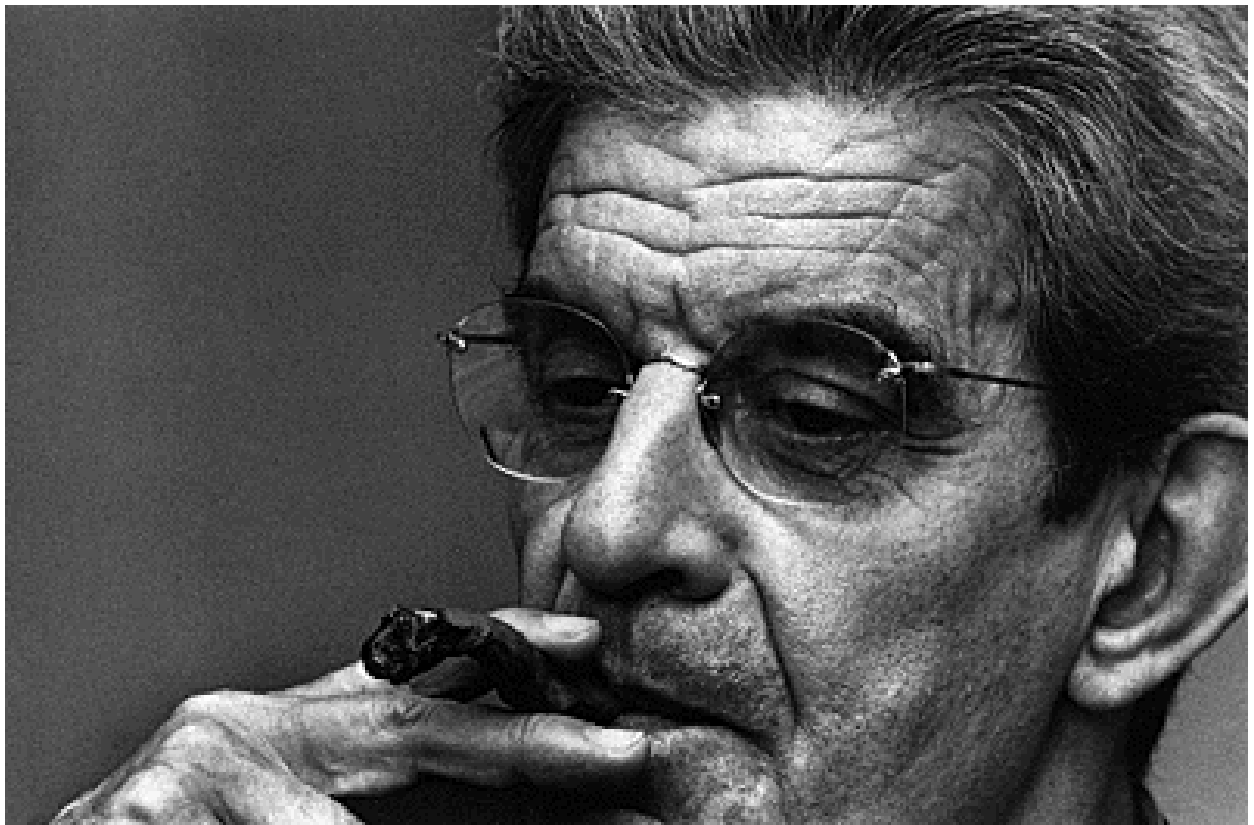


Jacques Lacan
Science and Truth



Translated by Bruce Fink

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Typescript of the opening lesson of the seminar I gave during the school year 1965-66 at the Ecole Normale Supérieure on *The Object of Psychoanalysis*, as a lecturer for the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Section 6).

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Might I say that I established the status of the *subject* in psychoanalysis last year? I went so far as to develop a structure which accounts for the state of splitting or *Spaltung* at the point at which the psychoanalyst detects it in his praxis.

He detects it on a more or less daily basis. He accepts it as a given, since the mere recognition of the unconscious suffices to ground it, and since it also submerges him, so to speak, by its constant manifestation.

But for him to know the state of his praxis, or to simply direct it in keeping with what is accessible to him, it is not enough for him to take this division as an empirical fact, or even for the empirical fact to become a paradox. A certain reduction is necessary which is sometimes long in completion, but always decisive in the birth of a science; such a reduction truly constitutes its object. Epistemology takes upon itself the job of defining this in each and every case, without having proven, at least to my mind, equal to the task.

For I don't believe that epistemology has fully accounted in this way for the decisive change which, with physics paving the way, founded *Science* in the modern sense, a sense which posits itself as absolute. Science's position is justified by a radical change in the *tempo* of its progress, by the galloping form of its inmixing in our world, and by the chain reactions that characterize what one might

call the expansions of its energetics. In this situation what seems radical to me is the modification in our subject position [*position de sujet*]¹, in both senses of the term, for that position is inaugural therein, and science continues to strengthen it ever further. Cyril 10/23

Koyré is my guide here, and it is rather widely recognized that he is still unrecognized [*méconnu*].

I didn't thus just make an immediate pronouncement concerning psychoanalysis' vocation as a science. But it might have been noticed that I took as my guiding light last year² a certain moment of the subject that I consider to be an essential correlate of science, an historically defined moment, the strict repeatability in experience of which perhaps remains to be determined: the moment Descartes inaugurates that goes by the name of *cogito*.

This correlate, as a moment, is the aftermath [*défilé*] of a rejection [*rejet*] of all knowledge³, but is nevertheless claimed to establish for the subject a certain anchoring in being; I sustain that this rejection of all knowledge constitutes the subject of science in its definition, this latter term to be understood in the sense of a "narrow doorway."

This light did not guide me in vain, for it led me at year end to formulate the experienced division of the subject as a division between knowledge and truth, and to accompany it with a topological model, the Möbius strip; this strip leads one to realize that the division where these two terms join together is not to be derived from a difference in origin.

Whoever lends credence to the technique for reading Freud I had to impose when the task at hand was simply one of resituating each of his terms in their synchronic relations, will be able to back up from the *Ichspaltung*⁴ (to which death put an end), to the articles on fetishism (1927) and the loss of reality (1924), to observe that the doctrinal revamping known as the second topography introduced the terms *Ich*, *Über-Ich* and even *Es* without certifying them as apparatuses, introducing instead a reworking of experience in accordance with a dialectic best defined by what structuralism has since allowed us to elaborate logically: namely the subject — the subject caught up in a constituting division.

The reality principle accordingly loses the discordance that supposedly characterizes it in Freud's work when, due to a juxtaposition of texts, it is split between a notion of reality that includes psychic reality and another that makes psychic reality the correlate of the perception-consciousness system.

The reality principle must be read as it is in fact designated: as the strain of experience sanctioned by the subject of science.

