

LACANIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS AND PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION

By

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Abstract

This is a study, at the core of which lies the investigation, the understanding and the approach of the religious phenomenon through J. Lacan's psychoanalysis. Lacan's post-structural approach to every subject leaves the whole question of religious sentiment and religious phenomenon lurking and creeping throughout his work, and our aim is to overcome these barriers, which Lacan poses, thus in order to approach, as accurately as possible, the locus of religion in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Lacan places the "Divine" on the level of the *symbolic*, thus giving us two crucial elements: firstly, the position of God in the human soul, and secondly, the dangers that arise from a possible expulsion from this position.

Keywords: *Lacan, Religiosity, Post-Structuralism, Psychoanalysis.*

Introduction

French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Jacques Lacan were born in Paris in 1901. During the curricula of the circulars, in which he excelled, he showed a special appeal in Religious and Latin, while he developed a special passion for Philosophy, which will accompany him in the whole theorizing of Psychoanalysis. In 1932, after completing his medical studies and specializing in Psychiatry, he published his doctoral thesis entitled "*De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité*". After this he studied Psychoanalysis with the psychoanalyst Rudolph Loewenstein (1898-1976) and was later accepted into the *Psychoanalytic Society* of Paris. In 1936, at the International Psychoanalytic Conference, he presents his interpretation of the "mirror stage", which, at least at the time, would go down in history as interrupted by a Freud biographer, named James. In 1945, he taught at the Sedan Clinic and finally at the *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes*. His teaching is published with early cancerous rhythms and is entitled "*J. Lacan - Le Séminaire*". His death occurred in Paris in 1981.

The figure of Lacan, together with his overall course in the field of Psychoanalysis, was a "shadow" domain in the field of Psychology for years. It is only in the last few years that various studies have been published relating Lacan's teaching in the fields of religion or Theology. At the same time, the Lacanian texts themselves give the scholar the opportunity to approach —up to a point— his most comprehensive religious-psychological view, which, however, is not presented verbally or systematically, but is expressed through the concepts of

the core of Lacanian thought (e.g. symbolically). This is the greatest difficulty in approaching religious concepts and symbols in his work. These cryptic references in the field of religion, very far from Freudian references, create difficulties for the seeker, who wants to draw and use this content.

In the present study, a thorough effort is made to approach the Lacanian work from the point of view of religion, having as basic research guidelines the questions which are related to the position of the *Divine* (*Sacred* or *Holy*) in the Lacanian system. Our goal is to enrich the field of Lacanian Psychoanalysis and—if possible—to draw some conclusions, which will be fertile ground for a new turn or deepening of the Psychology of Religion. This paper deals with the issue of religiosity in Psychoanalysis, as it evolved with the contribution of J. Lacan. Lacan did not only influence the history of psychoanalytic practice, but also many other fields of the humanities. With Lacan, transcendental thought begins to enter other fields, which are linked, either purely or indirectly, into the realm of Psychoanalysis. By theorizing the practice of Psychoanalysis, Lacan reinterprets how he sees the patient, as well as how the various scientific fields (e.g. the field of Linguistics, Anthropology, or Social Theory) were perceived, according to firstly its importance as an object, and secondly the very strength of their theories, seeing them being used now on the basis of "reading" clinical symptoms.

Theology, as a special scientific domain, has been affected, as we shall see, by this form of Psychoanalysis. The Psychoanalysis of Lacan did not adopt an "aggressive" attitude toward Theology and religiosity, as for example, Freudian did, but went to try to interpret it and place it in the very broad mental structures. A second question is merely related to the distribution of matter, concerns the relationship between Psychology and Psychoanalysis. In the end, the most comprehensive psychoanalytic practice was denervated when it falls into the realm of "Psychology of Depth" and is thus distributed as another practice within the science of Psychology?

Without any intention of making any evaluative judgments, historically and preliminary, Psychoanalysis have been included many times in the textbooks of Philosophy and History of Psychology as an integral and necessary part of Psychology. In fact, several times it has been regarded as the incarnation or the evolution of the science of Psychology itself. As we work within the framework of Lacanian thought, it would be useful, as we think, to quote Lacan's own thought on the relationship between these two "objects". For Lacan, Psychoanalysis doesn't seem to be at the core of the realm of Psychology and its hybrid forms. Lacan himself, after all, did not consider the soul as an organ and therefore had no hope of healing any mental pain or grief e.g. of Chemistry and Pharmaceuticals. Something like this sounded completely meaningless to him. Lacan emphasizes that the oral formulation of a memorandum is the remedy itself. After all, Lacan rejected this discarded and highly "castrated" manner by which Psychiatry treats Psychoanalysis. To the extent, however, that Freud and Lacan chose to capture in writing their most comprehensive theoretical constructs, we think it is positive to treat their overall relationship in the light of an intertextuality. Perhaps we should treat Freudian works as hypertext before the Lacanian

topic. By proclaiming the "return to Freud" through the science of dreams, Lacan will have formed such a thought, which will give him a distinctly distinct of the psychoanalytic identity. With the "return to Freud" one can see a combination of both thoughts. Lacan will accept the "three-dimensional" psychoanalytic perspective: the perspective of the analyzer, the perspective of the analyst, and the perspective of a "judge" created by the *Superego*.

Another notable distinction between Freud and Lacan is the treatment of the Oedipus complex. According to Lacan, the Oedipus complex is a symbolic structure, and actually the primary structure, which defines our symbolic and unconscious thoughts. The importance of the Oedipus complex lies in the fact that it marks the transition from the *Imaginary* to the *Symbolic*, but through a third space, the "*name of the father*". This term does not symbolize the real father, but the paternal significant (*signifiant*); the *sign* is a symbolic position, which the child perceives as the locus of the object of the mother's desire.

Lacan's theory of psychoanalytic practice is full of numerous neologisms and a variety of forms, which is the main reason why even today, Lacan faces a division among researchers. The absence of vocabulary *entries* for Lacanian Psychoanalysis in many books connected with the history of Psychology is proof of this.

Regardless of whether and to what extent this practice is oversimplifying and in line with historical reality, it is used here as a sign of the fact that Lacan was for several decades a controversial figure in Psychoanalysis, a "sect" of it, as those who perceive Psychoanalysis as a form of "religion" say. Thus, Lacan comes into the field of Psychoanalysis, as the child—in his view—comes into a consolidated language system, which not only alienates him, but also leaves him with a sense of imperfection, when he handles linguistic structures. In the same context, Lacan will try to change the form and content of many psychoanalytic terms in order to reinterpret them conceptually and semantically.

In this degree of reinterpretation, his theoretical approaches, which began in 1953, acquire particular importance and led to the rupture of the official psychoanalytic institutions, as well as with the introduction of new terms/concepts.

