

From acting to symbolising: the birth of the subject

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The notion of «subject» never acquired a specific psychoanalytic significance in Freud's thought. Of course, the subjective dimension was present in the concept of «Ego», but in an implicit not explicit form. Indeed, the Ego in the First Model predominantly represents the psycho-biological organisation of the self-preserving function, and in the Second Model it is a mediator between the demands of the Id, the Superego, and External Reality. Thus, as was made clearer later by Ego Psychology, the Ego was held to be a predominantly adaptive structure. It is only in the definition of the Ego formulated in *On Narcissism: an Introduction* (1914) that a subjective dimension appears more explicitly, only to disappear it seems, at least implicitly, in the writings which followed. In fact, in the paper on narcissism, the Ego is described as the product of two different and successive psychic processes: in the first place as the libidinal investment of the different erotogenic zones, followed by their subsequent integration. Thus, there needs to be a narcissistic libidinal investment of the erotogenic zones (1905, 208) which must be followed by «a new psychical action» (1914, 77) in order to form the Ego, thereby transforming primary autoeroticism into narcissism. Only at this point is an «object» created which, being the product of libidinal investment in the now integrated autoerotic zones, has a narcissistic dimension, as a result of which it can be called the precursor of a subjective organisation, which implies therefore that it is the libidinal investment in the Ego which constitutes the point of departure for the process of subjectivation.

In the English language, the conceptive of subjectivity is expressed by the term 'Self', and in the United States, in Chicago, a school of psychoanalysis arose named Self Psychology, in opposition to Ego Psychology which was dominant in New York.¹ In anglophone psychoanalysis the notion of the Self is omnipresent. As we know, both Winnicott and Kohut, although in different ways, frequently refer to the notion of the Self. The former (Winnicott, 1968), considers it the first subjective organisation to emerge from the primary condition of non-integration; hence it is a primordial, psy-

¹ It is not by chance that the psychoanalytic trend which more than any other makes reference to the Freudian theory of the Ego as developed in the Second Model, is called Ego-Psychology, and uses a term derived from Latin. Self Psychology stands in opposition to it.

cho-corporeal and relational entity. For Kohut (1971) it is potentially present from birth as the Nuclear Self, which nevertheless needs narcissistic support in order to develop. These are the well-known Selfobjects. Both these writers attribute to the Self a very substantial role in psychic functioning and locate its action and function beyond the processes hypothesised by Freud in the origin of psychic development.

The question of the «subject» was later posed in an explicit and specific manner in psychoanalytic thought by J. Lacan, who was influenced not only by the structuralist linguistics of F. De Saussure, but also by a reading of Hegelian idealism carried out in the light of the anthropological pessimism of Heideggerian existentialism.

This was introduced into Lacan's thought in a manner which can be considered somewhat paradoxical. Indeed, Lacan drew on the linguistic and philosophical structuralism that does not accept the notion of a «subject» understood in the Cartesian sense, insofar as it holds that man is the product of a «structure» formed by linguistic rules and by those of social exchanges. Thus, man would be hetero-determined by the rules of language and social exchanges. Despite that, Lacan took up this concept, identifying it with unconscious desire² which in his opinion is nevertheless essentially the expression of language, which he considers to be the real unconscious.³ To believe that the human condition is determined by what is external, is to define man as structurally alienated. This philosophical position, which Lacan accepted in full, also derives from his previous sharing of the reading of Hegel by A. Kojève during the Thirties in the light of Heideggerian existentialism (Lacan, 1966; Kojève, 1947).

Lacan used the formula of the poet Rimbaud, *Je est un autre* ('I is another'), in order to indicate the alienated dimension of the Ego, while identifying the unconscious, being an effect of language and hence the expression of a signifying network, as the place where desire emerges. This desire, at this point, would be the expression of a subjectivity (*Je*). According to Lacan, «desire» would specifically be the expression of access to the Symbolic which is one part of the tripod of psychic functioning formed by the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. This access would play an important role in constituting the Oedipal situation, which Lacan illustrates with the formula «Name-of-the-Father».

After Lacan, the notion of «subject» became a common theme throughout French psychoanalytic thought and later passed beyond French borders to become part of contemporary psychoanalytic thinking.