It suffices to give this some thought for the following ideas, which one disallows as overly obvious, to assume their proper place.

For example: that it is unthinkable that psychoanalysis as a practice and the *Freudian* unconscious as a discovery, could have taken on their roles before the birth — in the century which has been called the century of genius, i.e. the seventeenth century — of science; “science” should be taken in the absolute sense just indicated, a sense which hardly seems to efface what formerly went by the same name, but which, rather than detecting its archaism therein, draws to itself the latter’s principle [*en tire le fil à lui*] in such a way as to better demonstrate its difference from any other science.

One thing is certain: if the subject is truly there, at the nexus [*noeud*] of that difference, all humanist references become superfluous in science, the subject cutting them short.

In saying this about psychoanalysis and Freud’s discovery, I am not concerned with the incidental fact that it was because his patients came to him in the name of science, and because of the prestige science conferred upon its servants (even its lowly ones) at the end of the nineteenth century, that Freud was able to found psychoanalysis by discovering the unconscious.

I am saying, contrary to what has been trumped up about a supposed break on Freud’s part with the scientism of his time, that it was this very scientism — which one might designate by its allegiance to the ideals of Brücke, themselves passed down from Helmholtz and Du Bois-Reymond’s pact-bound devotion to the reduction of physiology, and the mental functions considered to be included therein, to the mathematically determined terms of thermodynamics (the latter having attained virtual completion during their lifetimes) — that led Freud, as his writings show, to pave the way which shall forever bear his name.

I am saying that this way never shed the ideals of scientism, as it is called, and that the mark it bears of this latter is not contingent but, rather, essential.

Its credit is preserved by this mark, despite the deviations to which it gave rise, Freud having opposed these deviations with timely sureness and inflexible rigor.

Witness his break with the most prestigious of his followers, Jung, as soon as the latter slipped into something whose function can only be defined as an attempt to reinstate a subject endowed

with depths (with an "s"), i.e. a subject constituted by a relationship — said to be archetypal — to knowledge; the said relationship was not reduced to that exclusively allowed by modern science, being no other than the one I defined last year as punctual and vanishing: that relationship to knowledge which, since its historically inaugural moment, has retained the name "*cogito*."

It is due to this indubitable origin, blatant in all of Freud's work, and to the lesson he left us as head of a school, that Marxism is unable — and I don't believe any Marxist has seriously contested this point — to attack his ideas on the basis of their historical extraction [*ses appartenances historiques*].

I have in mind here his affiliation with the society of the double monarchy, Freud remaining bounded within Judaizing limits in his spiritual aversions; and with the capitalist order which conditioned his political agnosticism (who among you will write an essay worthy of Lamennais⁵ on indifference in political matters?); and I would add: his espousal of bourgeois ethics, for which the dignity of his life inspires in us a respect that prevents us from realizing that his work has attained a stature — otherwise than in its misconceptions and confusions — comparable to that of the only men of truth we still have: revolutionary agitators and writers whose style leaves its mark on language (I'm thinking of someone in particular) and the thought that renews being of which we have the precursor.

You no doubt sense my haste here to dispense with the many precautions taken to remind psychoanalysts of their least debatable certainties.

I will nevertheless have to rehash them, even if it entails a certain heavy-handedness.

To say that the subject upon which⁶ we operate in psychoanalysis can only be the subject of science may seem paradoxical. It is nevertheless here that a demarcation must be made, failing which everything gets mixed up and a type of dishonesty sets in that is elsewhere called objective; but it is people's lack of audacity and failure to locate the object that backfires. One is always responsible for one's position as subject. Those who would like to may call that terrorism. I have the right to be amused, for it is not in a setting where doctrine is fair game for bargaining⁷ that I should fear obfuscating anyone by formulating that guileless errors are the most unforgivable of all.

The psychoanalyst's position leaves no escape, excluding as it does the tenderness of the beautiful soul. If it is still a paradox to even say so, it is perhaps once again the same paradox.

Whatever the case may be, I posit that every attempt, or even temptation, in which current theory persists in being a relapse, further incarnating the subject, amounts to errancy — ever fruitful in error, but as such faulty [*fautive*].⁸ The same is true when the subject is incarnated in man, himself nothing in such theories but a child.

For man is then taken to be a primitive, which falsifies the whole primary process, just as children are taken to be underdeveloped men, which masks the truth about what happens during childhood that is original. In short, what Claude Lévi-Strauss has denounced as the archaic illusion⁹ is inevitable in psychoanalysis if one is not steadfast in one's theory regarding the principle I just mentioned: but one subject is accepted as such in psychoanalysis, the one that can make it scientific.

Which suffices to indicate that I do not believe that, in this respect, psychoanalysis lays claim to any special privileges.

There is no such thing as a science of man, and this should be understood along the lines of "there's no such thing as an insignificant savings".¹⁰ There is no such thing as a science of man because science's man does not exist, only its subject does.

My lifelong repugnance for the appellation "human sciences" is well known; it strikes me as the very call of servitude.

But it is also fact that the term is incorrect [*faux*], except in the case of psychology which has discovered a way to outlive itself by providing services to the technocracy — sliding, as it were (as a sensational article by Canguilhem concludes, with truly Swiftian humor), like a toboggan from the Pantheon to the Prefecture of Police¹¹. Psychology thus meets with failure at the level of the selection of creators in science, and of the encouragement and backing of research.

It is easy to see that none of the other sciences in this class constitutes an anthropology. Consider Lévy-Bruhl and Piaget. Their concepts — so-called "prelogical" mentality and supposedly "egocentric" thought or discourse — refer only to the assumed mentality, presumed thought, and actual discourse of science's subject (not science's man). The upshot being that too many people now think that limits (mental, certainly), weakness of thought (presumable), and actual discourse (a bit tricky in the case of the man of science: someone rather different) lend weight to these constructions,

whereas the latter, while not entirely devoid of objectivity, no doubt, are relevant to science only insofar as they contribute nothing about the magician, for example, and little about magic; and though they contribute something about the traces of these latter, the traces are of but the magician or magic, as it was not Lévy-Bruhl who traced them. The reckoning in Piaget's case is still more unfavorable: he contributes nothing about children and little about their development, missing as he does what is essential therein, and, as concerns the logic he displays (Piaget's child, that is) in his responses to statements whose series constitutes the test he undergoes, Piaget comes up with nothing other than the very same logic that governs the enunciation of these statements in fulfillment of the goals of the test, i.e. the logic of the man of science, in which the logician, I won't deny it, in this case maintains his importance.

In sciences that are far more valuable, though their status stand in need of reevaluation, one finds that proscription of the archaic illusion (an illusion we can generalize with the expression "psychologization of the subject") in no way fetters fecundity.

A case in point is game theory, better called strategy, which takes advantage of the thoroughly calculable character of a subject strictly reduced to the formula for a matrix of signifying combinations.

