

Gilles Deleuze

Seminar on Anti-Oedipus, 1980

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Part 1

[Trans. Duthey:] ... The fact that you are numerous, quite numerous, while the last time, it's curious, you weren't that numerous, and all this is...

So I'm reminding you it's our last session. For those who need to see me for matters relating to our work, I am leaving for ten days, but I'll be gone, and I'll come back here to see those who need to see me, starting from the... around the 20th of June. Well, there it is, so you understand, this is how it is.

The last time, we began with some sorts of very vague conclusions, since these were not only conclusions regarding this year but covering a kind of undertaking -- it's a good thing to end here, whereas we don't quite know where we will be next year -- well, some conclusions about, or some lines of research about the work we have been doing here for several years.

I've started on some things, on "what is it?", I've come back to things on: "what it is?", I've tried to define as a line of flight, what are lines of flight? How does one live on lines of flight? What does it mean exactly, and most of all, how might the line of flight or the lines of flight turn out and run a risk of their own? I was saying basically for those who weren't here, I was saying, well yes, the problem of an analysis, it may not be at all to do a psychoanalysis but to do, for example, one can conceive of something else, a geo-analysis.

And a geo-analysis is precisely, it comes from the following idea: it is that people, whether individuals or groups, they are made up of lines. It's an analysis of lineaments, to draw the lines of someone, literally, to create someone's map. So then, the very question "does that mean something or not?", obviously that loses all meaning. A line doesn't mean anything. Merely creating the map with the sorts of lines of someone or of some group, of an individual, namely, what are all these lines which merge together? In fact, it seems to me, we could conceive of people as hands. Each of us is like a hand or several hands. We've got lines, but these lines do not tell the future since they don't pre-exist, but fine, there are lines of all kinds of types, and among others, there are lines we can call lines of borders, of slopes or of flights. And in a certain way, to live is to live on, in any case also, it's to live on these lines of flight. So this is what I've tried to explain, but each type of line has its dangers.

This is why, this is why it's good, this is why it's very good, one can never say – this is where I can escape -- salvation or despair always comes from another line than the one we expected. One is always taken by surprise. I was saying that the line of flight's very own danger is that it brushes against some such strange things of which, in a certain way, are the ones we most have to be wary. It's the ones we are tracing that we have to mistrust most because that's where we brush against the bigger dangers. [Trans. Thomson/Maglioni:] Namely, lines of flight always harbour a potentiality, a kind of potency [*puissance*], a possibility that they will be transformed into lines of destruction, into lines of despair or destruction.

So, I tried explaining that the last time, for me at least, these are lines of life, that's what they are first and foremost. And it is on the peaks, these peaks of flight that life is made and is created. And this is also where the line of flight risks becoming a line of death, a line of destruction and so on.

And last time I was getting quite moralistic, but I don't see a problem with that since I was speaking of dignity, of what is shameful in the cult of death. What is this cult of death that can suddenly derail a line of flight, block or entrap it? Or else try to graphically imagine a line of flight that suddenly veers off and plunges into a sort of – there is no better word for it – into a sort of black hole. All of that can happen.

But today, given that I don't wish to repeat myself excessively, I would like to examine a perhaps related problem, but in a completely different context. This is a problem very close to my heart and I've been wanting to speak about it for a long time but the occasion has never arisen, so I'll take it up now as a... [*Deleuze does not complete this*] It's a question that interests me greatly, and I'd like it to seem to start easily, and for you to ask yourself: What relationship does this have with what you've just summarized? And perhaps this relationship will emerge little by little, so let's forget all that. And here, I'm going to make what would almost be a summary, though not on my own account. I would like it to be a bit like an exercise where I'm taking the risk in front of you of constructing a problem with the help of certain authors who will furnish me with materials that are closely related to it. There you have it. First point: once again I'll number them because... [*Someone interrupts Deleuze with some pamphlets or handouts placed on the table*] Oh my God, there we are, well, yes...

Yolande (*seated near Deleuze*): They distributed them, on the table, this morning...

Deleuze: There we are, there we are...

Another student: They're not from me!

Deleuze: There you go... this is what I call abjection... this is truly abjection. Just recall, even if you may forget everything else, please remember the words of Unamuno that I find so wonderful. When the Francoist generals arrived shouting: "Long live death!", Unamuno replied: "Never have I heard such a stupid and repulsive cry." So I don't know if whoever writes this type of stuff... [*Deleuze holds up a pamphlet that he has found on his desk to show the class*] ... if they think they're being funny or humorous...

Yolande: And furthermore, they use your work in that... it's disgusting...

Deleuze: ... for me this is disgusting, it's filthy. It's worse than immoral, it's filthy! It's pure shit!

Yolande: They make use of Nietzsche and him [Deleuze], it's really disgusting.

Deleuze: ... it's really shit, that's all there is... What can be done? [Laughter] It's a document... It's disgusting.

Yolande: No, really, they're making use of him [Deleuze] and other... Take a look...

Deleuze: It's nuts, really, it's nuts...

Yolande: It's really disgusting that they're using them...

Deleuze: Ah, really? I hope they're not making use of my work...

Yolande: they are, in fact! They quote *Rhizome*, they quote Nietzsche... Nietzsche... It's really a very strange text...¹

Deleuze: Okay, let's speak about something in the same genre but more uplifting. There's an author that many of you know well who wrote a short text that for me summarizes the core of his thinking, and that I find extremely touching even before I understand why. I'm speaking about Maurice Blanchot.

In one of his books, *The Work of Fire*, he writes this.² It's text on Kafka; here is what he writes about Kafka. Listen attentively because this is where I want to start: "So, it is not enough for me to write "I" am unhappy"; "It's not enough for me to write "I" am unhappy", "as long as I write nothing else, I am too close to myself, too close to my unhappiness, for this unhappiness to become really mine...." [p. 21, translation]

I'd like for you just to let it flow through you, not looking for anything in particular here, just staying with the tonality of the writing. It's interesting... "As long as I say "I" am unhappy... I am too close to myself, too close to my unhappiness..." And now we expect him to say something like "for this unhappiness to become exterior." Instead, he says the opposite: "As long as I say "I," I am too close to myself, too close to my unhappiness for this unhappiness to become really mine" [p. 21]. A great sentence, "becomes really mine".

And he adds: "...in the form of language: I am not yet truly unhappy." [Pause] "It is only from the moment I arrive at this strange substitution, 'He [II] is unhappy' that language begins to be formed into a language that is unhappy for me, to sketch out and slowly project the world of unhappiness as it occurs in him" [pp. 21-22]. Only when I say: "He is unhappy" does this unhappiness become "really mine in the form of language", that is, it begins to constitute the world to which this unhappiness belongs. So, "it is only from the moment I arrive at this strange substitution, 'He is unhappy' that language begins to be formed into a language that is unhappy

for me, to sketch out and slowly project the world of unhappiness as it occurs in him. So, perhaps..." – in this expression that we haven't yet understood, "*He* is unhappy." We accept it as it is, placing our trust in Blanchot. "So, perhaps..." -- when I say "*I* am unhappy" – "I will feel myself implicated..."

You see, he is not at all saying that one shouldn't say "I" and concentrate on others; he is saying that it's only when I say "he is unhappy" that the unhappiness indeed becomes in a certain sense "mine." "So, perhaps I will feel myself implicated, and my unhappiness will be felt by this world from which it is absent..." This isn't as good, so I'm going to cut a bit, ok? "So perhaps I will feel myself implicated..." [p. 22] Fine... fine, fine, fine.

And in what sense does this concern Kafka? Well, Blanchot says that Kafka's stories are precisely like this. "He expresses himself in them by this immeasurable distance..." -- the distance between 'I' [*je*] and 'he' [*il*] -- "he expresses himself in them by this immeasurable distance, by the impossibility of recognizing himself in them." In other words, he has reached the point at which he is deprived of -- as Blanchot will say in another text, using another wonderful expression -- deprived of the power to say 'I...': "I reach the point at which I am deprived of the power to say 'I'".³ So, we have already made some progress. This would be the "he"; the "he" [*il*] is the point at which I am deprived of the power to say "I" [*je*].

So, what is this privation? You should immediately understand how this directly connects to my topic of the previous session. There is this theme that connects directly. If I define 'he' as the point at which I am deprived of the power to say "I", this is precisely the line of flight. In other words, the 'he' is the expression, or rather the "expressor", of the line of flight.

Fine, but how and in what conditions do I arrive at the point at which I am deprived of the power to say 'I'? And this point will allow us to regroup a number of notions, since we're attempting to construct our problem. We are gathering things together. What does this reveal? What defines this point? It is certainly not the fact of whether I say 'I' or not. I can always go on saying 'I.' That is of no importance. It is silly to think that things always pass explicitly through language. One of my favorite phrases by Beckett is when one character says more or less: "I will say it if they insist..." If "they" insist, I can perfectly well say it, just like everyone else. Just that I won't put anything into it. It's not a question of whether one says 'I' or not. In a certain sense, we are all like... like Galileo. We all say the sun comes up knowing perfectly well that it's not the sun that comes up but the Earth that turns. So, fine, we have to be able to say 'I' in the same way. We know that the 'I' is empty, but we say it nonetheless because it's a useful marker, it's an index, a linguistic index. Fine.

