

Repetition and dissemination: theory of addictive use

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So “Repetition and dissemination”, let's be clear from the outset, but it's the repetition and dissemination of the verb we're talking about. As we shall see, it is the verb that is disseminated, and precisely through repetition. At least, that's the main idea we're going to develop. It may seem a little far-fetched at first, but what we'd like to develop here, with you, in the hour allotted to us, is in fact the following idea: we'd like to consider that, in fact, it's not so much we who use the verb - as if we had it at our disposal to communicate - but rather, quite the opposite, that it's the verb that simply makes use of us. In other words, it's the verb that uses us, not the other way around. This is not a new idea. As early as the beginning of the 19th century, Schelling noted that “there is no reason that we possess, but only a reason that possesses us”. Then, of course, closer to home, in the last century, Heidegger came along to tell us that it's language that speaks, not us. His famous “*Die Sprache spricht*”. Or, a little closer still, Lacan, who said he was not a “poet but a poem”. As you can see, there's no shortage of examples.

The main question, then, is this: why on earth, if this is indeed the case, if it's the verb that preys on us, why on earth would the verb use us in this way? Well, our thesis, as you'll have gathered, is this: if the Word takes hold of us, it's precisely for the sole purpose, no more, no less, of disseminating itself. In other words, the idea is that the Word is simply using us to propagate itself, like a virus, and that we are, from this point of view, its simple and temporary hosts. We'll have to work out some of the consequences of this, because to take this as a hypothesis - that is, to consider that as an individual, as a subject, we would be no more than the vehicle of language, and nothing else - is not, as you can well imagine, without causing problems, or at least without raising serious questions.

Let's return to our title: “Repetition and dissemination”. In fact, we could have said “Repetition and dissemination of the verb”, since that's exactly what we're talking about. What else is to disseminate than to scatter, to spread, to sow, to disperse? For the speaker, for the speaking being, there is from the outset and necessarily the presence of a certain dissemination of the verb.

Indeed, whenever we speak, we witness an undeniable outpouring of the verb: it never ceases, flowing through us all the time and from all sides. To convince yourself of this, all you have to do is observe this simple fact: it's literally impossible for the

speaker to stop thinking. Try it, you'll see, it's literally impossible. Or you have to reach a level of meditation, which requires extraordinary technical skill, and which is not within everyone's reach - far from it. For the average person, even when you're asleep, you're thinking. It's easy to speak of a veritable, dizzying rustle, a constant trickle of words. Of course, "the word" here should be understood as something more than words. It could be images, sounds, gestures. It's about signifiers, in the broadest sense. Let's say it's about the verb as that which is capable of making sense.

So is it simply to enable the dissemination of the verb, the diffusion of language, that our meagre, perishable bodies serve? It's certainly possible. It's our hypothesis. Basically, what we want to do is simply see where such a hypothesis can lead us, if we take it seriously at all.

Be that as it may, the whole problem with the verb, with the symbolic, if we start to think of it as a kind of autonomous entity, which would be independent as such, is that in order to disseminate itself, well, it absolutely needs a third party. In this way, it's a kind of virus which, as such, cannot reproduce itself without having infested an organism. One day, perhaps, it will be possible for the symbolic to take up residence within machines, and disseminate itself there - that's the dream of a firm like Google, for example. But for this to happen, the verb needs a living organism. And so far, at least, it seems to be the human body that has proved to be the privileged and exclusive host of language.

What must be borne in mind, however, is that the Symbolic, as such, is purely and simply immortal. It is imperishable. The only condition for this - a necessary but sufficient condition - is that it must be able to be disseminated. The human being is thus precisely the one who finds himself to be, literally, letter by letter, the being parasitized by language. Indeed, it is because language exists that man can think of himself as a being. Language gives him his identity, his place. As we shall see, it even shapes his very destiny. For if we are subjects, we are subjects of language. This is the unconscious, no more, no less. At the end of his teaching, Lacan used the term "parlêtre" to refer to this mysterious unconscious. Let's not forget: there is no unconscious of the subject, but a subject of the unconscious.