The case of linguistics is subtler as it must take into account the difference between the enunciated and enunciation, i.e. the impact [*incidence*] of the subject who speaks as such (and not of the subject of science). That is why linguistics revolves around something else, namely the battery of signifiers, whose prevalence over effects of signification must be ensured. Here too antinomies appear, scaled to the extremism of the position adopted regarding object selection. What can be said is that the elaboration of the effects of language is very far-reaching, as one can construct a poetics that owes no more to references to the mind of the poet, than to its incarnation.¹²

It is in the realm of logic that various indications appear of the theory's refraction concerning the subject of science, differing as they appear in the lexicon, syntactic morphemes and sentential syntax.

Hence the theoretical differences between linguists such as Jakobson, Hjelmslev and Chomsky.

It is logic which here serves as the subject's navel, logic insofar as it is in no way linked to the contingencies of a grammar.

The formalization of grammar must literally circumvent this logic if it is to be successfully carried out, but the circumventing movement is inscribed in this very operation.

I will indicate further along how modern logic is situated (cf. the third example below). It is indisputably the strictly determined consequence of an attempt to suture the subject of science, and Gödel's last theorem shows that this attempt fails, meaning that the subject in question remains the correlate of science, but an anti-nominal correlate since science turns out to be defined by the deadlocked endeavor to suture the subject.

One should describe therein the crucially important mark of structuralism. It ushers into every "human science" it conquers a very particular mode of the subject for which the only index I have found is topological, i.e. the generating sign of the Möbius strip that I call the "internal eight."¹³

The subject is, as it were, internally excluded from its object [*en exclusion interne à son objet*].¹⁴

The allegiance to such a structuralism manifested in Claude Lévi-Strauss' work can be accredited to my thesis, assuming I confine myself for the moment to its periphery. It is clear, notwithstanding, that he highly valorizes the scope of the natural classifications savages invent — especially their knowledge of fauna and flora, Lévi-Strauss highlighting the fact that it surpasses our own — precisely because he can argue for a certain recuperation occurring in chemistry, owing to a physics of sapid and odorous qualities, otherwise stated, to a correlation between perceptual values and molecular architecture arrived at by means of combinatory analysis, i.e. by the mathematics of the signifier, as has been the case in every science to date.

Knowledge is thus clearly separated here from the subject along the correct lines, entailing no postulation of insufficient development, which, incidentally, would not be easy to substantiate.

What's more, when Lévi-Strauss, after having extracted the combinatory latent in the elementary structures of kinship, reports that a certain informer, to use the ethnologist's term, is himself fully capable of drawing the Lévi-Straussian graph, what is he telling us if not that, here again, he extracts the subject from the combinatory in question — the subject who on the graph has no other existence than the denotation *ego*?¹⁵

In demonstrating the power of the apparatus constituted by the mytheme in analyzing mythogenic transformations, which at this stage seem to become established [*s'instituer*] in a synchrony

simplified by their reversibility, Lévi-Strauss does not presume to deliver up to us the nature of the myth-maker [*le mythant*]. He simply knows here that his informer, while able to write the raw and the cooked — though lacking the genius whose mark has been left there — cannot do it, however, without checking at the cloakroom, i.e. at the Museum of Man, a certain number of operative instruments, otherwise known as rituals, which consecrate his subject existence as myth making; in checking them, what in another grammar would be called his assent is rejected from the field of structure. (Cf. Newman's *Grammar of Assent*, somewhat powerful, albeit written for execrable purposes — I will perhaps be led to mention it again).¹⁶

↳ The object of mythogeny thus is not linked to a development or stasis of the responsible subject. It is not concerned with this latter subject but rather with the subject of science. And the closer the informer himself is to reducing his presence to that of the subject of science, the more correctly is the collecting [of myth versions] carried out.

I believe, however, that Lévi-Strauss would have reservations about the introduction, during the collection of documents, of a psychoanalytically inspired approach, a sustained collection of dreams for example, with all that would entail by way of transference relationships. But why would he, when I maintain to him that our praxis, far from altering the subject of science (the only one about which he can or wants to know anything), is entitled to intervene only when it tends towards this subject's satisfactory realization in the very field that interests Lévi-Strauss?

Is that to say that a non-saturated but calculable subject would be the object that, in accordance with the forms of classical epistemology, subsumes the body of sciences one might call "conjectural" — which I myself have opposed to the term "human sciences"?

I believe it to be all the less indicated as this subject is part of the conjuncture constituting science as a whole.

The opposition between exact sciences and conjectural sciences is no longer sustainable once conjecture is subject to exact calculation (using probability) and exactness is merely grounded in a formalism separating axioms from laws for grouping symbols.

We cannot, however, be satisfied with the simple observation that a particular formalism is more or less successful, for in the last analysis we must motivate its trappings — trappings that have not arisen miraculously, but that have instead undergone renewal after

crises which, since a certain unswerving direction seems to have been taken in science, have been terribly effective.

Let me reiterate that there is something in the status of science's object which seems to me to have remained unelucidated since the birth of science.

And let me remind you that while, certainly, to now pose the question of psychoanalysis' object is to reraise a question I broached upon first mounting this rostrum¹⁷ — that of psychoanalysis' position inside or outside of science — I have also indicated that the question probably cannot be answered without the object's status in science as such being thereby modified.

The object of psychoanalysis (I'm laying down my cards now — you may have already guessed my hand, given this talk of the object) is no other than what I have already advanced about the function played therein by object *a*. Is knowledge of object *a* thus the science of psychoanalysis?

That is precisely the equation which must be avoided, as object *a* must be inserted, as we already know, into the division of the subject by which the psychoanalytic field is quite specifically structured — that is the point with which I resumed my seminar today.

That was why it was important to promote firstly, and as a fact to be distinguished from the question of knowing whether psychoanalysis is a science (i.e. whether its field is scientific), the fact that its praxis implies no other subject than that of science.

What you'll be so kind as to permit me to conjure up, with an image like that of the opening up of the subject in psychoanalysis, must be reduced to this great an extent if we are to grasp what the subject receives therein by way of truth.

One senses that this is a tortuously circuitous process akin to taming. Object *a* is not peaceful, or rather one should say, could it be that it doesn't leave you in peace?¹⁸ least of all those of you who have the most to do with it:¹⁹ psychoanalysts, who are thus those I electively try to target with my discourse. It's true. The scheduled starting point of our meeting today, being the one at which I left you last year — that of the subject's division between truth and knowledge — is a familiar point to them. It's the one to which Freud urges them with his call "Wo es war, soll Ich werden", which I retranslate, once again, to accentuate it here, as: "where it was, there must I, as subject, come to be".²⁰

[Now I demonstrate to analysts the strangeness of this point in taking it from behind, which consists here rather in bringing them

back to its front. How could what was, forever awaiting me in the guise of an obscure being, come to be totalized by a line which can only be drawn by dividing that being still more clearly from what I can know of it?