² It is necessary to specify that the concept of «desire» has also acquired a precise status only since the contributions of J. Lacan. Freud mentions it in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900, 567), where he claims that «nothing but a wish can set our mental apparatus at work». Later, in the *Three Essays* (1905), he formulated the concept of the drive but did not subsequently specify the difference between satisfaction of the desire and discharge of the drive, although in later works he made use of the term «desire» on many occasions.

³ We should recall that Lacan states that «the unconscious is structured like a language» and that for this reason it is an «effect of language». Therefore, it would be the language through which the adult addresses the *infans* which

In order to address this topic, we have to leave behind the Freudian concept of the drive. As we know, Freud believed that this had an organic «source» and was therefore the expression of the demands of the biological organism. In his opinion, this source sends the psyche a sort of delegation which he defined by the formula «instinctual representative» (Freud, 1915b). Developments in the neurosciences show us that, unless we want to turn psychoanalysis into a sort of dogmatic ideology, Freud's position must be modified. Now, we know that the neural impulses which reach the brain from different somatic regions and from the external environment, variations in hormone levels, and the organism's metabolic processes only create the intensity of the stimuli – that is the frequency of the impulses – and are not the «thing itself». This is the «principle of undifferentiated codification» (Von Foerster, 1985, 121). On reaching the brain, these quantitative phenomena are «translated»⁴ into qualitative phenomena: that is, into sensations, perceptions, and affective states, which in their turn determine the activation of «schemes of action» which are specific to each living species.

These «schemes of action» are at the service of the individual's self-preservation and the continuation of the species. Roughly speaking, such schemes of action can be defined as «instincts».

While this functioning is something that belongs to all living organisms, at the level of *Homo sapiens sapiens* a second translation is produced alongside the first, one due to the enormous development in humans of the cerebral structures, in particular of the frontal lobe, but not only to that. This second translation transforms these *schemes of action* into *schemes of meaning* (Widlöcher, 2011; Conrotto, 2014a, b). In my opinion, the identification of this second process of translation revives the «anaclitic theory» (Freud, 1905, 222n) which, along with the formulation of the Second Model and the Theory of the Life and Death Drives, had been, if not abandoned, then at least neglected by Freud himself. In the case in point, in *Homo sapiens sapiens* the *schemes of action* which produce the self-preserving behaviours – that is, those oriented towards the satisfaction of the individual's demands for life and the continuation of the species – acquire a further meaning which, not infrequently, tends to outdo the purely vital and self-preserving significance of the instinctual *schemes of action*. This new force was succinctly described by Freud as the *pleasure principle*, and thus defined as *sexual*: but since reproductive biological sexuality has not yet been developed in this phase of the life of the *infans*, what we are addressing must be called a *sexual/pre-sexual* sexuality. As Laplanche (2007) has specified, this is a psychic situation aimed at seeking a psycho-physical excitation.

Therefore, we can say that this second translation establishes an area of psychic functioning which does not obey the self-preserving reality principle, but the principle

⁴ This is, more precisely, an operation of transduction: that is, the conversion of stimuli into a response which draws on a different register, in this case the psychic.

of pleasure/desire (Laplanche, 2007).⁵ Because of its heterogeneity in relation to the self-preserving reality principle, or the «original reality-ego» (1915a, 134), this second psychic functioning is maintained outside consciousness. In my opinion, the exclusion of consciousness from this different psychic functioning depends on the fact that, because of its submission to the search for pleasure, it is in such conflict with the demands of self-preservation as to be capable of putting it in jeopardy.⁶ For this reason, it is the demands of self-preservation which determine the counter-investment in this functioning, preventing its access to consciousness. I believe that it may be this defence mechanism that produces the «primary repression» which constitutes the unconscious.