This simply means that there is no little man within man, no hidden entity that thinks and acts within us, "without our knowing it", but that there are quite simply laws of speech and language that pre-exist us, and inexorably determine us as subjects. To have an unconscious is simply to be subject to the laws of speech and language: to grammar, metaphor and metonymy. The crux of the matter, then, is none other than this: the human being, precisely because he speaks, cannot be reduced to being merely his body. Indeed, the whole problem is that he is never a body, since he is rather the one who has a body. He is, if you like, both an animal and a subject. This is the crux of the problem: it's what has always been symptomatic of humanity. In other words, in our hypothesis, everything starts from this observation, which we must accept as a kind of axiom: the speaking being is

fundamentally and irremediably a sick being. He is sick of being a speaker. This is true every day, isn't it?

If we compare humans to animals, it goes without saying that they are totally denatured, fundamentally at odds with their natural environment. Well, this is precisely because they are totally contaminated by a virus that is none other than the verb. The word denatures it, so to speak: it's even the source of all the perversions that make up the essence of humanity. As the late Lacan said, "everyone is delirious". Believing oneself to be normal is perhaps the greatest of all delusions. Be that as it may, we might as well say it straight out, abandon all hope: once you've become a speaking being, the disease is incurable.

Our purpose here is threefold. What's it all about? Firstly, to show that the dissemination of the verb is possible only through the grace - or because of, depending on your point of view - of repetition. It is repetition that makes us speakers, that makes us the vehicles of language. Secondly, we'll see what kind of havoc repetition can wreak on the speaker. Indeed, let's put it this way: repetition is always on the prowl for the speaking being. The concepts of "jouissance" and "death drive" will then be examined.

Thirdly and lastly, while the verb can be toxic by virtue of its very repetition, it is not without virtue. It enables subjectivation, neither more nor less. It's what allows a becoming-subject to get underway. It enables the artist, for example, to bring about a certain subversion. A subversion in which the poison - the verb-toxic - is used as a remedy - the fabrication of a verb-liberatory. The artist - and this will be our conclusion - will thus be considered here as one who devotes his life, no more and no less, to attempting to subvert subjectivation. All this may seem a little obscure when you put it like that, but it will become clearer as we go along.

To be more precise, we'll organize our talk as follows: first, we'll establish the central role played by repetition when it comes to the intrusion of the symbolic on the biological, when the verb takes hold of the body, when the sensitive is captured by the spiritual. Then we'll see that it's precisely this primordial role of repetition that makes the speaking being the only one capable of falling prey to various and varied addictions. What we'll show is that, if the verb wants only one thing - to spread, it can be refused by the host. The body can refuse to be parasitized.

A certain form of entry into addiction may indeed be such an attempt, an attempt to refuse the verb. As you can see, what's at stake here is none other than to show that the verb, while it can be at its best, subjectivizing us, enabling us to emerge as a "signifying subject", as a being capable of sublimation, can also be at its worst: in other words, it can be highly toxic. This toxicity arises when the verb serves the unbridled, mortifying jouissance of the death drive. In other words, the symbolic can sometimes be the very source of its host's death. In order to survive and spread, the verb will not hesitate to kill the organism that carries it.

When it comes to the verb, the symbolic, there is at once the dimension of art, knowledge, love, politics - in other words, everything that falls within the realm of sublimation - but also, and at the same time, a possible dimension of alienation: that when the latter simply becomes the bearer of semblances, of the inauthentic, depriving us, in any case, of a certain vitality of passions.

Let's begin, then, by establishing in what way, and above all how, language is particularly concerned with repetition.

It's repetition that allows the verb to spread. For better or for worse, we say. On the one hand, human beings are literally prisoners of language: their perceptions and emotions are guided, induced and totally perverted by language. For him, nothing is immediate. Everything passes through the mediation of representations. Isn't the gaze, for example, full of words? Try it out and you'll see.