Lacan, as early as 1953, began to move away from traditional Psychiatry for the reasons outlined in the preambles of this work. In fact, he has already approached "in the light of" Psychoanalysis and reinterpreted the field of psychosis, thus making it clear that the field of the Lacanian *Symbolic* is closer to its discovery. The crime of the Papin sisters was a beneficial condition for Lacan to approach the question of psychosis and to introduce himself to the understanding of nerves. For Lacan, psychotics convey their questions and doubts to others in a willingness to get rid of their anxiety; at the same time, by transmitting these feelings to others, others become their pursuers, in addition to their carriers of negative characteristics.

For Lacan, the birth of man has always been premature and the premature birth of persons involves various risks. Evidence of this is that if we leave after birth, we are more likely to die. This is the context in which man's first contact with himself will take place. The child meets an unspeakable source of anguish, looking into the mirror: *image*. In most cases, he cannot recognize himself in his

totality. The mirror cannot reflect the emotions, thoughts or fantasies that come with the new person. The young man, for the first time, places himself in front of him. The moment is crucial for the whole developmental course of man, who will continue to be accompanied by a feeling of imperfection and stress, every time he sees himself, a product of time, in photographs, recordings or mirrors.

This "dismembered" (double: divided / torn) baby's body goes through a process of bonding, which allows the young person to exercise a new control over his body imaginatively, that is, he is captured by this external image. This gives rise to the more general phenomenon of transference or imitation. The young man now will undergo a somehow alienation, which Lacan calls *imaginary* (to the level at which this identification of the young man with his idol takes place), thus implying the reflection the captivity of the child in the image. Lacan will come back to this subject later, to go into greater detail on this scene.

Fundamental to all Lacanian thought is his lecture in the context of the newly established psychoanalytical society, titled "*Real, Symbolic and Imaginary*". Lacan handled certain studies of the psychologist Melanie Klein (1882-1960) as the trigger. Klein released a case study on a patient. Her young patient sees the psychoanalyst as a piece of furniture, as she is beyond the *Symbolic* and the *Imaginary*. This child lived exclusively in the Lacanian *Real*.

For Lacan, the *Symbolic* is related to "speech" and symbolic function, as the anthropologist Levi Strauss (1908-2009) meant it. On the other hand, the *Imaginary* is related to the image of our peers, but also to our own representatives. Finally, the *Real* (*réel*) —which is distinguished from *reality*— is what remains outside the establishment of the *Symbolic*, although in the construction of the *Symbolic* Lacan considers that the expressive possibilities of the human nature are realized through the field of language. In fact, Lacan himself states "[...] *The whole problem from now on lies in the coupling of the symbolic and the imaginary within the composition of the real*".

Actually, the Lacan proclamation draws important conclusions. As mentioned above, the *Symbolic* indicates the overall order of the language, while the *Imaginary* is a typical human production, possibly a product of the possession of the neocortex. Finally, we should not confuse, first, the *Real* with reality, and, second, the *Real* (like, for example, religion might be) with the truth. Lacan presents religion as the negation of truth and not reality. According to Lacan, the '*real*' is the concrete, the visible. Another key element for a better understanding of the Lacanian theory is —as we will see below— that the *real* and the *imaginary* are connected.

Lacan's composition of *Symbolic* is distinguished between speech and language. The subject is understood as distinct from the Ego (which, in essence, consists of an imaginary structure). Thus, the subject may be religious in different ways with respect to the (narcissistic) Ego. After all, the epitome of Lacanian production could be traced exactly to this period, the period of the examination of language in Psychoanalysis and the formation of perhaps the most important Lacanian thought: "*The unconscious is structured as language*".

Of course, the cultural context greatly influences Lacan, and more specifi-

cally the material is drawn from this field of study of Structuralism and of linguistic theory. L. Strauss's structural methodology derives from this distinction of the founder of modern Linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) between language and speech: the distinction between a given system, such as language, and the individual expression or manifestation of this system, as in speech²⁹.

Also important for the formation of Lacanian thought —as mentioned above— is the theory of Saussure, which will distinguish three aspects of language: a) language itself as a universal human phenomenon of communication, b) language as a specific language or linguistic system, and c) speech as the language with the use of the specific verbal act or statement.

Because of the more general purpose of this study, it is not possible to further develop the totality of Lacanian thought and the psychoanalytic theory of its founder. It must be noted, however, that Lacanian innovations, the new elements of Lacanian thought do not stop here. As a product of time, we will see that new groundbreaking Lacanian concepts will come to frame, or even improve, the field of Psychoanalysis, theorizing Freudian imperatives, Freudian thoughts and hypotheses (see *ideal ego*, the *ideal of the ego* and so forth). What is worth noting, however, is that a significant difference between Lacan and Freud, creeps in at this point; by mapping the symbol, Lacan essentially states that from the moment the symbols appear, the material of mind is classified according to it, but without stating that everything is reducible to the *Symbolic*. This is the difference, because for Lacan for whom the unconscious is structured as a language, the unconscious is a significant material. Therefore, the unconscious is a process of meaning, but it cannot be independently controlled: Language speaks through us, instead of us through language. This, translated religiously, would mean that "Holy" speaks through our consciousness.

Lacan, as is well known, will define the unconscious as the discourse of the "Other" (any object, which as a reflection or projection replaces our lack), while the "great Other" (the symbolic locus or order, or "place of truth", good or bad faith / trust with another subject, starting with the mother and then the woman in general) is the language itself, the *symbolic order*, the one that cannot be fully assimilated by the subject, the really great otherness, that is the nuclear of our unconscious.

Later, we will examine how the symptom, for Lacan, is understood as a discourse, characterized by the impossibility of its realization and which has to find the channels of outsourcing. The person talks a certain way about the symptoms and therefore there is a need to decipher them. Censored conscious messaging can lead to psychosomatic illnesses. Lacan believes that there are certain passages so that if there are words trapped in the body as symptoms, they can be externalized. It is possible that entire nerves can be organized by words (religious or spiritual). Therefore, for Lacan, words are the material of symptoms.

