

Engaging with Catholics, I Regarding Morality, Freud Has What it Takes : Faculté Universitaire Saint-Louis, Brussels : 9<sup>th</sup> March 1960 : Jacques Lacan  
Discourse to Catholics, II Can Psychoanalysis Constitute the Kind of Ethics Necessitated by our Times?: Faculté Universitaire Saint-Louis, Brussels : 9<sup>th</sup> March 1960 : Jacques Lacan

Note on translation by JE: ‘Discourse to Catholics’ was translated as ‘Lecture to Catholics’ by Dennis Porter (p179: Ch XIV) and as ‘lectures, comments, and conversations in which I engaged in Brussels’ (p169). Therefore, I suggest that ‘Engaging with Catholics’ is nearer to what Jacques Lacan describes. This will be the title given throughout LacanianWorks.

P3-52 of Jacques Lacan, The Triumph of Religion , preceded by Discourse to Catholics : translated by Bruce Fink : 2013

Background:

The “Engaging with Catholics” includes two lectures – given on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> March 1960 in Brussels, at the invitation of the Faculté Universitaire Saint-Louis – which were billed as “open to the public.” Jacques Lacan refers to them in Chapters 13 and 14 of Seminar VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis. (See [Seminar VII: The ethics of psychoanalysis, 1959-1990: Jacques Lacan](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=380) or [here](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=380) )  
(<http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=380> ) Lacan refers to them in Seminar VII : 16<sup>th</sup> March 1960 : Chapter XIII – The Death of God : p169 of Denis Porter’s translation and Seminar VII : 16<sup>th</sup> March 1960 : Chapter XIII – The Death of God : p169 of Denis Porter’s translation. See the notes for the ‘Reading Seminar VII Group : 30<sup>th</sup> November 2013 at LacanianWorks : Category [A Reading Seminar VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?cat=332) : Available [here](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?cat=332) (<http://www.lacanianworks.net/?cat=332> )

“Engaging with Catholics”, the lectures Jacques Lacan had just given in Brussels, are mentioned in his Seminar VII : 16<sup>th</sup> March 1960. Lacan describes his encounter as ‘lectures, comments, and conversations in which I engaged in Brussels’ and Seminar VII : 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1960 where Lacan designates them with the words “my lectures to Catholics” (if the translation is correct.) (See ‘Reading Seminar VII’, as above or [here](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?cat=332) for more detail). Two successive versions of them were published in the organ of the École de la Cause Freudienne in Belgium: Quarto :Vol 6 :1982 :p5-24 and Quarto :Vol 50 : 1992 : p7-20

References to Sigmund Freud:

“Sie lieben also den Wahn wie sich selbst” see Sigmund Freud : Aus den anfängen der Psychoanalyse 1887-1902 : Briefe an W. Fliess : London, Imago : 1950 : p101 [Citation from Draft H Corrected.]

Rendered, by James Strachey, as “They love their delusion as they love themselves” Draft H, Paranoia : 24<sup>th</sup> January 1895 : p113 of The Origins of Psycho-Analysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess, Drafts and Notes 1887-1902 : Basic Books New York : 1954

or as ‘ One resorts to hallucinations, which are *friendly* to the *ego* and *support the defense*. from Letter of 24<sup>th</sup> January 1895 and Draft H, Paranoia : p112 of The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887-1904 : Translated by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson : Belknap Press : 1985.

This shows the benefit of reading the original language as did Jacques Lacan.

Also see Seminar III : The Psychoses : 1955-1956 : begins 16<sup>th</sup> November 1955 : Jacques Lacan : Availability given [here](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=657) (<http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=657> ) : Seminar III : 15<sup>th</sup> February 1956 : p157 : How does one enter psychosis? How is the subject led, not into alienating himself in the little other, but becoming this soething

which, from within the field in which nothing can be said, appeals to all the rest, to the field of everything that can be said? Isn't this something that evokes what you see displayed in the case of President Schreber – namely these fringe phenomena at the level of reality which have become significant for the subject?

Psychotics love their delusion like they love themselves. (See <sup>i</sup>) Having said this, Freud, who hadn't yet written his article on narcissism, added that the entire mystery lies here. This is true. What is the relationship between the subject and the signifier that is distinctive of the very phenomena of psychosis? How come the subject falls entirely into this problematic?

These are the issues that we are raising this year and I hope we are able to make some headway with them before the long vacation.

Seminar III : 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1956 : p214 : quote *Sie leben also den Wahn wie sich selbst. Das ist das Geheimnis*. This sentence is taken from the correspondence with Fliess, where the beginnings of the themes that will appear successively in Freud's work can be found with singular prominence.

Would we have Freud's style if we didn't have these letters? Yes, we still would, but they teach us that this style, which is nothing other than the expression of what orientates and animates his research, never deviated. Even in 1939, when he wrote 'Moses and Monotheism' (See <sup>ii</sup>), one feels that his passionate questioning hasn't waned and that it's still with the same almost desperate tenacity that he strives to explain how it is that man, in the very position of his being, should be so dependent upon these things for which he is obviously not cut out. This is said and named – it's a question of the truth.

Project for a Scientific Psychology : available here [The Project for a Scientific Psychology – 23rd & 25th September & 5th October 1895, Sigmund Freud](http://www.lacan.org/works.net/?p=401) or here <http://www.lacan.org/works.net/?p=401>

#### Availability

Published in French at École Lacanienne de Psychanalyse – Pas tout Lacan – 1960/1969 : here <http://www.ecole-lacanienne.net/pastout/lacan00.php>

1960-03-09 : Conférence sur l'éthique de la psychanalyse à Bruxelles (1ère) (11 p.) : Available here <http://www.ecole-lacanienne.net/documents/1960-03-09.doc>

*Il s'agit de la première de deux conférences données par Lacan à la faculté universitaire Saint-Louis, à Bruxelles, le 9 mars 1960. Ce texte a été publié au printemps 1986 dans la revue de l'École Belge de Psychanalyse, Psychoanalyse, n° 4, pp. 163-187, numéro entièrement consacré à Jacques Lacan. (La première publication de l'une – ou des deux ? – conférence(s) fut donnée en 1982, dans Quarto, supplément belge à La lettre mensuelle de l'École de la cause freudienne, sous le seul titre référencé par J. Dor « La psychanalyse est-elle constituante pour une éthique qui serait celle que notre temps nécessite ? » soit celui donné par Lacan à sa deuxième conférence à Bruxelles ; cette publication interne n'a pu être trouvée). Dans cette publication de la revue Psychoanalyse, le titre « I – À cette place, je souhaite qu'achève de se consumer ma vie... » n'est pas celui que Lacan avait lui-même proposé, ainsi qu'il est dit dans les dernières lignes de la présentation des deux conférences : « Lacan, fait inhabituel, avait rédigé la majeure partie du texte de ses deux interventions. Il les avait annoncées comme suit : – 1. Freud, concernant la morale, fait le poids correctement, – 2. La psychanalyse est-elle constituante pour une éthique qui serait celle que notre temps nécessite ? ». Nous laisserons cependant à la présentation du texte son titre tel que dans la publication, soit :*

1960-03-10 Conférence sur l'éthique de la psychanalyse à Bruxelles (2eme) (8p) :  
Available here: <http://www.ecole-lacanienne.net/documents/1960-03-10.doc>

*Il s'agit de la deuxième conférence donnée par Lacan à la faculté universitaire Saint-Louis, à Bruxelles, le 10 mars 1960. Ce texte a été publié au printemps 1986 dans la revue de l'École Belge de Psychanalyse, Psychoanalyse, n° 4, pp. 163-187, numéro entièrement consacré à Jacques Lacan. (La première publication de cette conférence fut donnée en 1982, dans Quarto supplément belge à La lettre mensuelle de l'École de la cause freudienne ; cette publication interne n'a pu être trouvée).*

*Dans la revue Psychoanalyse, le titre attribué à cette conférence : « II – ... Il me faudra ajouter " non " » n'est pas celui que Lacan avait lui-même proposé (cf. conférence du 09.03.60), à savoir : – « 2. La psychanalyse est-elle constituante pour une éthique qui serait celle que notre temps nécessite ? ». Nous laisserons cependant à la présentation de ce texte son titre tel que dans la publication, soit :*

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<sup>i</sup> "Thus they love their delusion as they love themselves. That is the secret."

