

JUDAISM IN THE LIFE AND WORK OF JACQUES LACAN:

A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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Lacan works resound with his anger at self-proclaimed “orthodox Freudians.” According to Lacan, these guardians of the Temple distinguish themselves principally by their misunderstanding of the true Freudian orientation and by their neglect of certain fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis.

Yet while Lacan denounced the misfortunes of Freudianism, the same fate lay in store for his own thought. Even in his lifetime, and despite the boisterous and stifling adulation which surrounded him, Lacan encountered the same ignorance, the same distortion of his thought. After his death, this betrayal by the disciples worsened. Several of his closest students openly rejected his teachings, while most others preferred to keep them under wraps.

Actually, within the history of ideas and the transmission of documents, this may be a kind of universal law, one which is echoed in the Gospels themselves. When Jesus addresses Peter, the disciple who will carry on his work, does he not say, “This very night, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times” [Matthew 26-34]? The law of the disciple intrinsically entails misunderstanding, distortion of the master’s thought and the rejection of his most salient points. If the faithful transmission of a doctrine ideally should be concerned as much with impasses and unresolved questions as with overstepping obstacles,

then conversely, so that the doctrine may act as the foundation which an institution can be built, it must immediately suture those questions which trouble it and which confer upon it both its value as truth and its perilous instability

Lacan created his works in an atmosphere of constant debate, as much with his contemporaries (anthropologists, linguists, logicians, writers) as with the great Ancients. His debate with Freud was, of course, his greatest concern; but he also debated with philosophers, mostly with Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger; with theologians Augustinian and Thomistic; as well as with great writers past and present—Shakespeare, Molière, Joyce, Duras, etc. What student today could correctly articulate those issues in Plato and Aristotle, for example, which puzzled Lacan and gave him pause?

One factor that sheds light on the notion of the disciples' misunderstanding of the master is the apparently marginal yet essential question of Lacan's relationship to Judaism. Actually this question constitutes one of the unrecognized axes of thought, one which he worked and reworked throughout his lifetime, apparently in a minor way—not because it was not important, but rather because intellectual circumstances did not welcome it. The intellectual atmosphere from the 1950s to the 1970s, the period during which Lacan's teaching developed, was in no way geared toward this interest. The proliferation of works on Judaism did not begin until the early 1980s, and this passion owes much to Lacan, to his influence, which extended beyond the closed circle of his students. His own interest seemed to most encouragement enough to return to a field lain fallow, barely cultivated by a few traditional groups. Despite all

this, the passages in his work which address this question are sufficiently consistent to bear witness to his interest.

To deny this element of Lacan's thought is to distort the perspective of his work, its true stakes. And yet his "official" students maintain this denial, this blind spot. For them, the Jewish question is not significant within the context of Lacanian studies. My own study, a preliminary one, will attempt at least to show that the question should be asked. It will include bits of personal testimony with little claim to academic worth. Without my own analysis as a patient of Lacan's, this aspect of his work would no doubt have escaped me. I was in analysis with him from September 1968 to July 1981. During this period of thirteen years, without a doubt the most formative ones of my life, I arrived each day at his office at 5, rue de Lille. From 1974 on, the year in which I began my thesis in medicine, he encouraged and supported me in my efforts to raise the question of a Freudian reading of Judaism. After this long period of visits, I could testify that his habit of adorning his seminars with Hebrew letters (next to Chinese ideograms) certainly derived from a serious knowledge of Hebrew texts. ¹

In a strange and unfortunately anomaly, the study of Jacques Lacan's biography is difficult. In France, a country fond of biographies—each year numerous volumes on the personalities who have left their mark on French intellectual life appear—to this day none has been written about Lacan. His life remains shrouded in mystery, a result of the family's veto. The unbelievable atmosphere of clandestine conflicts, cabals, and power struggles, which today still divide the Lacanians, merely reinforces this veto.

