The Order of Discourse

Editor's Note:
This text is taken from the book *Archives of Infamy: Foucault on State Power in the Lives of Ordinary Citizens* (2019), edited by Nancy Luxon and published by the University of Minnesota Press. The italicised paragraph at the beginning is from that text, as are the footnotes. The translation is by Thomas Scott-Railton. Minor grammatical errors have been corrected by me.

This essay served as Foucault's inaugural address to the Collège de France, given on December 2, 1970. Ritualistically, Foucault's address pays homage to Jean Hyppolite, whose death made this position available and who was Foucault's teacher at Lycée Henri IV and later his thesis supervisor. In recalling Hyppolite, Foucault addresses his own departure from Hegel and the paradox at the heart of this lecture and the entirety of his work: that the inaugural potential of power is deeply at odds with the knowledges that precede it. "The Order of Discourse" acknowledges and traces the complicated interplay between speech and text; the rules that variously organize each; and the uneven circulations of brief utterances, the cadences of ritualized speech, and the rarefaction of the speaking subject as discourse settles. Foucault's address ends by reflecting on the "philosophy of the event" as a way to frame this interplay. This essay proves seminal for later work by Roger Chartier, Arlette Farge, and eventually Jacques Rancière on the various circulations of words and publics.

Inaugural Lecture at the Collège de France, December 2, 1970

I wish that I could have slipped myself surreptitiously into the talk [*discours*] that I will deliver today, and into those that I will, perhaps, come to deliver here in years to come. Instead of beginning to speak [*prendre la parole*], I would have preferred that speech itself surround me and whisk me off far beyond any possible beginning. As I began to speak, I would have liked to have noticed that a nameless voice had long preceded me; then all I would have needed to do was attach myself to it, continue the sentence, slide myself into its interstices unnoticed, as if it had beckoned to me by holding itself, for just an instant, in suspense. Then there would be no beginning; and instead of being the person from whom the discourse [*discours*] came, I would instead be at the whim [*au hasard*] of its march, a slender lacuna, its potential vanishing point.

I would have liked it if behind me (having begun to speak long ago, having already echoed what I am going to say) a voice was saying: "I must go on, I cannot go on, I must go on, words must be spoken as long as there are any left, I must speak them until they find me, until they speak me [*qu'ils me disent*] — a strange punishment, a strange offence, I must continue, perhaps it has already taken place, perhaps they have already spoken me, perhaps they have transported me to the threshold of my own story, before the door that will open onto my story, I would be surprised if it would open."

There are many, I believe, who share my desire to avoid a beginning, a similar desire to find oneself, from the moment one enters the game [*d'entrée de jeu*], on the other side of the discourse, without having had to consider from the outside everything about it that might be singular, daunting, perhaps even malevolent. To this all-too-common wish, the institution responds in ironic fashion, because it renders beginnings solemn, because it surrounds them with a circle of attention and silence, and because it imposes certain ritualistic forms on them, as if to make them recognizable from a distance.

This desire says: "I wish I did not need to enter into the risky [*hasardeux*] order of the discourse; I don't want to have to deal with its sharp and decisive edge; I want it to surround me, like a calm, deep, indefinitely open, transparent sheen, from which truths would rise, one by one; I would only have to let myself be carried, within it and by it, like a happy shipwreck."[1] And the institution

[1] René Char was one of Foucault's favourite poets and was often quoted by him. The phrase "*épave heureuse*" comes from a poem by René Char titled "Allegiance" in which Char uses a lover's language to describe the experience of a poet delivering a finished poem to a public that risks misunderstanding it. Translator Mary Ann Caws renders the phrase as "joyous shipwreck"; Nancy Naomi Carlson translates it as "blissful sunken wreck."

replies: “You need not worry about beginning; we are all here to show you that discourse is in the order of laws [*ordre des lois*]; that we have long kept vigil over its appearance; that a space has been prepared for it, one that will honour it but defuse it; and if, by chance, it wields any power, it is from us, and only us, that this power has come.”

But perhaps this institution and this desire are nothing more than two contrasting replies to the same anxiety: anxiety over the discourse in its material reality as something spoken or written; anxiety over a transitory existence that is undoubtedly destined to disappear, but that will do so according to a time frame [*durée*] over which we have no hold; anxiety from the sense that underneath this activity, as grey and everyday as it might be, lurk powers and dangers that are difficult for us to imagine; anxiety from a suspicion that there are struggles, victories, wounds, domination, and servitude, in these many words whose roughness has long been smoothed by use.

But what, then, is so perilous about the fact that people speak, and that their discourses proliferate indefinitely? Where, then, is the danger?

Here is the hypothesis that I would like to advance this evening, so as to pin down the field — or perhaps just the exceedingly provisional theatre — of my work: I posit that in every society the production of discourse is simultaneously regulated, selected, organized, and redistributed by a certain number of procedures, whose role is to conjure away its power and its dangers, to master its chance events, to evade its heavy, formidable, materiality.

In a society like ours, we are all well aware, of course, of the procedures for *exclusion*. The most obvious of these, as well as the most familiar, is *prohibition* [*l’interdit*], We all know, of course, that not everything can be said, that you cannot bring up every subject in every context, and finally, that not just anyone can talk about absolutely anything. The taboo of the object, the ritual of circumstance, the privileged or exclusive rights of the speaking subject: here we have the play of three types of prohibition, which intersect, reinforce, and compensate for one another, forming a complex grid [*grille*] that endlessly changes itself. I will only note that, in our present day, the narrowest sections of this grid, where blacked-out cells proliferate the most, are the areas of sexuality and politics; as if the discourse, far from being that transparent or neutral element inside of which sexuality would be disarmed and the political pacified, was instead one of the places where they exercised, in a privileged manner, some of their most daunting powers. Although, in its appearance, discourse might not seem all that important, the prohibitions that have marked it quickly reveal its ties with desire and with power. And why should this be a surprise? Because discourse — as psychoanalysis has shown us — is not simply that which manifests (or conceals) desire; it is also the object of desire; and because — and this is a lesson that history continually teaches us — discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but the Why and the How of the struggle, the power being fought over.

There is another principle of exclusion that exists in our society: not a prohibition this time, but a division and a rejection. I have in mind the opposition between reason and madness. Since the depths of the Middle Ages, the madman has been the person whose discourse cannot circulate like that of others: his word was considered null and void, bearer of neither truth nor importance, unable to bear witness in court, unable to authenticate an act or a contract, and it could not even, during the sacrifice of the Mass, allow for transubstantiation to occur, for bread to become body. Yet, on the other hand, it was sometimes endowed, in contrast to all others, with strange powers: that of being able to speak a hidden truth, of prophesying the future, of seeing in all naïveté what the wisdom of others could not discern. It is curious to realize that throughout centuries in Europe the word of the madman either went unheeded or, if not, was attended to as the bearer of true speech [*parole de vérité*]. Either it tumbled into the void — rejected as soon as it was proffered — or it was believed to contain some naive or sly reason, a reason that would be more reasonable than that of reasonable

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Another possibility might be “happy wreck,” which connotes someone besotted and plays with both Char’s and Foucault’s invocations of desire. Char may be toying with Shakespeare, who uses the phrase “happy shipwreck” in *Twelfth Night*. — Ed.

people. In any event, whether excluded or secretly invested with reason, it did not, in a strict sense, exist. It was through his words that a madman's madness was recognized; they were the site where the division occurred; but they were neither recorded nor heeded. Never, before the late eighteenth century, did it occur to a doctor to find out what was said (how it was said, why it was said) in these words that nonetheless made all the difference. The vast discourse of the madman was returned to noise, and he was only allowed to speak [*donnait la parole*] symbolically, onstage, where he came forth, disarmed and reconciled, playing the role of masked truth.

