

Preface to the Japanese Edition of the Écrits, published in *La lettre mensuelle de l'École de la cause freudienne*, October 1981, n° 3, pp. 2-3.

Translated by Jack W. Stone. The original French of this Écrit can be found on the "Pas-tout Lacan" website.

⁽²⁾ That one translates me into Japanese, leaves me perplexed. Because it a language I have approached: in the measure of my means.

I have developed a high idea of it. I recognize the perfection it takes on in supporting a very refined social link in its discourse.

This link is the same that my friend Kojève, the freest man I have known, designated: snobbery.¹

It was for him a fact of humour, and very far from the humour that one believes oneself duty-bound to show about that mode of being, named the human.

Rather we might have informed him (I mean: we, the occidentals) that it was beginning with snobbery a chance might remain to us of acceding to the Japanese thing without being too unworthy of it--that in Japan there was a more sure matter than for us to justify said mode.

A marginal note: what I thus advance, certain people in France would compare no doubt with that "Empire of Signs" with which Barthes delighted us, insofar as they had wind of it. That those in Japan are irritated by this astonishing cornflower, gives me confidence: I will only be part of those who cannot confuse.

That said, I expect nothing of Japan. And the taste I have had for its usages, indeed its beauties, does not make me expect any more.

Notably, not to be understood.

It is certainly not that the Japanese do not give ear to all that can be elucubrated of discourse in the world. They translate, translate, translate everything that appears in it of the readable: and they have need of this. On the other hand they do not believe in it: like that, they account for themselves.

Only, there it is: in my case, the situation is different for them. Precisely because it is the same as theirs: if I cannot believe in it, it is in the measure that it concerns me. But this does not constitute, between the Japanese and me, a common factor.

I try to demonstrate to some "masters," to some academics, and even to some hysterics, that another discourse than theirs has appeared. Since only I hold to it, they think they will soon be disembarassed of it in attributing it to me, by means of which I have a crowd to listen to me.

A crowd that deceives itself, for it is the discourse of the psychoanalyst, which did not await me to be in place.

But that does not mean that psychoanalysts know this. One does not hear the discourse of which one is oneself the effect.

⁽³⁾A marginal note: this can happen nonetheless. But then one gets oneself expelled by what makes the body of this discourse. This, therefore, happened to me.

¹ Eric Laurent, in *Le dialogue Lacan-Kojève sur la bureaucratie et l'Empire* cites, as a definition of this "snobbery," the following passage from Kojève's *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*: "a state of living as a function of totally formalized values; in other words, empty of any human content in the sense of the historical." (The full text of Laurent's article can be found at <http://www.lacanian.net/Ornicar%20online/Archive%20OD/ornicar/articles/lrn0059.htm> .) (tr.).

I take up this note again: the Japanese do not interrogate themselves on their discourse; they re-translate it, and into those even that I come to say. They do so fruitfully, on the side of the Nobel among others.

Always the snobbery.

What can they henceforth make of the fact of my difficulties with a discourse of psychoanalysts in which no one among those Japanese I have met is ever interested? Except in consideration of the ethnology of the American tribe, where this only appears as a detail.

The unconscious (--to know what this is, read the the discourse that these *Écrits* consign to being that of Rome--), the unconscious, I say, is structured like a language.

This is what permits the Japanese language to consolidate (*colmater*) its formations so perfectly that I could witness the *discovery* by a Japanese woman of what a witicism is: a Japanese adult.

From which it is proven that the witicism is in Japan the dimension even of the most common discourse, and this is why no one who inhabits this language has any need to be psychoanalyzed, except to regularize his relations with slot machines--or even with more simply mechanical clients.

For the truly speaking beings, the *on-yomi* suffices to comment on the *kun-yomi*. The pincer they make the one with the other is the well-being of those they form in that they come out as fresh as a hot waffle.

Not everyone has the good fortune of speaking Chinese in his language, so that it is a dialect of it, nor above all--a stronger point--of having taken a writing into his language so foreign that it renders tangible at every instant the distance of thought, of the unconscious, from speech. Namely, the gap so risky to open up in international languages that are found pertinent for psychoanalysis.

If I did not fear being misunderstood, I would say that for whoever speaks Japanese, this is the usual performance of saying the truth *by* the lie, which is to say, *without being* a liar.

They asked me for a preface to my Japanese edition. I am saying in it what I think for that of which, as for Japan, I have no idea, to wit: what its public is.

To the extent that I want to invite it to close my book, as soon as this preface is read!

I would hope to leave it with an indulgent memory.

I tremble at its pursuit, in the sentiment where I am of never having had, in its country, "communication," except inasmuch as it operates from scientific discourse, here I mean: by means of the blackboard.

This is a "communication," which does not imply that more than one in it understands what it is about, even indeed that one does.

The discourse of the analyst is not the scientific. Communication there echoes a sense. But the sense of one discourse is never procured except from another.

Now let us imagine that in Japan as elsewhere, analytic discourse becomes necessary for the others to subsist, I mean: for the unconscious to return their sense. As language is made there, one would only have need in my place of a pen (*stylo*). Me, to hold it, this place, I must have a style.

Which does not translate, outside of the history from which I speak.

Jacques Lacan, this 1/27/72.