

Cogito and the History of Madness

Jacques Derrida

(1963)

The Instant of Decision is Madness
(Kierkegaard)

In any event this book was terribly daring. A transparent sheet separates it from madness.
(Joyce, speaking of *Ulysses*)

These reflections have as their point of departure, as the title of this lecture clearly indicates, Michel Foucault's book *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*.

This book, admirable in so many respects, powerful in its breadth and style, is even more intimidating for me in that, having formerly had the good fortune to study under Michel Foucault, I retain the consciousness of an admiring and grateful disciple. Now, the disciple's consciousness, when he starts, I would not say to dispute, but to engage in dialogue with the master or, better, to articulate the interminable and silent dialogue which made him into a disciple—this disciple's consciousness is an unhappy consciousness. Starting to enter into dialogue in the world, that is, starting to answer back, he always feels “caught in the act,” like the “infant” who, by definition and as his name indicates, cannot speak and above all must not answer back. And when, as is the case here, the dialogue is in danger of being taken—incorrectly—as a challenge, the disciple knows that he alone finds himself already challenged by the master's voice within him that precedes his own. He feels himself indefinitely challenged, or rejected or accused; as a disciple, he is challenged by the master who speaks within him and before him, to reproach him for making this challenge and to reject it in

advance, having elaborated it before him; and having interiorized the master, he is also challenged by the disciple that he himself is. This interminable unhappiness of the disciple perhaps stems from the fact that he does not yet know—or is still concealing from himself—that the master, like real life, may always be absent. The disciple must break the glass, or better the mirror, the reflection, his infinite speculation on the master. And start to speak.

As the route that these considerations will follow is neither direct nor unilinear—far from it—I will sacrifice any further preamble and go straight to the most general questions that will serve as the focal points of these reflections. General questions that will have to be determined and specified along the way, many of which, most, will remain open.

My point of departure might appear slight and artificial. In this 673-page book, Michel Foucault devotes three pages—and, moreover, in a kind of prologue to his second chapter—to a certain passage from the first of Descartes's *Meditations*. In this passage madness, folly, dementia, insanity seem, I emphasize *seem*, dismissed, excluded, and ostracized from the circle of philosophical dignity, denied entry to the philosopher's city, denied the right to philosophical consideration, ordered away from the bench as soon as summoned *to* it by Descartes—this last tribunal of a Cogito that, by its essence, *could not possibly* be mad.

In alleging correctly or incorrectly, as will be determined, that the sense of Foucault's entire project can be pinpointed in these few allusive and somewhat enigmatic pages, and that the reading of Descartes and the Cartesian Cogito proposed *to* us engages in its problematic the totality of this *History of Madness* as regards both its intention and its feasibility, I shall therefore be asking myself, in two series of questions, the following:

1. First, and in some ways this is a prejudicial question: is the *interpretation* of Descartes's intention that is proposed *to* us justifiable? What I here call interpretation is a certain passage, a certain semantic relationship proposed by Foucault between, *on the one hand*, what

Descartes said—or what he is believed to have said or meant—and *on the other hand*, let us say, with intentional vagueness for the moment, a certain “historical structure,” as it is called, a certain meaningful historical totality, a total historical project through which we think what Descartes said—or what he is believed to have said or meant—can *particularly* be demonstrated. In asking if the interpretation is justifiable, I am therefore asking about two things, putting two preliminary questions into one: (a) Have we fully understood the *sign* itself, in itself? In other words, has what Descartes said and meant been clearly perceived? This comprehension of the sign in and of itself, in its immediate materiality as a sign, if I may so call it, is only the first moment but also the indispensable condition of all hermeneutics and of any claim to transition from the sign to the signified. ‘When one attempts, in a general way, to pass from an obvious to a latent language, one must first be rigorously sure of the obvious meaning. The analyst, for example, must first speak the same language as the patient. (b) Second implication of the first question: once understood as a sign, does Descartes’s stated intention have with the total historical structure to which it is to be related the relationship assigned to it? *Does it have the historical meaning assigned to it?*’ Does it have the historical meaning assigned to it?’ That is, again, two questions in one: Does it have *the* historical meaning assigned to it? does it have *this* meaning, a *given* meaning Foucault assigns to it? Or, second, does it have the *historical* meaning assigned to it? Is this meaning exhausted by its historicity? In other words, is it fully, in each and every one of its aspects, historical, in the classical sense of the word?

2. Second series of questions (and here we shall go somewhat beyond the case of Descartes, beyond the case of the Cartesian Cogito, which will be examined no longer in and of itself but as the index of a more general problematic: in the light of the rereading of the Cartesian Cogito that we shall be led to propose (or rather to recall, for, let it be said at the outset, this will in some ways be the most classical, banal reading, even if not the easiest one), will it not be possible to interrogate *certain* philosophical and methodological presuppositions of this history of madness? *Certain ones* only, for Foucault’s enterprise is too rich, branches out in too many directions to be preceded by a method or even by a *philosophy*, in the traditional

sense of the word. And if it is true, as Foucault says, as he admits by citing Pascal, that one cannot speak of madness except in relation to that “other form of madness” that allows men “not to be mad,” that is, except in relation to reason, it will perhaps be possible not to add anything whatsoever to what Foucault has said, but perhaps only to *repeat* once more, on the site of this *division* between reason and madness of which Foucault speaks so well, the meaning, a meaning of the Cogito or (plural) Cogitos (for the Cogito of the Cartesian variety is neither the first nor the last form of Cogito); and also to determine that what is in question here is an experience which, at its furthest reaches, is perhaps no less adventurous, perilous, nocturnal, and pathetic than the experience of madness, and is, I believe, much less adverse to and accusatory of madness, that is, accusative and objectifying of it, than Foucault seems to think.

As a first stage, we will attempt a commentary, and will accompany or follow as faithfully as possible Foucault’s intentions in reinscribing an interpretation of the Cartesian Cogito within the total framework of the *History of Madness*. What should then become apparent in the course of this first stage is the meaning of the Cartesian Cogito as read by Foucault. To this end, it is necessary to recall the general plan of the book and to open several marginal questions, destined to remain open and marginal.

In writing a history of madness, Foucault has attempted—and this is the greatest merit, but also the very infeasibility of his book—to write a history of madness *itself*. *Itself*. Of madness itself. That is, by letting madness speak for itself. Foucault wanted madness to be the *subject* of his book in every sense of the word: its theme and its first-person narrator, its author, madness speaking about itself. Foucault wanted to write a history of madness *itself*, that is madness speaking on the basis of its own experience and under its own authority, and not a history of madness described from within the language of reason, the language of psychiatry *on* madness—the agonistic and rhetorical dimensions of the preposition *on* overlapping here—on madness already crushed beneath psychiatry, dominated, beaten to the ground, interned, that is to say, madness made into an object and exiled as the other of a

language and a historical meaning which have been confused with logos itself. “A history not of psychiatry,” Foucault says, “but of madness itself, in its most vibrant state, before being captured by knowledge.”

It is a question, therefore, of escaping the trap or objectivist naiveté that would consist in writing a history of untamed madness, of madness as it carries itself and breathes before being caught and paralyzed in the nets of classical reason, from within the very language of classical reason itself, utilizing the concepts that were the historical instruments of the capture of madness—the restrained and restraining language of reason. Foucault’s determination to avoid this trap is constant. It is the most audacious and seductive aspect of his venture, producing its admirable tension. But it is also, with all seriousness, the *maddest* aspect of his project. And it is remarkable that this obstinate determination to avoid the trap—that is, the trap set by classical reason to catch madness and which can now catch Foucault as he attempts to write a history of madness itself without repeating the aggression of rationalism—this determination to bypass reason is expressed in two ways difficult to reconcile at first glance. Which is to say that it is expressed uneasily.

Sometimes Foucault globally rejects the language of reason, which itself is the language of order (that is to say, simultaneously the language of the system of objectivity, of the universal rationality of which psychiatry wishes to be the expression, and the language of the body politic—the right to citizenship in the philosopher’s city overlapping here with the right to citizenship anywhere, the philosophical realm functioning, within the unity of a certain structure, as the metaphor or the metaphysics of the political realm. At these moments he writes sentences of this type (he has just evoked the broken dialogue between reason and madness at the end of the eighteenth century, a break that was finalized by the annexation of the totality of language—and of the right to language—by psychiatric reason as the delegate of societal and governmental reason; madness has been stifled): “The language of psychiatry, which is a monologue of reason *on* madness, could be established only on the basis of such a silence. I have not tried to write the history of that language

but, rather, the archaeology of that silence.” And throughout the book runs the theme linking madness to silence, to “words without language” or “without the voice of a subject,” “obstinate murmur of a language that speaks by itself, without speaker or interlocutor, piled up upon itself, strangled, collapsing before reaching the stage of formulation, quietly returning to the silence from which it never departed. The calcinated root of meaning.” The history of madness itself is therefore the archaeology of a silence.

But, first of all, is there a history of silence? Further, is not an archaeology, even of silence, a logic, that is, an organized language, a project, an order, a sentence, a syntax, a work? Would not the archaeology of silence be the most efficacious and subtle restoration, the *repetition*, in the most irreducibly ambiguous meaning of the word, of the act perpetrated against madness—and be so at the very moment when this act is denounced? Without taking into account that all the signs which allegedly serve as indices of the origin of this silence and of this stifled speech, and as indices of everything that has made madness an interrupted and forbidden, that is, arrested, discourse—all these signs and documents are borrowed, without exception, from the juridical province of interdiction.