Ab initio, the subject is born, formed and it will acquire the cognitive patterns within the "place of the other" and that is why Lacan's therapeutic ap-

proach aims at the need of the individual to escape from the "doors of identification" and develop deeper relationships with the others. Here we can see the great contribution of Lacanian theory in comparison with other theories, as for instance by the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995). It is not just a superficial or sharp approach of the subject to the Other, but for a precisely intersubjective identification of the subject with the very discourse of the Other; while the Phenomenology of E. Husserl (1859-1938) informs us that, being a selfish subject with an egoistic horizon, I cannot know if others are really present in my consciousness and if they are as real as I am —introducing some kind of autism— Lacan considers it necessary for the subject to consist of an interactive "being", as correctly predicted by the German existential philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) as early as 1927 in his work "*Sein und Zeit*". According to the Lacanian theory, I "submit" for the sake of the Other. Lacan understood as early as the 1950s how the intersubjective approach is necessary for subjective completion; he increasingly emphasized the organizational character of the *Symbolic*, that is, the social, cultural, and linguistic networks within which we are born. All this is pre-existent in our birth. The language is at its "place" prior to the moment of our birth. And all these environmental networks, such as religion, will be the most comprehensive background in which we move with birth; we are bound through the image and through the words and names that others use for us. In other words, our identity —as it were— depends on how we accept the words of the "Great Other" (first our mother and then all the others, in general). Lacan, after all, will find even in the dialect of *master* and *slave* and in the "*Phenomenologie des Geistes*" of the philosopher Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) that the genesis of consciousness has to become with the Other, clause that he will re-use in his late phase.

Thus, the subject of the Lacanian tradition is, in the final analysis, a break in principle within the discourse itself. From the perspective of the concept of "great Other" we pass to the object "*a*", which seems to be the desire of the Other, who comes to define the *subject*. Man is born when he hears the desires of others. It is laying in dialectic between Levinas, Lacanian analysis, both subjectivity and intersubjectivity, and the philosophy of Romanticism developed during the interwar period, and the Belle Epoque, which deal with the Other with a narcissistic egoistic way, in a way through which the Other is extinguished and lost, but also through which the Other is useful only to the extent that it builds my subject. The *Other* in French Philosophy, most notably in E. Levinas, lasts for me only an instant; the moment, which will help the consciousness of my subjectivity.

Unlike Levinas, Lacan considers it impossible for the Other to exist without the subject. It is impossible that man's desire can be desired by the Other, or: man desires the Other's desire for him. Thus, the fold from which the little *a* appears is created by the collapse of the hypothetical unity of the mother with the child. There's of course a whimsical degree.

Desiring to recognize and find the small *a*, I desire even more and as I seek the desire of the Other, my castration will occur, that is, precisely in the search for the knowledge of the desires of the other, the ignorance of which creates a

deficient feeling in me... "I am subjectivized" by the Other; I passively accept the desire of the Other and I "castrate" him, interiorizing him. Essentially, this is the psychoanalytic Lacanian reading of Freud, who described to us the subject as a game, as a tool of desire in the hands of the Other and his desires. It is within this theoretical framework that Lacan comes in medias res to further theorize Psychoanalysis, as well as to give it new theoretical concepts in its theoretical arsenal, either ab ovo or by reinterpreting the existing ones.

A. Is there a religiosity in the Lacanian theory?

In our overall aim, the question arises of how the religious phenomenon is treated in Lacanian writings and seminars. Already from the second Seminar, which examines the "Ego" in Freudian theory and the technique of Psychoanalysis, Lacan states that *"some people become anxious when they see me referring to God"* to complete his sentence saying: *"nevertheless I arrest God ex Machina, unless we detach the Machina ex deo"*. Lacan's speech is filled with metaphors from Christian Theology. Lacan's "god" defines otherness and as an element of language itself is hidden within the unconscious¹. God —more or less— is present through even his absence in the Lacanian work. Lacan, of course, mentions him verbally, but his whole discourse is symbolic (*the name of the Father*). In fact, in the most "theological" seminar, the 20th, there is that "strange" and unconventional dialectical connection about female sexuality and God. God, for Lacan, is, as Slavoj Žižek (1949-) observes, not dead, but unconscious! This, semantically, points to the existential position that God is, but does not exist, since, according to Lacan, it is a complete, coherent, non-castrated and non-deleted Other, an *Other* with a capital *A* and without a *barre*.

Lacan, continuing within the framework of Freudian thought, speaks of the relationship between Psychoanalysis and religion through two well-known texts by Freud: *"Totem und Tabu"* and *"Der Mann Moses und die Monotheistische Religion"*. Freud speaks there of some kind of progress of spirituality towards an aesthetic of the visible with Mosaic Monotheism and of a return of the repressed, not of the image of the sovereign, great, man, but of the dying father with the effective prohibition of incest through intercourse of speech! In other words, we have here, as it were, a return to religiosity, already when the father cries out for his murder. The murder of the father (patricide) allows the passage of the Freudian *imago* in the Lacanian *"name of the father"* (Oedipus ban, the "No" of the taboo of incest). The father, consequently, now returns "death", without a divine image with Mosaic Monotheism.

But God, who exists in his absence, clearly exists with one name; the name of the father, as the representative of the law. As a result, Lacan concludes:

*"The myth of the father's murder is precisely the myth of a year in which the god died. But, if God died for us, it means that He has always been dead. That's precisely what Freud says. It never existed, except in the mythology of the sons, that is to say of this command which is commanded to love this father"*².

¹ E. Boliaki, "Jacques Lacan, Religion and Ethics", *Theology* 76/1 (2005) 182.

² J. Lacan, *Seminar of Jacques Lacan (Book 8)*, Polity, Cambridge, 2015, p. 209.

The *void* (sic) created by the death of the father, which is translated by Freud as the birth and transmission of the Law concealing obsessive compulsions, does not persuade Lacan to adopt this interpretation. Lacan goes on to say that respecting this discrepancy is a word that can go further. That is why, in his work, we will repeatedly encounter the famous verse of Exodus 3:14: «*Εγώ ειμί ο ων*». In Lacan's opinion, the relationship between the words *I* and "*I am*" is a metonymic relationship: one implies the other. While for all beings the "is" (*être*), which belongs to the symbolic order, is opposed to the existence (which belongs to the order of the *real*), for God, the Implicit and the Absolute, this differentiation is not valid, because the core of our "being" is Other, the foreign, the elsewhere (see *ex-sistence*). The (human) subject is decentralized; his center is external to himself (see *eccentric*). From this, anthropologically, it follows that the subject is born with the lack (*manque*), a castration of the "being", the lack of a signifier in the Other' (cf. "Lack of meaning") desire (*désir*), that institutes the metonym of the lack of "being" (*manqué à être*). Theologically it confirms that, as far as God is concerned, we cannot, in the existent way, claim either that existence (*person*) precedes His essence (*nature*), or that essence precedes His existence. There is a gap for Lacan; in the absence of the name or in a name which cannot be pronounced (cf. *tacit* and *implied*). God does not identify himself with a primary name and cannot be named after his father, except by some others than himself, such as, for example, the Divine Word, which addresses Him as "my father"³.