It is not only in theory that the question of double inscription arises, having given rise to a perplexity whereupon my students Laplanche and Leclaire could have read its solution in their own split over how to approach the problem.²¹ The solution is not, in any case, of the Gestaltist type, nor is it to be sought on a plate where one finds Napoleon's head inscribed in a tree. It is quite simply to be found in the fact that an inscription does not etch into the same side of the parchment when it comes from the printing-plate of truth and when it comes from that of knowledge.

The fact that these inscriptions commingle [*se mêlent*] could have been simply accounted for by topology, there being at hand's reach a surface in which front and back are situated so as to join up at all points.

This goes much further than an intuitive schema, for it is in so to speak wrapping around the analyst in his being that this topology can grasp him.

That is why, though the analyst shifts topology to another plane, it can only be in a breaking up of a puzzle which must, in any case, be reduced to this basis.

Which is why it is not vain to restate that in the test of writing *I am thinking: "therefore I am"*,²² with quotes around the second clause, the notion is legible that thought only grounds being by knotting itself in speech where every operation goes right to the essence of language.

While Heidegger gives us the expression "*cogito sum*" somewhere²³, serving his own purposes, it must be remarked that he algebrizes the phrase, and we can justifiably highlight its remainder: "*cogito ergo*"; it is evident therein that nothing gets said [*rien ne se parle*] without leaning on the cause.

Now this cause is what is covered by the "*soll Ich*", the "must I" of Freud's expression, which, in reversing [*renverser*] its meaning, brings forth the paradox of an imperative that presses me to assume my own causality.

Yet I am not the cause of myself, though not for being the creature. The case is precisely the same for the Creator. I refer you on this point to Augustine and the prologue of his *De Trinitate*.

The Spinozian self-cause can take on the name of God. Still it is some-Thing Else [*Autre Chose*]. But let's leave that to the two words

["Autre" and "Chose"] I will only play on by stipulating that the Spinozian self-cause is also some-Thing other [*Chose autre*] than the Whole, and that this God, being other in this way, is nevertheless not the God of pantheism.

In the ego Descartes accentuates through the superfluousness of its function in certain of his Latin texts (a subject of exegesis I leave here to the specialists), one must grasp the point at which it continues to be what it presents itself as: dependent on the god of religion. A curious scrap²⁴ of *ergo*, the *ego* is bound up with²⁵ this God. Descartes' approach is, singularly, one of safeguarding the ego from the deceitful God, and thereby safeguarding the ego's partner — going so far as to endow the latter with the exorbitant privilege of guaranteeing the eternal truths only insofar as he is their creator.

The lot shared by the *ego* and God emphasized here is the same as that rendingly proffered by Descartes' contemporary, Angelus Silesius, in his mystical adjurations, upon which he imposes the form of distichs.²⁶

Those who follow my work would do well to recall here the use I made of the cherubic wanderer's jaculatory prayers²⁷, taking them up within the trajectory of the introduction to narcissism I was working on, following my own bent, the year of my commentary on *President Schreber*.²⁸

Now one can be a bit shaky²⁹ at this junction³⁰, that's the beauty of it, but one has to shake it just right [*il faut y boiter juste*].

And first of all by realizing that the two aspects don't fit together at this junction [*ne s'y emboîtent pas*].

That's why I'll take the liberty of letting it go a moment, so as to begin anew with the audacity I adopted at one time, but which I will only repeat insofar as I recall it to mind. For otherwise I would be repeating it twice, whereupon one could call it *bis repetita* in the true sense of this expression which does not mean simple repetition.

I'm referring to "The Freudian Thing," a talk the text of which is that of a second talk, deriving as it does from the occasion upon which I repeated it. It was pronounced the first time (may this insistence, in its triviality, make you aware of the temporal imbalance [*contrepied*] repetition engenders) in a Vienna where my biographer will situate my first encounter with what must be called the lowest depths of the psychoanalytic world, and above all with a bigwig whose level of culture and responsibility corresponded to that required of a body guard³¹ — but it didn't much matter to me:

it was idle chatter. I had simply wanted it to be in Vienna that my voice be heard in homage for the centennial of Freud's birth, not so as to mark the site of a deserted locus, but to mark that other site my discourse is now closing in on [*cerne*].

It is well known that I already took for granted at that time, as others do now, that the way opened up by Freud has no other meaning than the one I have made my own, namely that the unconscious is language. Thus did the inspiration strike me, seeing in Freud's way an allegorical figure strangely come alive, and the nudity donned by she³² who arises from the well quivering with a new skin, to lend her a voice — this gesture in a sense playfully echoing Saint-Just's challenge whereby he sent forth to heaven an avowal, enshrined by the assembled audience, of being nothing more than that which turns to dust, "and which speaks to you," he added.

"I, the truth, am speaking. . ." ³³ and the prosopopea continues. Think about the unnameable thing which, by virtue of its ability to pronounce these words, would go right to the being of language — if we are to hear them as they must be pronounced: in horror.

But everyone reads into the unveiling what he can. To its credit let us chalk up the muffled — though no less derisory — dramatism of the *tempo* at the end of this text, which you'll find in *Evolution psychiatrique*, 1956, v. 1, by the title "*La Chose freudienne*." ³⁴

I don't believe I owed the rather cool reception my audience gave me, upon the repeated delivery of the talk this text reproduces, to that same horror people might have felt. While willing to acknowledge what they considered to be its oblatory value, their deafness proved to be quite peculiar.

It is not that the thing (the "Thing" in the title) shocked them — at any rate not as much as it shocked some of my fellow helmsmen back then, piloting the raft upon which, through their doing, I patiently bed-fellowed ten long years (for the narcissistic sustenance of our shipwrecked companions) with Jaspersian understanding and vacuous personalism, while we worked like mad to keep ourselves from all being tainted by the liberal heart-to-heart. "Thing is not a pretty word," someone told me verbatim; "doesn't it simply ruin our quest for the ultimate in the unity of psychology where one obviously wouldn't dream of 'thingifying,' fi! who can you trust?" ³⁵ We thought you were in the avant-garde of progress, comrade."

One doesn't see oneself as one is, and even less so when one approaches oneself wearing philosophical masks.

But let's leave that aside. To realize the full extent of the misunderstanding, as it arose in my audience at that time, over an issue of some consequence, I will take up a point which came to light at more or less the same moment, and which one might find touching because of the enthusiasm it supposes: "Why," someone set the question rolling, and the concern is still in the air, "doesn't he say the truth about the truth?" [*le vrai sur le vrai*].

This proves just how vain my apology and prosopopea were.

