

**Gilles Deleuze**

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Réflexions**

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## Gilles Deleuze

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The fact that you are numerous, quite numerous, while the last time, it's curious, you weren't that numerous, and all that is...

So I'm reminding you it's our last session. For those who, for matters relating to our work, would need to see me, I am leaving for ten days, but I'll be there 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, you understand, this is how it is.

The last time, we started from some sorts of very vague conclusions, since it was 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 of, 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 taken up 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 the line of flight or the lines of flight might turn out and run a risk of their own. I was saying basically for those who weren't there, I was saying, well yes, the problem of an analysis, it may not be at all to do a psycho-analysis but to do for example, one can conceive something else, a geo-analysis.

And a geo-analysis, it's 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, to the letter, to do the map of someone. So then, the very question "does that mean something or not?" loses all meaning. A line, it doesn't mean anything. Merely do the map, with the sorts of lines of someone or of some group, or of an individual, that is to say, what are all these lines which blend? Indeed... It seems to me, we could conceive people as hands. Each of us it 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 there are lines, well, of all kinds of nature, and among others, there are lines we can call lines of border, of slope or of flight.

And in a certain way, to live it's to live on, in any case it's also live on lines of flight. It was what I've tried to explain, but each type of line has their dangers. It is because of that, it is why it's good, it is why it's very good, one can never tell -"it's where I'm going to pull through"; the

salvation or the despair always comes from another line that the one we expected. One is always taken by surprise.

2// I was saying the proper danger of the line of flight, it's that it brushes by some such strange things that in a certain way, it's the one we have to mistrust most. It's the one we trace that we have to mistrust most because it is where we brush by the bigger dangers.

**[“I and the personal pronoun”, translation Thompson/Maglionì]**

Lines of flight always harbour a potentiality, a potency, a possibility that they will be transformed into lines of destruction, lines of despair or destruction. The other time I tried to explain that, for me at least, these are nonetheless 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, is created. But 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 became quite moralistic about the whole thing, 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, seeing as how I don't wish to exaggerate in repeating myself, 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 never arose. So I'll take it up now. It's a question that interests me greatly and I would like nothing more than for you to ask me: “What relationship does it have with what you've just said?” And perhaps this rapport will emerge little by little. So let's forget everything...

Now 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 before you I take the risk of constructing a problem with the help of certain authors who will furnish me with materials that are closely related to it. First point: once again I'll number them because...

Oh God... there you go... this is what I call abjection... this is real abjection. Even if you 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.” 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, for me this is abject, disgusting, filthy. It's worse than immoral, it's filthy! It's pure shit! This is what I do with stuff like this...

(Student) Nonetheless they published it...

(Deleuze) Yes, it's a document of sorts, but it's disgusting!

(Yolande) And what's more they make use of us.

(Deleuze) Not of me, I hope...

(Yolande) Yes, they cite the rhizome, they cite Nietzsche. Nietzsche becomes something really bizarre here.

(Deleuze) They're the scum of the earth...

Okay, let's speak about something in the same genre but more uplifting. There's an author that some 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 in a 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.' 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...”

Let it flow through you. Don't look for anything in particular here. Just stay 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...”

A great sentence. And he adds: “in the form of language. I am not yet truly unhappy. 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.”

Only when I say: ‘He is unhappy’ does this unhappiness become “really mine in the form of language.” Which is to say that it begins to constitute the world to which this unhappiness belongs.

“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...” But we haven't yet understood the formula ‘he is unhappy’... What can that mean? Let's take it as is, trusting Blanchot. “So, perhaps...” When he says ‘I am unhappy’... “I will feel myself implicated...”

You see, he doesn't say that one shouldn't say 'I' and concentrate on others, he says only when I say 'he is unhappy' does the unhappiness become 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... “So perhaps I will feel myself implicated...”

Okay... In what sense does this concern Kafka? Blanchot says that Kafka's stories are precisely like this. "He expresses himself in them by this immeasurable distance..." - the distance between 'T' and 'He' - "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 'T'..."

*I reach the point at which I am deprived of the power to say 'T'...*

So we've already made some progress. This would be the 'he'. The 'he' is the point at which I am deprived of the power to say 'T'. So what is this privation? You should immediately understand how this directly connects to my topic of the other day. If I define 'he' as the point at which I am deprived of the power to say 'T', this is precisely the line of flight. In other words, the 'he' is the expression, or rather the "expressor", of the line of flight. But how and in what conditions do I arrive at the point at which I am deprived of the power to say 'T'? And this point will allow us to regroup a number of notions, since we're attempting to construct our problem. But what are we missing? What defines this point?

