

***G like...***

**GOD • A. DI CIACCIA**  
GUILT • V COCCOZ

# God

**Antonio Di Ciaccia**

**Freud:** Since the discovery of the Unconscious we can formulate the question in these terms: we know now that God is a substitute for the father, or more precisely, that he is a father who has been raised to a higher level; also, that he is a copy of the father as he has been perceived and known during the childhood by the single individual in his own personal childhood and by the human kind in its pre-history as the father of the pre-historical men. Later on, the single individual saw his father in a different way and he put him in perspective. The ideal image that the individual had of his father during his childhood remained and merged with the inherited image of the primordial father. It is from here that the individual representation of God originated.

**Philosopher:** It's not like that at all! The concept of God depends neither on the personal history nor on the pre-history of human kind. God is ontologically conceived as supreme concept of reality and as supreme concept of the thought, that is, as supreme value.

**Freud:** Philosophers stretch the meaning of words until they retain scarcely anything of the original sense. They give the name of "God" to some vague abstraction which they have created for themselves. The man who goes no further but humbly acquiesces in the small part which human being play in the greater world – such a man is, on the contrary, irreligious in the truest sense of the world.

**Theologian:** God is not a very vague abstraction or a semblance neither for the philosopher, nor for the theologian. As a matter of fact, as Saint Thomas of Aquin says: *Esse proprie convenit Deo*. Certainly, philosophy will tell us only that God is Being. It is, indeed, only through the revelation that we know that God is Person, and as Person, he is Father. *Proprie nomen personae patris est hoc nomen, pater, quod significat paternitatem*.

**Freud:** I need not to repeat here, the primal father was the original image of God, the model on which later generations have shaped the figure of God. The people which first succeeded in thus concentrating the divine attributes was not a little proud of the advance. It had laid open to view the father who had all along been hidden behind every divine figure as its nucleus. Fundamentally, this was a return to the hystorical beginnings of the idea of God. Now that God was a single person, man's relations to him could recover the intimacy and intensity of the child's relation to his father.

**Theologian:** The term father has to be referred to God first. Indeed, *Pater est principium sine principio*. So, *Pater prius dicitur de Deo quam de creatura*. It is only *analogice* that the name of father is given to the creation, as the Fathers of the Church have been saying from the beginning.

**Freud:** This hypothesis, which is founded on the observation of Robertson Smith (1889) and was developed by me in *Totem and Tabù* (1912-13), has been taken by Theodor Reik as the basis of this study on the problems of the psychology of religion of which this is the first volume. If the prehistoric and ethnological material on this subject is worked over psycho-analytically, we arrive at an unexpected result: namely that God the Father once lived upon earth in bodily form and exercised his sovereignty as chieftain of the primal human horde until his sons united to slay him. We have heard the admission that religion no longer has the same influence on people that it used to and this is not because its promises have grown less but because people find them less credible. Let us admit that the reason – thought perhaps not the only reason – for this change is the increase of the scientific spirit in the higher strata of human society.

**Lacan:** Here my views differ from Freud's. This knowledge, as we can find in the unconscious, is different from the scientific knowledge. Even though I predict the return to Freud's theories, I can say that *Totem et tabù* is twisted but for a good reason.

That story of the killing of the pre-historic human kind's father is Darwinian rubbish.

**Freud:** I wrote *Totem and Tabù* to say that it really happened.

**Lacan:** I know that for you, Freud, it is important that it *is* real and that everything originated from there. You care about it. We need to remember, though, that it is a myth. The myth incarnates the internal essence of every statement of the truth, which is that the truth can only be half said, we can only say half of it. Now, the role of the father, in our conception, it is that of a myth, nothing else but the dead father, just as you say. Only the dead father can be the symbolic father. Now, the symbolic role of the father is what I call – borrowing religious terms – the Name –Of-The-Father. Everything revolves around the Name-Of-The-Father. Just as for you, Freud, the sublimation. What I called the Name-Of-The-Father it is the place of God-Father. The Name-of-The-Father, that is God.

It is here that psychoanalysis, when successful, proves that we can live without the Name-Of-The-Father. We can live without it, if we use it.

