

Availability of English translation: [Press Conference at the French Cultural Center, Rome \(The Triumph of Religion\) : 29th October 1974 : Jacques Lacan](#) or [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=1471](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=1471)

See [Partial Summary of a Reading of “Triumph of Religion” \(Montreal, Canada\) : 18th November 2005 : Éric Laurent](#) or [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=12053](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=12053)



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**A Master Class – From Montreal to Rome**  
**Eric Laurent reads *The Triumph of Religion*<sup>[1]</sup>**

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On a snowy weekend in Montreal<sup>[2]</sup> Eric Laurent magnificently demonstrated how to read Lacan. It was truly a Master Class. Line by line with extreme rigorousness he guided us through Lacan's article *The Triumph of Religion* (Press Conference, Lacan with Italian journalists, Rome, October 29, 1974).

**Partial Summary of a Reading of “Triumph of Religion”**

This press conference by Lacan is structured simply as a conference. Lacan doesn't let himself be diverted by the journalists. He brings them to his own path. He starts from the position of the psychoanalyst as an impossible and he empowers himself to do so using the three Freudian impossibles. He makes however a new reading.

To govern is impossible because the unconscious is already the master; the place of the master signifier is inscribed there. To teach is impossible because the only knowledge that matters to us is the one we extract from ourselves. The place of knowledge is thus marked in the unconscious. He or she who governs and who teaches wants to ignore this precondition. Psychoanalysts occupy a place prepared by the sudden appearance, by symptomatic beatings, of object (a) in the world. Only the analyst knows it. It is from his experience that he interrogates the impossibles that have emerged in the discourses before him.

To the three impossible positions located by Freud, Lacan adds another one: that of the scientist. It had remained taboo for Freud, because it was an ideal. Lacan takes an ironic distance regarding Foucault, rejoicing in erasing the classic figure of humanism. Things are much worse. The knowledge of science is more effective than the one from human sciences. It can now obliterate human species from the face of the earth. This can be done either through physics and the nuclear bomb, either by biology and the weapons of mass destruction

developed by it, and also by other sciences. This horizon of destruction of human species by itself provokes the anxiety of the scientist. Robert Oppenheimer or Jacques Testart are examples of this.

The anxiety crisis of the scientist faced with this impossible to bear provokes an attempt to impose a prohibition on research and development of Knowledge. This movement is typical of the anxiety crisis. In the "Speech to Catholics" ten years earlier, Lacan demonstrated the link of desire and prohibition from the position of truth that makes a hole in the constituted knowledge. In 1974, the constituted knowledge, science, sweeps away the subject at the expense of its destruction. The triumph is first of all that of science that sweeps away humanity. The death threat she makes him endure is only a symptom of this sweeping away.

If the real of science gives anxiety to the subject, the psychoanalyst starts from another anxiety. If the world the scientist is concerned with is the one that obeys laws, the psychoanalyst is concerned by what refuses to obey laws, what doesn't work. Psychoanalysts have to deal with these objects. Psychoanalysts have to deal with those objects that make the world foul (play of words between *monde* (world) and *immonde* (foul)). In the world there is an object, the object (a). It is a reference to his Seminar on Anxiety. Psychoanalysts must be prepared to deal with them.

Science doesn't stop producing real where there was nature. The scientist community doesn't have to deal only with the truth as Popper would like, but with the real. By the production itself, the scientist unveils the death wish contained in knowledge. It is the most effective way to put an end to the suffering related to the living. Here is a new version of the "foreclosing of the subject" by science.

It is from the triumph of science that one must find the place of religion. At the time of the emergence of science, as shown in the trial of Galileo, science and religion were antagonists. This period continued until Freud. He thought, in his scientism, to eliminate religion. It is at this point that he comes back with "Moses and Monotheism" at the end of his work.

This period is over. Religion has reconciled with science. It endeavors now to give meaning to the real produced by knowledge. There where science fails to give a guideline of life, religion answers. The eternal truths respond to the never-ending changes of knowledge. This is especially the case for "true religion". Lacan uses this word to designate the catholic religion, according to a Hegelian inspiration. Catholicism is the true religion because is the religion "of the exit of religion" as Marcel Gauchet says. It is the religion where humanity adores itself. The triumph of the true religion, in that sense, leaves all its room to others and to the false religions of the New Age.

Psychoanalysis has other stakes to play with science. Where science forecloses the subject, psychoanalysis tries to put knowledge, the already-there knowledge, the knowledge of the living being, in the place of truth. We still have a compass to guide us, that of the knowledge that does not foreclose *jouissance*. Psychoanalysis is a symptom because it testifies the belief that the subject of civilization attributes to his symptom and his fantasy. It is the so-called "hedonism" of contemporary mass individualism. The subject believes in his symptom and through it, he can believe in the psychoanalyst.

In the Freudian perspective, it was the father, as symptom, who supported the prohibition to protect the subject from anxiety. Science has eliminated the prohibition supported by the paternal tradition and the belief attached to it. The psychoanalyst has taken up the relay. It is not that he functions as a representative of the father, as Freud believed. He supports the function, but he displaces it elsewhere, beyond the prohibition. He emphasizes the non-guarantee, the impossibility of writing the sexual rapport. It is another symptom. He is not sure that the movement of civilization would not "drown under meaning" and under new

norms what has been unveiled of the real of the speaking-being (*parlêtre*) at the time of the end of metaphysics and de-idealization of science.

Eric Laurent

[<sup>1</sup>] Lacan, J., *Le Triomphe de la Religion*, preceded by *Discours aux Catholiques*, Ed. Du Seuil, Coll. Champ Freudien, Paris 2005

Seuil, Paris, 2005

[<sup>1</sup>] 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Pont Freudien, Montreal, November 18-20, 2005

*Translated by M.C. Aguirre.*

*Reviewed by I. Aguirre*

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