At the same time, Lacan tries to point out the equivalence of three-dimensional fatherhood. Each being is bound to the other and neither can deceive the other two. For Lacan, Christianity is a drama that "literally" perpetuates the death of God and at the same time makes him a faithful supporter of the only love, which has since manifested itself as the command to "*love your neighbor as yourself*". He added, indeed, as we shall see later, that "the death of God" and "the love of neighbor" are terms of historical solidarity. The great Other, then,

³ The psychoanalyst P. Julien in his book "*God in our soul*", gives a nice interpretation regarding the names of God: "One cannot define the being - father according to a single dimension. Indeed, fatherhood presupposes three complementary approaches, three dimensions called symbolic, virtual and real. Initially, a symbolic god, that is, in the place of signifiers, paternity is a name of the father, indicating an attitude. The father is not the one who calls himself a father, but the one who can occupy a position, which has been named. It was named by whom, only by the mother, who transmits to the son or daughter the way of placement between her and the child". For Julien, Lacan managed to read exactly this through the answer of the god "I am who I am". That is, to be named by myself, to call myself. "The second dimension of fatherhood comes from the son or the daughter. It is that of the virtual [...] Thirdly, this conflict between the father in the symbolic and the father in the virtual can only find its solution with a third dimension of the father in the real. Indeed, only he allows the mourning of the ideal father to be performed. He is supposed to be able to establish the law of good. This is exactly the law that the real father relates to. The Father within the real is the man who desires a woman and precisely because of this mating a double possibility will be passed on to the next generation. "First the mourning of an ideal father should be performed and then slowly leave mother and father so that one day he can be engaged to a wife or a husband who comes from another family". The reading, made by Julien under the Lacanian words, appears here, of course. It is a product of Lacan's immersion in Sociology and specifically in the "sociology of the gift" by Marcel Mauss.

the Other with a capital A, is the important Other, the one who gives meaning to our requests. Initially the mother, who gives meaning / significance of the reactions of the child and contributes to the formation of the child's self and then the father, the unconscious, or even God himself⁴. In the first phase of life, the young person perceives the otherness of the Other whatever its gender either for masculine subjects or for feminine subjects.

B. The "Triumph of Religion".

In the interview entitled *"The Triumph of Religion"*, Lacan makes one of the most groundbreaking and shocking states in the tradition of Psychoanalysis: *"Religion will triumph, and that means that Psychoanalysis will have failed"*. In this interview, Lacan "cracks" the relationship between the (ecclesiastical) sacrament of Holy Confession and Psychoanalysis, which had gained ground, in the interval; he redefines practices and classifies them as diametrically opposed, while the forthcoming "triumph of religion" makes the following claim:

"Certainly not because of the confession. If psychoanalysis does not triumph over religion, it will die because religion is fearless. Psychoanalysis will not triumph. It will survive or it will not survive".

To the question whether he is convinced that religion will triumph, Lacan responds categorically:

"Yes. It will not only triumph over Psychoanalysis, it will triumph over many other things [...] Science is something new and will bring a lot of shocking things into the life of each of us. But religion, mainly the true⁵, has resources that we cannot even imagine [...] It took them a while, but the people of religion suddenly realized the fate that awaited them with science. They will need to give meaning to all the upheavals that science will introduce. And as to the meaning, they know the subject well. They are capable of really giving meaning to everything [...] And religion will give meaning to the most bizarre trials, those for which scientists themselves begin to have a slight sense of anxiety. Religion will find in all this a multitude of juicy meanings. It is enough to see how it works today, as it is modernized"⁶.

⁴ Mother represents the otherness later in the Object Relations theory (1930). This School will appreciate the role of the mother much more. The role of the father is of course as important as that of the mother and the deprivation of the father can be just as harmful as that of the mother. In the early phase, his role functions as a maternal surrogate and in another "expression" of the mother, while it seems that, a product of time, the one with the prohibitions and the laws will be the one who will introduce the child to the symbolic level and will intrude to erode and break the binary relationship (mother - child), turning it into a triple.

⁵ When Lacan speaks of true religion, he means Roman Catholicism. There is, as he says, a true religion, and that is the Christian Religion, while a little below he will state: of. He will succeed, it is certain, because he has the means [...] He will find a correspondence of everything with everything. This is exactly its function. Here, in essence, Lacan jokingly comments on the whole issue under the Freudian approach to religion. To a large extent, this is an issue related to the independent controllability and refutability of theological cases. Lacan does not rant here, but produces a lamentable elegy.

⁶ J. Lacan, *The Triumph of Religion & Speech to Catholics*, translated by N. Karagianni, Ekkremes Publishing House, Athens, 2005, p. 103.

Psychoanalysis has often been treated as a religion and in some cases as a Kabbalistic sect. For many decades Lacan evoked the monotheistic foundations of Western subjectivity as a set of dialectic fissures, which continued to break with the modern subject. In particular, the way Lacan treats the (Mosaic) Decalogue and the interpretation he makes of it, is indicative of this fact. As Lacan would say, the first commandment separates the **name** of the God from its (ancient) Greek meaning and ancient Greek Philosophy. The second commandment separates Monotheism from the heathen cultures, but whereunto it is born and re-registered. Lacan here, in the second commandment, not only isolates Judaism from its social and cultural context, but also the very ethics of a culture.

Of particular importance, after all, is the way in which Lacan deals with the ninth commandment («οὐ ψευδομαρτυρήσεις κατὰ τοῦ πλησίον σου μαρτυρίαν ψευδῆ»). According to Lacan, the "neighbor" is not the friend, not the brother, not even the citizen or any subject. Above all, the neighbor is the bare minimum of a social relationship; he is the object of the highest moral imperative. I should love her as much as I would love myself. Precisely here lies the dialectic between the death of God and the love of "neighbor", because, for Lacan, these terms are historically in solidarity. All these force us to read Lacan critically. Lacan uses the 9th Commandment to distinguish between the Decalogue and Philosophy, giving the example of the soothsayer Epimenides (7th – 6th BC) with the paradox of the phrase "Κρήτες ἀεὶ ψεύσται". Maybe, in a true context, even this sentence had the capacity to remove the paradox, but for Lacan it does not. For Lacan, the mandate "You should not lie" creates the desire to lie. For Lacan, the unconscious includes his own paradox, where the only truth is that there is no truth!

If we wanted to look at the whole issue of Lacanian Psychoanalysis from a prism of evaluative neutrality—if, of course, this is possible—we would find that there are mainly anti-religious positions of Lacan in his work. After all, Lacan is very accurate with regard to religious myths. Although he will never verbally declare every religious person to be psychotic, he regards psychosis as a cause for the continuation of religious myth. The psychotic would never be surprised that there are vocal hallucinations, visions and mystical experiences. The paradox, however, is that the objective reality that Lacanian work has far more informative content on the question of religiosity than even the works, for example, of Jung and Freud.