Lacan was born in 1901 to a Catholic family. His brother was a monk, and he received a solid religious upbringing himself. His familiarity with the writings of Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and the great mystics (Saint Theresa of Avila, Saint John of the Cross, Master Eckhart) attests to this fact. It seems from certain bits of evidence that in the thirties, the same period which he had his decisive encounter with psychoanalysis, Lacan also discovered Judaism in the course of a true spiritual crisis. How did this encounter occur? Apparently, it was the result of his reading *Israël et l'humanité* by Elie Benamozegh, published at the very beginning of the century, thanks to the devotion of Aimé Palliere, a defrocked Catholic seminarian who became so attached to Judaism that he almost converted.²

Lacan seems throughout his life to have been profoundly influenced by this book of Kabbalistic inspiration, written in a fine philosophical prose. He drew from it some of his own formulations. What proof can we offer to support such a statement? There are two testimonials, one public, the other private. On certain Fridays, Lacan would stage at the Hôpital Psychiatrique de Sainte-Anne what he called his "presentation of patients." After an in-depth dialogue with a hospitalized individual which might last more than an hour, he would offer a few thoughts to the audience which he allowed to attend those sessions. Several of those presentations left a lasting impression on the participants³.

Thus, in 1974, a young man about thirty years old was admitted for examination. His parents, both Jewish, had met in a concentration camp after it had been liberated by an allied army before they returned to France. They came to love each other under tragic conditions, and exchanged the strange vow that they would never tell

their children of their Jewish background. Because of it they had suffered too much and so wished to break the chain of suffering. Thirty years later, their son, who had been conceived in the camp, was presented to Lacan. He had fallen prey to a “mystical” delusion centered specifically on this Judaism. Lacan, in the ensuing exchange, made two very important remarks.

After escorting his patient out of the room, he returned, clearly moved, and repeated several times, “He read it! He read it!” What had this patient read? Benamozegh’s book! Lacan, then more than 70 years old, voiced the high regard he had for this work, which, according to him, was “the best introduction to the Kabbalah,” and invited his audience to read it. Moreover, in regard to the parents’ oath never to acknowledge or transmit their Judaism, he said, “This is what I call a foreclosure [foreclusion] of the Name-of-the-Father[Nom-du-Pere].” It was one of the rare occasions when his audience received a concrete example of this fundamental concept of his teaching on psychosis.

Towards the end of my analysis by Lacan, I was seized by a new interest in Benamozegh and Palliere and decided to study them. I had been familiar with these authors since adolescence, and their books had played a decisive role in my spiritual development. The case presentation which I had recently witnessed renewed my interest in these authors and I began a nearly exhaustive reading of their works. Exceptionally, Lacan gave me his approval on the project.

In the thirties, Lacan married a Jewish woman, Sylvia Maklès, who, for suspicious reasons, was referred to by the family name of her first husband, Georges Bataille. The story goes that at the beginning of the German occupation of Paris, Lacan presented himself at the

prefecture of police and succeeded in obtaining his wife's dossier, spiriting it away under the noses of the bureaucrats. Thus Sylvia was spared the persecutions which soon would befall Parisian Jews.⁴

From their marriage a girl was born, in the midst of the war, and she was given a Hebrew name, Judith—a great imprudence at the time. The girl's destiny seems to bear the mark of her father's desire. She linked her life to two Jewish intellectuals, first to the brilliant anthropologist of Tunisian origin, Lucien Sebbag, who committed suicide; then to the philosopher, Jacques-Alain Miller, who would become the executor of Lacan's will and the controversial editor of his seminars. Lacan frequented many Jewish intellectuals. His colleagues, other analysts, were for the most part Jewish, like Sacha Nacht who, before becoming his inflexible adversary, was a close friend. There were also Roman Jakobson and Claude Levi-Strauss, brilliant representatives of the structuralist human sciences, which Lacan considered to be refined versions of psychoanalysis. Doubtless all these Jews were profoundly assimilated. He acknowledged at the end of his life [as did Aimé Palliere] that his sympathies for Judaism and Jews were not repaid. This remark was the result of many painful disappointments: his expulsion from the International Psychoanalytic Association (I.P.A.) and his fallout with Levi-Strauss. In one of his last lectures, while recounting the story of Joseph sold by his brothers, he cried, "The Jews know what a brother is good for, to be sold into slavery in Egypt." For the audience at this lecture, of which I was a member, there was no doubt that Lacan clearly identified with Joseph.

My limited knowledge prevents me from further exploring the role of Judaism in Lacan's life. In any

case, it is ultimately secondary to his writings, and it is the study of these writings with which I am most concerned here.