These *schemes of meaning* produce what we psychoanalysts generally call «Primal Phantasies», which are nothing but schemes for interpreting different somatic and relational situations. The transformation of the *schemes of action* into *schemes of meaning* is a very complex process. It begins by means of a process of *making significant*, through which perceptual, visual, auditory, iconic, kinetic and kinaesthetic data become *signifiers* of a psychic order which does not obey the criterion of self-preservation but that of obtaining pleasure. The next step is the transformation of *signifiers* into *signs*.⁷ This opens the way to the development of thought.⁸ Such a transformation of the *schemes of action* into *schemes of meaning* happens because a transformative, generative process is set in motion, congenital in nature and linked to the evolution of the species. In my opinion, this process goes beyond the ability of every healthy newborn to develop verbal language, as Chomsky claims, but extends over the whole sensory area, and hence to internal and external perceptions such as the visual and auditory, because of which I believe that what we psychoanalysts call the *unconscious* can be defined as a semiotic-genetic and semantic-genetic system (Conrotto, 2014a, 2014b, 2015). Therefore, the transformation of the *schemes of action* into *schemes of meaning*

⁵ Laplanche draws our attention to the fact that the German term *Lust* means both “pleasure” and “desire” (2007, 14). However, as will be shown as this paper develops, I think that psychoanalytic metapsychology should distinguish between these two concepts.

⁶ Laplanche (2007) believes that in the human infant the search for pleasure is in fact a search for excitation and it is for this reason that the pleasure principle tends to conflict with the demands of self-preservation.

⁷ The concept of *Representamen* described by Peirce is helpful in understanding the process of making significant. This is a transformative process which puts one object in relation to another, conferring on the latter the function of representing something that is not materially connected to the object itself. Thus, according to Peirce, the «sign» and therefore the process of semiosis requires a reference to three terms, one of which is not materially present, and so we are dealing with a triadic function (Green, 2010, 45). In Chomskyan linguistics, the term «Merge» is the psychic ability to connect mental objects (Chomsky, 2012, 35). In my opinion, these are processes which draw on what we also call «making significant». They are to be understood as constitutive elements of the process of symbolisation.

⁸ D. Anzieu (2003, 28ff) has highlighted the so-called «formal significations» which are a representation of the outlines of an object in space. G. Rosolato (1985) highlighted the «demarcation significations» which differentiate the sensory qualities of objects; while J. Kristeva (1974) highlighted a primitive mode of signification operating in the unweaned child before the distinction between primary and secondary processes. This is a kinaesthetic vocal articulation in which the alternation between breathing and suckling is given a significant position.

happens through a process of signification, congenital in nature, and thus linked to the evolution of the species. This process, which is specific to the human new-born, is what defines it as belonging to the species *Homo sapiens sapiens*. On the basis of such a primary process, the formation of pictograms is carried out, as described by P. Aulagnier (1975): in other words, the identification between the erotogenic zones and the part-objects with which they come into contact. These «complementary object-zones» are at the basis of the process of forming the libidinal Ego, described by Freud in his essay on narcissism (1914). It is therefore the process of identification which makes use of the mechanism of transformation into its opposite and of «turning around upon the subject's own self» (Freud 1915a, 126-7) and which Green unifies in the formula of «double reversal», to represent the foundation of the possibility of attaining subjectivation (Conrotto, 2000b, 145ff). The formation of the so-called «skin-ego» described by Anzieu (1985) constitutes a fundamental intermediate passage for the development of the process of subjectivation. A fundamental passage for the formation of Primal Phantasies, starting from the signifiers, is that of acquiring the capacity for «depiction». In the case in point, we are dealing with the possibility of creating a «sensory image», which is a representational modality proper to the primary process. Here the «visual» precedes the «acoustic». Indeed, «considerations of representability» are among the earliest functions of psychic life (Freud, 1920). This means making all the data present in a given moment converge into a single intelligible unity, hence linking all the present elements in an «atemporal simultaneity in the form of a hallucinatory actualisation» (Botella C., Botella S., 2001, 49-52). The concept of «Merge» which I pointed out earlier, in note 7, indicates precisely the capacity for connecting several mental objects together. It clearly illustrates the process of integrating a plurality of sensory data into a single unity of signification.

Once these phantasy schemes, which we call «Primal Phantasies» have been formed, they have in the first instance a tendency to be put into action: that is, to express themselves in the form of actions and behaviours in a manner no different from the self-preserving schemes of action on which they are «anaclitic» except in the respect that they are in the service not of self-preservation but the attainment of pleasure, which Lacan calls *jouissance*. As I said earlier, this functioning tends to enter into conflict with self-preservation to such an extent as to place the latter in serious jeopardy, and this reprises in more current terms Freud's first description of the instinctual conflict: in other words, the conflict between the drives/needs of the Ego and sexuality (1910). In my opinion, it is the setting up of this psychic functioning, under the hegemony of the «pleasure principle» and hence the transformation of the *schemes of action* into *schemes of meaning* which lays down the basis for the activation of the process of subjectivation, although at this level the process of subjectivation is not yet fully activated. In fact, the drive is in itself impelled towards *jouissance*: that is, to discharge by its being «put into action». However, it is not yet «desire», which will only

be established when the process of symbolisation and metaphorisation is fully operational, through which *jouissance* will be transformed into «desire». It is worth saying that the processes of symbolisation and metaphorisation are what transform *jouissance* into desire, and it is only the formation of «desire» which represents the achieved constitution of a subjective dimension.⁹

