

Chapter 11

A father is beaten to death

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The “Christian” – he who for two thousand years has passed as a Christian – is simply a psychological self-delusion. Closely examined, it appears that, despite all his “faith”, he has ruled only by his instincts – and what instincts!”

(Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, 1895)

The “dead father” is a clinical experience that I’ve often encountered with analysands in various forms that resonate with my countertransference. My personal experience of this was especially strong when I lost my own father under dramatic circumstances in September 1989. He died in my native Bulgaria, two months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, murdered in a supposedly socialist hospital where experiments were performed on elderly patients; family members were forbidden to visit for “fear of germs.” Since bodies of practicing Christians who died were cremated to prevent religious gatherings, while mourning I could only talk about this through writing a novel.

I found myself writing, for the first time, what I called a “metaphysical detective novel.” It is a genre in which I continue to work, combining philosophical, political, poetic and even psychoanalytical approaches. I entitled the first of these *The Old Man and the Wolves* (1994). My father’s death drove me to see society as the criminal pact that Freud described: “Society was now based on complicity in the common crime” (1913). In addition, I felt a loss of inhibition that enabled me to unveil the repressed sadomasochism of the lovers surrounding the novel’s “dead father.”

The grief and melancholy I felt after my father’s death, their working through and subsequent sublimation, underlie the reflection contained in this chapter. In it I share personal countertransferential connotations that vary according to sexual difference. In particular I examine the fantasy of the “father beaten to death,” which I maintain lies at the foundation of the Christian faith.

A recently discovered Coptic manuscript, translated from Greek in the

third or fourth century, represents Judas as having fulfilled the wishes of Jesus rather than betraying him. This breaks with the traditional notion that has fostered Christian anti-Semitism. The analyst has no need of such “proof” to understand that the putting to death of the body of Christ is not just an unfortunate accident due to some betrayal or because of the internal rivalry among the Jews. The “father beaten to death” appears to me to be a logical necessity in the Christian construction of the desiring subject in that it liberates this subject from *guilt* over the incestuous *love* of the father and for the father by its projection onto passion-suffering as the only possible path for sublimation. This logical necessity begins with a displacement of the *prohibition* of incest, or its abandonment, now transformed into punishment *by* and *of* the father. Passion is joined to suffering before finally allowing both the father’s love and the love of the father in the “reconciliation” through something like Spinoza’s “infinite intellectual love” or Freud’s sublimation.

I should specify that I am an atheist. Yet I am convinced that psychoanalysis has the formidable privilege of being able to extend its thinking to the religious sphere where contemporary “clashes” still aggravate, if not condition, civilization’s discontents. Whether believers or non-believers, we are all affected by the cultural-religious environment in which we move. My conviction is that a psychoanalytic focus could lead to important advances in this field, on which the future of psychoanalysis might even depend. I am afraid, however, that at the moment we are still very much behind in our capacity to analyze the newer variants of the crisis of civilization.

The father complex is a universal though modulated very differently through the history of different civilizations and religions. Today, confronted with the new methods of procreation described by Eric Laurent in Chapter 4, it becomes imperative to consider these varieties of father complexes, and with different kinds of dead fathers. As children of the Enlightenment, and as disciples of Freud, rushing to confirm the death of God, psychoanalysts have tended to be blind to the complexities and paradoxes that abound in the history of religion, especially as they pertain to the role of the father, both living and dead.

My intention is to propose a new reading of *Totem and Taboo* (1913) inflected by an interpretation of *A Child is Being Beaten*, in order to examine the guilt that underlies the murder of the father as the other side of the desire for him.

Freud: *A Child is Being Beaten* (S.E., vol. 17, 1919)

When Freud postulates the existence of “original fantasies”¹ in the unconscious, stemming either from the observation of certain events or from a “prehistoric truth” dating back to “the original time of the human family,” he mentions only three: the primal scene, castration and seduction. The “a child is beaten” fantasy, introduced in 1919, seems to occupy a particular,

privileged place between these “original fantasies” which structure the psychoanalytical interpretation of desire and the variety of individual sexual scenarios in which the singular eroticism of speaking subjects unfolds. Poised halfway between the “original” and the “individual,” the mythic and the poetic, could the “a child is beaten” fantasy represent the beginning of individuation, that decisive time when the subject constitutes himself, starting with his *sexual choice*, and then as a *speaking identity*, in the ternary structure of oedipal kinship? I, male or female, excluded from the primal scene, look for my place between father and mother in order both to mark out my difference and to find my place among the ties, inseparably those of love and speaking, erotic and signifying.

