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Interview with Jacques Derrida

Jean-Luc Nancy

Jacques Derrida: From the question which introduces this interview one might pick out two phrases: firstly, "Who comes after the subject?" the "who" already signaling, perhaps, towards a grammar which would no longer be subjected to the subject: and secondly, "a prevalent discourse of a recent epoch concludes with its (the subject's) simple liquidation."

Now should we not take an initial precaution with regard to the *doxa*, which in a certain way dictates the very formulation of the question? This precaution would not be a critique. It is no doubt necessary to refer to such a *doxa*, should it only be to analyze it and possibly disqualify it. The question "Who comes after the subject?" (this time I emphasize the "after") implies that for a certain philosophical opinion today, in its most visible configuration, something named "subject" can be identified, as its alleged passing might also be identified in certain identifiable thoughts or discourses. This "opinion" is confused. The confusion consists at least in clumsy mixing up a number of discursive strategies. If over the last 25 years in France the most notorious of these strategies have in fact led to a kind of discussion around "the question of the subject", none of them has sought to "liquidate" anything (I don't know moreover to what philosophical concept this word might correspond, a word which I understand more readily in other codes: finance, crime, terrorism, civil or political criminality; one only speaks of "liquidation" therefore from the position of the law, indeed the police). The diagnostic of "liquidation" exposes in general an illusion and an offence, it accuses: they tried to "liquidate", they thought they could do it, we will not let them do it. The diagnostic implies therefore a promise: we will do justice, we will save or rehabilitate the subject. A slogan therefore: a return to the subject, the return of the subject. Furthermore, one would have to ask, to put it very briefly, if the structure of every subject is not constituted in the possibility of this kind of repetition one calls a return, and, more importantly, if this structure is not essentially before the law, the relation to law and experience itself, if there is any law, but let's leave this. Let's take some examples of this confusion, and also some proper names which might serve as indices to help us along. Did Lacan "liquidate" the subject? No. The decentered "subject" of which he speaks certainly doesn't have the traits of the classical subject (though even here, we'd have to take a closer look...), it remains nevertheless indispensable to the economy of the Lacanian theory. It is also a correlate of the law.

Jean-Luc Nancy: Lacan is perhaps the only one to insist on keeping the name...

JD: Perhaps not the only one in fact. We will speak later on about Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, but we might note already that Althusser's theory, for example, seeks to discredit a certain authority of the subject only by acknowledging for the instance of the "subject" an irreducible place in a theory of ideology, an ideology which, *mutatis mutandis*, is just as irreducible as the transcendental illusion in the Kantian dialectic. This place is that of a subject constituted by interpellation, by its being-interpellated (again being-before-the-law, the subject as a subject subjected to the law and held responsible before it). As to the Foucault's discourse, there would be different things to say according to the stages of its development. In his case, we would appear to have a history of subjectivity which, in spite of certain massive declarations about the effacement of the figure of man, certainly never consisted in "liquidating" the Subject. And in his last phase, there again, a return of morality and a certain ethical subject. For these three discourses (Lacan, Althusser, Foucault) and for some of the thinkers they privilege (Freud, Marx, Nietzsche), the subject can be re-interpreted, restored, re-inscribed, it certainly isn't "liquidated". The question "who", notably in Nietzsche, strongly reinforces this point. This is also true of Heidegger, the principal reference or target of the doxa we are talking about. The ontological question which deals with the subjectum, in its Cartesian and post-Cartesian forms is anything but a liquidation.

J-LN: For Heidegger, nevertheless, the epoch which comes to a close as the epoch of metaphysics, and which perhaps closes epochality as such, is the epoch of the metaphysics of subjectivity, and the end of philosophy is then the departure from the metaphysics of subjectivity...

JD: But this "departure" is not a departure, it cannot be compared to a passage beyond or a lapsing, even to a "liquidation".

J-LN: No, but I can't see in Heidegger, what thread in the thematic or the problematic of the subject still remains to be drawn out, positively or affirmatively, whereas I can see it if it's a question of truth, if it's a question of manifestation, a question of the phenomenon...