Hence, one can inquire—as Foucault does also, at moments other than those when he contrives to speak of silence (although in too lateral and implicit a fashion from my point of view)—about the source and the status of the language of this archaeology, of this language which is to be understood by a reason that is not classical reason. What is the historical responsibility of this logic of archaeology? Where should it be situated? Does it suffice to stack the tools of psychiatry neatly, inside a tightly shut workshop, in order to return to innocence and to end all complicity with the rational or political order which keeps madness captive? The psychiatrist is but the delegate of this order, one delegate among others. Perhaps it does not suffice to imprison or to exile the delegate, or to stifle him; and perhaps it does not suffice to deny oneself the conceptual material of psychiatry in order to exculpate one’s own language. All our European languages, the language of everything that has participated, from near or far, in the adventure of Western reason all

this is the immense delegation of the project defined by Foucault under the rubric of the capture or objectification of madness. *Nothing* within this language, and *no one* among those who speak it, can escape the historical guilt if there is one, and if it is historical in a classical sense—which Foucault apparently wishes to put on trial. But such a trial may be impossible, for by the simple fact of their articulation the proceedings and the verdict unceasingly reiterate the crime. If the *Order* of which we are speaking is so powerful, if its power is unique of its kind, this is so precisely by virtue of the universal, structural, universal, and infinite complicity in which it compromises all those who understand it in its own language, even when this language provides them with the form of their own denunciation. Order is then denounced within order.

Total disengagement from the *totality* of the historical language responsible for the exile of madness, liberation from this language in order to write the archaeology of silence, would be possible in only two ways.

Either do not mention a certain silence (a *certain* silence which, again, can be determined only within a *language* and an *order* that will preserve this silence from contamination by any given muteness), *or* follow the madman down the road of his exile. The misfortune of the mad, the interminable misfortune of their silence, is that their best spokesmen are those who betray them best; which is to say that when one attempts to convey their silence *itself*, one has already passed over to the side of the enemy, the side of order, even if one fights against order from within it, putting its origin into question. There is no Trojan horse unconquerable by Reason (in general). The unsurpassable, unique, and imperial grandeur of the order of reason, that which makes it not just another actual order or structure (a determined historical structure, one structure among other possible ones), is that one cannot speak out against it except by being for it, that one can protest it only from within it; and within its domain, Reason leaves us only the recourse to stratagems and strategies. The revolution against reason, in the historical form of classical reason (but the latter is only a determined example of Reason in general. And because of this oneness of Reason the

expression “history of reason” is difficult to conceptualize, as is also, consequently, a “history of madness”), the revolution against reason can be made only within it, in accordance with a Hegelian law *to* which I myself was very sensitive in Foucault’s book, despite the absence of any precise reference to Hegel. Since the revolution against reason, from the moment it is articulated, can operate only *within* reason, it always has the limited scope of what is called, precisely in the language of a department of *internal* affairs, a disturbance. A history, that is, an archaeology against reason doubtless cannot be written, for, despite all appearances to the contrary, the concept of history has always been a rational one. It is the meaning of “history” or *archia* that should have been questioned first, perhaps. A writing that exceeds, by questioning them, the values “origin,” “reason,” and “history” could not be contained within the metaphysical closure of an archaeology.

As Foucault is the first *to* be conscious—and acutely so—of this daring, of the necessity of speaking and of drawing his language from the wellspring of a reason more profound than the reason which issued forth during the classical age, and as he experiences a necessity of speaking which must escape the objectivist project of classical reason—a necessity of speaking even at the price of a war declared by the language of reason against itself, a war in which language would recapture itself, destroy itself, or unceasingly revive the act of its own destruction—the allegation of an archaeology of silence, a purist, intransigent, nonviolent, nondialectical allegation, is often counterbalanced, equilibrated, I should even say contradicted by a discourse in Foucault’s book that is not only the admission of a difficulty, but the formulation of *another* project, a project that is not an expediency, but a different and more ambitious one, a project more effectively ambitious than the first one.

The admission of the difficulty can be found in sentences such as these, among others, which I simply cite, in order not to deprive you of their dense beauty: “The perception that seeks to grasp them [in question are the miseries and murmurings of madness] in their wild state, necessarily belongs to a world that has already captured them. The liberty

of madness can be understood only from high in the fortress that holds madness prisoner. And there madness possesses only the morose sum of its prison experiences, its mute experience of persecution, and we—we possess only its description as a man wanted.” And, later, Foucault speaks of a madness “whose wild state can never be restored in and of itself” and of an “inaccessible primitive purity.”

Because this difficulty, or this impossibility, must reverberate within the language used to describe this history of madness, Foucault, in effect, acknowledges the necessity of maintaining his discourse within what he calls a “relativity without recourse,” that is, without support from an absolute reason or *logos*. The simultaneous necessity and impossibility of what Foucault elsewhere calls “a language without support,” that is to say, a language declining, in principle if not in fact, to articulate itself along the lines of the syntax of reason. In principle if not in fact, but here the fact cannot easily be put between parentheses. The fact of language is probably the only fact ultimately to resist all parenthization. “There, in the simple problem of articulation,” Foucault says later, “was hidden and expressed the major difficulty of the enterprise.”

One could perhaps say that the resolution of this difficulty is *practiced* rather than *formulated*. By necessity. I mean that the silence of madness is not *said*, cannot be said in the *logos* of this book, but is indirectly, metaphorically, made present by its *pathos-taking* this word in its best sense. A new and radical praise of folly whose intentions cannot be admitted because the *praise* [*éloge*]¹ of silence always takes place within *logos*, the language of objectification. “To speak well of madness” would be to annex it once more, especially when, as is the case here, “speaking well of” is also the wisdom and happiness of eloquent speech. Now, to state the difficulty, to state the difficulty of stating, is not yet to surmount it—quite the contrary. First, it is not to say in which language, through the agency of what speech, the difficulty is stated. Who perceives, who enunciates the difficulty? These efforts can be made neither in the wild and inaccessible silence of madness, nor simply in the language of the jailer, that is, in the language of classical reason, but only in the language of someone

for whom is meaningful and *before whom* appears the dialogue or war or misunderstanding or confrontation or double monologue that opposes reason and madness during the classical age. And thereby we can envision the historic liberation of a logos in which the two monologues, or the broken dialogue, or especially the breaking point of the dialogue between a *determined* reason and a *determined* madness, could be produced and can today be understood and enunciated. (Supposing that they can be; but here we are assuming Foucault's hypothesis.)

Therefore, if Foucault's book, despite all the acknowledged impossibilities and difficulties, was capable of being written, we have the right to ask what, in the last resort, supports this language without recourse or support: who enunciates the possibility of nonrecourse? Who wrote and who is to understand, in what language and from what historical situation of logos, who wrote and who is to understand this history of madness? For it is not by chance that such a project could take shape today. Without forgetting, *quite to the contrary*, the audacity of Foucault's act in the *History of Madness*, we must assume that a certain liberation of madness has gotten underway, that psychiatry has opened itself up, however minimally, and that the concept of madness as unreason, if it ever had a unity, has been dislocated. And that a project such as Foucault's can find its historical origin and passageway in the opening produced by this dislocation.

If Foucault, more than anyone else, is attentive and sensitive to these kinds of questions, it nevertheless appears that he does not acknowledge their quality of being prerequisite methodological or philosophical considerations. And it is true that once the question and the privileged difficulty are understood, to devote a preliminary work to them would have entailed the sterilization or paralysis of all further inquiry. Inquiry can prove through its very act that the movement of a discourse on madness is possible. But is not the foundation of this possibility still too classical?

Foucault's book is not one of those that abandons itself to the prospective lightheartedness of inquiry. That is why, behind the admission of the difficulty concerning the archaeology of

silence, a *different* project must be discerned, one which perhaps contradicts the projected archaeology of silence.

Because the silence whose archaeology is to be undertaken is not an original muteness or nondiscourse, but a subsequent silence, a discourse attested by *command*, the issue is therefore to reach the origin of the protectionism imposed by a reason that insists upon being sheltered, and that also insists upon providing itself with protective barriers against madness, thereby making itself into a barrier against madness; and to reach this origin from within a logos of free trade, that is, from within a logos that preceded the split of reason and madness, a logos which within itself permitted dialogue between what were later called reason and madness (unreason), permitted their free circulation and exchange, just as the medieval city permitted the free circulation of the mad within itself. The issue is therefore to reach the point at which the dialogue was broken off, dividing itself into two soliloquies—what Foucault calls, using a very strong word, the *Decision*. The Decision, through a single act, links and separates reason and madness, and it must be understood at once both as the original act of an order, a fiat, a decree, and as a schism, a caesura, a separation, a dissection. I would prefer *dissension*, to underline that in question is a self-dividing action, a cleavage and torment interior to meaning *in general*, interior to logos in general, a division within the very act of *sentire*. As always, the dissension is internal. The exterior (is) the interior, is the fission that produces and divides it along the lines of the Hegelian *Entzweiung*.

It thus seems that the project of convoking the first dissension of logos against itself is quite another project than the archaeology of silence, and raises different questions. This time it would be necessary to exhume the virgin and unitary ground upon which the decisive act linking and separating madness and reason obscurely took root. The reason and madness of the classical age had a common root. But this common root, which is a logos, this unitary foundation is much more ancient than the medieval period, brilliantly but briefly evoked by Foucault in his very fine opening chapter. There must be a founding unity that already carries within it the “free trade” of the Middle Ages, and this unity is already the unity of a

logos, that is, of a reason; an already historical reason certainly, but a reason much less determined than it will be in its so-called classical form, having not yet received the determinations of the “classical age.” It is within the element of this archaic reason that the dissection, the dissension, will present itself as a modification or; if you will, as an overturning, that is, a revolution but an internal revolution, a revolution affecting the self, occurring within the self. For this logos which is in the beginning, is not only the common ground of all dissension, but also—and no less importantly—the very atmosphere in which Foucault’s language moves, the atmosphere in which a history of madness during the classical age not only appears *in fact* but is also *by all rights* stipulated and specified in terms of its limits. In order to account simultaneously for the origin (or the possibility) of the decision and for the origin (or the possibility) of its narration, it might have been necessary to start by reflecting this original logos in which the violence of the classical era played itself out. This history of logos before the Middle Ages and before the classical age is not, if this need be said at all, a nocturnal and mute prehistory. Whatever the momentary break, if there is one, of the Middle Ages with the Greek tradition, this break and this alteration are late and secondary developments as concerns the fundamental permanence of the logico-philosophical heritage.