There is not a single seminar by Lacan which does not contain more or less consistent explorations of Judaism, Freud's Jewish identity, and the history of the Jewish people. The texts which deal with the principal notions of Lacanian doctrine, the "object 'a'" and the Nom-du-Pere, are obviously very significant.

First, the "object 'a'": toward the end of his life, I heard Lacan publicly and humbly acknowledge never having added anything to Freud's thought, with the possible exception of his elaboration of the "object 'a.'" Lacan developed this concept from Freudian theories of the "lost object," then still called a "drive-object" [objet pulsionnel] or "part-object" [objet partiel].⁶ Freud had recognized the existence of two part-objects and suspected that of a third. The two fundamental lost objects were the maternal teat and the fecal stuff.

Through the study of voyeuro-exhibitionist perversion, Freud sensed, but without clearly articulating it, the existence of a third drive, which Lacan later called the scopic drive [pulsion scopique], in which the role of the lost object harks back to the gaze of the Other.⁷

This step took on considerable importance, for this object, unlike the two previous ones, derives from no biological function, either nursing or excremental.

Psychoanalysis thus found itself stripped of its pseudobiological or medical straightjacket by which certain of its practitioners, indeed some of the most eminent, had sought to restrain it. In other words, psychoanalysis, by introducing the object of the gaze, reveals that it has no link whatsoever with the natural

sciences. It establishes itself firmly on the side of culture, that is, within human specificity.

Lacan goes even further by proposing a fourth drive-object which Freud almost never mentions, despite the importance of this object in psychotic hallucinations: the voice. With this notion of an invocative drive [pulsion invoquante], Lacan completes the catalogue of drives and their objects which, according to him, are four in number. Thus within the parenthesis which encompasses the breast, the feces, the gaze, and the voice, the “object ‘a’”—the cause of desire—is constituted.

Let us turn to the 1963 seminar on l’Angoisse, the very moment in Lacan’s teaching at which this concept emerges.⁸ One discovers that it is precisely in a moment of reflection on Judaism that Lacan produced his “object ‘a.’ “ First he discusses circumcision and critiques the accepted interpretation of an equivalency between it and castration. In a reference to Nunberg, Lacan holds that the foreskin represents a female equivalent from which the male subject distances himself and that its removal is equivalent from which the male subject distances himself and that its removal is equivalent to the fall of the “object ‘a.’ “. Then, in one of the last sessions of the seminar, Lacan comments on Reik’s article on the shofar.⁹ It is precisely here, in this commentary that the voice object emerges. The sound of the shofar is the voice of the imaginary father, of the ram sacrificed by Abraham in place of his son Isaac. The following year, Lacan planned to develop these questions and to clarify his idea of the Nom-du-Pere. Then came his exclusion from the I.P.A., which led to several consequences for him, some quite serious for the development of psychoanalysis.¹⁰ He first decided to suspend his seminar, although he had already given

its first session: an extended meditation on Judaism, or, more precisely, on Isaac, with commentaries drawn from Jewish tradition, from the Talmud and Rashi.

The great theoretical project of the seminar, barely begun, on the Noms-du-Pere seems to have been a reexamination of the fundamental concept of psychoanalysis, the Oedipus complex. According to Lacan, all new theoretical advancements—particularly in relation to the question of psychosis—depend on the reexamination. Moreover, this strategy—as is clear from rereading the single session of the 1964 seminar—implies an investigation of Judaism, which Freud carefully and neurotically bypassed. The “excommunication” of Lacan interrupted this project. The second consequence of the I.P.A.’s exclusion was that Lacan founded his own school, the École Freudienne de Paris [E.F.P.]. The school was three years in the making. Its organization was set out in a text of some twenty pages known by the title “Proposition du 9 octobre 1967.” This text defines the principles which organize the school and institutes the *passé*, or the procedure by which the title *Analyste de l’École* (which replaces the I.P.A.’s title of *didacticien*) is attained. The E.F.P. in 1980. An examination of this extremely dense text is particularly important to an understanding of the history of the Lacanian movement. The “Proposition” exists in two different versions, which present important differences of formulation. These differences clarify the place of Judaism in Lacanian doctrine.