JD: Yes. But two things. The very summary exposition which I have just ventured was a quick response, precisely, to whatever summariness there might be in this doxa which doesn't go to the trouble of analyzing up close, in a differentiated manner, the differential strategies of all these treatments of the "subject". We could have chosen examples closer to us, but let's move on. The effect of the *doxa* consists in saying: all these philosophers think they have put the subject behind them...

J-LN: So it would now be a matter of going back to it, and that's the slogan.

JD: It's the effect of the slogan I was getting at. Second thing: what you called the "thread to be drawn" in Heidegger, perhaps follows, among other paths, that of an analogy (to be treated very cautiously) between the function of the Dasein in *Being and Time* and the function of the subject in an ontological-transcendental, indeed ethico-juridical setting. Dasein cannot be reduced to a subjectivity, certainly, but the existential analytic still retains the formal traits of every transcendental analytic. Dasein, and what there is in it which answers to the question "who?", comes to occupy, no doubt displacing lots of other things, the place of the "subject", the *cogito* or the classical *Ich denke*. It retains from these certain essential traits (freedom, resolute-decision, to take up this old translation again, a relation or presence to self, the "call" (*Ruf*) towards a moral conscience, responsibility, primordial imputability or guilt (*Schuldigsein*) etc.). And whatever the movements of Heideggerian thought "after" *Being and Time* and "after" the existential analytic, they left nothing "behind", "liquidated".

J-LN: What you are aiming at in my question then is the "coming after" as leading to something false, dangerous...

JD: Your question echoes, for legitimate strategic reasons, a discourse of "opinion" which, it seems to me, one must begin by critiquing or deconstructing. I wouldn't agree to enter into a discussion where it was imagined that one knew what the subject is, where it would go without saying that this "character" is the same for Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Lacan, Foucault, Althusser, and others, who would somehow all be in agreement to "liquidate" it. For me, the discussion would begin to get interesting when, beyond the vested confusion of this doxa, one gets to a more serious, more essential question. For example, if throughout all these different strategies the "subject", without having been "liquidated", has been re-interpreted, displaced, decentered, re-inscribed, then firstly: what becomes of those problematics which seemed to presuppose a classical determination of the subject (objectivity, be it scientific or other, ethical, legal, political etc.), and secondly: who or what "answers" to the question "who"?

J-LN: For me, "who" designated a place, that place "of the subject" which appears precisely through deconstruction itself. What is the place that Dasein, for example, comes to occupy?

JD: To elaborate this question along topological lines ("What is the place of the subject?"), it would perhaps be necessary to give up the impossible, that is to say the attempt to reconstitute or reconstruct what has already been deconstructed (and which moreover has deconstructed "itself", an expression which encapsulates the whole

difficulty) and ask ourselves rather: what are we designating, in a tradition which one would have to identify in a rigorous way (let's say for the moment the one which runs from Descartes to Kant and to Husserl), under the concept of subject, in such a way that once certain predicates have been deconstructed, the unity of the concept and the name are radically affected? These predicates would be for example the sub-jective structure as being-thrown-or-under-lying of the substance or the *substratum*, of the *hypokeimenon*, with its qualities of stance or stability, of permanent presence, of sustained relation to self, what links the "subject" to conscience, to humanity, to history ... and above all to the law, as subject subjected to the law, subject to the law in its very autonomy, to ethical or juridical law, to political law or power, to order (symbolic or not)...

J-LN: Are you proposing that the question be reformulated, keeping the name "subject" used in a positive sense?

JD: Not necessarily. I would keep the name provisionally as an index for the discussion but I don't see the necessity of keeping the word "subject" at any price, especially if the context and conventions of discourse risk re-introducing precisely what is in question...

J-LN: I don't see how you can keep the name without enormous misunderstandings. But in lieu of the "subject", there is something like a place, a unique point of passage. It's like the writer for Blanchot: place of passage, of the emission of a voice which captures the "murmur" and detached itself from it, but which is never an "author" in the classical sense. How might one name this place? The question "who" seems to keep something of the subject, perhaps...

