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## Subjective and objective in “ordinary psychoses”

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I remember that some years ago Jacques-Alain Miller quoted Seneca in his definition of what “classic” means: something you don’t learn or read, but rather you relearn or re-read. Since then, this line is a sort of a good friend of mine. I read the line as an invitation.

1- What is “neurosis”?

This is a question which emerges from JAM’s “Ordinary psychosis revisited”. When Jean-Pierre Deffieux visited us in December, he could ask the question with his own voice. The effect is shocking. When you read Freud’s texts for the first time, especially if you are still slightly inclined to believe in prohibitions or prescriptions or proscriptions of sexuality, it seems very clear what neurosis is about. It consists in a variety of symptoms, none of which is crystal clear from the beginning, but you feel they are there. You didn’t need to question their existence. Now, suddenly, there is a question: what do you mean, “neurosis”? This is not a question which arises outside your framework, on the contrary, it is, if we use the terms of Thomas Kuhn, at the center of your scientific community. If “neurosis” was at a certain point a Freudian paradigm, the very existence of the question: “what is neurosis”, implies a certain change in paradigm. Something has changed, softly but surely. Perhaps it is not a “scientific revolution”, but not so far from it.

Jacques-Alain Miller re-defines neurosis, the good old paradigm, posing a series of “criteria”, as –only for example-- a clear cut differentiation among Ego, Id and Superego, and a clearly delineated Superego. I personally needed a re-reading of Freud to try to formulate what could be this “clearly delineated”. Wasn’t it clearly delineated from the beginning?

Well, in his text “The economic problem of masochism”, from 1924, Freud stresses that what he calls Superego:

*“...is much a representative of the Id as of the external world. It came into being through the introjection into the Ego of the first objects of the id’s libidinal impulses - namely, the two parents. In this process the relation to those objects was desexualized; it was diverted from its direct sexual aims. Only in this way was it possible for the Oedipus complex to be surmounted. The super-ego retained essential features of the introjected persons - their strength, their severity, their inclination to supervise and to punish. As I have said elsewhere, it is easily conceivable that, thanks to the defusion of instinct which occurs along with this*

*introduction into the ego, the severity was increased. The super-ego - the conscience at work in the ego - may then become harsh, cruel and inexorable against the ego which is in its charge. Kant's Categorical Imperative is thus the direct heir of the Oedipus complex."*

So, a "clearly delineated Superego" is a Superego whose two-faced representation may be clearly noted, one face toward the external world, and the other face toward the Id and its drives. Kant's categorical imperative is also a no-imperative if it lacks the drive's severity, a detail that is clearly stressed in Lacan's "Kant with Sade".

Jean-Pierre Deffieux, in the opportunity of his seminar in Israel in last December, referred to the question "what is neurosis?", and answered—among other very important details that I will not present here—by a no less surprising rupture of paradigm: you need to be sure of the presence of desire in the case. He quoted Lacan's seminar "Desire and its interpretation", lesson of 24 June 1959: *"This desire of the neurotic is something which is only a desire at the horizon of all his behaviour."*

2- What is "psychosis"?

In his June 2012 intervention closing the NLS Congress in Tel-Aviv, Eric Laurent brought about this other question. It was so soft that perhaps we didn't feel what was all about.

At the beginning, he makes one point, and it is what was for Freud the scope of this term:

*"The psychoses were understood by Freud as a form of productive discourse, sustaining the effort of subjects who fall wide of any belief in the father and ordinary tragedy, and responding to the clinical field newly systematised by psychiatry."*

From there, he arrives to the relationship that may be established between symptom, singularity and the difficulties and even impasses in classification:

*The paradox is that we took on board the word "psychosis" at a time when a new systematicity, a new classification, was emerging in the discourses. Lacan's teaching turned this approach to psychosis into the indication of a path where, just as we consider the full set of equivocations at the level of the Other rather than the rules, we consider just how much in each case the subject is unclassifiable. Les inclassables de la clinique was a title chosen by Jacques-Alain Miller for one of our congresses. The clinic's unclassifiable cases mark the effort by which the symptom, beyond groupings according to typical forms, can designate a subject's singularity.*

I say this is situated in the same direction as Lacan's later teaching. When the most elementary questions arise as new, the new paradigm reveals itself as "subjective", more than objective, including more *than ever* the psychoanalysts themselves.

It reminds me some lines of the very early Lacan, when in his "variations of the standard treatment", he writes:

*"Thus an external coherence persists in the deviations of analytic experience that surround its axis, with the same rigor with which the shrapnel of a projectile, in dispersing, maintains its ideal trajectory with the center of gravity of the pyramidal shape it traces out.*

*The condition of the misunderstanding which, as I noted above, obstructs psychoanalysis path to recognition thus turns out to be redoubled by a misrecognition internal to its own movement."*