

The Body in Psychoanalysis

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Ist I want to thanks Philip Dravers who corrected my english and translated the references I make to the course of Jacques-Alain Miller L'Être et l'Un, The being and the One.

Psychoanalysis is a process of speech, but it is a process that involves the body. First of all because you have to move your body to get to your analysis. Of course, today we can also have interviews/meetings at a distance, but we understand that it is always between sessions in which the body is present.

As Miller says in his course “Le tout dernier Lacan” — The very last Lacan — “The One-Body is the *parlêtre*'s sole consistency. (...) And it is understood that this is what the human being must bring to analysis. After all, if only speech was involved, there would be no reason why the telephone or the internet would not be appropriate media. One could say that the analytic experience requires that the body be given a more elevated function than the one assigned to it by psychoanalysis conceived on the basis of the symbolic”.¹ You could find this quotation of Miller in his course of 17th of January 2007.

But what is the body in psychoanalysis?

For Freud

In Freud we find a series of comments that suggest that the real of the body is the organism. We can quote the well-known expression “Anatomy is destiny”, which is, as Freud himself says, a variation of a saying by Napoleon. He uses it twice. First in his text “On the Universal Tendency to

¹ "L'Un-Corps est la seule consistance du parlêtre. (...) Et on comprend que c'est ce qu'il faut que l'être humain apporte en analyse. Après tout, s'il n'y avait que la parole en cause, on ne voit pas pourquoi le téléphone ou internet ne seraient pas des médias appropriés. On pourrait dire que l'expérience analytique impose de donner au corps une fonction plus relevée que celle que lui assignait la psychanalyse pensée à partir du symbolique" (Extract from the Jacques-Alain Miller course of 17/01/2007 Le tout dernier Lacan (The very last Lacan))

Debasement in the Sphere of Love”. The context is precise. It is about the persistence in sexuality of “coprophilic instinctual components”². He explains them by the anatomical localisation of the genital organs “*inter urinas and faeces*” in humans. The second time he uses this expression is in the text “Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex” to distinguish the response of the girl from that of the boy in the resolution of the Oedipus complex³.

Serge Cottet once remarked that “it is a little ironic (...) [for Freud] to quote Napoleon. For his entire theory of sexuality emancipates sexual desire from anatomy, the fate (destiny) of the libido depending above all on the avatars of the Oedipus and therefore on identifications.”⁴ What Cottet is saying here is that anatomy seems to be the real of the body in this Freudian expression, but that in fact the sexualised body is structured by the symbolic. You can find that in a text published by the Clinical Section of Rennes in 2013.

Freud also refers to neurones, for example in his “Project for a Scientific Psychology”⁵, to describe the psychic apparatus, but at the same time he emphasises the function of the psyche as related to language. These references are rather to be taken as a sign that Freud wanted to articulate his invention in relation to the science of his time.

It seems to me that in Freud we can specify the link between psychoanalysis and the body on two levels. First there is the constitution of a certain imaginary unity of the body, the one that Lacan will specify in his *Mirror Stage*, which is already present in Freud's conception of the Ego. And secondly there is in Freud an approach to the real in the body with the term “drive”.

² SE XI, p 189

³ SE XIX, p 178

⁴ Serge Cottet, “L’anatomie c’est le destin”, *L’a-graphe, L’inconscient et le corps*, Publication de la Section clinique de Rennes, octobre 2013.

⁵ Freud, Sigmund, (1895) A Project for a Scientific Psychology. SE I, p 283-397

The Ego, as presented by Freud in his text, “The Ego and the Id”⁶, is an agency of great heterogeneity⁷. It includes the perception-consciousness system and the preconscious, but also presents itself (the Ego) as having an unconscious part, the censor subject. It is also a unifying and alienating image of the body. And finally, it is a set of identifications. Very heterogeneous then.

By the time Freud arrives at his second topic, the Ego has become above all corporeal. It is not only a part of the id transformed by the Pc-Cs system, it is also linked to the body itself and to the sensations that the body experiences. It is a surface being, it is the image of the body as Lacan will develop it in “The Mirror Stage”. It is the axis marked a-a' on schema L, which is equivalent to the axis marked e-i(a) on schema R. It is a unifying image, the efficiency of which can be clearly identified by its failure in the schizophrenic when, because it is not constituted, it leaves the body fragmented.