JD: Yes.

J-LN: But the "what" is no better, for example the "process", the "functioning", the "text"...

JD: In the case of the text, I wouldn't say a "what"...

J-LN: Can you be more precise?

JD: Yes, a little later, that can wait.

I assumed, rather naively, that in our discussion here we would try to bypass the work that we have both done concerning the "subject". That of course is impossible; in fact it's idiotic. We will refer to this later. Yes, it's idiotic. Moreover, one could put the subject in its subjectivity on stage, submit it to the stage as the idiot (the innocent, the proper, the

virgin, the originary, the native, the naive, the great beginning: just as great, as erect and as autonomous as submissive, etc.).

In the text or in writing, such as I have tried to analyze them at least, there is, I wouldn't say a place (and this is a whole question, this topology of a certain locatable non-place, at once necessary and undiscoverable) but an instance (without stance, a "without" without negativity) for the "who", a "who" besieged by the problematic of the trace and of *différance*, of affirmation, of the signature and of the so-called "proper" name, of the *je[c]t* (above all subject, object, project) as destinerring of missive. I have tried to elaborate this problematic around numerous examples.

Let's go back a little and start out again from the question "who?" (I note first of all in passing that to substitute a very indeterminate "who" for a "subject" overburdened with metaphysical determinations is perhaps not enough to bring about any decisive displacement. In the expression the "question 'who?'" , the emphasis might well later on fall on the word "question". Not only in order to ask who asks the question or on the subject of whom the question is asked (so much syntax which decides the answer in advance), but to ask if there is a subject, no, a "who" before being able to ask questions about it. I don't yet know who can ask himself this nor how. But one can already see several possibilities opening up: the "who" might be there before and as the power to ask questions (this, in the end, is how Heidegger identifies the *Dasein* and comes to choose it as the exemplary guiding thread in the question of Being) or else it might be, and this comes down to the same thing, that which is made possible by the power (by being able to) ask questions about itself (who is who? who is it?). But there is another possibility which interests me more at this point: it overflows the question itself, re-inscribes it in the experience of an "affirmation", of a "yes" or of an "en-gage" (this is the word I use in *De l'esprit* to describe *Zusage*, that acquiescing to language, to the mark, which the most primordial question implies), that "yes, yes" **[1]** which answers before even being able to formulate a question, which is responsible without autonomy, before and in view of all possible autonomy of the who-subject, etc. The relation to self, in this situation, can only be *différance*, that is to say alterity, or trace. Not only is the obligation not lessened in this, but on the contrary it finds in it its only possibility, which is neither subjective nor human. Which doesn't mean that it is inhuman or without subject, but that it is from this dislocated affirmation (thus without "firmness" nor "closedness") that something like the subject, man, or whoever it might be can take shape. I now close this long parenthesis).

Let's go back. What are we aiming at in the deconstructions of the 'subject' when we ask ourselves what, in the structure of the classical subject, continues to be required by the question "who?"

In addition to what we have just named (proper name in exappropriation, signature or affirmation without closure, trace, *différance* from self, desterrance, etc.), I would add something which remains required by both the definition of the classical subject and by these latter non-classical motifs, namely a certain responsibility. The singularity of the "who" is not the individuality of a thing which would be identical to itself, it's not an atom. It is a singularity which dislocates or divides itself in gathering itself together to answer to the other, whose call somehow precedes its own identification with itself, for to this call I can only answer, have already answered, even if I think I am answering "no" (I try to explain this elsewhere, notably in *Ulysse Gramophone*).

Here begins no doubt the link with the larger questions of ethical, juridical and political responsibility around which the metaphysics of subjectivity is constituted. But if one is to avoid too hastily reconstituting the program of this metaphysic and suffering from its surreptitious constraints, it's best to proceed more slowly and not rush into these words...

J-LN: For me, the subject is above all, as in Hegel, "that which can retain in itself its own contradiction." In the deconstruction of this "property", it seems to me that the "that which", the "what" of the "itself" brings forth the place, and the question, of a "who" which would no longer be "to itself" in this way. A who which would no longer have that property, but which would nevertheless be a who. It is "him/her" I want to question.

