

THE SEMINAR OF
JACQUES LACAN

Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller

The Other Side of Psychoanalysis

BOOK XVII

TRANSLATED WITH NOTES BY

Russell Grigg

By Jacques Lacan

TELEVISION

THE SEMINAR OF JACQUES LACAN BOOK I

THE SEMINAR OF JACQUES LACAN BOOK II

THE SEMINAR OF JACQUES LACAN BOOK III

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THE SEMINAR OF JACQUES LACAN BOOK XX

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ÉCRITS: A SELECTION

FEMININE SEXUALITY

THE FOUR FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS



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THE SEMINAR OF
JACQUES LACAN

BOOK XVII

Translator's Note

This is a translation of the seminar that Jacques Lacan delivered at the Law Faculty, Place du Panthéon, in 1969–70, in the unsettled aftermath of the eventful year of 1968. The original text is the version of the seminar edited by Jacques-Alain Miller and published by Éditions du Seuil.

Quite apart from the usual challenges facing any translator of Lacan into English, this seminar presents special difficulties of its own. Certain of them call for special comment.

l'envers

Beginning with the title itself, *l'envers*, translated here as “the other side,” also carries the meaning of “back,” “verso,” “lining,” “underside,” “flip-side,” “underneath,” “bad side”—connotations of the unseen, even the obscene, which “the other side” in English only barely suggests.

lathouse

What is striking about this made-up word, pronounced LA-TOOZE, is its suffix, *-ouse*, which can be used to turn ordinary words into slang and informal language. Thus, *une bague*, a ring, becomes *une baguouse*; *la (prison) centrale* becomes *la centrouse*; and so on. With “lathouse” Lacan is obviously having a bit of fun with his object *a*.

astudé

This neologism, translated as “astudied,” attempts to work the “*a*” of “object *a*” into the term “student” or “studied” to convey something of the place the student occupies in the university discourse.

aléthosphère

This neologism, constructed as it is from the Greek words for “truth” and for “ball,” “globe,” or “sphere,” is plain enough for the English reader. Lacan introduces it to refer to the means by which something can be recorded at a distance, whether in the form of light or sound waves. The alethosphere obviously extends beyond the limits of the earth's atmosphere.

In other cases where the translation is open to question, potentially misleading, or has struck me as inadequate to the original French, I have included the original term in brackets; the reader can at least judge the adequacy of this English reflection to its French original.

I would like to thank Kerry Murphy and Justin Clemens for working their way through drafts, while Bruce Fink's detailed comments have also improved the quality of the translation.

Russell Grigg
Geelong, Australia

I

Production of the four discourses

DISCOURSE WITHOUT SPEECH

LOCI PREINTERPRET

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND *JOUISSANCE*

THE SLAVE ROBBED OF HIS KNOWLEDGE

THE DESIRE TO KNOW

Allow me once again, my dear friends, to raise the question of this audience which has assisted me, most notably today, by following me in what for some of you is the third of my relocations.¹

Before I do this, the least I can do is spell out how I have come to be here in order to thank those I owe thanks to. It is through an offer that the Faculté de droit has kindly made to several of my colleagues from the [École des] Hautes Études with whom they have kindly included me. I would like to thank, and I believe it is with your endorsement, the Faculté de droit, and in particular its senior Faculty, most notably the Dean.

As the notice may have informed you, I will only be speaking here—not that this place was not offered to me every Wednesday—the second and third Wednesdays of each month, thereby freeing me, no doubt, for other duties the other Wednesdays. And in particular, I believe I can announce that the first Wednesday of each month, at least for some of them, that is, every second month, and therefore the first Wednesday of December, February, April, and June, I will be going to Vincennes to give, not my seminar as was incorrectly announced, but what in contrast I have taken care to call, so as to stress that they are different, “Four Impromptus,” to which I have given a humorous title that you can read in the [university] grounds where the poster has already been put up.

Since, as you can see, it pleases me to leave certain details up in the air, I shall take immediate advantage of this to air a scruple that has stayed with me following the welcome that I gave a certain person, because on reflec-

* The original French pagination is included in the margins to facilitate comparison with the French text.

¹ This was the first year of Lacan's seminar at the Faculté de droit, after having been first held at Sainte-Anne Hospital and then, under the patronage of the Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, at the École normale supérieure.

tion it was not very friendly—not that I wanted it that way, but in fact that was how it turned out.

