

‘Increasing Forms of Anxiety in Neuroses and Psychoses’ by Carmen Gallano

My interest in this subject is not just a clinical one, but it was provoked by the difficulties presented by a new type of patient who comes to analysis expecting to be freed from anxiety. These patients do not feel their anguish as an affect pointing out something of their obscure being to them. Anxiety does not open them to the unconscious. On the contrary, it takes the form of an asubjective experience which so overwhelms them that they no longer recognise their own part in their situation.

Psychoanalysis is not a treatment of anxiety in itself, yet it is the only way to dissolve neurotic anxiety. But there is no chance of a psychoanalytic treatment of neurosis if the subject does not offer up his anxiety in the analytical transference, in the link with the Other. Why? Because anxiety is the way to approach what causes the failure of the phantasy. Thus, in psychoanalysis, we tend to see anxiety as a healthy function, a wake-up call to the subject, who wants to continue sleeping in the arms of the pleasure principle. There is, however, a flip side to this ‘useful’ aspect of anxiety. On the one hand, anxiety affects the subject, alerting him to his internal conflict – to his division from jouissance. But on the other hand, it confronts him with the opaque and disturbing presence of a little piece of the Real, which destitutes him and stops him naming the cause and the reason for his state.

Freud’s work began with his interest in anxiety neuroses — in which he found that the sexual function was damaged. Before his discovery of the unconscious he had noted that: “Anxious expectation is the nuclear symptom of the neuroses”.¹ He later modified his theory, abandoning the idea of a direct transformation of the sexual libido into anxiety. We can read about this in the *New Introductory Lectures*.² His conclusion to his *Lecture* of 1933 is a “twofold origin of anxiety – on the one hand as a direct consequence of the traumatic moment and the other as a signal threatening the repetition of such a moment”. I mention this essential point in Freudian theory since anxiety is no longer connected by Freud to the father, but to the trauma.

In the Seminar *R.S.I.* (13/5/75) Lacan puts forward the notion of anxiety as a “nomination of the Real”. Anxiety is the direct link with the unthinkable *thing*. Several years before, in Seminar X, he had stated that it was “the sole affect which does not deceive”. Here Lacan links himself with the final theory of Freud’s. He places anxiety in relation to the hole in the Other which, in neuroses, is turned into “the desire of the Other”. (In psychoses, too, the hole in the Other takes on significance, although it is not interpreted in terms of desire.) But in this seminar, Lacan also examined that which remained unexplored by Freud; the idea that the place of anxiety and the place of phantasy are the same.

Whereas the phantasy accommodates a desirable image, enveloping the lack, the anxiety evokes the object *a* — the Real of the remainder of jouissance which cannot be dealt with by the mirror image. The object *a* of the phantasy is certainly not visible and

¹ S.FREUD. *Anxiety Neurosis*, Standard Edition, Vol.III, p.93.

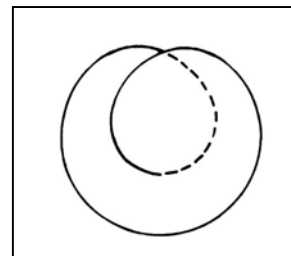
² ID. *Lecture XXXII*, Standard Edition, Vol.XXII, p.86

remains ignored by the subject. The phantasy is a screen over the Real, and the emergence of anxiety in its different forms manifests the failure of the Imaginary function to cover the Real.

Lacan, in his unpublished Seminar, *Anxiety* (30/1/63), reformulates, in a topology, the “twofold origin of anxiety” described by Freud. He divides the discourse of anxiety into two references:

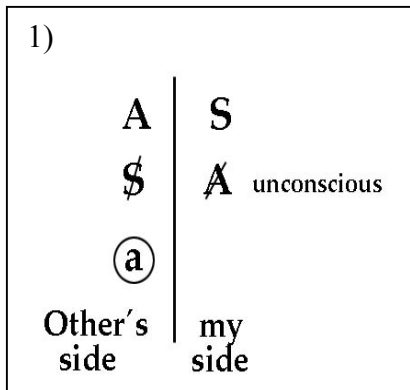
1) “One, to the Real, in so far as anxiety is the response to the most original danger, the insurmountable *Hilflosigkeit*, to the absolute distress of entering into the world.”