One of the misrepresentations of J. Lacan is the one he will make in the seminar "*Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*", where he will connect Psychoanalysis with religion⁷. For Lacan, the gods are part of the kingdom of the *Symbolic*. Lacan will not take a clear stand in favor of an atheistic attitude during his Seminars, perhaps because, if he did, he would essentially overturn the basic view that atheist can speak only to one who has mastered the symbolic meanings, related to God through a theological training, and therefore only theologians are able to speak within a theistic context.

⁷ S. Žižek, "Cogito, Madness, and Religion: Derrida, Foucault, and Then Lacan", *Theology after Lacan. The Passion for the Real*, James Clarke & Co, Cambridge, 2015, p. 2.

For Lacan, Psychoanalysis is neither in favor of, nor against any particular religion. It should also be noted that the anecdotal incident in which Lacan sent a postcard from Thessaloniki to the philosopher Louis Althusser (1918-1990), portraying the archangel Gabriel in a monastery, writes:

"Dear Louis, this photo is by Father Photios [...] The cell he holds is located in Karyes, the capital of this peninsula, where the monks feel at home and call it a sacred mountain".

For Lacan, it is precisely religion —and especially its functional extensions— which is based on the *Symbolic* (level). This raises an issue, related to the fact that there is no locus ("place"), that a central identity can be created and therefore a single and general construction of a worldview, but multiple modifications of human experience to approach the truth of Faith. This is quite important for two reasons: the first relates to the fact that Lacan continues to associate religiosity with neurosis and psychosis, but without generalizing this thought, writing that not all religious people are psychotic or neurotic. This impossibility of creating a center, from which a certain Faith derives, and which is evenly spread to the members of a Religion, enables the approach of religiosity in a very different way to its members.

The second reason, which follows from this case, is related to Lacan's structuring and postmodernism. For Lacan, the whole theological discourse constitutes a form of speech and, therefore, contains a kind of deficiency, thus introducing us to a peculiar mystical Lacanian Theology, as described by the French philosopher Catherine Clément (1939-)⁸. The point is that, as a product of time, there is an explosive emergence of Theology in Lacan's writings, and what the seminars did was bring to light the ways of the religious and theological tradition, which are a constant source of reference for Lacan and, in particular, to the extent that Theology plays a central structural role in Western subjectivity for him.

So, the following paradox is created: Primary Lacan has a profound difference with the latter. Contrary to what we usually find in the early theological standardization of Lacan's work, which is based on a central philosophical critique of Theology, but has little to do with theological discourse, the latter part, which was originally judged to be "transcendental"⁹, includes terms such as

⁸ E. Castelli, *The Postmodern Bible*, Yale University Press, 1997, p. 209: "Mystical theology [is] One that would involve real risks... for Lacanian analysis 'does not provoke any triumph of self-awareness'. As Roudinesco rightly points out: 'It uncovers on the contrary, a process of decentering, in which the subject delves into the loss of his mystery'".

⁹ Here, of course, an important question arises: Is Lacan a structuralist? Language is a structure, while speech is an act, in which the subject and the Other are involved. Of course, for Lacan, speech may not be the very actual dissemination of information between two people, but a random manifestation of monologues. Since Structuralism aimed at eliminating the subject and the concept of subjective action, replacing it with the autonomy of linguistic structures, Lacan is by no means a structuralist, because although he shares the idea of the autonomy of the Symbolic, at the same time he constantly seeks position of the subject. That is why, after all, he will connect language with the blocking of a possible subjective identity and the alienation, which is placed in the class of language. Thus, for Lacan, we often realize

"Catholic", "Reformed", "Buddhist" etc. In the following years, in the place of the "great Other" a dangerous meaning begins to enter: the meaning of God, whoever becomes this "great Other", completely abandons himself in his own creation and, now unconsciously, leaves people, without any superior force watching over them. From the Heideggerian point of view, it seems that man alone bears the burden of his freedom (see J.-P. Sartre) and the very destiny of his (his) God. It will be done, as Žižek will say, with the tears of Christ himself upon the cross, who realizes his own weakness, revealing in the same time that God is a-theist. Obviously, Žižek's Christology is both orthodox and exemplary. According to Žižek, Orthodox Christology is that Christ must indeed be God in order to "push" —in a way— the consequences of logic at the extremes (see the crucifixion of Logic: *madness*), while at the same time that within God Himself there is a "community".

In the area of recruiting, Lacan also included religious questions. For Lacan, our entry into a sacred temple, like our gaze on the icons, which in any case acts as triggering mechanisms, contains two very important differences. My gaze on the image, on its hagiography (on the sacred objects), is my desire for something I cannot have. God treats us as a desire and as an impossible object, which is sought for ever but escapes us from the subject. He is a negative (decisive) God, whose impossibility of fulfilment forces the subject himself to give up any positive approach to Him. Here the Orthodox theologian can distinguish a tonality of Eutychianism or transcendence. From this point of view here an Apophatic Theology of the Western type arises. God, for Lacan, as a great Other, into the symbolic order and the network that shapes reality for us, does not speak, but is spoken with us in the middle of the symbolic structure.

C. The 20th Seminary and God.

At the 20th Seminary, Lacan states that Christianity is the "true religion" (sic). This true religion sets out the secret and moral nature of Greek philosophical thought, combining paternal and maternal material. For Lacan, Christianity is the true religion, insofar as it is the only Religion that can explain the topology of the western soul, which Psychoanalysis discovers, and the relation of this topology to the question of "being", which belongs to the womb of a culture that Christianity helped to create. Christianity revealed the lie of Greek ontology and

that words are not designed for us and, in a way, there is a potential barrier between spreading the message: what I am thinking to say and what I am finally saying. For Lacan, only - and partly in fragments - poetry can convey - with its symbolic way of development - the reality of the mind. But if there are still doubts as to whether Lacan is a post-structuralist, I do not think there is any doubt today that Lacan is postmodern, in the sense that he believes that there is no single right way to approach reality. Lacan adapted to his psychoanalytic theory the basic principles of the postmodern conception of reality. This is precisely the reason for his opposition to Freud, who had found in sexuality the defining parameter for the formation of the human personality, already from childhood, while Lacan considered the social context and symbolic structures as causes of its formation as a whole. sexuality and personality in a long evolutionary course and yet moved away from single-factor explanations.

modern Romanticism, expressing the truth of human reality and exposing the void that occupies the place of the Other in the heart of desire.

In this 20th Seminar, Lacan creates a rift within God himself, dividing Him, while creating, on the one hand, a concept of theological rationalism, which corresponds to the male God, and, on the other, a maternal face of God, which intrudes with concepts such as diversity, sexuality, embodiment and so on.