One day somebody who is perhaps here, and will no doubt not make herself known, accosted me in the street just as I was getting into a taxi. She pulled over on her scooter and said to me, “Are you Dr. Lacan?”

“Yes, I am,” I said to her. “Why?”

“Are you holding your seminar again?”

“Yes, of course, soon.”

“Where?”

And then, no doubt I had my reasons for this, and I ask her to take my word for it, I answered, “You’ll see.”

She then took off on her little scooter with so much throttle that I was left both nonplussed and full of remorse. It’s my remorse that I want to convey to her today by apologizing to her, if she is here, in the hope that she will forgive me.

In fact, this is surely an opportunity to point out that it’s never, in any way whatever, by another person’s excesses that one turns out, in appearance at least, to be overwhelmed. It is always because their excesses happen to coincide with your own. It was because I was already at this point, in a certain state that represented an excessive preoccupation, that I no doubt expressed myself as I did, in a way I very quickly found inappropriate.

With that, let’s go into what my contribution for this year is going to be about.

1

I thought I should call this seminar “Psychoanalysis upside down” [*La Psychoanalyse à l’envers*].

Don’t get the idea that this title owes anything to the current situation that thinks it is in the process of turning a number of places upside down. Let me give just the following as proof of this. In a text published in 1966—one of those introductions that I wrote at the time of the collection of my *Écrits*, and which punctuate it—a text called “De nos antécédents,” “On My Antecedents,” on page 68, I describe my discourse as being about, I say, a revival of the Freudian project upside down. It’s thus written down well before the events—a revival from the other direction [*reprise par l’envers*].

What does that mean? Last year I managed, with much perseverance, to ascertain what discourse is about, as a necessary structure that goes well beyond speech, which is always more or less occasional. What I prefer, I said, and I even wrote it up on the board one day, is a *discourse without speech*.

The fact is that, in truth, discourse can clearly subsist without words. It subsists in certain fundamental relations which would literally not be able to be maintained without language. Through the instrument of language a number of stable relations are established, inside which something that is much larger and goes much further than actual utterances [*énonciations*] can, of course, be inscribed. There is no need of the latter for our conduct, possibly for our acts, to be inscribed within the framework of certain primordial statements. If this were not so, what would we make of what we keep rediscovering in our experience, and especially in our psychoanalytic experience—I mention analytic experience in this connection only because it gives this a precise designation—what would we make of what keeps appearing in the guise of the superego?

There are structures—we cannot describe them in any other way—for characterizing what can be extracted from this “in the form of,” one particular usage of which I took the liberty of stressing last year—namely, what happens by virtue of a fundamental relation, the one I define as the relation of one signifier to another. And from this there results the emergence of what we call the subject—via the signifier which, as it happens, here functions as representing this subject with respect to another signifier.

How is this fundamental form to be situated? Without any further ado we are, if you will, going to write this form in a new way this year. Last year I wrote it as the exteriority of the signifier S_1 —the one that is the point of departure for the definition of discourse that we will emphasize at this first step—with respect to a circle marked with the sign A , that is, the field of the big Other. But, simplifying, we will take S_1 and the battery of signifiers, which we will refer to as the sign S_2 . I am talking about those signifiers that are already there, whereas at the point of origin at which we place ourselves in order to establish what discourse is about, discourse thought of as the status of the statement [*l’énoncé*], S_1 is the one to be seen as intervening. It intervenes in a signifying battery that we have no right, ever, to take as dispersed, as not already forming a network of what is called knowledge [*savoir*].

Knowledge initially arises at the moment at which S_1 comes to represent something, through its intervention in the field defined, at the point we have come to, as an already structured field of knowledge. And the subject is its supposition, its *hypokeimenon*, insofar as the subject represents the specific trait of being distinguished from the living individual. The latter is certainly its locus, where the subject leaves its mark, but it isn’t of the same order as what is brought in by the subject, by virtue of the status of knowledge.

$$\frac{S_1}{S} \in \frac{S_2}{a}$$

No doubt it's around this word "knowledge" that there is a point of ambiguity to which, we have to stress this today, I have already rendered your ears sensitive by means of several paths, tracks, moments of enlightenment, or flashes of light.

Shall I mention it for those of you who took note of it, for whom it is still fresh in your mind? Last year I had occasion to call the Other's *jouissance* "knowledge."