To lend my voice to support those intolerable words, "I, the truth, am speaking. . .", goes beyond allegory. Which simply means everything that can be said of the truth, of the only truth: namely that there is no such thing as a meta-language (an assertion made so as to situate all of logical positivism), no language being able to say the truth about the truth, since the truth is grounded in the fact that it speaks, and that it has no other means with which to do so.

That is precisely why the unconscious which speaks the truth about the truth is structured like a language, and why I, in so teaching, speak the truth about Freud who knew how to let the truth — going by the name of the "unconscious" — speak.

This lack of truth about the truth, necessitating as it does all the traps meta-language — as sham and logic — falls into³⁶, is the true place of *Urverdrängung*, i.e. of primal repression which draws towards it every other repression — not to mention the other rhetorical effects it necessitates that we can recognize but by means of the subject of science.

And that is why we use other means to come to terms with it.³⁷ But it is of the utmost importance that these means be unable to let out [*élargir*] this subject. Their advantage lies in no doubt going right to what is hidden from him. But there is no other truth about the truth that can cover over this sore spot than proper names, Freud's or my own — unless one stoops to old wives' tales with which to grate away at [*ravaler*] henceforth ineffaceable testimony: a truth whose horrible face everyone is fated to refuse, or even crush when it is unrefusable, i.e. when one is a psychoanalyst, under that millstone I've occasionally used as a metaphor to remind people, via another mouthpiece, that stones too know how to scream when need be.

People will thus perhaps consider me justified in not having found the question, "Why doesn't he say. . .?" terribly touching, coming as it did from someone whose workaday role in a truth agency's offices made his naïveté doubtful, and in having hence-

forth preferred to do without the services he provided in mine, which has no need of cantors who dream of sacristy. . . .

Must it be stated that there are other bodies of knowledge [*savoirs*]³⁸ to know [*connaître*] than that of science when it comes to dealing with the epistemological drive?

Returning again to what is at issue: is this to admit that we must give up the notion in psychoanalysis that a body of knowledge corresponds to every truth? That is the breaking point at which we depend upon the advent of science. We no longer have anything with which to join knowledge and truth together but the subject of science.

This subject still allows us to do so, and I will now go further into the question of how — leaving my Thing to sort things out by itself with noumenon, in short order I suspect: as a truth which speaks has no-thing much [*peu de chose*] in common with a noumenon that, for as long as pure reason can be traced back, has always kept its mouth shut.³⁹

This reminder is not irrelevant, as the medium which will serve us at this point is one I brought up earlier. It is the cause: not the cause as logical category, but as causing⁴⁰ the whole effect. Will you psychoanalysts refuse to take on the question of the truth as cause when your very careers are built upon it? If there are any practitioners for whom truth as such is supposed to act, aren't you them?

Make no mistake about it, in any case: it is because this point is veiled in science that you have kept an astonishingly well-preserved place in what plays the role of collective hope in the vagabond conscience that accompanies revolutions in thought.

In writing that "Marx's theory is all-powerful because it is true," Lenin does nothing to come to terms with the enormity of the question his speech raises: if one supposes the truth of materialism in its two guises (*viz.* dialectic and history, in fact one and the same) to be mute, how could theorizing this increase its power? To answer with proletarian consciousness and the action of Marxist politics seems inadequate to me.

The separation of powers is at least announced in Marxism, the truth as cause being distinguished from knowledge put to work.

An economic science inspired by *Capital* does not necessarily lead to its utilization as a revolutionary power, and history seems to require help from something other than a predicative dialectic. Aside from this singular point, which I shall not delve into here, the fact is that science, if one looks at it closely, has no memory. Once constituted, it forgets the circuitous path by which it came into

being; otherwise stated, it forgets the dimension of truth that psychoanalysis seriously puts to work.

I must, however, be more precise. It is widely known that physical and mathematical theory — after every crisis that is resolved in a form for which the term “generalized theory” can in no way be taken to mean “a shift to generality” — often maintain what they generalize in its position in the preceding structure. That is not my point here. My concern is the toll [*drame*], the subjective toll that each of these crises takes on the learned [*savant*]. It takes its victims, and nothing allows us to say that their destiny can be inscribed in the Oedipal myth. Let us say that the subject is not often studied. J.R. Mayer, Cantor — well I’m not going to furnish a list of first-rate tragedies [*dramas*], leading at times to the point of madness; the names of certain of our contemporaries, in whose cases I consider exemplary the tragedy of what is happening in psychoanalysis, would soon have to be added to the list. I posit, moreover, that this tragedy cannot itself be brought within Oedipus without throwing this latter into question.

You see the program that is being sketched out here. It is not about to be realized. I even consider it to be rather blocked.

I am broaching it carefully, and for today I ask you to see yourselves in the reflected light of such an approach.

Which is to say that we are going to bring that light to bear on other fields than psychoanalysis that lay claim to truth.

It must be said that to the subject of science, magic and religion — the two positions of this order that are distinct from science, so much so that they have been situated in relation to science, as a false or lesser science in the case of magic, and as going beyond its limits, or even in a truth-conflict with science in the case of religion — are mere will-o’-the-wisps, but not to the suffering subject with whom we deal.

Will it be said: “He’s coming to it now. What is the suffering subject if not the one from whom our status derives? and what right do your intellectualizations give you to him?”

In response, I will start off with something I came across in the work of a philosopher recently awarded full academic honors. According to him, “The truth of pain is pain itself”.⁴¹ Leaving this matter for today to the realm he explores, I will come back to it to explain how phenomenology serves as a pretext for the counter-truth and to explain the latter’s status.

I will take it up now only to pose you analysts a question: does or doesn't what you do imply that the truth of neurotic suffering lies in having the truth as cause?

I propose the following:

Concerning magic, I begin with a viewpoint which allows for no confusion as to my scientific obedience, being confined to a structuralist definition. This viewpoint assumes that signifiers respond as such to signifiers. The signifier in nature is called up by the signifier of incantation. It is metaphorically mobilized. The Thing, insofar as it speaks, answers our objurgations.³ *ste*

That is why the order of natural classification I invoked from Lévi-Strauss' studies permits us, through its structural definition, to glimpse the bridge of correspondences by which the effective operation is conceivable, in the same way in which the operation was conceived.

This is, nevertheless, a reduction which neglects the subject.

Everyone knows that the readying [*mise en état*] of the subject — the shamanizing subject — is essential in Lévi-Strauss' studies. Let us observe that the shaman, as flesh and blood, is part of nature, and that the operation's correlative subject must hew himself from this corporeal medium. This mode of hewing [*recouplement*] is debarred from the subject of science. Only his structural correlatives in the operation are locatable for him, but they are exactly locatable.

It is in the form of signifiers that what must be mobilized in nature appears: thunder and rain, meteors and miracles.

Everything is ordered therein in accordance with the antinomial relationships by which language is structured.