The constitution of desire can only happen to the extent that the urge to discharge the drive impulse by putting it into action, is inhibited and replaced by the formation of a psychic «representation» superimposed onto another scenario which is linked to the first by a metaphorical and metonymic relationship. When the representation thus formed is stably installed in the psyche, it constitutes itself as «desire». By the same token, this process institutes in the individual in question a subjective dimension through which, however unconsciously, he feels himself to be a «subject»: that is, the bearer of a «desire» which he feels as an expression of himself, of his subjectivity. In practical terms, what happens is that these *schemes of meaning* encounter a process of transformation on the way to their symbolisation and metaphorisation. This entails an attenuation of their tendency to be put into action, in favour of the tendency to become psychic representations which constitute the individual's psychic reality and the internal world which sustains it, and also implicitly constitute his cultural universe.

It is only through this last transformative process that what we can call «subjectivity» is formed. In the process of transforming *jouissance* into «desire», the simple «discharge» into action is thus replaced by psychic «representation» which the individual, albeit unconsciously, perceives as the expression of his subjectivity.

At this point he becomes bearer of a legacy of meaning which is manifested in symbolic, though still entirely unconscious, representations. As I have indicated elsewhere (2004, 2005), I believe that the processes of symbolisation are closely connected to the process of sublimation in the sense that this process entails «sensory perception» being «given second place to what may be called an abstract idea.» Which means achieving the transformation of the impulse to action – in other words, of the urge towards direct satisfaction of the instinctual impulse – which becomes «investment in the investment» (Janin, 1998, 1085): that is, investment in the representational function itself. This sort of investment tends towards keeping the presence of the investment in representations or scenes active and stable over time (Conrotto 2004, 1032). This transformative process can be likened to what Green (2002) calls the «objectifying function». However, this is a process of symbolisation/ sublimation which determines the renunciation of the instinctual *jouissance* in favour of the representational function itself (Conrotto, 2014b, 52). This kind of transformation has a constitutive role in the formation of the Ego-subject in the sense indicated by Freud's celebrated

⁹ For this reason, I believe that it is necessary for psychoanalysis to distinguish between a «pleasure principle» and a «desire principle», even though Laplanche believes that the German term *Lust* can have both meanings.

formula *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*, which I prefer to translate as «Where It was, I (subject) must be achieved» (Conrotto, 2000a, 61). By the same token, this transformation, which is at the basis of the formation of the process of subjectivation, determines the structuring of the Oedipal conflict because the identification with the Father, as access to the «symbolic order», entails the renunciation of direct instinctual discharge. Therefore, we can say that subjectivation is a product of the Ego insofar as it is the renunciation of the direct realisation of the instinctual goals (Richard, Wainrib, 2006, 14), but as I have just stated, it is not correct to say that identification is always synonymous with subjectivation because only if the identification is a symbolic identification, like that which structures the Oedipal situation, can we say it is drawing on the process of subjectivation.

I think that the distinction made by H. Segal (1957) between symbolisation and symbolic equation describes very clearly the difference on the phenomenal plane between the first level of formation of the *schemes of meaning* which tend to express themselves in action and the second level in which such schemes become symbolic representations. It is only on this second level that we can say that what happens fully entails «becoming a subject». In my opinion, the transformation of the schemes of meaning towards their thinkability can happen through what Freud (1923, 31) calls «identification with the father in his own personal prehistory,» which is what, following A. De Mijolla (2002, 780), I prefer to designate as «ontological identification» in that this is what inserts the *infans* into the human universe and specifically constitutes its access to the *symbolic order*: in other words, to the renunciation by the so-called «unconscious phantasies» of their sole dimension of «putting into action».