We know that Lacan’s teaching, from beginning to end, is based on the distinction—often repeated, even harped on—between three categories¹¹. the Imaginary, an extension of the visual image of the body; the Symbolic (of language or of the signifier); and the Real defined as

impossible to represent, to manipulate) I.S.R.—or R.S.I., the title of one of his last emblematic seminars. They are strange letters, the first three in the name of Israel. A gratuitous speculation! We shall see! These letters were surely on his mind, for he writes in the first version of the “Proposition”: “The solidarity of these three principal functions which we have just traced finds its point of intersection in the existence of the Jews—which does not surprise us, since we know the importance of their presence in the psychoanalytic movement. It is impossible to unburden oneself of the consecutive segregation of this ethnic group through Marx’s considerations, through Sartre’s even less so. This is why, especially why, the religion of the Jews must be questioned within our hearts (mise en question dans notre sein)”.¹²

This enigmatic paragraph disappears from the second version. Yet it calls for commentary. First we must consider the identification of the “point of intersection [of the] three principal functions” with “the existence of the Jews.” Later, particularly in the seminar “R.S.I.,” which is largely concerned with the Borromean knot, Lacan identifies the intersection of the three circles of the knot, a representation of his three categories, with the “object ‘a’” the object-cause of desire but also the place and function of the psychoanalyst in the cure. For Lacan, then, the Jewish people occupy the same space as the “object ‘a,’” which also explains the following phrase in the paragraph: “Which does not surprise us, since we know the importance of their presence in the psychoanalytic movement.”¹³

Another point on which Lacan does not vary concerns the importance which he lends to the practice of textual interpretation in the training of psychoanalysts, to the

“textual knowledge” he demands of them. We find an emphatic affirmation of this in one of his central writings, “L’instance de la lettre dans l’inconscient.”¹⁴ The knowledge of the psychoanalyst consists first of all in his ability to read (listen to) his patient’s discourse and to read Freud’s texts as well as the great works of world literature.

Where then can one learn this art, this rhetoric? Lacan answers: “Here is the area in which we determine whom to admit to study. It is he from whom the sophist and the Talmudist, the peddler of stories and the bard, have drawn their strength, which at every moment we recover, more or less clumsily, for our own use” {“Proposition du 9 octobre 1967,” first version}.

A few years later Lacan returned at length to this brief allusion to the art of reading the Talmud, in a long interview on Belgian radio.¹⁵ We find here an emphatic encomium of the Midrash, the art of reading which constitutes the principal intellectual activity of the Jewish people. At the extreme, psychoanalysis is assimilated to the Midrash, but a secularized Midrash, torn from its original purpose, the study of sacred texts, so that it might be applied to the discourse of ordinary analysands.¹⁶

This leaves us with the rather emphatic last sentence of our quotation: “This is why, especially why, the religion of the Jews must be questioned within our hearts.”

What does this mean, this “questioning within our hearts” of the religion of the Jews? Does this expression not seem strange? Why does the “Proposition” not by the same token, invite us to “question Christians within our hearts?”

It can be understood as an invitation to “de-Judaize” psychoanalysis. But the many Jews at the head of its institution had always advocated a strict secularism and

affirmed antipathy for their Jewish background—an antipathy which caused many strange symptoms! Thus, when Anne Berman translated Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* into French, she edited out parts of the first sentence: "To deny a people of the man whom it praises as the greatest of its sons is not a deed to be undertaken light-heartedly, *especially by one belonging to that people.*" The italicized portion of the sentence is missing from her translation.¹⁷ Would Lacan then suppose that, although denied, the structures of the synagogue still had comparable influence at the heart of psychoanalysis? This is the logical interpretation of the first lesson of Seminar XI, *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, which immediately followed Lacan's break with the I.P.A. In this text, Lacan compares his lot to that of the excommunicated Spinoza, who is left without the possibility of recourse to the institution of the 'synagogue,' explicitly mentioned. In this case he uses the Hebrew words, *kherem* and *shamatta* {*Les quatre concepts, 9*}. Here we come to one of the most important (although misunderstood) aspects of Lacanian thought. For Lacan, the Oedipus complex, on the one hand, is the central principle of psychoanalytic theory. Without it, Freudianism becomes more paranoid ravings: "Remove Oedipus, and psychoanalysis in its fullest extent becomes entirely subject to the discourse of President Schreber," writes Lacan in the "Proposition du 9 octobre 1967" (second version, 27). But at the same time, "Oedipus poses a problem," a break in theoretical development, with the idealization of the father (cf., Seminar XVII, (18 Février 1970) and the "Proposition du 9 octobre 1967") This break derives from the neurosis of Freud himself, who, in his analysis, evaded his intimate relationship with Judaism. This Judaism