Concerning the "genius of nations", another problem that we occasionally touch upon, and that I never manage to address, how is it possible that certain thinkers... that there is a certain geography of thought? Such that we tend not to confuse either in philosophy or in other fields, say, English, German and French philosophy. Actually, I find these rough categories to be relatively well-founded. And it's not just a question language. There are indeed concepts that have a German signature, some good ones, perhaps even the greatest... just as there are concepts that have a French signature -- alas, very few, but we are not to blame for that --, there are also concepts with an English signature. It's strange.

As for me, to my knowledge, I've never seen an English person take seriously the 'I', the question of the 'I', at any level. It's odd... All the great texts of English philosophy, and there are some wonderful examples, focus on the following idea, which is why there is a kind of frontier of unintelligibility, of non-communication, between a Cartesian and an English philosopher.

A Cartesian is a little French flower. They only bloom in France, Cartesians... And we have quite a number of them. Generally speaking, as you all know, Descartes is a philosophy founded on the "I" [*moi*] and on the formula that perhaps we will discuss later, if there's time, that magical formula, "I think", "I think therefore I am", fine. Why does an Englishman... The Germans took up the "I think therefore I am", because they elevated the 'I' to an even higher power, transforming it into what they themselves called "the transcendental ego", the transcendental 'I'. Good. That really is a German concept, the transcendental ego.

The English, they're quite fine you know... In their open discussions on the matter, they say things that are much better, and much funnier. This amuses them greatly. Each time French or German philosophers speak of the 'me', of the subject, the English find it quite bizarre and amusing. They find it a really odd way of thinking. Their thinking always turns around a very interesting idea. If you ask them what the 'self' is, they'll pass their time saying, why yes, that means something: it's a "habit". Literally, one expects this to continue... I [*The Englishman*] am saying 'me' [*moi*] on account of certain phenomena, of a belief that these will continue. No more than that. There's a heartbeat, there's a someone who expects it to continue and who says, 'me'. It's a habit. It's wonderful this theory of the 'me' [*moi*], the self, as a habit if we attach it to a sort of lived experience. Why don't they live like us? We should make a civilizational survey. Why, in any case, do their thinkers not live the concept of the 'me' [*moi*], the self? Fine, you see I'm focusing on... [*Deleuze does not finish*]

I'll come back to Blanchot. If I try to summarize his thesis, it seems to me a very, very curious one. And it's interesting trying to sum it up, perhaps because up to now, it hasn't really been drawn out. We always say this to give us an incentive to continue our work. Perhaps it hasn't been well drawn out, since if it had been, we would find ourselves confronted with a problem, namely that Blanchot throws a sort of dynamic into the midst of all kinds of questions but without saying as much, or perhaps without even being aware of it to that point.

What do I mean by this? If I want to summarize Blanchot's thesis, it seems to me that what he is saying is that there is... or we *can*, from a certain point of view and in certain conditions – I insist on a "certain point of view" and on "certain conditions" -- bring out a kind of *tension* in language. And on the basis of this tension in language, or in any case, by virtue of this virtual tension, it doesn't pre-exist. One has to trace it oneself; the whole of language can be organized. And this would be a style, The whole of language can be organized in function of a tension, a certain well-determined tension, a tension that would enable us to pass from the personal pronoun [*Pause*] 'I-you' [*Pause*] to the third person 'he', with the 'he' surpassing the 'I-you'.

But the tension doesn't stop here. And in the same movement, that would enable us to pass from the 'he' of the third person (the third person pronoun or so-called 'personal' pronoun of the third person), to pass from the 'he' of the third person pronoun to another 'he' that is much more mysterious and secret. Why? Because this other 'he' no longer even designates a third person.

[Trans. Duthey:] So consider that the tension that would be put in the language would have two main moments: to surpass the personal pronouns of the first and the second person toward the 'he' of the third person, and at the same time, to surpass the 'he' of the third person toward an unusual form, namely toward a 'he' which is no longer any person. Here the problem starts to come into existence: what would this 'he' be? What would this 'he' be which is no more of the third person? It would be the 'he' of Kafka, the 'he' that Blanchot has tried to rediscover. Well, for the time being, we're not going too fast, so let's stay here.

So I could say this is a real tensor, this dual surpassing; this is what I called in another seminar, "a tensor of the language", that is, we would stretch the whole language and the narrative in the language is able to, toward, we would stretch it in accordance and depending on this movement of the first and second person to the 'he' [il] of the third person, and at the same time from the 'he' of the third person to the 'he' which is of no person at all.

Well, provided that what is added? That at the level of this 'he', we still have to define what is this 'he' of the third [person] which is no longer of any person at all? I am saying that, far from this being a 'he' that's anonymous, it would on the contrary a 'he' of the purest singularity. It would be a 'he' of pure singularity, that is, of singularity detached from any person. In another words, it would be at this level of the 'he', which designates no person any longer, that the singularity would be marked, that the proper name would be marked... Hey! I am saying the proper name. How come?

So here, I can sum up, even before my problem is elaborated. I can try to give you a clue by means of a sort of shortcut. I am only asking, try to conceive a position, the following position. Someone tells me: regarding the problem of the proper names, it is obvious that the proper name derives from the first and the second persons. It means, it may mean something. It means the first acceptance of the proper name would consist in this, that the proper name applies to someone who says 'I', or to someone to whom I say 'you' [tu]. That there are derived proper names subsequently, for example : proper names of countries, proper names of animal species -- as when the naturalists write in block letters to designate animal species -- that there are proper names of species, or proper names of cities, locations, etc., all that would derive from the first acceptance of the proper name, an acceptance which refers to 'I' and 'you' [tu]. This thesis concerning the proper names is truly simple. It consists in deriving the proper names from the forms 'I' and 'you' [tu]. You understand? It's a possible thesis, it's a possible thesis. Based on this, I can even invent it by myself and wonder afterwards if there are some authors who have supported it. In this case, I'm not thinking of someone in particular, but there are many, sometimes it is even implicit for them.

On the other hand, I am thinking -- this is almost an example; that, with this, it's in this way that I would like you to work, and not at all that ... -- I am thinking that I am an example. I am saying that only for the ones for whom this method is suitable. Suddenly, as soon as I've said that, a vague recollection occurs to me. So then, what I've just said isn't at all erudite. There are people who derive the proper names from 'I' and 'you' [tu]. But, once I've said that, which implies no special knowledge, there is a memory coming to me, which does come from a kind of knowledge, at random, as we all have.

[Trans. Thomson/Maglioni:] Suddenly I tell myself, there's a curious text by an author who isn't much read these days, which is one more reason to point it out to you since he's a very interesting writer with a very particular story. He was a psychiatrist, the son of an execrable historian of 19th century philosophy. He died not long ago, either during the war or just after the war. His name was Pierre Janet, Pierre Janet. At one point, he was really well known. He was a contemporary of... His works followed a parallel path to those of Freud. Neither of them ever... it's strange; people tried to put them in contact, but nothing ever came of it. Their starting point was the same: hysteria. Janet developed a very significant concept of hysteria.

[Trans. Duthey:] And he created a quite curious psychology which he proposed to name "Psychology of Conduct," even before Americans proposed the "Behavior Psychology". And it seems to me a very interesting psychology. Roughly the method was: based on a given psychological determination, look for the type of conduct it represents. And it was very fruitful, because it gave things like this... I won't proceed very further to make you want to find Janet's stuff for yourself.

[Trans. Thompson/Maglioni:] It was really interesting, because he said that memory – psychology of conduct was almost a quite valid educational method at one time – he said, memory, ok, that doesn't interest me. For me, it's completely meaningless. I wonder what kind of conduct one can assume only through memory. And his answer was: narrative [*récits*]. From which he derives his celebrated postulate: "Memory is the action of telling a story."

[Trans. Duthey:] Emotion, he said, emotion, one can't feel if one can't focus. You see, he used conduct as a system of coordinates for all things. Everything was conduct. Therefore it was very different from the American notion of behavior. But there was confrontation. Emotion, he said, if one doesn't say to what kind, to what kind of conduct it refers, and he said... So I'm interrupting Janet because myself, I've got a childhood memory which has forever branded me. We all have childhood memories like this.

It was during the holidays when my father used to give me Mathematics lessons. I was panic-stricken, and it was all settled. That is, up to a point, I suspect we both approached it while already resigned. Since we knew what was going to happen. In any case, I knew, I knew what was going to happen beforehand, because it was all settled, regular as clockwork. My father, for that matter, knew little about Mathematics but he thought he had, above all, a natural gift for enunciating clearly. So he started, he held the pedagogical conduct, the pedagogical conduct. I was doing it willingly because this was not a joking matter; I held the conduct of the instructed, the conduct of the instructed. I displayed every sign of interest, [*Laughter*] of maximal understanding, but all very soberly because there was no joking....

[Trans. Thompson/Maglioni:] And very quickly, something went off the rails that consisted in the fact that after five minutes, my father began to scream, he was ready to beat me, and I burst into tears. I was just a small boy, [*Laughter*] I burst into tears. What was going on? It's clear. There were two emotions in play: my profound chagrin and his profound rage. To what did these emotions correspond? To two defeats. He had failed in his conduct as a pedagogue. He couldn't explain. He wanted to explain something to me through algebra because, he said, it was simpler and clearer that way. And if I protested, and this is how it went off the rails, I protested, saying

my teacher would let me do algebra because a child of six has not right to have to solve an algebra problem; he's not supposed to do algebra. But he insisted that this was the only way he could make it clear. So, we both unravelled, defeat in pedagogical conduct: rage; defeat in the conduct of the instructed: tears. Very well, it's a failure, a total failure.