That the embedding of the decision in its true historical grounds has been left in the shadows by Foucault is bothersome, and for at least two reasons:

1. It is bothersome because at the outset Foucault makes a somewhat enigmatic allusion to the Greek logos, saying that, unlike classical reason, it “had no contrary.” To cite Foucault: “The Greeks had a relation to something that they called *hybris*. This relation was not merely one of condemnation; the existence of Thrasymachus or of Calicles suffices to prove it, even if their language has reached us already enveloped in the reassuring dialectic of Socrates. But the Greek Logos had no contrary.”

[One would have to assume, then, that the Greek logos had no contrary, which is to say, briefly, that the Greeks were in the greatest proximity to the elementary, primordial, and

undivided Logos with respect to which contradiction in general, all wars or polemics, could only be ulterior developments. This hypothesis forces us to admit, as Foucault above *all* does *not*, that the history and lineage of the “reassuring dialectic of Socrates” in their *totality* had already fallen outside and been exiled from this Greek logos that had no contrary. For if the Socratic dialectic is reassuring, in the sense understood by Foucault, it is so only in that it has already expulsed, excluded, objectified or (curiously amounting to the same thing) assimilated and mastered as one of its moments, “enveloped” the contrary of reason; and also only in that it has tranquilized and reassured itself into a pre-Cartesian certainty, a *sophrosyne*, a wisdom, a reasonable good sense and prudence.

Consequently, it must be *either* (a) that the Socratic moment and its entire posterity immediately partake in the Greek logos that has no contrary; and that consequently, the Socratic dialectic could not be reassuring (we may soon have occasion to show that it is no more reassuring than the Cartesian cogito). In this case, in this hypothesis, the fascination with the pre-Socratics to which we have been provoked by Nietzsche, then by Heidegger and several others, would carry with it a share of mystification whose historico-philosophical motivations remain to be examined. Or (b) that the Socratic moment and the victory over the Cartesian hybris already are the marks of a deportation and an exile of logos from itself, the wounds left in it by a decision, a difference; and then the structure of exclusion which Foucault wishes to describe in his book could not have been born with classical reason. It would have to have been consummated and reassured and smoothed over throughout all the centuries of philosophy. It would be essential to the entirety of the history of philosophy and of reason. In this regard, the classical age could have neither specificity nor privilege. And all the signs assembled by Foucault under the chapter heading *Stultifera navis* would play themselves out only on the surface of a chronic dissension. The free circulation of the mad, besides the fact that it *is* not as simply free as *all* that, would only be a socioeconomic epiphenomenon on the surface of a reason divided against itself since the dawn of its Greek origin. What seems to me sure in any case, regardless of the hypothesis one chooses concerning what is doubtless only a false problem and a false alternative, is that Foucault

cannot *simultaneously* save the affirmation of a reassuring dialectic of Socrates and his postulation of a specificity of the classical age whose reason would reassure itself by excluding its contrary, that is, by *constituting* its contrary as an object in order to be protected from it and be rid of it. In order to lock it up.

The attempt to write the history of the decision, division, difference runs the risk of construing the division as an event or a structure subsequent to the unity of an original presence, thereby confirming metaphysics in its fundamental operation.

Truthfully, for one or the other of these hypotheses to be true and for there to be a real choice between them, it must be assumed in *general* that reason can have a contrary, that there can be another of reason, that reason itself can construct or discover, and that the opposition of reason to its other is *symmetrical*. This is the heart of the matter. Permit me to hold off on this question.

However one interprets the situation of classical reason, notably as regards the Greek logos (and whether or not this latter experienced dissension) *in all cases* a doctrine of *tradition*, of the tradition of logos (is there any other?) seems to be the prerequisite implied by Foucault's enterprise. No matter what the relationship of the Greeks to *hybris*, a relationship that was certainly not simple ... (Here, I wish to open a parenthesis and a question: in the name of what invariable meaning of "madness" does Foucault associate, whatever the meaning of this association, Madness and *Hybris*? A problem of translation, a philosophical problem of translation is posed—and it is serious—even *if Hybris* is *not Madness* for Foucault. The determination of their difference supposes a hazardous linguistic transition. The frequent imprudence of translators in this respect should make us very wary. I am thinking in particular, and in passing, of what is translated by madness and fury in the *Philebus* (45e). Further, if madness has an invariable meaning, what is the relation of this meaning to the a posteriori *events* which govern Foucault's analysis? For, despite everything, even if his method is not empiricist, Foucault proceeds by inquiry and inquest. What he is writing is a history, and the recourse to events, in the last resort, is indispensable and determining, at

least in principle. Now, is not the concept of madness—never submitted to a thematic scrutiny by Foucault—today a false and disintegrated concept, outside current and popular language which always lags longer than it should behind its subversion by science and philosophy? Foucault, in rejecting the psychiatric or philosophical material that has always imprisoned the mad, winds up employing—inevitably—a popular and equivocal notion of madness, taken from an unverifiable source. This would not be serious if Foucault used the word only in quotation marks, as if it were the language of others, of those who, during the period under study, used it as a historical instrument. But everything transpires as if Foucault *knew* what “madness” means. Everything transpires as if, in a continuous and underlying way, an assured and rigorous precomprehension of the concept of madness, or at least of its nominal definition, were possible and acquired. In fact, however, it could be demonstrated that as Foucault intends it, if not as intended by the historical current he is studying, the concept of madness overlaps everything that can be put under the rubric of *negativity*. One can imagine the kind of problems posed by such a usage of the notion of madness. The same kind of questions could be posed concerning the notion of truth that runs throughout the book ... I close this long parenthesis.) Thus, whatever the relation of the Greeks to *hybris*, and of Socrates to the original logos, it is in any event certain that classical reason, and medieval reason before it, bore a relation to Greek reason, and that it is within the milieu of this more or less immediately perceived heritage, which itself is more or less crossed with other traditional lines, that the adventure or misadventure of classical reason developed. If dissension dates from Socrates, then the situation of the madman in the Socratic and post-Socratic worlds—assuming that there is, then, something that can be called mad—perhaps deserves to be examined first. Without this examination, and as Foucault does not proceed in a simply aprioristic fashion, his historical description poses the banal but inevitable problems of periodization and of geographical, political, ethnological limitation, etc. If, on the contrary, the unopposed and unexcluding unity of logos were maintained until the classical “crisis,” then this latter is, if I may say so, secondary and derivative. It does not engage the entirety of reason. And in this case, even if stated in passing, Socratic

discourse would be nothing less than reassuring. It can be proposed that the classical crisis developed from and within the elementary tradition of a logos that has no opposite but carries within itself and *says* all determined contradictions. This doctrine of the tradition of meaning and of reason would be even further necessitated by the fact that it alone can give meaning and rationality in *general* to Foucault's discourse and to any discourse on the war between reason and unreason. For these discourses intend above all to be understood.

2. I stated above that leaving the history of the preclassical logos in the shadows is bothersome for *two* reasons. The second reason, which I will adduce briefly before going on to Descartes, has to do with the profound link established by Foucault between the division, the dissension, and the possibility of history itself. "*The necessity of madness*, throughout the history of the West, is linked to the deciding gesture which detaches from the background noise, and from its continuous monotony, a meaningful language that is transmitted and consummated in time; briefly, it is linked to the *possibility of history*."

Consequently, if the decision through which reason constitutes itself by excluding and objectifying the free subjectivity of madness is indeed the origin of history, if it is historicity itself, the condition of meaning and of language, the condition of the tradition of meaning, the condition of the work in general, if the structure of exclusion is the fundamental structure of historicity, then the "classical" moment of this exclusion described by Foucault has neither absolute privilege nor archetypal exemplarity. It is an example as sample and not as model. In any event, in order to evoke the singularity of the classical moment, which is profound, perhaps it would be necessary to underline, not the aspects in which it is a structure of exclusion, but those aspects in which, and especially for what end, its own structure of exclusion is historically distinguished from the others, from all others. And to pose the problem of its exemplarity: are we concerned with an example among others or with a "good example," an example that is revelatory by privilege? Formidable and infinitely difficult problems that haunt Foucault's book, more present in his intentions than his words.

Finally, a *last question*: if this great division is the possibility of history itself, the historicity of history, what does it mean, here, “to write the history of this division”? To write the history of historicity? To write the history of the origin of history? The *hysteron proteron* would not here be a simple “logical fallacy,” a fallacy within logic, within an established rationality. And its denunciation is not an act of ratiocination. If there is a historicity proper to reason in general, the history of reason cannot be the history of its origin (which, for a start, demands the historicity of reason in general), but must be that of one of its determined figures,

This second project, which would devote all its efforts to discovering the common root of meaning and nonmeaning and to unearthing the original logos in which *a* language and *a* silence are divided from one another is not at all an expediency as concerns everything that could come under the heading “archaeology of silence,” the archaeology which simultaneously claims to say madness itself and renounces this claim. The expression “to say madness itself” is self-contradictory. To say madness without expelling it into objectivity is to let it say itself. But madness is what by essence cannot be said: it is the “absence of the work,” as Foucault profoundly says.