You will tell me that all of this is now over and done with, or at least is in the process of coming to an end: that the madman's speech no longer rests on the other side of the divide; that it is null and void no longer; that, on the contrary, we are now on the lookout for it; that we search for a meaning within it, or the outline or ruins of something greater; and that we have managed to come across them, these madman's words [*parole du fou*], in what we ourselves say, in that tiny gap through which what we are trying to say escapes us. But all this attention does not prove that the old divide is no longer at play; just think of the grand armature of knowledge-*savoir* through which we decipher these words; just think of the whole network of institutions that allow someone — doctor, psychoanalyst — to listen to this speech, and that at the same time allow the patient to bring forward, or desperately cling to, his poor words. Contemplating this should be enough to trigger our suspicions that this division, far from having been erased, is at play elsewhere, along different lines, through new institutions and with altogether different effects. And even when the doctor's role is only to lend an ear to words that have at last been liberated, it is always within the maintenance of the caesura that the doctor will listen; listening to a discourse invested with desire, and that believes itself — for its greatest exaltation or its greatest anxiety — to be the bearer of terrible powers. If the silence of reason is what is needed to cure these monsters, it is enough for this silence to be on the alert, and thus the division survives.

It is perhaps risky [*hasardeux*] to posit the opposition between the true and the false as a third system of exclusion, in addition to the two that I have just discussed. How could one reasonably compare the constraints of truth with divisions of this kind, divisions that were arbitrary from their entrance into the game, or that at the very least organized themselves around historical contingencies, that are not only modifiable but in perpetual displacement, that are supported by a whole system of institutions that impose and renew them, whose exercise is not free of constraint, or, for that matter, of a certain element of violence?

Of course, if we position ourselves at the level of a proposition, within a discourse, the divide between true and false is neither arbitrary nor modifiable, neither institutional nor violent. But if we adopt a wider scope, if we ask the question of what has been, and what continues to be, through our discourses, this will to truth [*volonté de vérité*] that has spanned so many centuries of our history, and what kind, in its most general form, of division it is that governs our will to know [*volonté de savoir*], then it is perhaps something like a system of exclusion (a historical system, modifiable, institutionally constraining) that will begin to appear.

There is no doubt that this divide was historically constituted. For the Greek poets of the seventh century, it was still the case that the true discourse [*discours vrai*] — in the strong and powerful sense of the word — the true discourse that engendered respect and terror, which reigned and thus required submission, was the discourse pronounced by those with right and according to the requisite rituals; it was the discourse that spoke justice and assigned each person their role; it was the discourse that, in prophesying the future, not only announced the future to come, but contributed to its realization, that brought with it the adherence of men and thus brought itself into destiny. And yet, within a century, the highest truth would no longer reside in what the discourse *was* or in what it *did*, it would come to reside in what it *said*: a day came when the truth was displaced from the ritualised, efficient, and just act of enunciation [*énonciation*] to the statement [*énoncé*] itself: toward its meaning, its form, its object, its relationship to its referent. A specific division was established between Hesiod and Plato, with the true discourse on one side and the false discourse on the other; and this division was novel, because from then on the true discourse was no longer the precious and desirable

discourse, since it was no longer the discourse tied to the exercise of power. The sophist was chased off.

This historical divide undoubtedly endowed our will to know with its general form. Yet this did not mean that it stayed put. In fact, it continually displaced itself: the great historical scientific shifts can at times be read as the result of a discovery, but they can also be read as the appearance of new forms of a will to truth. There was undoubtedly a nineteenth-century will to truth that did not intersect, either through the forms that it brought into play, or the domains of objects that it addressed, or the techniques that it employed, with the will to know that characterized classical culture. Let us jump forward a little: at the turn of the seventeenth century (and especially in England), a will to know arose that, prefiguring its actual contents, formulated models of possible, observable, measurable, classifiable objects; a will to know that imposed on the knowing subject (and in a certain sense did so prior to any experience) a certain position, a certain gaze and a certain function (observing rather than reading, verifying rather than commentating); a will to know that prescribed (and in a more general mode than any specific instrument) the technical level at which knowledge-*connaissance* would have to position itself in order be verifiable and useful. This all took place as if, beginning with the great Platonic divide, the will to truth had its own history, which is not that of the constraints of truth: a history of models of objects of knowledge-*connaissance*, a history of the functions and positions of the knowing subject [*sujet connaissant*], a history of the material, technical, and instrumental investments of knowledge-*connaissance*. Furthermore, this will to truth, like other systems of exclusion, shored itself up with institutional support: it is both reinforced and renewed by a thick scaffolding of practices, such as pedagogy, of course, as well as the system of books, of publishing, and of libraries; like the learned societies of yesteryear, the laboratories of today. And it is renewed as well, no doubt most deeply by the manner in which knowledge-*savoir* is established by a society, by which it is valorised, distributed, shared, and in a certain sense attributed. Let us recall, purely for symbolic purposes, the old Greek principle: arithmetic might be appropriate for democratic cities, because it teaches relationships of equality, but only geometry should be taught in the oligarchies, because it teaches proportions through inequality.

Finally, I believe that this will to truth, propped up in this manner by institutional support and distribution, tends to exercise on other discourses — I am still talking about our society — a certain kind of pressure and something like the power to constrain. I am thinking of the way in which, for centuries, Western literature had to search for support from the natural, the appearance of truthfulness [*le vraisemblable*], sincerity, and science as well — in short, from true discourse. I am also thinking of the way in which economic practices, codified as precepts or advice, and potentially as morality, have from the sixteenth century on sought to support, to rationalise, and to justify themselves through a theory of wealth and production; and I am also thinking of the way in which a body as prescriptive as the penal system sought to place its foundations and its justification in, first, of course, a theory of laws, and then, from the nineteenth century on, in sociological, psychological, medical, and psychiatric knowledge-*savoir*; as if even the word of the law could only be authorized, in our society, by a discourse of truth.

Of the three great systems of exclusion stamped upon discourse — prohibitions on speech, the division between madness and reason, and the will to truth — it is to the third that I have devoted the most time. This is because the first two have, for centuries, never halted their long slide in the direction of the third; because it increasingly tries to bring the other two under its own account, both to modify them and to serve as their foundation; because while the first two continually become more fragile, more uncertain to the extent that they have become inflected by the will the truth, the latter, in contrast, never ceases to reinforce itself, becoming deeper and more inescapable.

And yet, it is undoubtedly this third one that is the least discussed; as if the will to truth and its pitfalls were masked by truth itself through the course of its necessary progression. The reason for this is perhaps the following: if the true discourse has not been, since the time of the Greeks, the one that answered to desire or the person who exercised power, then what is at stake in the will to truth, in the will to speak, in this true discourse, if not desire and power? The true discourse, which its own

formal necessity emancipated from desire and liberated from power, cannot recognize the will to truth that inflects it; and this will to truth, which has imposed itself upon us for quite a long time now, is such that the truth it desires cannot but mask it.

Thus, all that appears before our eyes is a truth that would seem to be wealth, fecundity, a soft and insidiously universal force. As a result, we miss the will to truth, that prodigious machinery destined to exclude. All of those who, at various points in history, attempted to circumvent this will to truth and to hold it up against the truth and question it, at precisely the places where the truth endeavours to justify prohibitions and define madness, they must all, from Nietzsche, to Artaud, to Bataille, serve us as signposts — though grandiose ones, no doubt — for our daily work.

There are, of course, quite a few other procedures for the regulation and delimitation of the discourse. The ones I have spoken of up until this point are, in a certain sense, exercised from the outside; they function as systems of exclusion; they deal with the element of discourse that brings power and desire into play.

We can, I think, isolate a different group: internal procedures, which are internal in the sense that they are discourses regulating themselves. These procedures come into play through principles of classification, of ordering, of distribution, as if this time their aim was to master another dimension of the discourse: that of the event and of chance [*hasard*].

