

[The function of the anxiety : 13th July 2006 \(Rome\) : François Leguil](#) or [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=12095](#)

From the Vth World Association of Psychoanalysis' Conference: 'Scilicet of the Name of the Father': Rome: 13th - 16th July, 2006 : Published by www.wapol.com
www.wapol.org - 8 - Scilicet of the Name-of-the-father : Available at www.LacanianWorksExchange.net /texts by request Password on request from [here](#)
WAP-AMP – Rome; 5th Congress – “The Name of the Father: Doing Without, Making Use of”; “The end and the beginning of psychoanalysis.”

Note:

Angoisse constituée, angoisse constituante : [here http://www.lacan.com/jamsem2.htm](http://www.lacan.com/jamsem2.htm)
Jacques-Alain Miller's intervention : Anxiety Constituent and Constituted : probably presented in Rome 16th July 2006 includes the following quote :
The anxiety which must be done without is - as François Leguil showed us in the first presentation - the development of anxiety, its *Entwicklung*, its half- baked muddle by which the subject is held captive and which inhibits the act. That anxiety is certainty refused, anticipation and refusal of the certainty which the act would produce.
Extract of Jacques-Alain Miller's presentation, at the 2006 WAP Congress: *Le nom-du-père, s'en passer, s'en servir* [The Name-of- the-Father, doing without it, putting it to use] : Extract translated by Kieran O'Meara : Published SCRIOBH - the New Newsletter of the ICLO-NLS (Irish Circle of the New Lacanian School) : Issue 1 – 1st February 2017 : [here http://iclo-nls.org/?page_id=3518](http://iclo-nls.org/?page_id=3518)

The function of the anxiety: François Leguil: 2006: p7-8 of Scilicet : Translated Thelma Sowley

The function of the anxiety

François Leguil

The suffering and incomprehension that characterize anxiety do not allow those who endure it to give it the status of a symptom. Its repetition accentuates the threat it carries, and its opacity offers no hope for finding a signification that might begin to point the way in the search for its origin. The outbreak of a state of anxiety, or the supervening of an even more abrupt attack, seem to separate the subject from his/her history. It is this immediate opacity and the solution of continuity it establishes with the surrounding reality that serve as a pretext for those who are determined to find the consequence only in biology.

The same opacity and intensity of displeasure that it induces lead the tenants of psychology to think that what distinguishes it from fear is the absence of an object or the absurd allegation that the motive is not credible, such as the sequels of infantile phobia. In addition to organic medicine and psychology, there exists a third direction of research: more reflexive, it considers that this opacity causes the person to question his/her existence, to question the mysteries of his/her place in the world; it also considers that anxiety can become the occasion to return to the sources of being, or the proof (and the sanction) that the subject is not dealing with it as he might with the means he has.

The actual history of the clinic of anxiety, which, like that of pain, has existed for hardly more than two centuries, is shared by these three traditions:

first the medical tradition, which holds that anxiety is physical.

Then the psychological tradition, which holds that anxiety is an anomaly, an anomaly touching judgment and knowledge, a behavioral anomaly, that is to say an anomaly touching the development of one's adaptation to reality.

Finally, the philosophical tradition, existential, existentialist, ontological, pretends that anxiety is not unworthy of experiences of metaphysical purport.

A fourth tradition breaks with the first three that ignore it, be it by apparently celebrating its creator, recognizing in him the father of the veritable modernity of the history of the clinic of anxiety: this fourth is the Freudian tradition. But, although it can only be properly conceived from the aspect of its rupture with the three others, our facilities of thought intermix it too often with conceptualizations taken from the three others. It is useful to identify these intermixtures by a careful intellectual dissection, in order to find the true sense of this affect that remains the king of affects, of this displeasure that is deployed at the summit of displeasure. This is not a question of theoretical purity, but of practical efficacy: to say that anxiety, its essence, *das Wesen der Angst*, is neither physical nor psychological nor metaphysical is to advance the reasons that explain why our clinic cannot do without metapsychology.

We often repeat with good reason that anxiety "touches being". But the certitude of the moment of the experience gives rise to uncertainty, because the experience does not provide access to the revelation of a determining subjective truth. And yet, according to Freud, anxiety is not a concept, but something one experiences, *etwas Empfundenes*. It is a fundamental phenomenon that poses a crucial problem (*Grundphänomen und Hauptproblem*).

What a person suffering from anxiety learns most often from anxiety is that it is urgent to take a side road that leads one far away from the active zone. At the end of his Seminar devoted to The Ethic of psychoanalysis, Lacan reminds us that anxiety is an obstacle and not the conclusion that follows the passage. Within its grips, the horror is sterile if one does not go beyond. Unlike the symptom, which is necessary, the question for anxiety is not that of its utility, nor of its inutility. This question proceeds from a confusion between its function as a signal, which Freud discovered, and the phenomenon itself, which must not be developed if we want the function to be merely thinkable.