2) “On the other hand, it is going to be able to be subsequently taken up by the ego as a signal of infinitely slighter dangers.” These “slighter dangers” are, in the neuroses, just those of a “buried desire” (he takes the term from Jones). So, “the defence from the neurotic subject is not against anxiety but against that of which anxiety is the signal”. Lacan points out that anxiety is not the signal of the lack in the Imaginary, of the simple edge. From 1962 onwards Lacan believes that *anxiety is the signal of a radical cut somewhere in the structure of the subject, which makes the double edge in the twist producing the object a* (the cut of the internal 8).



The first reference is thus to anxiety as *Hilflosigkeit* and the second to anxiety as *Erwartung* (expectation, expectancy). The *host* (the object *a*) which was already there, becomes *hostile* when it is caught in the net of signifiers which weave the plot of the phantasy. Signifiers generate the world of the speaking being as a *known* world and the phantasy is produced to create an acceptable ‘reality’. But where the cut of the signifier into the Real opens out, anxiety appears and the world becomes an *unknown* environment. We can read in this Seminar the lesson of 19/12/62: “Without anxiety, this cut in the Real is unthinkable.” So anxiety lets the unexpected appear.

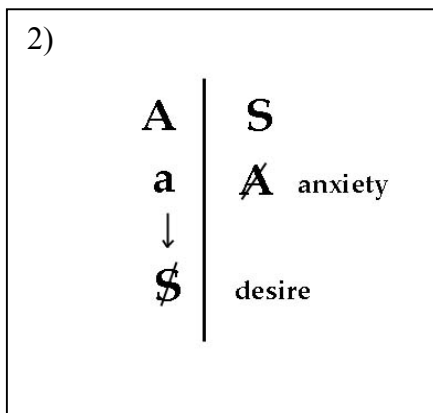
In Seminar X, we see that castration, *the cut separating the body and jouissance*, is not produced by the action of any father at all, but by language. This makes clearer the healthy function of anxiety, especially in the field of psychosis, where phallic signification of castration does not happen. Anxiety is the only affect which allows castration — the division of the subject in the Real — to become thinkable. In this Seminar, Lacan situates the two modes of the object *a* appearing in the double edge of the cut. Three diagrams show it as it appears in two different lessons of the Seminar:



1) In the lesson of 21/11/62:

Object *a* = a residue of the constitution of the subject. "The only proof of the otherness of the Other."

Object *a* = lost from the subject, lost from the unconscious; fallen from the subject, excluded from the universe of discourse.

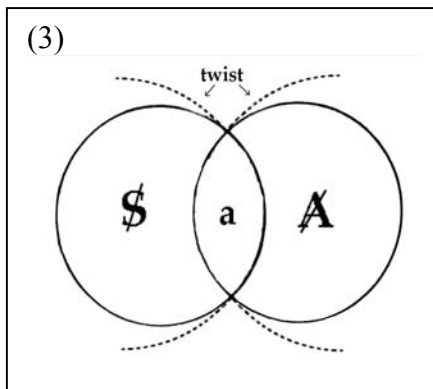


2) In the lesson of 6/3/63:

a = cause of desire, behind the subject, preceding him. It is what moves the subject, pushing him, giving the dynamics of desire.

a.../...A barred

a = separated by the bar from the A barred, yet close to the lack of the Other, a remainder of jouissance which can appear in the phantasy as that which is lacking in the Other.



So, anxiety is not merely the affect of the lack in the Other. The encounter with the hole in the Symbolic does not, in itself, create anxiety. The hysterical subject proves it. Anxiety is the sensation of the desire of the Other — the idea that the Other desires *something* and not nothing. This *something* is structurally the being of jouissance to which the subject is reduced by the drive. To round off this point, we can situate in a diagram (3) the double edge producing the object *a* in a torsion, a twist. I cannot take here the topological construction, as it would be too complicated for this paper. I will take

what seems easier to me: the support offered by Lacan in the first lesson of the Seminar, *La Logique du Fantasme*.

It is useful to represent on a surface the torsion, the twist, linking two operations: alienation and separation in the phantasy. The intersection between S barred and A barred which creates the place of object *a* and produces a gap, left by a loss of jouissance. In this gap, the objects of the drive can be taken to embody the libido.

Alienation in the phantasy links the subject up to the Other, by means of the object of the drive and the idea that he is lacking the object which is in the Other. Thus the subject

can feel in himself the lack of and desire for the object, which appears in the field of the Other. Therefore the classical neurotic anxiety is an alienation anxiety, connected to the desire of the Other.