“*The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego.*”⁸ This is what Freud wrote in *The Ego and the Id*. But this unifying image is always truncated — I quote — “it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface” - and he continues saying “If we wish to find an anatomical analogy for it, we can best identify it with the ‘cortical homunculus’ of the anatomists (...) [with the] speech-area on the left-hand side”.

His use of the homunculus must be related to the neurological science of his time, but it indicates an image of the body that does not immediately coincide with the body. Of course, it is not yet Lacan’s Mirror stage, because here it is not really a matter of an alienating image constructed on the basis of an external image (in the mirror) and thus on the image of another, but it is the body constructed as a unifying image. And he concludes this chapter by repeating and thus insisting: “*the conscious ego (...) is first and foremost a body-ego.*”⁹

⁶ SE XIX

⁷ (reprise partielle de mon texte sur Le Moi)

⁸ SE XIX p 26

⁹ SE XIX p 27

The other approach to the body taken by Freud is on the real side, with the drive. The *id* is logically first, as the place of drive, of jouissance, and the *ego* is itself a part of the *id* placed at the service of the reality principle, through a confrontation with the outside world — we can of course see a part of alienation in this intervention of the outside world, but it is not so logically precise then in the Mirror stage.

In other words, for Freud, first there is the *id*, and then “a part of the *id* (...) [that] has been modified by the direct influence of the external world”¹⁰, that is the *ego*. In the light of Jacques-Alain Miller's course,¹¹ we can say: there is, first of all, the One all alone. The *Id* is perhaps a first way of approaching the *Yad'lun* (translated by Bruce Fink in English : “There is such a thing as One”), the pure existence of the One, formulated in the last period of Lacan's teaching. And the *Ego* is itself a part of the *Id* placed at the service of the reality principle, through a confrontation with the outside world, that is to say with a “two”, the external world functioning here as an S^2 for the first S^1 .

The body thus appears in this Freudian text in two forms: the imaginary body which is the *Ego-body*, image and unifying form, and also the real body which is the *id*, the place of drives. We can talk about two bodies in Freud's work: the *ego* and the *id*, the image and the drive. As Jacques-Alain Miller puts it: “What Lacan calls the body is the incarnation of the Freudian *id*, it is — I say it first in French: “*le corps en tant qu'il se jouit*” — “the body in so far as it enjoys itself”¹². But Lacan will start his approach of the body with the image.

Freud limits his conception of the end of the analysis to pinpointing the mode of castration at stake for each of the sexes, that is to say, to the formulation of the phallus as symbolic. There is no way for him to go beyond this, which leads him to propose a finite and an infinite analysis, in other words, an analysis that must always be returned to periodically. It is in one of his last texts, “Analysis terminable and interminable.”¹³ This is how

¹⁰ SE XIX p 25

¹¹ JAM, L'être et l'Un (18 May 2011)

¹² JAM, L'être et l'Un, *ibid.*

¹³ SE XXIII, p 216-253

Freud comes to a halt on the way towards the formulation of this real of the body.

The body as image

For the rest, I want to take this problem of the body in psychoanalysis from the perspective of the last Lacan and even, more precisely, with reference to Jacques-Alain Miller's course "L'Être et l'Un" — in English "Being and the One". I'm going to refer to this course a lot.

I quote Miller in that course: "*The most obvious characteristic of the first Lacan is a triumphalist optimism characterized by the domination of the symbolic over the imaginary, which contrasts with the terrible pessimism of his last teaching. Jouissance — in the first period of Lacan's teaching — did not strictly speaking enter into the real but was placed on the side of the imaginary. It was only an imaginary effect and, since his starting point was the mirror stage, the body was only considered on the basis of its form, which governed its jouissance.*"¹⁴ And indeed in this mirror stage, Lacan describes the "illuminative mimicry (>i>e>é)" and the "jubilant activity" linked to the discovery of his body image¹⁵. These are all terms that evoke a jouissance of the body. And it is the image, the perception of this form, that thus commands the jouissance of the body, a jouissance that Lacan situates in the imaginary at that time.