Freud insisted on distinguishing between how the “a child is beaten” fantasy is played out for the little girl and the little boy. The young girl (and the woman) protects herself from her incestuous love for her father (first stage of the fantasy: “He loves me.”), and from her defensive masochism (second stage of the fantasy: “No, he doesn’t love me – he beats me.”), by projecting it inversely onto another, preferably someone of the same sex as the coveted paternal object (third stage: “He’s beating a boy.”). Two questions arise here. How does this transfer occur, this delegation of feminine desire to *another object*, of the same or more frequently of the opposite sex, which shelters her as a desiring *subject*? What becomes of this *reversed delegation of desire*, which properly speaking is not repression? It is what I would call an introjection of the affection for the father and of the father: a redirection of the affect *to* the father, a *père-version* in French – from the Latin *versus* meaning “toward.”

As I have commented elsewhere,² the little girl experiencing her first Oedipal stage with her mother, constructs a precocious alterity, a sensitive, preverbal presence, at one and the same time a pole of attraction and a pole of repulsion against which she will measure herself and from which she must separate. “You or me?” – such is her question from the outset. Unlike Narcissus, she cannot pose the question with the certainty of an Ego imbued with its own image. The little girl puts herself outside the bounds of arousal, nevertheless agitating, and protects herself against her passion. That passion is at first incestuous, then masochistic, concentrating on others: “He doesn’t love you because he hits you.” Who is this “you,” this beaten second person who protects my desire that is guilty of loving and being loved?

Freud’s interpretation is that the repressed, that follows desire, transforms paternal love into punishment of another person who is jealously hated. The prototype of this other beaten person is the mother, the little girl’s humiliated rival, even in the best of patriarchal families. However, the ambivalent love of the little girl for her mother protects the envied matron and seeks other targets, thereby sheltering the loved/hated maternal object. Usually other children take the place of this beaten rival in the little girl’s fantasy. But why this displacement and this masquerade?

The founder of psychoanalysis does not evoke a child's observations of other children frequently submitted to paternal punishment. His thinking suggests that it is the guilt internal to the voyeur's own repressed desire that creates the necessity for punishment, with or without observation of scenes of punishment. Where would this guilt-laden repression of the father's love, and love for the father, come from? A repression that finds its acme in the fantasy of punishment or even thrashing?

There is but a single compelling answer: It must be a repetition of the repression of incest that is both constitutive of the history of humanity and dictated by it. The foundation of the culture that characterizes our species, namely the repression of incest that underlies the original repression, necessarily engenders guilt as well as its corollary, masochism. This prehistoric guilt can lead to strong individual drives and incestuous overtones in the family, fostering a regression to pre-genital stages such as to oral-anal excitation (spanking), to masturbatory satisfaction, or to variants of the punishments – thrashings – that take the entire body for an erogenous zone.

I propose an addition to Freud's vision of this *endogenous masochism* determined by the *original repression of incest*. This very repression, pushing away incestuous desire, leads to a final *displacement of arousal*, this time not to another "object" ("a boy") but to the *medium of expression and communication itself*. Repression of incest leads to an investment of language and thought.

I am saying, therefore, that parallel to the fantasy that "another is beaten" which protects me from prohibited genital satisfaction and/or the incestuous desire to be loved and to love, I, the little girl, transfer the intensity of my desire to speaking and thought, to representation and to mental creativity. This transfer of libido onto language and intelligence is not a simple defense against guilty genital desires, for it moreover creates a new object of desire which becomes a new source of satisfaction that supplements erogenous pleasure. It is the capacity infinitely to represent and to name, to give words to genital and masochistic arousal itself. In this is the hope of finding partial substitutes to prohibited incest through symbolic work, but also of meriting this prohibited love, made guilty, to merit it by the extravagant capacity of sublimation. All humans possess that capacity, but the little girl works hard to excel at it better than anyone else.