A strange business. To be honest, this formulation had never been professed before. It's not new, since even last year I was able to make it sufficiently plausible for you, I could make the claim without raising any particular protests. This is something I announced I would return to this year.

Let me first of all finish what began with two legs, then had three. Let's give it its fourth.

The latter is something I have been emphasizing for quite a while, and last year especially, since for quite some time this was the purpose of the seminar—"D'un Autre à l'autre," "From an Other to the other," I called it. This other, this little other, with its famous "the," was what at this level, which is the level of algebra, of signifying structure, we designate as the object *a*.

At this level of signifying structure we have only to learn the way it operates. Thus we are at liberty to see what happens when we write the things out and give the entire system a quarter turn.

13 I have been speaking about this notorious quarter turn for long enough, and on different occasions—in particular, ever since the appearance of what I wrote under the title "Kant with Sade"—for people to think that perhaps one day it would be seen that this isn't limited to what the so-called Schema Z does, and that there are other reasons for this quarter turn than some pure accident of imaginary representation.

$$\frac{\$}{a} \in \frac{S_1}{S_2}$$

Here you have an example. If it seems justified to say that the chain, the sequence of letters of this algebra, must not be disturbed, then by performing this operation of a quarter turn we will obtain four structures, and no more, the first of which in some way gives you the starting point.

It is a simple matter to quickly reproduce the remaining three on paper.

I am only saying this to specify an arrangement that has absolutely not been imposed in any way—as they say, from a certain point of view, nothing has been abstracted from any reality. On the contrary it's already inscribed in what functions as this reality I was speaking about before, the reality of a discourse that is already in the world and that underpins it, at

least the one we are familiar with. Not only is it already inscribed in it, but it is one of its arches.

Of course, the form of letters in which we inscribe this symbolic chain is of no great importance, provided they are distinct—this is enough for some constant relations to become clear. As is the case with this formula.

What does it say? It locates a moment. What my discourse subsequently develops here will tell us what the appropriate meaning to give this moment is. It says that it is at the very instant at which S_1 intervenes in the already constituted field of the other signifiers, insofar as they are already articulated with one another as such, that, by intervening in another system, this $\$$, which I have called the subject as divided, emerges. Its entire status, in the strongest sense of this term, is to be reconsidered this year.

Finally, we have always stressed that something defined as a loss emerges from this trajectory. This is what the letter to be read as object *a* designates.

We have not left undesignated the point from which we extract this function of the lost object. It's from Freud's discourse about the specific sense that repetition has in the speaking being. Indeed, repetition is not about just any old effect of memory in the biological sense. Repetition bears a certain relationship to what is the limit of this knowledge, and which we call *jouissance*.

This is why it's a logical articulation that is at stake in the formulation that knowledge is the Other's *jouissance*—the Other's, of course, insofar as—since there is no Other—the intervention of the signifier makes the Other emerge as a field.

You will tell me no doubt that here, in short, we are still going around in circles—the signifier, the Other, knowledge, the signifier, the Other, knowledge, and so on. But this is where the term *jouissance* enables us to show the apparatus's point of insertion. In doing so, we are no doubt leaving behind what knowledge authentically is, what is recognizable as knowledge, and referring to the limits, to the field of these limits as such, the field that Freud's words dare to confront.

What is the upshot of all that these words articulate? Not knowledge, but confusion. Well then, from this very confusion we have to draw some lessons, since it is a question of limits and of leaving the system. Leaving it by virtue of what?—by virtue of a thirst for meaning, as if the system needed it. The system doesn't need it. But we feeble beings, as we will keep on discovering for ourselves at every turning point over the course of this year, we need meaning. Alright then, here's one.

It's perhaps not the right one. But then, it is certain that we will find that there are many of these "It's perhaps not the right one"—the insistence of which is for us a good indication of the dimension of truth.

Notice the ambiguity that the word "Trieb" has taken on in psychoana-

lytic stupidity, instead of people striving to grasp how this category is to be unpacked. The category is not without ancestry, I mean the word is not without a usage already, one that goes back a long way, as far back as Kant, but what it is useful for in analytic discourse would merit our not rushing in and translating it as "instinct." But, after all, these slippages do not occur for no reason. And although for a long time I have been emphasizing the aberrant character of this translation, we are nevertheless within our rights to benefit from it. Not so as to enshrine the notion of instinct, to be sure, and above all not in this respect, but to remind you what it is in Freud's discourse that renders it a habitable notion—and simply to try and make this discourse inhabit it in a different way.