Thus, not an expediency, but a different and more ambitious design, one that should lead to a praise of reason (there is no praise [*/?loge*], by essence, except of reason),¹⁰ but this time of a reason more profound than that which opposes and detennines itself in a historically determined conflict. Hegel again, al- ways . Not an expediency, but a more ambitious ambition, even if Foucault writes this: “*Lacking* this inaccessible primitive purity [of madness itself], a structural study must go back toward the decision that simultaneously links and separates reason and madness; it must aim to uncover the perpetual exchange, the obscure common root, the original confrontation that gives meaning to the unity, as well as to the opposition, of sense and non-sense” [*my italics*].

Before describing the moment when the reason of the classical age will reduce madness to silence by what he calls a “strange act of force,” Foucault shows how the exclusion and

internment of madness found a sort of structural niche prepared for it by the history of another exclusion: the exclusion of leprosy. Unfortunately, we cannot be detained by the brilliant passages of the chapter *entitled Stultifera navis*. They would also pose numerous questions.

We thus come to the “act of force,” to the great internment which, with the creation of the houses of internment for the mad and others in the middle of the seventeenth century, marks the advent and first stage of a classical process described by Foucault throughout his book. Without establishing, moreover, whether an event such as the creation of a house of internment is a sign among others, whether it is a fundamental symptom or a cause. This kind of question could appear exterior to a method that presents itself precisely as structuralist, that is, a method for which everything within the structural totality is interdependent and circular in such a way that the classical problems of causality themselves would appear to stem from a misunderstanding. Perhaps. But I wonder whether, when one is concerned with history (and Foucault wants to write a history), a strict structuralism is possible, and, especially, whether, if only for the sake of order and within the order of its own descriptions, such a study can avoid all etiological questions, all questions bearing, shall we say, on the center of gravity of the structure. The legitimate renunciation of a certain style of causality perhaps does not give one the right to renounce all etiological demands. The passage devoted to Descartes opens the crucial chapter on “the great internment.” It thus opens the book itself, and its location at the beginning of the chapter is fairly unexpected. More than anywhere else, the question I have just asked seems to me unavoidable here. We are not told whether or not this passage of the first *Meditation*, interpreted by Foucault as a *philosophical* internment of madness, is destined, as a prelude to the historical and sociopolitical drama, to set the tone for the *entire* drama to be played. Is this “act of force,” described in the dimension of theoretical knowledge and metaphysics, a symptom, a cause, a language? What must be assumed or elucidated so that the meaning of this question or dissociation can be neutralized? And if this act of force has a structural affinity with the totality of the drama, what is the

status of this affinity? Finally, whatever the place reserved for philosophy in this total historical structure may be, why the sole choice of the Cartesian example? What is the exemplarity of Descartes, while so many other philosophers of the same era were interested or—no less significantly—not interested in madness in various ways?

Foucault does not respond directly to any of these more than methodological questions, summarily, but inevitably, invoked. A single sentence, in his preface, settles the question. To cite Foucault: “To write the history of madness thus will mean the execution of a structural study of an historical ensemble—notions, institutions, juridical and police measures, scientific concepts—which holds captive a madness whose wild state can never in itself be restored.” How are these elements organized in the “historical ensemble”? What is a “notion”? Do philosophical notions have a privilege? How are they related to scientific concepts? A quantity of questions that besiege this enterprise.

I do not know to what extent Foucault would agree that the prerequisite for a response *to* such questions is first of all the internal and autonomous analysis of the philosophical content of philosophical discourse. Only when the totality of this content will have become manifest in its meaning for me (but this is impossible) will I rigorously be able to situate it in its total historical form. It is only then that its reinsertion will not do it violence, that there will be a legitimate reinsertion of *this* philosophical meaning *itself*. As to Descartes in particular, no historical question about him about the latent historical meaning of his discourse, about its place in a total structure—can be answered before a rigorous and exhaustive internal analysis of his manifest intentions, of the manifest meaning of his philosophical discourse has been made.

We will now turn to this manifest meaning, this properly philosophical intention that is not legible in the immediacy of a first encounter. But first by reading over Foucault’s shoulder.

There had to be folly so that wisdom might overcome it.
(Herder)

Descartes, then, is alleged to have executed the act of force in the first of the *Meditations*,

and it would very summarily consist in a summary expulsion of the possibility of madness from thought itself.

I shall first cite the decisive passage from Descartes, the one cited by Foucault. Then we shall follow Foucault's reading of the text. Finally, we shall establish a dialogue between Descartes and Foucault.

Descartes writes the following (at the moment when he undertakes to rid himself of all the opinions—in which he had hitherto believed, and to start all over again from the foundations: *a primis fundamentis*. To do so, it will suffice to ruin the ancient foundations without being obliged to submit all his opinions to doubt one by one, for the ruin of the foundations brings down the entire edifice. One of these fragile foundations of knowledge, the most naturally apparent, is sensation. The senses deceive me sometimes; they can thus deceive me all the time, and I will therefore submit to doubt all knowledge whose origin is in sensation): “All that up to the present time I have accepted as most true and certain I have learned either from the senses or through the senses; but it is sometimes proved to me that these senses are deceptive, and it is wiser not to trust entirely to any thing by which we have once been deceived.” Descartes starts a new paragraph.

“But ..” (*sed forte* ... I insist upon *the forte* which the Due de Luynes left untranslated, an omission that Descartes did not deem necessary to correct when he went over the translation. It is better, as Baillet says, to compare “the French with the Latin” when reading the *Meditations*. It is only in the second French edition by Clerselier that the *sed forte* is given its full weight and is translated by “but yet perhaps ... “ The importance of this point will soon be demonstrated.) Pursuing my citation: “But it may be that although the senses sometimes deceive us concerning things which are *hardly perceptible, or very far away*, there are yet many others to be met with as to which we cannot reasonably have any doubt ... “ [my italics]. There would be, *there would perhaps be* data of sensory origin which cannot reasonably be doubted. “And how could I deny that these hands and this body are mine, were it not perhaps that I compare myself to certain persons, devoid of sense, whose

cerebella are so troubled and clouded by the violent vapours of black bile, that they constantly assure us that they think they are kings when they are really quite poor, or that they are clothed in purple when they are really without covering, or who imagine that they have an earthenware head or are nothing but pumpkins or are made of glass ...”

And now the most significant sentence in Foucault’s eyes: “But they are mad, *sed amentes sunt isti*, and I should not be any the less insane (*demens*) were I to follow examples so extravagant.”

I interrupt my citation not at the end of this paragraph, but on the first words of the following paragraph, which reinscribe the lines I have just read in a rhetorical and pedagogical movement with highly compressed articulations. These first words are *Praeclare sane* ... Also translated as *toutefois* [but at the same time—trans.]. And this is the beginning of a paragraph in which Descartes imagines that he can always dream, and that the world might be no more real than his dreams. And he generalizes by hyperbole the hypothesis of sleep and dream (“Now let us assume that we are asleep ...”); this hypothesis and this hyperbole will serve in the elaboration of doubt founded on natural reasons (for there is also a hyperbolic moment of this doubt), beyond whose reach will be only the truths of nonsensory origin, mathematical truths notably, which are true “whether I am awake or asleep” and which will capitulate only to the artificial and metaphysical assault of the evil genius.

How does Foucault read this text?

According to Foucault, Descartes, encountering madness alongside (the expression *alongside* is Foucault’s) dreams and all forms of sensory error, refuses to accord them all the same treatment, so to speak. “In the economy of doubt,” says Foucault, “there is a fundamental imbalance between madness, on the one hand, and error, on the other ...” (I note in passing that elsewhere Foucault often denounces the classical reduction of madness to error.) He pursues: “Descartes does not avoid the peril of madness in the same way he circumvents the eventuality of dream and error.”

Foucault establishes a parallelism between the following two procedures:

1. The one by which Descartes wishes to demonstrate that the senses can deceive us only regarding “things which are hardly perceptible, or very far away.” These would be the limits of the error of sensory origin. And in the passage I just read, Descartes did say: “But it may be that although the senses sometimes deceive us concerning things which are hardly perceptible, or very far away, there are yet many others to be met with as to which we cannot reasonably have any doubt ...” Unless one is mad, a hypothesis seemingly excluded in principle by Descartes in the same passage.
2. The procedure by which Descartes shows that imagination and dreams cannot themselves create the simple and universal elements which enter into their creations, as, for example, “corporeal nature in general, and its extension, the figure of extended things, their quantity or magnitude and number,” that is, everything which precisely is not of sensory origin, thereby constituting the objects of mathematics and geometry, which themselves are invulnerable to natural doubt. It is thus tempting to believe, along with Foucault, that Descartes wishes to find in the analysis (taking this word in its strict sense) of dreams and sensation a nucleus, an element of proximity and simplicity irreducible to doubt. It is *in* dreams and *in* sensory perception that I surmount or, as Foucault says, that I “circumvent” doubt and reconquer a basis of certainty.

Foucault writes thus: “Descartes does not avoid the *peril* of madness in the same way he circumvents the *eventuality* of dreams or of error. Neither image-peopled sleep, nor the clear consciousness that the senses can be deceived is able to take doubt to the extreme point of its universality; let us admit that our eyes deceive us, ‘let us assume that we are asleep’ truth will not entirely slip out into the night. For madness, it is otherwise.” Later: “In the economy of doubt, there is an imbalance between madness, on the one hand, and dream and error, on the other. Their situation in relation to the truth and to him who seeks it is different; dreams or illusions are surmounted within the structure of truth; but madness is inadmissible for the doubting subject.”