So in addition to *masochistic perversity* ("I take pleasure in the fantasy of being beaten") is the *sublimatory jouissance* of the capacity to speak and to think *for and with* the beloved. From the beginning sublimation accompanies this perverse defense. Perversion acts as sublimation's double. This sublimatory movement re-emerges in the extreme in what I take to be the essential nuclear fantasy of Christianity: "A father is beaten to death."

The final fantasy "one beats a child" erases the representation of the masochistic scene "he beats ME" from the girl's conscience and replaces it by a double movement: on the one hand, the sadistic version of the fantasy "he

beats HIM,” and, on the other, a hypercritical moral conscience identified with the parental superego, in which the feminine superego takes root. The vigilance of the latter can reach a self-observation so extreme that it is akin to delirium.

The tension between this symbolic construction and excitability can engender the symptoms of the conflicted double personalities we call hysterics, a group largely composed of women. Yet this very conflict in a favorable familial context can be a strong stimulus to the development of women’s symbolic creativity. On a backdrop of tamed masochism, however, the conflict is merely tempered.

The girl’s strong identification with the paternal superego fused with the phallic function can work to the detriment of her feminine identifications. Causing the repression of the mother, who is reduced to castrated, sick femininity, can give rise to a virile mimetism that propels the feminine subject toward a glorification of spirituality. These all tend to reunite the little girl, and the woman she will become, with the symbolic father.

Nor does the little boy escape this sadomasochistic economy. The difference here is that his punishment fantasy, from the beginning, is experienced as passive: “I am loved by the father” (like a passive woman). To protect himself from this feminine position and the homosexuality it suggests, the boy superimposes his defensive fantasy “I’m beaten by the father” upon another fantasy that represses the father by inverting the sexual attributes of the punisher: “It’s not *he* who beats me, it’s SHE, a woman, the mother.” This is the third stage of the male masochistic fantasy. This fantasy, culminating in the scenario of the man flagellated by a woman, protects the subject from the danger of the father’s sadistic desire. It is against this desire that the son must protect himself at all cost, for it is this that persists both as an unconscious homosexual attraction and as the ultimate threat.

Although this masochistic fantasy of being beaten by a woman does not keep the man from occupying a feminine position given the nature of his passive role, it offers him a double benefit. “*That* doesn’t happen between men, since I have sex with a woman. Even if I am in a passive feminine position, I haven’t chosen a homosexual object. Moreover, the child beaten by his mother – who I now am – is not a passive woman, because this man suffering with the mother, that is to say me, feels as I suspected father to have felt, humiliated, always overshadowed by the power of maternal hysteria. Beaten, I join my father once again; we are united by these nuptials under the whip. After all is said and done, my man-beaten-by-a-woman masochism is the only compromise that makes me a man, perhaps belittled a bit, but who exists as I myself exist, solely through the feeling of suffering, of his suffering. My mother’s husband/lover, is, of course, the man I’ve always desired with a fearful desire and whose sadism I no longer have reason to fear.”

A father is beaten to death

Had you recognized me you would have known the Father.

(John, 14, 7–12)

Remember that for Freud the murder of the father is a foundational act, a historical reality in human civilization. In a similar way, for Christians, Christ is a historical figure and it is a real event that believers commemorate. I take these considerations into account, nevertheless distancing myself from them in what follows. I am only interested in the *psychic reality* that generates fantasies in the subject who does believe in such events, whether or not they actually occurred.

On another point: although Christ is the *Son*, according to Saint Paul, it is as the *Father* that he is put to death. From the perspective of the Trinity it is not possible that his suffering to death not also be that of the Father. What would happen intra-psychically if Jesus were not only a child or a beaten brother, but also a beaten father – beaten to death?

For the little girl, this situation means that the one she loves – the father as the object of maternal desire and as the phallic function that supports her access to representation, language and thought – finds himself in the position of the victim, similar to that of the boy subjected to the girl's sadistic fantasy. The fantasy of the "father beaten to death" could then be summarized as follows: "It's not me who's beaten; it's a boy who is beaten. Yet here is a beaten father. This father is therefore a sort of boy or brother or 'alter ego'."

By combining the son and the father, this scenario has the advantage of appeasing both the incestuous guilt that weighs on the desire for the Other (Sovereign Father) and of encouraging virile identification with this tortured man, but under the cover of the masochism promoted, even recommended by this double movement. "This beaten father and/or brother is my own kind, my alter ego, myself endowed with a male organ," says the girl or woman.

