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“The Peace of the Evening” (1)

“I can assure you,” Jacques Lacan said in an interview to *Express* in 1957, “that from the moment someone was first made to lie down on a couch, and even if the analytic rule was but summarily explained, the subject was already introduced into a search for his own truth. Simply finding himself speaking in that particular way in front of another—a silence made up of neither approval nor disapproval, but of attention—is perceived as a wait...for truth.” (2)

Let us give the “subject” a name, Colette Soler, and let us observe how she described, in third person, her initial meetings with Lacan in 1969.

Allow me to recall the initial surprise of this naive young girl. First of all, Lacan himself proved quite unsurprising at her first session. She had heard talk of subversion, and had imagined an adventurer of thought, but instead he spoke to her with common sense. She expected a legend, but found a man like all others, not at all pressing, marvelously paternal, encouraging and gentle, so gentle, too gentle! He took her coat, made her comfortable in a soft armchair, etc. Matter of factly, as though conducting a job interview, he methodically looked into her family situation, profession and education. With great interest, he punctiliously questioned her about what she had read about him. What did she think, and—did she know his daughter Judith?, and so on. And then, on top of it all, he ended by making her a solemn promise, without her having asked, to reflect on a small dilemma that she had brought up and to give her a solution at their next meeting. In short, he had her hooked—the result being that she could think of nothing else until the next meeting. And here came the second surprise. Before she could even sit down, she was hit by a lightening-quick question, “Well?” As if by miracle, she responded in a flash. In that brief lapse of time, she unthinkingly blurted out a sentence, and surely it was the last thing she would have thought to have said, and yet, once spoken, it proved to be without a doubt what she had come to tell him. He acknowledged this with a loud burst of laughter. (3)

What is the question about? About a truth made up of words. About a waiting for this truth that we might call listening. (Not the listening of the analyst, but of the analysand. Or of each one of us. In an altogether different setting, Heidegger had called it “the listening to language.” But is this setting so different?) About a situation whose affective tonality is silence. About an interval of stupor during which a sentence blurts out unthinkingly. And about the certainty that this was the sentence to say.

The least we can say to draw closer to the question is that this listening appears strange to us, even as something opposed to listening. And waiting might here seem an inappropriate term for an unexpected “outburst of words.” We could call on that magic word, “unconscious” (which bothered Heidegger so much), but then we risk perhaps dodging the question. Perhaps we will use this word “unconscious” sparingly at the end of our journey, but in the meantime, let us at least define a bit the path to be taken. And let us not forget that “loud burst of laughter,” which was not just a simple part of the narrative.

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And yet Lacan did not laugh when-in a lecture from his 1955-56 seminar dedicated to Psychosis and the Freudian case of President Schreber-he paused to describe and ponder (with a wonder more suited to an analysand) a phrase that had leaped into mind: “peace of the evening.” A phrase which broke into the discourse and the text like a small bolt of lightning-not unlike Schreber’s supposed “verbal hallucination”-and to which Lacan devoted compendious but not unproblematic remarks, as though he were dealing with a theoretical, yet absolutely decisive, detour. Even when he had finished with his example (unusual in itself for Lacan’s scarce use of examples), the impression remained for the rest of the seminar (and, I might dare say, for Lacan’s entire thought) that something both essential, yet difficult to tell, had been touched upon. This something regards “Being”, “language” and certainly that register-anything but univocal and transparent-which in the Lacanian lexicon corresponds to the word “symbolic”:

I don’t want to give an overly philosophical discourse here but want to show you for example what I mean when I tell you that discourse is essentially directed at something for which we have no other term than Being.

I ask you, then, to think about this for a moment. You are at the close of a stormy and tiring day, you regard the darkness that is beginning to fall upon your surroundings, and something comes to mind, embodied in the expression, the peace of the evening.

I don’t think anyone who has a normal affective life is unaware that this is something that exists and has a completely different value from the phenomenal apprehension of the close of the clamor of the day, of an attenuation of contours and passions. There is in the peace of the evening both a presence and a choice from everything that surrounds you.