Separation in phantasy places the cut between the object and the Other and tries to show how the subject can only take place in the Other by cutting off the object and becoming equivalent to it. My idea, according to clinical experience, is that the new forms of anxiety in capitalist civilisation are mainly separation anxieties, since the link to the Other is less established — in so far as the only link offered by capitalism is the cynical individualist's link to objects.

Anxious Love Melancholy

So far I have just presented a few points from Lacan's teachings in order to orientate myself. As a next step, I would like to approach the problem of anxiety in melancholia. I have never looked this question before, even though, many years ago, as a psychiatrist, I treated several melancholics. I have been searching psychoanalytical bibliographies for material on the subject. The result: not a lot, although I can recommend an article by Christian Vereecken.³

Vereecken notes that Jules Cotard found thoughts of immortality and eternity to be present in the anxious form of melancholia. He also points out that the furious form of anxiety in melancholia was present in the *Anatomy of Melancholy* of Burton⁴, in the extensive part dedicated to *love melancholy* (where Burton uses the terms "heroic love" or "heroic melancholy").

I also came across some interesting clinical observations by Tellenbach.⁵ He comments on the situation preceding the fall into psychotic melancholy, which is marked by the affect of despair. Tellenbach does not really talk about anxiety. Yet in the psychoanalytic clinic we have to distinguish despair and anxiety. Despair is the affect of an insoluble conflict. When a psychotic has to sacrifice himself in the enormous effort to live up to a tyrannical Ideal, he is confronted by the futility of his attempts. As defeat becomes impossible to avoid, he feels a deep despair. The melancholia is triggered by an encounter with a *real loss*, profoundly threatening to the existence of the subject and his efforts to maintain himself in the Symbolic order. Anxiety in melancholia can emerge as a state of physical agitation and fury, sometimes expressed in howls. Anxiety marks the border between being on the brink of ruin and being definitely ruined. The melancholic subject

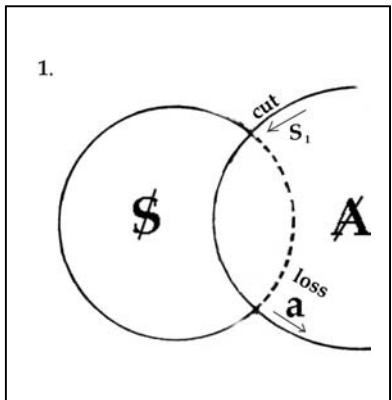
³ C. Vereecken, *De la mélancolie anxieuse aux fureurs héroïques*, in Actes de l'Ecole de la Cause Freudienne, no. X, 1986.

⁴ Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621. The new Spanish translation of 1997, published by the Asociación Española de Neuropsiquiatría, includes a fascinating introduction by Jean Starobinski, "*Démocrate parle, L'utopie mélancolique de Robert Burton*" (1984). Another classical work, after Burton's essay, was written by Jacques Ferrand in 1623: "*De la maladie de l'amour, ou mélancholie érotique*".

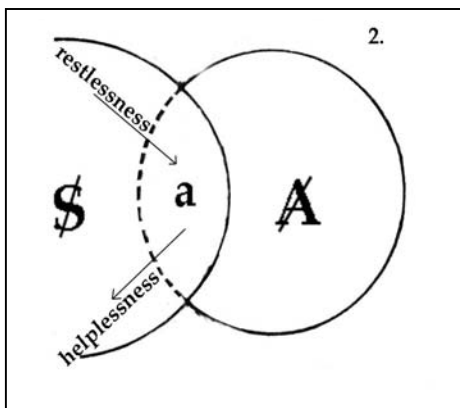
⁵ Hubertus Tellenbach, *Melancholie*, Springer-Verlag, Berlin, 1974.

will remain anxious so long as he fails to accept the impossibility of retaining the lost object (which can either be a love object or any kind of goods).

In lacanian logic, could we situate melancholia as a counterpart of anxiety, as Freud did in *Draft E*?⁶ It seems to me that the cut producing the double edge of the intersection locates the object *a*. We can see in its dynamics an opening and closing (a “pulsation”). This could be represented as follows:



1) *The edge announcing melancholia.* The cut is experienced as a *pain of existing* in a pure state; the pain of the haemorrhage of libido in the psychic life of the subject. The subject experiences his division from his libidinal cause — he loses the object which was placed as the cause of his desire. Pain arrives before anxiety. Melancholic pain is experienced as a psychological gap, as the falling into a dark hole, pushed by the lethal effect of signifiers.