And as Jacques-Alain Miller points out furthermore, in Lacan's study of Schreber's case, the jouissance of the body is still [or once again] situated at the level of the image. This is what Lacan refers to as "transsexualist jouissance" in Schema I¹⁶. Transsexual jouissance is a jouissance of the particular image of an idealised body constructed in

¹⁴ JAM, *L'être et l'Un* p 26 : *Le trait le plus manifeste du premier Lacan est un optimisme triomphaliste caractérisé par la domination du symbolique sur l'imaginaire, qui tranche avec le pessimisme de son dernier enseignement. La jouissance n'entraîne pas à proprement parler dans le réel, mais était rangée du côté de l'imaginaire. Elle n'était qu'un effet imaginaire, et le corps – son point de départ étant le stade du miroir – ne valait que par sa forme qui en commandait sa jouissance.*

[T.N. Cf. Jacques-Alain Miller, "Progrès en psychanalyse assez lente", *La Cause Freudienne* 78 (2011), p. 175. (pp.151-206).]

¹⁵ JL "The Mirror Stage, *Écrits* p 75-76

¹⁶ JL *Écrits* p 476

the Schreberian delusion. This imaginary body is the one on which the narcissistic jouissance of the subject is based.

The body is thus situated as an image and more precisely as the place where one experiences a jouissance of this alienating image. Of course, this image is subject to the displacement of the signifier, or as Jacques-Alain Miller says: “*only shadows and reflections taken up in the ballet of symbolic terms*”.¹⁷

At this first moment of Lacan's teaching there is a certain exclusion of the real, which is what always returns to the same place. This real, as Miller says, is, on that time, disqualified and stupid, like the stars that always return to the same place.

Here then, the body that psychoanalysis is concerned with is not real, it is a constituted and constitutive image since it is “the symbolic matrix in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form”¹⁸ — that’s what Lacan says in the Mirror Stage. And in the whole of this first period of Lacan’s teaching the symbolic will appear as determining the imaginary.

There is also another face of the body-image, which is that its grip in signifier mortifies it. It is the very principle of the signifier that makes present against a background of absence and absent against a background of presence. I am not going to develop this aspect today, I just want to mention it.

A body seized by bits of real (des bouts de réel)

I quote Miller: “*The Lacanian body was first that of the mirror stage, essentially imaginary, on the basis of which he deciphered the theory of narcissism. But once jouissance was no longer held to be the preserve*

¹⁷ JAM, L'être et l'Un, p 26 : “qu'ombres et reflets maniés par le ballet des termes symboliques” [!]

¹⁸ JL Ecrits, p. 76

*of narcissism, another body, one not reduced to its specular image, became its support.”*¹⁹

Miller points out that in Seminar XI another sense of the real appears. With the distinction between two types of repetition, automaton and tuche (terms he took from Aristotle) he gives a new meaning to the real. Automaton is the signifying repetition that obeys the symbolic order, whereas tuche is the irruption of a real, a chance encounter, which does not obey the symbolic order.

The automaton is subject to a symbolic order. The signifier insists, returns, repeats itself. It is repetition as Lacan first conceived it, with Freud. Tuche is a completely different kind of repetition. It is no longer a repetition in the symbolic order. It is the repetition of a trauma. It is the real that is the principle of this repetition that occurs as if by chance.

I quote Miller: *“This, as if by chance, already announces what Lacan will emphasise in his very last teaching, that “the real is without law. “Real-order” comes to be opposed by “real-trauma”, that is, the real as inassimilable.”*²⁰ What he calls here real-order is the effectiveness of the symbolic law that operates as a real that has effects - we think here of the schemas of the purloined letter. It is the real supremacy of the symbolic. The real-trauma, that of the tuche, is a new effectivity, which puts a spoke (un rayon) in the wheel of the symbolic order.

This has effects on what can be said about the body in psychoanalysis. The body no longer appears only as an image, but also as the place of a different, partial jouissance of the body, linked to bits of real. This is what gives the object little a its rightful place: bits of real, bits of jouissance. They are non-eliminable remainders, which also refers us to the symptomatic remainders that Freud found resistant to analysis.

¹⁹ JAM, L'être et l'Un, p 73: Le corps lacanien fut d'abord celui du stade du miroir, essentiellement imaginaire, à partir duquel il déchiffra la théorie du narcissisme. La jouissance n'étant plus réservée au narcissisme, c'est un autre corps non réduit à son image spéculaire qui en devenait le support.

