Jouissance of the word, jouissance of the body

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The random encounter of the body with the signifier

In Lacan’s teaching and in the psychoanalytic practice itself, there is a dialectic that goes from the subject to the parlêtre, that is, from the dead subject in the signifier chain to a being who speaks, a living being that depends on the existence of a body. He speaks and is spoken.

In general, we start with an urgent demand for which the word is necessary, to later stumble upon the remainders, the residues left by the extraction of meaning. The clinic highlights again and again Freud’s first psychoanalytic truth: we speak without knowing. The enunciated never coincides with the enunciation; we speak with the body and without knowing. With Lacan we include the dimension of the real, verifying the impossibility of inscribing the relation, mainly the sexual relation, between two bodies of different sexes. With Freud and Lacan we realize that when we enquire into the body, we arrive at the notion of satisfaction. Mankind has a body affected by signifiers that finds different types of known or unknown satisfaction. Jouissance is the result of the random encounter of the body with the signifier, an encounter that mortifies the body but at the same time slices into the flesh of the living which animates the mental world. Satisfaction is always in play, both cause and search, in the analytic experience.

We have followed J-A. Miller’s precise indications in the course “Analytic Subtleness” to locate the events of the body as soon as they are not just mere body facts. They produce
memorable moments, unforgettable traces, an advent of jouissance, fixations that do not cease to demand the symbolic deciphering of the unconscious. In the same way that there is a body that speaks, there is a body that does not speak, that enjoys the silence of the drive. It is with this speaking body, that we are spoken and which produces the analytic symptom. From these premises and with a clinical example, we will accentuate how the analytic practice is a short-circuit that passes through meaning, a copulation of language (seat of the unconscious), with one’s body[1].

**Women and words**

1. Feminine sexual jouissance allows for an understanding that the body itself becomes an “out-of-body”. Jacques-Alain Miller’s appreciation is interesting when he points out that in women the jouissance is contained in the body itself, unless that body is other for the subject[2]. A body out of itself, subject to a certain number of opening and unlimited phenomena.

The question of women’s otherness implies being other, even for herself. As women incarnate the difference as such, it leaves them with an essential emptiness that may make them very dependent on the man’s phantasy. It is a void that needs love, and love needs words, although women do not know what they want, but they do wish for words.

Women, in general, like to talk and of course being listened to. Many women are very good at detecting the “I am thinking of something else” look in their partner’s face, something quite masculine by the way. Men fill their void with thoughts, even more so if they are a bit obsessive.

Women love when men talk to them. An analysand, very passionate about his wife, used to complain that before going to the bedroom he had to pass through the living room. To talk. Until one day he discovered he could catch her by surprise on the way to the living room. A “living room” that lasted only for a while.

We say that the man, the left side of the formulas of sexuation, looks for a fetish object, silent and constant, inert, an element that can be found as One in the different partners. The object for women is Other, the women’s object is the Other who is not One and who is fundamentally speaking. It can be a letter, an online chat, a whatsapp message ... From the woman’s side, what the Other says is both a demand that concerns the object, and a complaint regarding what the Other says, or does not say.

The phantasy is valid for both sexes, but it has more weight for the man because it is similar to himself and, as mentioned above, mute. For the woman the Other of desire has to speak so that the subject can recognize her object.
**Porno tales**

Let’s take a vignette to recall, in our way, how the real of the social bond is the inexistence of that relation, the sexual one, and how to go toward the fact that the real of the unconscious is the speaking body. It is remarkable that there is no relation, means that the economy of jouissance is always substitutive, that there is no original, due to the fact that there is no totalizing drive, but that the jouissance of which the speaking being is capable is always the one not needed[3]. Just like the Freudian drive theory is Oedipal, the Lacanian jouissance theory responds to the not-All regime. Therefore, feminine sexuality is the one that opens the path that goes from truth to jouissance. If we follow the orientation that nothing is without jouissance, we will not propose its abandonment, but its displacement, its mutation, so it can be distributed differently[4].

A woman of a certain age, married for more than 35 years, meets her first boyfriend, Francis, again and starts an erotic relationship with him. Unlike her husband, the lover is impotent because of a prostate cancer operation. In spite of it, or perhaps partially because of it, she gets her first orgasm with him. And the following ones. At first, the ignorance and the surprise of this divine gift prevents her from formulating anything about this jouissance in analysis. Although caresses, kisses and toys had their importance, what heightened her libido were her lover’s words. He told her stories, a kind of a dirty storyteller, and in those spoken stories, very spoken, she incarnates the degraded, generally prostituted, characters. The tales of her teenage daydreams take the form of pornographic films, of Sadean tales: naked men and women, of no age. Men force women to fornicate over and over; they rape them; they touch their breasts; they squeeze the milk from their breasts. They are phallic and at the same time maternal breasts. After each encounter with her lover, she feels more beautiful, she climbs onto the pedestal and the world is aware of her change. Belle becomes Belle de Jour. An unconscious phenomenon, a confusion, invades the free association during a session, of this cultured woman, dedicated mother and grandmother, who finds herself as Belle de Jour. She forgets Catherine Deneuve’s name, and she confuses it with Jeanne Moreau’s. The analyst intervenes: You have made someone fall in love with you. “Francis desires me”, comes in the middle of the conviction of the maternal words, given to her all her life, about her being ugly and nobody would ever love her. Ever. Her marriage, for decades made her see how a man can desire her and love her, although the sentiments were not completely reciprocal, all it did was “save” her from the maternal insults. A life riddled with insults, since childhood, provoked by her, or not. “My husband has many faults, but he bet everything on me, that is why I married him”.