2) *The edge producing anxiety.* The cut is experienced as the radical *Hilflosigkeit*, in its two faces:

One, the *restlessness* of being thrown into the field of the Other, without mercy, as an object *a*. A pure condensation of jouissance disturbs the body. It cannot be assimilated by any Other and neither can it be reduced by the homeostasis of the pleasure principle.

The other face, the *helplessness*; the sense that no Other can respond to the jouissance, extraneous to the subject, yet pushed to be offered to this hole. It is a moment in which nobody can give a reply. No-

body — the English term is very precise here.

“Heroic love” is fundamentally morbid in its wish for jouissance and an impossible link with the Other (who is radically absent). The act of suicide may offer itself as the only solution, separating the lover both from his realization as the object causing the lack in the Other and from the killing tyranny of signifiers. The subject throws himself into the void, breaking free from the lethal action of language and liberating the Other from the indignity he realizes for him/her. In his heroic offering of his being he acts in the Real what the neurotic refuses above all; the sacrifice of his castration to ensure the jouissance of the Other.

⁶ S.Freud, *Draft E, How Anxiety Originates*, S.E. Vol.I, p. 192. “...a great longing for love in its psychical form, psychical erotic tension. Where this accumulates and remains unsatisfied, melancholia develops. Here we should have the counterpart of anxiety neurosis. Where physical sexual tension accumulates – anxiety neurosis. Where psychical sexual tension accumulates — melancholia.”

Anxious melancholy shows, as the psychiatrist Jules Cotard suggested, the identification with the Real of the object *a*: the immortality of the libido, the eternity of this piece of the Real, escaping forever the lethal action of language. Perhaps one might wish to see the anxious melancholic as the last hero in our civilization, which has no more place for heroes since those who fight to defend the law of desire are now excluded by capitalist discourse.

But Burton's ancient hero of love can no longer play the role of an honourable warrior. The Ideal has fallen. He is just enjoying his being as real proof of what absolute love is. The melancholic position is one of extreme indignity: the idealization of the lost object above any value of the narcissistic image. The desperate call to the Other in the expectation of receiving at least a sign which could name the unutterable being of *jouissance*, is experienced as the obscure will of the Other abolishing the subject. There is no doubt that melancholic love is an anxious and painful love, colouring the affects of restlessness and helplessness in dark, bright black.

Sometimes we find a sort of absolute love in schizophrenia. Yet it is not an absolute love coloured in black as in melancholia. I would say that in schizophrenia the absolute love comes to colour affects in red. The anxiety felt in the body is an extreme excitation. It is the red colour of restlessness without the dark colour of helplessness. The difference between the melancholic subject and the schizophrenic subject is that the schizophrenic is not identified with the hole in the universe, the real cause of the lack in the Other, but with the object of *jouissance* which is not separated from the body. Thus, the schizophrenic's anxious love is not a heroic one.

It may also be interesting to look at the similarity between melancholic heroic love and radical feminine love. Of course, love today is no longer the kind so highly esteemed in the XVIIth century. But could feminine love be ahistorical? Or dislocated from any history? Feminine *jouissance* and feminine love are not psychotic at all in their absolute mode, yet the woman's love is a mad one. The only point in common with the psychotic is that feminine *jouissance* cannot be entirely civilized by Symbolic law. The Other *jouissance* is supplementary to phallic *jouissance* and it has nothing to do with any object. And the Other *jouissance* is not the object of anxiety. It is experienced as an absolute joy. But this ravaging joy brings anxiety, as this *jouissance* is experienced totally alone since it exists at the very place of the lack in the Other, in an abyss. The only reply the subject can find is love, an absolute love calling the absent Other. When no Other replies, she is overwhelmed by pain and anxiety.

So long as a woman remains attached to an unrealistic longing for love, she is prone to fall into a melancholic state. While she is entirely attached to an absent Other — a man taking the figure of her God — she will suffer in direct proportion to her love.

