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Individual intervention

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Essays on the maternal function

There is, of course, a difficulty, both in psychoanalytic theory and in its practice, to conceive when and for what reason a mother might not manage to create the place of the Other for her baby or her child and, at the same time, why, once created, this role can disappear, without her realizing, either about its creation or its disappearance.

This is why we believe that the Other does indeed exist, the real as well as the symbolic, but that also, as something that is created, its very existence can be lost without a trace of the date of such an event.

It is not necessary, in our opinion, to appeal to the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father to explain this misfortune to us, literally speaking, because a subclinical melancholy in her and those around her, without actual loss, can be enough to bring about a withdrawal of investment from the baby, not yet or already born, and even from a child who already talks cheerfully and plays games related to his/her age.

It is indeed the desire for the child that creates the place of the Other, %, and it is this same desire that creates a cause: Φ . But stating as much does not resolve the question of who's

experiencing jouissance, and from what. Better yet, we haven't resolved why a relationship, (because, yes, there is one), that should be so satisfying, suffers from so many avatars, as if its stability, in a large number of cases, was always compromised.

Nevertheless, the letter Φ as the cause of jouissance has a double reading, without which it would not be useful for us in the search for what can happen during primary identification: it reads like an antinomy with a form of obligatory distribution. On the one hand as phallic signification on the mother's side towards the child, and on the other phallic jouissance on the child's side. Any manifestation of jouissance in the mother, which does not refer to any structure in particular, does not fail to manifest itself as a disturbance in the child, who will remain in the real, with no return of the repressed, like an object lodged in the Ego and the singular logic of his passions, without articulation to the signifier's chain.

When the opposite event occurs, when it is the phallic signification that fails in the mother and is not sufficient for the investment of the baby or the child, even though the latter has already passed the theoretical age at the end of the mirror stage, his/her demands become either unheard or super-ego demands for her, demolishing the remains of love which is transformed into duty or self-sacrifice. Obsessive armour or melancholy, manifest or not, make their entrance here. Secondary autism or adolescent psychosis find here their umbilication point.

In the two cases of Φ defect, we should appeal, not so much to the presence of the child's father, as to the generation of the mother's parents, to find a meaning for her that was non-existent until then.

If this is not the case, the invention of the Other, the task of giving him/her an existence disappear little by little from their mutual relationship, and although the mother is anchored in

the paternal function, the disappearance of Φ as the first Name-of-the-Father between her and the child seriously jeopardizes its transmission.

This is one of the great paradoxes of motherhood: a woman can be subject to the paternal function and, at the same time, not be able *to be the one that passes it down*.

The cause of the primary identification consists of an antinomy whose scriptures do not, however, have the same power. Phallic significance is the cause of the transubstantiation of maternal desire and love into phallic jouissance in the child's body. Here is the major turning point and principle of all the changes that Lacan brought to the psychoanalytic corpus. But the effects of this significance are not effective on autistic children or infantile psychoses.

Why?

Because it does not reach the baby, but remains within the limits of maternal narcissism.

This does not happen only in very serious cases, but also with those who come to neurosis insufficiently loved and above all, without knowing it, suffering from the logical consequences of what we call "the Other Trauma".

We could advance an explanation by appealing to Lacan's Set Theory statement (Seminar XVI), that the Other is *like* an empty set. You might ask: how? but doesn't the treasure of the signifier, the signifier's chain belong to the Other as they are? Indeed so, but without the empty set we would never reach them. They would be unattainable.

To count 1, +1, -1, it is necessary to add a parenthesis { } to the 0 of the empty set, and thus be able to count it as a set. A flaw in the mother's long-written desire for motherhood, which is articulated but not articulable, means that this set does not count the child as such, but only the mother as the desired child. This is why her desire only reaches her, the Other is

hardly created and the phallic significance does not reach the child as the agent par excellence of the cause of jouissance.

But if we are already talking about the One and its functions, then we are assuming that the S1 has come into play, foreclosing Φ of the cord to infinite, and closing in on itself twice on the symbolic and under the imaginary, will have the S1 written on the RS crossing. Real and Symbolic at the same time. We will never have access to this real except through the letter and its repetition.

The transition from primary to secondary identification is not logically necessary. It can be written, but happens one by one, in singular real times, which depend on the desire of the mother, the father and also of the child. If a place has been granted to him/her to go on writing a sentence that he/her has not started.

There is indeed, between mother and child, a request that no longer wants to be requested, a desire that can no longer be satisfied (Ch. Melman in "Les ailes d'Eros").

Although the mother may have been counted, in a contingent way, as "one" in the maternal and paternal desires, there is still a great deal of room for her to want to pursue this count, which seems insufficient to her, with each of her children, or at least one of them. The one who has been chosen to do this has been given to her by her own father, and therefore for herself, he/she belongs to her. The child is the impossible condition for belonging to herself.

With Lacan there's a powerful change between the first and the second theory of phallic denotation. All of which remain true depending on how we use them. The second makes it possible to think logically about childhood events that the first hardly allowed, but which remains true when the analysis makes it possible to weave a knot that supports the structure, causing

S1 to separate love from its incestuous meaning. Everyone, thereafter, can make the choice of preeminence between love and desire.

When we find ourselves faced with the disappearance of unconscious love for a child, we also find that its continuation is impossible: a father can hardly come between mother and child except to offer the child another love, if it's a girl, and the separation trait, if it's a boy.

The second theory of phallic denotation allows us to rethink the cases of mothers for whom children do not bring a cause of jouissance, but on the contrary, who take it away from them.

In short, Winnicott's subject throughout his life.

Translation : Carmela Uranga