Looking at something immediately calls for putting it into words, and it's very difficult, perhaps even impossible, to do otherwise. But this inescapable mediation brings the best. Quite simply, because without it, we'd be confronted with a totally immoral and distressing reality, and here we need only think of nightmares to get an idea. It's the nightmare, in fact, that gives us a tiny glimpse of what the Real is when there are no longer any signifiers to cover it up, to give it meaning. In passing, we should also mention certain hallucinogenic drugs, which give us a glimpse of the Real. The "bad trip" on lsd, for example, and for those who might be interested, what else is it but an encounter with the Real? It's the most common experience. This mediation by language also leads to the worst, for we are then, and by that very fact, forever separated from the immediacy and vitality of the passions.

The "real" life, the biological life, the life in direct contact with the world, the life governed by instincts alone, is in effect forever forbidden to us, simply because we are traversed by language.

It's a sad commentary on the human condition: we are neither fully body nor fully spirit. Caught between form and matter, between the sensible and the intelligible. Anyway, let's move on.

The first step is to try and understand how language takes hold of us. How does one become a speaking being? I might as well tell you that it's not something we're born with. As an aside, at a time not so long ago, when this kind of experiment was still quite possible, a few people set out to find out what God's language was. They thought, not without a certain finesse, that if they took a few newborn babies, simply deprived them of all contact with any language whatsoever, simply provided for their survival, well, when they started to speak, it would necessarily be the language of God. Well, I'll give you the results of the experiments right now: the children all died. A child to whom you don't also give spiritual nourishment, i.e. language, simply doesn't survive. This can be explained by bearing in mind that, as Lacan put it, "the

essence of man is his relation to man". This means that we are social animals, political animals, and that if a man is not included in a structure, if he is not integrated into the community of his peers, he does not survive, he simply lets himself die. And to integrate someone into a structure, what else but to integrate them into a discourse, i.e. to feed them words from the outset, to speak of them, so that they come to speak within themselves.

If language takes hold of us so easily, it's of course because we're used to it, because we're immersed in it, from before birth.

But more precisely, if the symbolic, structure and language have a hold on us, it's only through repetition. The original point of entry into the symbolic, for a subject, is none other than the repetition of a beat in eclipse of a presence against a background of absence. Let's explain.

The minimum requirement for a structure to exist, and for us to become its subject, is a difference between at least two signifiers.

This is what Saussure taught us in linguistics, and what made structuralism so successful in France in the 60s. All you need is a pair, two things that oppose each other, to generate a structure. What's needed - without being able to go into detail here - for a structure to arise and function, is for there to be at least one empty square. The most trivial image of a structure, to use a metaphor and speak to everyone, is the game of *jeu de l'oie*. It's a structure, and it's able to operate because there's a square left empty, a square that allows the elements to move within it, in a more or less complex, but always calculable, combinatorics. By the way, the very fact that we cannot reduce ourselves, as a mind, to the symbolic, the very fact that thought will always go beyond reason, and even language, is precisely that we cannot reduce ourselves to being, as a subject, nothing more than an empty box in a structure. Let's just say that what will always separate the machine, however complex it may be, from the speaker, is precisely that the machine can say nothing about its structure. It may be, and increasingly so, a hyper-complex logico-mathematical construction, but it will never say anything about its structuring. It calculates without being able to say anything about its calculation.

Let's just remember, for our purposes here, that thought is always denser, more complex, than the symbolic. Which translates into saying that, as individuals, we are not machines. This is the dead end of structuralism.

The real is, in fact, always far more complex than what we can say about it. While the symbolic, language and structure can take hold of our bodies, we are by no means reduced to them. As Lacan said, we are not our body, we have a body. So we can do everything we can to refuse subjectivation, we can do everything we can to be an anti-subject. We can refuse to leave our bodies at the disposal of language. We can militate against the subject, against language. For some, it's a real passion. We'll come back to this later, but this is what drug addicts and artists do, each in their own way.