The path is thus paved in the unconscious for the Oedipal father, usually the agent of the Law and Prohibition now to be able to fuse with the subject of the guilty amorous passion that "I" am, as a girl loved by this same father. The superman father is humanized, even feminized by the suffering he undergoes; and because of this he is at once my ideal love object and my double, an ideal ego. A complicit "us" is formed by and in the father's passion. From here on we shall share love, guilt and punishment together. For my unconscious, such a father is not only positioned as an agent of the prohibition and the punishment it entails, but he is also the forbidden love object suffering from prohibition and punishment *like me*. I dedicate superego-like idealization to him, one that permeates my feeling of being a minor excluded from the primal scene to the point of actually resorbing this feeling. I thus return to the first phase of my Oedipal fantasy: "I love him and he

loves me." Because of our immersion in paternal passion, this love expresses itself differently: "We are both in love, and guilty; we both deserve to be beaten to death. Only death will bring us together again."

It follows that for the unconscious, these father/daughter reunions *suspend the incest taboo* by the suffering of the two punished lovers, in such a way that this suffering necessarily will be experienced as a marriage. The suffering of the father beaten to death, sexualized under the whip of faith, this love without pity, is the paradise of masochism.

Masochism encourages sublimation by placing the fantasy of the father beaten to death at the summit of the evangelical narrative so that it calls out for our identification. Christianity does not content itself with reinforcing the prohibition of desire. It also paradoxically displaces them and opens up the path to their working through or sublimation.

The neurotic's desire is curbed and/or stimulated by the threats of judgment, condemnation and expiation, all of which mutilate that desire. However, being beaten as this son-father is beaten, the believer-subject's unconscious releases his desire from guilt's hold, enabling it to take form in what must be called sovereign, divine suffering. This is no longer the *guilty suffering* that results from *transgression*. It is rather suffering as the only way to *union* with this ideal that is the Father. This is suffering made new. Christic, it is not the flip side of the Law but the Law's suspension for the benefit of *jouissance* in idealized suffering. It is a *jouissance* in longing, in the essential failure to satisfy the desire for the father. The suffering-jouissance in that ambivalent longing is a reorientation of desire toward the father. (Remember the Latin "versus" from which is derived the French *vers le père* and hence *père-vers*.) The father beaten to death does not make suffering commonplace or banal. Nor does he authorize incest. By the glory and the grace of our suffering-together, of our com-passion, he adjusts and justifies it.

Moreover, the adoration of the beaten father leads to another fundamental consequence: beyond the surreptitiously accepted *incestuous link* with the father, it is *symbolic activity* itself that the subject is encouraged to sexualize through paternal passion.

To the extent that it is by thought and language that I connect with the beaten-to-death Other, it is indeed this *representation* of my frustrated desire that promotes the passion for the father, or the *Father as a figure of passion* that replaces the *Father of the Law*. The resexualization of the ideal father as the Man of Passion brings about an unprecedented resexualization of representation itself, of the very activity of fantasizing and of speaking. We know that while favoring compassion, the Passion of the Father of Pain invites me to enact my sadomasochistic drives, not only in everyday reality but also in acts of mortification and penance. Sadomasochistic drives are diverted beyond the reality of suffering to death to the kingdom of representation where language alone can move ahead to appropriate them. More than through my mere communication with the beaten-to-death Other, it is

through the thought and speech I create around the *father beaten to death* that I become this Other's *chosen one*.

The activity of representing-speaking-thinking, attributed to the father in patrilineal societies and which connects me to him, now becomes the privileged realm of sadomasochistic pleasure, the "kingdom" indeed, where suffering opens out, justifies and appeases itself. *Sublimation* is this displacement (metonymy/metaphor) of pleasure starting with the body and culminating in representation. Perversion and sublimation are the opposite sides of this flexibility, if not of this fabulous suspension of the incest taboo induced by the beaten-to-death father.

A traversal of the death instinct?

Another essential moment of the fantasy "a father beaten to death" not only *frees* the death instinct as sadomasochistic aggression, but also confronts this drive in its profound and radical Freudian sense. This implies an undoing of ties, to living itself: *déliaison* as Green calls it. This is precisely what the Gospel narrative hints at when God the Father himself regains nothingness.