It may be tempting to say that, in our civilization in which the subject is offered no other attachment than to consumer objects, real heroism is that of feminine love (which can certainly appear out-of-history). Nevertheless this kind of love seems to me to be a silent heroism, condemned to live out of the social link: a muteness in which a woman consumes only herself. It produces nothing with any valuable effect on others. Love letters and love

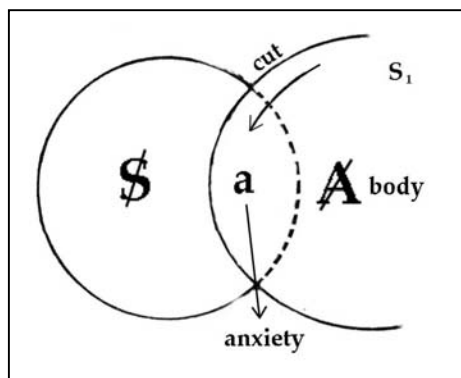
poems written by women in the mystic exaltation of this kind of love — flooded with an intense *pathos* — reveal that this feminine love is, in fact, the name of an excessive jouissance. It can transmit nothing in the field of knowledge. The mad love of the “true woman” is, of course, a way to escape the capitalist discourse, yet it is not really subversive as it is unlivable for her and for her deified Man and it creates nothing valuable in the field of desires.

The value of anxiety in schizophrenia

On the opposite side to feminine anxiety — so linked to the menacing loss of love — we can find the anxiety of the schizophrenic subject. Schizophrenic anxiety is the paradigm of psychotic anxiety. The paranoiac, by means of delusion, reduces his perplexity in front of the hole in the Other. His conviction concerning his delusional signification provokes aggression and hatred towards the Other, but it is a useful exit for anxiety.

However, the schizophrenic does not find in his chosen signifiers an effective safety net, as each signifier is equivocal, deceiving in itself. The hole in the Other remains a nonsense hole. In the absence of the screen of phantasy, the object *a*, comes nearer to the body, appearing in close proximity to the presence of the Other, who becomes a body inhabited by a nameless will, outside any law.

When anxiety emerges, the schizophrenic has the idea that he is just a “bodily thing”, separated from his image. A schizophrenic’s anxiety takes the form of restlessness, since he feels that he does not have his own body, that his body does not belong to him. He experiences life abandoning the body, and at the same time his body is delivered to strange returns of jouissance. As a patient of mine once said: “Losing one’s life is not the same as dying. My life was lost and I couldn’t do anything. I was reduced to a biological mash — just flesh and blood, accompanied by thoughts.”



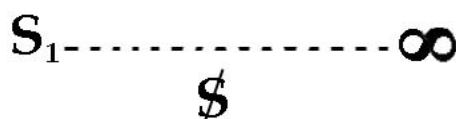
Many schizophrenics testify to the healthy value of anxiety, since it is the affect which makes thinkable the cut which separates the subject from the Real; the cut made by the action of language into the Real. He can experience what he is as a subject, in a lucid state, separated from what he is as a body — either a shapeless mash or an erratic jouissance. This cut locates the subject in his existence. Anxiety is here a signal; not a signal in the ego but a signal of the fracture of jouissance by language. The division of the subject appears in the Real, where jouissance is split into pieces. It is the force behind hypochondriac anxiety. Anxiety warns the schizophrenic of the imminent danger of being abolished as a subject, of becoming just a piece of the Real lodged inside the Other.

One of my schizophrenic patients, always distressed when he meets women, described the object of his anxiety in a dream: “A sort of octopus whose tentacles wave

around the hole of a sort of womb, which is opening and closing in a strong suction”. Just at the moment in which he is going to be caught by this strange mouth, he wakes up, invaded by anxiety. He says his anxiety is a protection against women, a signal of the unknown dangers embodied by them. By himself, he couldn’t connect the figure of his nightmare to the traces of his history, not even to the insatiable voracity of his mother’s dissatisfaction — a mother who transformed her child into an appendix to hold on to, since she rejected her husband. I had to construct it for him and this construction relieved him; he became less anxious afterwards.

Another patient told me: “I have no fear of fear. Anxiety saves me. It is the index that stops me from going mad.” We can also read the excellent testimony of Pessoa, in the “*Libro do Desasossego*”, where he gives this term “*desasossego*” (which can be translated into English as “restlessness”) to describe his lucid state.

