

THE SYMPTOM IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

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What is the symptom? In the first place, it is the casket of a truth of the subject. Psychoanalysis interprets this thesis: within the symptom there is a truth of desire that the subject would like to know, indeed it is part of the very nature of the symptom to give a glimpse of this truth at the very moment in which it conceals it: a compromise solution in which an unconscious desire of the subject emerges encoded, in the light of consciousness or on the surface of the flesh. In the symptom, in its configuration and in its expressiveness, the story of the subject and his desire is drawn: the story of a truth repressed because it is uncomfortable, scabrous, often unmentionable. Not only, therefore, a sign of a malfunction of an organ of the body or a deviation from a supposed universal norm of health, as medicine conceives it, but a substitute formation, a symbolic metaphor, a clue to be interpreted, a truth to be revealed. It is a conception that attributes a hermeneutical value to the work of psychoanalysis and makes the resolution of the symptom a therapeutic goal.

However, Freud himself must admit that the symptom does not disappear, that one must surrender in the face of the persistence of suffering, the attachment of the subject to the repetition of his pain. In the end he realizes that not everything in the symptom is interpretable and that there is a limit to the production of meaning, which is potentially inexhaustible, but fruitless. In clinical practice, one must accept the irreducible hole of meaning at the heart of an analytic experience. The impasse of the unconscious structured as a language is the advent of the real unconscious, which accounts for the stopping point of infinite signification and the discovery that the symptom is not only a formation sensitive to decipherment and symbolic interpretation but is also impregnated with a real drive that repeats itself. Lacan, in the wake of what Freud had identified as an afterlife of the pleasure principle, calls it *jouissance*. This is why he invents a neologism: he speaks of the *varité* of the symptom, a term that condenses *truth* and *variety*, that is, the fact that the symptom presents itself with different aspects, as endowed with a meaning that can be interpreted and as *jouissance* that remains outside interpretation.

To approach this dimension of the symptom, it is necessary to move from a process of speech to one of writing where it is no longer the signifying chain, but the *letter* that makes a sign of how each person enjoys his unconscious. Analytic work therefore aims at a subjective elaboration of knowledge, the knowledge of those "fruitful" remains, which transforms the symptom and produces a peculiar form of satisfaction. It is easy to understand how the symptom is not a sign that makes the

subject fall into a certain clinical category, so to speak universal, but rather a sign of his singularity, of his being a One irreducible to anyone else, unique, although, in a structural sense, alienated from the Other and therefore entangled in a problem that is still unresolved: to authorize oneself to one's own desire, to be that One. On the one hand, the symptom makes the *parlêtre* unique and identifies it in its singularity, on the other hand, it is often felt and experienced, by that same *parlêtre*, as something foreign and senseless, a disorder that harms its narcissism and destabilizes it. This is how most of the time we come to the psychoanalyst, asking for help to get rid of a symptom that we complain about, but to which we are unconsciously attached. It is up to those who accept this question - to its act, to its tact, to its ethics, to what Lacan calls its *savoir-faire* - to ensure that the demand for healing (healing that is today expected or demanded quickly) is transformed into a desire to know, into a question about the meaning of that senseless and inopportune thing that is the symptom itself and about its grafting into the fabric of one's existence.

Lacan emphasised the historicity and at the same time the provocative nature of the symptom and forged a neologism, *hystorisation*, a play on words that brings together *historisation*, historicisation, and *hystérisation*, hysteresisation: the process of rewriting, of resignification *après coup*, in which the subject retraces the essential events of his life, moving in the space already marked by the Other, by his conditioning, by the contingent situation in which he finds himself thrown, which he has not chosen and which determines him. At the same time, Lacan also gave a name to the responsibility of the analyst in listening to the symptom, calling this responsibility the *psychoanalyst's desire*. It is a desire which, unlike all common desires, excludes any desire for enjoyment. It is not someone's desire for someone else, it is not intersubjective, but it is a desire *for* something, a desire that tends towards unconscious knowledge and a subjective truth that is unconscious or unspeakable. The analyst's desire is the antithesis of any psychological or psychotherapeutic approach that aims at an imaginary mastery over the Other or that, in the perspective of an ideal and/or universal good, obeys educational, normative, or adaptive ends.

Only this desire of the analyst can grasp the symptom as necessary, that is, as an intimate and singular figure of the subject, which allows the three registers of the imaginary, the symbolic and the real to be knotted together. On the one hand, an analytical path allows us to illuminate the symptom and to dispel some grey areas of reality, in other words to "know how to deal with" the symptom; on the other hand, to name the singular *jouissance* of the subject and, in so doing, to operate as a function of a loss of *jouissance* of the symptom, of a reduction of the solipsistic, self-centred satisfaction that is linked to it. This also means getting out of an analytical scene

stuck on the first traumatic mark of infantile jouissance, which marks the irreducible singular trait of subjective difference, to also access later forms of jouissance that reopen the games in the subject's life.

Translation
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