This "descent of the Father himself, after the Passion, to the deepest recesses of the earth"³ is called *kenosis* in Greek, meaning "non-being," "nothingness," "inanity," "nullity;" but also "insane," "deceiving," (cf. the adjective *kenos* means "empty," "useless," "vain;" and the verb *kenoun*, "purge," "cut," wipe out").⁴ Beyond the beaten father's sadomasochism, we are confronted with *the suspension of the paternal function itself*, which is to say the canceling out of the capacity to represent or to symbolize that this function upholds in psychoanalytic theory. In theological terms, it is no more and no less than a matter of *the death of God*. In philosophical terms and in reference to the death instinct as a "carrying wave" of all drives, we can say: only "Thanatos is," as Deleuze (1967) wrote, meaning, "only nothingness is."

It is God himself who "suffers" in Christianity. This scandal, which theology is hesitant to confront, prefigures the modern notion that "God is dead." "God is dead." "God himself is dead" is a prodigious representation, one "which presents representation with the schism's deepest abyss."⁵

Christian theology seems barely to have mentioned the death of the Father, almost as though it prefers to deny the death of the symbolic function that it implies, given that Christ's resurrection is almost immediate. This *splicing* of this desired death, the emptying of the symbolic function (*kenosis*) on to its denial (*resurrection*) possesses tremendous therapeutic power! What a marvelous way to restore the capacity to think and to desire in an exploration that suffering pushes to the limit of sanity! Because the Father and the Mind are mortal, extinguished by the Man of Pain, who thinks up until the point of his suffering to death, they can be reborn and thought begin anew. Could this be the ultimate variant of liberty made possible by Christian suffering that Nietzsche had in mind when he observed that this abandonment to *kenosis*

endows *human and divine* death on the cross with "this liberty, this sovereign detachment,/ which puts suffering/ beyond all resentment" (Nietzsche, *L'Antéchrist*, 40).

According to Green, human subjects are all the result of the long work of the negative: birth, weaning, separation and frustration. Christianity highlights the essential internal drama of becoming by presenting Christ at the heart of the split between Passion and Resurrection. In so doing, it endows itself with an immense cathartic, unconscious power. It represents in fact an advance in the understanding of the psychosexual variants of suffering that has otherwise required the development of the sciences, particularly the human sciences. Freud's psychoanalysis made a great leap forward in this direction. However, much of this long road has yet to be traversed.

In the scenario of the Father-beaten-to-death, *kenosis*, the nothingness, of the divine is a return to the fresh consciousness of a new beginning, the fantasy of resurrection. The sovereign suffering of *kenosis* is paradoxically a depassioning: *kenosis* de-eroticizes suffering. The internal necessity of the human mind to yearn for the Other, to desire the divine, to grasp for meaning, suddenly becomes empty, vain, useless, mad. The duality of desire as both an absolute and as nothingness takes Christianity to the limits of the religious, understood as a need to believe. The *kenosis* of the Father-Son is an encounter not with the religious, but with the *sacred*, if understood as thought of the unthinkable. Mystic Meister Eckhart said, "I ask God to leave me free of God." Perhaps Saint John of the Cross best expressed the presence of the impossible in the tension of desire and thought, the nothingness that punctuates the "vain pursuit"⁶ proper to the need to believe. Isn't it the *sacred* to which modern knowledge aspires, when seeking not a new way to maintain the creation of meaning in the modern subject threatened by fragmentation, criminality and delirium? Isn't this the task of psychoanalytic interpretation? In my *Hatred and Forgiveness*, I suggest that interpretation is *for-giving*, not in the religious or sacred sense, but giving sense to what was non-sense, deciphering desire and/or hatred through the elucidation of transference in countertransference.

In the Christian model of the Dead Father, the believer introjects the Father's death through his identification with the Father-Son, finding resolution in *reconciliation*, the Christian version of the Jewish *alliance*. Spinoza, interpreting this ultimate mystery for modern man, writes in his *Ethics* V,⁷ "God loves himself with intellectual love," translating what for the believer is a resorption of suffering into "the new body" of Christ "risen to heaven" at the right hand of the Father. Since "infinite intellectual love" coexists with an existential suffering that it is able to elucidate, Spinoza renames it "God" now transformed into joy. By having focused, on com-passion and nothingness (*kenosis*) as inseparable from "loving intelligence," the genius of Christianity provides an excellent counterweight to suffering in its sublimation and its working through by psychic and verbal activity. "I," suffering because

desiring/thinking, loving/loved, am capable of *representing* my passion to myself; this *representation* is my resurrection. The mind, in love with passion, re-creates by means of loving intelligence in thoughts, narratives, paintings and music, the fruits of the tree of life.