It indeed appears, then, that Descartes does not delve into the experience of madness as he delves into the experience of dreams, that is, to the point of reaching an irreducible nucleus which nonetheless would be interior to madness itself. Descartes is not interested in madness, he does not welcome it as a hypothesis, he does not consider it. He excludes it by decree. I would be insane if I thought that I had a body made of glass. But this is excluded, since I am thinking. Anticipating the moment of the Cogito, which will have to await the completion of numerous stages, highly rigorous in their succession, Foucault writes: “impossibility of being mad that is essential not to the object of thought, but to the thinking subject.” Madness is expelled, rejected, denounced in its very impossibility from the very interiority of thought itself.

Foucault is the first, to my knowledge, to have isolated delirium and madness from sensation and dreams in this first *Meditation*. The first to have isolated them in their philosophical sense and their methodological function. Such is the originality of his reading. But if the classical interpreters did not deem this dissociation auspicious, is it because of their inattentiveness? Before answering this question, or rather before continuing to ask it, let us recall along with Foucault that this decree of inadmissibility which is a forerunner of the political decree of the great internment, or corresponds to it, translates it, or accompanies it, or in any case is in solidarity with it—this decree would have been impossible for a Montaigne, who was, as we know, haunted by the possibility of being mad, or of becoming completely mad in the very action of thought itself. The Cartesian decree therefore marks, says Foucault, “the advent of a *ratio*.” But as the advent of a *ratio* is not “exhausted” by “the progress of rationalism,” Foucault leaves Descartes there, to go on to the historical (politico-social) structure of which the Cartesian act is only a sign. For “more than one sign,” Foucault says, “betrays the classical event. “

We have attempted to read Foucault. Let us now naively attempt to reread Descartes and, before repeating the question of the relationship between the “sign” and the “structure,” let us attempt to see, as I had earlier mentioned, what the *sense of the sign itself* may be.

(Since the sign here already has the autonomy of a philosophical discourse, is already a relationship of signifier to signified.)

In rereading Descartes, I notice two things:

1. That in the passage *to* which we have referred and which corresponds to the phase of *doubt* founded on *natural* reasons, Descartes *does not* circumvent the eventuality of sensory error or of dreams, and does not “surmount” them “within the structure of truth;” and all this for the simple reason that he apparently does not ever, nor in any way, surmount them or circumvent them, and does not ever set aside the possibility of total error for *all* knowledge gained from the senses or from imaginary constructions. It must be understood that the hypothesis of dreams is the radicalization or, if you will, the hyperbolical exaggeration of the hypothesis according to which the senses could *sometimes* deceive me. In dreams, the *totality* of sensory images is illusory. *It* follows that a certainty invulnerable to dreams would be *a fortiori* invulnerable to *perceptual* illusions of the sensory kind. It therefore suffices to examine the case of dreams in order *to* deal with, on the level which is ours for the moment, the case of natural doubt, of sensory error in general. Now, which are the certainties and truths that escape perception, and therefore also escape sensory error or imaginative and oneiric composition? They are certainties and truths of a nonsensory and nonimaginative origin. They are *simple* and *intelligible* things.

In effect, if I am asleep, everything I perceive while dreaming may be, as Descartes says, “false and illusory,” particularly the existence of my hands and my body and the actions of opening my eyes, moving my head, etc. In other words, what was previously excluded, according to Foucault, as insanity, is admissible within dreams. And we will see why in a moment. But, says Descartes, let us suppose that all my oneirical representations are illusory. Even in this case, there must be some representations of things as naturally certain as the body, hands, etc., however illusory this representation may be, and however false its relation to that which it represents. Now, within these representations, these images, these ideas in the Cartesian sense, everything may be fictitious and false, as in

the representations of those painters whose imaginations, as Descartes expressly says, are “extravagant” enough to invent something so new that its like has never been seen before. But in the case of painting, at least, there is a final element which cannot be analyzed as illusion, an element that painters cannot counterfeit: color. This is only an *analogy*, for Descartes does not posit the necessary existence of color in general: color is an object of the senses among others. But, *just as* there always remains in a painting, however inventive and imaginative it may be, an irreducibly simple and real element—color similarly, there is in dreams an element of noncounterfeit simplicity presupposed by all fantastical compositions and irreducible to all analysis. But this time—and this is why the example of the painter and of color was only an analogy—this element is neither sensory nor imaginative: it is intelligible,

Foucault does not concern himself with this point. Let me cite the passage from Descartes that concerns us here:

For, as a matter of fact, painters, even when they study with the greatest skill to represent sirens and satyrs by forms the most strange and extraordinary, cannot give them natures which are entirely new, but merely make a certain medley of the members of different animals; or if their imagination is extravagant enough to invent something so novel that nothing similar has ever before been seen, and that then their work represents a thing purely fictitious and absolutely false, it is certain all the same that the colours of which this is composed are necessarily real. And for the same reason, although these general things, to wit, a body, eyes, a head, hands, and such like, may be imaginary, we are bound at the same time to confess that there are at least some other objects yet more simple and more universal, which are real and true; and of these just in the same way as with certain real colours, all these images of things which dwell in our thoughts, whether true and real or false and fantastic, are fanned,

To such a class of things pertains corporeal nature in general, and its extension, the figure of extended things, their quantity or magnitude and number, as also the place in which they are, the time which measures their duration, and so on.

That is possibly why our reasoning is not unjust when we conclude from this that Physics, Astronomy, Medicine and all other sciences which have as their end the consideration of composite things, are very dubious and uncertain; but that Arithmetic, Geometry and other sciences *of* that kind which only treat of things that are very simple and very general, without taking great trouble to ascertain whether they are actually existent or not, contain some measure of certainty and an element of the indubitable, For whether I am awake or asleep, two and three together always form five, and the square can never have more than four sides, and it does not seem possible that truths so clear and apparent can be suspected of any falsity.

And I remark that the following paragraph also starts with a “nevertheless” (*verumtamen*) which will soon be brought to our attention.

Thus the certainty of this simplicity of *intelligible* generalization-which is soon after submitted to metaphysical, artificial, and hyperbolical doubt through the fiction of the evil genius is in no way obtained by a continuous reduction which finally lays bare the resistance of a nucleus of sensory or imaginative certainty. There is discontinuity and a transition to another order of reasoning. The nucleus is purely intelligible, and the still natural and provisional certainty which has been attained supposes a radical break with the senses. At this moment of the analysis, no imaginative or sensory signification, as such, has been saved, *no* invulnerability of the senses to doubt has been experienced. *All* significations or “ideas” of sensory origin are *excluded* from the realm of *truth*, *for the same reason as madness* is excluded from it. And there is nothing astonishing about this: madness is only a particular case, and, moreover, not the most serious one, of the sensory illusion which interests Descartes at this point. It can *thus* be stated that:

2. The hypothesis of insanity—at this moment of the Cartesian order—seems neither to receive any privileged treatment nor to be submitted to any particular exclusion. Let us reread, in effect, the passage cited by Foucault in which insanity appears. Let us resituate it. Descartes has just remarked that since the senses sometimes deceive us, “it is wiser not to trust entirely to any thing by which we have once been deceived.” He then starts a new paragraph with the *sed forte* which I brought to your attention a few moments ago. Now, the entire paragraph which follows does not express Descartes’s final, definitive conclusions, but rather the astonishment and objections of the nonphilosopher, of the novice in philosophy who is frightened by this doubt and protests, saying: I am willing to let you doubt certain sensory perceptions concerning “things which are hardly perceptible, or very far away,” but the others! that you are in this place, sitting by the fire, speaking thus, this paper in your hands and other seeming certainties! Descartes then assumes the astonishment of this reader or naive interlocutor, pretends *to* take him into account when he writes: “And how could I deny that these hands and this body are mine, were it not perhaps that I compare myself to certain persons, devoid of sense, whose ... and I should not be any the less insane were I *to* follow examples so extravagant.”

The pedagogical and rhetorical sense of the *sed forte* which governs this paragraph is clear. It is the “but perhaps” of the feigned objection. Descartes has just said that all knowledge of sensory origin could deceive him. He pretends to put to himself the astonished objection of an imaginary nonphilosopher who *is* frightened by such audacity and says: no, not all sensory knowledge, for then you would be mad and it would be unreasonable to follow the example of madmen, to put forth the ideas of madmen. Descartes *echoes* this objection: since I am here, writing, and you understand me, I am not mad, nor are you, and we are *all* sane. The example of madness is therefore not indicative of the fragility of the sensory idea. So be it. Descartes acquiesces to this natural point of view, or rather he feigns *to* rest in this natural comfort in order better, more radically and more definitively, to unsettle himself from it and to discomfort his interlocutor. *So* be it, he says,

you think that I would be mad to doubt that I am sitting near the fire, etc., that I would be insane to follow the example of madmen. I will therefore propose a hypothesis which will seem much more natural to you, will not disorient you, because it concerns a more common, and more universal experience than that of madness: the experience of sleep and dreams. Descartes then elaborates the hypothesis that will ruin *all* the *sensory* foundations of knowledge and will lay bare only the *intellectual* foundations of certainty. This hypothesis above all will not run from the possibility of an insanity—an epistemological one—much more serious than madness.

