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The Name-of-the-Father and the “Direction of the Cure”

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“The Direction of the Cure” — I’m talking about the 1958 text — surpasses the Freudian perspective of the analyst’s occupying in the cure the place of the father. With his confrontation of phallic identification, Lacan lays the grounds, for his ulterior developments concerning the “beyond Oedipus”.

“The Direction of the Cure” defines a new status for the subject, the barred subject, apprehended with reference to the articulation of signifiers, and no longer with reference to signification. From that point on, Lacan has its function as a want-to-be. This want-to-be leaves the place to “receive the complement of the Other”, which will become object (a). The subject’s want-to-be, situated at the heart of “the analytic experience, in the same field in which the passion of the neurotic is deployed”¹ defines the function of desire as central in the direction of the cure. The definition of the binary opposition demand-desire is established as early as “L’instance de la lettre”² with reference to the signifier and the signified. The Other of the signifier brought into play in the analytic experience is perceived through the demand. Regression is not to be situated as a return to the past, but as the return to the present of signifiers used in demands that have undergone prescription. The drive is situated in the interval between the signifiers of the demand and not in relation to the object. He writes this ($\$ \grave{a} D$), an S fading within the cut of the demand. Lacan identifies desire to a metonymy whose signified slides from signifier to signifier. The desire is that of a subject between two signifiers, a barred subject. The analytic interpretation that comes from the Other identifies the desire in what is said. By relating the desire of the subject to the desire of the Other, Lacan specifies that “it is as Other that he desires”, but the subject does not know that. To the subject’s “what do I want?” is substituted a “what do you want?” addressed to the Other from whom the subject expects in fact an oracle concerning his desire³. It will be formulated for the analysand in the sense of “a what does he want of me?”. The desire of the analyst as desire of the Other is what supports and makes possible the discourse of the unconscious; it is the operator of the direction of the cure from the bias of interpretation. This perspective takes its distance from the consistence of the Other in the Freudian transference. It also takes its distance from the perspective developed in “On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis”, in which the Other is conceived of as the whole of the signifying chain, which has the value of one, and whose consistence is assured by the Name of the father.

This text puts an end to the problematic of the desire for recognition, in favor of the recognition of desire⁴. The fundamental desire of the subject for Freud is to be the phallus for the Other. As Jacques-Alain Miller indicates⁵, “The Direction of the Cure” relocates the end of the analysis such as it was treated by Freud. It proceeds by discerning the identification of the subject to the phallic signifier beyond the imaginary signification. The obstacle that the castration complex constituted under the auspices of penis-envy for women and the refusal of castration for men is revealed as an effect of the position of the analyst as father that Freud occupied. If the Other embodied in transference is a father, he assures the consistence of the Other. The Freudian father tries to impose a norm on the *jouissance* of each of us. He knows what every one of us needs. Marriage, love and work are the paradigms. “The force of the subject’s phallic identification stems from the fact that it responds to the desire of the Other”⁶. When this Other in analysis has the consistence of the Name of the father, there is no reason for phallic identification to be doubted.

However, Lacan distinguishes the signifier of desire from the object of desire. The signifier of desire is the phallus. The object of desire is separated from it, or opposed to it. The case of the Three Card Monte tosser serves as a magisterial illustration. The dream of the lady responds to the demand of her lover. She does not believe in the fixity of her fantasy, but displaces it through her dream and

interprets it. Seeing herself endowed with a male organ does not prevent her from desiring it. She is subject to the want-to-be. The fact of having it provokes in her a desire. The demand of penis-envy apparently satisfied (having the phallus), this nevertheless makes way for a deep dissatisfaction. The dissatisfaction of the demand appears as constitutive of the object of desire. The object (a) has a relation with the dissatisfaction of the demand and also with the dissatisfaction of need insofar as it is articulated to the demand. The articulation of desire to demand, that is to say with a signifier, has for effect to bring into the open an object that is related to dissatisfaction⁷. The notion of fantasy presented here highlights the object of desire (and *jouissance*) qualified relative to the demand and the signifier. It operates in the symbolic, in the field of the Other and not only with respect to the imaginary.

The whole problem for Lacan will then be to articulate desire as the subject's want-to-be, the desire for nothing, with the status of the objects concerned. This is what led him to reflect upon the object that is in front of desire. In his ulterior elaboration, Lacan would say that it is not only the dissatisfaction of the demand that is in play, but the dissatisfaction of the drive. The object (a) as surplus *jouissance* will be articulated with reference to "the dissatisfaction of the drive", with respect to a want-to-be.

The direction of the cure opens the register of \bar{A} (barred A) by the desire of the Other formulated by the "what does he want of me?" discussed in "Subversion of the Subject" and shows the incompatibility, for the subject, of desire and speech. The progressive pinpointing of the fantasy and the object (a) during the 1960s discloses for the neurotic the position of *jouissance* he occupies beyond the phallic identification he remained fixed to with Freud. Lacan's renovation of the concept of fantasy implied its being crossing and revealed the disjunction of the Other and *jouissance*. By situating the place of the analyst with reference to the desire of the Other, of an Other that will always reveal itself as still more inconsistent, Lacan displaces the issue of the Freudian cure achieved in the Name of the father by revealing the particularities of the *jouissance* of each one of us.

Translation : Thelma Sowley

Footnotes

- ¹ J. Lacan « La direction de la cure », *Ecrits*, Paris, Seuil, p. 613.
- ² J. Lacan « L'instance de la lettre », *Ecrits*, Paris, Seuil, 1966, p. 524.
- ³ J. Lacan « Subversion du sujet et dialectique du désir », *Ecrits*, Paris, Seuil, 1966, p.824.
- ⁴ J. Lacan « La direction de la cure », *Ecrits*, Paris, Seuil, 1966, p. 623.
- ⁵ J.A Miller « Donc », 1993-1994 seminar, session of 22 June 1994.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ J. Lacan « La direction d la cure », *Ecrits*, Paris, Seuil, 1966, p.637.