But let's get back to what we're interested in. When it comes to the grip of structure - of the symbolic, of language - on our bodies, this grip originates, originally and originally, from the subject's oscillation between being and non-being. In other words, the simple difference between one alternating signifier and another. This is how the symbolic takes hold of our bodies. And that's why we're immediately in a state of repetition. The repetition of presence/absence. Presence and absence, in their alternation, underpin the construction of the whole Freudian theory of access to language - in passing, it also underpins the whole theory of sets, and thus the whole of mathematics, since zero and one are also generated by a repetition of presence/absence, and thus underpin the whole of arithmetic. Originally, it's a question of presentifying absence against a backdrop of presence. For language, the paradigm is perhaps the famous reel game. Freud's grandson gains access to symbols by throwing his reel while uttering a "Fort/da".

Which can be rendered as a kind of "present", "absent". The grandson thus plays for hours trying to become the master of this disappearance/reappearance. What the naive little child doesn't know is that, by playing at making presence appear against a background of absence, he gradually becomes parasitized by language. He becomes the subject of the structure, the subject of the signifier. He thought he'd become master of the thing, but it's the thing that takes hold of him.

There are all kinds of very concrete examples of this. After all, this is empiricism as initiated by Hume. In this view of things, our representations derive solely from our experience. There's nothing innate about it. Be that as it may, all the examples we're about to give you clearly demonstrate the extent to which repetition is the source of language. Or, more precisely, the extent to which the symbolic takes hold of us through repetition.

We can already look at what happens when, for one reason or another, language fails to take hold of a body. When something stumbles, when it just won't take. In the sphere of infantile psychosis, or autism as it's now called, it's easy to see that something of the order of repetition has been left hanging. Stereotypies, rhythmic body swaying, what else but incessant repetition? The same is true of echolalia, where the child becomes a sounding board, simply repeating the words he hears without being able to make them his own. It's as if the symbolic has taken a bite out of the biological, but not enough for the subject to become fully the subject of language. Perhaps it's even an individual decision. Doesn't the child refuse, from the outset, to be the plaything of the structure? The autistic person would then be blocking the verb, no more and no less, by remaining below language, below all signification. In any case, it's a hypothesis, a question we're entitled to ask ourselves. Even if it runs counter to the current doxa, which is to look for the causes of autism in primarily organic dysfunctions.

Another example. When a subject is already a speaking being, but not yet a complete master of the language, don't we also witness phenomena of repetition, in which, incidentally, we can't help but see a certain jubilation? Children love to be told the same story over and over, down to the last comma. They never tire of being told the same text over and over again. Much more often, it may be a cartoon, watched thousands of times, that always provokes the same satisfaction in the child. Here, it's the fact of repetition that counts, not what's repeated. And we can see from these observations what an insane hold repetition so easily has on us. Let's just say that repetition exerts a real fascination on human beings. One could almost speak of bewitchment, or at any rate magnetization, as repetition as such takes precedence over what is repeated. Language, the symbolic, structure - they're all basically synonymous - make us their subjects through repetition. The "signifying subject" is produced through repetition.

As Didier Laroque puts it with great finesse: "Humans prefer to recognize than to know". Indeed, it's all there. And it's perhaps most obvious in music, where the repetition of the motif is fundamental. The reason why this repetition is so central is so that we can anticipate its return, and experience genuine aesthetic pleasure and jubilation.

Another classic example of repetition, and one that shows just how subject we are to it, this time drawn from clinical experience, is the case of failure neurosis. A subject will repeatedly fail in his life, always in the same way: he fails his exams, his love affairs end badly, and always in the same disastrous way. Without going into the details of the etiology, let's just say that there's a repetitive force at work here every time, which manages to turn our story into something on the order of a true destiny. Repetition foments our destiny, as we see every day. You can read Kierkegaard's beautiful book on repetition, which is magnificently written and is probably the most profound statement ever made on the concept of repetition.

A final example, again drawn from clinical experience. The totally enigmatic return of the traumatic scene after an event that has broken the psyche. It took Freud a long time to understand why we repeat the horrifying scene over and over again, through memories, images that impose themselves on our consciousness in spite of ourselves, or through incessant nightmares. He came to believe that the repetition of the event, however painful, was the only way for the subject to bind the event, to catch it in the net of the symbolic and the imaginary. A trauma is something of the real order that has torn a hole in our habitual representations of the world. The accompanying affect is anguish. And it's only by repeating, over and over again, the vision of the trauma that we can sometimes succeed in suturing it, by phagocytizing it, digesting it to a greater or lesser extent, to give it back a place in a symbolic order, and thus put an end to the anguish to some extent. This is a fundamental virtue of repetition.