<sup>ii</sup> Freud: Moses and Monotheism: 1934-1938

Standard Edition: Vol 23: page 3 or Penguin Freud Library: Vol 13: p237

Available here: <http://archive.org/details/mosesandmonothei032233mbp>

## Lecture Announcement

The perspective opened up by Freud regarding the unconscious determination of man's behavior has impacted almost the entire field of our culture. Will it shrink in analytic practice to the ideals of normalization, ideals whose widespread circulation will offer a curious spectacle? It is well known that Dr. Jacques Lacan puts the psychoanalytic community to the test with a teaching that is very demanding regarding the principles of its action. At the Seminar at which he has trained an elite corps of practitioners and that he has given for seven years in Prof. Jean Delay's department [at St. Anne Hospital], he has arrived this year at the topic of the moral consequences of Freudianism, believing that he needs to venture beyond the shelter of a false objectivism to present objectively the action to which he has devoted his life.

He feels that such a presentation will be of interest to the public, and all the more so in that psychoanalytic action is judged in the private realm. He thus takes the risk today of introducing an untrained audience to an aim that goes to its very heart. Whereas Dr. Jacques Lacan does not

believe that one can abandon to religious people alone the set of dogmas on which the Christian precept of our morality is based, involving the primacy of love and awareness of the neighbor, we will perhaps be surprised to see that Freud articulates the question here at its true lofty level, going far beyond the biases that are imputed to him by a phenomenology that is often presumptuous in its criticism. Hence the subtitles Dr. Lacan has provided us with for the two lectures, he reserving the right to adapt them as he sees fit:

- I. Regarding Morality, Freud Has What it Takes
- II. Can Psychoanalysis Constitute the Kind of Ethics Necessitated by our Times?

Philosophers will perhaps learn here to rectify the traditional position of hedonism; men of feeling to limit their study of happiness; men of duty to reconsider the illusions of altruism; libertines – yes, even them – to recognize the voice of the Father in the commandments his Death left intact; and spiritual men to resituate the Thing around which desire's nostalgia revolves.

## I. Regarding Ethics, Freud Has What it Takes

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When Canon Van Camp came to ask, with his typically refined courtesy, if I would speak at the Faculté Universitaire Saint-Louis about a topic related to my teaching, I found, by God, nothing simpler than to say I would speak on the same topic I had chosen for the academic year that was beginning – this was back in October – namely, the ethics of psychoanalysis.

I am recounting here the circumstances or conditions of my choice essentially in order to avoid a few misunderstandings. When one comes to a talk by a psychoanalyst, one generally expects to hear once again a defense of psychoanalysis, which is so disputed, or a few insights regarding its virtues that are obviously, in theory, as everyone knows, of a therapeutic nature. That is precisely what I will not provide this evening.

I thus find myself in the difficult position of basically having to lead you into the midst of what I have chosen to discuss this year with an audience that is necessarily better trained for this

research than you can be – regardless of your attraction to the topic and the attention I can see on all of your faces – since those who attend my seminar have been doing so for about seven or eight years.

My teaching this year is thus focused explicitly on a theme that is generally avoided: the ethical impact of psychoanalysis, of the morals that psychoanalysis can suggest, presuppose, or contain, and of the step forward psychoanalysis would perhaps allow us to take – how audacious! – in the moral realm.

## I

To be quite frank, the person before you entered psychoanalysis late enough to have tried before – upon my word, like anyone who has been trained or educated – to orient himself in the realm of ethics. To orient himself theoretically, I mean, if not also, perhaps, by God, through several experiences often referred to as those of youth.

Nevertheless, he has been involved in psychoanalysis long enough to be able to say that he will soon have spent half his life listening to lives that are told, that are confessed [*s'avouent*]. He

listens. I listen. Regarding these lives that, for almost four septenaries, I have listened to as they are confessed to me, I am in no way qualified to weigh their worth. And one of the goals of the silence that constitutes the rule of my listening is precisely to silence love. I will thus not betray their trivial and unique secrets. But there is something to which I would like to attest.

In the position that I occupy, and where I hope to finish out the remainder of my days, is something that will remain palpitating after me, I believe, as a waste product in the place I will have occupied. What is involved is, so to speak, an innocent questioning, or even a scandal, that can be formulated more or less as follows.

How does it happen that these good and accommodating men or neighbors, every one of whom props up a certain knowledge or is propped up by it, who are thrown into this business – to which tradition has given various names, that of existence being the latest in philosophy – into this business of existence (and what is lame about it is, I will say, what remains most confirmed), let themselves go to the point of falling prey to captivation by the mirages by which their lives, wasting opportunity, allow their essence to escape, by

which their passion is toyed with, and by which their being, in the best of cases, only attains the scant reality that is affirmed only insofar as it has never been anything but disappointed?

This is what my experience shows me. This is the question I bequeath regarding the subject of ethics, where I muster what for me, as a psychoanalyst, constitutes my passion.

Yes, I know that according to Hegel all that is real is rational. But I am one of those who think that the converse is not to be disparaged – that all that is rational is real. There is only one small problem with this: I see that most of those who are caught between the one and the other, the rational and the real, are unaware of their reassuring compatibility. Will I go so far as to say that those who reason are to blame? One of the most worrisome applications of this much talked-about converse is that what professors teach is real and has as such as many effects as any other real – interminable, indeterminable effects – even if their teaching is false. This gives me pause for thought.

Accompanying a patient's enthusiastic rush toward a bit of reality [*réel*], I begin skidding with him on what I will call the creed of stupidities

about which it is difficult to say whether contemporary psychology is the model or the caricature. Namely, the ego, considered to be a function both of synthesis and of integration; consciousness considered to be the culmination of life; evolution considered to be the pathway by which the universe of consciousness comes into being; the categorical application of this postulate to the individual's psychological development; and the notion of behavior, which is applied in a unitary fashion in order to break every bit of dramatic tension in human life down to the most ridiculous degree. All of this camouflages the following: nothing in the concrete life of a single individual allows us to ground the idea that such a finality directs his life and could lead him – through the pathways of progressive self-consciousness undergirded by natural development – to harmony with himself as well as to approval from the world on which his happiness depends.

Not that I don't recognize the effectiveness of the jumble that concretizes – on the basis of collective successions of what finally seem to be corrective experiments – under the heading of modern psychology. One finds there light forms of suggestion, so to speak, that are not without

effect, and that can lead to interesting applications in the field of conformity and even of social exploitation. The problem is that this register has no hold on an impotence that merely grows to the extent that we have ever more occasion to implement the said effects. Man is ever more impotent to meet up anew with his own desire, and this impotence can go so far that he loses its carnal triggering. Even when the latter remains available, this man no longer knows how to find the object of his desire and no longer encounters anything but unhappiness in his search, living in an anguish that progressively shrinks what one might call his chance to invent.