Janet said: emotion is simply a failure in conduct. You become emotional when you fail in the conduct you're trying to maintain, that's when emotion arises. One of Janet's best books, he wrote a lot, much of it bad, but one the finest books, a quite unusual book, in my view, is a massive tome called *From Anxiety to Ecstasy* that gathers together the seminars he gave. It's a lovely title, if you see this book, if you have time, one day in a library, thumb through *From Anxiety to Ecstasy* which still seems to be a very beautiful bool.

I recall that it's precisely in *From Anxiety to Ecstasy* that he makes a very odd observation. Janet says: "You know what the first person is?" I'm telling you this because he wanted to demonstrate that the first person was a type of conduct. A certain type of conduct. And this is the example he gives. If there wasn't a first person, if we weren't able to say 'I', what would we have to say?

[Trans. Duthey:] For example, an example from Janet, you are a soldier, and you ask your officer for a leave. Janet thinks hard and says, -- I'm not sure he is right for that matter, one would have to ponder, but it's quite good what he says, so let's pretend he is actually right -- he says, "if there was no first person, the soldier would be compelled to say: 'Soldier Durant asks for a leave for soldier Durant'. That is, he would be forced to redouble the proper name. This is very, very smart, I don't know if you can feel it, this is very, very, very shrewd, very... it's a beautiful idea. One tells oneself, even if one doesn't quite understand what he is saying, this is a good idea; one tells oneself, "there is something in there".

If I ask for a leave for my friend, I say: "Soldier Durant asks for a leave for soldier Dupont"; the officer answers: "Is it any business of yours?". If I ask for a leave for myself, and if I have no sign 'I'... [*Interruption of the recording*] [31:06]

[...] or the personal pronoun since it can extend to 'you' [*tu*], the same reasoning, the personal pronoun, it's economy -- it would be a fine definition -- it's the economy of the reduplication of the proper name. This is good. The soldier Durant can say indeed "I ask for a leave", allowing him to avoid saying: 'Soldier Durant asks for a leave for soldier Durant'.

Why do I tell you this? Because, I hope you are attuned to it, it is simply the contrary of the thesis I just alluded to.

[Trans. Thompson/Magioni:] The thesis that I just alluded to was one that seemed quite simple: the proper name derives from the first and second-person pronoun. -- Things get so complicated when one tries to construct a problem. So, let's try to imagine the possibility of a reverse procedure, the possibility that in the end we could say the opposite. -- This is the possibility that it's the first and second-person pronoun that derive from the proper name. So, you understand the situation we're now thrown into? Because if it's true that, according to Janet's hypothesis, the first and second-person pronoun derive from the proper name, what does the proper name designate? What does the proper name refer to?

So, at this level we find ourselves with the same problem. That is what I wanted to say. [Pause] Before starting my regrouping, which will give us a full picture of the problem we're looking for, I want to mention another case which has a certain importance in linguistics. I'll try to define in my own words what could be called a 'personalism' or a 'personology' in linguistics. I would say there is one great modern, contemporary linguist who developed an actual personology in linguistics: [Émile] Benveniste, it's Benveniste. And in fact, Benveniste places particular importance on the personal pronoun in language, to the point that he affirms it to be a common feature of all languages. He places particular importance on the first and second-person pronouns. So, Benveniste proposes – and here I don't think I'm twisting his thought, except in certain conditions that I will define later -- a path of derivation that would be the following: In the first place, 'I-you [tu]', first- and second-person pronouns; second, 'he' – no, that's not it either, no I'm wrong... Strike that --⁴

He proposes, first of all, an extraction, to extract from the 'I' and from the 'you' [tu] – the first and second-person pronouns – an irreducible form, a linguistic form that would be irreducible to any other. Second, from this irreducible form would unfold the 'I' and 'you' [tu], the first and second-person pronouns of current usage. Third, from this would unfold the third person pronoun, the 'he.'

Why do I propose this overly abstract schema? To show you that we are in fact confronted with two schemas. I am proposing Blanchot's and Benveniste's, which are diametrically opposed. They are diametrically opposed in the following sense: Blanchot begins from 'I-you' [tu] which he surpasses through 'he' and then surpasses the 'he' by means of another 'he/it' [il] that would be irreducible. Benveniste begins from the personal pronoun in general from which he detaches 'I-you' [tu] and then detaches from the 'I' an irreducible form.

In other words, in one case, that of Blanchot, you have what I would call "language", a treatment of language which submits it to a tension, I would almost say - employing a term from physics – *surface tension*, a surface tension that drags language towards its periphery and that tends towards this mysterious 'he'/'it' that no longer designates any person, a surface, peripheral tension that drags the whole of language towards this 'he'/'it' that no longer designates any person.

In Benveniste's work, you have the exact opposite: there's a centering, a profound concentration that drags the whole of language towards the personal pronouns and the extraction of an 'I' even more profound than the personal pronouns themselves. Here we have a kind of inner concentration, an interior centering.

Georges Comtesse: This is even the same difference that arises between a linguistics of languages [*langue*] and a what is called a linguistics of speech [*parole*].

Deleuze: Yes, that's it. Entirely correct. Because it forces us to put in question the distinction between *langue* and *parole*. And this is why Benveniste needs what he refers to as *discourse*. For Benveniste, discourse is a category that goes beyond the Saussurean *langue-parole* duality.

So, it's from this point that I would like to start, as though I were beginning from zero, so you can understand what's at stake, because our problem will be precisely this. We're not choosing, in this, we aren't choosing; we're trying to find our way between these two possible movements. We have identified two virtual movements, which don't exist readymade. It would truly be like two different uses of language. On the one hand, a usage that concentrates, that tends towards a deepening of the personal pronoun. And on the other, a language that is always exterior to itself, that moves beyond personal pronouns towards an impersonal usage, towards a 'he'/'it' that no longer pertains to any person.

So, it's not a question of saying that one is right and the other wrong, that's not useful at all, but to see first of all, what these notions have to tell us and to look in them for something that is of use to us. But of use to us in what sense? That depends a lot on what each of us means in using the word 'I', 'I-me'.

So, I pretend to begin again from zero. And I ask myself, what does 'I' mean, linguistically speaking? What is this 'I'? Generally speaking, you know linguists have always said, and have fully demonstrated, that the 'I' is a very bizarre, a very particular linguistic sign. What's more, several other linguistic signs also fit this case, though perhaps there is one that is more profound than the others. Among these, they cite as special cases the first- and second-person pronoun, *I* and *you* [*tu*]; they also cite the proper name and also temporal and spatial markers such as *here* and *now*. Maybe also *this* and *that*, and finally they cite *proper names*. All this forms quite a mixed category: first- and second-person pronouns, proper names, adverbs like 'here' and 'now', demonstrative pronouns like 'this' and 'that'. Fine.

What do all these things have in common? Once again, we have to try to analyze the sign, *I*. As you know, linguists have invented an interesting category to describe all these cases, whose English term is *shifter*, which [Roman] Jakobson translates into French by the word *embrayeur*. He says that these are very particular linguistic categories because they are shifters. What is a shifter? [*Pause*] One can try to explain it by referring it to *I* or *here*, *now*.

Well, when I say *I*, what does a linguistic sign generally contain? It has a double rapport: on one hand with something, or a state of things, that it designates, which we call the rapport of designation. And on the other hand, it has a rapport with a signified, known as the rapport of signification. [*Pause*] If I say *man*, the situation is simple, it's not a shifter. If I say *man*, I can assign the rapport of designation, saying that *man* designates this or that other man and so on. And I can equally well assign the rapport of signification. *Rational animal*, I could say. *Man* means a *rational animal*. I will say that *rational animal* is the signified of *man*.

Good. You see that a linguistic sign always seems to bear a designation and a signified. In different rapports, it depends... the concrete name, the abstract name, perhaps these don't have... perhaps the abstract name has above all a signified. For example, *Justice*. Whereas a concrete name, for example *dog*, has perhaps above all a designation. Even if it can vary, names seem to have this double reference. When I say *I*, what is unsettling in this? What is its designation? There isn't one. You understand, there's none. There seems to be one, we might say, it's me. But what is *me*? There's no designation when I say *I*. I can't designate me by myself. Why? Because in principle, in the rapport of designation, there is no self-designation. The *I* is already a bizarre

enough sign... That's what Benveniste postulates when he says that it is self-referential, which is to say that it refers to itself and not to a state of things. In other words, whereas other signs seem to have a designation which is defined through its existence independent of the sign, the *I* is not attached to a designated object that has an existence independent of the sign.

Moreover, can we say that the *I* has a signified? The answer is no. Literally the *I* doesn't signify anything. In what sense does it not signify anything? I have already said this in relation to other matters. [Bertrand] Russell has a nice formula; he says: When I say the word *dog*, I use a current linguistic sign. The word *dog* signifies something that I can designate in secondary terms under the name "dogness" or "caninity." What is there in common between all those who say *I*? We can say that the *I* is strangely not at all a collective concept. It is a solely distributive concept. And notice that the same thing applies to *here* and *now*. But here things become more complicated.

