



Il «mistero del corpo parlante»

Le «mystère du corps parlant»

O «mistério do corpo falante»

The «mystery of the speaking body»

El «misterio del cuerpo hablante»

From the Body in Joint Ownership to the Speaking Body

We have learnt from the very beginning of Lacan's teaching that the body does not exist unless it is being spoken. As early as the mirror stage, the child does not anticipate itself in the image that it receives unless some speech is also there in order to indicate to the child that it is this other one (limits of the imaginary). What is thus described is the condition, necessary, yet not sufficient, to avoid Narcissus' sad ending, that of having drown in his own reflection.

Not sufficient because no speech can constitute a body habitat that has no failure (limits of the symbolic), thus disclosing, in the fiasco of its own design, the impossibility to totally reduce the living (persistence of the real).

The fact that the body is speaking, that it is a speaking body, is a more recent inference, which does not invalidate what has just been pointed out, but, on the contrary, which allows to discover some new resources apt to orient us when we deal with an ordinary clinic, and moreover to renew its carrying out.

We can thus reread this excerpts from "*Two Notes on the Child*" written by Lacan in October 1969: "(the child) saturates the mode of the lacking where the desire (of the mother) is specified, by taking the place of this object (*a* in the maternal fantasy), {...} giving thus a body to this desire, and making it exist {...}. The somatic symptom (of the child) gives a maximum of guarantee to this un-acknowledgement (of the mother with respect to her own truth) {...}. The result being that the child is exposed to a greater compliance within the fantasy, according to what it gradually presents as real".¹

Based on what remains unknown in the Other's desire, occasionally the maternal Other, the subject finds itself divided, in return, by its own lack. Therefore, the child that Lacan is referring to in his "*Notes*", the one who encounters a mother whose lack it saturates with its somatic symptom, believes that it knows what this mother wants. It offers to this Other "who is there" – too much, maybe – states Lacan,² (yet not too much there), this bit of a body which dysfunctions, and it gets in return the answer which only the need conditions (the need to be protected, writes Lacan in the "*Notes*"). The fixation of jouissance that results from this cyclical functioning could be situated at the juncture between the imaginary and the real, where Lacan places, in his *Seminar II*, lesson of January 26, 1955, the differentiation between the self-closure of the subject, a strictly narcissistic position, and its aperture to the desire of the Other.

¹ Lacan J., "Two Notes on the Child", in *Other Writings (Autres écrits)*, Seuil, Paris 2001 and in *Ornicar ?* no. 37, April/June 1986, pp. 13-14).

² Lacan J, The Seminar. Book XI. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*.

However, the passage from one position to the other supposes that separation succeeds to alienation.

If we make a leap of several years, in his text titled "*The Third*", as well as in the seminars following it, Lacan places the jouissance of the Other at the intersection between the registers of the real and the imaginary.

The child which is mother sick will be caught up in a jouissance which cannot be distinguished from that of the Other. It inhabits the body of the child as a lessee, while it is the Other who is the beneficial owner. As for the child, it has a hard time disappearing from the enclosed field of the fixation (alienation) in order to reappear only among signifiers that represent it (separation). Lacan refers here to an impossible *aphanisis* as a condition of desire rather than as fear of its absence.

Nevertheless, the mystery remains, and it can be implicitly deduced from the "*Notes*". There is no common destiny that apply to similar situations; the drive towards life in itself is an indeterminate fact. Obviously, a child who finds itself caught in an exclusive bond to its mother can succumb to debility even more than what is the case by mere structure, or it can 'choose' the indecision of psychosis. Yet, in addition, the small '*parlêtres*' can, one by one, extract themselves from this clutch, which is never total, since they are confronted with the Other jouissance, the one which exceeds the phallic jouissance and is never saturated by any object, allowing thus for a doubt to subsist as to the total maternal satisfaction. Based on that, and also on an obscure decision of the being, the child can transform its somatic symptom into a "body event", that is into a symptom of the speaking body; and more than that, if it is structurally necessary, it can transform it into a *sinthome* tying in a borromean knot and in a particular way the three registers, beginning with the knots of the imaginary and the real.

Martine Menès
(trad. Radu Turcanu)