What happens here in the shadows was suddenly shed light on by Freud at the level of neurosis. Corresponding to the eruption of his discovery into the basement was the advent of a truth. The latter concerns desire.

2

Desire is no simple thing. It is neither elementary, nor animalistic, nor especially inferior. It is the result, composition, or complex of an entire articulation whose decisive character I attempted

to demonstrate in the second to last term of my teaching, of what I say where I do not shut up – and perhaps at some point I should tell you why.

The decisive feature of desire is not simply that it is full of meaning or that it is archetypal. To give you a quick survey, I will say that desire does not represent an extension of the so-called psychology of understanding, or a return to a micro/macrocosmic naturalism, to an Ionian conception of knowledge, or the figurative reproduction of primal concrete experiences, as so-called genetic psychoanalysis puts it these days. This last arrives at a simplistic notion that confuses the progression by which a symptom comes into being with regression along the therapeutic pathway, leading to a sort of telescoping relationship that wraps itself around a stereotyped frustration in the relationship of dependency that ties a child to its mother.

All of that is but semblance and source of error. Desire – insofar as it appears in Freud's work as a new object for ethical reflection – must be resituated within the context of Freud's intentions.

The central characteristic of the Freudian unconscious is to be translatable, even where it cannot be translated – in other words, at a certain



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radical point of the symptom, namely the hysterical symptom, which is undeciphered by its very nature and thus decipherable – that is, [even] where the symptom is represented in the unconscious only by lending itself to the function of what can be translated.

What can be translated is what is technically called the signifier. It is an element that presents two dimensions: it is synchronically linked to a battery of other elements that can be substituted for it and it is available for diachronic use – that is, for the constitution of a signifying chain.

Indeed, there are in the unconscious signifying things that repeat and that constantly run unbeknown to the subject. This is similar to what I saw earlier today when I was coming to this room – namely, the advertisements running in streaming lights along billboards on the fronts of our buildings. What makes them interesting to clinicians is that, under the right conditions, they manage to insert themselves into what fundamentally has the same nature as them: our conscious discourse in the largest sense – namely, all that is rhetorical in our conduct, which is far more extensive than we think. I will now leave the dialectical side of things.

Here you will ask me what these signifying elements are. I will answer that the purest example of signifiers are letters, typographical letters.

You will tell me that letters have no meaning. This is not necessarily true. Consider Chinese letters. For each of them you find in the dictionary a range of meanings that in no wise pales in comparison with the range of meanings corresponding to our words. What does this mean? What do I mean by giving you this answer? Not what you might think, since it means that the definition of these Chinese letters, just like the definitions of our words, has a scope that consists merely in a collection of usages.

Strictly speaking, a meaning is born from a set of letters or words only insofar as it presents itself as a modification of their already received usage. This implies first that any [new] signification this set acquires draws on the significations to which it has already been linked, as foreign to one another as the realities involved in this reiteration may be. This is the dimension that I call metonymy, which makes poetry of all realism. This implies, on the other hand, that any new signification is generated only by the substitution of one signifier for another, which is the dimension of metaphor

by which reality becomes infused with poetry. This is what happens at the level of the unconscious, making it such that the unconscious is by nature a discourse, assuming we allow ourselves to qualify a certain use of linguistic structures as a discourse.

Does poetry already operate at this level? Everything leads us to suspect as much. But let us confine ourselves to what we see. What we see are effects of rhetoric. Clinical work confirms this, for it shows us these effects creeping into concrete discourse and into everything that can be discerned regarding our behavior as marked by the stamp of the signifier. This will bring those of you who are somewhat informed back to the very origins of psychoanalysis: the interpretation of dreams, slips of the tongue, and even jokes. This will alert the others, those who are more advanced, to the direction in which an effort to increase our knowledge base is being made.

What, need we but read our desire in such hieroglyphs? No. Look back at the texts by Freud on the themes I just mentioned – dreams, slips of the tongue, and jokes – and you will never see desire being clearly articulated. Unconscious desire is what is meant by the one who or the

thing that proffers unconscious discourse. This is why the latter speaks. Which means that he is not obliged, as unconscious as he may be, to speak the truth. Moreover, the very fact that he speaks makes it possible for him to lie.

Desire corresponds to the true intention of this discourse. But what can the intention of a discourse be in which the subject, insofar as he speaks, is excluded from consciousness? Here we have something that is going to pose a few totally new problems to the moral philosophy of good intentions, which our modern exegetes have apparently not yet decided to broach.

At least this is true of a Thomist who, quite some time ago already, found nothing better to do than to compare Freud's doctrine to the core of Pavlov's work in order to bring it to the distinguished attention of Catholics. Curiously enough, this brought him, beginning then, and even now, praise both from those he commented on – namely, the professors at the arts college that awarded his doctoral degree – and from those one can say he betrayed, that is, his psychoanalytic colleagues. I have too much esteem for the present literary and psychoanalytic capacities of my audience to think that their satisfaction with

him is anything other than that of a complicit silence regarding the difficulties psychoanalysis truly brings into play in ethics. The starting point of reflection would, it seems, be to observe that perhaps the more a discourse is deprived of intention, the more it can be confused with truth, with *the* truth, with the very presence of truth in the real, in an impenetrable form.

Must we conclude from this that it is a truth to no one until it is deciphered? What are we to think of a desire with which consciousness no longer has anything to do except to know it to be as unknowable as the "thing in itself," but which is nevertheless recognized to be the structure of the "for itself" *par excellence* that a chain of discourse is? Doesn't Freud seem to you to be more applicable than our philosophical tradition as regards conducting oneself correctly in relation to this extremity of intimacy that is at the same time excluded internality?

It is excluded except perhaps here in Belgium, which has long been buffeted by the winds of mystical sects, not to mention heresies, in which this intimacy became an issue not so much of a political choice as of religious heresy, whose secret led to the characteristic effects of a conversion in

people's lives, before persecution showed that it was dearer to them than their lives.

I am broaching here a remark that I don't think is out of place at the university where I am speaking.

The coexistence [at this university] of two separate streams of teaching – one that is denominational and one that is not – is no doubt progress, reflecting tolerance. It would be all the more ungracious of me to contest it in that we ourselves in France have quite recently taken a similar path. It seems to me, nevertheless, that this separateness leads to a sort of mimesis of powers that are represented in it, which results in what I will call a curious neutrality. It seems to me less important to know which power benefits from this neutrality than to be sure that in any case it is not detrimental to all those affected by these powers.

A sort of strange division in the field of truth has thus been propagated. I will say that, to me – and the very least one can say is that I profess no denominational affiliation – an epistle by St. Paul is as important to comment on in ethics as one by Seneca. But I wonder if both don't lose something essential to their message if they are not commented on in the same place.

In other words, to designate a realm as that of belief, inasmuch as it may be such, does not seem to me to suffice to exclude it from the examination of those who are attached to knowledge. Moreover, to those who believe, it is certainly a kind of knowledge [*un savoir*] that is at stake in it.

St. Paul pauses to tell us:

What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*.  
[Romans, 7:7-11]

It seems to me that it is not possible for anyone, whether a believer or a non-believer, not to find himself called upon to respond to what such a text implies by way of a message articulated

regarding a mechanism that is, moreover, alive and well, perfectly perceptible and tangible to a psychoanalyst. To tell you the truth, when in one of my classes [in Seminar VII] I recited this text without any transition from my own remarks, my students only noticed that it was no longer me who was speaking [in my own name] because of its rhythm, the halftime that shifts music to another perceptible mode. Be that as it may, the shock they received from the story of this music proves to me that, whatever their background, it had never made them hear before the meaning of this text at the level at which I situated it in their practice.