What are these kinds of concepts that are exclusively distributive? In other words, the *I* refers to the person who says it. It's quite a bizarre state for a linguistic sign. A sign that designates only who pronounces it and which has no collective signification, but only distributive signification insofar as it is effectuated by the one who speaks, the one saying it. It is 'I' for the one who says 'I.' One can trace the same passage for what an *I* designates as *here*. Here is a purely distributive concept. If I say *here*, also my neighbour can say *here*. But between these two *heres* there is nothing strictly in common. This is strange. I can also say – but the difference is quite significant – that they are concepts that perhaps have a signification, but one which is fundamentally implicit; it's an enveloped signification. Which is to say that the signification is given in the signifier itself. This is a very rare occurrence.

This is where I want to refer to Descartes to pay homage to one of his finest texts, because this is one of the most beautiful texts that I know by Descartes. It's in the *Replies*. You know that Descartes writes a famous book called *The Meditations* to which a number of his contemporaries pose objections in a book called *Objections*, to which Descartes answers in another text called *Objections and Replies to the Objections*.

Now in *Replies to the Objections* he responds to an objection that has been made to his *cogito* in which Descartes pronounced his famous formula *I think therefore I am*. Many people had objected to it, saying they didn't know what he meant by this "I think therefore I am." And Descartes replies with great brio – I believe, in the way a logician or a linguist might speak today -- He has an intuition thanks to someone who has had made objections, and he in fact invokes language. In the 17th century they already had linguists. So, at a certain point, Descartes answers, taking up the problem of language. And he says: When I say "I think therefore I am" you shouldn't be surprised. "However bizarre it might seem to you, I am giving a definition of man."

I find this very interesting. It seems highly mysterious. Descartes pronounces his formula "I think therefore I am" and says to an objector, "You don't understand, it's not just any old formula. It's a veritable definition of man." But why should "I think therefore I am" be a definition of man? And here Descartes becomes quite brilliant, very crafty. He says: you are accustomed to an Aristotelian manner of definition. You are accustomed to saying that man is a

rational animal. Thus, you proceed by way of traditional concepts. You define a thing through its realm and its specific difference. The realm of man is the animal realm, and his specific difference is rationality.

For Descartes, such a mode of definition might be termed one that proceeds by way of *explicit signification*. Why *explicit signification*? Because when I say that man is a rational animal... Let's say I teach, I am teaching. I have a class and I say "Man is a rational animal. Repeat!" And the students say: "Alright, so man means rational animal."

[Trans. Duthey:] But one has to know what 'animal' means and what 'reasonable' means. Fine, so one goes up from the definition of the genus to the definition of the difference. Very well. You can see that it is the explicit meaning. The explicit meaning is a signifier from which the signified can and must be made explicit.

Descartes says, "What you don't understand about my thought, when I say 'I think therefore I am', it's a mode of definition which proceeds in an entirely different way." For he asserts, and he will assert it in all his works, that to understand the phrase -- it's really sharp linguistically -- to understand the phrase, presumably you have to know the language. But you don't need to know what 'to think' and 'to be' mean. The meaning is enfolded in the phrase, and I can't say 'I think therefore I am' without understanding, unless I only repeat it like a parrot... But if I think by saying 'I think therefore I am', I hereby understand by the phrase, by the signs themselves, what 'to think' and 'to be' mean.

In other words, 'I think therefore I am', contrary to 'man is a reasonable animal', is a phrase with an enfolded meaning, and not with an explicit meaning. You can see, little by little we are getting closer. And the enfolded meaning isn't a meaning which could be developed. It is a meaning which has not to be developed, which cannot be developed because its mode of being is the enfolding.

So we may not be convinced, but we just remember that. I am saying we're going a little further in the analysis of what the linguists call 'shifters'. So, I would say that they are very paradoxical signs, since they are 'sui-referential', since they apply to whoever may utter them, or depend on who uses them. They are strictly distributive or with an enfolded meaning, it's the same thing.

[Trans. Thomson/Maglioni:] As Russell said, going back to his phrase, the word 'dog' refers to a concept common to all of the beings the word designates. In other words, this concept is "dogness" or "caninity". The *I* doesn't refer to such a concept. Or, as he adds, the proper name doesn't refer to a common concept.

[Trans. Duthey:] Several dogs, as they are named 'dogs', have a common concept. On the other hand, if several dogs can be named 'Rover', there is no such thing as a common concept we could call the 'Rover-ity'. Here we cannot say it better, this is the status of the 'distributive concept'. It amounts to say that 'Rover' as a proper noun is solely a distributive concept.

If I go on with my echoes, echoes coming from classical texts, I tell myself, let's make a detour then, even if we mix all up for this final meeting, let's pass by Hegel. Since he is an author that I

seldom talk about, make the most of it. Besides, I'm not going exploring; I'll stick to the very beginning of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

[Trans. Thomson/Maglioni:] At the very beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, it's clear to every reader that Hegel is performing a sleight of hand, a piece of verbal acrobatics that he impudently calls *dialectics*. What does he say to show us that things are caught up in a movement, a continuous movement proper to dialectics, and that they are subject to a kind of movement of self-sublation? What does he do? Has anyone ever been so cunning? He tells us this: let's begin with what is most certain. At this point we have to imagine a dialogue of the dead in which Hegel is explaining this to the English philosophers. You can guess the exact moment when the English philosophers will begin to laugh. [Laughter] Hegel says, with his usual gravity – I take back everything I've said about Hegel because it's clear he's a great genius. But anyway... [Laughter] --

But after all... anyway, anyway, try to follow me closely. He tells us a story which is rather fine and quite convincing. He tells us there is sense-certainty, entangled consciousness. It's the starting point of *Phenomenology of Spirit*: consciousness mired in sense-certainty. And consciousness says that the sensible has the last word on things. Here the English philosophers might say: "This German gentleman is already betraying us." But they might also say: "Yes, perhaps we too could say that. We've already said that sense-certainty is foremost". In fact, it's a thematics that runs through what is called empiricism. And, as we all know, empiricism is an English invention.

So here we have consciousness caught up in sense-certainty. It matches particularity, singularity. And our splendid Hegel analyses singularity and demonstrates that it is an untenable position because we cannot take a step without overcoming the stage of sense-certainty. And in order to show this, he says that sensible consciousness is as though torn, a tear that will become the first stage in the dialectic of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It is torn because, while it presumes to seize the most particular, it in fact seizes only the abstract universal. Why does it presume to seize 'the most particular'? It presumes to aim for what is most particular in the sensible and expresses this in saying 'this' [*ceci*], 'here' and 'now'.

But as Hegel, who at this point becomes almost cheerful -- which is quite unusual for him -- says, "here" and "now" is the empty universal because it pertains to every moment of space -- no, what am I saying? No -- to every point in space of which I can say 'here' and every moment in time of which I can say 'now.' In the very moment I believe I have seized what is most singular, in fact I seize only abstract and empty generality. So, you see how, caught in this contradiction, sensible consciousness is ejected from the sensible and must move on to another stage of the dialectic.

But before this happens, the English philosophers I mentioned before will have a laugh. Why are they cracking up? Because it seems that poor Hegel has lost his head. The dialectic has to work. Hegel strikes a formidable blow because he acts as though the concepts of *this*, *that*, *here*, and *now* were common concepts, which is to say, common concepts that refer to states of things and which have an explicit signification. He treats the concepts of *here* and *now* exactly as he would the concept *dog*.

As a result, a supporter of sense-certainty -- if he had no other reason for reading the *Phenomenology* -- would have no qualms about closing the book, because there would, as Hegel says, be no reason to go any further. Hegel thinks that sense-certainty sublates itself because he's performing a sleight of hand. Namely, instead of realizing that *here*, *now*, the proper name, etc. are literally shifters, he translates them as common concepts at which point, he falls into contradiction, a contradiction between the function of *here* and *now* which refer to what is most singular and the form of *here* and *now* translated into the pure universal.

But you see that that isn't the case. We should make a special category, in saying that it's not true that *here*, *now*, proper names and the *I* are not real concepts, but that they are instead very special concepts: distributive concepts. And that distributive concepts cannot be aligned with common concepts,

[Trans. Duthey:] These are concepts of a particular type. So, there are of a particular type. I've just tried, by taking the notion of 'embrayeur' or shifter, I would just like it to be relatively clear, it's very curious indeed. When I say 'I', well then, it only refers to the one who utters it, to me only ; the others also say 'I' and there is no more community from the point of view of concept. And, well, you understand...

Is that true for all forms of 'I'? You are going to see why I say that, we've almost reach the goal, at the end of what was the most difficult in what I had to say. Is that true? Is that true for all forms of 'I'; needn't it be detailed? It needs to be detailed for sure, because it's only true up to a certain stage. If I say 'I am strolling', it's not an 'I', but at the same time, [Trans.