JD: Still on a preliminary level, let's not forget Nietzsche's precautions regarding what might link metaphysics and grammar. These precautions need to be duly adjusted and problematized, but they remain necessary. What we are seeking with the question "who?" perhaps no longer stems from grammar, from a relative or interrogative pronoun which always refers back to the grammatical function of subject. How can we get away from this contract between the grammar of the subject or the substantive and the ontology of substance or the subject? The different singularity which I named perhaps does not even correspond to the grammatical form "who" in a sentence where in "who" is the subject of a verb coming after the subject, etc. On the other hand, if Freudian thought has been consequential in the decentering of the subject we have been talking about so much these last years, is the "ego", in the elements of the topic or in the distribution of the positions of the unconscious, the only answer to the question "who"? And if so, what would be the consequences of this?

Henceforth, if we might retain the motif of "singularity" for a moment, it is neither certain nor a priori necessary that "singularity" be translated by "who", or remain the privilege of the "who". At the very moment they marked, let us say, their mistrust for substantialist or subjectivist metaphysics, Heidegger and Nietzsche, whatever serious

differences there may be between the two, continued to endorse the question "who?" and subtracted the "who" from the deconstruction of the subject. But we might still ask ourselves just how legitimate this is.

Conversely, and to multiply the preliminary precautions and not to neglect the essential entanglement of this strange history, how can one forget that even in the most marked transcendental idealism, that of Husserl, even where the origin of the world is described after the phenomenological reduction, as originary consciousness in the form of the ego, even in a phenomenology which determines the Being of beings as an object in general for a subject in general, even in this great philosophy of the transcendental subject, the interminable genetic (so called passive) analyses of the ego, of time and of the alter ego lead back to a pre-egological and pre-subjectivist zone. There is therefore, at the heart of what passes for and presents itself as a transcendental idealism, a horizon of questioning which is no longer dictated by the egological form of subjectivity or intersubjectivity. In the French philosophical scene, the moment when a certain central hegemony of the subject was being put into question again in the sixties was also the moment when, phenomenology still being very present, people began to become interested in those places in Husserl's discourse where the egological and more generally the subjective form of the transcendental experience appeared to be more constituted than constitutive, in sum to be as grounded as precarious. The question of time and of the other became linked to this transcendental passive genesis...

J-LN: Still, it was by penetrating into this Husserlian constitution, by "forcing" it, that you began your own work...

JD: It is within, one might say (but it is precisely a question of the effraction of the within) the living present, that *Urform* of the transcendental experience, that the subject conjoins with non-subject or that the ego is marked, without being able to have the originary and presentative experience of it, by the non-ego and especially by the alter ego. The alter ego cannot present itself, cannot become an originary presence for the ego. There is only an analogical a-presentation (*apprésentation*) of the alter ego. The alter ego can never be given "in person", it resists in principle the principles of phenomenology, namely the intuitive given of originary presence. This dislocation of the absolute subject from the other and from time does not come about, nor does it lead beyond phenomenology, but rather, if not in it, then at least on its border, on the very line of its possibility. It was in the fifties and sixties, at the moment when one became interested in these difficulties in a very different way (Levinas, Tran Duc Tao, myself) **[2]** and following moreover other trajectories (Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger), that the centrality of the subject began to be displaced and this discourse of "suspicion", as some were saying then, began to be elaborated in its place. But if certain premises are to be found "in" Husserl, I'm sure that one could make a similar demonstration in

Descartes, Kant and Hegel. Concerning Descartes, one could discover, following the directions of your own work, [3] similar aporia, fictions and fabrications. Not identical ones, but similar. This would have at least the virtue of de-simplifying, of "de-homogenizing" the reference to something like The Subject. There has never been The Subject for anyone, that's what I wanted to begin by saying. The subject is a fable, as you have shown, and to concentrate on the elements of speech and conventional fiction which such a fable presupposes is not to stop taking it seriously (it is the serious itself)...

