

XI International Rendezvous of the Forums VII International Encounter of the School of Psychoanalysis of the Forums of the Lacanian Field

09-12 JULIO | 2020 |

Paseo La Plaza - CABA
Av. Corrientes 1660

Buenos Aires
Argentina

So that there be a body...

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With the title I want to underline in the first place that the body is not at the point of entry. *Having* a body seems to be obvious, and yet this is so only for whoever has it. The question is that the body may come to be – or not –, may be constituted – or not – from the point where *the infans* has not yet built a body. The reference to the prematurity of the human creature as an explanation for this ‘not yet’ is not at all sufficient, as this is not only a matter of development.

Strictly speaking, *infans* is not subject. The subject requires the support of a body, and at the same time the subject makes the body; but the subject is so only by being represented by a signifier for another signifier, that is to say, within the discourse: we can maintain that one is in language by virtue of a saying of the Other, without a choice and from point zero on the part of the *infans*; but the entry into discourse is subject to the contingency of some encounters and the choice of a response to these encounters which may be ‘yes’ or ‘no’, or silence. Subject, then, the *infans* is not. An individual... he/she is not either, since ‘individual’ refers to the One, to the unit and the indivisible: it is clear that the individual requires the recognition of him/herself as singular, and that this recognition is only possible from the perspective of the alienation-separation on the basis of which he/she can be counted as one among other ones. The *infans* would be close to a bunch of fragments than to something unitary. It is evident that he/she is not *parlêtre* either, since this requires the coalescence in the *materialité* of *la langue* of the signifier (which is of the Other) and *jouissance* (which is of the One). The term ‘organism’ is not satisfactory either, be it because of its aspect of simple ‘living being’, as the ensemble of the organs of the animal body, or because of its proximity to the organic – to the organized. At any rate, the *infans* has what he has as a body in so far as he/she is recognized as human, as being *one of us*, looked at from the perspective of some *parlêtres*, but still in need of what Colette Soler has called ‘a second birth’¹, for which – I insist – an encounter (which as such is contingent) and a choice are necessary. Here a question arises: from where, from which point is this choice produced? Even if this question may only indicate that one may choose not

¹ Soler, C. *El en-cuerpo del sujeto*. G. G. Ediciones, p. 123.

to respond and thus remain outside the chain, outside discourse², in the last analysis this second birth supposes, implies, the demand. I do not know whether there is a term that would be more appropriate than *infans*, but it does not matter, as what interested me at the time was to begin from the start and pose a few questions about what a body is.

I keep going with the title, and immediately one can perceive that it requires a continuation, and this is clear: ‘So that there be a body...’ What? What are the necessary conditions, and which are the sufficient ones? The little I have said so far outlines a frame for the ‘body’, a position from which it is possible to say that ‘there is one’, that ‘one has one’, even if for the time being it is only through negative definitions: it is not a subject, it is not an individual it is not a *parlêtre*, it is not only a living organism... yet the body needs the subject as the subject needs the body, and the same could be said of the individual and the *parlêtre*. As for the organism, which appeals to the living, this does not come alone, as the first birth includes the human milieu in which it is produced, the Other of language for whom that organism, already *infans*, comes to occupy the place of a link in the generational chain, and about him/her many things have been said.

We are then situated in the space that extends from the first to the second birth – or in the autistic subject, who could appear to have remained frozen there. I do not have experience in the work with *infans* who become child subjects after coming out of the second birth³, but I do have clinical experience with young Kannerian or ‘prototypical’ autistic subjects⁴ and have wondered about the use of certain concepts and their pertinence: I refer to terms like drive, object (for example, there are references to the retention of the voice as object in the autistic subject⁵, or to the autistic object) or jouissance. In reality these terms are always included in the subject’s semantic space, and its usage makes us difficult to think, in their originality, some phenomena that we observe when working with autistic subjects, since in the space between births neither the real nor the imaginary have been holed by the symbolic.⁶ We should not then speak of drive⁷ when there is no articulated demand, and consequently we should not speak of

² This is clearly seen in autism, where the ‘outside discourse’ takes the form of a ‘without grammar’, which is patent in the means of communication that an autistic subject may employ (from verbal signs – like delayed echolalia – to the use of images, passing through signs on the body).

³ This birth is simultaneous with that of the (barred) Other and that of the body in its dimension of continent – of imaginary unit – and in its dimension of enjoying substance – ordained by the phallus into the drive machinery.

⁴ Cf. Laurent Mottron, *L'intervention précoce pour enfants autistes*. Ed. Mardaga, Brussels, 2016. Mottron distinguishes between a prototypical autism that resembles the type described by Kanner very much, and an autistic syndrome that is associated with a variety of genetic or neurological disorders. His contributions are interesting, despite his prejudices against psychoanalysis as a tool for the treatment of autistic subjects.

⁵ Maleval, J.-C. (2011) *El autista y su voz*. Ed. Gredos [among other works].

⁶ In fact, when we think about the lived experience of autistic subjects in the light of the three registers we face a few problems, since it is for us impossible to think of a real that is not holed, limited by a sufficiently consistent imaginary and symbolic. And yet we are witnesses to a wild real, not at all ‘domesticated’, not at all civilized... even if we can distinguish a few imaginary symbolic elements – such as what somewhere I called ‘dialogical cells’, made of two or three or even more elements that do not form a signifying chain in the structure, that is to say, do not move towards symbolization. Despite the absence of symbolization, these ‘dialogical cells’ and some autistic montages manage to constitute a precarious barrier and false hole in the real, whose irruption, without that barrier, manifests itself occasionally as anxiety, as horror of the unbearable, and usually as the impossibility raised to an unlimited power of the relation with the semblables: in this sense, it can be appreciated that the crossing over of that impossibility can only be contingent and fragmentary.

⁷ Although we cannot speak of a ‘montage’ of the drive, we observe in its place other montages – sometimes relative to the holes of the ‘body’ as well, and other times relative to circuits that have their starting points and their ends in the sensitivity of other zones.

object (nor of the object of the drive, or of the object of desire, or the object as cause), nor of jouissance ('jouissance is something that is certainly experienced, but as modified by the signifying operation'⁸).

Perhaps some of the questions that this prelude opens may develop a trajectory in our rendezvous.

See you in Buenos Aires!

Translated by Leonardo S. Rodríguez

⁸ Soler, C. (2013-2014) *¿Humanización? Curso 2013-2014. Los Pliegues de la Biblioteca*, No. 5 [a publication of the EPFCL-FFCLE- F9], p. 31.