What link is there between the expression the peace of the evening and what you experience? It’s not absurd to ask oneself whether beings who didn’t give this peace of the evening a distinct existence, who didn’t formulate it verbally, could distinguish it from any of the other registers under which temporal reality may be apprehended. This might be a panic feeling, for example, over the presence of the world, an agitation that you observe at that moment in the behavior of your cat which appears to be searching left and right for the presence of a ghost, or this anxiety which, although unknown to us, we attribute to primitive peoples over the setting of the sun, when we think they are perhaps afraid that the sun will not return-which, moreover, isn’t unthinkable. In short, a feeling of disquiet, of a quest. There’s something here-isn’t there?-that leaves intact the question of what the relationship is between this order of being-which has its existence equivalent to all sorts of other existences in our lived experience, and which is called the peace of the evening-and its verbal expression. (4)

I don’t want to be overly philosophical, Lacan admits: that is, he knows-and says as much-that what is in question is Being, the being of discourse, the relationship between speech and Being. If the tone of the question, and even the question itself, seem to hint at Heidegger and his questioning of Being, Lacan cannot help but summon up from philosophy, above all, a radically phenomenological attitude. The peace of the evening cannot be reduced to a feeling (it is not just a disquiet or a sense of panic over things), and we would miss the point if we limited the meaning of this expression to a psychologically lived experience: we would elude the phenomenon of language as such. Yet we find ourselves before something experienced-albeit an experience that cannot be comprehended if we remain alone before it. Lacan’s phenomenology is radical because it recognizes what the subject’s position can and must be in order that the arriving phrase show its meaning. For this reason analysis, as well as the whole of Lacan’s philosophical attention, is concentrated on listening and hearing. Here, in fact, we need to modify our usual way of understanding the relationship between speech and subject that we call, precisely, listening.

Lacan’s steps toward the question, and the leap toward understanding it, made by the example of the peace of the evening, are equally phenomenological. As I said, the stage for Lacan’s speech was set with Schreber’s case. What can the anomaly of his “delirious” discourse tell us to the advantage of the supposed

normality of our own speech? What does Schreber's "disturbance" allow us to see with respect to the function of the symbolic? "Nothing is as ambiguous as verbal hallucination," Lacan states. While we believe we are defining a field, in reality we ought to be expressing a grave doubt because-if we succeed in taking it apart, that is in suspending the chain of confirmations-this expression, "verbal hallucination," opens up the question of the relationship between mouth and ear: of that listening to ourselves that is not an acoustical phenomenon, but the listening of an Other, a listening within the language. Is it an anticipation of meaning? The phrase comes "alive" only starting from this anticipation. Between the actual hearing and speaking there is a "link" which is not external (external in the sense that we commonly say "we hear ourselves speaking"), but which pertains to the level of the language itself. "It is at the level at which the signifier conveys meaning, and not at the sensory level of the phenomenon," Lacan says, "that listening and speaking are like front and back." (5) But if we suspend what Lacan calls "the sensory level of the phenomenon," it is not enough for us-nor was it for Lacan-to speak of signifier and meaning, and so from this point on we must develop analysis. Is it in fact enough to ask ourselves: where do we stop? Does not language in some way rely on the world? And since the answer is obviously yes (there is not just an unending deferment of significations, we do not exhaust the expression the peace of the evening in an endless chain of meanings), we must therefore make the endpoint coincide with the philosophical term "Being." And here, then, is where the central question-that formulated by Lacan with his example-takes shape. Not what is the being of language, but precisely how we place ourselves in listening to language, or what we succeed in describing of this unexplored register of the lived experience. The manner and difficulty of describing this listening pose yet a further question whose importance Lacan (as I will attempt to show further on) perhaps underestimated.

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Curiously, one of Emanuele Severino's recent writings contains an example almost identical to that of Lacan. It is useful to recall it here in order to understand better where Lacan is leading us.