And at the forefront, we find commentary. I would imagine, although I am not sure, that there are no societies without major narratives that are told, retold, and varied upon; sayings, texts, ritualised bodies of discourse, recited according to set conditions; things that were once spoken and have since been preserved, because they are thought likely to contain some secret or wealth. In short, we might suspect that in societies there is a quite regular differentiation in the stature of different discourses: the discourses that "speak themselves" over the course of days and interactions, which pass along with the very act of their speaking; and the discourses that are at the origins of a certain number of new speech acts that elevate them, transform them or speak of them, in short, discourses that, imperceptibly, beyond their formulation, *are spoken*, remain spoken, and are still to be spoken. We are familiar with the examples of these in our cultural system: religious and juridical texts, as well as the texts — which are quite curious when we consider their status — that we call "literary," and, to a certain extent, scientific texts.

Certainly, this difference in levels is neither stable, nor constant, nor absolute. There is not, on one side, a category of fundamental or creative discourses established once and for all, and then, on the other, a mass repetition, annotation, and commentary. Many major texts become jumbled or disappear, and commentaries sometimes move to the forefront. But even as the specific points of application change, the function remains the same. And this principle of a differentiation of levels never ceases coming into play. The idea of radically erasing it could only ever be a game, a utopia, or an anxiety: a game like Borges's idea of a commentary that would be nothing more than the rewriting (but this time solemn and expected) of the original text word for word, or the game of a critique that would go on endlessly about a text that didn't exist; the lyrical dream of a discourse that would be reborn in each of its points absolutely new and innocent, and that would reappear continually, completely fresh, on the basis of things, or sentiments, or thoughts; the anxiety of Janet's patient for whom the least utterance was like "the word of the Gospel," harbouring inexhaustible treasures of meaning, worthy of being eternally repeated, begun anew, commentated upon: "When I think," he would say after having heard or read something, "when I think about this phrase that it too will also go off into eternity and that I perhaps have not yet fully understood it."

But how could we not see that in each of these cases it is only one of the terms of the relationship that has been struck down, that the relationship itself was never abolished? This relationship that never ceases to modify itself over time; this relationship that in a given era will take on multiple and divergent forms; juridical exegesis is deeply different (and has been for quite some time) from religious commentary; a single literary work can give rise, simultaneously, to very distinct

types of discourses: *The Odyssey* as primary text was repeated, in the same period, by Bérard's translation, by countless textual commentaries, and by Joyce's *Ulysses*.

For the moment I would like to limit myself to indicating that, in what we generally call commentary, the gap between the primary text and the secondary text plays two roles that work in tandem. On the one hand, it allows for the (indefinite) construction of new discourses: the long shadow [*surplomb*] of the primary text, its permanence, its status as an endlessly adaptable discourse, the multiple or hidden meanings it is believed to contain, the reticence and the essential richness bestowed upon it, all of these establish the open possibility of speech. But, on the other hand, commentary's only role, whatever the techniques employed might be, is to *finally* say what was silently articulated *in there*. It must always, in accordance with a paradox that it forever displaces but from which it never escapes, say for the first time that which nonetheless had already been said and tirelessly repeat that which nonetheless had never been said. The endless burbling of commentary is agitated from within by a dream of masked repetition; its horizons are perhaps nothing more than its point of departure: simple recitation. Commentary conjures away the chance element [*hasard*] of discourse by giving it its due; it makes it possible to say something else from the text itself, but on the condition that it be the text itself that is spoken and in a certain sense fulfilled. The gaping multiplicity of meaning and chance [*aléa*] are transferred, by the principle of commentary, from that which could have been said, onto the number, the form, the mask, the circumstances, of repetition. The novelty is not in what is said, but in the event of its return.

I think that there exists another principle for rarifying discourse. This one is, up to a certain point, the complement of the first one. I am referring to the author. By the author I do not mean, of course, the speaking individual who uttered or wrote a text, but the author as the unifying principle of the discourse, as the unity and origin of its significations, as the location of its coherency. This principle is not at play everywhere, nor does it function in a uniform manner; there are quite a few discourses circulating all around us whose meaning or effectiveness was not drawn from an author to whom they could be attributed: everyday words, erased immediately; decrees or contracts that require signatories, but not an author; technical manuals that are transmitted anonymously. But in the domains where attribution to an author is *de rigueur* — literature, philosophy, science — we can indeed see that it does not always play the same role. In the order of scientific discourse, attribution to an author was, in the Middle Ages, indispensable, because it was an index of truth. A proposition was considered to draw even its scientific value from its author. Since the seventeenth century, this function has been continually eroded in scientific discourse, and it now serves merely to endow a theorem, an effect, or a syndrome with a name. In contrast, in the order of literary discourse, and beginning in the same period, the function of the author has never ceased to reinforce itself: all of the stories, all of the poems, all of the dramas and comedies that had been allowed to circulate during the Middle Ages in, at the very least, a relative anonymity were now beginning to be questioned (and were ordered to tell) about where they had come from, who had written them; the author was asked to account for the unity of the texts placed under his name; he was asked to reveal, or at the very least to provide through his person, the hidden meaning that ran through them; he was asked to tie them together, through his personal life and his experiences, through the real history that saw them born. The author is what gives the disquieting language of fiction its unities, its knots of coherency, its insertion into the real [*réel*].

I know what people will say: "But you are talking about the author as he is created by the critic after the fact, once death has come and all that remains of him is a dusty pile of notebooks. A little order must be introduced into all of that, you'll admit. And imagining a project, a coherency, a theme, behind an author's mind or life, can indeed be somewhat fictional, but that does not take away from the fact that he did indeed exist, this real author, this individual who emerged through all the words employed, which carry the genius or disorder of his mind."

It would be absurd, of course, to deny the existence of the individual who writes and invents. But I think that — at least from a certain era onwards — the individual who began to write a text on the horizon of which prowled a possible *œuvre*, took on the responsibility of the author's role: what

he writes and what he does not; when he sketches out, even if only as a rough draft, an outline of the work, and what he lets fall to the wayside as everyday words, this whole game of differences is prescribed by the authorial role, either as he receives it from his time period, or as he modifies it in turn — because he can upend the traditional image that we have of the author. From a new authorial position, he can carve out, from everything that he might have said, from everything that he says every day, at every moment, the still-trembling profile of his work.

Commentary limited the chance [*hasard*] of the discourse through the play of an *identity* that takes the form of *repetition* and of *sameness*. The authorial principle limits this same chance through the play of an *identity* that takes the form of an *individuality* and a *me* [*moi*].

We must also recognize that another limiting principle exists in what we call, not the sciences, but rather the "disciplines." A principle that is just as relative and mobile. A principle that makes construction possible, but only through a narrowly defined game.

The organization of disciplines is as opposed to the principle of commentary as it is to that of the author. The latter because a discipline defines itself by a domain of objects, a body of methods, a corpus of propositions that are considered true, an interplay of rules and definitions, of techniques and instruments: these all constitute a certain kind of anonymous system available to anyone who can or wants to use it, without its meaning or its validity being tied to the person who happened to invent them. But the principle of the discipline is also opposed to that of commentary: in a discipline, unlike a commentary, the starting assumptions are neither a meaning to be rediscovered nor an identity to be repeated, but are rather the requirements for the construction of new statements. For a discipline to exist, there must therefore be the possibility of formulating new propositions, and of doing so indefinitely.