Thomson/Maglioni:] Isn't there a great difference between the use of *I* in certain cases and other uses of *I*? Or *I* in certain formulae and *I* in other formulae. [Pause] When I say 'I walk' -- here I'm deliberately taking two very distant examples. I'm still trying to construct my problem. I'll take two extreme examples, but we will perhaps see that everything in the middle creates problems. If I say 'I walk' I clearly understand that this is a phrase... [Interruption of the taped recording] [1:02:17] which employs a shifter: 'I.' But is this so fundamentally different from 'he walks'? Meaning: is the use of *I* in 'I walk' not already a use I would define as derived?⁵

Part 2

Which is to say an *I* that stands for a *he*. An *I* aligned on the *he*. Why? Because I can very well say 'I walk' while not walking. Ah, I've just said... Hey, the proof is that I've just said, 'I walk' and I haven't moved. I'm not walking. Therefore, I can say 'I walk' without walking. Which equates to saying that the *I* in this case has a rapport of designation with a state of things exterior to it. And which therefore may or may not be effectuated. At this point I will say that this is a use of the term *I*, which is a term, okay... a special sign but which can have a common use. When I say, 'I walk,' I don't use the *I* in a sense proper to the *I*. I use it in a common sense, thus one which is valid for a *virtual he*. I say, 'I walk' exactly as another person would say of me 'he walks' or 'he doesn't walk.' There is an alignment of the *I* upon the *he*.

Perhaps at this point you will understand what Benveniste has in mind when he says that it is not enough to draw out the formal specificity of the *I* and *you* with respect to the *he*. Something more must be done. That is to say, we have to draw out the form of this special *I*... We have to

extract from the *I* an *I* that is even more special, more profound, and this will be at the centre of langue-parole, meaning at the centre of discourse. And what will this be? It suffices to take the opposite case to the formula ‘I walk’. When I say ‘I walk’, I use *I* in terms of a current common usage. That is to say, I use it as a *he*, or as a common concept.

Let’s look for a case that is not like this. As I just said, if I say, ‘I walk’, I make a common use of *I* because I can say it without walking. Therefore, ‘I walk’ is a formula that refers to a state of things that is exterior and can be effectuated or not. Whereas – and here I jump to the other extreme – when I say ‘I promise’ ... I say, ‘I promise’. It’s a curious phrase. It’s completely different from the point of view of a good linguistic analysis. And Benveniste was not the only one to make such an analysis. English linguists too still take pride in having done so.

So, when I say ‘I promise’ ... Okay, I promise... But that can also be a false promise. And yet a false promise is not a promise that is false. So, what does it mean to say a false promise isn’t a promise that is false? It means that when I promise, when I say, ‘I promise’, whether I wish to or not, whether or not I intend to keep the promise, I *do* something in saying it, which is to say I actually promise. It’s enveloped in the formula.

I would say that such a formula doesn’t designate anything that is exterior to it, or at the same time, I would say that it’s meaning is enveloped within. [*The Burkhalter video edits the following sentences up to the marker * below*] This difference, I would like for you to grant me this difference, the fundamental difference between the two formulas: the ‘I’ of ‘I am taking a walk’ and the ‘I’ of ‘I promise’. In saying ‘I promise’, I’m promising. In saying ‘I’m taking a walk’, I’m not taking a walk just for that. And if we consider why there are these two different cases, linguistic analysis provides a perfect response. As an English linguist [*J.L. Austin*] has said, “I do something by saying this”. There are things that I do by making the statement. By saying “I promise”, I am promising; by saying “I close the window”, I’m not closing the window.

In other words, in this sense, we’ll say that there are “speech acts,” that [*] there are certain acts typical of language from which we derive the very interesting concept developed by the English: the *speech act*, the act of language. These are language acts that we have to distinguish from actual actions, meaning actions exterior to language. The phrase ‘I close the window’ refers to an action that is exterior to language, whereas ‘I promise’ doesn’t refer to an external action. When I say, ‘I declare this session open’, the session is effectively open. And yet it’s not completely certain. Well, let’s suppose it is... At first glance, this could be the case. When I say, ‘I declare this session open’, the session is open. In other words, I do something by saying it. I open the session. There is no way to open the session other than by saying ‘the session is open’. It’s a speech act. You understand... Good.

So, I have my two extreme cases: ‘I take a walk’ and ‘I promise’. Or if I say ‘I greet you’... Actually, you’ll tell me that there are equivalents. Yes indeed. Instead of saying “the session is open”, I could strike a hammer three times. But these three strikes would not constitute a speech act. We will call *speech act* any formula in which something is done in its being said. So ‘I promise’ isn’t the same as ‘I walk’...

So, is this clear, the difference between these two opposite cases? Let's look at some other examples. When I say 'I suppose...' what does this refer to? To which case? Or I say 'I think...' What case does that refer to? One senses that this is going to be complicated. If I say, 'I reason', which case does that refer to? Now things become interesting because if we mix all this up, I can see that Descartes was indubitably right. It wasn't out of caprice that he opposed the objections. He is someone who thinks that the formula 'I think' was of the second type. I can't say this without doing something by saying it, namely: without think. Why? Well, that's his business... Among his implicit presuppositions is the idea that man always thinks. So, to a certain extent, I cannot avoid thinking. Benveniste, however, will deny that 'I think' is a phrase of the second type. And he will place it in the first category.

[Trans. Duthey:] Fine, this is to say, it's complicated; each time, analyses of the sentence are required. But at least I have filled in -- it's just where I meant to go -- I have at least filled in a part of the construction of my problem. Namely, what does Benveniste mean when he centers the entirety of the language, not only on the personal pronouns, first and second persons, but on something even deeper contained in the personal pronouns of the first person and the second person?

You understand? The answer is that a centering of the language, as Comtesse expressed it very well a moment ago, is going to allow of putting the question of the duality language/speech on behalf of what Benveniste calls the discourse. That amounts to saying that [Trans. Thomson/Maglioni:] *he*, or rather the ensemble of so-called common formulae, exists only through... linguistically speaking, it exists only on the condition that it is placed within and referred to a kind of matrix of discourse, which is to say the *I* that would be more profound than any *I*. The *I* that would be more profound than any *I* belongs to the type: *I* promise, [Pause] the category of shifter.

So, you see, what we have here is not simply a surpassing -- I return to where I started from -- In this case there is not simply a surpassing in linguistic terms of the *he* with respect to *I* and *you*, but also the surpassing of the *I* and *you* towards an even more profound *I*. And here we bounce back to the beginning. We bounce back because viewed in the light of Benveniste, who has had a certain influence in the field of linguistics, Blanchot's text seems to me even more unusual.

Although when Blanchot was writing this, he wasn't thinking about the linguists of the time. What does he mean when he says: "No, not at all. What is this business?" As though Blanchot were saying to us: "What is all this personology that's used in... ?" [Deleuze does not complete this] And he says quite openly that all of so-called modern literature has gone against this movement. All modern literature and everything that counted for him in it has made the reverse movement, that is, to surpass the *I* and the *you* [*tu*] towards a *he/it* of the third person, and from this towards a *he/it* that is even more profound and that pertains to no person at all.

In this respect, I think Blanchot has something to teach us not only in terms of literature but also of linguistics because, as far as I am aware, he is the only one to sustain such a hypothesis in terms of linguistics. In his work, we find elements of a critique of the theory of shifters, a critique of the linguistic theory of the shifter. As a result, this is interesting because... why does

Blanchot not do this? Why...? There's something here I don't quite understand. But no matter... So, what does he mean?

For us, it means that Blanchot's schema would work only if... just as Benveniste showed that there is an *I* more profound than the *I*, an *I* of 'I promise' deeper than the *I* of 'I take a walk', Blanchot had to undertake a quite different attempt in the opposite direction, showing that in the *he/it* of the third person, there is a much more profound *he/it* which no longer pertains to any person and which concerns us all, a *he/it* which at this point is no longer at the centre of language but at the *borderline* of language, as its tensor, assuring the peripheral tension of language, all the surface tension of language which, at this point, flattens language, stretching it towards its limits. [Pause]

And, in fact, all the authors he cites as those who have handled this mysterious *he/it* -- Kafka and others -- are writers who have accomplished this kind of extending of language. They have refused to centre language on devices such as shifters, and instead they have performed this kind of extending, treating it like a sort of skin that has to be stretched out, a surface tension of the skin that tends towards a kind of limit. Rather than establishing centres in language, they traverse it by means of tensors.

[Trans. Duthey:] So fine, what would it be? We still need... And then, what would this *he/it* be? It's not difficult, you should have guessed already what kind of *he/it* it is. If you grant me -- we're pretending to believe in what Benveniste has said... why not? He is certainly right from his point of view -- at the level of *I*, there are two levels. Once again, to put it simply and not to complicate matters, there are the *I* of "I'm taking a walk" and the *I* of "I promise". They are not the same.

For us, the question is... Are there two levels of *he/it*? You see; you will tell me, we must not put in too much symmetry, but it's curious anyway because Benveniste acts as if *he/it* wasn't a problem at all. He overtakes it right away toward *I* and *you* [*tu*], he overtakes them toward the deeper still *I*. Benveniste does no analysis of *he/it* [*il*]. He treats the *he/it* as a common concept, as the word 'dog', as all this. And yet, aren't there also two kinds of *he/it*? *He/It*, this can be the third person.

