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The Root of Segregation

A young man of 30 who describes his family with pride during the initial consultation, shares a disturbing memory in a subsequent session: at the age of 11, he hears his father saying that while he was in a taxi at a traffic light, he saw a group of transvestites on the street. His father says: “The taxi driver had to tell me, ‘But you know they are men, right?’”. “It was shocking! They really looked like women!” And added: “Those guys should all be killed.” The patient felt that this incident had affected the respect and good memories that he had of his father.

There are many references in Lacan —mainly during the 70’s— where segregation is linked to power struggle, to history, to the capitalist pseudo-discourse and to science. However, in Seminar XVIII, Lacan claims: *“It should be said that there is no need for (...) ideology for racism to be constituted. All that is needed is a surplus jouissance that is recognized as such.”* [\[1\]](#)

We can see from this quote that beyond any identification, beyond any imaginary tension, any logic of mass culture or historical factors, Lacan refers to jouissance as that which is at the heart of the matter of segregation. We clearly understand that what is usually denied is the jouissance of the other, but this is not the most interesting part.

It is here that we can retroactively think the scope of another of his *écrits*, one from his early teaching, going back twenty years in his work to the point when, during his research on paranoia, Lacan states; “... when he attempts to show that it is precisely the *kakon* of his own being that the madman tries to get at in the object he strikes...” [\[2\]](#)

Here, in fact, we find the seed of all segregation: since it is one’s own jouissance that remains misrecognised; it is when something of this jouissance returns from the other that the most fundamental denial sets a drive into motion in order to attack it.

Coming back to this young man, during a session in which he was mentioning again his father’s saying “Those guys should all be killed”, the analyst asked him to describe the complete scene once more. After listening to it, the analyst said: “So, the taxi driver had to explain to your father that those people in the street were not women?” The patient quickly answered: “Exactly!” After a silence, he started laughing and added: “He thought they were girls! He liked them!”

Discovering that his father’s brutal statement was the effect of an encounter with his own opaque and strange jouissance; and that it was his own horror that drove his irrational reaction of hate of the other, brought the patient some relief in relation to this memory. Even though the psychoanalyst might subscribe to movements that take fundamental rights into consideration (and I think it is desirable that they do), they will always have on the horizon the limits of what is at stake at this level. There is a real of hatred, of extremism and fanaticism, at the root of segregation; and this real can only be treated on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the subjective logic of the individual who professes it. Even so, if psychoanalysis can open up a question about this it could be a valid contribution to the world.

[1] Lacan, Jacques, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVIII, Unpublished.

[2] Lacan, Jacques. *Écrits*, The first Complete Edition in English, W. W. Norton & Company, 2006.

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Access to the References

[1] 20th January 1971. See Seminar XVIII, On a discourse that might not be a semblance [*semblant*] (1970-1971) : from 13th January 1971 : Jacques Lacan at www.LacanianWorks.org /4 Jacques Lacan (19710113)

pII 8-9 of Cormac Gallagher's translation (www.LacanianIreland.com) : That which, in a discourse, is addressed to the Other as a Thou, gives rise to an identification to something that one can call the human idol. If I spoke the last time about red blood as being the blood that is most useless to propel against the semblance, it is indeed because, as you have seen, one cannot advance and overthrow the idol without immediately afterwards taking its place, and we know that this is what has happened to a certain type of martyr! It is indeed in the measure that something in every discourse that appeals to the Thou provokes a camouflaged, secret identification, which is only one to this enigmatic object that may seem to be nothing, the tiny little surplus enjoying of Hitler, that went no further perhaps than his moustache, this was enough to crystallise people who...who had nothing mystical about them! Who were the most committed to the process of the discourse of the capitalist, with what that involves in terms of a questioning of surplus enjoying in its form of surplus value. It was a matter of seeing whether, at a certain level, one would still have one's little bit (*son petit bout*) and indeed this was enough to provoke this effect of identification. It is amusing simply that this should have taken the form of idealisation of the race, namely, of the thing which on that occasion was least involved. But one can find where this character of fiction comes from, one can find it. What must be simply said, is that there is no need for this ideology for a racism to be constituted, and that all that is needed is a surplus enjoying that recognises itself as such. And that whoever is a little bit interested in what may happen would do well to tell himself that every form of racism, in so far as a surplus enjoying is very well capable of supporting it, is now what is on the agenda. This is what is in store for us in the years to come.

[2] Presentation on Psychical Causality : 28th September 1946 (Bonneval Hospital, Paris) : Jacques Lacan. See www.LacanianWorks.org /4 Jacques Lacan (19460928). Also in *Écrits* : 1966 : Jacques Lacan.

P141-143 of Bruce Fink's translation, p175-176 of *de Seuil* (October 1966), I believe that the question does not concern Philinte's wisdom, and the solution would perhaps shock these gentlemen, for the fact is that *Alceste* is mad and that Moliere demonstrates that he is—precisely insofar as *Alceste*, in his 'beautiful soul', does not recognize that he himself contributes to the havoc he revolts against.

I specify that he is mad, not because he loves a woman who is flirtatious and betrays him—which is something the learned analysts I mentioned earlier would no doubt attribute to his failure to adapt to life—but because he is caught, under Love's banner, by the very feeling that directs this art of mirages at which the beautiful *Célimène* excels: namely, the narcissism

of the idle rich that defines the psychological structure of "high society" ["*monde* "] in all eras, which is doubled here by the other narcissism that is especially manifest in certain eras in the collective idealization of the feeling of being in love.