There is a certain flippancy in the way science disposes of a field regarding which it is not clear how it can so easily lighten its load. Similarly, faith has, a bit too often for my taste, been letting science resolve problems when questions translate into suffering that is a bit too hard to handle.

I am certainly not going to complain about the fact that clergymen have been sending their flocks to psychoanalysts. They are certainly doing the right thing there. What jolts me a bit is that, when they do so, they stress, it seems to me, that the individuals they send are sick and can thus

find some help in analysis, even if the source of the help is, let us say, a bad one.

If I am wounding a few people of good will, I hope that I will nevertheless be forgiven on Judgment Day owing to the fact that I will have, at the same time, encouraged this goodness to withdraw into itself – namely, regarding the principles of a certain non-will.

## 3

Everyone knows that Freud was a crude materialist. Why then wasn't he able to resolve the problem, which is nevertheless so easy, of moral agency [*instance*] by resorting, as is classic, to utilitarianism?

Such recourse ultimately involves behavioral habit, which is recommended for the well-being of the group. It is so simple and, moreover, it is true. The attraction of utility is irresistible, so much so that we see people damning themselves for the pleasure of giving their [modern] conveniences to other people who, they've got it into their heads, cannot live without their help.

This is undoubtedly one of the most curious phenomena of human sociability. But what is

essential is the fact that the useful [*utile*] object incredibly leads to the idea of sharing it with the greatest number, because it is truly the need for the greatest number as such that gave them the idea [in the first place].

There is only one difficulty here, which is that, whatever the benefit of utility and the extension of its reign, it has nothing to do with morality. The latter consists primarily – as Freud saw and articulated, and he never changed his tune regarding it, unlike many classical moralists, or even traditionalists, or even socialists – in the frustration of a *jouissance* that is posited by an apparently greedy law.

Freud no doubt claims to rediscover the origin of this primordial law, using a Goethean method, by following traces of critical events that have remained perceptible. But don't be fooled: the ontogenesis that reproduces phylogenesis is merely a keyword used here in order to convince everyone. It is the *onto* [in ontogenesis] that serves here as a smokescreen [*trompe l'oeil*], for it is not the individual as an entity [*l'étant*] but rather the subject's relation to being, assuming this relation is based on discourse. The past of the concrete discourse of the human line can

be refound therein, inasmuch as in the course of man's history things have happened to him that have changed the subject's relation to being. Thus, apart from the alternative – the hereditability of acquired traits that Freud seems to accept in certain passages – is the tradition of a condition which, in a certain way, grounds the subject in discourse.

I cannot fail to emphasize here the full import of a condition that I'm surprised no commentator has brought out: Freud's meditations on the function, role, and figure of the Name-of-the-Father, in addition to his entire ethical reference revolving around the properly Judeo-Christian tradition, to which they are thoroughly linked in his work.

Read the short book with which Freud's meditations end a few months before his death, but which had already been consuming and preoccupying him for many years: *Moses and Monotheism*. This book is merely the endpoint and fulfillment of what began with the creation of the Oedipus complex and continues in a book that is so poorly understood and so badly appraised: *Totem and Taboo*. In it you will see the figure that appears of the father concentrating upon itself love and hate;

it is a magnified, magnificent figure, marked with a style of active and suffered cruelty.

We could debate at length about what led Freud to this image, about the personal reasons that led him to it – namely, his family, his experience of childhood, his father, old Jacob Freud, prolific and hard-working patriarch of the small family from the indestructible race. But what is important is not to examine Freud's psychology.

There would be a lot to say on the topic. In my view, his psychology was more feminine than anything else. I see the trace of this in the extraordinary monogamistic requirement that led him so far as to submit to a kind of dependency that one of his disciples, the author of his biography [Ernest Jones], calls "uxorious." I can't really imagine Freud as a father in everyday life. I believe that he experienced the Oedipal drama only at the level of the analytic horde. He was, as Dante says somewhere, its *Mère Intelligence*.

As for what I myself have called the Freudian Thing, about which I will speak to you tomorrow evening, it is first of all Freud's Thing – namely, something that is diametrically opposed to intention–desire. What is important is for us to situate how Freud discovered this Thing and

where he began from when he followed its trail in his patients.

*Totem and Taboo* revolves around the function of the phobic object, and it is this function that guided Freud toward the function of the Father. Indeed, this function constitutes a turning point between the preservation of desire in its omnipotence – and not, as people in a certain analytic tradition write, creating problems, the omnipotence of thought [i.e., “magical thinking”] – and the correlative principle of a prohibition that leads to the setting aside of this desire. The two principles wax and wane together even if their effects are different: the omnipotence of desire engenders fear of the defense that ensues in the subject, and prohibition drives the statement of desire away from the subject in order to transfer it to an Other, to the unconscious that knows nothing of what is propped up by its own enunciation.

What *Totem and Taboo* teaches us is that the father prohibits desire effectively only because he is dead and, I will add, because he does not know it himself – “it” here referring to the fact that he is dead. This is the myth that Freud proposes to modern man, insofar as modern man is the one

for whom God is dead – in the sense that he believes he knows it.

Why does Freud adopt this paradoxical position? In order to explain that man’s desire will be all the more threatening and thus that its prohibition will be all the more necessary and severe. God is dead, nothing is permitted anymore. The decline of the Oedipus complex is the mourning of the father, but it leaves us with a durable consequence: the identification known as the superego. The unloved father becomes the identification upon which one heaps reproaches in oneself. This is what Freud brings us, joining up through a thousand threads of his testimony with a very ancient myth, the one that makes the entire ruined Earth depend on something wounded, lost, or castrated in the mysterious King.

We must examine in detail what this scrutiny of the function of the Father represents and introduce here the most precise distinctions, especially between what I have called the symbolic instance – the father who promulgates, who is the seat of the articulated law in which is situated the waste product of deviation or deficit around which the structure of neurosis is specified – and, on the other hand, something that contemporary



analysis constantly neglects even though it is perceptible and alive everywhere for Freud: namely, the impact of the real father. Even when this impact is good or beneficial, it can, as a function of this structure, lead to ravaging and even maleficent effects.

There is considerable clinically articulated detail that I cannot go into or guide you into here if only because of the limited time available to us. Suffice it to say that, if there is something that Freud situates at the forefront of ethical experience, it is the drama that is played out in a certain place that we must certainly recognize – regardless of Freud's justified denial of having any personal penchant for religious sentiment or religiosity – as that in which an experience is articulated as such that Freud doesn't even bother to qualify as religious, since he tends to universalize it. He nevertheless articulates it using the very terms with which characteristically Judeo-Christian religious experience has itself historically developed and articulated it.

In what sense does monotheism concern Freud? He knows, as well as one of his disciples does, that the gods are innumerable and changing like the figures of desire, that they are living

metaphors. But this is not the case for the only God. If Freud seeks out the prototype thereof in a historical model, the visible model of the Sun, from the first Egyptian religious revolution, that of Akhenaten, it is in order to link back up with the spiritual model of his own tradition: the God of the Ten Commandments.

He seems to adopt the first by making Moses into an Egyptian in order to repudiate what I will call the racial root of the phenomenon, the psychology of the Thing. The second makes him articulate as such in his account the primacy of the invisible, insofar as it characterizes the promoting of the paternal bond, founded on faith and law, taking precedence over the maternal bond, which is founded on a manifest carnality. These are Freud's terms.

The sublimable value of the Father's function is underscored directly at the same time as the properly verbal or even poetic form of its consequence surfaces, since it is to the tradition of the prophets that Freud attributes responsibility for making the monotheism that was repressed by a more formalist sacerdotal tradition progressively resurface in the history of Israel, through the ages. With an image, and following Scripture,

this return basically paves the way for a possible repetition of the attack on the primal Father in the drama of redemption, where this attack becomes blatant – I'm still summarizing what Freud wrote here.