The doctor can do no more with the essence of anxiety than the forger of *Weltanschauungen*, than the sage. More seriously confronted with the real demands of the times, or with the legitimate demand for relief, he confuses it with the pain he suppresses. But by suppressing the phenomenon, he amputates the subject of the essential guide that the function as a signal offered to his desire. As early as 1926, Freud indicated the direction that our contemporary medical science neglects: calm the phenomenon, *die Angstentwicklung*, avoid it, or even "eradicate" it, without depriving the subject of its function as a signal.

This discovery of Freud's is accompanied by a reminder: anxiety is universal, but it is not general. Everyone does not suffer from anxiety and the light - Freud hoped this - that will reveal what the essence of anxiety is, can come just as well from the study of those who do not experience it, or from those for whom the phenomenon of the *Angstentwicklung*, of developed anxiety, does not check its function as a signal. The psychologist moves into this gap: the signal he knows is the famous couple of stimulus-response, or something equivalent. His operation uses Freud's discovery to make it say the contrary by presenting anxiety as the dysfunction of a subjective-alert mechanism, the dysfunction of the defensive functions of fear and flight: anxiety would be just exaggerated, immoderate, erroneous fear, a reaction that exceeds

standardizable norms. In his teaching on anxiety, in 1963, Jacques Lacan reminds us that the Freudian distinction is very different and so much more decisive: in fear the danger is external; in anxiety it is internal; in reality for the former, with the real for the latter.

The conception developed by Lacan places the function of anxiety between the opaque function of the real and, opposed to it, that of the signifier. This conception gives its true value to the Freudian notion of signal. As early as 1916, Freud showed that anxiety is not an abnormal or immoderate fear, because it logically precedes it. Lacan reminds us of this when he emphasizes in his commentary on “little Hans” that fear “treats” anxiety.

An inassimilable succession of paradoxes is constitutive of the Freudian clinic of anxiety that Lacan shows is the consequence of the elusive character of the subject of the unconscious. These paradoxes lead Freud to trace the meanders of a difficult metapsychology. This metapsychology cannot be summed up by the academic identification of two successive theories in which anxiety would be the effect of repression, then its cause. That is too schematic; as early as the middle of the 1900s, Freud balances, not so much between two theorizations of anxiety, but between an approach to the question of anxiety from the point of view of truth or from the point of view of the real. In the end, far from throwing in the sponge, he gives his reasons for not choosing one theoretical construction that would refute the other.

Thus, by virtue of the dissatisfaction caused by the faltering of his thinking on anxiety, Freud proves that his metapsychology is the sign that makes of this major affect a cause of his determination not to give up on his desire, on a desire that we can designate thanks to the author of the *Écrits*: not to let go of psychic causality.

On the last page of the July 3, 1963 lesson, Jacques Lacan evokes what it means “to confront anxiety”, what “overcoming” it involves and the “trace of that something that goes from the existence of the *a* to its passage in history”. We read neither Freud nor Lacan as witnesses of their times, but as the harbingers of an ethical exigency of the clinic: how we can “relieve anxiety” in and by the analytic act? Or: how we can dim the affect of anxiety, how we can extenuate the phenomenon in a subject, so he/she might at last take the measure of its function?

Translation : Thelma Sowley

References:

Sigmund Freud: 1916 :

probably Lecture 25 – Anxiety : 1917 : in Part III – General Theory of the Neuroses of Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis: 1915-1917 (Published 1916-1917) :

Sigmund Freud :

Published by www.questia.com and available [here](#)

or published by www.gutenberg.org and available [here](#)

or published by www.archive.org and available [here](#)

&

Sigmund Freud 1926 :

almost certainly Inhibitions, Symptoms & Anxiety : 1926d : Sigmund Freud

Little Hans :

Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-year-old Boy – ‘Little Hans’: 1909 : Sigmund Freud

his commentary on “little Hans” : probably [Seminar IV : The Object Relation 1956-1957 : from 21st November 1956 : Jacques Lacan](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=11980) : Details of forthcoming English translation [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=11980](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=11980)

Seminar X : 3rd July 1963 : Available [Seminar X: The Anxiety \(or Dread\): 1962-1963: begins 14th November 1962: Jacques Lacan: Text in English & References](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=212) or [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=212](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=212)

Further texts:

By François Leguil [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?cat=673](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?cat=673)

Of the clinic [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?cat=160](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?cat=160)

Notes on texts by Jacques Lacan [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?cat=4](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?cat=4)

Commentaries on Seminar X [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?cat=11](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?cat=11)

Other texts presented at the Vth Congress with notes

[Autism : 13th July 2006 \(Rome\) : Virginio Baio](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=12071) or [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=12071](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=12071)

[Knot and Name-of-the-Father: July 2006: Pierre Skriabine](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=6544) or [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=6544](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=6544)

[Guiding Principles for Any Psychoanalytic Act: 16th July 2006 : Rome : Éric Laurent](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=10884) or [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=10884](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=10884)