Concerning corporeality, Lacan "sees" an empathetic disposition of Christianity towards the soul of Christ and especially over His body; the body, which human nature defines to have a beginning, but the Divine defines without end. Thus, Christianity introduces a shadowy concept of the flesh and lets it infiltrate the purity of the Greek philosophical tradition, while condemning man with the intolerable thought of the impossibility of eternal bodily life. The human spirit can only conceive of God as something intangible. Humankind conceives God as infinite.

Returning to Žižek's analysis, reopening the question of diversity and desire in Lacan's interpretation of the Christian God, Žižek translates the relevant hagiographic passages as the very transition from Judaism to Christianity, which ultimately obeys the womb of transition from the masculine (patriarchal) to the feminine (maternal) formula of sexual life. The dialectic of the sexes in the Bible itself, after all, is used by Lacan himself, who usually refers to the well-known passage of the hymn of love from the "Letter to the Corinthians" of the apostle Paul, to support his claim¹⁰. This passage is clearly imbued with Lacanian connotations, when in its conclusion Lacan will relate the question of the mirror to the fetal worldview or the questions of knowledge and truth.

On the other hand, Lacan will draw attention to corporeality and the Art of baroque bodies, which represent the deities, and which express the incarnate Christ, who is presented as the fragile little brother of the God of Greek desire. Lacan's Christ suffers and dies; he remains connected mainly with sacrifice and death, rather than with His resurrection, and in such a way that there is no concept of the mother's body in Him and the joy of the fertility of birth and incarnation.

Lacan redefines the overall theological framework by replacing the Freudian model of instincts with a post-Saussurian adaptive model of language and speech discrimination. So, the channel of communication between these two quantities is discovered, as for Lacan the symbolic order is the place, where all Theology belongs and becomes psychoanalytically perceived. Indeed, using the same channels of communication, Lacan finds ways to penetrate in the other aspects of religiosity, such as those expressed by Buddhist Philosophy. Lacan mentions Buddhism several times in his work in various places, while it is worth mentioning that he does not examine it exhaustively, to the extent that he examines the "true religion", i.e. the Roman Catholics. Buddhism is part of the Lacanian "*Écrits*", especially in the field of function and speech during Psychoanalysis. There, Lacan will say that we need to look at the traditional facts

¹⁰ St Paul, 1 Corinthians 13.

provided by Buddhists, and refers to the characteristic error of existence, which is divided into three headings: that of love, hate and ignorance¹¹.

At the same time, Lacan at the 16th Seminar, makes an especially paradoxical reading of the difference between the philosophical and theological psychoanalytic tradition. What distinguishes, says Lacan, the God of the Jews, the one who was characterized as the cause of Monotheism by the other gods, was not a peculiar development; what sets him apart is that this God is to be defined by the fact that he speaks. In Christianity, reason (Heb. *Davar*) is revealed immediately, positioned in the order of the *Real*. It is the interface between Christianity and Psychoanalysis. Lacan holds himself not only to the fact that God speaks and is revealed, but also the fact of His general Revelation.

D. The 'Great' Other.

In this last part of the examination of Lacanian Psychoanalysis we will deal more with "*Discours aux Catholiques*". Indeed, when he refers to the "imminent triumph of religion", Lacan does not prevail, but simply recognizes something that is inevitable. It is precisely at this point that he will reveal that Theology and religion are ideological practices with all the symbolic ones. It is this Lacanian conception which today will enable Theology not only to converse, but also to supplement Lacanian thought itself. For Lacan, it seems that what enabled Theology to lose part of its towards its global survival was this triumphant theological alliance with neoliberal Capital. This is where the entire question arises of whether religion continues to triumph in the modern world under the guise of Capitalism.

Finally, Psychoanalysis consists of a special Theology, treating theological questions with acuteness. In particular, Lacanian Psychoanalysis does not refer to or examine God as such, but focuses on the meaning of the *Other*. In this sense, the Lacanian "god" is hidden and hence a question must be asked: what happens if the *Other* does not exist? What would that mean, after all, if God had not existed for Psychoanalysis? It seems that the "great Other" is an auxiliary and beneficial factor in the overall stabilization of the *symbolic order*, which—as a part of it—is based on the "name of the father" and which provides the "laws" and shapes our rituals and beliefs.

The father, then, must survive, in order to maintain and perpetuate the law, even if Christianity will eventually create a "rift" at this very point with the event of the Crucifixion. So, for Lacan, if one really wants to identify oneself as an "atheist" and wants to maintain an atheistic attitude, he must really take the (mental and moral) responsibility for his atheism. If we humans are to understand God's position, we must rewrite a part of our *Symbolic*. He identifies himself with the "place of the Other" and with otherness. If, in fact, God leaves this point, we will lose some of our otherness. God is at the confluence of the *Real* and the *Imaginary*, and therefore with his non-existence there will be a point of

¹¹M. D' Amato, "Lacan avec le Bouddha", *Theology after Lacan. The Passion for the Real*, James Clarke & Co, Cambridge, 2015, p. 74.

emptiness. Therefore, Lacan reminds us that, in spite of our atheism, we continue to believe in God, because, as F. Nietzsche said, we keep faith in the language. That is why the only ones who can truly be atheists are the ones who can talk about God, i.e. theologians. Thus, Theology will survive, but perhaps as an ideology; Psychoanalysis, no. In its 36th paragraph "Speech to the Catholics" J. Lacan will refer to the famous work <Totem und Tabu> of S. Freud and prohibition, which occurs, because the father died, and because he is ignorant of the fact that he has died. Lacan observes:

*"Whatever Freud's justified denial of any personal inclination toward religious sentiment, religiosity, that it is definitely the place where an experience is articulated as such, about which, of course, Freud's least concern is to characterize it religious as it tends to universalize it, but which nevertheless articulates it precisely on the terms that the predominantly Judeo-Christian religious experience itself has historically developed and articulated. In what sense is Freud interested in monotheism? He knows as well as any of his disciples that the gods are innumerable and unstable, like the forms of desire, that they are their living metaphors. But this is not the case with the one and only god. If he sought his original in a historical model, the visible model of the Sun of the first Egyptian religious revolution, the model of Akhenaten, he did it to reconnect with the spiritual model of his own tradition, the God of the Ten Commandments"*¹².

Conclusion and Critical Remarks.

In this part we will try to capture what is implicitly creeping throughout this article; that is, the very relation of Lacanian Psychoanalysis to religion. A guide for the consideration of this fundamental question of our objective will be this dialectic coexistence of the two above quantities.

We first saw how Freudian Psychoanalysis coexist with Lacanian Psychoanalysis, possessing both religious and theological meanings. In particular, we have seen that religiosity holds a special place for the more general formation of the *symbolic* of the subject. We also considered Lacan's views about religiosity itself and how it survives. Lacan analyzes these issues piecemeal in his seminars, which is a hindrance to Lacan's attempt to address the question of religiosity.