To explore a little more the function of anxiety in schizophrenia, I would say that there are two different forms of anxiety. The first one might be called *healthy schizophrenic anxiety*: anxiety as a starter for the subject, which leads to the work of his psychosis. Thus anxiety as an internal affect pointing out the division of the subject, showing that the body is split from jouissance. It indicates to him that he has not disappeared, even though he is at the border of an *infinite interval* which is not limited by a second signifier, by any S2. We could put it as follows:

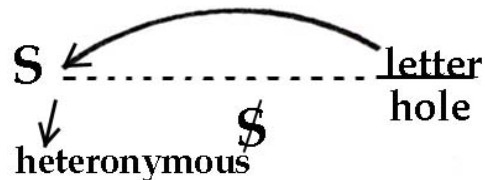


The place of the Other, of the second signifier, is an infinite hole. The identity of the subject is reduced to a pure, infinite void, and his value is reduced to zero (1/ infinite = 0).

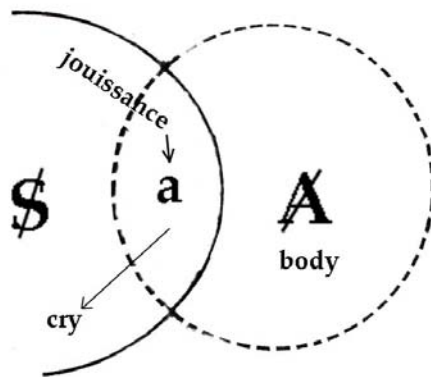
So, anxiety is a healthy affect in so far as it marks the double separation from the unchained signifier in the Real, S1, and from the jouissance fractured into erratic pieces, placed out-of-body in the hole in the Symbolic. The first patient I quoted said: “Suddenly the world went dark, I saw an infinite grey fog, crossed by a horizontal dark line. Now I can’t devote myself to anything — concentrating on something means losing everything else. There’s an expression: the person who tries to sit between two chairs ends up on the floor. I am no more than nothing. The trick is to create a mental hole to escape reality. It excludes suicides and includes a certain madness. I have to use my mind as a last refuge.”

I have heard from many schizophrenic patients how anxiety pushes them to call up the signifiers in their minds, and how words arrive in the form of unexpected sentences. Those who are in analysis are led by anxiety to contact this special Other ready to listen to them. Anxiety can open schizophrenic subjects to a new elaboration of knowledge, in which they can hold up their lucidity and enjoy their inventions. Either they give form to a body of words never said before or they produce an art object. As long as they are occupied with this work of their psychosis they avoid the issue of a precipitation in the hole, and thus the route of the *passage à l’acte*.

Pessoa tells us how the experience of *desasossego* provokes an inspired, frantic writing in which he is transported out of himself. “Something” is writing, something which is not himself, as he has no identity in that moment. The writing produced creates for him another identity: another *heteronymous*. The letter arrives suddenly, yet not without work, and takes up its place in the hole of the S2. The letter is able to condense the infinite and extract him from anxiety. Thus he is suspended in never ending identities created by the plurality of writings inhabiting him.



Secondly, we have to consider another form of anxiety in schizophrenia, directly linked with the *jouissance* returning erratically to the body. This is felt as an asubjective anxiety, not a psychological one but a physical one. It is the anxiety expressed by a cry, a howl, a scream, or by bodily agitation. The cry, said Lacan, at the end of the Seminar X, “...is the first manifestation of anxiety from that which will be the subject. He *will* be, he is not yet”. Later, in the Seminar XI he describes: “...the radical node in which are conjoined demand and drive, designated by the formula of the drive $\$ \rightleftharpoons D$, which might be called the cry”.⁷ Elsewhere Lacan had also stressed that Schreber’s “miracle of howling” had nothing to do with any subject.⁸



⁷ J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, Peregrine Books, London, 1986. p.209

⁸ J. Lacan, *Écrits, a selection*, Tavistock publications, London, 1977. p.202 .

(a) What he calls the miracle of howling (*Brüllenwunder*), a cry torn from his breast that surprises him beyond all expectation, whether he is alone or with others, who are horrified by the spectacle he offers them of his mouth suddenly gaping over the unspeakable void, abandoning the cigar that was stuck there only a moment earlier.

(b) The call for help (*‘Hülfe’ rufen*), emitted by “divine nerves detached from the mass, the plaintive tone of which is caused by the greater distance into which God withdraws.”

This second form of anxiety is the signal of the cut made by the drive into the body, reducing it to its real connection with jouissance. The subject feels that he has no identity, he disappears, emerging at the borders of his own body, a body not separated from the Other. The jouissance of the Other seems the same as his own returning jouissance. The idea that another person is invading him, enjoying his body, is a delusional translation.

