



**HURLY -
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as a foreigner in France, bitterly
ed up and told me I would pay him
t was double. Was he making me
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ssance unbeknownst to me that
[money] included in my country's
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d from the French by David Hafner

être", the words "n'être" or "not to be/not
being born".]
master".]

Money on the Couch

Éric Laurent

Immanent Money

This is one of a series of articles written by contemporary analysts recalling a moment of their experience in analysis with Lacan. They all touch on the price of the session and the meaning of money for each analysand. It was originally published in No. 85 of La Cause du désir, the journal of the École de la Cause freudienne, whose theme for this issue translates as Money, Totem and Taboo.¹ Éric Laurent is an Analyst Member of the School, member of the École de la Cause freudienne (France) and of the New Lacanian School.

Is money the index of exchange value, of use value, or of the irremediable discord between the two? For a liberal profession like psychoanalysis, is money a just reward for the time devoted by an alert mind? Is money the instrument *par excellence* for abolishing debts, the one, true, all-purpose signifier? Or is it rather the hidden cause *par excellence*, suitable for highlighting the radical opacity of the intention of the analyst, who, like the hidden god, knows how to veil his face at the right moment?

That is how Flaubert characterises it in his *Dictionary of Accepted Ideas*, also known as *Le Catalogue des opinions chic*. "Money: the cause of all evil. *Auri sacra fames*".² This chic Latin comes from Virgil and means the "cursed thirst for gold" that came before capitalism. Money is both all of that and lots of other things

1 Laurent, É., "L'argent immanent", *La Cause du désir*, No. 85, Oct. 2013, pp. 50-2.

2 Flaubert, G., *Dictionary of Accepted Ideas*, transl. J. Barzun, New Directions, New York, 1968, p. 64.

also, as any debate among economists about the currency war, or about bank interest rates, will remind the innocent. Money defies all the knowledge that one can elaborate about it, and the 'money supply' continues to scoff at its zealots, refusing to behave itself according to the measures and models that have been elaborated to control it. Money, in times of crisis, is what can disappear "faster than you can count".³ Is money the realisation of the flight of meaning in the universe of representation? An objection will be raised immediately. Money does not flee. It accumulates, it holds back, it hides. It is the anal object *par excellence*. We may thus conclude: the drive circuit implies both retention and abandonment.

But money can also resonate with the oral, scopic or invocatory circuit. It devours and it is devoured. It is flaunted or concealed. It can be at the heart of the most vociferous imperative. It is ubiquitous. It is everywhere. It is nowhere. It is the hidden God, *Mammon*, perpetually invocable in order to give full account of the conduct of the subject. There is nothing more immanent than that God.

Double or Quits

MONEY, during my treatment, certainly went through a whole range of meanings. At the start of my psychoanalysis, I was still a student. My parents paid for my analysis, a high price, making it a luxury item in the family struggle. Then, as soon as I could pay for it, the price of the sessions returned within normal limits. I found out what people of my generation and professional milieu were paying, more or less, because of course we asked one another, especially the guys, how much a session was.

I had heard of impossible amounts that Lacan was asking some to pay. I also knew of cases where the amount asked, a reasonable amount, never varied, except in exceptional circumstances. In my case, it was neither a figure of the first type nor of the second. There was some modification, in my experience, but things were basically stable and foreseeable, until the day when I announced to him that I had finally got my head above water, managing a mix between work and family life to such an extent that I, the son of a doctor, was going to be able to finally undertake medical studies and become a psychiatrist. This late vocation was of course going to distract me from my immediate participation in the School of Psychoanalysis, but it was just one step backwards in order to jump two steps forward, I assured him. I would be more prepared for future combats, which would no doubt happen.

³ Declaration of the future President Barack Obama, during the last part of his first presidential campaign [on 8 October 2008, at the Indiana State Fairgrounds in Indianapolis], just when he was getting ahead of John McCain. ["The money you've been putting away for your retirement or your kids' college education is disappearing faster than you can count."]

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⁴ This term refers to a
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[1977].

I was able to note, in my practice, and among my friends, and in reading other people's accounts, the variety of ways in which a vocation for medicine could arise, especially during those years when the alliance between psychiatry and psychoanalysis was taken for granted. In a way I wanted to do Lacan's route in reverse, going from psychoanalysis to psychiatry, but it was in order to come back to it in a better position, I argued. Lacan immediately opposed my plan with few words, allowing me to find out for myself why it was not necessary for me to become a doctor like my father in order to feel authorised as a psychoanalyst. He opposed it by cutting short the session and by demanding "from now on" double the fee I was paying. This sum was impossible for me to pay. I didn't have it. I would have to earn it, which would take up all the time that I had put aside for the project, ruining the plan totally. Double or quits? I doubled! I was going to have to manage without this paternal identification. After a difficult time, and because of a variety of circumstances, I was able to get back to the former state of affairs, and to a more reasonable price for the sessions.

Not Banal

LACAN was definitely "non-negotiable"⁴ in questions of money, but this intractability can be interpreted in many ways. It was mainly, it seemed to me, about separating money from its banality and from a meaning reduced to its utilitarian value.

I also heard, outside his office, or in the corridor, when he was accompanying an analysand to the door of the apartment, the multiple ways in which Lacan could ask for the price of the session. There were as many variations possible as there are for explaining the 'fundamental rule' which begins the psychoanalytic process. Lacan could say in a general fashion, "I usually ask for this amount. Is that a problem?" Or, on the contrary, he might say in the most individual way, "For you, seeing as you have told me what you told me, it will be ..." He could turn money into a major thing and count several times with astonishing care the sum which had just been paid. Or he could, on the other hand, reduce it to nothing by asking, "You have a little something for me?" One would be astonished. It was anything but a banal exchange. If one accepts that the aim of these variations was to bring home to each person the whole range of drive meanings which this all-purpose signifier can take on, then the whole group of these variations is like a series that punctuates the unfolding of the psychoanalytic experience according to the different values which the articulation of *jouissance* and money can take on in it.

⁴ This term refers to a quotation of Lacan's, which is the basis of Pierre Martin's book *Argent et psychanalyse* [Money and Psychoanalysis], Navarin, Paris, 1984.

At this time of world financialisation in which we are ruled by the masters of evaluation and best value, it is not easy to be inspired by these *exempla* of Lacan in order to obtain the 'effect of resonance' of money. The contemporary subject, crushed by debts and imperatives, has less margin for manoeuvre than those who were still living at the end of the 'Thirty Glorious Years'. It is no doubt time for us now to take on the challenge of continuing to reinvent psychoanalysis and its practice in our own context.

Translated from the French by Pauline O'Callaghan

Money on the Couch

Jean-Claude

The Analyst
the Analyst

*This is one of a series
of their experience
and the meaning of
of La Cause du
for this issue trans
Analyst Member*

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seminar at Rue
Naturally, I did not
year. Every other
attend provided one
In a few minutes
with interest and
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1 Razavet, J.-C., "L'analyse
2 Centre for Psychoanalysis