[Trans. Thomson/Maglioni:] Okay, fine, *he/it* can be the third person, but if I say 'it happens' (*il arrive*), 'it happens', what else can this third person be? -- Here I'm not speaking on behalf of Blanchot. I'm trying to say things of a simpler nature. And we'll see if Blanchot connects to this. -- In French, there is another *he/it* [*il*] which marks not only the third person but also the impersonal. 'It rains' [*Il pleut*]. Why wouldn't this difference between these two indefinite forms of the third person deserve a linguistic analysis similar to that of the *I*? When I say 'it happens' [*il arrive*], or 'it rains', these are two formulas stretched to the extreme. 'It rains'.

[Trans. Duthey:] What would this *he/it* be? What is this kind of sign? It doesn't refer anymore to a person. What does it refer to? It refers to an event. There is thus the *he/it* of the event. You recognize this *he/it* of the event in the expression 'there is' ["*Il y a*" in French]. It is curious to notice that the 'personologists' make the 'there is' ["*Il y a*"] depend, treat it like a shifter, that is, make it depend on the *I*. We are not there yet. 'There is' ["*Il y a*"] or the 'it' [*il*] of 'it's raining'

[‘il pleut’] refer to the event. An event is not a person. However, is it the anonymous? If you remember what I was saying before, here we find the same problem again. It is not the anonymous. It is not the universal. An event, on the contrary, is extremely singular and is individuated. Here it is, we have to say that the individuation of the event is not of the same type that the individuation of the person.

Here again, we have one hell of a problem because the problem is taking a new turn as we continue constructing it; at each instant, we think we’re about to fail to master it, as a result of its bursting out into various directions. As a result, here I digress again. I think we are now grasping the problem despite all the digressions I am making. Since I think digressions are parts of constructing the problem. Then they won’t be a part later; you can disregard them afterward, but to cope with the problem, we need all kinds of detours.

[Trans. Thomson/Maglioni:] So, in fact, there are many authors, I think even the great majority of authors. The problem of individuation is another problem, but we considered this during another seminar -- I spent months on this. I was quite pleased because that interested me greatly. —⁶ Well, it’s... there are many authors, if we look again for sources, for whom individuation, in the literal sense of the term, can only be the individuation of a person. Individuation can only be applied to a person.

So, there you have it. I’m reminded of a text by Leibniz... Leibniz says that certainly, there are many different uses of the words *a* or *an*. Making a reflection on the indefinite article, he says that *a* or *an* constitute a series of hierarchical grades. When I say, ‘an army’, we have what he calls ‘a pure being of collection’. It’s an abstract entity. When I say, ‘a stone’, it is already more individuated according to Leibniz. When I say, ‘a stone’, ‘a beast’, ‘an animal’, this is even more unified, individuated. And he launches his great formula: “Being one, is being One”. *Being* one is being *one*. And the more one *is* the more one *is one*. Which is to say that, fundamentally speaking, Being is the person.

So, many authors have maintained that the secret of individuation lies on the side of the person. To the point where they end up saying that the event only has individuation either by derivation, or else, by fiction. That is, it is either a fictional or derived individuation. It presupposes persons. Again, only the English – oh, how strange this story of the genius of nations is... – have chosen not to follow this path. In my view, many English philosophers flirt with the idea that the secret of individuation is not the person. Real individuation concerns events. It’s an odd idea.

You might ask yourself what justifies such a view. What do you think? Does this say anything to you? Does this speak to you? What do they mean? They mean that people too -- they make the inverse derivation -- they say that people too are individuated in the same manner as events. But we simply don’t see this. We have so many bad habits. We think we are people but in fact we’re not. We are in our way small events. And if we are individuated, we are so as events not as people. It’s interesting. You might say that we would have to define what an event is and what a person is. No, I appeal to the resonances that things... depending on what you say about it, the definition of what constitutes an event changes in a peculiar way.

What is a battle? What is an event? An event? Death, is that an event? What is it? And what is the rapport between the event and the person? A wound, is that an event? Yes, if I'm wounded, a wound is an event. It's the expression of something that happens or that has happened to me. Okay, so how is a wound individuated? Is it individuated because it happens to a person? Or do I call 'person' the one to whom it happens? It's complicated.

Perhaps those of you who were here previous years – I don't remember how long ago -- will recall that I spent a lot of time on the following questions: What is the individuation of a time of day? What is the individuation of a season? What is this mode of individuation that, in my view, does not at all pass by way of persons? What is the individuation of a wind? When geographers speak about wind, they actually give proper names to winds.

So, our problem returns., understand? It's the same problem as the one we had before but at a different level. Some say that the proper name is, first of all, the person and that all other uses of a proper name are derived. Others say -- you have to make your own choice; my own view is very much aligned with this other side that I'm trying to explain -- who tell us it's not like the say. It only seems that way, fine. But it's not the first time that something seems to be what it isn't. That's not it. I truly believe that the first usage of the proper name and its meaning are discovered only insofar as they derive from events. What is or has been fundamentally identified by a proper name are not people but events. I mean that, before the person, there is clearly this very strange region... because individuations are made in a completely different way. [Pause]

I cited from the beautiful poem by Lorca: "Oh that terrible five in the afternoon..." Oh that terrible five in the afternoon... What kind of individuation is this?⁷ In English novels, I'm asking you simply to note this, in English novels, not always but in the works of many great English novelists, the characters aren't really characters. You see, we go back to Blanchot. Luckily, we can console him and console ourselves through him. Although he doesn't speak about English novelists as such. So perhaps here we have another source who can take his side.

In many English novels, particularly at key moments, characters are not treated as persons. They are not individuated as persons. Take the Brontë sisters for example. They have a kind of genius. Especially one, though I don't remember which, so I won't mention her... No, I think it's Charlotte actually. I'm sure it's Charlotte Brontë... who constantly presents her characters not as persons but as the equivalent of a wind. A passing wind. Or in Virginia Woolf... they can take the form of a school of fish, or a walk. It's not... Say, I rediscover the same case, precisely what Benveniste neglected and treated as of minor importance: 'I'm taking a walk', precisely it's enough that I walk for me to be *I* no longer. If my walk is a walk, I'm no longer an *I*: I am an event. The author who rendered this quite marvellously in English literature is of course Virginia Woolf.

[Trans. Duthey:] Virginia Woolf, as soon as she sets a hero in motion, he loses his quality of person. [Pause] A great example, in Virginia Woolf, is the promenade of Mrs. Dalloway... "I won't say anymore I'm this or that", concludes *Mrs. Dalloway*. "I won't say anymore I'm this or that"... I won't say "I"; I've got an individuation problem. It's very odd; we've got to be cautious with little things. We are never done with them. If needed, we might say, well, there is a vague

choice between what and what? Between saying *I* and saying the nothingness or saying *I* or the undifferentiated abyss, the form *I* or 'the depth without face'.

There are authors, there are thinkers. Consider them as great painters; when I was saying, there is as much creation in philosophy for that matter, this is like painting, it's like music. There are great philosophers who worked in these coordinates: the form of the individual or the undifferentiated abyss. And God they had genius! One of those who has gone furthest this way, it's Schopenhauer [Trans. Thomson/Maglioni:] who sang of the woes of individuation, but in his case, individuation was conceived as that of the person and the undifferentiated abyss. And the young Nietzsche was fascinated by this idea. In his *Birth of Tragedy*, we find him still clinging to these coordinates. Very soon afterwards, however, Nietzsche will say that there is another path. Not a middle way, but a completely different path that will overturn the very terms of the problem. He will say, no, that the choice is not between the individuation of persons or the undifferentiated abyss: there exists another mode of individuation.

And it seems to me that all these authors turn around this very complex notion of the event, an individuation of the event that will no longer be the individuation of any person. What is a morality? There is a morality everywhere in the type of personology I described before. Benveniste is a moralist of language. He is a moralist of language, except that his moralism is a moralism of the person. In the other case, there may be just as much of a morality but one that is of a different nature. It's not the same notion of dignity or wisdom that we see at work here. Nor is it the same kind of dissipation. It's not the same kind of non-wisdom either. It's not... Everything changes, everything changes.

In what sense? If you live *your* individuation and not that of a person, it is -- to go back to the terms we used last week -- that of a *tribe*, for example. I am a tribe, I have my tribes. Fine, I have my own tribes. You'll tell me I said *my* and *I*, that the tribe is subordinated to *I-you*, no... to *you-me*. But I will answer you: You haven't understood. Don't bore me with questions of language. Once again, if, just like everyone else, I say 'the sun rises', I can also say 'I have my tribes'. Of course, in the formula 'I have my tribes', the word *tribes* is subordinate to *I* and *my*, that is, to the first-person pronoun and first-person possessive pronoun. Except that *I* is individuated according to the *mode* of tribes. Which is to say its individuation is not at all like that of a person.

So, doesn't this change everything? Here again, the point isn't to know who is right and who is wrong. If now we say that the proper name first and foremost designates events... designates winds... events, it doesn't designate persons, or only secondarily, and in the last instance, we can say that we are adopting a kind of anti-Benveniste stance. But this is not to upset Benveniste, it's just as a way of sticking to our path.

What does this mean? Why am I speaking about individuation through the event in opposition to the other form of individuation? I would almost say that individuation in the mode of persons is nothing more than a linguistic fiction. It doesn't exist. -- I say this because I feel like it, because... --, Obviously at this point any personologist, assuming this was... if it were true, the personologist would be entirely a fiction. So, what does this mean? It might mean... It should be said what a strange thing an event is because, in the event, we must distinguish two things. We still haven't finish developing our distinctions or moving them.