We owe to N. Zaltzman (1998) the highlighting of the fact that *Moses, his People, and Monotheist Religion* (Freud, 1934-38) represents an extraordinary advancing of the Oedipal theory, understood as the institution of the Father of the Law. This text describes a psychic transformation which leads to the giving up of the drive's immediate satisfaction and promotes a process of sublimation which locates the function of thought at the centre of the process of civilisation and psychic healing (Zaltzman, *ibid.*, 56).

So, the advent of the «activity of thought» would be the effective goal of psychoanalytic treatment through which «thinking» becomes the central element of psychoanalytic healing (Conrotto, 2000a, 76).

Many metapsychological formulations have been proposed to describe this transformation. I will choose some which appear to be very different from each other in that they refer to different theoretical models, but I will try to show how they in fact describe the same psychic process.

We owe the first formulation of this transformative process to Bion (1963) who, speaking about the formation of the unconscious, states that from early infancy sensory *beta elements* are transformed into *alpha elements* by the work of the rêverie func-

tion carried out by the adults who care for the infant. These latter are therefore the basic constituents of the representational unconscious from whose articulation we will later be able to form dreams, both those of sleep and those of waking. In other words, they are the constituent elements of unconscious psychic life. Where the adults' rêverie function may not have been sufficient, it will be the psychoanalytic situation which has to fill this lack, fostering the transformation of beta elements into alpha elements.

The second formulation of this transformative process comes to us from Lacan (1973, 1975), who believed that it is the function exercised by language, which he calls the *Other*, which transforms the sensory data which occupy the infant's psyche and which he calls the *Imaginary*, the status of which is preconscious. Thus, it would be through the work of language that the sensory data, the *Imaginary*, are transformed into representational data, which are what he calls the *Symbolic*. It would be this transformation which creates the unconscious which, according to Lacan, is linguistic in nature. The *Subject* is born out of this transformative process and is initially the *subject of the unconscious*. Psychoanalytic work would have as its task precisely that transformation of the *Imaginary* into the *Symbolic*. The third metapsychological formulation which I shall comment on is that proposed by Green (1973) who believes it is the primary *negative hallucination* that creates the *framing space*, which is none other than an empty screen on which psychic *representations* can be formed and projected. The rules of the psychoanalytic setting would favour this transformative process.

We can clearly see that the three models illustrated here in fact share a basic element, which is the centrality of the process of de-sensorialising the contents of the psyche and their transformation into symbolic/sublimatory – ie. representational – sense.

We see that the three models presented here also share the recognition that the transformative process described here, if it should happen not to occur adequately over the course of the psychic development of the individual in question, is stimulated and fostered by the analytic situation. Indeed, the «fundamental rule» which enjoins the analysand to «say everything, to do nothing but speak» produces a «double transference» (Green, 1984): not just the transference onto the object but also onto words. This operation «takes on the role of creating a metaphor» (*ibid.*, 119). By the same token, the analyst's intervention, formulated in linguistic terms, also fosters the transformation of the structure of the unconscious phantasies, from the condition of sensoriality to that of metaphors. This highlights how «the apparatus of language is an analogon of the psychic apparatus, a conversion of it» (*ibid.*, 129). All this substantiates the old formulation according to which «psychoanalysis treats by means of the word;» that is, «a word treatment». In essence, we can say that the interpretation which happens by means of language generates the representation of what at first was not representation but a sensory state. Thus, the interpretation is identifiable in the activity of the metaphor (Fédida, 1992, 234-35).

At this point, the individual becomes the bearer of a legacy of meaning which is manifested in symbolic, albeit entirely unconscious, representations. As I have indicated elsewhere (2004, 2005), I personally believe that the processes of symbolisation are closely connected with the process of sublimation, in the sense that this latter process entails the deferral «of a sensory perception until after it has become represented.» I believe that this sort of *alpha function*, which in the first instance is linked to the evolution of the species, also depends on the mirroring function carried out by the caregiving adult and on the unconscious messages she or he sends to the infant: and thus a sort of rêverie. Therefore we can say that we become «subjects» thanks to the subjectivating action of the other (Richard, Wainrib, 2006, 15). Hence, subjectivation is a sort of effect of co-thinking (Widlöcher, 1996). In the words of Pontalis, the formation of the psyche derives from the introjection of the maternal psyche: that is, of the psyche functioning of the human environment in which the infant lives.