Popularly, the idea of instinct is indeed the idea of knowledge—knowledge such that we are unable to say what it means, but it is supposed to result, and not without good reason, in the fact that life subsists. On the other hand, if we are to give any sense to what Freud says about the pleasure principle as essential to the functioning of life, being the principle whereby tension is maintained at its lowest level, aren't we already stating what, as his subsequent discourse shows, was forced upon him? Namely, the death drive.

What forced this notion upon him was the development of an experience, analytic experience, insofar as it has the structure of discourse. For don't forget that one does not invent the death drive by considering people's behavior.

We have the death drive here. We have it here, where something is taking place between you and what I am saying.

2

I said, "What I am saying." I am not talking about what I am. What would be the use, since, in short, one can see this, owing to your presence? It's not that your presence speaks in my favor. It does speak sometimes and, usually, in my place.

Be that as it may, what justifies me in saying something here is what I would call the essence of this manifestation that the diverse and successive audiences I have attracted according to the locations in which I have spoken have been.

I was particularly keen to tack the following remark on somewhere, because, as I am in a new location, today seemed to me to be the day. The location has always had an impact upon the style of what I am calling this manifestation, and I do not want to pass up the opportunity to say that it bears a relation to the usual meaning of the term "interpretation." What I

said by, for, and in your presence is at each of these moments, if we define them by their geographical locations, always already interpreted.

This will have to take its place in the little rotating quadrupeds I have begun to put to use today, and I will come back to it. But so as not to leave you completely in the dark, I will point something out to you straight away.

If I had to interpret what I said at Sainte-Anne Hospital between 1953 and 1963, I mean pin down its interpretation—interpretation in a sense contrary to analytic interpretation, which makes you feel how much analytic interpretation itself goes against the grain of the ordinary meaning of the term—I would say that what was the loudest chord, the chord that really resonated, was having fun.

The most exemplary character in this audience, which was a medical one obviously—but then, some of the participants were not doctors—was the person who punctuated my discourse with a sort of continuous stream of jokes. This is what I will take as most characteristic of what over a period of ten years was the essence of my manifestation. Further proof of this is that things only started to turn sour when I dedicated a term to the analysis of jokes.²

That's a big aside, and I can't go on in this direction for very long, but I must add what it was that characterized interpretation at the place where you left me last time, the *École normale supérieure*.

E. N. S.—it's quite magnificent in initials. It revolves around being [*l'étant*]. One must always know how to benefit from literal equivocations, above all when they are the first three letters of the word *enseigner*, "to teach." As it happens, it was in rue d'Ulm that it was noticed that what I was saying was a teaching.

Before that, it hadn't been at all obvious. It was not even permitted. The professors, and especially the doctors, were very worried. The fact that it wasn't at all medical left serious doubts whether it deserved to be called teaching, right to the day when they saw these young blokes from the *Cahiers pour l'analyse* come along, who were trained in this part of the world where—as I had said a long time before, precisely at the time of the jokes—one of the effects of training is that one knows nothing but teaches it beautifully. The fact that that was how they interpreted what I was saying—I am speaking today of a different interpretation from analytic interpretation—does indeed make sense.

Naturally, no one knows what will happen here. I don't know whether law students will come, but actually, it would be wonderful for interpretation. This will probably be by far the most important moment of the three, since this year we are tackling psychoanalysis from the other side, and per-

² See *Le Séminaire, Livre V, Les formations de l'inconscient, 1957-1958* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998).

haps, precisely, giving it its status, in what is called the juridical sense of the term. This, in any case, has surely always been concerned with the structure of discourse, and to the nth degree. If this isn't what law is, if we cannot grasp how discourse structures the real world here, then where can we? This is why we are no worse off here than anywhere else.

It is therefore not simply for reasons of convenience that I seized this opportunity. But it is also what causes you the least inconvenience in your travels, at least for those who were accustomed to the other side.³ I am not so sure that, for parking, here is very convenient, but then, for that, you still have rue d'Ulm all the same.

3

Let's pick up the thread again.