If I highlight these essential features of Freudian theory, it is because, compared to what it represents by way of courage, attention, and confronting the true question, it seems to me of slight importance to fault Freud for not believing that God exists or even for believing that God does not exist. The drama in question is articulated with universal human value. In scope, Freud here assuredly goes beyond the framework of all ethics, at least of those ethical systems that intend not to proceed through the pathways of the Imitation of Christ.

Will I say that Freud's pathway proceeds at man's level? I would not say so willingly. You shall perhaps see tomorrow where I intend to situate Freud in relation to the humanist tradition.

At the point at which we find ourselves in relation to the latter, I see man overdetermined by a *logos* that is found wherever one also finds his *Ananke*, his necessity. This *logos* is not a superstructure. Indeed, it is rather a substructure, since

it undergirds intention, articulates the lack of being in man, and conditions his life of passion and sacrifice.

No, Freud's thought is not humanistic. Nothing allows us to apply this term to him. His thought is nevertheless tolerant and tempered. Let us call it humanitarian, despite the nasty overtones this word has acquired in our times. But, curiously enough, his thought is not progressive – it has faith neither in the movement of immanent freedom, nor in consciousness, nor in the masses. And it is in this respect, strangely enough, that Freud goes beyond the bourgeois milieu of ethics against which he could not, moreover, rise up, no more than against everything that is occurring in our era, including the ethics that reigns in the East and which, like any other, is an ethics of moral order and service of the State.

Freud's thinking is altogether different from this. Pain itself seems useless to him. Discontent with civilization comes down to this, in his view: so much pain for a result whose final structures are rather aggravating. The best people are those who always require more of themselves. Let us grant a few moments of repose to the masses as well as to the elite.

Amidst such an implacable dialectic, isn't this a derisory palinode? I hope to show you tomorrow that it is not.

Morality, as the ancient Greek tradition teaches us, has three levels: the sovereign good, honesty, and utility.

As regards the sovereign good, Freud's position is that pleasure is not it. Nor is it what morality refuses. Freud indicates that the good does not exist and that the sovereign good cannot be represented.

It is not Freud's intent to turn psychoanalysis into some kind of outline of honesty for our times. He is far from Jung and his religiosity, which one is astonished to see preferred in Catholic milieus, and even Protestant ones, as if pagan gnosis or even rustic witchcraft could renew the pathways to the Eternal.

Let us remember that Freud is the one who taught us that guilt finds its roots at the unconscious level, where it is linked to a fundamental crime for which no one can individually answer, nor has to. The reason for guilt nevertheless lies at the deepest level of man, once desire is the scale of articulated language even if it is not articulable.

You will no doubt stop me here. Reason – what are you saying? Can there be logic where there is no negation? Certainly, Freud said and showed that there was no negation in the unconscious, but it is also true, when one analyzes the topic rigorously, that negation stems from the unconscious. This is nicely highlighted in French by the articulation of the discordant “*ne*” that no necessity of the statement absolutely necessitates. “*Je crains qu’il ne vienne*” means I am afraid he is coming, but also implies to what extent I desire it. Freud speaks assuredly at the heart of the knot [*noeud*, which in French sounds just like *ne*, not] of truth where desire and its rule go hand in hand, in this “it” [or “id”] whereby desire's nature partakes less of the entity [*l'étant*] of man than of the want-to-be whose mark he bears.

I hope to show you that Freud – without pedantry or the reformer's zeal, and open to a folly [*folie* also means madness] that goes far beyond its roots as sounded by Erasmus – indicates to us the agreement between man and nature, which mysteriously opposes itself, and where he would like to find a way to get a respite from his pain, finding reason's measured time.

## II. Can Psychoanalysis Constitute the Kind of Ethics Necessitated by our Times?

Monseigneur, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

I left you last night with a series of roughly hewn judgments regarding Freud, his position in ethics, and the honesty of his aim.

I believe that Freud is far closer than he allows to the Christian commandment "Love thy neighbor as thyself." He does not allow it; he repudiates it for being excessive as an imperative, if not for being mocked as a precept by its apparent fruits in a society that nonetheless calls itself Christian. But it is a fact that he investigates the point.

He speaks about it in a surprising text entitled *Civilization and its Discontents*. His whole discussion revolves around the meaning of the "as thyself" at the end of the formulation. The mistrustful passion of he who unmasks makes Freud pause before this "as." The weight of love is at stake. Freud knows in effect that self-love is great; he knows it better than anyone, having recognized that delusions are powerful because they find their source therein. "*Sie lieben also den Wahn wie sich selbst*" – they love their delusions

as themselves, he wrote. This power is the one he designated with the name "narcissism." It involves a secret dialectic in which psychoanalysts have a hard time finding their way around. It is in order to allow us to conceptualize it that I introduced into psychoanalytic theory the strictly methodological distinction between the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real. Here's how it goes:

I undoubtedly love myself, and with all the persistent passion in which life's bubble seethes and swells in a palpitation that is both voracious and precarious, not without fomenting in its bosom the sore point from which its unity will spring forth anew, disseminated by its very shattering. In other words, I am tied to my body by the characteristic energy that Freud placed at the core of psychical energy: the Eros which makes living bodies come together to reproduce, which he calls libido.

But what I love, insofar as there is an ego to which I am attached with a mental concupiscence, is not the body whose beating and pulsation are all too evidently beyond my control, but an image that misleads me by showing me my body in its *Gestalt*, its form. It is beautiful, big, and

strong – it is all the more so inasmuch as I am ugly, small, and pitiful. I love myself insofar as I essentially misrecognize myself – I merely love an other, an other [*autre*] with a lowercase initial *o*, hence my students' use of the term "little other."

There is nothing surprising in the fact that it is myself alone that I love in my semblable. Not merely in neurotic devotion, if I indicate what psychoanalytic practice teaches us, but also in the broad, widespread form of altruism, whether educative or familial, philanthropic, totalitarian or liberal, to which people would often wish to see the magnificent croup of the unfortunate beast respond with a sort of vibration – man transfers nothing but his self-love [*amour-propre*]. This love has indubitably been long since detected in its extravagances, even glorious ones, by moralists as they investigated its supposed virtues. But psychoanalytic investigation of the ego allows us to identify it with the form of the goatskin bottle [*outré*], with the outrageousness of the shadow whose prey the hunter becomes, and with the emptiness [*vanité*] of the visual form. This is the ethical face of what I have articulated, in order to convey it, with the term "mirror stage."

As Freud teaches us, the ego is made up of

identifications that are superimposed like [layers of] peels, constituting a sort of wardrobe whose items bear the mark of being ready made, even if the way they are put together is often bizarre. Owing to identifications with his imaginary forms, man believes he recognizes the core of his unity in the guise of self-mastery by which he is necessarily duped, whether it is illusory or not, for this image of himself in no way contains him. If it is immobile, only his grimaces, flexibility, disarticulation, dismemberment, and scattering to the four winds begin to indicate what his place in the world is. And yet it took a long time for him to abandon the idea that the world was created in his image and for him to recognize that what he rediscovered by way of this image – in the form of signifiers which his industriousness had begun to strew throughout the world – was the essence of this world.

We see here the decisive importance of the discourse of the so-called physical sciences and of something that raises the question of an ethics which can measure up to an era like ours.