eventually comes to represent both the hidden motive behind the birth of psychoanalysis and its dead-end, figured by the concept of the ideal father. According to Lacan, something lies beyond this concept. But in fact this perspective can only be revealed by a questioning of Judaism.

The expression *en question*, which is found so frequently in Lacan's writing, perhaps has another meaning, one which does not necessarily weaken the first. He entitles an important text of the *Écrits*, "Du sujet enfin en question." In this case, he is doubtless questioning the nature of the subject of the unconscious, he is interested in this essential concept, a direct consequence of the concept of the signifier. But Lacan also notes "subjective destitution" as a criterion of so-called training analysis. We thus may consider a structure, either in order to reinforce it or to destroy it.

Here we touch on one of the principal difficulties in an understanding of Lacan's texts, one which we will identify for lack of a better term, as ambivalence. Of course, Lacan wanted us to consider Judaism, to study it actively. He also of course wished for a "de-Judaization" of psychoanalysis, just as he wished more generally to attack the heavy religiosity which reigns there. But instead of this theoretical initiative, Lacan obtained completely different results with his school between 1967 and 1980. He found there a dramatic deepening of "religious fervor." The questioning of Judaism came to be understood as an unbearable hostility towards Judaism.

The project of finding a way out of the dead-end which psychoanalysis constructed in the "ideal father" or "dead father" proves to be an illusion. None of his students would make it through this bottleneck, this

“gully,” for the simple reason that not one of them truly understood the project. Those who might have had an inkling, in spite of everything, were quickly brought to their senses by the little clique of “students” who held the keys to the academy.

The “Proposition du 9 octobre 1967” contains another important component of Lacan’s relationship with Judaism, one which concerns the recent history of the Jewish people, namely the Holocaust. In veiled terms, this text was really a bomb launched at the I.P.A., an accusing finger pointed at the psychoanalytic institution’s skeleton in the closet which was actively suppressed, untouchable. Strangely, it would remain so even for Lacan’s own students.

Let us turn to the first version of the “Proposition.” Lacan here denounces the I.P.A. analysts’ waning interest in the Oedipus complex: “The marginalization of the Oedipal dialectic continues to become more and more pronounced, both in theory and in practice.

Now, this exclusion has a corresponding effect in the real, one which is concealed in dark shadows.

It is the correlative accession of the universalization of the subject proceeding from science, of the fundamental phenomenon whose eruption was shown by the concentration camp. {c’est l’avenement corrélatif de l’universalisation du sujet procédant de la science, du phénomène fondamental dont le camp de concentration a montré l’éruption). [Proposition,” first version, 22

The second version of the “Proposition” is even clearer. Lacan repeats the three famous categories here, which he also calls “facticities”: the Symbolic, discussed through the Oedipal question; the Imaginary, which is also that of the psychoanalytic institution; and, finally

the Real, the category which he had insistently promoted. What is the Real in our time?

The third facticity, a real one, too real, real enough that the Real is more prudish in promoting it than is language, is what makes it possible for us to speak the words *concentration camp*, something on which, it seems to me, our thinkers, wavering between humanism and terror, have not concentrated long enough. Suffice it to say that what we have seen emerging from it, to our horror, represents a reaction of precursors to what will go on developing as a consequence of the reshaping of social groups by science. [“Proposition,” second version, 29]

Let us add to the citation by recalling the conclusion of the Seminar of 1964-65 on *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*:

“ There is something profoundly masked in the critique of the history that we have experienced. This, re-enacting the most monstrous and supposedly superseded forms of the holocaust, is the drama of Nazism.

I would hold that no meaning given to history, based on Hegelian-Marxist premises, is capable of accounting for this resurgence—which only goes to show that the offering to obscure gods of an object of sacrifice is something to which few subjects can resist succumbing, as if under some monstrous spell.