But there is more; and there is more, undoubtedly, so that there will be less: a discipline is not the sum of all the true things that can be said about something; it is not even the body of everything that could be, with regard to a given subject, accepted according to a principle of consistency or systematicity. Medicine is not constituted by the sum total of true things that could be said about illness; botany is not defined as the sum of all truths concerning plants. There are two reasons for this: first, both botany and medicine, as with all disciplines, are made up as much of errors as truths; errors that are neither vestigial nor foreign bodies, but that have a valid history and serve a positive function, a role that often cannot be disassociated from that of truth. But, in addition, for a proposition to belong to botany or pathology, it must answer to certain conditions — in one sense these are stricter and more complex conditions than those of pure and simple truth and, in any event, they are different ones. It must address itself to a set field of objects. Ever since the end of the seventeenth century, for example, for a proposition to be "botanical" it had to relate to the visible structure of the plant, the system of its similarities both far and near, or the mechanics of its fluids (and it could no longer hold on to — as was still the case in the sixteenth century — its symbolic values, or to the ensemble of virtues and properties attributed to it in antiquity). But, if it does not belong to a discipline, a proposition must utilise a well-defined type of conceptual instruments or techniques; from the nineteenth century on, a proposition was no longer medical, it fell "outside of medicine" and took on the character of individual fantasy or popular imagination if it brought into play concepts that were at once metaphorical, qualitative, and substantial (such as those of engorgement, or of warm liquids and dry solids). On the other hand, it could, and indeed it had to, draw upon concepts that were just as metaphorical, but that were built upon a different model, one that was functional and physiological (tissues could be irritated, inflamed, even degenerative). And there is more: in order to belong to a discipline, a proposition must be able to inscribe itself into a certain kind of theoretical horizon: it is sufficient to recall that the search for the original language, a theme that was perfectly acceptable until the eighteenth century, was enough, in the second half of the nineteenth century, to plunge any discourse not just into error, but into chimera, into fantasy, into nothing less than linguistic monstrosity.

Within its limits, each discipline recognises true and false propositions, but it also rejects, beyond its margins, a whole teratology of knowledge-*savoir*. The exterior of a science is both more

and less populated than we might think: there is, of course, immediate experience, the imaginary themes that endlessly carry and renew beliefs that have no memory; but perhaps there are also no errors in the strict sense, because error can only emerge and be identified within a definite system of practice; on the other hand, there are prowling monsters whose shapes shift along with the history of knowledge-*savoir*. In short, a proposition must fulfill complex and weighty requirements to be able to belong to the ensemble of a discipline; before being called true or false, it must be, as Monsieur Canguilhem would say, "in the truth" ["*dans le vrai*"].

We have often wondered how it was that the botanists and biologists of the nineteenth century were unable to see the truth of Mendel's claims. The reason for this was that Mendel spoke of objects, employed methods, and placed himself on a theoretical horizon that were foreign to the biology of his time. No doubt Naudin before him had posited the thesis that heritable traits were discrete; however, as new and strange as this principle might have been, it could still participate — at least in the form of an enigma — in the biological discourse. Mendel, for his part, conceptualised the hereditary trait as an absolutely new biological object, thanks to a novel system of distinctions: he uncoupled it from the species, he uncoupled it from the sex that had transmitted it; and the field in which he observed it was the indefinitely open series of generations, where it appeared and disappeared according to statistical regularities. A new object called for new conceptual instruments, and new theoretical foundations. Mendel spoke the truth [*disait vrai*], but he was not "in the truth" of the biological discourse of his era: his rules were certainly not the kind by which biological objects and concepts were formed. It would take a change in scale, the deployment of a whole new model of biological objects for Mendel to enter into the truth and for his propositions to come to appear (for the most part) accurate. Mendel was a true monster, which meant that science could not speak of him; whereas Schleiden, for example, who, thirty years earlier, in the midst of the nineteenth century, denied plant sexuality, but did so within the rules of the biological discourse, was only formulating a disciplinary error.

It is always possible for the truth to be told in the wilderness beyond the discipline; but you can only enter within the truth by obeying the rules of a discursive "police" that you must reactivate in each of your discourses.

The discipline is a principle that regulates the production of discourse. It imposes limits on discourse through the play of an identity that takes the form of an endless updating and readaptation of the rules.

We have habitually seen the productivity of an author, the multiplicity of commentaries, the development of a discipline, as so many infinite resources for the creation of discourses. Perhaps. But they are nonetheless also principles of constraint; and in all likelihood we would be unable to offer an account of their positive roles or their role in proliferation without taking into consideration their function as restrictions and constraints.

There is, I believe, a third set of procedures that allows for the regulation of discourses. Here it is no longer a question of mastering the powers that discourses bring with them, or of conjuring away the chance nature [*hasard*] of their emergence. Instead, the focus is on determining the conditions for bringing discourses into play, imposing a certain number of rules upon the individuals that hold them, and therefore denying others access. This is another form of rarefaction, this time of speaking subjects; none shall enter into the order of the discourse without satisfying certain exigencies or if he is not, from the outset, qualified to do so. More precisely: not all of the areas of the discourse are equally open and accessible; some are highly forbidden (differentiated and differentiating) while others seem open to the winds, as if they were placed, without any preexisting restriction, at the disposal of every speaking subject.

While I am on this theme, I would like to relate an anecdote that is so beautiful that one shudders to think it is true. It brings together in a single figure all of the constraints on discourse: those that limit its powers, those that seek to master its chance emergences, those that differentiate among speaking subjects. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Shogun had heard tell that the

Europeans owed their superiority — in navigation, commerce, politics, the art of war — to their knowledge-*connaissance* of mathematics, and he wished to accrue this precious knowledge-*savoir* to himself. As he had been told of an English sailor who possessed the secret of this marvellous discourse, he had him brought to his palace and retained him there. He took lessons from him, one on one. He learned mathematics. He was, in fact, able to hold on to power, and lived to be quite old. It was only in the nineteenth century that Japanese mathematicians would appear. But the anecdote doesn't end there: there is also the European side. According to the story, Will Adams, the English sailor, had been self-taught: a carpenter who had learned geometry from working in a naval yard. Should we regard this story as an expression of one of the great myths of European culture? That in contrast to the monopolised and secret knowledge-*savoir* of the Oriental despots, in Europe there was a universal communication of knowledge-*connaissance*, an indefinite and free exchange of discourses?

This theme, of course, does not hold up under examination. Exchange and communication are positive figures at play within complex systems of restrictions; and they undoubtedly wouldn't know how to function independently of these. The most superficial and the most visible of these systems of restriction is constituted by what we might group together under the name "ritual." Ritual defines the requisite qualifications of speaking individuals (who, in the game of a dialogue, of interrogation, of recitation, must occupy such and such a position and formulate such and such statements). It defines the gestures, behaviours, circumstances, and the whole body of signs that must accompany the discourse; and finally, it sets the supposed or imposed efficacy of words, their effect on those to whom they are addressed, the limits of their value as constraints. Religious, judicial, therapeutic, and even to a certain extent political discourses can hardly be disassociated from this establishment of a ritual that determines both singular properties and appointed roles for speaking subjects.

A somewhat different functioning can be seen in the case of "societies of discourse," whose function was to preserve or produce discourses, but did so in order to circulate them within a closed space, distributing them only according to strict rules and such that their bearers were not dispossessed through this very distribution. An archaic model of this were the groups of rhapsodes who possessed the knowledge-*connaissance* of the poems to recite, and possibly to vary and transform; but this knowledge-*connaissance*, even though its aim was basically ritual recitation, was protected, guarded, and preserved within a set group, through the memory exercises themselves often incredibly complex; apprenticeship brought you admission into a group and a secret that recitation manifested but did not divulge; the roles of speaking and listening were not interchangeable.

Of course, there are no longer any such "societies of discourse" with this ambiguous game of secrecy and divulgation. But let there be no mistake: even in the order of true discourse, even in the order of published discourse that is free of all ritual, forms of appropriating the secret and of noninterchangeability are still exercised. It could very well be that the act of writing as it is institutionalised today in the book, the publishing industry, and the figure of the writer, takes place within a "society of discourse" that, while perhaps diffuse, is undoubtedly constraining. The difference of the writer, ceaselessly opposed through himself to the activity of all other writing or speaking subjects, the intransitive character that he lends his discourse, the fundamental singularity that he long ago granted to "writing," the dissymmetry armed between "creation" and every other play of the linguistic system. All of this manifests in its formulation (and, moreover, tends to lead back to the play of practices) the existence of a certain "society of discourse." But there are indeed many others that function in a completely different mode, according to different regimes of exclusivity and divulgation: think of the technological or scientific secret; think of the forms of the diffusion and circulation of medical discourse; think of those who have come to appropriate the economic or political discourses.