This kind of anxiety marks the return of the pieces of jouissance condensed around the holes in the body, the return of the drive in the real of the organism which emerges in the body either as a hole or as a piece of flesh. This form of anxiety is the *hypochondriac* restlessness, which is not very useful to the subject, in so far as it does not place him, only marks the cut made by the signifier into the Real. It introduces a suffering tear in the body. I would say that it is *a tear without tears*, as tears are the sign of a subject — of a barred subject, affected by a painful experience. In short, the subjective experience of anxiety in schizophrenia *places* the subject, whereas the cry, emerging only from the body, *displaces* and abolishes him.

In English the same word ‘cry’ can express these two different senses: the psychotic cry, excluding the subject, and ‘crying’, which can manifest the subject. Another schizophrenic patient tells me: “Before going mad, the anxiety was internal and love was external. Now, since love is internal and I’m at the centre of an empty world, the anxiety is outside me. When I screamed, it wasn’t me, it was something else invading my body”. This patient has, for many years, been repeatedly violent and destructive — mainly suicidal actings-out or aggressive passages à l’acte against her parents. These two forms of precipitation in acts, pushed by anxiety, are an immediate response showing either the absence of the subject in the hole in the Other (and it is an acting-out) or the presence of the object to which the subject is reduced by the Other (and it is a passage à l’acte).

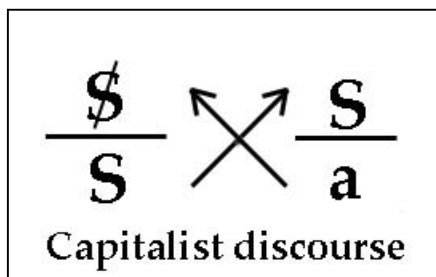
Sometimes after a passage à l’acte — killing the other — a psychotic immediately kills himself. These kinds of actions may be taken by people who have previously been perceived as ‘normal’. They are the most dangerous cases, as they do not lead to the work of psychosis, the only thing capable of giving the subject a chance.

Neurotic Anxieties in Today’s Capitalism

After this long discussion of different forms of anxiety in the psychoses, I would like to deal with the current most frequent forms of anxiety in hysteria and obsessional neurosis.

Of course, the classic neurotic forms of anxiety, disguised in phantasy, have not disappeared. We realize in our clinical experience that the neurotic phantasy is the very mode by which the subject disguises, covers, the Real object of anxiety. The classic neurotic anxiety is anxious expectancy (*erwartung*) organized by repetition, and the hypothetical situations of danger are outlined on the screen of the phantasy. The phantasy leads from *anxiety* to *fear* and it allows the anxiety to be transformed into *neurotic symptoms*. The neurotic subject nourishes his fears in order to justify his defences and avoidances.

The newer forms of anxiety in the neuroses are the sudden emergences of anxiety which cannot be linked by the subject to any representation in his mind, which have no connection to unconscious knowledge and which are separated from the desire of the Other. These forms of anxiety are generally induced by the capitalist discourse in which the subjects are caught, in so far as objects of the market are proposed as the due cause of



desire in our civilization. Women are invited to take care of their bodies — and to be a woman is reduced to being a “pretty form”, to compete in the market and capture desires. Men are pushed to have a phallic power, to prove they can triumph over the desire of the Other. Therefore, they also have to take care of their bodies, to dedicate themselves to body-building and to be “vigorous”. The unexpected instance of anxiety is the one in which

the subject loses either the bright image protecting him in his phantasy, or his power.

Let us take, first of all, the most frequent form of anxiety in today’s hysteria — the one in which the conversion symptom may be absent. Hysteria is the discourse which unmasks the way in which the regime of the Master works. The capitalist discourse operating nowadays produces the failure of the hysterical discourse, leaving the hysteric in a new helplessness. She does not find in the Other a support for her desire. She remains “identified with the lack”, paralyzed in apathy, doing nothing, as she is disconnected from the social link. The counterpart of this “doing nothing” is the insurrection of the object *a*, which suddenly becomes present on the scene, as the object of the drive, close to the body.