We had got to the point of situating our instinct and our knowledge, in sum, on the basis of what Bichat defines as life. "Life," he says, and this is the most profound definition, it is not at all trite if you look at it closely, "is the totality of forces that resist death."⁴

Read what Freud says about life's resistance to the decline into Nirvana, as the death drive was otherwise described at the time he introduced it. No doubt, at the heart of analytic experience, which is an experience of discourse, he gives thought to this decline toward a return to the inanimate. Freud goes that far. But what, he says, makes for the subsistence of this bubble—really, this image forces itself upon you when you listen to these pages—is the fact that life only ever returns there via paths that are always the same, ones it has previously traced. What is this, if not the true sense given to what we find in the notion of instinct, which is that it implies knowledge?

This track, this pathway, is familiar to us. It's ancestral knowledge. And what is this knowledge, if we don't forget that Freud introduces what he himself calls "beyond the pleasure principle," the pleasure principle itself not being overturned thereby? Knowledge is what brings life to a halt at a certain limit on the path to *jouissance*. For the path toward death—this is what is at issue, it's a discourse about masochism—the path toward death is nothing other than what is called *jouissance*.

³ The École normale supérieure is located in the rue d'Ulm, which runs off the Place du Panthéon and is not far from the new location of Lacan's seminar at the Faculté de droit.

⁴ Marie François Xavier Bichat (1771–1802), French doctor, anatomist, and physiologist. See his *Physiological Researches on Life and Death* (1827; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1977).

The relationship between knowledge and *jouissance* is a primitive one, and it is where what emerges with the appearance of the apparatus of the signifier comes to be inserted. It is henceforth conceivable that we are binding up the function of this emergence of the signifier.

"That will do!" I hear you say. "Do we really need to explain everything? And, why not, the origins of language?" We all know that to structure knowledge correctly one needs to abandon the question of origins. What we are doing, in spelling this out, is superfluous with respect to what we have to develop this year, which is situated at the level of structures. It is a futile search for meaning. But, as I have already said, let's take note of what we are.

I will go on, then. At the intersection of a *jouissance*—and not just any *jouissance*, it must no doubt remain opaque—at the intersection of a *jouissance* that is privileged above all others—not because it is sexual *jouissance*, since what this *jouissance* designates by being at this intersection is the loss of sexual *jouissance*, castration—in relation to this meeting point with sexual *jouissance* there emerges, in the Freudian fable of repetition, the engendering of something radical that gives body to a schema that is, literally, articulated. S_1 , having emerged at the first moment, is repeated with respect to S_2 . The subject emerges from this entry into a relation, the subject that something, a certain loss, represents. And it is worth having made this effort in the direction of meaning in order to comprehend the ambiguity.

It was not for nothing that last year I called "surplus *jouissance*" this same object that I had moreover described as the one that the entire dialectic of frustration in analysis is organized around. This means that the loss of the object is also the gap, a hole opened up to something, and we don't know whether or not this something is the representation of the lack in *jouissance*, which is situated by means of the knowledge process, insofar as it appears in a completely different light as a result of being, from that point on, knowledge scanded by the signifier. Is it even the same?

The relationship to *jouissance* is suddenly made to appear in a different light by this still virtual function called the function of desire. Moreover this is why I'm describing what appears here as "surplus *jouissance*" and not forcing anything or committing any transgression.

I beg you to bite your tongue a bit over all this nonsense. What analysis shows, if it shows anything at all—I invoke here those whose soul is a little bit different from the one of which one could say, as Barrès says of the cadaver, that it talks nonsense—is very precisely the fact that we don't ever transgress.⁵ Sneaking around is not transgressing. Seeing a door half-open is not the same as going through it. We shall have the occasion to come back

⁵ Maurice Barrès (1862–1923), French writer and conservative political figure of French nationalism.

to what I am introducing now—there is no transgression here, but rather an irruption, a falling into the field, of something not unlike *jouissance*—a surplus.

But perhaps even that has to be paid for. That is why I told you last year that in Marx the *a*, which is here, is recognized as functioning at the level that is articulated—on the basis of analytic discourse, not any of the others—as surplus *jouissance*. Here you have what Marx discovered as what actually happens at the level of surplus value.

Of course, it wasn't Marx who invented surplus value. It's just that prior to him nobody knew what its place was. It has the same ambiguous place as the one I have just mentioned, that of excess work, of surplus work. "What does it pay in?" he says. "It pays in *jouissance*, precisely, and this has to go somewhere."

What's disturbing is that if one pays in *jouissance*, then one has got it, and then, once one has got it it is very urgent that one squander it. If one does not squander it, there will be all sorts of consequences.