...

With this lovely wish and the taste he has for the song "J'aime mieux ma mie," why doesn't he court a salesgirl at his local flower shop? He would not be able to "show to all" his love for such a girl, and this is the true key to the feeling he expresses here: it is the passion to demonstrate his unicity to everyone, even if only in the form of the isolation of a victim, an isolation in which he finds bitter, jubilatory satisfaction in the final act of the play.

As for the mainspring of his twists and turns, it lies in a mechanism that I would relate not to the *self-punishment* but rather to the *suicidal aggression of narcissism*,

For what infuriates Alceste upon hearing Oronte 's sonnet is that he recognizes his own situation in it, depicted all too precisely in its ridiculousness, and the imbecile who is his rival appears to him as his own mirror image. The words of mad fury to which he then gives vent blatantly betray the fact that he seeks to lash out at himself. And whenever one of the repercussions of his words shows him that he has managed to do so, he delights in suffering its effect.

Here we can note an odd defect in Ey's conception: it diverts him from the signification of the delusional act, leaving him to take it as the contingent effect of a lack of control, whereas the problem of this act's signification is constantly brought to our attention by the medical and legal exigencies that are essential to the phenomenology of our experience.

Someone like Guiraud, who is a mechanist, again goes much farther in his article, "Meurtres immotives" ("Unexplained Murders"),[10] when he attempts to show that it is precisely the *kakon* of his own being that the madman tries to get at in the object he strikes.

Let us take one last look at Alceste who has victimized no one but himself ...

Footnote 10 p158, In 'Évolution psychiatrique', 2 (March 1931), 25-34. See also P. Guiraud and B. Cailleux, "Le meurtre immotivé, réaction libératrice de la maladie chez les hébéphrènes," 'Annales Médico-psychiatrique 2 (November 1928): 352-60

P782 Bruce Fink's translator's end-notes, (175.3) *Kakon* means "bad (object)" in Greek.

Other uses of 'kakon' by Jacques Lacan

All from *Écrits* /October 1966 : Jacques Lacan, see www.LacanianWorks.org /4 Jacques Lacan (19661001 or Index of Jacques Lacan's texts)

Two quotes from *Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis* : mid-May 1948 (Brussels) : Jacques Lacan
See www.LacanianWorks.org /4 Jacques Lacan (19480515)

P90 of Bruce Fink's translation, p110 of *de Seuil* (October 1966), This series parallels another, that of imputations of harm, the explanations for which—without mentioning the obscure *kakon* to which the paranoiac attributes his discordance with all living things—...

Translator's (Bruce Fink's) end-note p775, (110.7) *Kakon*: "bad (object)" in Greek.

P16-17 of Alan Sheridan's translation, A relation that appears even more profound when – I have shown this in the case of a curable from, self-punishing paranoia – the aggressive act resolves the delusional construction.

Thus the aggressive reaction is seriated in a continuous manner, from the sudden, unmotivated outburst of the act, through the whole gamut of belligerent forms, to the cold war of interpretative demonstrations, paralleled by imputations of noxiousness which, not to mention the obscure *kakon* to which the paranoid attributes his alienation from all living

contact, rising in stages from a motivation based on the register of a highly primitive organicism (poison), to a magical one (evil spells), a telepathic one (influence), a lesional one (physical intrusion), an abusive one (distortion of intention), a dispossessive one (appropriation of secrets), a profanatory one (violation of intimacy), a juridical one (prejudice), a persecutive one (spying and intimidation), one involving prestige (defamation and attacks on one's honour), and revenge (damage and exploitation).

I have shown that in each case this series, in which we find all the successive envelopes of the biological and social status of the person, retains the original organization of the forms of the ego and of the object, which are also affected by this series in their structure, even to the spatial and temporal categories in which the ego and the object are constituted, experienced as events in a perspective of mirages, as affections with something stereotypical about them that suspends the workings of the ego/object dialectic.

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P94 of Bruce Fink's translation, p115 of de Seuil (October 1966), By showing us the primordial nature of the "depressive position," the extremely archaic subjectivization of a *kakon*, Melanie Klein pushes back the limits within which we can see the subjective function of identification at work,

P20-21 of Alan Sheridan's translation, Only Melanie Klein, working on the child at the very limit of the appearance of language, dared to project subjective experience back to that earlier period when observation enables us nevertheless to affirm its dimension, in the simple fact for example that a child who does not speak reacts differently to punishment or brutality.

...

Hence we can understand by what structural means the re-evocation of certain imaginary *personae*, the reproduction of certain situational inferiorities may *disconcert* in the most strictly predictable way the adult's voluntary functions: namely, their fragmenting effect on the *imago* of the original identification.

By showing us the primordality of the 'depressive position', the extreme archaism of the subjectification of a *kakon*, Melanie Klein pushes back the limits within which we can see the subjective function of identification operate, and in particular enables us to situate as perfectly original the first formation of the superego.

But it is of particular importance to define the orbit within which, as far as our theoretical reflexion is concerned, are ordered the relations – by no means all elucidated – of guilt tension, oral noxiousness, hypochondriacal fixation, even that primordial masochism that we exclude from our field of study, in order to isolate the notion of an aggressivity linked to the narcissistic relation and to the structures of systematic *méconnaissance* and objectification that characterize the formation of the ego.