The reference to dreams is therefore not put off to one side—quite the contrary—in relation to a madness potentially respected or even excluded by Descartes. It constitutes, in the methodical order which here is ours, the hyperbolical exasperation of the hypothesis of madness. This latter affected only certain areas of sensory perception, and in a contingent and partial way. Moreover, Descartes is concerned here not with determining the concept of madness but with utilizing the popular notion of insanity for juridical and methodological ends, in order to ask questions of principle regarding only the *truth* of ideas. What must be grasped here is that *from this point of view* the sleeper, or the dreamer, is madder than the madman. Or, at least, the dreamer, insofar as concerns the problem of knowledge which interests Descartes here, is further from true perception than the madman. It is in the case of sleep, and not in that of insanity, that the *absolute totality* of ideas of sensory origin becomes suspect, is stripped of “objective value” as M. Gueroult puts it. The hypothesis of insanity is therefore not a good example, a revelatory example, a good instrument of doubt—and for at least two reasons. (a) It does not cover the *totality* of the field of sensory perception. The madman is not always wrong about everything; he is not wrong often enough, is never mad enough. (b) *It* is not a useful or happy example pedagogically, because it meets the resistance of the nonphilosopher who does not have the audacity to follow the philosopher when the latter agrees that he might indeed be mad at the very moment when he speaks. Let us turn to Foucault once more. Confronted with the situation of the Cartesian text whose

principles I have just indicated, Foucault could—and this time I am only extending the logic of his book without basing what I say on any particular text—Foucault could recall *two truths* that on a second reading would justify his interpretations, which would then only apparently differ from the interpretation I have just proposed.

1. It appears, on this second reading, that, for Descartes, madness is thought of only as a single case—and not the most serious one—among all cases of sensory error. (Foucault would then assume the perspective of the factual determination of the concept of madness by Descartes, and not his juridical usage of it.) Madness is only a sensory and corporeal fault, a bit more serious than the fault which threatens all waking but normal men, and much less serious, within the epistemological order, than the fault to which we succumb in dreams.

Foucault would then doubtless ask whether this reduction of madness to an example, to a case of sensory error, does not constitute an exclusion, an internment of madness, and whether it is not above all a sheltering of the Cogito and everything relative to the intellect and reason from madness. If madness is only a perversion of the senses—or of the imagination—it is corporeal, in alliance with the body. The real distinction of substances expels madness to the outer shadows of the Cogito, Madness, to use an expression proposed elsewhere by Foucault, is confined to the interior of the exterior and to the exterior of the interior. It is the other of the Cogito. I cannot be mad when I think and when I have clear and distinct ideas.

2. Or, while assuming our hypothesis, Foucault could also recall the following: Descartes, by inscribing his reference to madness within the problematic of knowledge, by making madness not only a thing of the body but an *error* of the body, by concerning himself with madness only as the modification of ideas, or the faculties of representation or judgment, intends to neutralize the originality of madness. He would even, in the long run, be condemned to construe it, like all errors, not only as an epistemological deficiency but also as a moral failure linked to a precipitation of the will; for will alone can consecrate the

intellectual finitude of perception as error. It is only one step from here to making madness a sin, a step that was soon after cheerfully taken, as Foucault convincingly demonstrates in other chapters.

Foucault would be perfectly correct in recalling these two truths to us if we were to remain at the naive, natural, and premetaphysical stage of Descartes's itinerary, the stage marked by natural doubt as it intervenes in the passage that Foucault cites. However, it seems that these two truths become vulnerable in turn, as soon as we come to the properly philosophical, metaphysical, and critical phase of doubt.

Let us first notice how, in the rhetoric of the *first Meditation*, the *first toutefois* [at the same time] which announced the “natural” hyperbole of dreams Just after Descartes says, “But they are mad, and I should not be any the less insane,” etc., is succeeded by a second *toutefois* [nevertheless] at the beginning of the next paragraph. To “at the same time,” marking the *hyperbolic moment within natural doubt*, will correspond a “nevertheless,” marking the *absolutely hyperbolic moment* which gets us out of natural doubt and leads to the hypothesis of the evil genius. Descartes has just admitted that arithmetic, geometry, and simple notions escape the first doubt, and he writes, “Nevertheless I have long had fixed in my mind the belief that an all-powerful God existed by whom I have been created such as I am.” This is the onset of the well-known movement leading to the fiction of the evil genius.

Now, the recourse to the fiction of the evil genius will evoke, conjure up, the possibility of a *total madness*, a total derangement over which I could have no control because it is inflicted upon me—hypothetically—leaving me no responsibility for it. Total derangement is the possibility of a madness that is no longer a disorder of the body, of the object, the body-object outside the boundaries of the *res cogitans*, outside the boundaries of the policed city, secure in its existence as thinking subjectivity, but is a madness that will bring subversion to pure thought and to its purely intelligible objects, to the field of its clear and distinct ideas, to the realm of the mathematical truths which escape natural doubt.

This time madness, insanity, will spare nothing, neither bodily nor purely intellectual perceptions. And Descartes successively judges admissible:

(a) That which he pretended not to admit while conversing with the nonphilosopher. To cite Descartes (he has just evoked “some evil genius not less powerful than deceitful”): “I shall consider that the heavens, the earth, colours, figures, sound, and all other external things are nought but the illusions and dreams of which this genius has availed himself in order to lay traps for my credulity; I shall consider myself as having no hands, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, nor any senses, yet falsely believing myself to possess all these things.” These ideas will be taken up again in the *second Meditation*. We are thus quite far from the dismissal of insanity made above.

(b) That which escapes natural doubt: “But how do I know that Hell (i.e., the deceiving God, before the recourse to the evil genius) has not brought it to pass that ... I am not deceived every time that I add two and three, or count the sides of a square ...?”

Thus, ideas of neither sensory nor intellectual origin will be sheltered from this new phase of doubt, and everything that was previously set aside as insanity is now welcomed into the most essential interiority of thought.

In question is a philosophical and juridical operation (but the first phase of doubt was already such) which no longer names madness and reveals all principled possibilities. *In principle* nothing is opposed to the subversion named insanity, although *in fact* and from a natural point of view, for Descartes, for his reader, and for us, no natural anxiety is possible regarding this actual subversion. (Truthfully speaking, to go to the heart of the matter, one would have to confront directly, in and of itself, the question of what is *de facto* and what *de jure* in the relations of the Cogito and madness.) Beneath this natural comfort, beneath this apparently prephilosophical confidence is hidden the recognition of an essential and principled truth: to wit, if discourse and philosophical communication (that is, language itself) are to have an intelligible meaning, that is to say, if they are to conform to their essence and vocation as discourse, they must simultaneously in fact and in principle escape madness.

They must carry normality within themselves. And this is not a specifically Cartesian weakness (although Descartes never confronts the question of his own language), is not a defect or mystification linked to a determined historical structure, but rather is an essential and universal necessity from which no discourse can escape, for it belongs to the meaning of meaning. It is an essential necessity from which no discourse can escape, even the discourse which denounces a mystification or an act of force. And, paradoxically, what I am saying here is strictly Foucauldian. For we can now appreciate the profundity of the following affirmation of Foucault's that curiously also saves Descartes from the accusations made against him: "Madness is the absence of a work." This is a fundamental motif of Foucault's book. Now, the work starts with the most elementary discourse, with the first articulation of a meaning, with the first syntactical usage of an "as such," for to make a sentence is to *manifest* possible meaning. By its essence, the sentence is normal. It carries normality within it, that is, *sense*, in every sense of the word—Descartes's in particular. It carries normality and sense within it, and does so whatever the state, whatever the health or madness of him who propounds it, or whom it passes through, on whom, in whom it is articulated. In its most impoverished syntax, logos is reason and, indeed, a historical reason. And if madness in general, beyond any factitious and determined historical structure, is the absence of a work, then madness is indeed, essentially and generally, silence, stifled speech, within a caesura and a wound that *open up* life as *historicity in general*. Not a determined silence, imposed at one given moment rather than at any other, but a silence essentially linked to an act of force and a prohibition which open history and speech. *In general*. Within the dimension of historicity in general, which is to be confused neither with some ahistorical eternity, nor with an empirically determined moment of the history of facts, silence plays the irreducible role of that which bears and haunts language, outside and *against* which alone language can emerge—"against" here simultaneously designating the content from which form takes off by force, and the adversary against whom I assure and reassure myself by force. Although the silence of madness is the absence of a work, this silence is not simply the work's epigraph, nor is it, as

concerns language and meaning, outside the work. Like nonmeaning, silence is the work's limit and profound resource. Of course, in essentializing madness this way one runs the risk of disintegrating the factual findings of psychiatric efforts. This is a permanent danger, but it should not discourage the demanding and patient psychiatrist.

So that, to come back to Descartes, any philosopher or speaking subject (and the philosopher is but the speaking subject *par excellence*) who must evoke madness from the *interior* of thought (and not only from within the body or some other extrinsic agency), can do so only in the realm of the *possible* and in the language of fiction or the fiction of language. Thereby, through his own language, he reassures himself against any actual madness—which may sometimes appear quite talkative, another problem—and can keep his distance, the distance indispensable for continuing to speak and to live. But this is not a weakness or a search for security proper to a given historical language (for example, the search for certainty in the Cartesian style), but is rather inherent in the essence and very project of all language in general; and even in the language of those who are apparently the maddest; and even and above all in the language of those who, by their praise of madness, by their complicity with it, measure their own strength against the greatest possible proximity to madness. Language being the break with madness, it adheres more thoroughly to its essence and vocation, makes a cleaner break with madness, if it pits itself against madness more freely and gets closer and closer to it: to the point of being separated from it only by the “transparent sheet” of which Joyce speaks, that is, by itself—for this diaphaneity is nothing other than the language, meaning, possibility, and elementary discretion of a nothing that neutralizes everything. In this sense, I would be tempted to consider Foucault's book a powerful gesture of protection and internment. A Cartesian gesture for the twentieth century. A reappropriation of negativity. To all appearances, it is reason that he interns, but, like Descartes, he chooses the reason of yesterday as his target and not the possibility of meaning in general.