What scientific discourse unmasks is that nothing any longer remains of a transcendental aesthetic by which harmony would be established,

even if that harmony were [now] lost, between our intuitions and the world. No analogy can henceforth be established between physical reality and any sort of universal man. Physical reality is fully and totally inhuman. The problem that arises for us is no longer that of the *co-naissance* [a play on *connaissance*, knowledge, and *naissance*, birth] or of a co-naturalness by which the affinities of appearances open up before us. We know what's what on earth and in heaven – neither contains God – and the question is what we make appear there in the disjunctions constituted by our technology [*techniques*].

Our technology, I say, and you will perhaps correct me on this point: “Human technology that serves man.” Of course, but it has taken on a measure of effectiveness inasmuch as its crux is a science that was unleashed, as it were, only by giving up all anthropomorphism, even that of the fine *Gestalt* of spheres whose perfection was the guarantee that they were eternal and, moreover, that of the force whose impetus was felt at the heart of human action.

Our science is a science of little signs and equations. It partakes of the inconceivable, insofar as it takes Newton to be right where Descartes

was wrong. It is no accident that this science takes on an atomic form, for it is structured by the production of the atomism of the signifier. People wished to reconstruct psychology upon this atomism, but we protested against it when it came to understanding ourselves: we did not recognize that we were inhabited by this atomism. This is why Freud begins with the hypotheses of psychological atomism, whether or not we can say that he fully endorses them. He treats the elements of association not as ideas which must be purified by experience, but as signifiers whose constitution implies first their relation to what is hidden that is radical in structure as such, that is, the crux of permutation – namely, that one thing can be put in the place of another thing and that it can represent the other thing solely in this way.

The meaning of the word “representation” is entirely different here than it is in painting: *Anschauung*, where reality [*réel*] is supposed to engage in some sort of striptease with us. Moreover, Freud articulates it properly – not using the term *Vorstellung* [(re)presentation], although the accent is placed on the representative in the material of the unconscious – using

instead *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* to say what is repressed.

I won't go into any detail here. I'm not slipping into some sort of philosophical construction; I am trying to find my way in the most immediate material of my experience. If I refer to Freud's work to attest to this experience, it is because we find in it a rare conjunction – despite the negative appraisal of critics who are just as trifling as they are lacking in understanding, which happens to those who have but the word “understanding” on their lips – a rare concordance, as I was saying, exceptional in the history of thought, between Freud's speaking [*dire*] and the Thing he discovers for us. What this involves by way of lucidity on his part goes without saying, but, after all, in accordance with what he discovers for us, I will go so far as to say that the accent of consciousness placed on one or another point of his thought is secondary here.

In his work, representations are no longer even remotely Apollonian. They have an elementary destination. Our neurological apparatus operates in such a way that we hallucinate what may answer in us to our needs. This is perhaps an improvement compared to what we can presume

about the reaction mode of an oyster attached to its rock, but it is dangerous in that it places us at the mercy of a simple taste-related or percussive sampling, so to speak, of sensation. In the final analysis, we need but pinch ourselves to know if we aren't dreaming. Such is at least the schema that we can provide of what is articulated in the twofold principle that commands the psyche, according to Freud: the pleasure principle and the reality principle, inasmuch as the physiology of man's so-called natural relationship to the world is articulated in them.

I won't dwell on the paradox constituted by such a conception from the standpoint of a theory of behavioral adaptation, inasmuch as the latter is ruled by the attempt to reconstruct a certain conception of ethology. We must see what is introduced, in this schema of the [psychical] apparatus, by its effective functioning insofar as Freud discovers therein the chain of strictly unconscious effects.

People have not authentically perceived the reversal that the unconscious brings with it at the very level of the twofold principle: a reversal or, rather, a challenging of the elements with which these principles are ordinarily associated.

The function of the reality principle is to concern itself with the satisfaction of need, and particularly what is episodically attached to it by way of consciousness, insofar as consciousness is tied to the elements of the privileged sense [i.e., sight] in that they involve the primordial narcissistic image. Conversely, thought processes, all the thought processes – including [*compris*], I almost said compromising, judgment itself – are dominated by the pleasure principle. Situated in the unconscious, they are drawn out of it only by theorizing verbalization that extracts them for reflection. The sole principle of their effectiveness for this reflection is the fact that they are already organized, as I said yesterday, according to the structure of language.

The true reason for the unconscious is that man knows at the origin that he subsists in a relationship of ignorance, which means that man's psyche involves a first division by which everything with which he resonates – regardless of the heading under which it is placed, whether appetite, sympathy, or in general pleasure – leaves out and skirts the Thing to which everything he experiences, in an orientation of the already predicative signifier, is destined.

I did not [have to] unearth all of that in the *Entwurf*, the "Project for a Scientific Psychology," discovered in the papers that make up Freud's correspondence with Fliess. It is quite clear there, but it only takes on value by showing the skeletal outlines of a reflection that blossomed into an indisputable practice. The tight link Freud demonstrates between what he calls *Wissbegierde*, which in German is very strong, *cupido sciendi* – in French we would have to say "curious avidity" – and the decisive turning of the libido is a sweeping fact whose repercussions are seen in a thousand determining features in any individual child's development.

Nevertheless, this Thing is no object and could not be one, in that its end [*terme*] arises as a correlate of a hypothetical subject only insofar as this subject disappears or vanishes – the subject fades but does not end – beneath the signifying structure. Indeed, what intention shows is that this structure is already there before the subject begins to speak and makes himself into the bearer through speech of any truth whatsoever, before he lays claim to any recognition whatsoever. The Thing is thus that which – in any living being that discourse comes to inhabit and that offers



itself up in speech – marks the place where he suffers from the fact that language manifests itself in the world. In this way, being appears everywhere that the Eros of life encounters the limit of its unitive impulse [*tendance*].

This impulse toward union is, in Freud's work, at an organismic or biological level, as they say. Nevertheless, it has nothing to do with what is apprehended by biology, the newest of the physical sciences. It is a mode of eroticized capturing of the body's principal orifices. Hence the famous Freudian definition of sexuality, from which people wanted to deduce a supposed "object relation" said to be oral, anal, or genital. This notion of object relations harbors within itself a profound ambiguity, if not a pure and simple confusion, for it gives a natural correlate a characteristic of value that is camouflaged behind reference to a developmental norm.

It is with such confusions that [Christ's] malediction regarding those who "bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders," found in Matthew [23:4], will strike those who authorize in man the presupposition of some personal shortcoming [*tare*] at the core of dissatisfaction.

While Freud detected the reasons for debasement in the sphere of love better than ontological casuistry did over the course of centuries, he related it first to the Oedipal drama – in other words, to a dramatic conflict articulating a more profound splitting of the subject, an *Urverdrängung*, that is, an archaic repression. Thus, even as he left room for secondary repression that forces the currents he calls tenderness and desire to go their separate ways, Freud still never had the audacity to propose a radical cure for a conflict that was structural in nature. If he outlined, as no primitive or modern typology of character has ever done, what he designated as libidinal types, it was expressly in order to formulate that he had gotten to the point of confirming that there was undoubtedly, in the end, something irremediably awry in human sexuality.

This is undoubtedly why Ernest Jones – in the obituary that it devolved on him to write for his most passionately admired master – could not help but situate Freud, owing to his conception of man's destiny, under the patronage, he writes, of the Church Fathers, even though Freud was the declared partisan of a resolutely antireligious *Aufklärung* [Enlightenment].

Let us go further. Although Freud holds sexual morality responsible for the nervousness pervasive in modern civilized man, he never claims to have a general solution to propose regarding a better way to configure this morality.