THE PROCESS OF SUBJECTIVATION AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGICAL ORGANISATIONS

In my opinion, the different forms of psychopathology can be attributed to the different levels of symbolisation reached by the unconscious *schemes of meaning* in each individual. A highly developed symbolic transformation corresponds to a good state of mental health. A fairly well developed symbolic transformation with some inadequacies, as a result of which the unconscious *schemes of meaning*, not completely symbolised, irrupt into consciousness in the form of symptoms, give rise to a neurotic situation. This is what we call the effect of the «return of the repressed». What happens in these cases is that *schemes of meaning*, not sufficiently symbolised, impel the individual to put them into action. In order to avoid this direct «putting into action», the Ego shifts it, transforming it into a psychosomatic process which involves the outside world. And this is what we call the formation of the «neurotic symptom». I say that this is a psychosomatic process which involves the outside world and not simply a psychic process because neurotic symptoms always have a somatic component which also invades the outside. Think of hysterical symptomatology and the anxiety neuroses which also have somatic manifestations, and the phobias about certain situations belonging to the outside world, such as agoraphobia and claustrophobia, and the obsessional rituals which involve the body and the behaviour. A markedly insufficient symbolic transformation gives rise to the activation of defences such as splitting and denial, which constitutes the clinical picture of the perversions and «borderline states». In these cases too, the aspect of «putting into action» is clearly present. Lastly, when the processes of symbolisation are largely or entirely missing, the clinical picture of the more or less serious psychotic organisations is set up. In these cases, the unsymbolised *schemes of meaning* irrupt into consciousness in the form of a radical

incapacity to control impulses, which thus tend to be «put into action» or alternatively appear in the form of delusions which are forms of non-thought or hallucinations. Both these manifestations are expressions of an involvement of the body: the hallucination is obviously so because they involve a sensory area, and likewise the delusion, being a manifestation of an «idea-thing» and not an «idea-thought», because as Bion (1967) showed it is a form of «non-thought». So, it is legitimate to define psychosis as a de-subjectivation (Richard, Wainrib, 2006, 13), in the sense that we can say that the psychotic, instead of being a «subject», and hence the bearer of a «desire», is «subjected» to the instinctual impulse and can only put it into action – «act» and not think.

At the present time, it is widely held that in postmodern societies characterised by the dissolution of the patriarchal order – the diminution of the Name-of-the-Father in the Lacanian formulation – the process of subjectivation would be made more difficult. In other words, it is believed that the so-called «new pathologies» are the expression of a difficulty in the process of subjectivation.

I believe that the question should be framed more exactly.

In the first place, we must start from the fact that the structure of the human psyche, like that of language, is a product of neuro-psycho-physiological evolution. Thus, the processes of making significant, with the subsequent formation of the so-called «Primal Phantasies» which bring their reciprocal interrelating to bear on the so-called «infantile sexual theories» and the Oedipal situation, are something which mankind acquired, we suppose, about sixty or seventy thousand years ago (Tattersall, 2012).

This being the case, I do not think we can maintain that the end of the so-called patriarchal society has brought about an increase in non-neurotic pathologies because, we now know that many of the hysterical and obsessional manifestations described by Freud were not, and indeed are not, expressions of neuroses but contain extra-neurotic nuclei. As A. Green pointed out (1990, 130ff), hysteria is not a neurosis but can be called a «hysterical madness», and we know that obsessiveness frequently conceals a psychosis. Personally, I believe that the «theory of the neuroses» formulated by Freud should be considered a model or an interpretative schema able to illustrate a certain typology of clinical phenomena, but this does not rule out the possibility that symptomatological manifestations that are neurotic in form may conceal extra-neurotic psychic dispositions (Conrotto, 2011a, 2011b, 2012).

To this we must add that in patriarchal societies unconscious phantasies were often enacted socially, and this played a part in the social rules actively at work. The position of women, even in the west until very recently, is a case in point.