J-LN: Everything you have recalled here comes down to emphasizing that there is and never has been any presence-to-self which would not call into question the distance from self that this presence demands, in short. "To deconstruct", here, comes down to showing this distance at the very heart of presence, and in so doing, this prevents us from simply separating an outdated "metaphysics of the subject" from another thinking which would be, altogether, elsewhere. However, something has happened, there has been a history both of the thinking of the subject and of its deconstruction. What Heidegger determined as the "epoch" of subjectivity, has this taken place, or has the "subject" always been only a surface effect, a fallout which one cannot impute to the thinkers? But in that case, what is Heidegger talking about when he talks about subjectivity?

JD: An enormous question. I'm not sure that I can approach it head-on. To whatever degree I can subscribe to the Heideggerian discourse about the subject, I have always been a little troubled by the Heideggerian delimitation of the epoch of subjectivity. His questions about the ontological inadequacy of the Cartesian view of subjectivity seem to me no doubt necessary but inadequate, notably in regard to what would link subjectivity to representation, and the subject-object couple to the presuppositions of the principle of reason in its Leibnizian formulation. I have tried to explain this elsewhere. The repudiation of Spinoza seems to me to be significant. Here is a great rationalism which does not rest on the principle of reason (inasmuch as in Leibnitz this principle privileges both the final cause and representation). Spinoza's substantialist rationalism is a radical critique of both finalism and the (Cartesian) representative determination of the idea, it is not a metaphysics of the cogito or of absolute subjectivity. The import of this repudiation is all the greater and more significant in that the epoch of subjectivity determined by Heidegger is also the epoch of the rationality or the techno-scientific rationalism of modern metaphysics...

J-LN: But if the repudiation of Spinoza stems precisely from his having distanced himself from what was dominant elsewhere, does that not confirm this domination?

JD: It's not Spinoza's case which is most important to me. Heidegger defines a modern hegemony of the subject of representation or of the principle of reason. Now if the

delimitation works through an unjustified repudiation, it is the interpretation of the epoch which risks becoming problematic. And so everything becomes problematic in this discourse. And I would graft another remark at this point. We were speaking of dehiscence, of intrinsic dislocation, of *différance*, of desterrance, etc. Some might say: but precisely, what we call "subject" is not the absolute origin, pure will, identity to self or the presence to self of consciousness but indeed this non-coincidence with self. This is a riposte to which we'll have to return. By what right do we call this "subject"? By what right, conversely, can we be forbidden from calling this "subject"? I am thinking of those today who would try to reconstruct a discourse about the subject which would not be pre-deconstructive, about a subject which would no longer include the figure of mastery of self, of adequation to self, centre and origin of the world, etc... but who would define the subject rather as the finite experience of non-identity to self, as the underivable interpellation inasmuch as it comes from the other, from the trace of the other, with the paradoxes or the aporia of being-before-the-law, etc. Perhaps we'll pick this up again later on. For the moment, since we're speaking of Heidegger, let me add this. I believe in the force and the necessity (and therefore in a certain irreversibility) of the act by which Heidegger substitutes a certain concept of *Dasein* for a concept of subject still too marked by the traits of the *vorhanden* being, and hence by an interpretation of time, and insufficiently questioned in its ontological structure. The consequences of this displacement are immense, no doubt we have still not measured their extent. There's no question of laying these out here in an improvised manner, but I simply wanted to note this: the time and space of this displacement opened up a gap, marked a gap, they left fragile, or recalled the essential ontological fragility of the ethical, juridical and political foundations of democracy and of every discourse which one can oppose to national socialism in all its forms (the "worst" ones, or those which Heidegger and others might have thought of opposing). These foundations were and remain essentially sealed within a philosophy of the subject. One can quickly perceive the question which might also be the task: can one take into account the necessity of the existential analytic and what it shatters in the subject and turn towards an ethics a politics (are these words still appropriate?), indeed an "other" democracy (would it still be a democracy?), in any case towards another type of responsibility which safeguards against what a moment ago I very quickly called the "worst"? Don't expect from me an answer in the way of a formula. I think there are a certain number of us who are working for just this, are letting ourselves be worked by this, which can only take place by way of a long and slow trajectory. This cannot be dependent upon a speculative decree, even less upon an opinion. Perhaps not even upon philosophical discursivity.