The object recently imagined by psychoanalysis as a measure of one's libidinal correspondence [with reality] would inform with its standard a whole reality as the mode of the subject's relation to the world: a voracious relation, a retentive relation, or – as people express themselves using a term that bears the mark of a moralizing intention about which one must say that the defenders of psychoanalysis in France thought they had to embellish its first manifestation – an “oblative” [altruistic or self-sacrificial] relation that would signal the idyllic advent of the genital relationship. Alas, is it up to the psychoanalyst to repress the fundamental perverseness of human desire into the hell of the pre-genital because it is connoted with affective regression? Is it up to him to make us forget the truth revealed in the ancient mysteries that “Eros is a black God”?

The object in question merely traces out a crude condemnation of the effects of frustration that analysis takes it upon itself to temper. The

sole result is to camouflage the far more complex sequences, whose richness and singularity alike seem to be strangely eclipsed in a certain orthopedic utilization of analysis.

The singular – I am searching here for a French equivalent of the English term “odd” – role of the phallus in the fundamental disparity of its function, the virile function, is situated in the two ways of surmounting the Other's castration. Its dialectic [in masculinity] seems to have to involve the formulation “He is not without having it,” whereas femininity is subject to an early experience of deprivation in order to wind up wishing to make the phallus *be* symbolically in the product of childbirth, whether this product turns out to have it or not.

This third object, the phallus, detached from the Osirian dispersion to which I alluded earlier, serves the most secret metonymic function depending on whether it intervenes in or is reabsorbed by desire's fantasy. By which I mean that this fantasy is at the level of the unconscious chain, which corresponds to the identification of the subject who speaks as an ego in conscious discourse. In fantasy, the subject experiences himself as what he wants at the level of the Other, this

time with an uppercase *O* – in other words, in the place where he is truth without consciousness and without recourse. It is here that he creates himself in the thick absence called desire.

Desire has no object, if not, as its singularities show, the accidental one, whether it is normal or not, that happens to manage to signify, whether in a flash or in a permanent relationship, the confines of the Thing – in other words, of this nothing around which all human passion tightens its spasm with a shorter or longer modulation and a periodic return.

The passion of the mouth that is most passionately stuffed is for the nothing by which, in anorexia, it demands the [kind of] deprivation that reflects love. The passion of the miser is for the nothing, to which the object enclosed in his beloved treasure chest is reduced. How could man's passion manage to find satisfaction without the copula that joins being as lack with this nothing?

This is why, whereas a woman may be secretly content deep down with the person who satisfies both her need and this lack, a man, seeking his want-to-be beyond his need – which is nevertheless so much better assured than a woman's – is

inclined toward inconstancy, or, more exactly, toward a duplicating of the object, whose affinities with what there is by way of fetishism in homosexuality have been very curiously explored in analytic practice, if not always correctly and well put together in psychoanalytic theory.

But do not believe, nonetheless, that I think women are more favored when it comes to jouissance. Their difficulties are hardly in short supply and are probably more profound. But it is not my objective here to go into that, even though our group will soon be taking it up in collaboration with the Dutch Society of Psychoanalysis.

Have I at least succeeded in conveying to you the topological chains that situate at the heart of each of us the gaping place from which the nothing questions us about our sex and our existence? This is the place where we have to love the neighbor as ourselves, because in him this place is the same.

Assuredly, nothing is closer to us than this place. To express it, I will borrow the voice of the poet who, regardless of his religious accents, was recognized by the Surrealists to be one of their elders. The poet in question is Germain Nouveau, the one who signed himself *Humilis*.

DISCOURSE TO CATHOLICS

*Frère, ô doux mendiant qui chantes en plein vent,  
Aime-toi, comme l'air du ciel aime le vent.*

*Frère, poussant les bœufs dans les mottes de terre,  
Aime-toi, comme aux champs la glèbe aime la terre.*

*Frère, qui fais le vin du sang des raisins d'or,  
Aime-toi, comme un cep aime ses grappes d'or.*

*Frère, qui fais le pain, croûte dorée et mie,  
Aime-toi, comme au four la croûte aime la mie.*

*Frère, qui fais l'habit, joyeux tisseur de drap,  
Aime-toi, comme en lui la laine aime le drap.*

*Frère, dont le bateau fend l'azur vert des vagues,  
Aime-toi, comme en mer les flots aiment les vagues.*

*Frère, joueur de luth, gai marieur de sons,  
Aime-toi, comme on sent la corde aimer les sons.*

*Mais en Dieu, Frère, sache aimer comme toi-même  
Ton frère, et, quel qu'il soit, qu'il soit comme toi-même.*

[Brother, oh sweet beggar who sings in the wind,  
Love thyself, as heaven's air loves the wind.

DISCOURSE TO CATHOLICS

Brother, driving the oxen through the clods of earth,  
Love thyself, as in the fields the glebe loves the  
earth.

Brother, who makes blood-red wine from golden  
grapes,  
Love thyself, as the vine loves its golden clusters.

Brother, who bakes bread, golden outside and fair  
inside,  
Love thyself, as in the oven the outside loves the  
inside.

Brother, who makes cloth, joyous weaver of fabric,  
Love thyself, as in itself the wool loves the fabric.

Brother, whose boat hews the blue-green waves,  
Love thyself, as at sea the deep loves the waves.

Brother, lute player, gaily marrying sounds,  
Love thyself, as one senses the string loves the  
sounds.

But in God, Brother, know how to love thy brother  
As thyself, and whatever he may be, let him be as  
thyself.]

Such is the commandment of love for one's neighbor.

Freud is right to stop short there, dumbfounded by its invocation, because psychoanalytic practice shows – and analysis articulates as a decisive discovery – the ambivalence by which hatred follows like a shadow all love for the neighbor who is also what is most foreign to us.

How then not to plague him with tests designed to get him to make the only cry that could allow us to know him? How is it that Kant does not see what his thoroughly bourgeois practical reason runs up against when it is set up as a universal rule? The debility of the proofs he gives for it has only human weakness going for it, which sustains the naked body that Sade gives it: boundless jouissance for all. It would take more than sadism – an absolute love, in other words, an impossible one.

Isn't this the key to the function of sublimation that I am currently getting those who attend my Seminar to dwell upon? Man tries to compromise with the Thing in various forms: in the fundamental art that makes him represent it in the hollow in the vase in which the longstanding alliance is grounded; in religion which inspires in

him fear of the Thing and makes him stay at the proper distance from it; and in science, which does not believe in it, but which we now see confronted with the fundamental wickedness of the Thing.

*Trieb* [drive], a primary and eminently enigmatic notion in Freud's theory, tripped over the form and formulation of the death instinct, scandalizing his disciples. The death instinct is, nevertheless, the response of the Thing when we don't want to know anything about it. It doesn't know anything about us either.

But isn't this also a form of sublimation around which man's being, once again, turns on its hinges? Isn't libido – about which Freud tells us that no force in man is more readily sublimated – the last fruit of sublimation with which modern man responds to his solitude?

Let prudence keep me from moving ahead too quickly!

May the laws, by sole means of which we can find anew the path of the Thing, be guarded by us. They are the laws of speech by which the Thing is surrounded.

I have raised before you the question that is at

the very heart of Freud's practice. Perhaps I have done so madly, for the pitfalls of psychological mastery are hardly revealed even to those who might appear to be most able to avoid them.

I have gone so far as to say that there have been classes in which we discussed Christ's psychology. What does that mean? Is it in order to know in what way his desire could be grasped?

I teach something whose endpoint is obscure. I must apologize here – I was led to it by a pressing necessity of which the one that brought me here before you is but a small moment, which will help you, I hope, to understand.

But I am not happy to be here [*être là*]. This is not my place, which is by the bedside of the patient who speaks to me.