In the "manifesto" of Atheism ("*Die Zukunft einer Illusion*"), Freud, the founder of Psychoanalysis, predicts that it is inevitable that religion will disappear, doomed in the face of the steadily accelerating progress of Science. According to the Enlightenment account, Freud had the "belief" that the progress of knowledge is related to leading the apocalyptic knowledge of Theology to its rationalization. Almost a century later, religion and the religious phenomenon continue to live, having in fact—inexplicably for many—consolidated and embraced the new technologies very easily, the new worldviews and the new findings of Science.

¹² J. Lacan, *The Triumph of Religion*, translated by N. Katsogianni, Ekremes, Athens 2005, p. 64.

Lacan, in one of the most explosive parts of his production, in the 11th Seminar, claims that the true formula of Atheism is not a dead god, but an unconscious God, far from materialistic approaches like Freud's and 18th century French Encyclopedists. That is why, in the 17th Seminary, he will explain why the final act of a complete atheist cannot be the "death of God". Religious beliefs continue to benefit from the "mental existence" after His death! Therefore, indeed, Lacan asserts that the atheist must know that God is unconscious, something which thus Psychoanalysis is far from His death and escape. In other words, by continuing the Freudian interpretation, God still exists in the unconscious (as C. G. Jung had argued on several occasions), therefore not dead. Lacan draws attention to the fact that her father's death can reinforce religious imperatives, something that will make the return of the God ever stronger. To protect Psychoanalysis from the creeping and an unconscious existence of religiosity in the mind of the analysand, a practice must be applied which is not possessed by any kind of "gods".

Professor of the Psychology of Religion at the University of Athens, S. Tsitsigkos (2011), referring to the Freudian view of religion as universal forced neurosis, relativizes the "positivity" of the natural sciences, that is, the modeling of Physics in all sciences, when they come to suggest scientific frameworks stating that Psychoanalysis eventually succeeded to some extent, replacing the mythical with the animistic stage and the Christian God with the unconscious as its substitute, as well as the Christian Religion with a new secular and scientific "religion"¹³. Nowadays the action of Psychoanalysis is limited and less than 10% of psychologists belonging to the American Psychological Society admit that they work in psychoanalytical practice.

More phenomenologically, we could say that in Lacanian Psychoanalysis there are religious and anti-religious readings. Lacan challenged the supposedly given interpretation of Freud's writings, undermining the central position of the Ego in post-Freudian Psychology and affirming the language-analytic functions of the unconscious, proposing the categorization of psychic function into three classes (*imaginary*, *real* and *symbolic*), on the basis of which all psychic phenomena can be described. God in Lacan's work continues to live and appears inexplicably in these places where he is completely absent, in a special (decisive) manner: Unconscious! For Lacan, this anesthesia of God is, as we have seen, the bridge towards an atheistic society and an atheistic Psychoanalysis. But the Lacanian "God" is, essentially, hidden (*Deus absconditus*) in the *Symbolic* through a consolidated and fanciful "collective symbolic unconscious" that continues to live.

A hindrance to our search was the fact that Lacan makes almost no reference to Orthodox Christian tradition and worship. Also, the Lacanian concepts, which happen to be in theological discourses and the discourse of Lacanian Psychoanalysis, might move in a framework of overlap, but also almost opposite contents. For instance, the Lacanian sense of love and affection is striking to the

¹³ S. K. Tsitsigkos, *Psychology of Religion in the 21st century*, Arreton, Athens, 2011, p. 145.

extent that they are close to Christianity. In the 12th Homily of <in Colossians>, Saint Chrysostom writes:

«Ὅταν δὲ συνίωσιν οἱ σύζυγοι οὐκ εἰκόνα ἄψυχον, οὐδὲ εἰκόνα τινός ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀλλ' αὐτοῦ ποιοῦντες τοῦ θεοῦ, καθ' ὁμοίωσιν» (When spouses come together seem not as a lifeless image, nor with anything found on earth, but with the realization of the divine will, based on "likeness").

So, St. John Chrysostom refers to this holistic question, examining and evaluating the act of love as a type and image of the union of the Divine nature with the human one in the Divine Incarnation of J. Christ, reminding us briefly about what Lacan mentions in his late phase, regarding female sexuality (*jouissance*) and God. Lacan appears to be reconnecting eroticism with the Divine. In the context of a dualist (Western) conception, love was identified with sexual function, while love was placed in the space of the soul, in a spiritual realm. In other words, there was an "in a sense" fold, a multi-rift between love and God, but "God" was the very meaning and essence of erotism and Love. Thus, the distortion of erotic sentiments cannot be linked to what Christian Theology calls "the transitional state" and the subsequent exclusion of God from this field. And yet, again, the Lacanian view does not allow us to draw a conclusion unscathed, since the question of the Lacanian view of our desire is raised; we desire something from the Other, knowing that he cannot provide it to us. We look for the Other's gaze, knowing that it will leave us a sense of incompleteness. This very feeling of imperfection, the feeling of emptiness, is directly related to human desire and is a node that we cannot read unless we read it verbally with a theological sense.

Lacan clearly draws a distinction between *need*, *demand* and *desire*. Man, in order to satisfy his *desire* (*besoin*), must go through the signifiers of the Other. The subject must articulate his *request*, which is addressed to the Other. What is not satisfied by demand, what each request leaves in balance, is desire. Lacan will illustrate this point with an excerpt from the famous "Confessions" of St. Augustine. There, the Saint, recounting a childhood memory, confesses that, seeing his younger brother, breastfeeding, he was seized with envy. Lacan uses this example, several times and insists on the dimension that Freud projects on the meaning of jealousy, which the subject feels if he realizes that someone else has taken the position that he would like to be there. He will later say that this image of satisfaction, that the subject has seen, embodies object A.

This vision of Freud is similar to the one developed by psychologist and psychoanalyst Erich Fromm (1900-1980). This is about the need of the individual to maintain an ideal and the need to follow a Religion. According to Fromm, for late Psychoanalysis, there is no human being without religious need, that is, the need for a framework to be worshiped. Naturally, by adopting Kantian terminology here, the manner in which Erich Fromm defines this need has nothing to do with Lacanian necessity. The important element and the reason why we insist so much on Fromm's Psychoanalysis is that it allows a conclusion to be "infiltrated" into the discussion, according to which the interests of the devoted

religious person and the psychologist coincide. The theologian is keenly interested in the teachings of a Religion, while the psychologist is also interested more or less in the moral content of a Religion, namely in how it manifests itself in human behavior and its effect on him. In this light, Lacan himself understood that during Psychoanalysis—whether it took the form of his own technique or Freudian Psychoanalysis—he observed and participated in thoughts and feelings, which were imbued with a very intense way from the religiosity of the examinee, something that C. Jung similarly had observed: Studying neuroses, he studied religion. After all, Freud was the first to conceive of the relationship between the two.