²⁰ JAM, L'être et l'Un, p 33 : Ce 'comme au hasard' est déjà l'annonce de ce que Lacan fera valoir comme 'le réel est sans loi' dans son tout dernier enseignement. Au réel-ordre s'oppose le réel-trauma, soit le réel comme inassimilable.

And Jacques-Alain Miller explains: *“This imaginary status fails to account for the jouissance of the symptom, at the moment when Lacan took Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety seriously.”*²¹ What changes in this text, in relation to Freud’s previous writings, is the status of the symptom. In his earlier texts, it is a question of discovering the meaning of the symptom, of deciphering it, of extracting the truth from it. None of this is still the case in *“Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety”*. Now it is a question of clarifying the function of the symptom. In his course *“The Partner-Symptom”* Miller discusses this shift in Freud’s approach. What is this function of a symptom? As Freud said, I quote: *“A symptom is a sign of, and a substitute for, an instinctual satisfaction which has remained in abeyance; it is the consequence of the process of repression.”*²² In other words, the satisfaction of the drive can only be obtained through the symptom. In Lacanian terms: the jouissance is that of the symptom. It is easy to understand why Miller considers that this text by Freud opens the way towards the last Lacan.

And Jacques-Alain Miller continue — I quote him in his course *“L’être et l’Un”* : *“From then on, it is necessary to re-establish a gap between the unconscious and the id. The question then becomes that of the relation between the unconscious and the id.”*²³ Indeed, it is a question of not confusing the unconscious of Freud's first topic with the id of the second topic. The unconscious is situated on the basis of the signifier and develops in the signifying equivocations. The id must be separated from it. It is the place of drives, of jouissance therefore, which does not respond to the laws of the signifier. The body is the body traversed by the drives.

At this moment in Lacan the little *a* appeared as a piece of the real. But this moment stops when Lacan reduces the object little *a* to a semblant. I quote Miller : *“This logical moment will find its stopping*

²¹ JAM, *L’être et l’Un*, p 73: Ce statut imaginaire défaille pour rendre compte de la jouissance du symptôme, au moment où Lacan a pris au sérieux Inhibition, Symptôme et Angoisse.

²² SE XX, p 91

²³ JAM, *L’être et l’Un*, p 73: Il faut dès lors restituer un écart entre l’inconscient et le ça. La question devient celle du rapport de l’inconscient et du ça.

point in Seminar XX Encore, Chapter VIII, when Lacan (...) says that the object is 'unable (...) to sustain itself in approaching the real'."²⁴

The sinthome

This is what brings us to the last period of Lacan's teaching. I quote Miller: "*There is a second version of the real, not the bits of real, but the one that Lacan calls the sinthome — with the spelling s.i.n.t.h.o.m.e. It is really something else, since the sinthome is a system well beyond the bits of real. The sinthome is the real and its repetition. (...) The real itself thus appears, as the mainstay and wellspring of the symbolic.*"²⁵ Repetition thus comes from the real.

To get to this point, and make the link between jouissance and the real, several things were required. And the first of these was a jouissance not linked to the prohibition. In Freud, jouissance is linked to Oedipal prohibition. And for Lacan also jouissance will be linked for a long time to what is forbidden. A sentence in the *Écrits* testifies to this: it is on page 700 of the English edition: "Castration means that jouissance has to be refused in order to be attained on the inverse scale of the Law of desire".

It can be attained only if it is refused. Jouissance was thus linked to desire. One desires the object especially as the law prohibits it. The law of desire is that which creates desire by prohibition. And jouissance is thus situated on the basis of the prohibition, on the basis of a saying "no", in other words it is situated within an oedipal framework [*problématique*]. Jouissance thus remains linked to its phallic expression.