As you can see, there's no shortage of examples when it comes to grasping the extent to which we are in the grip of repetition. If we become the prey, the plaything, the subject of language, it's always by the "grace" of repetition. If language can inoculate itself into our bodies, disseminate itself through them, it's by making use of our strange appetite for repetition. So, the place of the symbolic - and we must be very careful here - is not, as we might think, the mind, but the body. It's the body that is literally contaminated, parasitized, by the symbolic. This is what psychoanalysis has taught us. The letter makes us the playthings of destiny: it foments our symptoms, structures our modes of enjoyment, and is always to be found at the very heart of our most intimate passions. What's more, for the speaker, the drive is nothing more than a matter of grammar.

It's always about seeing, being seen, going to be seen, eating, being eaten, and so on and so forth.

Repetition makes us talk, but it is also, by that very fact, capable of wreaking havoc. Our bodies, in fact, can end up being no more than mere supports for the dissemination of words. The host can sometimes end up being sacrificed for the sole benefit of the parasite. In fact, the biological body may well not survive the force of repetition when it becomes totally unbridled. The death drive then comes into play, in the form of the automatism of repetition we're about to discuss. Let's not forget that when *jouissance* is too strong, well, the body gives way: it's no more and no less than death.

Let's not lose sight of the fact that the Symbolic can be considered an autonomous entity. And as such, it can do without us.

This is why some people will do anything - absolutely anything - to rid themselves of the parasite, to rid themselves of the verb. There is, in fact, a very specific use of repetition that allows us to "get out" of the verb. If repetition has made us talk by inoculating us with the virus that is the verb, then perhaps a use of repetition could rid us of this fundamental toxin: that's the idea. And it's the drug addict who, more than anyone else, is going to try it. For him, the verb makes you sick, and the poison is clearly injected through repetition. Well, through repetition, he says to himself, perhaps it's possible to extricate oneself from the verb. In short, we're going to use the poison as a remedy.

The future drug addict is the one who, more than any other, is acutely aware of the semblance dimension of the verb. To be a speaker is, in effect, to be cut off from the real world. Representation acts as a screen between what we perceive and what is real. For the speaker, authentic access to reality is no longer possible. This is why

they may want to cut themselves off from the spoken word. Drug addicts can't stand the inauthenticity and semblance of language. They've come to understand that truth has a fictional structure, and that as soon as we're in language, we're in lies. For reasons that are different each time, and that belong to him, such a thing is strictly unbearable. So he's going to do everything he can to get rid of the verb - let's just say that he's suffered too much from the verb and its inescapable dimension of semblance.

The future drug addict will soon realize that, in what is only the beginning of an addiction, it is quite possible to switch from the repetition of enjoyment to the enjoyment of repetition. As satisfaction cannot last forever, the only way out is to keep repeating it. This is what the future drug addict does, as indeed does everyone else. But what's going to characterize him, what's going to make him an addict, and no longer a simple drug user, is that by dint of repeating enjoyments, he's going to fall into the enjoyment of repetition. If there's *jouissance de la répétition*, it's because it's the repetition that enjoys, not the subject. There's even a total eclipse of the Subject when repetition takes control of a body in this way. So, of course, there's a paradox here, since for the drug addict it's a question of weaning themselves off the verb, but intoxicating themselves. The use of intoxicants will, by dint of repeated consumption, lead to a pure enjoyment of repetition. It's no longer the product consumed or the satisfaction it brings that counts, it's simply the repetition of consumption. What we need to bear in mind is that the product consumed is of no importance to the addict. What counts is not the nature of the product, nor even the quantity or frequency of absorption. What counts is that there is a shift from the repetition of consumption, from a repetition of enjoyment, to a pure enjoyment of repetition. In other words, the point is to realize that it's not the drug taken that counts, but the gesture.

