

Racism, Homosexuality, and Paranoia

Dr. Gilbert Diatkine

Racists, like delusional people, feel as if they are victims of a plot hatched by invisible adversaries, who surround them from all sides, seeking to strip them of their means, to penetrate them, and against them they must defend by any means possible, perhaps even by murderous violence. But racists are not generally mentally ill people. In 'Some neurotic mechanisms in jealousy, paranoia and homosexuality', Freud highlights that delusional jealousy is a 'an attempt at defence against an unduly strong homosexual impulse' (Freud, 1922, p. 273) [1]. Homosexuality is thus radically rejected, and a new neo-reality is created. Can one envision that this hypothesis may apply to a universal disposition of the human spirit, out of which both racism and paranoia could be born?

But how is it that homosexuality is so poorly tolerated among paranoid people, while it can be accepted and even claimed in other conditions? Freud always refused to see homosexuality as perverse or as a neurosis (Freud, 1905, p.30. n.13 added in 1915). An answer to this question may be that in accepted homosexuality, there is still another party that limits the danger of being totally invaded by the other. On the contrary, in delusional homosexuality, the other is fused with the primary object and its intrusion can no longer be limited. In the homosexual fantasy of paranoid people, as in the fantasies of delusional racists, nothing can stop the invasion by the object. The stranger infiltrates everywhere, the person of the superior race is humiliated, robbed, and mistreated by an enemy over whom they have no hold.

Three theoretical concepts speak to this fusion of primary objects.

Three concepts of the fusion of primary objects

1. In the 'combined parent fantasy' described by Melanie Klein, the person is subjected to a destructive coitus by a father in the inside of a mother who is herself subjected to a constant and dangerous coitus by the father. It is impossible to call for one of the parents to protect them from the other because they are inextricably linked. In fantasizing of being passively delivered from the sadism of the father, the subject can hope to find a primary lost maternal object there, to which the image of the father is bound (Klein, 1940, p. 366).
2. According to Lacan, the primary object is the first source of all anxieties, that of being neutered by the father, or of being devoured by the object. But in the regard of the Other, the child sees that they themselves are not enough to fulfill the mother, and that something exists outside of the child that the mother doesn't have, and excites her desire: the father's phallus. For Lacan, the phallus only appears as what the Other lacks, as in castration, which Lacan denoted with the symbol (Lacan, 1962-1963, p. 53 and p. 197). To find the primordial object without being devoured by it, the person must on their own form this missing phallus, fecalized, which Lacan calls *object a*. The subject then becomes the 'cause' (and not the 'object') of desire of the Other, and provokes their 'pleasure' (and not their 'orgasm') (Lacan, 1970, p. 67, p. 215).
3. According to Winnicott, by acting as a 'mirror,' the mother 'presents the object' to the child. She creates the transitional space in which the child can 'use the object' and have the subjective feeling of having created the object (Winnicott, 1971, p. 154). The loss of such a containing-object mirror causes the disappearance of the transitional space. The distance between the mother and the object that she presents is thus abolished.

Schreber

In his *Mémoires*, Presiding Judge Schreber describes how the absence of his wife for a period of four days transformed his severe depression into delirium for which he was hospitalized under the care of Père Flechsig for three months. During this period, his wife came to see him twice daily for several hours, and had eaten lunch together with him each day (Schreber, 1903, p. 51).

From then on appeared the first signs of communication with supernatural powers, particularly that of nerve-contact with Professor Flechsig kept up with me in such a way that he spoke to my nerves without being present in person. (Schreber, 1903, p. 52) [2]

When his wife returned, Schreber demanded that she cease her visits, so that she wouldn't see him in that state. One can imagine that up until that point, Madame Schreber served a purpose of Holding for her husband. In the social reality, as in Schreber's delusion, Flechsig was the main character. But Schreber's libidinal investment in Flechsig may only have been possible because his image was 'presented' to the patient by his spouse.

It's almost as if Madame Schreber had, while leaving, taken away the image of Schreber and all treatment aspects of the Clinic, bound together in an unbreakable way.

As for the loss of his wife for Schreber, it is sometimes possible to identify the loss of a containing mirror object who is the departure point for delusional antisemitism.

