

Note on the Child

Jacques Lacan

It seems that if we look at the failure of utopian communities, Lacan's position evokes the following dimension.

The function of residue that the conjugal family supports (and thereby maintains) in the evolution of societies highlights the irreducibility of a form of transmission – one that is of a different order than that of life considered as the satisfaction of needs – but one that has a subjective constitution, implying a relationship to a desire that is not anonymous.

The functions of the mother and the father are to be judged on the basis of such a requirement. For the mother: insofar as her care bears the mark of an individualized interest, even if via her own lacks. For the father: insofar as his name is the vector of the embodiment of the Law in desire.

In the conception of it developed by Jacques Lacan, the child's symptom is located in the position of a response to what is symptomatic in the family structure.

In this context, a symptom, which is the fundamental fact of analytic experience, can be defined as representing the truth.

A symptom may represent the truth of the family couple. This is the most complex case, but it is also the one that is most open to our intervention.

The articulation is much more limited when the symptom that comes to dominate arises from the subjectivity of the mother. In this case the child is directly concerned as the correlate of a fantasy.

If the gap between the identification with the ego ideal and the piece taken from the mother's desire lacks the mediation that is normally provided by the father's function, it leaves the child susceptible to every kind of fantasmatic capture. He becomes the mother's "object" and his sole function is to reveal the truth of this object.

The child realizes the presence of what Jacques Lacan designates as *objet a* in fantasy.

By substituting himself for this object, the child saturates the mode of lack whereby (the mother's) desire is particularized, whatever her specific structure - neurotic, perverse or psychotic.

He alienates in himself all possible access by the mother to her own truth through giving it body, existence and even the requirement to be protected.

The somatic symptom gives the greatest possible guarantee to this misrecognition [*méconnaissance*]; it is the inexhaustible resource that, depending on the case, may testify to guilt, serve as a fetish, or incarnate a primordial refusal.

In short, in the dyadic relationship with the mother the child gives her, in immediately accessible form, what the masculine subject lacks: the very object of his existence appearing in the real. As a consequence, the child is open to greater subornation in fantasy in a manner commensurate with what is real in what he presents.

Translated by Russell Grigg

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