I believe, nevertheless, that it is an oversimplification to claim that with the end of modernity and the emergence of the postmodern condition (Lyotard, 1979), the fall of the «meta-social guarantees» (Touraine, 1992) of bourgeois society has brought about a corresponding fall of the «meta-psychic guarantees» (Kaës, 2008): in other words, of the oedipal structure. Indeed, I think that the fall of the «meta-social guarantees»

which has come about everywhere in the last fifty years has revealed the existence of an inadequately established set of «meta-psychic guarantees» on the psychic level. In my opinion, the so-called cohesion and order of bourgeois societies were not maintained by the active presence of such «meta-psychic guarantees» – that is, by an internalised «law of the father» – but rather by an active repression by parents and by society of the instinctual urges that are manifested in new generations. For this reason, rather than being a society based on the acquisition of the symbolic functioning of the «Name of the Father» it was a society based on the imposition of authority and the active repression of the drives, both in the family and in society. Starting in the last four or five decades, adults have become less authoritarian and have not exercised a repressive action over their progeny with the same severity. So-called «liberation ideologies» have given a further blow to the existence of a socially repressive order, which has encouraged the liberation of instinctual impulses which, lacking an adequate containment, have brought about the explosion of a narcissism which is often not counterpoised by a sufficient investment in the object. So, I think that the end of patriarchal society has not provoked a fall of the «meta-psychic guarantees» but rather has revealed the insufficiency of the processes of symbolisation and metaphorisation of the phantasy scenarios, and hence of the constitution of the Oedipus Complex, understood as access to the symbolic, which used to be present and which characterised human society in general. For these reasons, it has only become more obvious in post-modern society how difficult it is «to become subjects». Even so, the game is still played around the quality of the functioning of the processes of symbolisation/ sublimation and how they relate to the acquisition of a more or less good state of mental health. For these reasons, I believe we need to acknowledge that psychic pathology is much more wide-spread than classical psychiatry has recognised. I think we should admit that, given the continued existence of a great variety of psychic functioning and differing levels of severity, we can say that good mental health is the exception rather than the rule. Indeed, as we experience every day in our clinical practice, even in apparently well integrated individuals, or at worst those with a few neurotic symptoms, there are psychic mechanisms at work which can be attributed to extra-neurotic psychopathological dispositions, if not to psychotic functioning. The diffusion of the concept of the borderline state and the ever more frequent use of this concept in the description of situations which we encounter in our day to day clinical practice confirm that we are now ever more compelled to acknowledge the presence and spread of forms of pathology that are evidently not attributable to neurosis. In this respect, it must be pointed out that many psychopathological and predominantly extra-neurotic manifestations find their expression in the social, often masked by political or religious ideologies.

Returning now to the theme of the subjectivation process, we can say that in the various psychoses, the individuals who carry them cannot be called «subjects»

because they are, to a greater or lesser degree, under the sway of impulses they cannot control and, in the most serious cases, they lose even the capacity for perceiving themselves as the authors of their own thoughts and their own actions (Richard, Wainrib, 2006, 33).

From this perspective, we have to admit that one of the objectives of psychoanalytic treatment is that of encouraging the analysand's subjectivating function. This objective is especially central in work with the extra-neurotic pathologies. In these cases, the analysing situation as a «symbolising situation» (Roussillon 1995, 42) offers itself implicitly as a way of reactivating the transitional processes which have been left blocked in the patient's psyche, with the aim of pushing them in the direction of a subjectivating process.

CONCLUSIONS

We could therefore hypothesise that what Freud calls Ego in the First Model is the psycho-biological self-preserving organisation, but not the «subject» understood as an expression of unconscious desire. Within certain limits, the Ego of the Second Model is also a self-preserving system in that it must mediate between the demands of the Id, the Superego, and External Reality. The defence mechanisms and the criterion of adaptation lead in this direction.

From the perspective I have tried to describe, the Id can now be defined no longer as an instinctual reservoir, somatic in origin, but as the product of the translation of *schemes of action* into *schemes of meaning*; the latter, under the sway of the pleasure principle, being the Lacanian *jouissance*. It consists of pure impulsiveness. Subjectivation is the transformation into symbolic meaning of these «schemes of meaning» which, in this way, attenuate or sometimes abandon entirely their tendency to be put into action. In this case, a process of sublimation is achieved which, as I said earlier, is closely connected to that of symbolisation. Although it is not possible to identify in verbal language the single instrument of this transformation, it is still possible to speculate that the language system and hence verbal thought play a fundamental role in transforming the schemes of meaning into symbolic meaning.