Thus let not the philosopher stand up, as happened to Ibn Arabi, to greet me overflowing with signs of his consideration and friendship, to end up embracing me and saying, "Yes."

Of course, like Ibn Arabi, I would respond by saying "Yes" to him. And his joy would be heightened when he observed that I had understood him.

But, realizing what incited his joy, I would have to add, "No."

## The Triumph of Religion

## Bibliographical Information

“Discourse to Catholics”: mentioning in his seminar on March 23, 1960, the lectures he had just given in Brussels, Lacan designates them with the words “my discourse to Catholics” (Seminar VII [Paris: Seuil, 1986], p. 211). Two successive versions of them were published in the organ of the École de la Cause Freudienne in Belgium: *Quarto*, 6 (1982): 5–24, and *Quarto*, 50 (1992): 7–20.

“The Triumph of Religion”: the title and the section headings were provided by Jacques-Alain Miller. A first version came out in the internal bulletin of the École Freudienne de Paris, *Les Lettres de l'École*, 16 (1975): 6–26.

## Translator's Notes

I would like to thank Mark and Katharina Kroll-Fratoni, as well as Héloïse Fink for their kind assistance on this translation. All errors here are my own.

The numbers in parentheses refer to the page and paragraph number of the present English edition.

### Discourse to Catholics

- (8, 1) André Breton introduced the term *peu de réalité* (scant reality) in his 1924 “Introduction au discours sur le peu de réalité”; see *Point du Jour* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970); in English, see “Introduction to the Discourse on the Paucity of Reality,” in *Break of Day*, trans. Mark Polizzotti and Mary Ann Caws, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999, pp. 3–20.
- (9, 2) There may be a reference to “corrective emotional experiences” in the phrase “corrective experiments.”

- (11, 2) “The so-called psychology of understanding” is a reference to Jaspers.
- (11, 2) On “genetic psychoanalysis,” see H. Hartmann and E. Kris, “The Genetic Approach in Psychoanalysis,” *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, vol. 1, New York: International Universities Press, 1945; see Lacan’s comments on it in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. B. Fink, H. Fink, and R. Grigg, New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2006, p. 599.
- (23, 3) *Mère Intelligence* seems, rather, to come from Paul Valéry’s *Poésie*.
- (25, 1) Or “in the sense that he believes He knows it.”
- (25, 2) “God is dead, nothing is permitted anymore” is an obvious reversal of the line attributed to Dostoevsky (and found not quite word for word in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Part 4, Book II, chapter 4, “A Hymn and a Secret”): “If God is dead, all is permitted.”
- (25, 2) The “ancient myth” may be that of Cronus and Uranus.
- (32, 3) “Sie lieben also den Wahn wie sich selbst”: see Sigmund Freud, *Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse 1887–1902: Briefe an W. Fliess*, London: Imago, 1950, p. 101. [Citation from Draft H corrected.] Rendered as “Thus they love their delusion as they love themselves,” in *The Origins of Psycho-Analysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess, Drafts and Notes 1887–1902*, New York: Basic Books, 1954, p. 113. Cf. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III, The Psychoses*, trans. R. Grigg, New York: Norton, 1993, p. 214.
- (34, 2) *Semblable* is often translated as “fellow man” or “counterpart,” but in Lacan’s usage it refers specifically to

- the mirroring of two imaginary others (*a* and *a'*) who *resemble* each other (or at least see themselves in each other). “Fellow man” corresponds well to the French *prochain*, points to man (not woman), the adult (not the child), and suggests fellowship, whereas in Lacan’s work *semblable* evokes rivalry and jealousy first and foremost. “Counterpart” suggests parallel hierarchical structures within which the two people take on similar roles – that is, symbolic roles – as in “The Chief Financial Officer’s counterpart in his company’s foreign acquisition target was Mr. Juppé, the *Directeur financier*.” I have revived the somewhat obsolete English “semblable” found, for example, in *Hamlet*, Act V, scene II, line 124: “his semblable is his mirror; and who else would trace him, his umbrage, nothing more.”
- (34, 2) *Amour-propre* can be rendered as self-love, self-regard, self-esteem, vanity, or pride.
- (34, 2) “The outrageousness of the shadow whose prey the hunter becomes”: there is a likely allusion here to the French expression *lâcher la proie pour l’ombre*, meaning to give up what one already has to go chasing after shadows. *Vanité* can mean vanity, pride, futility, emptiness, hollowness, or uselessness.
- (35, 1) *Pelure* ([layers of] peels) is also a slang term for clothes.
- (36, 2) A likely reference to the Copernican (or, more accurately, Keplerian) revolution, which required giving up the idea that the heavens moved according to perfectly spherical motions, and Freud’s revolution, taking consciousness out of the center of man’s motivation.



- (37, 2) *Anschauung*: the Seuil French version reads *Abschäumungen* (evoking scum or dregs), but this does not seem to make sense given the context. *Anschauung* is based on the verb *anschauen*, meaning "to look" or "to watch," and is used in artistic contexts. An earlier version of the text reads *Abschattung* (shading), although a better alternative in this context might be *Abschattierung*.
- (38, 2) "Those who have but the word 'understanding' on their lips" is a likely reference to Karl Jaspers.
- (41, 1) The "Project for a Scientific Psychology" (1895) can be found in the Standard Edition, vol. 1, and in *The Origins of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Marie Bonaparte, Anna Freud, and Ernst Kris, trans. Eric Mosbacher and James Strachey, New York: Basic Books, 1954.
- (41, 1) *Wissbegierde* is often rendered in English as inquisitiveness or intellectual curiosity.
- (41, 1) *Cupido sciendi* means curiosity, desire to know the why and how of things.
- (42, 1) Lacan often uses *tendance* (tendency) instead of *pulsion* (drive), especially in his early work.
- (44, 2) Regarding Eros as a "black God," see *Écrits*, Paris: Seuil, 1966, p. 607.
- (45, 3) The "Osirian dispersion" may be a reference to the earlier mentioned dismemberment and scattering to the four winds. *Le fantasme du désir* (desire's fantasy) could also be rendered as "desire qua fantasy."
- (46, 3) "The passion of the miser is for the nothing, to which the object enclosed in his beloved treasure chest is reduced." This sentence is an obvious reference to Molière's *The Miser*.
- (47, 2) Lacan gave a paper entitled "Guiding Remarks

- for a Convention on Female Sexuality" (found in *Écrits*, 1966) at the International Colloquium of Psychoanalysis which took place September 5-9, 1960, at the University of Amsterdam.
- (49, 7) The poem, entitled *Fraternité*, "Brotherhood," can be found in *Poèmes d'Humilis*, Paris: La Poétique, 1910.
- (52, 5) Ibn Arabi met the philosopher Averroes, giving him only yes and no answers.

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- (56, 3) Lacan is perhaps referring to Olivier Reboul's *L'Élan humain ou l'Éducation selon Alain*, Paris: Vrin, 1974, with a preface by Jean Château, published in a series overseen by Jean Château. Alain was one of the pseudonyms of Émile-Auguste Chartier.
- (56, 4) *Il n'est pas forcé que l'homme soit éduqué* (rendered in the text as "it isn't necessary to educate man") is somewhat ambiguous here: Lacan might mean that there is no need to educate people (period, or because in any case they educate themselves), that it isn't clear that people are ever educated by others (they educate themselves instead), or even that it isn't clear that people are ever truly educated or cultured.
- (59, 3) Something that is *foireuse* fails miserably or is cowardly.
- (63, 2) The interviewers refer back occasionally to a few remarks Lacan made prior to the beginning of the interview proper, which are not included in the published edition.