I shall thus investigate the effect of demand in magic, with the idea of testing whether the relationship to desire defined by my graph can be detected therein.

Only in this way, to be described further on, using an approach which does not involve coarse recourse to analogy, can a psychoanalyst consider himself qualified to say something about magic.

His comment that magic is always sexual has its value here, but does not suffice to make him an authority on the subject.

I will conclude with two points worthy of your attention:

Magic involves the truth as cause in its guise as efficient cause;

Knowledge is characterized in magic not only as remaining veiled for the subject of science, but as dissimulating itself as such, as much in the operative tradition as in its act. That is one of magic's conditions.

As for religion, I will simply indicate the same structural approach and, just as summarily, that this outline is founded in an opposition between structural traits.

Is it possible to hope that religion will take on a more clear-cut status in science? I ask this because for some time now strange philosophers have been giving the flimsiest definition of the relations between science and religion, primarily taking them to be deployed in the same world, religion thus having an all-encompassing position therein.

On this delicate point, about which certain people would want me to adopt analytic neutrality, I promote the principle that befriending everyone is an inadequate policy for maintaining intact the position from which one must operate.

In religion, the putting into play of the truth as cause by the subject — the religious subject, that is — described earlier is taken up in a completely different operation. An analysis on the basis of the subject of science necessarily leads one to bring out in religion mechanisms that are familiar to us from obsessional neurosis. Freud perceived them in a flash that gives them an import surpassing all traditional criticism. The intent to measure religion against obsessional neurosis is in no way incommensurate.

If one cannot begin with remarks such as this — that the function fulfilled by revelation in religion translates as a negation [*dénégation*] of the truth as cause, i.e. revelation negates [*dénie*] what grounds the subject who maintains himself therein⁴² as a concerned party — then there is little chance of giving the so-called history of religions any limits, in other words any rigor.

Let us say that a religious person leaves responsibility for the cause to God, but thereby bars his own access to truth. Thus he is led to place the cause of his desire in God's hands, and that is the true object of the sacrifice. His demand is submitted to the supposed desire of a God who must henceforth be seduced. The game of love starts in that way.

Religious people thus confer upon truth the status of guilt. The upshot being a distrust of knowledge, most evident in the cases of those Church Fathers who proved to be the best reasoners.

Truth in religion is related to [*renvoyée à*] so-called "eschatological" ends, which is to say that truth appears only as final cause, in the sense that it is deferred [*reportée à*] to an end-of-the-world judgement.

Hence the obscurantist stench which permeates all scientific uses of finality. *le c.*

I've noted in passing how much we have yet to learn about the structure of the subject's relationship to truth as cause from the writings of the Fathers, and even from the first conciliar decisions. The rationalism organizing theological thought is in no way a question of fancy, as the platitudes would have it.

If there is fantasy therein, it is in the most rigorous sense of the institution of a real which covers over the truth.

The fact that Christian truth had to formulate the untenable notion of a Three and One God does not strike me as inaccessible to scientific investigation. On this point, ecclesiastical power adapts remarkably well to a certain discouragement of thought.

Before accentuating the impasses of such a mystery, it is worthwhile reflecting upon the necessity of this mystery's articulation; thought must be measured against this necessity.

The question must be broached at the level at which dogma lapses into heresy — and the question of the *Filioque*⁴³ seems to me to allow of explanation in topological terms.

Structural apprehension must be primary therein; it alone permits an accurate assessment of the function of images. *De Trinitate* here has all the characteristics of a theoretical work and we can take it as a model.

Were this not the case, I would advise my students to expose themselves to a sixteenth-century tapestry awaiting them in the foyer of the Mobilier National, on display for another month or two, that forces itself upon one's gaze.

The Three People, represented in an absolute identity of form, perfectly at ease talking amongst themselves on the fresh banks of Creation, are quite simply anxiety-provoking.

And what is hidden by such a well-made machine, when it confronts the couple, Adam and Eve, in the flower of their sin, is certainly of the sort to be proposed as a mental exercise on human relationships, ordinarily imagined to never exceed duality.

But my audience should first become versed in Augustine. . .

I seem to have thus only defined characteristics of religions from the Jewish tradition. They are no doubt helpful in showing us the interest thereof — and I am inconsolable at having had to drop my project of relating the function of the Name-of-the-Father to the study of the Bible.⁴⁴

The fact remains that the key lies in a definition of the relation of the subject to truth.

I believe I can say that insofar as Claude Lévi-Strauss conceives of Buddhism as a religion of the generalized subject, i.e. involving an

indefinitely variable stopping down⁴⁵ of the truth as cause, he flatters this utopia in believing that it concords with the universal reign of Marxism in society.

Which is perhaps to make too little of the exigencies of the subject of science, and to lend too much credence to the emergence in theory of a doctrine of the transcendence of matter.

→ Oecumenicalism only seems to have a chance if it is grounded in an appeal to the feeble-minded.

As concerns science, I cannot today say what seems to me to be the structure of its relations to the truth as cause, for our progress this year shall contribute to an understanding of this point.

I will broach the topic with the strange remark that our science's prodigious fecundity is to be examined in relation to the fact, sustaining science, that science doesn't want-to-know-anything about the truth as cause.

You may recognize therein my formula for *Verwerfung* or foreclosure, which forms here a closed series with *Verdrängung*, repression, and *Verneinung*, negation, whose function in magic and religion I have indicated in passing.

What I have said of the relations of *Verwerfung* to psychosis, especially as *Verwerfung* of the Name-of-the-Father, is apparently at odds here with this attempt at structural situation [*repérage*].

If one remarks, however, that a successful paranoia might just as well seem to constitute the closure of science — assuming psychoanalysis were called upon to represent science — and if, moreover, one acknowledges that psychoanalysis is essentially what brings the Name-of-the-Father back into scientific examination, one comes upon the same apparent deadlock; but one has the feeling that this very deadlock spurs on progress, and that one can see the chasm that seemed to create an obstacle therein coming undone.

The current state of the drama of psychoanalysis' birth, and the ruse that hides therein by beguiling [*à se jouer de*] writers' conscious ruses, should perhaps be taken into account here, for I was not the one who came up with the expression "successful paranoia".

I shall certainly have to indicate that the effect [*incidence*] of the truth as cause in science must needs be recognized in its guise as formal cause.

But that will be so as to shed light on the fact that psychoanalysis instead emphasizes the guise of material cause, a fact that qualifies its originality in science.

This material cause is truly the form of impact [*incidence*] of the signifier that I define therein.

The signifier is defined by psychoanalysis as acting first of all as if it were separate from its signification. Here we see the literal character trait specific to the copulatory signifier, the phallus, when — arising outside of the limits of the subject's biological maturation — it is effectively (im)printed; it is unable, however, to be the sign representing the partner's sexed being [*sexe étant*], i.e. his or her biological sign; recall, in this connection, my formulas differentiating the signifier from the sign.