Ignorance, indifference, an averting of the eyes may explain beneath what veil this mystery still remains hidden. But for whoever is capable of turning a courageous gaze towards this phenomenon—and again there are certainly who would not succumb to

The fascination of the sacrifice in itself—the sacrifice signifies that, in the object of our desires, we try to find the evidence for the presence of desire of this Other that I call here *the dark God*.”¹⁸

These texts, for those who wish to meditate on them, are of considerable import: the emergence of the concentration camp phenomenon as a consequence of the exclusion of the “Oedipal dialectic,” of the decline of the paternal signifier, the real identified as the Holocaust and the recent history of the Jewish people.

Lacan then turns to examine the history of the I.P.A. during the “dark years,” as they were called. Let us quote from the first version of the “Proposition”:

“The rise of a world organized by all kinds of segregation is what psychoanalysis has shown itself to be attuned to, by not allowing one of its members to enter the extermination camps. [22]

They are but a few words which do not seem to have much consequence—except to make us ask ourselves: how did the psychoanalytic institution go about preventing the deaths of its “known members” from Central Europe, all Jewish? This question can only return us to the history of the analytic movement and to the dealings of the directors of the I.P.A. between 1933 and 1935, Ernest Jones in particular, with the Nazis, represented by Dr. Goering, nephew of the sinister Nazis official.¹⁹ An agreement was struck. Freud, then much weakened, denounced it, but only in private. The terms are well-known. In exchange for the “maintenance of psychoanalysis” (although it was to change its name), the Berlin Institute of Psychoanalysis founded by Max Eitingon would be purified of its members, including its founder.

On the surface it seems to have been a deal where both sides were duped. What is this sinister joke, the “maintenance of psychoanalysis” in the shadow of the camp watchtowers and then of the crematory chimneys? Either the directors of the I.P.A. were imbeciles, or they had obtained another advantage about which they are, to this day, discreet: “to save the lives of its known members.” In 1967, this affair was known only to a very restricted circle which practiced a strict policy of silence. Of course, the great biographies of Freud discuss it,²⁰ but only in the diminished sense of an event tragic, but past. This apparently was not Lacan’s opinion.

One must reread through this coded perspective the 1957 seminar on l’ethique de la psychanalyse.²¹ Why has Antigone—a woman who preferred to give up her life and to share the fate of her dead brother left unburied, rather than accept the order of a tyrant no matter what his name is—entered the field of psychoanalysis here? Let us go even further: if we are to interpret things in this way, where is the relationship between the conduct of the directors of the I.P.A.—who refused the only true fate worthy of a psychoanalyst, that of Antigone—and the synagogal structure of the I.P.A., denounced in Seminar XI? Precisely in the status of extra-territoriality is will not to share a common destiny—which characterizes (alas!) the common orientation of the synagogue. The history of the Jewish people is filled with episodes of leaders—and among them the illustrious Maimonides and numerous other Jewish thinkers of the Spanish Golden Age—who attempted to turn in a different direction, that of inscribing the Jewish people *and its difference* into the community of peoples. But this distinction never succeeded in supplanting the one which is still in place

and which consists of remaining apart from the affairs of the world. The psychoanalysts of the I.P.A. conducted themselves with respect to the community of their Jewish brothers in the same way that the synagogue conducts itself with respect to the community of men. Such is the veiled accusation which seems to arise from this analysis.

Lacan showed a great deal of courage regarding this affair, which probably resulted in his expulsion from the I.P.A. The years which followed would more than prove him right. The silence which surrounds this shameful affair to this day weighs heavily on the whole field of psychoanalysis. To convince ourselves of this fact we need only remind ourselves of the scandal whose name we derive from the players at both ends of this chain, the “Kemper-Lobo” scandal.

