Speaking with your body-stepladder

Presentation of the fourth lesson of the seminar “Speaking Lalangue of the Body” by Éric Laurent

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On the 4th of February 2015, in the fourth lesson of his course “Speaking Lalangue of the body”, Eric Laurent explores the relation between the stepladder (escabeau) and sublimation, that was approached by Jacque-Alain Miller in his argument for the WAP Congress, taking as a starting point the reading of Lacan’s “Joyce the sinthome”. In Miller’s argument, this text is an orientation for deciphering what defines the speaking being, the body spoken and speaking, distinct from the Heideggerian being and also from the contemporary cognitive paradigm.

Miller introduces the stepladder as “the pedestal upon which the speaking being elevates himself, steps up to make himself beautiful.” It is what allows him to “elevate himself to the dignity of the Thing”. It is a reference to Seminar VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, where Lacan approaches the problem of sublimation, which consists in accounting for how the autoerotic jouissance of the drive goes in the direction of the desire of the Other.

For Miller, the sublimation of the stepladder is located in the intersection with narcissism. A modified narcissism, says Laurent, as it is not only a matter of the image, but of the relation of belief in the idolised body. For Lacan, the body comes first and it is marked by a trauma that Lacan calls trouma, a wordplay on ‘trauma’ and ‘hole’ (trou). In fact, the fundamental of the body is a hole and outside of it there is an image. The speaking being is a being of a void.

The belief in the body-stepladder is grounded on the negation of the unconscious: I do not think in order to believe in my being. However, the unconscious is the spoken knowledge which constitutes HOM, who has a body before the mirror stage, starting from the impact of the saying. It is a trauma outside of meaning, which provokes a saying without knowing. In the stepladder there is jouissance of speaking which includes meaning, while the jouissance of the sinthome excludes meaning. Thus, speaking with the body-stepladder is crossing through the
defiles of speech sustained by meaning. The speaking being is a being of speech; he is not sustained by the image or by the impression of the representations, nor is he incarnated in the brain.

Translated by Noga Wine