At first glance, these "doctrines" (religious, political, philosophical) are the inverse of "societies of discourse," in which the number of speaking individuals, even if it was not fixed, tended to be limited, and it was only among them that the discourse could circulate and be transmitted. Doctrine, in contrast, tends toward diffusion; and it is by having one single body of discourses in common that individuals, as many as we would like to imagine, define their reciprocal belonging. It

would appear that the only requisite condition is recognizing the same truths and accepting a certain rule — which can be more or less flexible — of conformity with the validated discourses. If this were all, doctrines would hardly be that different from the scientific disciplines, and discursive regulation would only bear upon the form and content of statements, not on the speaking subject. Yet doctrinal belonging simultaneously implicates both the statement and the speaking subject, and each one through the other. It implicates the speaking subject by and through the statement, as is shown by the exclusionary procedures and the mechanisms of rejection that come into play once a speaking subject has formulated one or several inassimilable utterances; heresy and orthodoxy do not reflect a fanatical exaggeration of doctrinal mechanisms; they belong fundamentally to these disciplines. But, conversely, doctrine implicates statements on the basis of the speaking subject, to the extent that doctrine always functions as the sign, the manifestation, and the instrument of a preexisting belonging — belonging to a class, a social status or a race, a nationality or a shared interest, a struggle, a revolt, a resistance, or an acceptance. Doctrine binds individuals to certain types of enunciations and in consequence prohibits all others: but, in return, it employs certain types of utterances to bind individuals to one another, and to differentiate them from all others. Doctrine carries out a dual subjectification [*assujettissement*]: of speaking subjects to discourses, and of discourses to the group, at least the virtual one, of speaking subjects.

Finally, on a much larger scale, we must indeed recognize that there are great cleavages in what we might call the social appropriation of discourses. While education may well be, by right, the instrument through which any individual in a society like our own can gain access to any type of discourse, we all know that in its distribution — in that which it permits and that which it prevents — it follows lines marked by social distance, opposition, and struggle. Any system of education is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledge-*savoirs* and powers that they bring with them.

I am well aware that it is quite abstract to separate, as I have just done, rituals of speech, societies of discourse, doctrinal groups, and social appropriations. The majority of the time they are bound together constituting grand edifices that distribute speaking subjects among the different types of discourse and that appropriate these discourses to certain categories of subjects. In a word, these are the great procedures for discursive subjectification. What is, after all, a system of teaching, if not a ritualisation of speech [*la parole*]; if not that which qualifies and sets the roles of the speaking subjects; if not the constitution of a doctrinal group, or at least a diffuse one; if not a distribution and an appropriation of the discourse along with its accompanying powers and knowledge-*savoirs*? What is “writing” (that of “writers”) if not a similar system of subjectification that might in some cases take somewhat different forms but whose major scansions are analogous? Do not the judicial system and the institutional system of medicine, at least in certain aspects, constitute similar systems for subjectifying discourse?

I wonder if a certain number of themes in philosophy have not also emerged both in response to this play of limitations and exclusions as well as, perhaps, in order to reinforce it.

In response to them, initially, by positing an ideal truth as the law of discourse and an immanent rationality as the principle of their development, as well as by renewing an ethos of knowledge-*connaissance* that promises truth only to the desire for truth itself and to the power of thought alone.

And subsequently as a way to reinforce these limitations and exclusions through a denial that this time works broadly upon the specific reality of discourse.

Ever since the Sophists’ trade and games were excluded, ever since their paradoxes were more or less securely muzzled, it would seem that Western thought took care to ensure that in discourse there would be as little space as possible between thought and speech; it would seem that it took care to ensure that discourse would appear only as a kind of interjection between thought and speech; it would be thought draped in its signs and rendered visible through words, or conversely, it would be the very structures of language brought into play, producing the effect of meaning.

This ancient elision of the reality of discourse in philosophical thought has taken many forms over the course of history. We have come across it again recently in the guise of several themes that are familiar to us.

It might be that the theme of the founding subject [*sujet fondateur*] makes it possible to elide the reality of the discourse. Effectively, the founding subject is responsible for directly animating the empty forms of language with his designs; passing over the thickness and the inertia of empty things, he grasps intuitively, the meaning deposited there. He is also the one who, beyond time, founds horizons of meaning that history will then only need to explicate, and where propositions, the sciences, and deductive ensembles will, ultimately, find their foundation. In his relationship to meaning, the founding subject has at his disposal signs, marks, traces, letters. But he does not need to pass through the singular instance of discourse to make them manifest.

The theme opposed to this one, the theme of the original experience [*l'expérience originaire*], plays an analogous role. It assumes that at the bare level of experience, before it had even been able to grasp itself in the form of a *cogito*, preexisting significations, which were in a certain sense already spoken, roamed the world, preparing it all around us and opening it from the outset to a kind of a primitive recognition. Thus, a primeval complicity with the world would have founded the possibility of speaking of it, speaking in it, of designating it and naming it, of judging it, and finally of knowing it in the form of truth. If discourse there is, what could it be, in its legitimacy, if not a discrete reading? Things were already murmuring a meaning that our language needed only to raise up; and this language, beginning with its most rudimentary project, already spoke to us of a being, and it was like its nervous system.

The theme of universal mediation is, I think, another manner of eliding the reality of the discourse, even though it might appear otherwise. It might seem, at first glance, that by discovering at every turn the movement of a logos that elevates singularities into concepts and that permits immediate consciousness to deploy at long last all the rationality of the world, it is indeed the discourse itself that is placed at the centre of speculation. But this logos, truth be told, is nothing more than a discourse already held, or rather it was things and events themselves that imperceptibly made themselves discourse by deploying the secret of their own essence. Discourse is nothing more than the shimmering of a truth in the process of being born in its own eyes; and once everything can at last take the form of discourse, once everything can be said [*tout peut se dire*] and discourse can be pronounced about anything [*se dire à propos de tout*], it is because all things, having manifested and exchanged their meaning, can recede into the silent interiority of the consciousness of self.

Therefore, whether in a philosophy of the founding subject, a philosophy of original experience, or a philosophy of universal mediation, discourse is nothing more than a game, a game of writing in the first case, of reading in the second, of exchange in the third, and this exchange, reading, writing never bring into play anything but signs. Thus, the discourse cancels itself out, in its reality, by placing itself on the order of the signifier.

What civilisation, at least in appearance, has been more respectful of discourse than ours? Where has it been more and better honoured? Where has it been, or so it would seem, more radically freed of its constraints and universalised? Yet I believe that underneath this apparent veneration of discourse, beneath this appearance of logophilia, a fear is lurking. Everything functions as if prohibitions, barriers, thresholds, and limits were put in place in such a way that the great proliferation of the discourse would be, in part, mastered; such that its richness would be discharged of its most dangerous element and its disorder would become organised according to figures that eschew its most uncontrollable aspects; everything unfolds as if we wished to erase the very marks of its irruption into the game of thought and of language. In our society — and in every other as well, I imagine, but according to different profiles and scansions — there is undoubtedly a profound logophobia, a kind of deaf fear of these events, of this mass of things said, of the outpouring of all these statements, of everything that could be violent, discontinuous, aggressive, disorderly, as well as perilous, and of the great incessant and disorderly buzzing of discourse.