Having said this, whatever the force, the necessity or the irreversibility of the Heideggerian gesture, the point of departure for the existential analytic remains tributary of precisely that which it puts into question. Tributary in this respect – I am picking this

out of the network of difficulties which I have associated with it at the beginning of *De l'esprit* (on the question of the question, technology, animality and epochality) - of that which is intimately linked to the axiom of the subject the chosen point of departure, the entity exemplary for a reading of the meaning of Being, is the entity which we are, we the questioning entities, we who, as open to the question of Being and of the being of the entity we are, have this relation to self, which is lacking in everything which is not *Dasein*. Even if the *Dasein* is not the subject, this point of departure (which is moreover assumed by Heidegger as ontologico-phenomenological) remains analogous, in its "logic", to that which he inherits in undertaking to deconstruct it, it isn't a mistake, it's no doubt an indispensable phase, but now...

J-LN: I'd like to point something out to you: a moment ago you were doing everything to dismiss, to disperse the idea of a "classic" problematic of the subject. Now you are targeting in Heidegger that which would remain tributary of the classical thinking or position of the subject. That seems a bit contradictory...

JD: I didn't say, "there is no problematic of the subject", but that it cannot be reduced to a homogeneity. This does not preclude, on the contrary, seeking to define certain analogies or common sources, provided that one takes into account the differences. For example, the point of departure in a structure of relation to self as such and of re-appropriation seems to me to be common just as much to transcendental idealism, to speculative idealism as the thinking of absolute subjectivity, as it is to the existential analytic which proposes its deconstruction. *Being and Time* always concerns those possibilities most proper to *Dasein* in its *Eigentlichkeit*, whatever be the singularity of this "appropriation" which is not, in fact, a subjectivation. Moreover, that the point of departure of the existential analytic is the *Dasein* privileges not only the rapport to self but also the power to ask questions. Now I have tried to show (*De l'esprit*, p. 147, n.1 sq) what this presupposed and what could come about, even in Heidegger, when this privilege of the question was complicated or displaced. To be brief, I would say that it is in the relation to the "yes" or to the *Zusage* presupposed in every question that one must seek a new (post-deconstructive) determination of the responsibility of the "subject". But it always seems to me to be more worthwhile, once this path has been laid down, to forget the word somewhat. Not forget it, it's unforgettable, but rearrange it, subject it to the laws of a context which it no longer dominates from the centre. In other words, no longer speak about it, but write it, write "on" it as on the "subjectile" for example. **[4]**

In insisting upon the as such, I am pointing from afar to the inevitable return of a distinction between the human relation to self, that is to say that of an entity capable of conscience, of language, of a relation to death as such, etc. and a non-human relation to self, incapable of the phenomenological as such - and once again we are back to the

question of the animal. [5] The distinction between the animal (which has no or is not a *Dasein*) and man has nowhere been more radical nor more rigorous than in Heidegger. The animal will never be either a subject nor a *Dasein*. It doesn't have an unconscious either (Freud), nor a rapport to the other as other, no more than there is an animal face (Levinas). It is from the standpoint of *Dasein* that Heidegger defines the humanity of man.

Why have I rarely spoken of the "subject" or of "subjectivity", but rather, here and there, only of "an effect" of "subjectivity"? Because the discourse on the subject, even where it locates difference, inadequation, the dehiscence within auto-affection, etc., continues to link subjectivity with man. Even if it acknowledges that the "animal" is capable of auto-affection (etc.), this discourse nevertheless does not grant it subjectivity and this concept thus remains marked by all the presuppositions which I have just recalled. Also at stake here of course is responsibility, freedom, truth, ethics and law.