Goncourt

Starting in 1884, Edmond de Goncourt became a raging anti-Semite, who endorsed the calls for death of Jews from the anti-Semite leader Edouard Drumont (Goncourt, T.III, 17 March 1887, p. 22). Previously, Goncourt was an avant-garde artist. He supported Baudelaire and Flaubert against imperial censure. Open to foreign cultures, he was part of the group of connoisseurs that introduced Japanese artists in the West. He shared the prejudices of his time, and was an anti-Semite just like Balzac, Georges Sand and Flaubert: he made anti-Semitic remarks, supposedly spiritual, and had excellent Jewish friends.

In the psychic life of Edmond de Goncourt, his younger brother Jules occupied a unique place. Almost all of his novelistic and theatrical body of work was co-directed with Jules. The *Journal des Goncourt* [*The Goncourt Journal*] is written in the first-person singular. The two brothers dictated it as one sole voice starting in 1851, but Jules did the writing. Contrary to Edmond, Jules had relationships with their family, and an exuberant sexual life, which happened to earn him general paralysis (a form of neurosyphilis) from which he died in 1870 (Ibid., T.II, p. 243). Edmond gives precise details about the way in which he grieved by internalizing specific parts of his brother, namely his sexual freedom. However, the internalization of the mirror object that Jules represented for his brother did not suffice to maintain Edmond's narcissistic equilibrium. He needed an exterior environment that could substitute for his brother. He found it by becoming part of the young writers of the future that Gustave Flaubert gathered around him: Zola, Tourgueniev, Daudet and Goncourt. After the death of Flaubert in 1880, this group, ravaged by rivalries, dissolved. Goncourt then found a new containing mirror object in the entourage of Alphonse Daudet. When he met Daudet for the first time, Edmond identified details that reminded him of his brother. But in 1884, Daudet also contracted neurosyphilis (Ibid., T.II, p. 1806) and suffered from horrifyingly painful emaciation (Ibid., T.II, p. 1806).

Goncourt thus replaced Daudet with Edouard Drumont as a containing mirror object. Edouard Drumont, who would publish *La France Juive* [*Jewish France*] in 1886 played an essential role in the rise of murderous antisemitism in France. Goncourt remained a militant anti-Semite, up until he created his own containing object, in the form of the 'Académie Goncourt', a group of young writers of

whom he was the Master, and he would designate annually the young writer who would be the writer of the future that he would have liked to be. Every year, by buying the novel that received the Prix Goncourt prize in large quantities, the French people contribute to the posthumous narcissism of Edmond de Goncourt.

Céline

After having been a conformist adolescent, Céline was damaged by the first conflicts of the first World War and seemed to lose all of his illusions at once. He emerged from the wars of 1914 as a cynic disillusioned by everything, who unscrupulously abandoned the women who loved him when he no longer needed them. In 1932, he suddenly became a leading writer with his novel *Voyage au bout de la nuit* [*Journey to the End of the Night*]. He created an absolutely new way of writing. Through meticulous work on written language, he gave the reader the illusion of spoken language, and he transformed the events that he experienced into an expressionist and magnified form.

Céline had for a long time been distant from the extreme right and from anti-Semitism. He was repulsed by the rise of Hitlerism, he had Jewish friends, and was very interested in Freud. His turn towards anti-Semitism occurred in June 1936. He unexpectedly took up Hitler's programme of the annihilation of the Jews. He published three extremely violent anti-Semitic books one after the other: *Bagatelles pour un massacre* [*Trifles for a Massacre*] (1937), *L'école des cadavres* [*School for Corpses*] (1938) and *Les beaux draps* [*A Fine Mess*] (1941). During the German occupation of France, his anti-Semitism was so exaggerated that he ended up causing even the worst fascists to worry.

What happened to him? In 1936, Céline published *Mort à crédit* [*Death on Credit*], which, after the enthusiasm brought about by *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, was very poorly received by critics, both on the left and the right. In this novel, Céline paints a frightening expressionistic tableau of his childhood and adolescence, which contrasts astonishingly with the banal quotidian reality that his letters reveal. Céline had a pampered childhood, in a conventional and relatively well-off family. This transformation is part of the art of Céline, but one can easily imagine the trauma that reading *Mort à crédit* could have been for his mother. Céline didn't have more than a distant relationship with her, but he could have experienced negative critiques like that which his mother could have told him after reading *Mort à crédit*.