During the war, Kemper was, at Dr. Goering’s side, the director of the ex-Psychoanalytic Institute of Berlin, now *judenrein*, disinfected of its Jews. Once the war was over, Ernest Jones advised him to lose his identity in South America where he founded, in 1946, the Psychoanalytic Institute of Brazil. In the 1980’s, the scandal of Dr. Lobo, a psychoanalyst and member of the I.P.A., exploded. Lobo acknowledged, after having been recognized by one of his victims, that he had served as an assistant to the torturers of Videla’s dictatorial regime. He had been in charge of medical surveillance during the torture sessions. Lobo at first had fiercely denied the accusation, *with the support of his analyst and the authorities of the I.P.A.*, in particular French Jewish analysts who rejected as pure slander the testimonials collected against him. When he lost his nerve, he decided to tell all, that he had for example, confided his “moonlighting” to his analyst, who withdrew behind the famous “analytic neutrality.” It

happened that this analyst himself had undergone analysis with Dr. Kemper, who was able to analyze in the shadow of the Nazi's torture victims. What a horrible return of the repressed! Frightening repetitions! But it has hardly aroused any emotion in circles of analysts, either in the I.P.A. or among Lacanians. It appears, then, that these circles no longer think, that they do not reflect and are moved only by their own internal institutional quarrels.²²

When they learned of this affair, Lacan's own students decided it was without great importance. Likewise, confronted with the passages from the "Proposition du 9 octobre 1967" on which I have commented here, they merely shrug their shoulders. How weighty could these few pamphlets be, from which one cites only a page or two, compared with the thousands of pages of seminars and articles by Lacan? Or rather, what weight do these students have, Jews included, who were repudiated by their masters at the moment of dissolution?

Lacan dared what no Jewish analyst had ever dared: he went against the current of strict—but superficial—secularism of the Jewish psychoanalysts who directed the I.P.A., and he seriously contemplated and questioned Judaism. For these I.P.A. analysts, to show an interest in Judaism, of which they conserved within themselves a mummified memory, seemed at once dangerous and sacrilegious, as if one were raising a hand against a senile ancestor to whom one owes respect for services rendered. For Lacan, however, the Jewish question, in its theoretical aspects as well as its practical and historical ones, was one of the essential questions of Western culture.

Beyond this interest, what was Lacan's emotional and intellectual link to Judaism? It is a difficult question to answer. Obviously he shows no traces of anti-

Semitism. But one detects in his writings expressions of antipathy, of a “negative transference” which he claimed to experience with respect to Freud, but doubtless just as much regarding Judaism. One must therefore appreciate that Lacan—who had been formed by Christianity, that is, in a necessarily deep-set tradition of hatred of Judaism—had confronted this feeling instead of turning away from it. He recognized the importance of Judaism at a time when nothing would have pointed him in this direction, allowing himself to be drawn into the whirlwind. Lending support through his interest in the Talmud, the Midrash, and the Kabbalah, he contributed to the ferment of Jewish studies in France indirectly, at a distance, reaching beyond his own circle of influence.

But why then have the Jews, for better or for worse, marked this century as they have? Perhaps we can answer this question with the hypothesis which the Israeli philosopher Yeshayahu Leibowitz dared to formulate, that beyond appearances this period was the swan song of a prodigious and ancient culture which today is in the throes of death. The Holocaust doubtless brought the final blow.²³

In the same way, Lacan, the greatest analyst since Freud, by the brilliance which he brought to the discipline throughout his lifetime, dared to suggest that psychoanalysis, as a living practice, also lay dying. The Academy, the Lyceum of ancient Greece, ceased to exist all the while leaving for our contemplation several of the most prodigious texts in human history. Human groups are visited by the same death drive as human beings.

NOTES

- 1) For typographical reasons, these Hebrew letters are often omitted from the duplicated transcriptions of**

- the seminars. They are more symptomatically omitted from the version edited by Jacques-Alain Miller and published by Editions du Seuil. Nevertheless, “pirate” editions do include these Hebrew annotations, specifically the reproduced text of the seminar on L’Angoisse held at the Bibliotheque Nationale de Paris(Paris: Editions du Piranha, 1982), 2 vols. The transcription of the single session of the seminar on “Les Noms-du-Pere” (20 November 1963) appeared in the Bulletin de l’Association Freudienne 12/13(April/June 1985).
- 2) Elie Benamozegh, *Israel et l’humanite* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1914), or abridged (Paris: Albin Michel, 1961); Andre Palliere, *Le Sanctuaire inconnu* (Paris:Rieder, 1926), or in a new edition (Paris: Minuit, 1950).
 - 3) Unfortunately, there is no exhaustive inventory of these “presentations of patients.” The event I describe was organized by Dr. Michel Czermak.
 - 4) This episode is recounted in Catherine Clement. *The Lives and Legends of Jacques Lacan*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 19.
 - 5) Sebbag is the author of *Marxisme et structuralisme*, 2nd ed. (Paris, Payot, 1969) We are indebted to him for his important work on the Pueblo Native Americans of New Mexico.
 - 6) Cf. Sigmund Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology* in *The Standard Edition of the Psychological works of Sigmund Freud*(London:Hogarth, 1966), vol. 1, and *Three Essays on Sexuality*, vol. 7.
 - 7) Lacan develops the notion of pulsion scopique most clearly in his Seminar XI. *Les quatre concepts*