Even the coming night, indicated by the word, is a meaning shrouded by a word (or by an expression of an historical language), and the word which shrouds it, indicates it. The form speaks of that which it shrouds: it indicates it. But 'the coming night' does not indicate darkness, starlight, attenuating shapes and colors, or the emotional state that accompanies the fall of night: 'the coming night' (the word) indicates just that, the night that is coming, a meaning, to be sure, which from the start appears shrouded by the very word that indicates it, but yet not identical with those other meanings (darkness, starlight, emotional state, etc.) which the interpretative will would like to form a unified sense-and which furthermore appear themselves as shrouded in the words which indicate them. So that if and when the coming night appears, it would be necessary that the thing in which it consists ultimately appear as that thing, and not as the thing itself shrouded in the word. (6)

We could certainly stop here on the "overly" philosophical problems this text opens up, but what is of interest here, above all, is the difference between the two ways of considering ultimateness. In Lacan's example, the event of language is both first and last: there is no "thing" which appears beyond the phrase, and wanting to see something, even proclaiming this to be a necessity, has precisely to do with "excessive" philosophy, with, perhaps, the very interpretative will from which the listening needs to distance itself without, however-I might add-ever completely succeeding. For Lacan, the being of language is not a being beyond language, a destiny (destination) of truth-as Severino would have it-presenting itself however as "the unconscious"(!) of language. Rather, it is language itself, the speech as event. In both cases, one is dealing with the suspension of the "senses," with which we subjectively (psychologically) apprehend the evening or the coming night in order that we might reach the fringes of the words themselves through a lessening of the interpretative will. However, Severino finds himself at a paradoxical fork: although the words continue to "shroud" the things, as they should, it is nonetheless necessary that the "thing" finally appears as no longer shrouded by speech, but only as the thing. A double necessity which could name the problem, yet instead

presents itself here as the solution. In fact, it is possible to reach this philosophical “ultimateness” only if the fading of the interpretative will is already given as solved (as achieved or practicable by philosophy), to use Severino’s words. But this is precisely the problem that Lacan calls “listening”: a listening within the language, for which it is no longer possible to consider speech as something shrouding the meaning. What became of the subject or even the “self” in this symbolic register? So Lacan seems to ask himself, keeping an eye on the place from which the question inevitably arises. If we were to abandon this place, or even the phenomenological place of the lived experience, we might deceive ourselves, believing that the language shines forth because of an ultimate and fixed truth. But in such a case, we, consequently, could put ourselves neither on the trail of the effects of the signifier, with which language “shrouds” the subject, nor on the particular effect through which language appears to us so surpassable as to allow us to see the truth shining from within it.

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Lacan continues:

We can now observe that something quite different happens according to whether we, who have called up this peace of the evening ourselves, have formulated this expression before uttering it, or whether it takes us by surprise or interrupts us, calming the agitation that dwelled within us. It’s precisely when we are not listening for it, when it’s outside our field and suddenly hits us from behind, that it assumes its full value, surprised as we are by this more or less endophasic, more or less inspired, expression that comes to us like a murmur from without, a manifestation of discourse insofar as it barely belongs to us, which comes as an echo of what it is that is all of a sudden significant for us in this presence, an utterance such that we don’t know whether it comes from without or from within-the peace of the evening.

Without going to the heart of the issue of the relationship between the signifier, qua signifier of language, and something that without it would never be named, it’s noticeable that the less we express it, the less we speak, the more it speaks to us. The more foreign we are to what is at issue in this being, the more it has a tendency to present itself to us, accompanied by this pacifying expression that presents itself as indeterminate, lying on the border between the field of our motor autonomy and this something that is said to us from outside, this something through which the world borders on speaking to us.