Furthermore, for the first time in his life he had not abandoned a mistress, but was left by one, Elizabeth Craig, who he would pursue in vain all the way to Los Angeles. My hypothesis is that these simultaneous narcissistic losses crippled the solution that Céline had found to overcome the trauma of the war. This trauma itself would have brought forward an adolescent crisis that would not have occurred during his adolescence.

The literary work of Céline alone was not enough to maintain his narcissistic equilibrium. It should have been validated by the opinion of the public that held value to him. Not the public at large, who he disdained, and who received *Mort à crédit* very well, but his family, who he misrepresented and recreated in the book, the literary critics, and his mistress, Elizabeth Craig. Failing, he created himself a new reality in which the Jew infiltrated everywhere and sought to sodomize him.

Racism and paranoia

To summarize, the features that racism and paranoia have in common can be found in the loss of the containing environment, which quietly provides for the subject the function of the mirror, of holding, of handling, and of the presentation of the object. These are often the environments of our daily life that

silently accomplish this function: the closing of a business, the defeat of an army, the decadence of a social class all represent for many individuals the loss of a maternal containing object, which guaranteed their identities and their position relative to their Ideal of Self. Regression to masochistic position of passive submission to a terrifying object is a last resort to recover the primary maternal object to which he is bound in the fantasy. As in paranoid delusion, racism is a projective defense against this masochistic homosexual fantasy.

References

- Céline L.F. (2009). *Lettres*, edition published by Henri Godard et Jean-Paul Louis. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pleiade, Gallimard, 2009, 2034 pp.
- Freud, S. (1905). *Trois essais sur la théorie de la sexualité* [*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*]. (Fr. trans. B. Reverchon-Jouve). Paris: Gallimard, 1923.
- Freud, S. (1911). Remarques psychanalytiques sur l'autobiographie d'un cas de paranoïa (*Dementia paranoides*) [Psycho-analytic notes on an autobiographical account of a case of paranoia]. (Fr. trans. Marie Bonaparte and R. Loewenstein. (Le président Schreber) in *Cinq psychanalyses*. Paris: PUF, 1954.
- Freud, S. (1922). Sur quelques mécanismes névrotiques dans la jalousie, la paranoïa et l'homosexualité [Some neurotic mechanisms in jealousy, paranoia, and homosexuality]. (Fr. trans. D. Guérineau). *Névrose, psychose et perversion*. Paris: PUF, 1973.
- Goncourt, E. & J. de (1956). *Journal* [*Journal*]. Paris: Fasquelle et Flammarion, 1956. New edition, Robert Laffont, Paris: Coll. Bouquins, 1989.
- Klein, M. (1940). Le deuil et ses rapports avec les états maniaco-dépressifs [Mourning and its relation to manic depressive states]. (Fr. trans. M. Derrida). *Essais de psychanalyse*. Paris: Payot, 1967.
- Lacan, J. (1956). D'une question préliminaire à tout traitement possible de la psychose [On a preliminary question to any possible treatment of psychosis]. *Ecrits*. Ed. du Seuil, Paris, 1966.
- Lacan, J. (1962-1963). *Le séminaire, X, L'angoisse* [*Seminar X: Anxiety*]. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2004, 389pp.
- Schreber, D.P. (1903). *Mémoires d'un névropathe* [*Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*]. (Fr. trans. P. Duquenne and N. Sels). Paris: Seuil, 1975.
- Winnicott, D.W. (1971). Le rôle de miroir de la mère et de la famille dans le développement de l'enfant [Mirror-role of Mother and Family in Child Development]. (Fr. trans. Cl. Monod and J.-B. Pontalis). In *Jeu et réalité*. Paris: Gallimard, 1975.
-

[1] As translated into English from the German by James Strachey.

[2] From *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, as translated into English from the German by Benjamin Gregg.

Translation: Benji Muskal