To put it another way, Christianity at once avowed and denied the putting-to-death of the Father. This is the solution that it imposed on the universal “dead father” of the human condition. Christianity took hold of the Greco-Roman body. The beaten-to-death-Father died 2000 years ago through the passion of the Son, while post Counter-Reformation Catholicism resorbed the body of Antiquity rediscovered by the humanists, and pushed it to its limits in the Passion of Man. Painting, music and literature then developed these passions, radically shaking up the subject of monotheism.

The tension between desire and meaning, particular to the speaking being and commanding the sadomasochistic logic of human experience, is resolved in a way described by Nietzsche as a “self-delusion dominated by instincts.” What follows is a summary of some of the features of this Christian heritage in modern culture and society:

- Christianity promotes a direct relationship with the Father, one comparable to the “primal identification,” *direkte und unmittelbare* according to Freud (1923). This is the experience of faith, still present in derivative form in modern secular culture, especially in the sociological *need to believe*, particularly manifest in unpragmatic outbursts of behavior such as riots and revolutions so frequent in post-Catholic countries like France. These could be interpreted as so many sadomasochistic appeals to the loving Father.
- The subject renounces incest in order to rediscover the *desiring and desirable father* as a *loving and symbolic* father and to join him by introjecting the passion of the body as well as the *symbolic capacity* itself.
- This new beginning (“In the beginning there was the Word” (John 1: 1) is suffering. The speaking child must renounce his Oedipal desires and compensate for his guilt; the speaking child is a beaten child. (See Freud’s “separation-frustration,” Klein’s “depressive position” and Lacan’s “lack.”)
- And yet, by relieving this infantile, incestuous, speaking and suffering humanity, through the suffering of the Father, incarnate as his Son to be beaten to death, Jesus shakes up the primary constituents of the human condition.
- The eroticization of suffering makes manifest the torment of the desiring body in the human family triangle. Incest with both parents, particularly with the father, is not just an unconscious desire. It becomes *preconscious*. The unconsciously encouraged father/daughter incest will stimulate the cultural and social dynamism of the Christian woman. The unconsciously encouraged fantasy of homosexual father/son love will tend to facilitate

- a social bond based on political and warlike brotherhoods, though not without the risk of abuse and permissiveness.
- The seam between *beaten-to-death* and *resurrection* could create a kind of double bind, but with an optimal Oedipal complex it could in contrast stimulate the sublimatory performance of the Ego. *For the girl*: “rebirth has never exceeded my powers,” writes Colette. Detective novels, as well as psychoanalytic inquiry, not far from the logic of detective stories, could constitute the path of this kind of rebirth. *For the boy*: identification with the beaten-to-death Father and his resurrection represents the threat of passivization and feminization that generate anxiety, while on the contrary, the optimal working through of homosexuality opens up the possibility of thought, fertilized by the imagination.
 - Both the heroism of Antiquity and the unlimited phallic power of monotheistic man appear to be untenable. Superman does not exist, sovereignty is only possible in the symbolic dimension, and this depends on the sadomasochism of desire.
 - With regard to repression, there is no other way out of the *père-version* other than to transfer it to sublimation. Since the subject is inherently *père-verse*, he can only become a glorious body if he keeps to the ideal, while resexualizing it. And it is art, thought as art or art as thought, in all its variants that will be his element. Hence, perversion is in the process of being depenalized and depathologized in modern secular society.

As for the Death of the Father that crowns this sadomasochistic course, it de-eroticizes incestuous passion and leaves open the possibility of another kind of psychic experience, namely that of the abolition of the symbolic and/or paternal power, bringing in its wake the risk of mental, social and even biological disorganization with which we are confronted in the global era. But the death of the father also confronts us with unknown possibilities of freedom generated by the decline of religion – new variants of Spinoza’s “intellectual love” which for the philosopher would be of God. The love relationship experienced in the *process of transference* is currently our modest and difficult counterbalance. Through interpretation of transference and countertransference, the Father is infinitely dying and resurrecting in me, if and only if I am a subject in analysis.