What does this being, or not, of language, this the peace of the evening, mean? To the extent that we’re not expecting it, or wishing for it, or haven’t even thought about it for a long time, it’s essentially as a signifier that it presents itself to us. No experimentalist construction can justify its existence, there is a datum here, a certain way to take this time of the evening as a signifier, and we can be open to it or closed to it. And it’s precisely insofar as we have been closed to it that we receive it through this peculiar echo phenomenon, or at least the start of it, which consists in the appearance, at the limit of the phenomenon’s grip on us, of what will most commonly be expressed for us by these words, the peace of the evening. (7)

Let us note that what at first seemed obvious no longer appears as such. The obvious psychological feature of the phenomenon organized itself around a note of disquiet. However, the lived experience, towards which Lacan pushes us with his “description,” takes its tone from something pacifying. To comprehend the effect of the signifier which “the peace of the evening” has for us, and thus, to draw closer to the “too” philosophical question (what kind of being surrenders itself to language? How do being and language correspond to each other?)-without allowing excess philosophy to sidetrack our intention from the start-we need to pause over the “surprise,” that “elle ne tombe sur le dos,” “that hitting upon us”: a surprise which, in its *mise en abyme* between the example and its meaning, calms us, having something to do with “peace.” The phrase reaches us certainly because we are open to it, because we allow it to pass, something which-if we truly succeed in opening ourselves for a moment to its shaking off the disquiet of the day-disposes us to a pacifying abandon: a silence, thanks to which our talk is stilled, along with our troubles and empty words, so

that at last language speaks, and the words emerge and come into being. It is a matter of listening. The beating of the unconscious, its opening and closing, the intermittent gaps, the play of surprise and of the expedient [“trovata”] (and beyond this, but with necessity, how we transcribe it), are a question of listening, of the disposition of subjectivity. If it were not so-if symbolism’s claimed autonomy meant autonomy from the subject, something there having nothing more to do with the here in which we cannot help but recognize ourselves-we could neither say anything about it, nor pay any attention to it.

But which listening? Here, in the subversion of the obviousness, the most obvious appearance uproots both our ordinary speech and the obviousness which permanently dwells in our words: this listening should be understood as a closure, or more succinctly, as the contrary of listening. “It’s precisely when we are not listening for it,” Lacan says; “to the extent that we’re not expecting it,” “insofar as we have been closed to it,” he repeats. But what is he effectively saying and repeating? We may-or even must, given that we are not in a position in which the phrase hit us but rather in one in which we reflect (certainly at the risk of being too philosophical) with Lacan on the surprise, on the fact that the phrase hits us-legitimately ask ourselves about the effect language can have both on us, and in and of itself. As if one could or should atune oneself, so to speak, to this “closing” brought into play by the surprise: as if there were a way of Being, an attitude or thinking, which would paradoxically correspond to such a closure which would instead seem to exclude (in order that it abandon itself to) any participation, including that of the analyst and the philosopher. Lacan’s putting down in writing this sudden halting, attributable to our psyche’s automatism and thence to chance, repeats the question, thereby indicating to us that every description carries with it the responsibility of a transcription.

So, there is this listening-and this is what above all interests both Lacan and ourselves-which is like a closing: a listening which is the subversion of the obviousness of lending an ear, more a distancing rather than an intentional drawing nearer. The closer we draw, the more we know how to distance ourselves from the claim of our self. It is this paradoxical listening which speech solicits in return, because, and on the condition that, speech tells us something about itself. The question of the unconscious stands on its own two feet and has sense only if we approach it from this angle.

There is a closing and extraneity, Lacan says, to the extent that we can succeed, and gain it through passivity, perhaps, but a passivity which is an “acting out,” an exercising of ourselves on ourselves through the other. “Closing,” to be inserted in quotation marks, as an attempt, never truly realized, to maintain some distance from the imaginary pressure of our own self: a de-compression of subjectivity. A gain of space, margin and play, in order that that opening, which we are, happens to us, presents itself, so that speech tell us something of itself. There is no need to translate philosophically this “listening” of the unconscious of language and outside language, which Lacan centers around his idea of the signifier. This hearing, in fact, already appears as such, being firmly placed in the philosophical discourse on the weakening of subjectivity, in that phenomenological turn which starts from Heidegger’s description of the Da-sein as an opening, to come, after a spin (as Lacan would say), back and pose to Heidegger himself the question of the subject-that question which he seems to elude while at the same time subverting it. For me, Lacan unquestionably goes beyond a re-proposition to an elaboration of the question of how the subject can be reconsidered from the perspective of its own otherness-“ourselves as an other”-and why such a reconsideration must lead to an ethics.