**Philosopher:** But if God is dead, then everything is allowed!

**Lacan:** The conclusion that we can draw from our experience is that to the statement: “God is dead” follows the statement: “Nothing is allowed anymore”. But let's talk about *jouissance*. It is written in the *Ecclesiaste*: “God orders me to *jouir*”. I think you noticed the difference between the Hebrews' and Plato's God. Even though the history of the Christian religion, for what concerns the Hebrews' God, has found in Plato's God its little psychotic diversion...

**Philosopher:** Psychotic diversion!?

**Lacan:** The philosophers' God is the subject that we suppose that knows. Period. Einstein also uses it when he makes the point of the good old God that doesn't lie, the latent God behind every theory. It is at this level that we could question how much is left of the real atheism, the only one in which it is possible for the mind to face the challenge to the subject supposed to know. The real formula of atheism is not that God is dead but that God is unconscious. It is high time we remembered the difference between the Aristotelian God - immobile universal engine -, Plato's delirious view - God as highest good - and the Hebrews' God, who announces himself through the Word. The latter is a God who says: “I”, a God with whom one can talk, a God that asks you something and that in the *Ecclesiaste* orders you: “*Jouis!*” – which is really remarkable. To obey to an order to *jouir* is something that gives you anxiety. This is an order to which I can only answer: *J'ouis* “I hear”. This is a God that says precisely what he is.

**Theologian:** *Nomen, qui est, triplici ratione est maxime proprium nomen Dei...*

**Lacan:** If we translate, like Saint Augustine does, the biblical passage *Ehyeh acher ehyeh*, with the expression *Ego sum qui sum*, “I am which I'am”, it would be revealed that God and the Being are one and the same. It is an absurdity when God talks to Moses in the burning bushes. Slightly better is the Settanta's translation: *Ego sum qui est*. As Greeks, they conceived God as the supreme Being. The Being is I. What we are talking about here is a unique Being, who has nothing else to say but “I am what I am”.

**Philosopher:** From the I to that? From “which” to “what”? From the subject to the object? Or are there from the logical point of view two position of God, a universal one and a particular one?

**Lacan:** Whether he believes in God or not, one must deal with him. He can't avoid him. It is a God you can't eradicate because he doesn't have any other fundaments but that he is the oath to the universe of discourse.

Should I remind you that one is not lonely when he has the universe of language by his side, as Baltasar Gracian says in his *Criticicon* about the deserted island? The thought, if it is undermined by lack of sexual intercourse, thinks and thinks only through the One. From here originates the universal. But where does psychoanalysis come from? From the Jewish tradition. And in the Jewish tradition, as I said when I did not want to continue with my seminar about the Names of the Father, I had time to point out the fact that in Abraham's sacrifice what is sacrificed is actually the father depicted as the mutton. Through this sacrifice, the universality of the human kind is castrated. The One of the thought that we assume has an essence; if we define the thought as effect, its essence is the function of object *A*, that we will call the cause. It is a privileged cause that gives us the game of language.

**Philosopher:** God is the language then?

**Lacan:** No, God is not the language but he is implicit every time there is a language expression. The language expression creates God just that simply. As long as we will say something, hypothesis of God will be present. In fact, it is impossible to say anything without making him exist in the form of the Other.

**Theologist:** After listening to your reasoning, I still don't understand if you believe God exists or not.

**Lacan:** he exists, this good old God. The mode in which he exists may well not please everyone, especially not the theologians who, as I have been saying for a long time, are far more capable than I am of doing without his existence. Unfortunately, I am not quite in the same position because I am dealing with the Other. This Other, while it may be one alone, must have some relation to what appears of the other sex. And why not interpret one face of the other, the God face, as supported by Feminine *jouissance*. Since all this cares about thanks to the being of significance, and since this being has no place other than the place of the Other which I designate with a capital O, one can see the cockeyedness of what happens. And since it is there too that the function to which castration refers, one can see that where this may not make for two Gods, nor does it make for one alone. In sum, the only possibility for God to exist is that He – capitalized – *jouisse*, that is, He be *jouissance*.

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