It suffices to say in passing that in psychoanalysis, history constitutes a different dimension than development — and it is an aberration to try to reduce it to the latter. History unfolds only in going against the rhythm of development — a point from which history as science should perhaps learn a lesson, if it expects to escape the ever-present clutches of a providential conception of its course.

In short, we once again come upon the subject of the signifier as I discussed it last year. Conveyed [*véhiculé*] by a signifier in its relation to another signifier, the subject is to be as rigorously distinguished from the biological individual as from any psychological evolution subsumable under the subject of understanding.

In minimal terms, that is the function I grant language in theory. It seems to me compatible with historical materialism, the latter having left this point unaddressed. Perhaps the theory of object *a* will also find its place therein.

As we shall see, this theory is necessary to a correct integration of the function — from the standpoint of knowledge and the subject — of truth as cause.

You might have glimpsed in passing in the four modes of the cause's refraction just surveyed here, an analogous nominal schema and the same number of modes as in Aristotle's physics.

It's no accident, as his physics bears marks of a logicism that still retains the savor and sapience of an original grammaticism:

Τοσαῦτα τὸν ἀριθμὸν τὸ διὰ τι περιελήφεν.⁴⁶

Will it seem valid to us that the cause may remain exactly as many-sided in polymerizing?⁴⁷ *αὐτὸς ὁ αὐτὸς*

It is not the sole goal of this exploration to afford you an elegant hold on frameworks which in and of themselves escape our jurisdiction: magic, religion, and even science itself.

My concern is also to remind you that as subjects of psychoanalytic science, you must resist the temptation of each of these relations to truth as cause.

But not in the way in which you are at first likely to understand this.

Magic tempts you only insofar as you project its characteristics onto the subject with which you are dealing — in order to psychologize, i.e. misrecognize, it.

So-called magical thought — always attributed to someone else — is not a stigma with which you can label the other. It is just as valid for your fellow man as for yourself within the most common limits, being at the root of even the slightest of commandment's effects.

To be more explicit, recourse to magical thought explains nothing. What must be explained is its efficiency.

As for religion, it should rather serve us as a model not to be followed, instituting as it does a social hierarchy wherein the tradition of a certain relation to truth as cause is preserved.

Simulation of the Catholic Church, reproduced whenever its relation to truth as cause spills over into the social realm, is particularly grotesque in a certain International Psycho-analytical, owing to the condition it imposes upon communication.

Need it be said that in science, as opposed to magic and religion, knowledge is communicated?

It must be stressed that this is not merely because it is usually done, but because the logical form given this knowledge includes a mode of communication which sutures the subject knowledge implies.

That is the main problem raised by communication in psycho-analysis. The first obstacle to its scientific value is that the relation to truth as cause, in its material guises, has remained neglected by the circle of its elaborators.

Shall I conclude in returning to the point with which I began today: the division of the subject? This point constitutes a knot.

Let us recall that Freud unties the knot in his discussion of the lack of the mother's penis, where the nature of the phallus is revealed. He tells us that the subject divides here regarding reality, seeing an abyss opening up therein against which he protects himself with a phobia, and which he at the same time covers over with a surface upon which he erects a fetish, i.e. the existence of the penis maintained albeit displaced.

Let us, on the one hand, extract the (no) [*pas-de*] from the (no-penis) [*pas-de-pénis*], to be bracketed out [*à mettre entre parenthèses*], and transfer it to the no-knowledge [*pas-de-savoir*] that is the hesitation step [*pas-hésitation*] of neurosis⁴⁸.

Let us, on the other hand, recognize the subject's efficacy in the *gnomon* he erects, a *gnomon* that constantly indicates truth's site⁴⁹ to him.

Revealing that the phallus itself is nothing but the site of lack it indicates in the subject.

This is the same index that directs me to the path along which I want to proceed this year, i.e. the path away from which you yourselves shy, as you are called forth as analysts in that lack.

December 1, 1965

Notes

1. The French here could also be translated as "position as subject", and will be thus translated at various points in the text. All footnotes are translator's notes, unless otherwise indicated.

2. In Seminar XII, *Problèmes cruciaux pour la psychanalyse*, 1964-65.

3. "Knowledge" in this translation always corresponds to "*savoir*" in Lacan's text. The French term "*rejet*" a few words earlier in this sentence was the first translation Lacan adopted for Freud's "*Verwerfung*" later preferring "*forclusion*": "foreclosure". "*Défilé*" could also be rendered as *defile*, in the sense of narrow passage.

4. Lacan is referring here to Freud's unfinished article, "*Die Ichspaltung im Abwehrvorgang*", translated into English as "Splitting of the Ego in the Defensive Process", dated January 2nd, 1938.

5. French writer (1782-1854) on religious and political subjects, known for his *Essai sur l'indifférence en matière religieuse* in four volumes (1817-1823).

6. Lacan refers here to the subject as a which, not a whom, an interesting case in point as French most often does not allow us to decide either way, "*il*" and "*elle*" referring as easily to a he or a she as to a masculine or feminine noun; Lacan's subject is thus depersonalized here to the utmost.

7. Lacan is no doubt referring here to the wheeling and dealing that took place within the *Société française de psychanalyse* in 1963 — leading to Lacan's marginalization and "excommunication" — that proved to what extent analysts were prepared to compromise on theoretical issues to obtain IPA affiliation.

8. "*fautive*" can also mean "at fault" in the moral sense.

9. Cf. the chapter on the "Archaic Illusion" in *The Structure of Kinship*, Beacon, Boston, 1966.

10. The French here is "*il n'y a pas de petites économies*", an expression akin to "every little bit helps" or "a penny saved is a penny earned" in English, and literally means "there's no such thing as small savings", the implication being that regardless of the amount saved, it's already signifi-

cant, the qualifier "small", or "insignificant" as I've translated it here, thus being inappropriate.

11. The Pantheon, situated atop the Mont Ste-Geneviève, is the burial place of some of France's most distinguished writers and thinkers; the rue St. Jacques leads, in an uninterrupted downhill stretch, from the Mont Ste-Geneviève, past the Sorbonne, and on the Ile-de-la-Cité, site of Paris' main police station. See Canguilhem's article, "*Qu'est-ce que la psychologie*", *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 1958, v. 1, reprinted in *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*, 1/2, Société du Graphe, 1966, above all p. 91, where Canguilhem points out that psychology, in singlemindedly pursuing instrumental goals, has no independent criteria or values with which to guide the selection of its own future researchers.