And if we wish to, I won't say do away with this fear but analyse it through its preconditions, its play, and its effects, we must, I believe, resolve to three decisions that present-day thought somewhat resists and that correspond to the three groups of functions that I just mentioned: questioning our will to truth; restituting discourse's character as an event; and finally lifting the sovereignty of the signifier.

These are the tasks, or rather a few of the themes, that will govern the work I wish to carry out here in the years to come. It is easy to see some of the methodological requirements that this will entail.

First, a principle of *reversal*: the sites where the source of discourse was believed to reside, according to tradition, alongside the principle of their proliferation and their continuity, through these figures that seemingly played a positive role, such as the author, the discipline, the will to truth, we must instead understand as a negative game serving to amputate and rarify discourse.

But, once these rarifying principles have been identified, once we have ceased considering them as fundamental and creative bodies, what will we uncover beneath them? Will we be forced to recognize the virtual plenitude of a world of uninterrupted discourses? Here is where other methodological principles must be brought into play.

A principle of *discontinuity*: that rarifying systems exist does not mean that beneath or beyond them, a great unlimited, continuous, and silent discourse reigns, having been repressed or restrained by them, and that our goal would be to raise it back up by restoring it to speech [*en lui restituant enfin la parole*]. We should not imagine that there is something unspoken or unthought [*un non dit ou un impensé*] that criss-crosses the world, intertwining with all of its forms and all of its events, and that it would be a matter of uttering or thinking it at long last. Discourses must be treated like discontinuous practices that sometimes intersect, sometimes converge, but that are just as likely to exclude or remain unaware of one another.

A principle of *specificity*: we must not dissolve discourse into a game of preexisting significations; we must not imagine that the world presents us with a legible face that we would need only to decipher; it is not complicit in our knowledge-*connaissance*; there is no prediscursive providence that inclines it in our favour. We must think of discourse as a violence that we do to things — in any case, like a practice that we impose upon them; and it is in this practice that the events of discourse[2] find the principle of their regularity.

The fourth rule is that of *exteriority*: the path is not from discourse toward its hidden internal kernel, toward the heart of a thought or a meaning that manifests itself within it, but rather it begins with discourse itself, its apparition and its regularity, and travels in the direction of its external conditions of possibility, toward that which gives rise to the chance [*aléatoire*] series of these events and that fixes its boundaries.

Four concepts should therefore serve as principles regulating this analysis: the concepts of the event, of the series, of regularity, and of conditions of possibility. They each have their clear opposite, term for term: event and creation; series and unity; regularity and originality; conditions of possibility and meanings. The latter four concepts (meaning, originality, unity, creation) have, in a rather general manner, dominated the traditional history of ideas that, by common agreement, sought out a point of creation, the unity of a work, of an era, or of a thematic, the mark of individual originality, and the endless treasure of hidden meanings.

There are only two remarks I wish to add to this. The first relates to history. We often credit contemporary history with having stripped the privileges heretofore accorded to the singular event and with having drawn out the structures of the long term [*longue durée*]. Doubtless. But I am not so

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[2] Foucault will later use the term "*événements discursifs*" in the March 17, 1971, lecture from the same *Lectures on the Will to Know: Lectures at the Collège de France 1970–1971*, English series ed. Arnold Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 194. Foucault also used that phrase, along with the phrase "*discours comme événement*," in his 1968 essays "Réponse à une question" and "Sur l'archéologie des sciences: Réponse au Cercle d'épistémologie," in *Dits et Écrits II* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 701-23 and 724-59. — Ed.

sure that this was precisely the direction in which the work of historians was pointing. Or rather, I do not think that there is something like an inverse rationale between identifying the event and analysing the long term. It would seem, on the contrary, that it was by accentuating the granularity of the event to the extreme, by shifting the resolution of historical analysis down to the official price lists [*mercuriales*], notarised acts, parish registers, port archives, tracking them year by year, week by week, that we were able to see beyond battles, decrees, dynasties, or assemblies, all the way to massive phenomena that spanned a century or centuries. History as it is practiced today does not shy away from events. Instead, it continually broadens their scope, continually unearthing new layers, both shallower and deeper, continually isolating novel ensembles, at times numerous, dense, and interchangeable, at times rare and decisive: from quasiquotidian price fluctuations to meteoric inflation. But what's crucial is that historians do not examine an event without placing it in a defined series, without specifying the mode of analysis applied to this series, without seeking to understand the regularity of phenomena and the limits on the probability of their emergence, without interrogating variations, inflections, and the shape of the graph, without trying to determine the conditions on which these depended. Of course, history has long given up viewing events through an interplay of cause and effect within the formless unity of a grand destiny, either vaguely homogeneous or rigidly hierarchical. But this rejection did not imply a search for anterior, foreign structures hostile to the event; it meant establishing diverse, intersecting, divergent series that would make it possible to circumscribe the "site" of the event, the margins of its haphazardness [*aléa*], the preconditions of its emergence.

The fundamental concepts that become necessary at this juncture are no longer those of consciousness and continuity (along with their correlative problems of liberty and causality), nor those of the sign and the structure. The concepts we need now are those of the event and the series, along with the interplay of related concepts; regularity, hazard [*aléa*], discontinuity, dependency, transformation. It's through such an ensemble that the discourse analysis I have in mind unfolds, not (of course) along the traditional thematics that philosophers of the past took for "living" history, but rather through the effective work of historians.

But it is also through this shift that my analysis poses philosophical, or theoretical, problems, ones that are in all likelihood rather daunting. If discourses must be treated first as ensembles of discursive events, what status should we give this concept of the event that philosophers only rarely took into consideration? The event is, of course, neither substance nor accident, neither quality nor process; the event is not on the order of bodies. Yet it is in no way immaterial; it is always at the level of materiality that the event takes effect, that it is an effect; it resides and consists in the relationship, the coexistence, the dispersion, the cross-referencing, the accumulation, the triage of material elements; it is neither an act nor a property of a body; it is produced as an effect of and by material dispersion. Let us say that the philosophy of the event should move in the direction, which may seem paradoxical at first glance, of a materialism of the insubstantial.

Furthermore, if discursive events should be approached according to series that are homogeneous, yet discontinuous with one another, what status should we give this discontinuity? This is not a matter, of course, either of the succession of instants over time or of the plurality of various thinking subjects. This is a question of the caesuras that shatter the moment and scatter the subject into a plurality of possible positions and functions. A discontinuity of this kind strikes against and invalidates the smallest units that are traditionally recognised and the hardest to contest: the moment and the subject. And, below them, independent of them, we must conceive of relationships between these discontinuous series, relationships that are not on the order of succession (or simultaneity) within a single (or several) consciousnesses; we must elaborate — outside of philosophies of the subject and of time — a theory of discontinuous systematicities. Finally, if it is true that, within certain limits, these discursive and discontinuous series have their own regularity, then no doubt it will be impossible to establish between their constitutive elements connections of mechanical causality or ideal necessity. We must allow happenstance [*aléa*] to be introduced as a

category in the production of events. Here again we can feel the absence of a theory that would allow us to think about the relationships between chance [*hasard*] and thought.

Thus, in the slight discrepancy that I propose to establish in the history of ideas, which consists in dealing with, not the representations that might lie behind discourses, but discourses as regular and distinct series of events, in this slight discrepancy, I fear that I recognise something along the lines of a tiny (and perhaps odious) machine that could introduce into the very root itself of thought, *chance, discontinuity,* and *materiality*. A triple threat that a certain form of history tries to conjure away by telling the story of a continuous progression of ideal necessity. Three concepts that should make it possible for us to connect the practice of historians and the history of systems of thought. Three paths for our project of theoretical development to pursue.

By following these principles and setting my bearings against this horizon, the analyses that I propose can be arranged into two groups. On one side there is the "critical" group, which will implement the principle of reversal: attempting to pin down the forms of exclusion, limitation, and appropriation that I discussed earlier, showing how they came to be formed, what needs they answered, how they were modified and displaced, what constraint they actually exercised, to what extent they were inflected. On the other there is the "genealogical" group, which will implement the three other principles: how series of discourses were formed, through, despite, or with the assistance of these systems of constraint, what norms were specific to each of them, and what were the conditions of their emergence, their growth, their variation.