It's certainly not the fact of whether I say 'T' or not. I can always go on saying 'T'. That's of no importance... It's silly thinking that things always pass explicitly through language. One of my favorite of Beckett's phrases 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 'T' 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. We have to be able to say 'I' in the same way. We know that the 'T' is empty, but we say it nonetheless because it's a useful marker, it's an index, a linguistic index. Fine.

Thinking of 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, perhaps even the greatest... just as there are concepts that have a French signature, alas, very few... but we're not to blame for that. There are also concepts with an English signature. It's strange. I've never seen an English person take the 'T', the question of the 'T', seriously at any level. It's odd... All the great theynamics of English philosophy, and there are some wonderful examples, turn around 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, Cartesianism is a philosophy founded on

the ego and on the formula we will discuss later, if there's time, that magical formula *I think therefore I am*.

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. Each time French or German philosophers speak of the 'me', the self of the subject, the English find it quite bizarre and amusing. They find it a really odd way of thinking. Their thinking all turns around a very interesting idea. If you ask them what the 'self' is, they tell you it's a habit. Literally, one expects it to continue... I say 'me' 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', the self, as a habit if we attach it to a sort of lived experience. Why don't they live like 'me-s'? We should make a civilizational survey. Why, in any case, do their thinkers not live the concept of the 'me', the self?

You see, I'm wandering a bit... but back to Blanchot. If I try to summarize his thesis, it seems to me a 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 were, we would find ourselves confronted with a problem. Which is to say that Blanchot throws a sort of grenade into the midst of all kinds of questions but without saying as much, and 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, bring out a kind of *tension* in language. And on the basis of this tension in language, or thanks to this virtual tension – it doesn't pre-exist, it has to trace itself – the whole of language can be organized. And would this be a style? The whole of language can be organized in function of a tension, a certain well-determined tension that would enable us to pass from the personal pronoun 'I-you' 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.

[tape interrupted]

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 19<sup>th</sup> century philosophy. He died not long ago, either during the war or just after the war. His name was Pierre Janet. At some point he was really well known. He was a contemporary of... His works followed a parallel path to Freud. Neither of them understood... it's strange. Attempts were made to try 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.

[tape interrupted]

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 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 telling stories. From which he derives his celebrated postulate: “Memory is the action of telling a story.”

[tape interrupted]

Very soon 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... I burst into tears. What was going on? It's clear. There were two emotions in play: my profound sorrow 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 he went off the rails. I protested, saying my teacher never gave me algebra to do. A child of six is not supposed to have to solve an algebra problem. But he insisted that this was the only way he could make it clear. So we both lost our temper. Defeat in pedagogical conduct: rage. Defeat in the conduct of the pupil: 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 is a massive tome called *From Anxiety to Ecstasy* that gathers together the seminars he gave.

[tape interrupted]

It's 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?

[tape interrupted]

A thesis that seems quite simple: the proper name derives from the first and second person pronoun. But let's try to imagine the possibility of a reverse procedure. The possibility that in the end we could say the opposite. That it's the first and second person pronoun that derive from the proper name. So you understand the situation we're in... If, 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.

Before starting my regrouping, which will give us a full picture of the problem we're looking at, 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: Benveniste.

Indeed Benveniste places particular importance on the personal pronoun in language, to the point where he affirms that it's a common feature of all languages. He places particular importance on the first and second person pronouns. So Benveniste – and here I don't think I'm twisting his thought – proposes (in certain conditions that I will define later) a path of derivation that would be the following... In the first place 'I-you' first and second person pronouns. Secondly 'he' ...no that's not it either, no I'm wrong... Strike that.

He proposes firstly an extraction, to extract from the 'I' and the 'you' – the first and second person pronouns – an irreducible form, a linguistic form that would be irreducible to any other. Secondly, from this irreducible form we derive the 'I' and 'you', the first and second person pronouns of current usage. Thirdly, from this would be derived 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, that of Blanchot and that of Benveniste, which are diametrically opposed.

They are diametrically opposed in the following sense: Blanchot begins from 'I-you' which he surpasses through 'he' and then surpasses the 'he' by means of another 'he' that would be irreducible. Benveniste begins from the personal pronoun in general from which he detaches 'I-you' 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' that no longer designates any person. I repeat: *a surface, peripheral tension that drags the whole of language towards this 'he' that no longer designates any person...* In Benveniste 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.

(Student) These are surely the same differences that exist between a linguistics of languages and a linguistics of words...

Deleuze: Yes, that's it. Because it forces us to completely 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. 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.

Our problem will be precisely this. We're not choosing, we're trying to find our way between these two possible movements. We have identified two virtual movements, which don't exist in concrete reality. It would 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' 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 when they use the word 'I'. 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*, 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*... 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 Jakobson translates by the word *embrouilleur*. He says that these are very particular linguistic categories because they are shifters. What is a shifter? One can try to explain it by referring it to *I* or *here*, *now*.