As with the child who wants to see his favourite cartoon over and over again, it's not the content that counts, it's the repetition itself.

The question is, then, how can switching from the repetition of *jouissance* to the *jouissance* of repetition help the drug addict wean himself off what he considers to be the fundamental toxicity? In other words, how can it help him wean himself off the verb? What does it actually mean to wean oneself off the verb? What else, if not literally de-subjectivizing oneself? If language makes us its subject, if we are subject to it, well, getting rid of language means no longer being its subject, and therefore, in effect, de-subjectifying ourselves. What the drug addict wants, more than any other, is a return to the time before representation, a return to a lost origin where language would not have rendered our lives inauthentic, cutting us off from reality and the vitality of passions. What the drug addict wants is to cut himself off from the world of language, to achieve greater authenticity. Knowing full well that as a subject he's nothing but a representation, he'll do everything in his power to cut himself off from himself as a subject. He'll use the compulsion to repeat to de-subjectify himself. What

else does he want, if not to become a pure body again? It's a return to sensations outside language, outside representations, that the future drug addict initially aspires to. Let's return to the addictive use of repetition by the addict in an attempt to get out of the verb. Talking about "intoxicating oneself in order to detoxify oneself" requires some serious explanation. What we need to understand is that once we've reached the point where it's repetition that enjoys us, and in us, well, there's simply no longer any Subject worth having. The automatism of repetition, the blindest death drive of all, will then take hold of us, leaving us totally outside the realm of language. What else is the drug addict if not a fierce anti-subject? In this respect, he's a real fighter, a courageous fighter even. "Courageous", because making oneself the place for the enjoyment of repetition is done in the throes. There's no such thing as a happy addict. If you succeed in de-subjectivizing yourself, first through compulsive drug use, then through compulsive use of repetition itself - in other words, if you become addicted to repetition in order to cut yourself off from the verb - you pay with unimaginable suffering. Quite simply, because if there's no longer a subject, there's only an object: the object of the pleasure of repetition. It's no longer we who enjoy ourselves by repeating enjoyments, it's repetition that uses us for its own autistic enjoyment. This is the death drive, and nothing else. I might as well tell you that most drug addicts, when they really go on a crusade against words and language, don't come back. What they get out of language is nothing less than death. For when a body becomes a mere vehicle for the enjoyment of repetition, it doesn't last long. But you mustn't get the wrong impression, otherwise you'll think this is a caricature of the real thing: there are very few real drug addicts out there. To give you a clearer picture, consider that the most deadly addiction, where the subject most of the time really goes to the end of his or her desubjectification, paying a high price in the process, since they often die as a result, is anorexia nervosa. In this case, the product is simply "nothing". The anorexic eats nothing, not nothing.

As I said, it doesn't matter what the product is in an addiction: you can find yourself addicted to gambling, or to strong sensations, for example. What counts is the repetition of an enjoyment, which becomes an enjoyment of repetition alone.

The definition of addiction, let's repeat, is to have shifted from the repetition of *jouissance* to the *jouissance* of repetition.

What we have here is an addictive use of repetition itself, as a *pharmakon*, a remedy, but which at the same time proves to be a violent poison. Weaning oneself off the verb is the goal for the addict, who at all costs does not want to find himself a mere body at the disposal of the verb. A body that allows language to spread through it, using it as a host to be parasitized.

He doesn't want pretence, he wants an immediate relationship with the world. He refuses to be fooled by language, and that's precisely why he finds himself wandering. For "the non-dupe wanders", as Lacan famously put it. You have to know how to use semblants, not reject them out of hand. In the end, there's no one more of a dupe than the non-dupe. Simply because a rejection of language, a rejection of

semblants, is often nothing more and nothing less than the death of all vitality. The host does not survive the desertion of the fundamental virus that is the verb.

If we can believe that there is a possible addictive use of repetition to wean ourselves off semblances, to leave the world of representations, to desubjectify ourselves, it will nevertheless fail, inexorably. You can't prevent the dissemination of the verb through the addictive use of repetition. This is because, with semblants, the only solution is to learn how to use them, not to try, far too radically, to get rid of them. In other words, to do without the verb, you have to learn to use it. And isn't it the artist, more than any other, who instinctively understands this?

