Lacanian Studies of the ECF

The Symptom Beyond the Hysterical Symptom – Lecture on “Joyce the Symptom”

Fabian Naparstek

In this second seminar, Eric Laurent comes back to the previous topic with respect to the term flesh and its difference with the notions of the living body or the physical body. From this, he seizes the opportunity to talk about Joyce and the body-symptom. In the first place, he puts forward one way of speaking Lalangue of the body, from the side of the phantasy as presented in Radiophonie. There he locates a mode of jouissance of a remainder outside the body, in the object a. However, he immediately clarifies that there is another version of Lalangue of the body— that of the symptom. That is, the new perspective of the symptom beyond the Freudian unconscious. At this point he draws on the opposition made by J.-A. Miller in his presentation of the next congress, between the symptom as a metaphor and the new version of the sinthome, in the last Lacan, as a body event. Having raised these points, he pauses on the definition given by J.-A. Miller of the hysterical symptom. Hysteria is defined as when “there is a symptom of the symptom, when you form a
symptom from ‘someone else's symptom’".[1] This definition derives from a passage of the text, “Joyce the symptom II” rewritten by Lacan. The symptom called hysteria, - according to Lacan - ... “is only interested in another symptom”, that is, “the hysterical symptom is the symptom for LOM to be interested in the symptom of the other as such”. [2]

At this point Eric Laurent rigorously analyses the investigation conducted by our colleague Carlos Rossi on the differences and events that determine J. Lacan’s seminar and revision of “Joyce the Symptom”. [3] Laurent goes back to the topic at hand, of the new conception of the symptom in its autistic character, and in this sense the disinterest that each one has for the symptom of others. Thus, there is a purity of the symptom in Joyce, and Lacan adds that this symptom “does not concern you in any way”[4]. Laurent then outlines the multiple consequences that can be extrapolated from these formulations with regards to Joyce, and finally he comes back again to hysteria and the aforementioned definition. It is interesting to see how he compares and differentiates the definition of an autistic symptom that concerns no one, with a hysterical symptom tied to the other by means of the love of the father.

In effect, it is thanks to the hysterical symptom, which connects to the other, that Freud could begin the psychoanalytic experience. In this specific point we are very close to the Freudian theory of the hysterical symptom and identification as the bond to the big Other, in chapter VII of Group Psychology. Prior to this, Eric Laurent distinguished the conception of the body according to Freud and later Lacan, focusing especially on the last teaching, in the body’s articulation to the three registers. This route, which begins with the imaginary body in Freud as a result of narcissism, ends with its modulations throughout Lacan’s teachings, as a sexuated body. There is a man’s and a woman’s body. Along the way he elaborates the first paragraphs of “Joyce le Symptôme”[5] which reveals a perspective on men and their truly precious bodies. Later he expounds on the different presentations of being versus having from the feminine perspective throughout J. Lacan’s teachings. This ends again in “Joyce the symptom II” and the phrase “having is being able to do something with”[6]. At this point, Eric Laurent clarifies that being able to itself not articulated to copulation, but rather to writing. Finally, he leaves us with an orientation as to what speaking Lalangue of the body means.

Translated by: Alejandro Betancur Velez


[3] Seedetails and precisions in the dialogue between Carlos Rossi and Jacques Aubert in Joyce the symptom (public group on Facebook coordinated by Carlos Rossi and Lorena Buchner).