12. Cf. Lévi-Strauss and Jakobson's article on Baudelaire's poem "*Les chats*", *L'Homme*, II, 1, pps. 5-21.

13. Cf. Seminar XI, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Norton, N.Y., 1978, p. 156.

14. This can, it seems to me, be phrased in a number of different ways. Most generally but cumbersomely: the subject is in a relation of internal exclusion with respect to its object; more precisely, the subject is excluded from within its object, i.e. is both within its object and at the same time excluded therefrom. Cf. here Lacan's formulations in Seminar VII, *L'éthique de la psychanalyse*: "*cet intérieur exclu qui . . . est ainsi exclu à l'intérieur*" [this excluded inside or interior which . . . is thus excluded from within] (p. 122) and "*cette extériorité intime, cette extimité*" [this intimate exteriority (or externality or outside), this "extimacy"].

15. Cf. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969, pps. 172, 173, 180 and 332.

16. The reference here is to John Henry Newman; the book was published in 1870.

17. A reference to Lacan's opening lesson of *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, "Excommunication".

18. The French, "*se pourrait-il qu'il ne vous laisse pas tranquilles?*", could also be translated: "could it be that it doesn't leave you alone?".

19. or "who deal with it most:"

20. The French here reads: "*là où c'était, là comme sujet dois-je advenir*", which could also be rendered as "where it was, there, as subject, must I come to be", or "where it was, there must I come to be as subject".

21. See Jean Laplanche's contribution to the joint article with Serge Leclaire, "*L'inconscient : une étude psychanalytique*", in *L'inconscient, VIe Colloque de Bonneval*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1966, pps. 95-130 and 170-177. Cf. Lacan's discussion in Seminar XI, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Norton, 1978 and in "Radiophonie" in *Scilicet II/III*, Seuil, 1970, pps. 68-69.

22. The unfamiliar ring to this phrase is due to the most recent English translation of Descartes' *Philosophical Writings* by J. Cottingham (Cambridge, 1986).

23. In *Being and Time*, for example, paragraphs 24, 46 and 211.

24. "chute" translated here by "scrap" has a religious connotation as well, *la chute* being the fall (from grace).

25. or "(at) one with" [*solidaire de*].

26. Angelus Silesius (otherwise known as Johannes Scheffler) was a German theologian and poet, known especially for *Der cherubinische Wandersmann*, 1674, written in the form of distichs, i.e. rhymed couplets (cf. the partial English translation: *Selections from The Cherubic Wanderer*, translated and introduced by J.E.C. Flicht, London, 1932).

27. "jaculation" in French could also be translated in this context as "ejaculatory prayers" or simply "ejaculations": "short prayers 'darted up' to God" (OED).

28. The only reference I have been able to locate in Seminar III, *Les Psychoses*, is on p. 361 where Lacan uses the words "*parole jaculatoire*"; he refers to Angelus Silesius more directly in Seminar II, *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 131; his intended reference here however seems to be to Seminar I, *Freud's Papers on Technique*, Cambridge U. Press, 1988, pps. 231-3, a seminar in which one finds a long discussion of narcissism and a few lines of one of Angelus Silesius' prayers.

29. *boiter* means both to limp (or wobble) and to be unsound, as in the case of a theory.

30. The "joint" or junction here seems to be that of God and the ego (referred to two paragraphs above), which are also the most likely referents of the "two aspects" mentioned in the next paragraph.

31. [Lacan's note:] Later an executant in the operation of destroying my teaching; the outcome, of which the present audience was aware, is of interest to the reader only as concerns the disappearance of the journal *la Psychanalyse* and my promotion to the rostrum at which I gave the present lecture. [Lacan seems to be referring here to Dr. Hoff who invited him to Vienna in 1956 to speak of "The meaning of a return to Freud in psychoanalysis".]

32. *celle*: the truth here.

33. "*Moi, la vérité, je parle. . .*". Cf. here pps. 120-123 of Sheridan's translation of "The Freudian Thing", *Écrits*, Norton, New York, 1977.

34. [Lacan's note:] Concerning these last lines, cf. p. 408 of *Écrits*, Seuil, 1966 [pps. 120-121 in *Écrits: A Selection*, Norton, 1977].

35. In order to keep up the play here on "fi" with which Lacan ends this sentence: "*à qui se fier?*", English would have to resort to the somewhat more awkward "in whom can you have confidence?".

36. "*toutes les chutes que constitue le métalangage en ce qu'il a de faux-semblant, et de logique*"

37. Lacan's "*pour en venir à bout*", which I have translated as "to come to terms with it", is very vague, as the word "*en*" could refer to any of a number of things in the preceding sentence: the lack of truth about the truth, every other repression, or the other rhetorical effects. "*en venir à bout*" could also mean to get to the bottom of it [e.g. repression], to exhaust them [e.g. the rhetorical effects], succeed, get it over with, etc.

38. In French one commonly speaks of "*un savoir*" (literally: "a knowledge") and "*des savoirs*" (literally: "knowledges"), the sense ranging from some knowledge to a whole field or fields of knowledge; both senses should be kept in mind here.

39. *la ferme* also means closes it, and thus one could read it as closing or shutting in/off truth.

40. *causer* also means to chat, talk, gab, etc.

41. The reference here seems to be to Merleau-Ponty.

42. Lacan's intended reference here could be either "in religion" or "revelation".

43. A doctrine according to which the Holy Ghost proceeds both from the Father and from the Son (in Latin "*filioque*" means "and from the son").

44. [Lacan's note:] I put on hold the Seminar which I had announced for 1963-64 on the Name-of-the-Father, after having closed the opening lesson (in November of 1963) with my resignation from the public forum [*place*] of Sainte-Anne at which my seminars were held for ten years.

45. Lacan's term here is "*diaphragmatisation*" which indicates the closing of an aperture, like that of a camera.

46. The reference here is to 198a, lines 15-16 of Aristotle's *Physics*, translated in rather different ways by the various French and English translators, many of whom combine it with the sentence that immediately precedes it in the original; Wicksteed and Cornford, for example, give: "It is clear, then, that there are such things as causes, and that *they can be classified under the four heads that have been enumerated*" (the part in italics corresponding roughly to the Greek text cited). Cf. Aristotle, *The Physics*, translated by P.H. Wicksteed and F.M. Cornford, Harvard University Press, London, 1929. A word seems to be missing from Lacan's quote, as in all of the versions of the Greek I consulted, the first word $\tau\omicron\sigma\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha$ is followed by $\varphi\alpha\rho$

47. "*se polymériser*". A polymer is a large *aggregate* molecule, i.e. it is made up of several smaller molecules; "polymerizing" can thus be understood here in the sense of aggregating, or becoming an aggregate: the cause becomes a composite.

48. "*pas*" in French can mean both "no" (or "not") and "step".

49. "*le point de vérité*:" the point, place or position of truth; "site of lack" in the next sentence corresponds to "*ce point de manque*". I have translated "*à toute heure*" by "constantly", but the combination in French of something being erected that at every moment or hour designates the place of something else could be taken to have sundial overtones. Lacan is here