The fierce will of the artist: the subversion of subjectivation. Who is the artist if not the one who, like the drug-addicted subject, refuses the world of semblances imposed on him by the language of the city, the masters of the tribe? What he can't stand is not being at the origin, the source of the language he speaks. A language is imposed on him, a language, and the vision of the world that inevitably goes with it. This hardly suits him.

The artist may feel, as much as the future drug addict, totally contaminated by the word, but he will nevertheless opt for an entirely different strategy to extract himself from it. His willpower is fierce, almost mad. To put it bluntly, he will attempt, no more and no less, a subversion of subjectivation.

Let's explain. Since the subject is only a representation, that it has no being as such, that it is not even a substance, that it is only what one signifier represents for another signifier, well, the artist is going to make a choice. He will choose, quite simply, to remodel language. Since, as a subject, he's merely a representation, he'll at least take it upon himself to choose this representation. No longer subject to it, but constructing it. In other words, he's not only going to make a name for himself, he's going to make a language of his own, no more, no less. To do so, he's even prepared to lose the ability to be heard by members of his community. He's perfectly capable of addressing a hypothetical future in his own language. Unable to bear the fact that even his first name has been imposed on him, he will do everything in his power to engender himself, to give himself his own name. He's going to create his own language, even if it means he'll be the only one, for centuries to come, able to speak it. This is the artist's wild and ferocious will. As René Char once said, "that which comes into the world to disturb nothing deserves neither consideration nor patience". His truth will blow a hole in knowledge, reorganizing the entire encyclopedia, no less.

We can cite two major artists who clearly proceeded in this way, in a totally conscious manner: a writer and a poet. Joyce and Artaud. Joyce, in *Le portrait de l'artiste en jeune homme*.

Le langage que nous parlons lui appartient avant de m'appartenir. [...] Son idiome, si familier et si étranger à la fois, sera toujours pour moi un langage acquis. Je n'ai ni façonné ni accepté ces mots. Ma voix les tient aux abois. Mon âme s'exaspère à l'ombre de son langage¹.

Then Artaud, in *Le théâtre et son double* :

De ce nouveau langage la grammaire est encore à trouver. Le geste en est la matière et la tête... Il refait poétiquement le trajet qui a abouti à la création du langage... Il remet à jour les rapports inclus et fixés dans les stratifications de la syllabe humaine, et que celles-ci en se refermant sur eux a tués².

Artaud, like Joyce, will thus attempt, as artists, to remedy the parasite induced by language. They invent a new grammar. Like drug addicts, they don't seek to get rid of the symbolic as such. They just want to remodel it, rearrange it, reappropriate it for themselves. They want to invent their own language, nothing more, nothing less. It's not a question of dispensing with the verb by cutting oneself off from the world, as well as from oneself, but of learning to use it in such a way as to make oneself as unique as possible. Basically, it's about creating a new language within language. The artist doesn't reject structure or language; in fact, more than anyone else, he has a profound need for it. He just wants to be able to use the play permitted by structure to create, to invent. He wants to reinvent himself, let's say it again, by making a name for himself.

The drug addict, unlike the artist who needs the recognition of his peers, is totally autistic: his only partner is his enjoyment. An opaque pleasure that totally excludes meaning. The artist, too, is a being who has chosen to reject all that is initially imposed on him, but instead of cutting himself off from the world, he becomes part of it. No longer subject to the common language, he invents his own. To avoid misunderstandings, this language may be literature or poetry, mathematics or philosophy, pictorial or musical, or whatever. But in all cases, it will be up to others to learn to speak this new language. If to philosophize "is to learn to speak one's own language", then to be an artist is to go one step further: it's to impose on others the language we've made our own.

¹ See Joyce, James, *Portrait de l'artiste en jeune homme*, Paris, Folio classique, 1992, p.279.

² See Artaud, Antonin, *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *Le théâtre et son double*, "Deuxième lettre sur le langage", Paris, Gallimard, 1978, p.106.