Let's leave the thing up in the air for the moment.

4

What am I up to? I am beginning to get you to acknowledge, simply through locating it, that this four-footed apparatus, with its four positions, can be used to define four radical discourses.

It's no accident that I presented this form to you as the first. There is no reason why I could not have begun with any of the others, with the second for instance. But it is a fact, determined by historical reasons, that this initial form—the one that we express by starting with this signifier that represents a subject with respect to another signifier—has a very special importance, insofar as, in what I am going to state this year, it will be singled out as being, of the four, the one that articulates the master's discourse.

The master's discourse. I don't see any point in recounting its historical importance, given that you are, after all, on the whole recruited through this sieve called the university, and that, as a consequence, you are not unaware that it's all philosophy ever talks about. Even before it began talking about this alone, that is before it called it by its name—at least in Hegel it stands out, and is quite specially illustrated by him—it was already apparent that at the level of the master's discourse something appeared which is of interest to us concerning discourse, irrespective of its ambiguity, and which is called philosophy.

I do not know how far I will be able to go with what I want to point out to you today, since we mustn't delay if we want to go over the four discourses in question.

What are the others called? I will tell you straight away, why not?—even if only so as to whet your appetite.

That one, the second on the blackboard, is the hysteric's discourse. It's not obvious straightaway, but I will explain it to you.

And then, the other two. One is the analyst's discourse. The other. . . . No, definitely not, I won't tell you what it is. Saying it just like that today would create too many misunderstandings. You will see—it's a discourse that is highly relevant today.

Coming back to the first one, then, I must ground why it is that the present algebraic formula is described in this way, as the one that gives the structure of the master's discourse.

S_1 is, to say it briefly, the signifier, the signifier function, that the essence of the master relies upon. From a different angle you may perhaps recall what I emphasized several times last year—that the slave's own field is knowledge, S_2 . Reading the testimonies we have about life in Antiquity, in any case discourse about this life—read Aristotle's *Politics* on this—what I am claiming about the slave as being characterized as the one who is the support of knowledge is not in doubt.

In Antiquity this was not simply a class, as with our modern slave, it was a function inscribed in the family. The slave Aristotle speaks of is just as much a part of the family as he is a part of the State, and even more a part of the family than a part of the State. This is because he is the one who has the know-how [*savoir-faire*]. Before we can know whether the knowledge is known, whether a subject can be founded on the perspective of a knowledge that is totally transparent in itself, it is important to know how to mop up the register of what, at its origins, know-how is.

Now, what is it that happens right before our very eyes, which gives meaning, an initial meaning—as you will see, there are other meanings—to philosophy? Fortunately we have traces of this thanks to Plato, and it is quite essential to remember this so as to put what is at issue in its place and, after all, if anything in what is bothering us has any sense, it can only come from putting things in their place. What does philosophy designate over its entire evolution? It's this—theft, abduction, stealing slavery of its knowledge, through the maneuvers of the master.

To see this it is enough to read Plato's dialogues from time to time, and, as only God knows, for the past sixteen years I have been making an effort to get those who listen to me to do it.

I will begin by distinguishing what on this occasion I will call the two aspects of knowledge, the articulated aspect and this know-how that is so

akin to animal knowledge, but which in the slave is not totally devoid of the apparatus that transforms it into one of the most articulated networks of language. The point is that this, the second layer, the articulated apparatus, can be transmitted, which means it can be transmitted from the slave's pocket to the master's—assuming they had pockets in those days.

It is here that you have the entire effort to isolate what is called *episteme*. It's a funny word, I don't know whether you have ever given it much thought—"putting oneself in the right position," in short it is the same word as *Verstehen*. It is all about finding the position that makes it possible for knowledge to become the master's knowledge. The entire function of the *episteme* insofar as it is specified as transmissible knowledge—see Plato's dialogues—is always borrowed from the techniques of craftsmen, that is to say of serfs. It is a matter of extracting the essence of this knowledge in order for it to become the master's knowledge.

And then, naturally, this is augmented by a little backlash, which is absolutely what is called a lapsus, a return of the repressed. But so says someone or other, Karl Marx or someone.

22 Refer to the *Meno*, where it is a question of the square root of 2 and its incommensurable. There's someone who says, "Hey, look, get the slave to come over, that little fellow, can't you see, he knows." They ask him questions, master's questions, of course, and the slave naturally answers what the questions already dictate as their response. You find here a form of ridicule. It's a way of scoffing at the character who is being taken apart here. It is shown that the serious business, the aim, is to make it known that the slave knows, but by acknowledging it only in this derisory way, what is hidden is that it is only a matter of robbing the slave of his function at the level of knowledge.