It is not a big effort for her, an analysed woman, to understand that the porn phantasies that excite her in the masculine phantasy contain the same words as the maternal insults. The body is penetrated by words.
The orgasm between the insult and the word of love

Hysterical fantasies, wrote Freud to Fliess in his letter on April 6, 1897, date back to what children heard in earlier times and only understood afterwards. In Delia, it was the signification of the first love, the one that had not been consummated, the one of the castrated lover, the one that allowed her to empty the injuring value of the maternal ravage and allow her to give herself to a man who has the value of the Other. It is because of this event that these words have woken up a new satisfaction with a surprising body event for her. She has the first orgasm in her life. The first felt orgasm after the age of 60 is described as “I was in another world, he caressed my vagina and I disappeared. His words were ‘give me, give me’ and I disappeared”. And there, when the injuring words of the mother are equivocal in the enjoy-meant of the phantasy, the body disappears. It is true that the most efficient jouissance is given by way of the misunderstanding from that heavy, ugly and rejected body, from the times when the mother threw objects at her, food in her face, as a response to some of her rebellions and/or resistances to the maternal excesses. It is interesting that, just like Lacan points out in Seminar 3, the annihilating injury is a culminating point, it is one of the peaks of the speech act, a rupture of the language system, but so is the loving word. An old unsatisfied demand has made itself heard in arrhythmic pulsations, driving her frequent desire to finish the relation with the lover, in the shape of a demand for unrequited love. The complaint now is that the man who made her enjoy until orgasm, does not love her. And the anguish surges. Lacan points out the close relation between orgasm and anguish, as in both cases there is an expectation from the Other. The orgasms continue, although not as intense as the first one, the one that took her by surprise. Strange wanderings, whose cause turns out to be the unbearable of an attained jouissance. It is the back and forth, the full and empty of the conjunction-dissjunction of love and jouissance.

The other, who now takes her into his porn phantasy jouissance, is and was a coward, she will say, because he does not take charge of his desire. The pedestal fades.

The choice of neurosis shows that the words bear on the activation of each one’s jouissance programme. We are spoken, Lacan asserts, and because of it, it is coincidences that push us, as if they were plotted (tramado). We believe that we say what we want, but it is what the others have wanted, more specifically our family, which speaks us. There is a plot (trama) and we call it our destiny. With the maternal injury, she obtained a jouissance of the word, with those displaced words, those orgasms. “My mother could spend months without talking to me, like Francis”, and that silence is when the injuries resound.

As a teenager, when Delia could not accede to the sexual relation in her love life with Francis, by impediment of her mother, a part of her phantasy acted. She lost her virginity at the age of 17 to an older man, a quasi-Marquis, whom she had not met before, introduced by her classmate, an older girl very experienced in the sexual field, who explained to her the details and delights of sex. “I played the whore role to provoke my
father”, an act which ended in the police intervening, and which initiated a permanent sexual anaesthesia. The traumatic scene of seeing her father handcuffed for beating the Marquis, emerges, and the testimony that entailed betraying or not betraying her father with her statements. This father, also “handcuffed” by the mother when he remained locked in the bathroom for hours each time his wife went crazy.

A mute, opaque jouissance, emerged beyond this experience and it is the trauma analyst who must make it speak. The body that gives consistency to the speaking being, occasionally speaks in a very silent way. Does this jouissance allow changes, modifications, mutations? We always ask ourselves how trauma mortifies and how it invigorates. In the same way as the maternal insults, once they are made equivocal and de-dramatized of their masochist component, are the basis of a phantasy that gives pleasure. The voice is condensed by the extraction of the object. Besides, there is the relation with the Other’s lack, with that place of the unlimited, of the ravaging partner. When the affair comes out into the open due to a “miscalculation”, her husband comes out to hit the lover, with words, and this way the “moribund savior” remains enlivened as the father does. For her. It is revealed that her symptom is located in accordance with her father’s symptom, mortified by his own prejudices, those that drove her mother crazy. As Miller brings up in the presentation of the next Congress in Rio, there is hysteria when there is the symptom of a symptom, when you make a symptom from another’s symptom.

In this way we see how the speaking body hosts, is constituted by, two jouissances, of the word and the body. The speaking body enjoys itself, it is enjoyed, and it also speaks in terms of drives.

To conclude

What begins as a jouissance game and perverse phantasies, cannot conclude in a demand for love, perhaps because of the same place where it had started, except in a loop that the body has marked in a new way. The experience of the orgasm as body event changes things forever. A revelation in the phantasy, the glory of the mark, can make the imaginary partner of the phantasy dissipate, make it erase itself to unblock the access to jouissance as impossible to negativise, so that the subject is not obliged to steal the jouissance in secret and that he or she can make a new alliance[9].

We have tried through the practice, to approach the fact that jouissance is not prior to the signifier, although it is of the body. To conjugate the body and language to make us enjoy, we have the dimension of the sinthome.

There is living proof that, even when things do not work, there is always the master signifier to appeal to. When things in life fail, and it sooner or later happens, the symptom
appears as a substitution to achieve satisfaction. The analytical experience shows that satisfaction can be obtained without so much suffering.

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