Joyce, for example, turns language against itself. He turns Latin against itself, rejects all the culture of his time, and denounces the pretenses and prejudices of all current discourse. To this end, he reworked the language until he was able to forge his own. He creates the new. He tries to become “the only individual mind of his time”. The drug addict, on the other hand, if he too wants to be singular and live outside the norm, outside language, makes no attempt whatsoever to reinvest the world of culture and representation. The last thing on his mind is to reinvent a language that would be his own, absolutely singling him out. The drug addict wants to reject even his own name; the true artist wants the same thing, but chooses to rename himself. He, too, seeks to throw off the diktats of the language world.

However, his approach, even if it comes from the same source, is quite different. In both cases, there is a profound rejection of the world order, but their approaches ultimately lead to two strictly opposite results.

The drug addict is in the business of destruction. They leave behind a world of illusions, but to reach a totally sterile universe, a world where nothing exists but the desert of reality. What else is the real if not a world without words, where emptiness reigns supreme? Now totally voiceless, all that remains for the addict is his empty *jouissance*, resolutely closed in on itself, autistic and senseless as such. The death of the organism becomes the only horizon for such a subject, along with the compulsion to repeat. Once the body is trapped in the pleasure of repetition, there is no longer even a subject worth having. The drug addict may succeed in cutting himself off from the world, but he fails nonetheless, no longer even managing to live.

The artist, too, rejects the world into which he has been thrust in spite of himself, but rather than cutting himself off from it radically, he tries to reshape it, to recreate it to his liking. He wants to make a name for himself in it, and to do so, he uses not repetition, but the signifier directly. His aim is to give the world a new, as yet totally unheard-of meaning. If the drug addict wants to destroy the world of culture and symbolism, the artist wants to deform it, leaving his deepest imprint on it. As we've said, what does the true artist actually do, if not reinvent language within language itself? The artist is therefore the perfect body for disseminating the verb. For if we return to our initial idea, our thesis, which consists in thinking of the symbolic as an autonomous entity, desiring only one thing: to be able to disseminate itself, then it goes without saying that the artist will not be in the least opposed to this. He will even ensure that, through his creations, a new arrangement, a new combinatory, emerges, but always while remaining the subject of the structure. The artist uses the verb, but serves it just as well, contributing to its dissemination, even extending its empire by adding truths to past knowledge. The artist helps to disseminate the verb, he even helps to increase knowledge, he adds stones to the edifice by being at the source of new combinations within the structure.

The drug addict's "machine-like" functioning, totally outside signifiers, makes him strictly incapable of artistic production. He deprives himself of the materiality of the signifier, and can no longer build anything in the artistic or cultural register. He thus blocks the dissemination of the verb. But he pays for it with his own life. Most of the time, he succumbs to this fierce refusal of all language.

So, if a large number of artists, and not the least, appear to us to be drug addicts, this is only an impression. A creator is anything but a body that functions outside language. In fact, it's strictly impossible for a creator to compulsively empty himself, to enjoy repetition and let repetition enjoy him.

The compulsion to repeat renders one speechless. Let's not confuse the drug-addicted subject with the artist developing a work or a discourse based on the use of toxic substances. A work about drugs is not the work of the drug-addicted subject.

An artist, even a genius, doesn't compose when he's truly a drug-addicted subject. He creates in the intervals, when he manages to stamp out the compulsion and become a subject-artist again. Creation only takes place beyond addiction. The artist-subject, if he uses drugs - and he often does - is never an addict-subject. The two positions are mutually exclusive: you're either an artist or a drug addict. The poet, seen as necessarily "cursed and addicted", remains a romantic vision. The "good word" proper to creators always requires a distancing from repetition, and is therefore not possible within a purely addictive subjective economy.

The artist - and this will be our conclusion - succeeds where the drug-addicted subject fails. Only the true artist succeeds in subverting subjectification. He succeeds, in fact, in allowing the verb to spread through him, while leaving his singular trace within language itself by inventing a language hitherto unheard of.

Thank you for listening.