- fondamentaux de la psychanalyse (Paris: Seuil, 1973), chapter 6 and 14.
- 8) See, for example, in the “Piranha” version, the session of 22 May 1963.
 - 9) Theodor Reik, “Das Ritual: Psychoanalytische Studien” in *Imago* (Leipzig, Vienna Zurich: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1928) book 11, ch.4.
 - 10) See “L’excommunication” in Jacques-Alain Miller, ed. Supplement to *Ornicar*” *Bulletin periodique du Champ Freudien* 8 (1977).
 - 11) Lacan held a conference in 1949 on these three categories, well before he began his seminars in 1953. He develops them further with his theory of the Borromean knot, the first elements of which are laid out in Seminar XX, *Encore* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), then again in Seminar XXI, *Les Non-dupes errant* (21973-74) and *R.S.I.* (1974-1975), both of which are unpublished.
 - 12) “Proposition du 9 octobre 1967” (first version), *Analytica* (Paris: Ornicar, 1978) 23. The second version appeared in *Scilicet I* (1968) and is reprinted in subsequent annual bulletins of the E.F.P. [Unless otherwise noted all translations of Lacan are my own—Trans.]
 - 13) In his history of the Borromean knot, Lacan identifies the intersection of the three circles of the knot as the “object ‘a.’”. See for example, the seminar *R.S.I.* the session of 10 December 1974, published in *Ornicar* 2 (1975): 95. Moreover, Lacan suggests the identification of the Jewish people with the “object ‘a’”, or with the notion of “remnant” [reste] basing himself on the word of the Prophet Isaiah, *sh’erit* [remnant], quoted in Hebrew in the seminar on *L’Angoisse*, 8 May 1963.

- 14) Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Seuil 1966), 493-528: text translated as "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious" in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 147-78.
- 15) Lacan, "Radiophonie" in *Scilicet 2/3* (Paris, Seuil. 1970): 80-81.
- 16) See Gerard Haddad, *L'Enfant illegitime: Sources talmudiques de la psychoanalyse*, first edition (Paris: Hachette, 1981) or 2nd edition (Paris: Point Hors Ligne, 1990, 18-28 and 261 to the end.
- 17) Freud, *Moise et le monotheisme*, trans. Anne Berman (Paris: Gallimard, 1948). the English translation is from *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage, 1967), 3.
- 18) Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Hogarth, 1977), 274-75.
- 19) Cf., particularly the anthology of texts compiled by Jean-Luc Evard, *Les Annees brunes: La Psychanalyse sous le Troisieme Reich* (Paris: Confrontations, 1984) In particular see p.191 of E. Branin and L. Kamener's article, "Psychanalyse et national-socialisme" in that volume.
- 20) Marthe Robert, *La Revolution psychanalytique* (Paris: Payot, 1964) 248ff. See also Ernest Jones's *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Basic Books, 1957), vol. 3.
- 21) Lacan, *Seminar VII, L'Eethique de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1986)
- 22) Public conference at the Maison de l'Amerique Latine (217, boulevard Saint Germain, Paris_, Monday, 16 January 1989 by Dr. Elena Besserman-Visanna, a psychoanalyst affiliated with the I.P.A. and the ex-director of the Psychoanalytic Institute of Rio de Janiero.

23) Yeshayahu Leibowitz, Al olam u-m'loho (Jerusalem: Keter, 1987) A French version exists, translated and with a preface by Gerard Haddad: Israel et judaisme. ma parte de verite (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1993) See part 3, "Juadaisme"