Erich Fromm comes to agree with Lacan and at the same time disagrees with Freud, who interpreted religion as a collective childish neurosis of humanity, reversing—like Lacan—this claim and interpreting it as a neurosis form of private religion. That is why Lacan will not take a second step to characterize the psychotic and the neurotic as the bearers of religion and to say that all religious people are psychotic.

Lacan, however, unlike Fromm and Freud, did not talk somewhere verbally about the authoritarian form of religion, but from the context, we can reach certain conclusions. The key element of authoritarian Religions and authoritarian religious experience is submission to a transcendental power, a power greater than man. The most elementary virtue of this type of faith is submitted. This was basically the type of religion that Freud ignited, the monotheistic religion of the Old Testament, that he had in his mind, something that could characterize today the way with which the theology of Calvinism developed. In dominant religion, God is a symbol of power and strength. He is the supreme power, while man is utterly weak and dependent upon him. It obviously has political implications, linked for example, with Hitler and Stalin, and their authoritarian governments. In states where human life has no value and where the authoritarian position of the ruler has been ideal, which is so abstract and so distant that one can hardly find any connection with life and people, such as is in fact. On the one hand, the Aryan race is hematologically invulnerable, on the other hand the courageous proletariat. For this reason, Lacan will most probably stop at Marxism and not continue on the practical implications of Leninism and Stalinism¹⁴.

On the contrary, humanist Religions, according to E. Fromm, are precisely those that Psychoanalysis would approach sympathetically, such as for example, are the Buddhism of the first years, the teaching of Socrates, of Christ and the Pantheism of Spinoza¹⁵. Spinoza specifically has catalytic influences on Lacan. Consequently, the theology of Freud is so different and heterogeneous

¹⁴ In recent years, and especially after Žižek's approach to Lacanian Psychoanalysis, there has been a new term in the vocabulary of Political Philosophy: Lacanian-Marxism (like Freud-Marxism); J. M. Rabate, *The Cambridge companion to Lacan*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2003, pp. 153-154.

¹⁵ J. Lacan, "captured" by the phrase of B. Spinoza "Desire is the essence of man", and which he will classify as a guide for his own psychoanalytic version. Here, according to A. Vergote, there is another great difference between Freud and Lacan, in the level of desire, and the difference lies in the fact that Freud operates with a causal dependence on the past.

from that of Lacan. Freud focuses on the principle of the Old Testament Law, which is written in the spirit of authoritarian religion. God is the sovereign and patriarch of the tribe and creates man for his own pleasure. Lacan treats a humane religion, Roman Catholic Christianity, which is based on the New Testament. Lacan, then, immediately recognized that people's faith and feelings are rooted in their character and that it is shaped by the overall religious, economic, social and political context that prevails within the *Symbolic*. Lacan will not stop after revealing these psychological processes—which, in a way, underpin religious experience—but proceeds to discover the conditions that lead to the development of authoritarian or, conversely, humanitarian religion, respectively, from which the various kinds of religiosity and religious experience derive.

We have seen some basic points, which form the foundations of the psychoanalytic edifice, with Freud's theoretical framework first and Lacan later, demonstrating the multidimensional structure of the human personality, the dynamics of the functions that compose the various psychic phenomena, and its role language network in the development and evolution of the subject. Lacan, extending the Freudian view, presents, in an inventive way, the *unconscious* to be structured as a language, to have a series of mechanisms similar to those that structure the network of *signifiers*, highlighting as a feature the discontinuity, the inadequacy and the lack of coherence between in these two systems. The conceptual dimensions in the works of Freud and Lacan have common points of reference in terms of the intense action of the individual to make his desires known and to fulfill them.

Lacan, symbolizing and theorizing the entire psychoanalytical development hitherto known, was the cornerstone of the transformation of Psychoanalysis in science. He was not only the most important psychoanalyst since Freud's time, not only a milestone in the further examination of psychoanalytic structures and the structures of religiosity, but also something else, broader, more positive and more critical. Lacan influenced the course of Theology itself at the start of the postmodern era. Lacan's positions will be an indicator not only of the course of the innate branch of the Psychology of Religion, but also, more broadly, of the change of a *paradigm*, according to the Th. Kuhn concept, which it would finally lead us to understand where God Himself is hidden within the mental structures of the human psyche and to reconsider and perhaps reinterpret—without any disposition to rationalize faith (which would obviously be in vain)—our relationship with God himself.

Let us keep, in conclusion, that the god of Lacan did not die, but in a state of "anesthesia", i.e. *Sabbathism*. Lacan showed particular respect for the phenomenon of religiosity and developed an almost anti-Freudian reading of the phenomenon, to the extent that he recognized that he had the ability to stabilize, transmit, and solidify critical stories from the *Symbolic* level itself. After all, his postmodern discourse and belief that the path to truth has many "ways" almost compelled him to use traditional arguments about how religion might be a beneficial factor. It largely denies the Freudian-Darwinian view that we should cut off everything that is considered prescientific. Lacan placed the psychoanalyst

in the place of the Great Other, for this is exactly how he resembles the desire of the analysand.

Finally, another important question arises from our study: Since Psychoanalysis as a practice was to be a creation closely linked to the Jewish Tradition, due to the cultural context of the life of its founder, it is also an atheistic practice, a practice that is not necessarily atheistic, but a practice that does not "seek" involvement with theological and religious events, and is nevertheless excluded from theological discourses. Why is Lacan insisting on coming back to religion? For, for Lacan, the psychoanalytic discourse, the discourse of Psychoanalysis is, doubtless, colored by what it seems to reject, that is to say by religion; that is, where holiness itself is based, of which Lacan speaks, and at the basis of which is this "strange" phenomenon, called "*jouissance*". In other words, their pleasure, pain and unease are no different, and where the singularity of Christian love emanates; there, again, exactly, that the pleasure and the love of the Other will occupy the space of the lost—not the phallus, but the breasts—of the holy Good of Sicily¹⁶.

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¹⁶ St Agathi of Sicily (235-261 AD) underwent a mastectomy by the prefect Quintinianum as a result of her refusal to renounce Christianity in order to become his wife. Lacan refers to it in his second seminar. Here it is used in the light of the relationship between God and the female *Jouissance*, as correlated by Lacan in his late phase. Indeed, in the 1972-3 Seminar, Lacan uses the term "God" as a metaphor, i.e. as the replacement of one signifier by another, for the "great Other".