But in doing this, Lacan shifts our attention from subjectivity’s fight with itself, from its way of carrying itself out, to the effects that this implies on and for the language, whereby he re-launches the Heideggerian intuition, according to which things provoke us to language, and thus corrects that “excess” of philosophy.

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If we put ourselves in a “listening” mode, if we take this “closure,” much like an epoch, as accomplished-insofar as we can-what is then happening with language? What did it give us to hear, what is happening with its claimed ultimateness? In this point, where the “lived experience” is subverted, where do we stop? Let’s re-read Lacan’s text: in fact, we must find the answer to the previous questions in the register of language itself, in the proposal and in the effort of the transcription. We could then formulate the questions into one single question: what does Lacan say and do about this in this exemplary text. Noting immediately that the unresolved oscillation between what Lacan has in the end to say on language (reflecting on the phrase peace of the evening), and what he does in terms of writing (what he actually says about it, describing his example), belongs not marginally to the paradoxicality of the question, to its constitutive instability, as is already completely explicit in the word “closure.”

After such a philosophical start, the truth awaiting us in the end is destined to disappoint us greatly, if what we had been waiting for was of the order of a concept or an essence, or even if-in a Lacanian way-we had been expecting more details on the theory of the signifier. Instead, what we find in our hands is an uncertain metaphor-even too suggestive, and, to a Lacanian ear, cacophonous for its excess of the imaginary. “A murmur from outside,” which “echoes” what is immediately “significant” for us in the presence of peace of the evening, “a singular phenomenon of echo, or at least a hint of it.” In this margin or limit, we land in an ambiguity which the signifier and the real have in common: “we shall never know-Lacan says-in the perfect ambiguity in which it dwells, what it owes to this marriage with discourse.” (8) Of this signifier which in principle escapes us, we can only know that “it’s already presented to us with a more or less appropriate fringe of discourse phenomena,” “a froth” produced by the signifier and which carries us away. Echo, fringe, froth: this is how Lacan gathers, in his listening, what in the end is destined to elude us. No thing appears beyond language, and if we question ourselves about the “being” of these words which fall upon us, “the peace of the evening,” we must halt at some rather vague images: a murmur, froth, a kind of echo. And if we were to go further? If we decided to do so, we would cease to hear.

Of course, we could think that here Lacan, friend of the algebra of the psyche, fails, or retreats long before his objective, taking a comfortable refuge in the warehouse of suggestive images. But we would do injustice not just to this text, but to his entire body of writing. With a razor, itself so un-Lacanian, we would cut away the part least consonant with our philosophical claim. And here then, in this point of language, we would substitute the reticence of circumspection with the virulence of the theoretical gesture. The result would be the absence of any remaining trace of that which escapes us, and whose oscillating instability the “images” of the murmur, the echo and the froth-precisely with their uncertainty and impropriety-would wish to preserve. Certainly at the same moment, for both Lacan and us, the question again arises about the intertwining of the symbolic and imaginary; a question which Lacan neither ever claims to have solved, nor did he elaborate towards the paradox of the transcribed speech and, thus, of its own writing.

In the end we must ask ourselves to what this uncertain reflexivity, suspended between saying and not saying, corresponds, if we observe its game combined with the flow of the text. The listening to listening-which is the real point-can draw us into an oscillation which is an alternation between description and transcription: we should maintain this oscillating game if we are to draw closer to language, and then-whether Lacan realizes it or not-melding and changing its modes of description, this game would repeat itself, sometimes as a swing of tones within a single phrase. We could say that the text we have just read constitutes a “narrative”: indeed, an experience is told. But we would again be wrong to place here a philosophical stress on narrative writing. In fact, narration has importance in relationship to the theoretical question (what is the Being of language?) only if it enters into a play of collision and collusion, in a swing of modes, and only if it succeeds, while remaining necessarily provisional, in instituting intervals, pauses and gaps. In short, only if it is able to limit and interrupt the excess of thought, and thus, break the timing of logical conclusion. Or, less optimistically, to delay its effects to certain moments, as, for example, in this specific text.