To give what I have just said its sense one has to see, and we will take this step next time, how the slave's position is articulated with respect to *jouissance*. I already began to say this last year, in the form of a colorful hint. What people usually say is that *jouissance* is the privilege of the master. What is interesting on the contrary, as everyone knows, is what belies this within it.

In short, it's the master's status that is at stake here. By way of introduction today I only wanted to tell you how profoundly interesting this status is to us, the utterance of which is worth keeping for a future step. It is interesting to us when what is being unveiled and, at the same time, reduced to a corner of the landscape is the function of philosophy. Given the space, briefer this year than others, that I have allowed myself, I will no doubt be unable to develop it. It is of no importance, perhaps someone else will take up this theme and do what he will with it. Philosophy in its historical function is this extraction, I would almost say this betrayal, of the slave's knowledge, in order to obtain its transmutation into the master's knowledge.

Does this mean that what we have seen emerge as the science that dominates us is the fruit of this operation? Here again, rather than having to rush in, we can observe that on the contrary it's nothing of the kind. This wisdom, this *episteme*, created with every recourse to every dichotomy, led only to knowledge that can be designated by the term that Aristotle himself used to characterize the master's knowledge—theoretical knowledge. Not in the weak sense that we give this word, but in the emphatic sense that the word "theoria" has in Aristotle. A singular mistake. I will come back to this, since for my discourse this is the crucial point, the pivotal point—it was only when, by a movement of renunciation of this wrongly acquired knowledge, so to speak, someone, for the first time as such, extracted the function of the subject from the strict relationship between S_1 and S_2 —I named Descartes, whose work I believe I am able to spell out, not without agreement with at least a significant number of those who have discussed it—that science was born.

It is well to distinguish between the time at which this turn emerged in the attempt to pass knowledge from the slave to the master, and the time it recommenced, which is motivated only by a certain way of raising, within the structure, all possible functions of the statement insofar as the articulation of the signifier alone supports it. There you already have one small example of the insight that the type of work I am proposing this year may bring you. Don't think it stops there.

What I have been proposing here presents, as soon as one shows it, at least this characteristic of uncovering the obvious—who can deny that philosophy has ever been anything other than a fascinating enterprise for the master's benefit? At the other extreme we have Hegel's discourse, with its outrageous absolute knowledge, as it's called. What can this absolute knowledge possibly mean, if we begin with the definition that I took the liberty of recalling as being a foundational one for our way of proceeding concerning knowledge?

This is perhaps where we will start next time. It will at least be one of our points of departure, for there is another, which is no less important, and which is quite particularly salubrious because of the overwhelmingly outrageous things one hears from psychoanalysts concerning the desire for knowledge.

If there is one thing that psychoanalysis should force us to maintain obstinately, it's that the desire for knowledge bears no relation to knowledge—unless, of course, we wheel out the lubricious word "transgression." A radical distinction, which has far-reaching consequences from the point of view of pedagogy—the desire to know is not what leads to knowledge. What leads to knowledge is—allow me to justify this in the more or less long term—the hysteric's discourse.

24 There is as a matter of fact a question to be asked. Does the master who brings about this operation of the displacing, the conveyancing, of the slave's knowledge want to know? Does he have the desire to know? A real master, as in general we used to see until a recent era, and this is seen less and less, doesn't desire to know anything at all—he desires that things work. And why would he want to know? There are more amusing things than that. How did the philosopher manage to inspire the master with the desire to know? I will leave you on this note. It's a bit provocative. If there are any of you who work this out between now and next time, let me know.

26 November 1969

Supplement

Following session: Agitation

The people who, for various reasons, love me warned me that agitation was in the air.

They are not sufficiently aware that for me, too, agitation is in the air. And I do so for a reason that is of supreme interest to me—for what it proves or disproves concerning this level at which I am situating the structure of a discourse.

I have just said "I."

It's obviously because I am viewing the discourse in question from somewhere else. I am viewing it from a place in which I am situated by another discourse, of which I am the effect—so that, in the present case, saying "This discourse situates *me*" is the same as saying "This discourse is situated."