SUMMARY AND KEYWORDS

The notion of the «subject» acquired a specifically psychoanalytic meaning, starting from the works of Lacan and then extending to numerous areas of contemporary psychoanalysis. The author maintains that the process of subjectivization is made possible by the gradual physiological dissolution of the sensorial component of psychic functioning – that is, of the prevalence of primary process – which occurs in the course of the child's psychic development. In this way, an empty space is created in which “representations” can be formed that are expressions of a thinking activity, even though unconscious. This entails the birth of the subjective dimension in the individual's psychic life. The processes of symbolization, sublimation, and metaphorization are the agents of this transformation. The author states that different forms of psychopathology can be explained in relation to the greater or lesser severity of missing elements in the process of subjectivization.

KEYWORDS: Desire, metaphor, drive, symbolization, subject.

DE L'AGIR AU SYMBOLISER: LA NAISSANCE DU SUJET. La notion de «sujet» a acquis une signification spécifiquement psychanalytique à partir du travail de J. Lacan, et elle s'est étendue à de nombreux domaines de la psychanalyse contemporaine. L'auteur pense que le processus de subjectivisation est rendu possible par la dissolution progressive physiologique de la composante sensorielle du fonctionnement psychique, c'est-à-dire de la prévalence du processus primaire, qui se déroule pendant le développement psychique du nourrisson. Cela crée un espace vide sur lequel se forment les «représentations», qui sont des expressions d'une activité de pensée, quoique inconsciente. Cela implique la naissance de la dimension subjective dans la vie psychique de l'individu. Les processus de symbolisation, de sublimation et de métaphorisation sont les agents de cette transformation. L'auteur pense que les différentes formes de psychopathologie peuvent s'expliquer par rapport aux déficiences plus ou moins graves du processus de subjectivisation.

MOTS-CLÉS: Désir, métaphore, pulsion, symbolisation, sujet.

DESDE EL ACTUAR HASTA EL SIMBOLIZAR: EL NACIMIENTO DEL SUJETO. La noción de «sujeto» adquirió un significado específicamente psicoanalítico a partir de la obra de J. Lacan y luego se extendió a varios ámbitos del psicoanálisis contemporáneo. El autor considera que el proceso de subjectivación es posible gracias a la progresiva disolución fisiológica del componente sensorial del funcionamiento psíquico, es decir, de la prevalencia del proceso primario que ocurre a lo largo del desarrollo psíquico infantil. De esta manera se produce un espacio vacío sobre el cual se pueden formar las «representaciones» que son expresiones de una actividad del pensamiento, aunque sea inconsciente; esto implica el nacimiento de la dimensión del «sujeto» en la vida psíquica del individuo. Los procesos de simbolización, sublimación y metaforización son los agentes de esta transformación. El autor opina que las diferentes formas de psicopatología pueden explicarse en relación a las mayores o menores carencias del proceso de subjectivación.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Deseo, metáfora, pulsión, simbolización, sujeto.

VOM AGIEREN ZUM SYMBOLISIEREN: DIE GEBURT DES SUBJEKTES. Der Begriff des «Subjekts» hat in der Arbeit von J. Lacan eine spezifisch psychoanalytische Bedeutung erlangt und erstreckt sich auf zahlreiche Bereiche der zeitgenössischen Psychoanalyse. Der Autor behauptet, daß der Prozeß der Subjektivierung durch die physiologisch fortschreitende Auflösung der sensorischen Komponente des psychischen Funktionierens ermöglicht wird, d.h. von der Prävalenz des Primärprozesses, die während der psychischen Entwicklung des Kindes stattfindet. Dies schafft einen leeren Raum, auf dem sich die «Repräsentationen» bilden können, die ein Ausdruck des Denken sind, wenn auch unbewusst. Dies beinhaltet die Geburt der subjektiven Dimension im individuellen psychischen Leben. Die Prozesse der Symbolisierung, Sublimation und Metaphorisierung sind die Agenten dieser Transformation. Der Autor ist der Meinung, dass die verschiedenen Formen der Psychopathologie in Bezug auf die mehr oder weniger gravierenden Mängel des Subjektivierungsprozesses erklärt werden können.

SCHLÜSSELWÖRTER: Antrieb, Metapher, Symbolisierung, Subjekt, Wunsch,.

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