Let us first look at the critical group. An initial set of analyses might examine what I have designated as exclusionary functions. In the past I have studied one of these functions over a specific period — such as the division between reason and madness in the Classical era. The next step might be to try to analyse a system of a prohibition on language, such as the one that surrounded sexuality from the sixteenth until the nineteenth century. This would not, of course, be a matter of watching its welcome disappearance over time, but rather of observing how it has been displaced and rearticulated on the basis of a practice of confession in which forbidden behaviours were named, classified, placed in a hierarchy, and all of this in the most explicit manner, up until the rather timid appearance, quite late, of the topic of sex in nineteenth-century medicine and psychiatry. These are, of course, only reference points, and somewhat symbolic ones at that, but I am already prepared to wager that the scansions will not be those we expect and that the prohibitions will not always take place where we might imagine.

For the time being, it is the third system of exclusion to which I would like to turn. And I will conceptualise it in two ways. First, I would like to try to identify how the choice of truth [*choix de la vérité*] — within which we are caught but which we also endlessly renew — was made, as well as repeated; I will first look to the era of sophistry and the beginning of this choice with Socrates, or at the very least with Platonic philosophy, in order to observe the manner in which the effective discourse, ritual discourse, the discourse full of powers and perils, had order brought to it little by little by a division between the true and the false discourse. I will then look to the turn of the seventeenth century, at the time of the emergence, especially in England, of a science of looking, observing, recording, a specific natural philosophy that was no doubt inseparable from the establishment of new political structures — or from religious ideology as well, for that matter. This was undoubtedly a new form of the will to know. Finally, the third reference point will be the beginning of the nineteenth century, with the great foundational acts of modern science, the formation of an industrial society, and the positivist ideology that accompanied it. Three cross sections into the morphology of our will to know; three stages in our philistinism.

I would also like to pick up on the same question from an entirely different angle: tracking the effects of a discourse with scientific aspirations — a medical, psychiatric, and sociological discourse — on the whole body of prescriptive discourses and practices that constitute the penal system. The study of psychiatric expertise and its role in penalisation will serve as the starting point and source material of this analysis.

It is with this same critical perspective, but at a different level, that we should analyse procedures for limiting discourses, from among those that I designated earlier as the principles of the author, of commentary, and of the discipline. We can, from this perspective, envisage a number of courses of study. I am thinking, for example, of an analysis of the history of medicine from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Not one focused on the discoveries made or the concepts employed, but rather on grasping, not just within the construction of medical discourse, but also within the entirety of the institution that supports, transmits, and reinforces it, the ways in which these principles of author, commentary, and discipline were brought into play. One that would seek out how the principle of the great author was exercised: Hippocrates, Galen, of course, but also Paracelsus, Sydenham, and Boerhaave. And then it would turn to how the practices of aphorism and of commentary were exercised, even up to the nineteenth century, and how little by little these came to be replaced by a practice based on cases, collecting cases, on a concrete model of clinical learning. Finally, it would ask what model medicine looked to as it sought to constitute itself as a discipline, leaning first on natural history, then later on anatomy and biology.

We could also contemplate studying the manner by which literary history and criticism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries constructed the character of the author and the figure of the *œuvre*: employing, modifying, and displacing the approaches of religious exegesis, biblical interpretation, hagiography, of legendary and historical "lives," of autobiography and memoir. We must also, one day, study the role that Freud played in psychoanalytic knowledge-*savoir*, so different was it from that of Newton in physics (and of all the founders of disciplines), and so different as well from the role that authors play in the field of philosophical discourse (even if the author was, like Kant, the source of a new way of doing philosophy).

Here we have a few projects for the critical side of our endeavour, for our analysis of the bodies of discursive regulation. As for the genealogical side, it is concerned with the actual formation of discourses, either within the limits of regulation or outside of them, or, as is most common, on both sides of this delimitation. The critical approach analyses the processes for rarifying, but also assembling and unifying, discourses; the genealogical approach studies their formation, which is simultaneously dispersed, discontinuous, and regular. In truth, these two tasks can never be entirely separated from one another; it is not as if we had, on one side, the forms of rejection, exclusion, assembly, and attribution, and then, on the other, at a deeper level, the spontaneous eruption of discourses that, either immediately before or after their appearance, are submitted to triage and regulation. The regularised formation of discourse can integrate, under certain conditions and up to a certain point, the regulatory procedures (this is what happens, for example, when a discipline takes on the form and status of scientific discourse); and conversely, these regulatory structures can take shape within a discursive formation (as is the case with literary criticism as the discourse that constitutes the author). Therefore, any critical project seeking to put into question the regulatory structures must also simultaneously analyse the discursive regularities through which these came to be formed; and any genealogical description must take into account the limits at play during the actual process of formation. Between the critical enterprise and the genealogical one, the difference does not lie so much in the object or the domain, but in points of attack, perspectives, and delimitations.

Earlier, I raised a possible avenue of inquiry: examining the prohibitions stamped upon the discourse of sexuality. It would be difficult and abstract, in any event, to undertake this study without at the same time analysing the body of discourses — literary, religious, and ethical, biological, medical, as well as legal — that deal with sexuality, and in which it is named, described, made into a metaphor, explicated, and judged. We are far from having constituted a unitary and regular discourse on sexuality. Perhaps we will never be able to do so, and perhaps this is not even the direction in which we are heading. It matters little. Prohibitions do not take the same form and their interplay is different in the literary discourse as it is in the medical one, in the psychiatric discourse as in the discourse of the direction of conscience. And, conversely, these different discursive regularities do not reinforce, circumvent, or displace prohibitions in the same manner. The only way to undertake this study would

therefore be to examine a plurality of series in which these prohibitions come into play. In each case, at least in part, the prohibition will be different.

We might also consider the series of discourses from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries dealing with wealth and poverty, money, production, and commerce. Here we are dealing with a powerfully heterogeneous body of utterances, formulated by rich and poor, educated and uneducated, Protestants and Catholics, royal officers, merchants, and moralists. Each of them with its own form of regularity, and its own systems of constraint as well. And none of them that would prefigure precisely another form of discursive regularity that would adopt the allure of a discipline and would come to be called the "analysis of wealth," and then "political economy." Yet it was out of them that this new regularity formed itself, picking up on or rejecting, justifying or brushing aside, their various statements.

We might also imagine a study focused on discourses concerning heredity, such as they might be found, spread and scattered across disciplines, observations, techniques, and various beliefs, up until the beginning of the twentieth century. Then it would be a question of showing the interplay of connections through which these series ultimately came to be reassembled in the figure, both epistemologically coherent and recognised by the institution, of genetics. This is in fact what François Jacob has just accomplished, with unparalleled brilliance and scientific rigour.

Thus, critical descriptions and genealogical descriptions must alternate back and forth, confer mutual support to each other, and complete one another. The critical portion of the analysis engages the systems that envelop the discourse; it attempts to identify, to pin down, the principles for ordering, rarifying, and excluding from discourse. Let us say, if a play on words will be permitted, that it practices a rigorous indirection [*une désinvolture appliquée*]. The genealogical portion of the analysis, in contrast, attaches itself to the series of the actual formation of discourse: it attempts to grab hold of it in its affirmative power, and by this I do not mean a power opposed to that of negation, but rather the power to constitute domains of objects, on the basis of which true and false propositions could be affirmed or negated. Let us call these domains of objects positivities; and let us say, to play with words a second time, that if the critical style is one of a rigorous indirection, then the genealogical mood will be that of a chance positivism [*positivisme heureux*].