I am wounded, ow, ow ow! Wounded, the wound... I have a knife stuck in me. *[Interruption of the audio recording]* [1:33:21] *[The following four sentence, missing from the audio recording, are included in the Thomson/Maglioni translation]:* Or else war breaks out. Here we have two types of event. There are two sides... I cite here an author Blanchot knows well: Joe Bousquet. *[Return to the audio recording]*

... Joe Bousquet is a very odd author. Very fine... He was wounded by a grenade during World War I. He died quite recently. The wound left him paralyzed, immobile. He lived in bed. He wrote a lot. Fortunately, not about himself, but about things he felt he had to say. Here is a phrase of Bousquet's that sounds quite strange: "My wound existed before: I was born to embody it." There's a lot contained in these words. You will note that only someone who is profoundly sick or struck by a malady could sustain a thesis that in another's mouth would sound quite odious. Bousquet had to have undergone the grenade explosion that left him paralyzed to be able to sustain a thesis of this sort. "My wound existed before." It sounds like a kind of diabolical pride... "I was born to embody it." -- If this phrase speaks to you... accept this method. If the phrase doesn't say anything to you, forget it. But if the phrase says something to you, we can go on. -- What could it mean?

It seems to me – and he explains this very well so that we feel it too – he means that an event can only exist insofar as it is *effectuated*. There are no events that are not effectuated. On this, fine. There is no platonic idea of the wound. Yet at the same time, we have to say two things: there's always something in the event that surpasses, that exceeds, its effectuation. In other words, an event only exists insofar as it is effectuated. But in what exactly?

I go back to the words I used before. An event only exists insofar as it is effectuated in persons and things, in persons and states of things. War doesn't exist independently of the soldiers who are subjected to it, the materials that are deployed, the places involved... that is, it is only effectuated in states of things and persons. Otherwise, what are we talking about? What war? The pure idea of war? What would that mean? So, I have to reassert that every event is of this type, and at the same time, I maintain that in every event, however small or insignificant, there is something that exceeds its effectuation. There is something that cannot be effectuated. *[Pause]*

[Trans. Duthey:] I can't go too much further. What would it be, this something which cannot be effectuated? Wouldn't it be what I called the individuation proper to the event and which doesn't pass anymore by the persons or the states of things? In a cold wind, there we are, in a cold wind - if you like the cold wind or if... I don't know what -- there is something, a cold wind doesn't exist regardless of its being effectuated in what? In some states of things; example: the temperature which releases it, which causes it, and in persons, the coldness felt by persons, by animals, etc...

And yet, something tells me that -- some of you might quite legitimately tell me: "ah, this doesn't mean a thing to me!" -- Something tells me there is no cold wind which doesn't overflow, which however, is consubstantial of this part that is the one of its effectuations.

[Trans. Thomson/Maglioni:] It's here we can say that in every event that happens to us there is something that can only be called the splendour of an event that exceeds every effectuation. That

at the same time cannot be effectuated and that surpasses its effectuation. As if it had a *moreness*, an excess. Something that exceeds the effectuation of the event in things and persons. This is what I would call the most profound sphere of the event. Perhaps not the most *profound*, because we are no longer in the world of depths, but I'm using the word randomly.

You know where I'm heading... Now we can better understand Bousquet's phrase: "The problem is to become worthy..." -- And here we have his whole moral -- "to be worthy of what happens to us" - whatever that is, whether good or bad. It almost makes one think, for those familiar with the matter, of the morality of the Stoics, although here it takes another shape, the Stoic morality.

To accept the event... What does this mean? It doesn't at all mean to resign ourselves or to say: "Oh God, it serves me right." This isn't what the Stoics mean. It's not by chance that they were the first among the Greeks to formulate a theory of the event, which they pushed quite far. This is what they say: In the event there is something they call, in their own language, the *incorporeal*.

The event is effectuated in bodies and would not exist were this not the case, but in itself, it contains something incorporeal. "My wound existed before: I was born to embody it". Meaning: yes, it was effectuated in me, yet it contains something for which it is no longer *my* wound. It is the *it*-wound.

And so back to Blanchot. You understand? Hence the idea of "being worthy of what happens to us" whatever it is, whether it's a horrible catastrophe or a lucky streak. There are people whose mode of living is always to be unworthy of what happens to them, whether it be suffering or joy. I think that these are the personologists, those who centre, who centre things on the first- and second-person, those who fail to draw out the sphere of the event.

[Trans. Duthey:] Fine. To be worthy of what happens to us, this is a very curious idea, or a very, very curious way of living. That is, to 'mediocritize' nothing. There are people who 'mediocritise' death. There are people who 'mediocritize' their own diseases, despite indeed having diseases. I don't know... Yes, they have disease-events. Well, there are people who make everything filthy... like the guy who writes "commit suicide!". There you have a phrase of fundamental mediocrity. It isn't someone who has a connection with death, absolutely not. The ones who have a connection with death, they have on the contrary a cult of life, which is entirely something else and they don't piss around like that. [Trans. Thomson/Magliani:] So you understand... being worthy of what happens to us means drawing out of the event that is effectuated in me or that I effectuate, that part which cannot be effectuated. [*End of the La Voix de Deleuze/Paris 8 transcription*] [101 :46] ... Yes?

A woman student: [*Inaudible question, concerning Blanchot and suicide*]

Deleuze: Blanchot stated it clearly regarding death, and he also speaks of suicide. In suicide, he says, there is an operation which is fundamentally one of bad faith; in suicide, there is a kind of desperate effort to effectuate and render the event of death as though it could be completely effectuated, that is, to exhaust it through its effectuation since Blanchot insists that one can never separate the two deaths: the death that is effectuated in me and to which I am more or less near,

more or less close, and that which in death cannot be effectuated and which impedes my killing myself. [Pause] And in this we have a kind of cult of life... [End of the Thomson/Maglioni transcript; here starts the heretofore untranscribed and untranslated text] which, in fact, does not prevent them... If you think of the case of the Nazi State, etc., this corresponds quite well, the Nazi State, this appears precisely contrary to suicide; in some ways, the cult of life is a kind of great... Anyway, this is too complicated... Yes?

A student: I saw a very good film not too long ago by Louis Malle, "Le feu follet" [1963; The Fire Within], one of the first ones; it's really good, in fact, but anyway, no matter. And finally, he commits suicide and finally, he says, this is positive, this suicide. There is a positive suicide as well, as you've said, there are those that disgusting, and the suicide of a being, the purpose for destroying himself is to impose himself...

Deleuze: I don't know if...

The student: You don't think so? [Laughter]

Deleuze: I don't believe that there is suicide for the purpose of affirming oneself. I believe that are a great many suicides, yes, for the purpose of distressing others.

The student: [Indistinct comments] ... You are saying things that I didn't say...

A woman student: [Indistinct comments; from what follows, this is a comment on voluntary suicides]

Claire Parnet: There are luxury hotels in the USA...

Deleuze: That's true. It's...

Parnet: There are luxury hotels in the USA where you pay for...

The woman student: [Indistinct comments]

Parnet: Yes, you choose your death, and all is arranged...

Deleuze: That at least has something in common, namely, it is, it really belongs the cult of death, this sort of [indistinct word]. That this, really, that this cult of death is part of our social way of living today is obvious, and that's what I was calling... I tell you, I really don't see another definition, it's fascism, fascism, just that. It is an enterprise of the death cult: let the others die, and I will follow them; others first, then me. That's fundamental, that's fundamentally in fascism. And it's not, I was telling you, it's not an ideological proposition. As a result, when you see a guy saying, "Long live death!" », even if he takes himself for an artist, for me, he appears like a lamentable little fascist because that's what leads, what, that's what leads... It's always finally a question of the death of others, and even in certain cases of suicide, it is the death of others that they're seeking.

Comtesse: There is a problem that can be pointed out in what you are saying, that is, in the "being worthy" of the event, because that, someone who is worthy of the event can say, for example, people precisely like [*indistinct name*], like Bousquet, like Blanchot, etc., because they are writers who are thinking of something else. Only, there are sometimes examples where we manage to say that, there are [*noises near the microphone, inaudible remarks*] ... that is, that the event which happens to them, which bursts in, for example, for [*inaudible*] ... the event that erupts is an event that is not just in some sort of inside [*indistinct word*] ... It is literally a line from the outside, a line of madness in which, in which, for example, the madman can [*indistinct words*] be absorbed in an [*indistinct word*].