The "logic" of the trace or of *différance* determines this re-appropriation as an ex-appropriation. Re-appropriation necessarily produces the opposite of what it apparently aims for. Ex-appropriation is not what is proper to man. One can recognize its differential figures as soon as there is a relation to self in its most elementary form (but for this very reason there is no such thing as elementary).

J-LN: When you decide not to limit a potential "subjectivity" to man, why do you then limit yourself simply to the animal?

JD: Nothing should be excluded. I said "animal" for the sake of convenience and to use a reference which is as classical as it is dogmatic. The difference between "animal" and "vegetal" also remains problematic. Of course the relation to self in ex-appropriation is radically different (and that's why it is a thinking of *différance* and not of opposition) in the case of what one calls the "non-living", the "vegetal", the "animal", "man", or "God". The question also comes back to the difference between the living and the non-living. I tried to indicate the difficulty of this difference in Hegel and Husserl, as well as in Freud and Heidegger.

J-LN: For my part, in my work on freedom, I was compelled to ask myself if the Heideggerian partition between *Dasein* on the one side and, on the other side, *Vor-* or *Zuhandensein* would not reconstitute a kind of distinction between subject and object.

JD: The categories of *Vorhandenheit* and *Zuhandenheit* are also intended to avoid those of object (correlate of the subject) and instrument. *Dasein* is first of all thrown. What would link the analytic of *Dasein* with the heritage of the subject would perhaps be more the determination of *Dasein* as *Gewoifenhait*, its primordial being-thrown, rather than that of a subject which would come to be thrown, but a being thrown which would be

more primordial than subjectivity and therefore also than objectivity. A passivity which would be more primordial than traditional passivity and than *Gegenstand* (*Gegenwurf*, the old German word for object, keeps this reference to throwing, without yet stabilizing it into the stance of a *stehen*). I refer you to what I have said about the *dé-sistance* (in *Psyché*) [6] on the subject of the subject in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. I am trying to think through this experience of the throwing/being-thrown of the subjectile beyond the Heideggerian protocols about which I was just speaking and to link it to another thinking of destination, of chance and of destinerrance (see again "My Chances", [7] where I situate a (repudiated) relationship between Heidegger and a thinking of the Democritean type).

Starting at "birth", and possibly even prior to it, being-thrown reappropriates itself or rather ex-appropriates itself in forms which are not yet those of the subject or the project. The question "who" then becomes: "who (is) thrown?" "Who becomes "who" from out of the destinerrance of the being-thrown?" That it is still a matter here of the trace, but also of iterability (cf. "Limited Inc." in *Glyph*) means that this ex appropriation cannot be absolutely stabilized in the form of the subject. The subject assumes presence, that is to say sub-stance, stasis, stance. Not to be able to stabilize itself absolutely would mean to be able only to be stabilizing itself. Ex-appropriation no longer closes itself; it never totalizes itself. One should not take these figures for metaphors (metaphoricity implies exappropriation), nor determine them according to the grammatical opposition of active/passive. Between the thrown and the falling (*Verfallen*) there is also a possible point of passage. Why is *Geworfenheit*, while never put into question, subsequently given to marginalization in Heidegger's thinking? This is what, it seems to me, we must continue to ask. And ex-appropriation does not form a boundary, if one understands by this word a closure or a negativity. It implies the irreducibility of the relation to the other. The other resists all subjectivation, even to the point of the interiorization-idealization of what one calls the work of mourning. The non-subjectivable in the experience of mourning is what I tried to describe in *Glas* and in *Mémoires (for Paul de Man)*. There is in what you describe in your recent book [8] as an experience of freedom, an opening which also resists subjectivation, that is to say it resists the modern concept of freedom as subjective freedom.

J-LN: In what you are calling ex-appropriation, inasmuch as it does not close in upon itself and although it does not close in upon itself (let us say in and in spite of its "passivity") is there not also necessarily something on the order of singularity? It is in any case something in the order of the singular that I was getting at with my question who.