When I say *I*, what does a linguistic sign normally 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. 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.

But when I say *I*, what does this disturb, 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 not at all a collective concept. It is a solely distributive concept. And 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 'T 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, enveloped. Which is to say that the signification is given in the signifier itself. Which is a very rare occurrence.

Now I will cite from Descartes to pay homage to one of his finest texts. It's in the *Replies*. 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 *Replies*. 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, the way a logician or a linguist might speak today. He has an intuition thanks to someone who has had made objections and he invokes language.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> 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."

[tape interrupted]

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.

[tape interrupted]

**[Paris 8]** 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 'Roverity'. Here we cannot say 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 last time, let's pass by Hegel. Since he is an author I seldom talk about, make the most of it. Besides, I don't venture, I keep to the very beginning of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

[Translation by Thompson/Maglioni]

**[Beginning of video clip]** 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. 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 after all... anyway, try to follow me.

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 so as 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. [End of video clip] 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 ‘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, 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 amused? 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*.

Here, 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. Which is to say that 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. 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.

[tape interrupted]

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... 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 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. 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. 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 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 and at the same time I would say that its meaning is enveloped in the phrase itself.

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 walk' and 'I promise'. Or if I say 'I greet you'... actually there are equivalents. Instead of saying the session is open I could strike a hammer three times. But these three strikes would 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'... 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 does that refer to? There's a feeling 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 thought that the formula 'I think' was of the second type. I can't say this without doing something as I say it, namely: 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.

[tape interrupted]

*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*. 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?" 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* towards a *he* of the third person, and from this towards a *he* that is even more profound and that pertains to no person.

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. And this is interesting because... why does Blanchot do this? There's something here I don't quite understand. But no matter... So what does all this 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 walk'... Blanchot was to make a quite different attempt in the opposite sense in showing that in the *he* of the third person there is a much more profound *he* which no longer pertains to any person and which concerns us all. A *he* 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 it flattens, stretching it towards its limits. And, indeed, all the authors he cites as those who have handled this mysterious *he* - Kafka and others - are writers who have

accomplished this kind of spreading and sprawling of language. They have refused to centre language on devices such as shifters, and instead they have performed this kind of spreading, 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.

[tape interrupted]

Okay... *he* can be the third person, but if I say 'it happens' (*il arrive*)... 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* (*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.

[tape interrupted]

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 and 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'... When I say 'a beast, an animal' this is even more unified, individuated. And he launches his great formula: "being is one thing." *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.

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 has no individuation, if not by derivation. Or else, by fiction. That is to say 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? 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 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?

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 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. 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 they say. It only seems that way. But it's not the first time that something seems to be which 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 this very strange region... because individuations are made in a completely different way. 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?

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 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...

Isn't this the 'I walk' that Benveniste neglected and treated as of minor importance? It is 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 bore this quite marvellously in English literature is of course Virginia Woolf.

[tape interrupted]

Schopenhauer sang of the woe 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 that the choice is not between the individuation of persons or the undifferentiated abyss: there exists another mode of individuation.

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 something else entirely. In what sense?

If you live *your* individuation and not that of a person, it is - to go back to the terms we used the other time - that of a *tribe*. I am a tribe, I have my tribes. 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...

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 too 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. So 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... Obviously at this point any personology, if it were true, 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're still developing our distinction, moving it. I am wounded. Oh no, the wound. I have a knife stuck in me. 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.

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 paralysed, 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. Okay. 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. It only exists insofar as it is effectuated in persons and things. War doesn't exist independently of the soldiers who are subjected to it, the materials that are deployed, the places involved... that is to say 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.

[tape interrupted]

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. 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 *he*-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 who are always 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.

#### [Paris 8 translation]

Well. 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 say, to ‘mediocrise’ nothing. There are people who ‘mediocrise’ death. There are people who ‘mediocrise’ their own diseases, however they have diseases. I don’t know, yes, they have diseases-events. Yeah well, there are people who make everything filthy... as the guy who writes “commit suicide !”.

Here is 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.

#### [Translation by Thompson/Maglioni]

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.

(Student) Can I ask you a question?

(Deleuze) Yes.

(Student) (*question inaudible*)

(Deleuze) Blanchot stated it clearly regarding death and he also speaks of suicide. In suicide there is an operation which is fundamentally one of bad faith. Because in suicide there is a kind of desperate effort to effectuate and render the event of death as though it could be completely effectuated, to exhaust it through its effectuation. 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. And in this we have a kind of cult of life.