For example, I'm thinking of the last one, it's been a while since I saw it, Werner Herzog's last film, "Woyzeck" [1979]. Woyzeck, from within him, he is someone excluded by [*indistinct words*] from humans, etc., and he hears, and that is an event, he hears from the start of the film something that rises from the earth, which rises from the earth and which is neither a noise, nor a conversation, nor a rumor, nor a murmur, and which is something related to the inaudible. And when he hears precisely this inaudible, this kind of thing that overflows everything, at that moment, he is in an event, and in this event, [*noise, inaudible words*] to plug in or connect with a [*indistinct word*] or thread which literally is an outside, and at that moment, which makes a kind of division which drives him mad, and that he does not decide this either, that is, the earth is on fire, but I am frozen, in other words, the event which is related to a kind of [*indistinct word*], a lake of fire and a block of glaciation inside him. That is, here, he plunges into a line from the outside which is the line of madness, and he arrives at the end, at that moment, inside the block awakened by the event to hear, in a magnificent scene, in a field of air, from the last Herzog film, not the inaudible, he sees it, the inaudible, the song of the earth rising, the musical song of the earth, for example, and the voice of the earth, the voice of the earth prompts him to kill. And in the last Herzog film, he killed the husband, in this instance, and in the last Herzog film, who, after the murder, he experiences another event there, the warming, as if the murder made him go from one state to another, the man of glaciation, the warming, linking the condition of a [*indistinct word*].

So, there is... we could multiply examples. This is an example of madness, but there are certain events in which it is no longer possible to maintain the closure from within, where there is complete absorption in a flow from the outside, and that is precisely the controllable line, even the undecidable of the event precisely in order to end.

Deleuze: All right, listen, there, parenthetically, if you haven't done it, have you checked in..., if it's not so clear in the text, in Herzog's film, have you checked in the text of [Georg] Büchner, if there is the equivalent for cold and fire?

Comtesse: No.

Deleuze: You'd have to... Do you have the text?... Let me take a look... You don't know about it? And what proves you are right is that it's in the clearing that you're talking about, that's where he has the circle of mushrooms, the circle of witches, right? ... In the film, it is repeated... the trace of circular mushrooms, where Woyzeck sees... He talks about mushrooms, yes, yes, yes...

Really, what you are doing, it seems to me, in this I would be very much in agreement, except on the starting point, there is no need to... What you are doing is almost the linkage of what we are doing today and what we were doing the last time because there, what you call the event of madness, when the guy is completely trapped, and might indeed be seized either by a suicidal rage or else by a murderous rage, what is going on here? This is really what I tried to analyze, it seems to me, the last time in the form [of] this kind of conversion, suddenly, this entirely abominable, terrifying conversion of a line of flight which, being blocked off, rushes into a line of destruction. So that, it seems to me that the last time, I tried to say what here you tried to say today in your turn and with your own way... [*Someone speaks*] Yes?

A student: [*Inaudible remarks*]

Deleuze: What?

The student: [*Inaudible comments, concerning "being worthy" and morality*] [*Laughter*]

Deleuze: Listen... I'm using an example here, this example that you've just cited, because it seems typical to me. It's really the method that...

The student: [*Interrupting, inaudible remarks*]

Deleuze: I understand fully, but the entire intervention comes down to taking a word seriously. I am begging you... If this were my legacy, I would tell you this: when you listen to someone and when you speak in your turn, it's not about the words, I assure you, OK? If a certain word seems to you to have such a particular connection, you know another word for it, so insert the other word yourself. Because the question... I could have said just as well, in my opinion... well, yes, "morality" is so... there is good morality everywhere, yes, there is morality everywhere. [*Pause*] When Nietzsche said, "Down with morality!" in *Beyond Good and Evil*, he adds immediately and in the same sentence, but be careful, don't be stupid, don't be like the guy who says, "Go kill yourself!" Beyond good and evil, that does not prevent and it certainly does not mean "beyond good and bad". Fine, he means, good and evil is indeed a mystification; it does not mean everything is equal. He never thought that, Nietzsche. There, that's really, that's from marketplace Nietzscheans, who believe that Nietzsche is the one who says, "everything is permitted", all that. Good.

So, if you don't like the word "morality" and if you think that morality is fundamentally indexed on the person – that's fine if you say that; we can say anything – well, you will find another word [*Pause*] for what functions as "morality" independently of people. And there, in fact, there is a word which has its tradition and which is not the same word "morality", it is the word "ethics". [*Pause*] It is not by chance that Spinoza wrote not "a morality", but "an ethics". Why was that? It is not the same thing, in fact, and it is not by chance because Spinoza is the one who said before Nietzsche, "good and bad mean absolutely nothing". [*Pause*] But Spinoza, he also doesn't say, he doesn't say "therefore, everything is equal". He says, in fact, good and bad... the phrase, when it has a meaning, "good and bad mean absolutely nothing", is a phrase which means explicitly and which says explicitly that the real difference passes between the good and the bad, and that the

difference between good and bad does not coincide with that of good and evil, and in this, there is a fundamental difference.

The art of distributing the good and the bad or of organizing this good-bad couple in its difference with good and evil, this is what Spinoza calls "an ethics", so he will say, "very good, I'm not engaging in morality", he will say, "I am creating an ethics". You can keep the word "morality" if you're interested. Suffice it to say, well, there is a morality of good and bad; you can say, oh well, it's not a morality, it's an ethics. Well, it doesn't matter, all that.

Why does the word "ethics" still have a kind of interest? Because "ethos" is an interesting word, and "ethos" is, it is... really, you see it today in what is called ethology. It is a very complicated concept, this discipline which deals with animals under the name of ethology. "Ethos" is several things: it is the ways of life [*modes de vie*], the ways of life; territories or places -- It's a very complex notion -- sojourns and places, ways of life; how territories and ways of life are articulated. That speaks to us, in fact, about something quite different from what is meant by "morality" in the traditional sense. But "morality" in the traditional sense also refers to "mores" [*moeurs*], and mores, [*Pause*] is very much linked to... [*Deleuze does not finish the sentence*] So, it's your choice, yes...

So I would just like to end this whole session, this last session, by saying, I almost did more than I, than I am doing, than I proposed. So now see, and I would now like it to be clearer what Blanchot is telling us in this little text. It amounts to saying [*Pause*], this anti-personological schema, it amounts to saying "I" and "you" [*tu*] are ultimately only fictions, they are linguistic fictions. [*Pause*] You have to go past them to a "he"/"it". [*Pause*] But the "he"/"it", in turn, is not the "he"/"it" of the third person. We must go beyond the "he"/"it" of the third person towards the "he"/"it" of the event. [*Pause*] And finally, if the "he"/"it" of the event is deeper than the "he"/"it" of the third person, it is because the event, however profoundly effectuated in persons and necessarily effectuated in persons, contains a part of the ineffectuable which is constitutive, and the "he"/"it" of which Blanchot speaks is the "he"/"it" of the event. [*Pause*]

And I am saying, in case someone disputes the fact, it seems to me, about which I no longer have much to say, what I called the last time, I could say, what is a line of flight? A line of flight is precisely the line or the movement which goes from the assignment of persons to this peripheral flight, to this tension of a tensor, that is, which goes towards the "he"/"it" of the event. And that is the positive character of the line of flight; so, that it can turn into a line of destruction, by falling back on people or else in the case that Comtesse mentioned, that Comtesse cited, when precisely this line of flight is blocked, etc., yes, yes, everything is possible, including the worst ... There you have it.

Well, next year, I don't know what will happen, I don't know if Vincennes will stay Vincennes, or what we are doing, but anyway, well... [*Pause*] Yes?

A student: Do you know what you will be doing in your course?

Deleuze: Next year, I don't know because I could do, really... I still hope that there will come a day when I can organize – I don't know yet. I tell myself, why not, it will be necessary to do,

really, to find something new, to get out of what I have been offering you for four or five years, here – I tell myself, why not start from scratch? My dream would be to do a course on “What is philosophy?” just like that, “What is philosophy?” [*Laughter*] fine, in which I will try to say how philosophy is the creation of concepts, what it means to create concepts, all that. We will see. It will depend so much on... it will depend so much on, on the people... because I want to say – this is not a final compliment that I'm offering to you – it's obvious that what I'm talking about, I can only discuss it to the extent that you are there. I can't talk about it in front of... well, it's obvious... [*Sounds of movement; end of the audio recording*] [1:17:53]

Notes

¹ Here begins a partial (and edited) video-audio of this lecture (91 minutes, to minute 1:43) with intertitles and subtitles in English; see

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_TLHon_bNw&list=PLJ5b_OPez7lo3GYwz17sIU3BUqyn6m0Rc&index=2 (verified 8 July 2023).

² Maurice Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995). French original: Maurice Blanchot, *La Part du feu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949). References are to the chapter “Kafka and Literature”. For Deleuze’s analysis of this same Blanchot text on Kafka, see session 5 of the Foucault seminar (November 19, 1985).

³ Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 130. French original: Maurice Blanchot, *L’entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 192.

⁴ A 44-minute video excerpt of this lecture, with English subtitles from this point onward to the truncated ending, is available on Daily Motion, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x36nts9> [verified July 9, 2023]. On Benveniste’s linguistics, see session 18 of Cinema 4 seminar (April 16, 1985); on the Benveniste-Blanchot linguistic opposition, see session 4 of the Foucault seminar (November 12, 1985).

⁵ The brief text after the audio cassette interruption is audible in the Marielle Burkhalter film of part of this session.

⁶ This reference concerns at least part of the seminars in 1976-77 and 1977-78; see sessions 2 and 3 in the seminar *A Thousand Plateaus* II (March 8 and May 3, 1977) and the session on musical time in the seminar *A Thousand Plateaus* III (February 18, 1978).

⁷ On the kind of individuation suggested here with the Lorca quote, as well as in Bronte and Woolf, also known as “hecceity”, see *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 261-263 and the segment of this plateau 10, on becomings.