Conclusion

Freud hypothesized that the prohibition of incest, on which human culture is founded, begins with the discovery by the brothers that the father is an animal to be killed. Of this Totem, only the Taboo has been preserved, in order to be transformed into rules for the exchange of women, laws, names, language and meaning. After the Holocaust, the Freudian approach was the only one that emphasized the sadomasochistic desire for the law of the father that feeds

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Freud hypothesized that the prohibition of incest, on which human culture is founded, begins with the discovery by the brothers that the father is an animal to be killed. Of this Totem, only the Taboo has been preserved, in order to be transformed into rules for the exchange of women, laws, names, language and meaning. After the Holocaust, the Freudian approach was the only one that emphasized the sadomasochistic desire for the law of the father that feeds

both the moral order and the dark *Eros* that underpins *père-version* and the sublimation of *homo religiosus*. The beginning of the third millennium, with the collapse of paternal and political authority and the massive return of the need to believe, reveals something else. The Dead Father, a necessary condition for the existence of *homo religiosus*, died on the cross 2000 years ago, but the promise of his resurrection is to be sought neither in the next world, nor in this. Then where and when? Freud, a man of the Enlightenment, began by making love lie down on the couch. In order to return to the love of the father and the mother, he gambled that the “I” is capable of going beyond its progenitors, beyond itself, and its loves, on the condition that it be subject to perpetual dissolution in analysis, in transference and countertransference. This presupposes that not only is there a Dead Father, but also figures of paternity and of loves, in the plural, in which the “I” takes pleasure, which the subject kills and resuscitates when it speaks, loves and thinks. I recently argued in a similar vein that the various “needs to believe” were just so many impassable *père-versions* of the speaking being, and that the *mère-versions* themselves, encouraged by feminism, the pill, and medicalized procreation, were no exception, and that the “clash of religions” could be elucidated by psychoanalytic attention.

We thought that “Big Mother” had replaced the Oedipal Father. This is not really the case. The Freudian analyst, whether a man or a woman, works with a new version of the “paternal function,” neither totemic animal, nor Laïos/Oedipus, nor Abraham/Isaac. In the love-hate relationship of transference, the father is not only loved and hated and put to death and resuscitated, as the scriptures would have it. He is literally *atomized* and incorporated by the analysand; and this continuous dissolution-recomposition, for which the analyst stands as the guarantor, enables the analysis of drug addicts, of cases of somatization, of criminals, of borderlines. The subject of these “new maladies of the soul” develops a paradoxical identity, which reminds me of the Brownian motion of that drip painting of Jackson Pollock called *One* (One, Number 31, 1950).⁸ Where has the One gone? Am I the same One when I analyze and when I am analyzed? Yes, but my identity is undecidable, without a fixed centre and without morbid repetition; I am rather a kind of serial music, an improvised dance that is nevertheless supported by an underpinning and an open order.

Such is the secret, the troubling fascination of European and American culture imbued by 2000 years of Christianity. Psychoanalysis is perhaps the best-prepared mode of thought available today to attempt to interpret its hold, as well as the grip of other world religions. Psychoanalysis offers a space for reflection in which the effort of clarification takes precedence over the deadly confrontation between a tendency to *regression* on the one hand and the explosion of the *death drives* on the other. Both together now threaten global humanity.

Notes

- 1 *Urfantasiën*, cf. "Un cas de paranoïa", *A case of paranoïa*, 1915, SE, t. 14.
- 2 J. Kristeva, (2000) "The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt, *Œdipus again*", p. 65 *sq* and in *The Extraneousness of the Phallus*, p. 94 *sq.*; (2004) "The Two-faced Œdipus", p. 406 *sq.*
- 3 Paul, *Épître aux Ephésians*, IV: 9.
- 4 cf. J. Kristeva, (1989) "Holbein's Dead Christ", in *Black-Sun*, p. 105 *sq.*
- 5 Hegel, *Lessons on the Philosophy of Religion*, III.
- 6 Chant entre l'âme et l'Époux.
- 7 Proposition XXXVI.
- 8 Museum of Modern Art, NYC.

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