elle a le nom de l'innommable: la *Doctrine Anonyme*.'

⁹ TN: 'son auto-réflexivité qui, d'interdire à son énonciation de se diviser, fait en son champ le méta-langage indiscernable du langage-objet.'

¹⁰ TN: 'My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright' (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* [1921], trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge Classics, 2001), 6.54).

¹¹ TN: Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge* [*Wissenschaftslehre*, 1794], trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

speak or write it, the Discourse will present itself as an effort, 'not a reality that *is*, but something that we ought to, and yet cannot, produce.'¹²

What is being stated here depends on a *law*, a law of reason *a priori*, or a law *a posteriori* of the sign: a self-reflexive and thus self-reproducing object has for its correlate an impossible construction, or an infinite activity. *This is why we can just as well say that it does not exist, or that it is indestructible.*

Freud must have had some knowledge of this object, whose self-reproduction is not a division but rather a repetition, since it is indivisible, in order to have been able to have recognized desire¹³ as indestructible, and to have withdrawn the unconscious from the principle of contradiction. As for analysis, its termination has nothing in common with the end of any physical process, for its movement is perpetual. [105]

I add, in order to mark the place where other developments might be inserted, that the proposition of Fichte which I cite above situates the point where his discourse joins that of Spinoza.

'We necessarily arrive at Spinozism, if we exceed the *I am*'¹⁴, and to hold oneself to the *I am* as if it were an Unconditioned amounts to giving the absolute I the properties of substance, as Schelling's first text (*On the I as the Principle of Philosophy*) indicates: 'Spinoza has characterized the unconditioned in a perfect manner, for everything that he says of substance can apply word for word to the absolute I.' We should nevertheless draw attention to the fact that, since God is not self-conscious, Spinoza expounds his theory in a definitive text.

Perhaps the co-ordinates that I give here, in passing, to Fichte – i.e. Spinoza and Freud – will forestall laughter from those who think they have recognized, in the aporia of the Doctrine, something like, what exactly? An ideology!

To make it clear that in my view what is at stake here is not this, I will say that we must take up the four problems identified by Fichte in his opusculum of 1794, 'Concerning the Concept of the *Doctrine of Science* or, of So-Called "Philosophy"'¹⁵, and I take them up again, turning them to my own ends.

How is the Doctrine sure that it exhausts science, including the science to come? It is because it must discover its causes. How is it distinguished from particular sciences? By the way it thinks what they cannot integrate into their field – the decisions that institute their principles. How is it distinguished from logic? As logic of the signifier. How does it conduct itself in relation to its object? The Doctrine is antinomical to the object, i.e. they are mutually incompatible, whether the former absorbs the latter, or the latter vanishes in the former: they only exist in the non-relation, as incommensurable.

These responses should not be taken for the Doctrine itself: I am only declaring what this Doctrine must be. But if it is already clear that we must not understand by science the indistinct totality of all human knowledge (i.e. that which for Kant begins with but does not derive from experience¹⁶), but rather the thought that calculates, verifies and experiments, to the exclusion of perception, of consciousness, and of all the modes of feeling [*sentiment*], then space is made in the Doctrine for the history of the sciences insofar as it teaches which *position* of the subject makes science possible.

What must be known in order to situate the position of a subject in any conjuncture are the relations it entertains with the authority of the guarantee [*instance de la garantie*], with its statements, with their object. If we can clarify the modes

¹² TN: Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge* I, 101/102tm.

¹³ *Perseveration* in Spinoza's sense is an identical effect.

¹⁴ TN: Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge* I, 101/102tm.

¹⁵ TN: Fichte, 'Concerning the Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre*', in *Early Philosophical Writings*, trans. & ed. Daniel Breazeale (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 94-135.

¹⁶ TN: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A1/B1.

whereby the subject correlative to science relates to these three determinations, we will be able to know the causes of science.