At the level of this discourse it's not so as to be able to blow my own trumpet, to give a good course, as we say, which is everything. It doesn't count for nothing, to be sure, and no one can tell me that, up till now, there has been any lack of opportunity for taking notes.

25 To be honest, I cannot complain of ever having been disturbed.

But I do not think that agitating is about disturbing classes. It would be a pity if I had to teach this to the agitators themselves.

To be honest, as essential in fact as whether or not I speak without being disturbed is what my listeners are steeped in. In effect, what I am speaking about is a signal that this discourse that is not my own, but the one of which I am—to restrict myself to this provisional term—the effect, is swinging into action.

I went to Vincennes last week where people might have thought that what took place wasn't to my taste. Everyone agreed in fact that my going, solely by virtue of my being a prominent person, would be the occasion for obstruction. Does anyone believe that this would have made any sort of impression on me? Need I say that I was fully aware of what I was to encounter there? And what sort of great novelty, in the context, do people expect this incident to have constituted for me when such obstruction has nothing new about it?

If we go right back to the start, when I began my discourse at Sainte-Anne, what I am calling "what my listeners are steeped in" was at that time constituted by a little survey the frequency of which I couldn't say, but it may well have been monthly then quarterly. It was an anxious investigation they were carrying out on my listeners, in the very milieu where I was their guest, on the subject of knowing how well my teaching fulfilled the requirements of what constitutes medical teaching. It might have been the case—horror of horrors—that my teaching did not possess the characteristics of medical teaching.

On the subject that I chose to begin with, namely, good heavens, the critique of Freud, what could the characteristics of medical teaching have possibly been? Did it only have to consist in some act of reference—I didn't say "reverence"—to terms considered to be sacred because they are themselves located right in the center, at the heart, of medical teaching? Should I have indicated, in order for this teaching to be medical, that perhaps one day endocrinal causes will be found for neurosis? Or just simply recalled that there is one of these little elements that we cannot fail to take account of, and that we call the constitutional factor? That would have been medical.

In short, as I did not bother to waste time on these genuflections the investigations stopped and they were convinced that I had placed them in the unfortunate position of being subjected, at the heart of a place that is essentially medical, to a teaching that wasn't.

It was then that I was made aware, by people through whom, since they were in analysis with me, one was, unfortunately, only too sure that the message regarding what one thought of my public would necessarily get to me.

I mention this because in the audience that you are today I can discern a bit better than last time the seams, the components, I can situate the faces better. There are many familiar faces here, but I am delighted by this, as I am also delighted with the relative decrease in numbers I can observe—last time, it was a bit like a crowded Metro in here.

A fair few of you were already part of that very old audience before following me to that place from which I had to emigrate, as it turned out, and I can say that my audience at Sainte-Anne really did consist then of those

who are currently the pillars of the *École freudienne*—I do not mean by that that these are not people you can count on. Well then, good heavens, one had the impression, it seems, merely on the basis of watching them wander about before they went in to listen to me at half-past twelve, as usual, that they showed all sorts of signs of drug addiction and homosexuality. It was palpable. It was, obviously, what the style, the general form, and the bearing of these itinerants reflected.

This is so that you know that it's no recent thing that, because of its composition, my audience gives rise to—what? this is precisely what I am wondering about—a certain discomfort. We experienced this in a place that organized a venue for us, and, to be sure, I am grateful to those who mentioned the fact that it lasted as long as it did. Nevertheless, don't imagine that characterizing my audience as troublemakers began at these incidental places.

27 It was students at the *École normale*, the Normalian elements, these little princes of the university who know quite well that you don't have to know something in order to teach it, who discovered that very curious things were happening at my seminar. It so happened over there that when you smoked—in fact, for this reason I made myself the echo, every now and then, of the fact that you might refrain from doing so—something happened that I have never seen anywhere, which is that the smoke went through the ceiling of the room, so that the elegant Normalians who were apparently in the library space above could no longer breathe.

These are extraordinary things that can obviously only occur because of the audience that you are. It is the importance of this that I am showing you.

[Arrival of a building supervisor.]

I was calling this agitation at Vincennes into question, you really see it, perfectly. This dear man is very touching.

All this takes place in a zone that nevertheless does not lose its meaning.

[The supervisor turns off the lights and retracts the blackboard.]

However amusing these jokes about higher offices, I declare the session over.

10 December 1969

AXES OF THE ANALYTIC SUBVERSION