2. As for the second truth Foucault could have countered with, it too seems valid only

during the natural phase of doubt. Descartes not only ceases to reject madness during the phase of radical doubt, he not only installs its possible menace at the very heart of the intelligible, he also in principle refuses to let any determined knowledge escape from madness. A menace to all knowledge, insanity—the hypothesis of insanity—is not an internal modification of knowledge. At no point will knowledge alone be able to dominate madness, to master it in order to objectify it—at least for as long as doubt remains unresolved. For the end of doubt poses a problem to which we shall return in a moment.

The act of the Cogito and the certainty of existing indeed escape madness the first time; but aside from the fact that for the first time, it is no longer a question of objective, representative knowledge, it can no longer literally be said that the Cogito would escape madness because it keeps itself beyond the grasp of madness, or because, as Foucault says, “*I who think, I cannot be mad*”; the Cogito escapes madness only because at its own moment, under its own authority, it is valid *even if I am mad*, even if my thoughts are completely mad. There is a value and a meaning of the Cogito, as of existence, which escape the alternative of a determined madness or a determined reason. Confronted with the critical experience of the Cogito, insanity, as stated in the *Discourse on Method*, is irremediably on a plane with scepticism. Thought no longer fears madness: “... remarking that this truth *I think; therefore I am*’ was so certain and so assured that all the most extravagant suppositions brought forward by the sceptics were incapable of shaking it.” The certainty thus attained need not be sheltered from an imprisoned madness, for it is attained and ascertained within madness itself. It is valid *even if I am mad—a supreme* self-confidence that seems to require neither the exclusion nor the circumventing of madness. Descartes never interns madness, neither at the stage of natural doubt nor at the stage of metaphysical doubt. *He only claims to exclude it during the first phase of the first stage, during the nonhyperbolic moment of natural doubt.*

The hyperbolic audacity of the Cartesian Cogito, its mad audacity, which we perhaps no

longer perceive as such because, unlike Descartes's contemporary, we are too well assured of ourselves and too well accustomed to the framework of the Cogito, rather than to the critical experience of it its mad audacity would consist in the return to an original point which no longer belongs to either a *determined* reason or a *determined* unreason, no longer belongs to them as opposition or alternative. Whether I am mad or not, *Cogito, sum*. Madness is therefore, in every sense of the word, only one *case* of thought (*within* thought). It is therefore a question of drawing back toward a point at which all determined contradictions, in the form of given, factual historical structures, can appear, and appear as relative to this zero point at which determined meaning and nonmeaning come together in their common origin. From the point of view which here is ours, one could perhaps say the following about this zero point, determined by Descartes as Cogito.

Invulnerable to all determined opposition between reason and unreason, it is the point starting from which the history of the determined forms of this opposition, this opened or broken-off dialogue, can appear as such and be stated. It is the impenetrable point of certainty in which the possibility of Foucault's narration, as well as of the narration of the totality, or rather of *all* the determined forms of the exchanges between reason and madness are embedded. It is the point at which the project of thinking this totality by escaping it is embedded. By escaping it that is to say, by exceeding the totality, which—within existence—is possible only in the direction of infinity or nothingness; for even if the totality of what I think is imbued with falsehood or madness, even if the totality of the world does not exist, even if nonmeaning has invaded the totality of the world, up to and including the very contents of my thought, I still think, I am *while* I think. Even if I do not *in fact* grasp the totality, if I neither understand nor embrace it, I still formulate the project of doing so, and this project is meaningful in such a way that it can be defined only in relation to a precomprehension of the infinite and undetermined totality. This is why, by virtue of this margin of the possible, the principled, and the meaningful, which exceeds all that is real, factual, and existent, this project is mad, and acknowledges madness as

its liberty and its very possibility. This is why it is not human, in the sense of anthropological factuality, but is rather metaphysical and demonic: it first awakens to itself in its war with the demon, the evil genius of nonmeaning, by pitting itself against the strength of the evil genius, and by resisting him through reduction of the natural man within itself. In this sense, nothing is less reassuring than the Cogito at its proper and inaugural moment. The project of exceeding the totality of the world, as the totality of what I can think in general, is no more reassuring than the dialectic of Socrates when it, too, overflows the totality of beings, planting us in the light of a hidden sun which is *epekeina tes ousias*. And Glaucon was not mistaken when he cried out: “Lord! what demonic hyperbole? *daimonias hyperboles*,” which is perhaps banally translated as “marvelous transcendence.” This demonic hyperbole goes further than the passion of hybris, at least if this latter is seen only as the pathological modification of the being called man. Such a hybris keeps itself within the world. Assuming that it is deranged and excessive, it implies the fundamental derangement and excessiveness of the hyperbole which opens and founds the world as such by exceeding it. Hybris is excessive and exceeds only *within* the space opened by the demonic hyperbole.

The extent to which doubt and the Cartesian Cogito are *punctuated* by this project of a singular and unprecedented excess—an excess in the direction of the nondetermined, Nothingness or Infinity, an excess which overflows the totality of that which can be thought, the totality of beings and determined meanings, the totality of factual history—is also the extent to which any effort to reduce this project, to enclose it within a determined historical structure, however comprehensive, risks missing the essential, risks dulling the *point* itself. Such an effort risks doing violence to this project in tum (for there is also a violence applicable to rationalists and to sense, to *good* sense; and this, perhaps, is what Foucault’s book definitely demonstrates, for the victims of whom he speaks are always the bearers of sense, the *true* bearers of the *true* and *good* sense hidden and oppressed by the *determined* “good sense” of the “division”—the “good sense” that never divides itself enough and is always determined too quickly—risks doing it violence

in turn, and a violence of a totalitarian and historicist style which eludes meaning and the origin of meaning. I use “totalitarian” in the structuralist sense of the word, but I am not sure that the two meanings do not beckon each other historically. Structuralist totalitarianism here would be responsible for an internment of the Cogito similar to the violences of the classical age. I am not saying that Foucault’s book is totalitarian, for at least at its outset it poses the question of the origin of historicity *in general*, thereby freeing itself of historicism; I am saying, however, that by virtue of the construction of his project he sometimes runs the risk of being totalitarian. Let me clarify: when I refer to the forced entry into the world of that which is not there and is supposed by the world, or when I state that the *compelle intrare* (epigraph of the chapter on “the great internment”) becomes *violence itself* when it turns toward the hyperbole in order to make hyperbole reenter the world, or when I say that this reduction to intraworldliness is the origin and very meaning of what is called violence, making possible all straitjackets, I am not invoking an *other world*, an alibi or an evasive transcendence. That would be yet another possibility of violence, a possibility that is, moreover, often the accomplice of the first one.

I think, therefore, that (in Descartes) everything can be reduced to a determined historical totality except the hyperbolic project. Now, this project belongs to the narration narrating itself and not to the narration narrated by Foucault. It cannot be recounted, cannot be objectified as an event in a determined history.

I am sure that within the movement which is called the *Cartesian Cogito* this hyperbolic extremity is not the only element that should be, like pure madness in general, silent. As soon as Descartes has reached this extremity, he seeks to reassure himself, to certify the Cogito through God, to identify the act of the Cogito with a reasonable reason. And he does so as soon as he *proffers* and *reflects* the Cogito. That is to say, he must temporalize the Cogito, which itself is valid only during the instant of intuition, the instant of thought being attentive to itself, at the point, the sharpest point, of the instant. And here one should be

attentive to this link between the Cogito and the movement of temporalization. For if the Cogito is valid even for the maddest madman, one must, in fact, not be mad if one is to reflect it and retain it, if one is to communicate *it* and its meaning. And here, with the reference to God *and* to a certain memory, would begin the hurried repatriation of all mad and hyperbolical wanderings which now take shelter and are given reassurance within the order of reasons, in order once more to take possession of the truths they had left behind. Within Descartes's text, at least, the internment takes place at this point. It is here that hyperbolical and mad wanderings once more become itinerary and method, "assured" and "resolute" progression through our existing world, which is given to us by God as terra firma. For, finally, it is God alone who, by permitting me to extirpate myself from a Cogito that at its proper moment can always remain a silent madness, also insures my representations and my cognitive determinations, that is, my discourse against madness. It is without doubt that, for Descartes, God alone protects me against the madness to which the Cogito, left to its own authority, could only open itself up in the most hospitable way. And Foucault's reading seems to me powerful and illuminating not at the stage of the text which he cites, which is anterior and secondary to the Cogito, but from the moment which immediately succeeds the instantaneous experience of the Cogito at its most intense, when reason and madness have not yet been separated, when to take the part of the Cogito is neither to take the part of reason as reasonable order, nor the part of disorder and madness, but is rather to grasp, once more, the source which permits reason *and* madness to be determined and stated. Foucault's interpretation seems to me illuminating from the moment when the Cogito must reflect and proffer itself in an organized philosophical discourse. That is, *almost always*. For if the Cogito is valid even for the madman, to be mad—if, once more, this expression has a singular philosophical meaning, which I do not believe: it simply says the other of each determined form of the logos—is not to be able to reflect and to say the Cogito, that is, not to be able to make the Cogito appear as such for an other; an other who may be myself. From the moment when Descartes pronounces the Cogito, he inscribes it in a