In any case, at least one thing merits emphasising: discourse analysis as understood here does not seek to unveil the universality of a meaning, it brings to light the play of imposed rarity, with a fundamental power to affirm. Rarity and affirmation; rarity, finally, of affirmation, rather than continuous generosity of meaning, rather than the monarchy of the signifier.

And now let those with limited vocabularies say — if they prefer its sound to its meaning — that this is structuralism.

I am well aware that the research whose outline I have tried to describe here would have been impossible without the assistance of models and reference points. I believe that I owe a great deal to Monsieur Dumézil, since it was he who encouraged me to work at an age when I still believed that writing was a pleasure. But I also owe a great deal to his work itself; I hope he will forgive me if I have led his texts, which dominate us today, astray from the path of their meaning and rigour; it was he who taught me to analyse the internal economy of a discourse in a manner entirely different from the methods of traditional exegesis or linguistic formalism; he is the one who taught me to identify, through the play of comparisons, systems of functional correlations from one discourse to the next; it was he who taught me how to describe the transformations of a discourse and its relationships to an institution. If I sought to apply this method to discourses other than legends or mythological narratives, it was because I was looking at the work of historians of science, especially that of Monsieur Canguilhem. It is to him that I owe my understanding that the history of science was not necessarily restricted to the following alternative: either a chronicle of discoveries or a description of the ideas and opinions bordering science on the side of its faint genesis or the side of its external fallout. But that instead we could, and indeed we should, see the history of science as a simultaneously coherent and changeable body of theoretical models and conceptual instruments.

But I think that a great part of my debt is to Jean Hyppolite. I know that, in the eyes of many, his work falls under the sign of Hegel, and that our whole era, whether it be through logic or epistemology, through Marx or Nietzsche, has attempted to escape from Hegel. And what I attempted to say earlier about the discourse is quite unfaithful to the Hegelian logos.

But truly escaping Hegel would require appreciating exactly what it would cost to detach ourselves from him. This would require knowing just how far Hegel, perhaps insidiously, has moved in our direction. This would require knowing what remains Hegelian about that which allows us to argue against Hegel, and to measure the extent to which our recourses against him are perhaps a lure that he has set for us, at the end of which we will find him waiting, immobile and elsewhere.

Moreover, if more than one of us owes a debt to Hyppolite, it is because he tirelessly went ahead and cleared for us the path away from Hegel, down which we find ourselves brought back to him again, but in a different way, before being obliged to take leave of him anew.

First, Hyppolite took great pains to give substance to the great, somewhat phantomlike, shadow of Hegel that had lurked since the nineteenth century and with whom an obscure combat had been waged. It was through a translation, that of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, that he gave Hegel this substance; and Hegel himself is quite present in the French text, the proof of this being that Germans have consulted it in order to better understand what, for a moment at least, became the German version.

In addition, Hyppolite searched and explored all of the avenues of this text, as if his fear was: Can we still philosophise where Hegel is no longer possible? Can a philosophy continue to exist that is not Hegelian? Is that which is non-Hegelian in our thought necessarily also nonphilosophical? And is the antiphilosophical also necessarily non-Hegelian? In such a way that he did not simply wish to offer a meticulous description of the Hegel whose presence he brought to us: he wished to make him into a framework for the experience of modernity (is it possible to think in the Hegelian mode of the sciences, history, politics, and of everyday suffering?), and conversely, he wished to make our modernity the testing ground of Hegelianism and, through that, of philosophy. For him the relationship to Hegel was the site of an experience, a confrontation, from which it was never certain that philosophy would emerge victorious. He did not employ the Hegelian system as a reassuring universe, far from it. He saw in it the extreme risk taken by philosophy.

This explains, I believe, the displacements that he carried out, I will not say within Hegelian philosophy, but rather upon it, and upon philosophy as Hegel conceived of it; it also explains a whole inversion of Hegel's themes. Instead of conceiving of philosophy as totality finally able to think of and grasp itself in the movement of the concept, Hyppolite saw it, against the backdrop of an infinite horizon, as an endless task: though always early to rise, his philosophy was never prepared to draw to a close. A project without end, and therefore a project that was always begun anew, dedicated to the form and the paradox of repetition: philosophy, as the inaccessible thought of the totality, was for Hyppolite that which could be repeated in the extreme irregularity of experience; it was that which presented and exposed itself as a question that arose continually in life, in death, in memory: thus he transformed the Hegelian theme of the achievement of self-consciousness into a thematic of repetitive interrogation. But, because it was repetition, philosophy did not come after the concept; it did not need to pursue the edifice of abstraction, instead it would always need to beat a retreat, to break with its acquired generalities, and bring itself back into contact with nonphilosophy; it needed to move toward, as close as it could, not to that which would complete it but to that which preceded it, to that which was not yet awake to its anxiety; it needed to gather up the singularity of history, the regional rationalities of science, the depth of memory in the consciousness, not to reduce them, but to think them again; thus emerge the themes of a philosophy that is present, anxious, and mobile all along the length of its contact line with nonphilosophy, existing only by it and revealing the meaning that this nonphilosophy has for us. Moreover, if philosophy lies in this repeated contact with nonphilosophy, what was the beginning of philosophy? Was it already there, secretly present in what it was not, beginning to whisper its own formulation within the murmur of things? But, if so, then the philosophical discourse will perhaps not have a *raison d'être*; or perhaps it had to begin on a

foundation that was at once both arbitrary and absolute? We can thus see the Hegelian theme of the movement proper to the immediate being replaced by a theme of the foundation of the philosophical discourse and its formal structure.

And finally, there is the final displacement that Hyppolite worked upon Hegelian philosophy: if philosophy must indeed begin as an absolute discourse, what can we make of its history and of this beginning that began with a solitary individual, within a society, a social class, and surrounded by struggles?

These five displacements, leading to the extreme edge of Hegelian philosophy, by taking it undoubtedly beyond its own limits, invoke one after another the major figures of modern philosophy that Hyppolite continually brought into confrontation with Hegel: Marx with his questions of history, Fichte with the problem of the absolute beginning of philosophy, Bergson with the theme of contact with nonphilosophy, Kierkegaard with the problem of repetition and truth, Husserl with the thematic of philosophy as an infinite endeavour, tied to the history of our rationality. And, beyond these philosophical figures, we can observe all of the domains of knowledge-*savoir* that Hyppolite brought to bear upon his own questions: psychoanalysis and the strange logic of desire, mathematics and the formalisation of discourse, the theory of information and its application to the analysis of the living, in short all of the domains from which we can ask the question of a logic and an existence that are continually knotting and unknotting their ties to one another.

I think that his *œuvre*, articulated in several major books, but even more invested in research, teaching, a perpetual attention, an everyday alertness and generosity, through seemingly administrative and pedagogical responsibilities (which is to say in truth doubly political responsibilities), intersected, formulated the most fundamental problems of our time. In my infinite debt to him, I am but one of many.

It is because I undoubtedly borrowed the meaning and the possibility of my work from him, as he often lit my way where I had been stumbling in the dark, that I would like to dedicate my work to him, and why it was so important for me to conclude this presentation of my projects with an expression of my gratitude to him. It is in his direction, in the direction of this lack — where I feel both his absence and my own shortcomings — that the questions I am now asking cross paths.

Because I owe him so much, I quite understand that the choice you made in inviting me to teach here was, in great part, an homage to him; I am grateful to you, deeply grateful, for this honour, but I am no less grateful for how much this choice is a reflection of him. While I do not consider myself to be up to the task of succeeding him, I know that, on the other hand, if this happiness could have been granted to us, I would have been, this evening, encouraged by his indulgence.

And now I better understand why it was that I felt such difficulty earlier. I know now which voice it was that I had wished to precede me, to carry me, to invite me to speak, and to inhabit my own discourse. I know what was so daunting about beginning to speak, because it is from this floor that I listened to him, and because he is no longer here, now, to hear me.