So hysterical anxiety has become the sensation of being reduced to a mere body — an asubjective one. Very often, the acting out arrives to short-circuit the subjective experience of anxiety: bulimia, for example, or consumption of alcohol and drugs. Bulimic patients don’t allow themselves time to arrive at a feeling of anxiety. Freud described “ravenous hunger” in anxiety neuroses as an “equivalence of anxiety”, a “rudimentary anxiety attack”.

In all the cases I have treated, this asubjective form of restlessness in hysteria, the return of the object of the drive capturing the body and mind, is a consequence of the avoidance of the question of sex. These girls do not want to know anything about the links between bodies. They avoid orientating themselves in the differences between men and women. They refuse to see themselves as sexuated bodies determined by castration in desire, bodies inhabited by the sexual drive. The capitalist discourse contributes further to eject the question and to reduce bodies to their image or to their autistic jouissance, connecting to other bodies as mere objects of consumption. So, the question of love and desire is buried or rejected when the hysteric girl experiences the loss of her phallic value for a man. But the hysterical subject does not only feel anxiety in front of the lack of the Other, but also when faced with becoming the object of jouissance for a man — an end to which she won’t allow herself to be reduced.

Let us also take briefly *panic attacks*, so frequent nowadays in obsessional neurosis, and leading sometimes to *passages a l’acte* to avoid anxiety. Obsessional neurotics too are

affected by capitalist discourse. They cling to their phallic power in order to maintain their ego in the face of the Demand of the Other. Their object of jouissance has to be wrapped in the phallic image, to form their phantasy by “accentuating the impossibility of the subject vanishing”, as Lacan said in *Subversion of the Subject*. So long as he denies the desire of the Other, the obsessional is at risk of running into the traumatic situation in which the desire of the Other appears unexpectedly, in the form of an openness to jouissance which reduces the being of the subject to an instrument in the service of the Other.

Suddenly, in the moment at which he feels he is vanishing, losing his power, as the desire of the Other cannot be filled and covered by the phallus, he can no longer hide behind the signifier. Lacan has proposed that anxiety emerges when *émoi* and embarrassment converge on the subject. The obsessional panic attack is the sudden feeling of helplessness, a sensation of death. It may even be mistaken for a heart-attack. The fall of the phallus shows the symbolic order claiming its “pound of flesh”. (And the “pound” is the object with which the obsessional usually deals in our capitalist order, as the main measure of his value.)

The ‘panic attack’ is just a term established by the DSM IV to name this kind of sudden anxiety in neurotic people who experience the fall of the ‘normal’ phallic affirmation in their ego. But it is important to distinguish neurotic panic and human panic — which emerges at the moment in which a real danger threatens the life of the subject.

Anxiety in its radical form, linked to the singular existence of each human being — who necessarily makes a hole in the world as he emerges as a subject — cannot be eliminated from psychical and physical life. But the psychoanalytic experience tells us that anxiety is the only affect “which does not deceive”. And here perhaps I could sum up with the following statement: Where the subject experiences the cut of the Symbolic into the Real, anxiety, where he experiences the imminence of his destruction by a Real danger, panic.

Our so-called human environment has always provided both. Nevertheless, the current form of capitalism dominating our world has introduced human beings into a spiral in which the disorder of the master signifiers carries subjects away in a frantic race, propelled by the threat of a loss, and ultimately brings them to an even bigger loss. Our distorting capitalist world forces us into a new helplessness, since we are invited to take no other sustenance than the objects offered by a market to which we become voluntary slaves.

The irony of our capitalist ‘democracies’ is that at the same time as they claim freedom of thought and the choice of any mode of jouissance, they only offer the subject a narrow place in which to survive, one determined by the uncertainty of never knowing whether the others will offer us profits or losses. Social life is constructed as an expensive performance, a spectacle to seduce — with dazzling “special effects” — an audience reduced to passive spectators. To become someone worthwhile, one has to appear “on the screen”. The political and cultural discourse is just a script cynically written for each occasion, according to the business interest of the moment. Our world is the great business show...

How can contemporary subjects find a space for desire in this huge supermarket? What hope is there for the psychoanalytic experience of the unconscious? Could the desire of the analyst operate to invite the subject to pierce the screen? There is no Other to give the answer. As the first psychotic patient I have quoted said, at the highest point of her *hilflosigkeit*:

“There is a hole in the foggy grey landscape, my potential disappearance. The thing would be to create another hole, so each of us could decide whether to include or to exclude the reality of our interiors.”

Madrid, February 2003.

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