



The «mystery of the speaking body»

Il «mistero del corpo parlante»

Le «mystère du corps parlant»

O «mistério do corpo falante»

El «misterio del cuerpo hablante»

The Body Symptom

After having approached the symptom in its relations to truth and under the form of the metaphor, Lacan advances a definition of the symptom that is articulated with the body. The symptom is “an event of the body”¹. That the symptom is registered in the body is not a new indication in Lacan. It is present from the beginning of his teaching. One has only to refer to his text “Function and field of speech and language”, where firstly the symptom is already asserted as that which is written in the sand of the flesh², and secondly is introduced as the hysterical kernel of neurosis, that is, as an inscription in the body which thus concerns every symptom. As well, one observes, from this time on, an elaboration of the notion of event considered as the subjective reproduction of the past in the present. But still another perspective is drawn from 1953; language is conceived, according to Lacan’s formula, as “subtle body, but it is body”. What is thus changed between the symptom defined as inscription in the body, and more than twenty years later, as event of the body? Is there a change between the Freudian conception of the symptom as drive fixation, then as substitutive satisfaction, and Lacan’s conception of the symptom as modality of *jouissance* of the unconscious? Let us note that what is at stake is not solely doctrine, but concerns above all the future of the symptom in analysis. In effect, the formulation of the symptom as event of the body points to something quite other than rhetorical sophistication. Although in the early Lacan the idea is that the symptom is written in the body, during the period of “Function and field of speech and language” it concerns a speech that is to be delivered and whose inscription “may be destroyed”³. Lacan thus goes back, at this moment, to the therapeutic optimism of the early Freud.

Now, in order to seize what is designated by the symptom as event of the body, it is necessary to refer to the seminar *The Non-Dupes-Err*⁴ where Lacan underlines that there is only event as a saying. This new conception of the event asserts that this one is no longer the *historicisation* relative to the symbolic but sign of the real, as that which is thus written beyond decipherment. It is also necessary to observe that at the moment when Lacan advances language as “subtle body”, he establishes the disjunction between subject and body. In effect, the definition of the subject implies the chain of signifiers in the unconscious but not in the body. And it is the structural necessity of moving to a conjunction between the signifier and *jouissance* which leads Lacan to introduce the concept of the *parlêtre*, and which designates henceforth the being by the *jouissance* of the body.

But one can pose the question of knowing, how the obsessional symptom as “thought of which the soul is burdened”⁵ is event of the body. It is from the fact that thought is *jouissance* and that one only enjoys as a body.

The Rome Rendezvous will be thus a putting to the test of the psychoanalytic clinic, which is certainly a clinic of discourse but whose aim is the modification of the *jouissance* substance. Hadn't Lacan envisaged psychoanalysis as "device whose real touches the real"?⁶ Henceforth, it will be a question of distinguishing, on each occasion, between bodily phenomena and body events, at the start and at the end of an analysis. The first find their expression in the psychosomatic phenomenon, hypochondria, not to say the waking of a body which in its essence is silent. The second concerns the *inmixing* of the signifier in the body, indelible trace then, and the singularity of a solution, each analysand's, concerning the enigma of the body and the *savoir faire* about *jouissance*.

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¹ J. Lacan, «*Joyce le symptôme*», in *Autres Ecrits*, Paris, Seuil 2001, p. 569.

² J. Lacan, «*Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage*», in : *Ecrits*, Paris, Seuil, 1966, p. 301.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

⁴ J. Lacan, «*Les non-dupes errent*» [unpublished], to refer in particular to the lessons of December 1973 and January 1974.

⁵ J. Lacan, «*Télévision*» in : *Autres Ecrits*, Op. cit., p. 512.

⁶ J. Lacan, «*...ou Pire*» in : *Autres Ecrits*, Op. cit., p. 542.