system of deductions and protections that betray its wellspring and constrain the wandering that is proper to it so that error may be circumvented. At bottom, leaving in silence the problem of speech posed by the Cogito, Descartes seems to imply that thinking *and* saying what is clear and distinct are the same thing. One can say *what* one thinks and *that* one thinks without betraying one or the other. Analogously—*analogously only*—Saint Anselm saw in the *insipiens*, the insane man, someone who could not think because he could not think what he said. Madness was for him, too, a silence, the voluble silence of a thought that did not think its own words. This also is a point which must be developed further. In any event, the Cogito is a work as soon as it is assured of what it says. But before it is a work, it is madness. If the madman could rebuff the evil genius, he could not tell himself so. He therefore cannot say so. And in any event, Foucault is right in the extent to which the project of constraining any wandering already animated a doubt which was always proposed as methodical. This identification of the Cogito with reasonable-normal-reason need not even await—in fact, if not in principle—the proofs of the existence of a veracious God as the supreme protective barrier against madness. This identification intervenes from the moment when Descartes *determines natural light* (which in its undetermined source should be valid even for the mad), from the moment when he pulls himself out of madness by determining natural light through a series of principles and axioms (axiom of causality according to which there must be at least as much reality in the cause as in the effect; then, after this axiom permits the proof of the existence of God, the axioms that “the light of nature teaches us that fraud and deception necessarily proceed from some defect”). These dogmatically determined axioms escape doubt, are never even submitted to its scrutiny, are established only reciprocally, on the basis of the existence and truthfulness of God. Due to this fact, they fall within the province of the history of knowledge and the determined structures of philosophy. This is why the act of the Cogito, at the hyperbolical moment when it pits itself against madness, or rather lets itself be pitted against madness, must be repeated and distinguished from the language or the deductive system in which Descartes must inscribe it as soon as he proposes it for

apprehension and communication, that is, as soon as he reflects the Cogito for the other, which means for oneself. It is through this relationship to the other as an other self that meaning reassures itself against madness and nonmeaning. And philosophy is perhaps the reassurance given against the anguish of being mad at the point of greatest proximity to madness. This silent and specific moment could be called *pathetic*. As for the functioning of the hyperbole in the structure of Descartes's discourse and in the order of reasons, our reading is therefore, despite all appearances to the contrary, profoundly aligned with Foucault's. It is indeed Descartes—and everything for which this name serves as an index—it is indeed the system of certainty that first of all functions in order to inspect, master, and limit hyperbole, and does so both by determining it in the ether of a natural light whose axioms are from the outset exempt from hyperbolical doubt, and by making of hyperbolical doubt a point of transition firmly maintained within the chain of reasons. But it is our belief that this movement can be described within its own time and place only if one has previously disengaged the extremity of hyperbole, which Foucault seemingly has not done. In the fugitive and, by its essence, ungraspable moment when it still escapes the linear order of reasons, the order of reason in general and the determinations of natural light, does not the Cartesian Cogito lend itself to repetition, up to a certain point, by the Husserlian Cogito and by the critique of Descartes implied in it?

This would be an example only, for some day the dogmatic and historically determined grounds—ours—will be discovered, which the critique of Cartesian deductivism, the impetus and madness of the Husserlian reduction of the totality of the world, first had to rest on, and then had *to* fall onto in order *to* be stated. One could do for Husserl what Foucault has done for Descartes: demonstrate how the neutralization of the factual world is a neutralization (in the sense in which to neutralize is also to master, to reduce, to leave free in a straitjacket) of nonmeaning, the most subtle form of an act of force. And in truth, Husserl increasingly associated the theme of nonnality with the theme of the transcendental reduction. The embedding of transcendental phenomenology in the metaphysics of

presence, the entire Husserlian thematic of the living present is the profound *reassurance* of the certainty of *meaning*.

By separating, within the Cogito, *on the one hand*, hyperbole (which I maintain cannot be enclosed in a factual and determined historical structure, for *it* is the project of exceeding every finite and determined totality), and, *on the other hand*, that in Descartes's philosophy (or in the philosophy supporting the Augustinian Cogito or the Husserlian Cogito as well) which belongs to a factual historical structure, I am not proposing the separation of the wheat from the tares in every philosophy in the name of some *philosophia perennis*. Indeed, it is exactly the contrary that I am proposing. In question is a way of accounting for the very historicity of philosophy. I believe that historicity in general would be impossible without a history of philosophy, and I believe that the latter would be impossible if we possessed only hyperbole, on the one hand, or, on the other, only determined historical structures, finite *Weltanschauungen*. The historicity proper to philosophy is located and constituted in the transition, the dialogue between hyperbole and the finite structure, between that which exceeds the totality and the closed totality, in the difference between history and historicity; that is, in the place where, or rather at the moment when, the Cogito and all that it symbolizes here (madness, derangement, hyperbole, etc.) pronounce and reassure themselves then to fall, necessarily forgetting themselves until their reactivation, their reawakening in another statement of the excess which also later will become another decline and another crisis. From its very first breath, speech, confined to this temporal rhythm of crisis and reawakening, is able to open the space for discourse only by imprisoning madness. This rhythm, moreover, is not an alternation that additionally would be temporal. It is rather the movement of temporalization itself as concerns that which unites it to the movement of logos. But this violent liberation of speech is possible and can be pursued only in the extent to which it keeps itself resolutely and consciously at the greatest possible proximity to the abuse that is the usage of speech—just close enough to *say* violence, to dialogue with itself as irreducible violence, and just far enough to *live* and live as speech. Due to this, crisis or oblivion perhaps is not an accident,

but rather the destiny of speaking philosophy the philosophy which lives only by imprisoning madness, but which would die as thought, and by a still worse violence, if a new speech did not at every instant liberate previous madness while enclosing within itself, in its present existence, the madman of the day. It is only by virtue of this oppression of madness that finite-thought, that is to say, history, can reign. Extending this truth to historicity in general, without keeping to a determined historical moment, one could say that the reign of finite thought can be established only on the basis of the more or less disguised internment, humiliation, fettering and mockery of the madman within us, of the madman who can only be the fool of a logos which is father, master, and king. But that is another discourse and another story. I will conclude by citing Foucault once more. Long after the passage on Descartes, some three hundred pages later, introducing *Rameau's Nephew* Foucault writes, with a sigh of remorse: "In doubt's confrontation with its major dangers, Descartes realized that he could not be mad-though he was to acknowledge for a long time to come that all the powers of unreason kept vigil around his thought." What we have attempted to do here this evening is to situate ourselves within the interval of this remorse, Foucault's remorse, Descartes's remorse according to Foucault; and within the space of stating that, "though he was to acknowledge for a long time to come," we have attempted not to extinguish the *other* light, a black and hardly natural light, the vigil of the "powers of unreason" around the Cogito. We have attempted to *requite* ourselves toward the gesture which Descartes uses to requite himself as concerns the menacing powers of madness which are the adverse origin of philosophy.

Among all Foucault's claims to my gratitude, there is thus also that of having made me better anticipate, more so by his monumental book than by the naïve reading of the *Meditations*, to what degree the philosophical act can no longer no longer be in memory of Cartesianism, if to be Cartesian, as Descartes himself doubtless understood it, is to attempt to be Cartesian. That is to say, as I have at least tried to demonstrate, to-attempt-to-say-the-demonic-hyperbole from whose heights thought is announced to itself, *frightens* itself, and *reassures* itself against being annihilated or wrecked in madness or in death. *At its height* hyper-

bole, the absolute opening, the uneconomic expenditure, is always reembraced by an *economy* and is overcome by economy. The relationship between reason, madness, and death is an economy, a structure of deferral whose irreducible originality must be respected. This attempt-to-say-the-demonic-hyperbole is not an attempt among others; it is not an attempt which would occasionally and eventually be completed by the saying of it, or by its object, the direct object of a willful subjectivity. This attempt to say, which is not, moreover, the antagonist of silence, but rather the condition for it, is the original profundity of will in general. Nothing, further, would be more incapable of regrasping this will than voluntarism, for, as finitude and as history, this attempt is also a first passion. It keeps within itself the trace of a violence. It is more written than said, it is *economized*. The economy of this writing is a regulated relationship between that which exceeds and the exceeded totality: the *différance* of the absolute excess.

To define philosophy as the attempt-to-say-the-hyperbole is to confess—and philosophy is perhaps this gigantic confession—that by virtue of the historical enunciation through which philosophy tranquilizes itself and excludes madness, philosophy also betrays itself (or betrays itself as thought), enters into a crisis and a forgetting of itself that are an essential and necessary period of its movement. I philosophize only in *terror*, but in the *confessed* terror of going mad. The confession is simultaneously, at its *present* moment, oblivion and unveiling, protection and exposure: economy.

But this crisis in which reason is madder than madness—for reason is nonmeaning and oblivion—and in which madness is more rational than reason, for it is closer to the wellspring of sense, however silent or murmuring—this crisis has always begun and is interminable. It suffices to say that, if it is classic, it is not so in the sense of the *classical age* but in the sense of eternal and essential classicism, and is also historical in an unexpected sense.

And nowhere else and never before has the concept of *crisis* been able to enrich and reassemble all its potentialities, all the energy of its meaning, as much, perhaps, as in Michel

Foucault's book. Here, the crisis is on the one hand, in Husserl's sense, the danger menacing reason and meaning under the rubric of objectivism, of the forgetting of origins, of the blanketing of origins by the rationalist and transcendental unveiling itself. Danger as the movement of reason menaced by its own security, etc.

But the crisis is also decision, the caesura of which Foucault speaks, in the sense of *krinein*, the choice and division between the two ways separated by Parmenides in his poem, the way of logos and the non-way, the labyrinth, the *palintrope* in which logos is lost; the way of meaning and the way of nonmeaning; of Being and of non-Being. A division on whose basis, after which, logos, in the necessary violence of its irruption, is separated from itself as madness, is exiled from itself, forgetting its origin and its own possibility. Is not what is called finitude possibility as crisis? A certain identity between the consciousness of crisis and the forgetting of it? Of the thinking of negativity and the reduction of negativity?

Crisis of reason, finally, access to reason and attack of reason. For what Michel Foucault teaches us to think is that there are crises of reason in strange complicity with what the world calls crises of madness.

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