The access to the symbolic as language is a listening; and language allows itself to be listened to, in its surprise, not simply through an ecstatic experience which might remain completely mute, but only through a paradoxical play between description and transcription, to whose secret, so to speak, Lacan dedicated all his written words.

Translated from the Italian by Claudia Vaughn

Notes:

- 1) Published in French as “Lacan et la science moderne” in Collège International de Philosophie, ed., Lacan et les philosophes (Paris: Albin Michel, 1991), pp. 333-351.
- 2) See François Regnault, Dieu est inconscient (Paris: Navarin, 1985).
- 3) Someone should explain what manipulations of this word have given it its insulting connotation. It carries this connotation no less than the words materialism, atheism, or irreligion (I cite them at random). It is a fact that Lacan refers Freud to scientism (see in particular “La science et la vérité,” *Ecrits* [Paris: Seuil, 1966], p.857-858), but even if he thereby wanted to differentiate himself from Freud, it is unlikely that he meant to belittle the person to whom he wanted to return.
- 4) The disjunction-conjunction of the scientific ideal and the ideal science is clearly conformable with the disjunction-conjunction of the Ego Ideal [Idéal du Moi] and the ideal Ego [Moi idéal], such as Lacan articulates it, starting from Daniel Lagache, in his “Remarque sur le rapport de Daniel Lagache, *Psychanalyse et structure de la personnalité*” (*Ecrits*, cit., p.647-684; see in particular p.671-683). From such a structural analogy one can easily elicit the mirages produced by the name of science; they exist and they must be dissipated, but science is not reducible to them.
- 5) One fact among others: Freud had signed in 1911 a manifesto calling for the creation of a society to develop and spread a positivist philosophy. Among the signers one finds Ernst Mach, David Hilbert, Felix Klein, and Albert Einstein. The indication is double: the fact that Freud gave his signature says something about his positions in a moment when he was publishing the third edition of the *Traumdeutung*, and was founding the International and the *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse*. Furthermore, and given the screening that usually accompanies this kind of operation, the fact that Freud’s name was accepted, if not solicited, permits to measure his social success amidst the German-speaking positivist circles. See on this point the important historical introduction by Antonia Soulez to the collection *Manifeste du cercle de Vienne et autres écrits* (Paris: PUF, 1985), p.32.
- 6) *Séminaire XI* (Paris: Seuil, 1973, p. 139); Engl. transl. by Alan Sheridan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (London: Hogarth Press & Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1977), p. 151.
- 7) See *Séminaire VII* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), p.147; Engl.transl. *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, transl. by Dennis Porter (London: Routledge 1992), p. 122: “...modern science, the kind that was born with Galileo, could only have developed out of biblical or Judaic ideology, and not out of ancient philosophy or the Aristotelian tradition.”
- 8) Aristotle defines “syllogism”-which is the general name for reasoning before becoming the technical name of a particular form of reasoning-as “a discourse where, once having posed certain things, a different thing... necessarily follows [ex anankes]”. It is Plato of the *Timaeus* who connects regulated thought to the motion of celestial bodies: “God invented and gave us sight to the end that we might behold the courses of intelligence in the heaven, and apply them to the courses of our own intelligence which are akin to them, the unperturbed to the perturbed, and that we, learning them and partaking of the natural truth of reason, might imitate the absolutely unerring courses of God and regulate our own vagaries.” (*Timaeus*, 47b-c) In these two cases both Plato and Aristotle are the founders of the ancient episteme. The necessity in the logoi, insofar as it is necessity, constitutes the point in science, where the resemblance between the necessary being of the entity and the necessary being of the knower is accomplished. Conversely, science is nothing if not the

accomplishment of this resemblance which, by way of the purified soul, unites man, endowed with a body, to the supreme Being which is incorporeal.