JD: Under the heading of *Jemeinigkeit*, beyond or behind the subjective "self" or person, there is for Heidegger a singularity, an irreplaceability of that which remains non-

substitutable in the structure of *Dasein*. This amounts to an irreducible singularity or solitude in *Mitsein* (which is also a condition of *Mitsein*), but it is not that of the individual. This last concept always risks pointing towards both the ego and an organic or atomic indivisibility. The *Da* of *Dasein* singularizes itself without being reducible to any of the categories of human subjectivity (self, reasonable being, consciousness, person), precisely because it is presupposed by all of these.

J-LN: You are getting around to the question "who comes after the subject?", thus reversing the form "who comes before the subject?"...

JD: Yes, but "before" no longer retains any chronological, logical, nor even ontologico-transcendental sense, if one takes into account, as I have tried to do, that which resists the traditional schema of ontologico-transcendental questions.

J-LN: But I still do not understand whether or not you leave a place for the question "who?" Do you grant it pertinence or, on the contrary, do you not even want to pose it, do you want to bypass every question...?

JD: What troubles me is what also commands me; it involves the necessity of locating, wherever one responds to the question "who?" – not only in terms of the subject, but also in terms of *Dasein* – conceptual oppositions which have not yet been sufficiently questioned, not even by Heidegger. I referred to this a moment ago and this is what I have been aiming at in all my analyses of Heidegger. **[9]** In order to recast, if not rigorously re-found a discourse on the "subject", on that which will hold the place (or replace the place) of the subject (of law, of morality, of politics – so many categories caught up in the same turbulence) one has to go through the experience of a deconstruction. This deconstruction (we should once again remind those who do not want to read) is not negative, nor nihilistic; it is not even a pious nihilism, as I have heard said. A concept (that is to say also an experience) of responsibility comes at this price. We have not finished paying for it. I am talking about a responsibility which is not deaf to the injunction of thought. As you said one day; there is a duty in deconstruction. There has to be, if there is such a thing as duty. The subject, if subject there must be, is to come after this.

Notes

[1] *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, transl. B. Harlow, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979; "Prejugés" in *La faculté de juger*, Paris, Minuit, 1984; *U/ysse Gramophone*, Paris, Galilée, 1987; *De l'esprit: Heidegger et la question*, Paris, Galilée, 1987; "Nombre de oui" in *Psyché: Invention de l'autre*, Paris, Galilée, 1987.

[2] For example *La voix et le phénomène*, Paris, PUF, 1967, p. 94; *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. David B. Allison, Northwestern University Press, 1973, p. 84. This note develops the implications of Husserl's sentence: "We can only say that this flux is something which we name in conformity with what is constituted, but is nothing temporally 'objective'. It is absolute subjectivity and has the absolute properties of something to be denoted metaphorically as 'flux', as a point of actuality, primal source-point, that from which springs the 'now', and so on. In the lived experience of actuality, we have the primal source-point and a continuity of moments of reverberation (*Nachhallmomenten*). For all this, names are lacking."

The note ends with: "There is no constituting subjectivity. The very concept of constitution must be deconstructed."

[3] *Ego Sum*, Paris, Flammanon, 1975.

[4] "Forcener le subjectile" in Antonin Anaud, *Portraits et Dessins*, Paris. Gallimard, 1986.

[5] *De l'esprit*, *op. cit.*, and *Psyché*, *op. cit.*

[6] "Desistance", preface to the American translation (E. Cadava and Ch. Fynsk) or Philippe Lacoue-Labarhe's *Typography*, Harvard University Press.

[7] "My Chances" in *Taking Chances*, transl. A. Ronell and J. Harvey, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984.

[8] *L'expérience de la liberté*, Paris, Galilée, 1988.

[9] Also, for example, *The truth in painting* (tr. G. Bennington, The University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 286: "Unless Heidegger ignores (excludes? forecloses? denies? leaves implicit? unthought?) an other problematic of the subject, for example in a displacement or development of the value "fetish". Unless, therefore, this question of the *subjectum* is displaced otherwise, outside the problematic of truth and speech which governs *The Origin*."

Translated by Peter T. Connor

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