What changes in his last teaching is that jouissance, as real, takes first place. As Miller says: "*It is precisely beyond prohibition that Lacan*

²⁴ JAM, L'être et l'Un, p 73: Ce moment logicien trouvera son point d'arrêt dans le Séminaire XX *Encore*, chapitre VIII, quand Lacan baisse les bras en formulant que l'objet *a* ne peut pas « se soutenir dans l'abord du réel. » [JL Sem XX p 95]

²⁵ JAM, L'être et l'Un, p 44: Il y a une deuxième version du réel, non pas la version *bout*, mais celle que Lacan appelle le sinthome. C'est vraiment autre chose, puisque le sinthome est un système bien au-delà du bout de réel. Le sinthome, c'est le réel et sa répétition. (...) Le réel apparaît ainsi lui-même, comme principe et ressort du symbolique.

could think of positivized jouissance as the body in so far as it enjoys itself (celle d'un corps qui se jouit). The difference is perceptible - jouissance is no longer attached to a prohibition, it is a body event."²⁶ The body event is not related to desire. It is not a signifying repetition of this dialectic of desire. The jouissance here is that of trauma, of a contingent shock. It is a chance encounter, not subject to the law of desire. Miller adds: "*It is no longer bound in a dialectic but is the object of a fixation.*"²⁷

He also points out that Lacan was only able to formulate feminine jouissance after having cleared jouissance of its link to prohibition. In this course Miller will extend this feminine jouissance to jouissance as such, linked to what Freud calls "fixation". Regarding this jouissance of the body here, note that it is not simply a body in so far as it enjoys, but a body in so far as it enjoys itself (in French : it is not "il jouit" but "il se jouit"). It is not at all the same thing, since this body that enjoys itself is therefore the body of autoeroticism.

What Lacan calls "*Yad'lun*", "There is such a thing as One", is the One of existence, pure real of the signifier One all alone, without meaning, that is to say without the two — therefore there is no sexual relation, no two. This situates the body in the series of the three affirmations: Yad'lun i.e. there is the One^[28]; there is no sexual relation; and there is the body.

Miller puts it like this: "*The body appears here as the Other of the signifier, which is what Lacan implied by saying that the Other is the body.*"²⁹ Before this, the Other of the signifier was the Other of truth, it is the meaning of the paternal metaphor. Now the Other of the signifier One, without meaning, is the body. The real of jouissance is the conjunction of the One and the body.

²⁶ JAM, L'être et l'Un, p 53: C'est précisément au-delà de l'interdiction que Lacan a pu penser la jouissance positivée comme celle d'un corps qui se jouit. La différence est sensible – la jouissance ne tient plus à une interdiction, c'est un événement de corps.

²⁷ JAM, L'être et l'Un, p 53: Elle n'est plus prise dans une dialectique, mais elle est l'objet d'une fixation.

²⁸ Yad'lun is usually translated as : "there is something of One" or even, as Fink does, "There is such a thing as One".

²⁹ JAM, L'être et l'Un, p 134: Le corps apparaît là comme l'Autre du signifiant, ce que Lacan laissait entendre en disant que l'Autre, c'est le corps.

This jouissance, opaque to meaning, linked to the mark of trauma on the body, led Lacan to "invent the writing of the sinthome"³⁰. The sinthome will be the repetition of this mark. It is an iteration, a repetition of this mark of jouissance. And Jacques-Alain Miller brings it closer to the Freudian concept of fixation. As Freud says in *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, when speaking about the development of the libido (I quote): "even in normal development the transformation is never complete and residues of earlier libidinal fixations may still be retained in the final configuration."³¹ In Freud, fixation is always linked to the repetition of a particular libidinal trait. This can be found in many places in his work, although he did not give this term much scope. It was Lacan who in fact developed the notion in the sinthome. And Miller adds: "What point of fixation means is that there is a One of jouissance, always returning to the same place."³² A One that produces a symptomatic re-iteration.

The One alone, which here determines the sinthome in its repetition, is meaningless – as meaning necessarily implies the two of the signifying dialectic. However, this out of meaning, this *hors-sens*, does not mean that we see nothing, that there is no possible articulation. As Miller says: "in order to be heretical, analytical practice supposes, not that we leave the field of language, but that we attune ourselves to its material part, to the letter instead of being."³³ Being, that is the signifying articulation with the meaning. It is therefore a matter of reading the letter to catch hold of the body (*pour attraper le corps*).

³⁰ JAM, L'être et l'Un, p 94

³¹ SE XXIII, p 229

³² JAM, L'être et l'Un, p 99: Ce que veut dire point de fixation, c'est qu'il y a un Un de jouissance revenant toujours à la même place.

³³ JAM, L'être et l'Un, p 145: la pratique analytique, (qui) suppose, pour être hérétique, non pas de quitter le champ du langage, mais de se régler sur sa partie matérielle, sur la lettre au lieu de l'être