9) Clearly my own assertions come under the rubric of conversation rather than that of the *matheme*. The historical facts are more complex: we can cite Archimedes and Lucretius, who complicate the device, as well as the phenomenon, of Greek optics, as it has been reconstructed by Gérard Simon, *Le Regard, l'Être et l'Apparence* (Paris: Seuil, 1988). We can also cite, following Eugenio Garin, the example of learned astrology [*astrologie savante*] with its claim to grasp the accidents of a destiny in its most individual aspects by means of the configuration of eternal stars and the calculations of number. Whence the scandal that it provoked in certain ancient philosophers (well summed up in the discourse of Favorinus, reported by Aulus Gellus, *Ancient Nights*, XIV,1) and the insistence on its “foreign” (Chaldean) character. Still, this doctrine took root in the Greek-Latin configuration.

Garin goes as far as to claim that the combination of mathematics and the empirical, which characterizes modern science, was made possible by the return of learned astrology starting in the XII century and flourishing in the XV and XVI centuries. This process parallels that of magic which, conceived as action on the world regulated by knowable principles, gives the first elements of the modern relation that connects science, as theory of technology, to technology, as practice and application of science. See Eugenio Garin, *Moyen-Age et Renaissance* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p.121-150.

10) In this regard one can consult the works of Thomas Kuhn, and in particular his collection, *The Essential Tension* (Chicago & London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1977), which is more explicit about the confrontation with Popper than *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1970).

11) Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire VII* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), p. 147; Eng. tr., cit., p. 122.

12) One can find the articulation of the letter, of the possible universe and of the throw of the die in Saul A. Kripke. See in particular *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972). Clearly we will not take into account the horror that a comparison to Mallarmé or Lacan would inspire in Kripke, supposing that he knew of what we are speaking.

13) Put otherwise, the doctrine of the letter rests on a logic with two phases. The reader can verify that the formula of Lacan $S1(S1(S1(S1 \rightarrow S2)))$ -which one finds in *Séminaire XX. Encore* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p.130- is nothing but the literalization of this logic.

14) What sort of infinite is this? In the last instance, it is the “literalizable” infinite of the mathematicians, that is of Cantor. But he was a latecomer. At the origin of Galilean science, there exists the paradox that the moment this science declares itself mathematized and refers the universe to the infinite, there is no mathematics of the infinite. Against the background of such [*hystérésis*] is structured the oscillation between positive infinity and negative indefinite, of which Descartes is the first to sign.

15) Those who are familiar with Lacanian formulas will recognize here the formula of the feminine. They will easily draw from this the prediction that science has something to do with psychosis and its effects of “*pousse-à-la-femme*” [“pushing-towards-the-woman”]. They will be reminded of certain points of the positivist religion.

16) See *Télévision* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), p.16-17; Engl.transl. by Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, “Television”, in *October*, 40, Spring 1987, p.10.

17) To suppose further that these a priori properties can be partially grasped through the means of mathematized logic is what transforms the theory of the signifier into a logic of the signifier. *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* proposed (among other things) to constitute in a positive manner such a logic, different from the mathematized logic, but based on it.

18) St. Thomas Aquinas sums it up by saying: “*Omne ens est unum, verum, bonum*”. See on all the above Heinrich Scholz, “*Einführung in die kantische Philosophie*”, *Mathesis Universalis* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), p.172.

19) From this derives the importance that Lacan attributes to Freud’s proposition: “The dream-work does not think, or calculate [or] judge” (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, VI, S.E., 4, 1900 [*L'Interprétation des rêves*, VI, Paris: PUF, 1967, p. 432]). See *Télévision*, cit. (p.26; see also p.49), where the unconscious is defined as “a knowledge that does not think, or calculate, or judge” (Engl.transl., *Television*, cit., p. 18, see also p. 32). There is no contradiction between the proposition “the unconscious does not think” and the famous definition of the unconscious as a “*ça pense où je ne suis pas*”; one must understand that the thinking refused to the unconscious is the imaginized thinking [*pensée imaginarisée*] and that the thinking accorded to the

unconscious is thinking reduced to its minimal laws, that is, de-imaginized thinking.