From the compass to the GPS between the sexes

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The ancient compass oriented in relation to a cardinal point, providing the coordinates with which we could localize ourselves. The Name of the Father was the north that has marked an age where the symbolic axes situated the subject. In fact, J.-A. Miller has already spoken about the disoriented[1] subject of our current epoch. Essentially, the compass is a device that, from one symbolic point, orders a series of coordinates – also symbolic – and determines the subject’s position in the field of the Other. However, our time proposes a technical device that guides us to the indicated place without the orienting pole and its respective coordinates. The GPS enters into our lives with a voice (feminine) that directs us to the designated point without us having any idea of our location. This voice usually has the modulations of our super ego and reprimands severely for any deviations and speeding, while recalculating the route. In the end, we know we arrived solely because we followed orders from a voice that does not allow for questions nor protests, so we have no inkling as to what is our situation with respect to the Other.

In the presentation for our next WAP Congress, J.-A. Miller shows by means of the presence of porn in our age, the “semantic vacuity” taken to the extreme of “degree zero of meaning”[2]. “Commonly,” says Miller, “the ceremony, on one side and the other of the
screen, is enacted without words, save the fakedsighs and gasps of pleasure”[3]. J.-A. Miller emphasizes the “the body-scopy”[4] of porn, but also highlights the presence of the voice and the lack of meaning in the sexual encounter. That semantic vacuity, characteristic of porn, could be thought of as an extreme of the relationship between the sexes “in the mores of the younger generations”[5]. These customs frame a style of “disenchantment, brutalisation and banalisation”[6]. Porn could be considered the paradigm of an age where what predominates is the lack of sense in the relationship between the sexes and the presence – often disquieting – of the object a. In fact, we recently saw a film, where the protagonist falls in love with an operating system, and maintains a relationship with a voice that guides him, like a GPS, down the supposed routes of love[7]. A love lacking in sense, where the body is ignored and the presence of the voice (feminine) guides the way. Indeed, Lacan points out “that one believes what she says. That is love”[8]. “The difference is nevertheless manifest between believing in it, in the symptom, and believing it. This is what makes the difference between neurosis and psychosis. In psychosis, the subject not only believes in the voices, but he believes them. “One believes her ... but one is blinded there”[9].There are certain dangers in believing in a woman, and what she says, to the point of making that belief a voice of the super ego that can drive the man in question crazy. Lacan compares neurosis and psychosis, but also the craziness of love. Craziness that can render the subject blind, following the super ego’s voice and love’s lack of sense. An issue we encounter more and more in our practice: men ravaged by the feminine voice that leads them blindly to unthinkable places.

At the same time, when Lacan touches on our current age, he reveals that “the objects a are everywhere, isolated, alone and always ready to surprise in the first encounter”[10]. I have highlighted the fact that these objects a can be found isolated and alone, to indicate that they are loose from the fixed relationship we suppose in each subject’s phantasy. In the phantasy “the subject, in so far as it is divided, has a certain relationship with the object a”[11]. A fixed relationship that acts as a compass in the encounters and mis-encounters with the Other sex. It is because the objects erupt, loose and isolated, that we can compare our current age to craziness. “The mass media, those errant gazes and capricious voices, that are very naturally destined to be even more present ... enter through the eyes and ears”[12]. This is the liberty of craziness, the crazy are free because they have the object ain their pocket. This means that the current epoch pushes toward a collision with the Other sex, not via the compass of a particular erotic condition, but rather by means of the GPS of the presence of the object a, loose, and lacking insense. J.-A. Miller’s presentation at the last congress opens multiple perspectives of research for our working community, and I wanted to take this opportunity to pause and reflect on what inspired me in his way of addressing the modes of social bonds between the sexes in our time.

Translated from the Spanish by Alejandro Betancur Velez

[1]Translator’s footnote: the word the author uses is ‘desbrujulado’ which is literally ‘decompassed’.
[7] I am referencing the film “Her, a love story”.