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The Power of Women and Women in Power: Psychoanalytical Interpretation of the Roots of Power

YESTERDAY / TODAY: MEN, WOMEN, AND THEIR RESPECTIVE PLACES

Yesterday, women were an entity in relation to men; an entity that goes along with a man, maternity, sex, etc. Do you remember? Women were either mothers or prostitutes; no middle status, nothing else. Maternity is the power of the Symbolic, the origin of Family. Prostitution is the power of the mind, the source of “jouissance.” Both concepts are under the power of death drives. The first, maternity, because the child is a place of transmission, a symbolic object, and not enough a real proof of love; it is a continuity of the “Name of the Father,” and the woman’s body is used for this. The second, prostitution, is another form of power: the mind is sexual, and it is the place of all “jouissance,” of all the Powers: religion, politics, culture, economics, etc.

Today, women want to get out of this Symbolic functioning, in which they pay the price of being able to give life by having to renounce to their place as women; they want to be more than just mothers of, after being the daughters of, the wives of, etc. Women become more and more conscious of this. They want to get out of this ghetto, where they only have a representative role. No woman can want to be loved just because she is the mother of her husband’s children. This slavery is over! To become more human, “men” have to renounce to “jouissance.” All forms of jouissance are a drug, a dependence, a perpetual lack to be filled. But lack and its language are emptiness, and emptiness cannot be filled.

For centuries, the Unconscious and its language of lack were the place where no real men, no real women, could be; they were only symbolic fathers and mothers, making together symbolic children. This was a symbolic structure, in which only symbolic representations of men and women exist. No real place, no real life, only dependent people repeating a world of Parental language obeying the Laws of the Other, above them.

The discovery of psychoanalysis—which coincidentally came at Hitler’s time and with the extermination of 6 million Jews, fathers, mothers, daughters, and sons alike—is linked with the beginning of this symbolic order’s “Death.” This murder was the product of One man’s crazy mind, who had an Ideal of ethics giving him the right to decide which race was superior

and which was inferior, and to kill millions of lives in the name of an Ideal of purity and intelligence. This meant that a life had no value in men's minds.

SYMBOLICALLY, WOMEN AND MEN WERE NEVER TOGETHER

The notion of Father is a Signifier and is purely Symbolic. In the Unconscious, there is no equivalent of this notion of Father. A woman becomes a Mother biologically. When Jacques Lacan says, "She is it [the phallus] but she does not have it," and "He has it but he is not it," the equation is clear. In a Symbolic logic, men and women live under the stamp of the impossibility to really meet.

THE SYMBOLIC AND GENDER

The Symbolic is sexual, which means that in the logic of the Unconscious no man or woman is gendered; they are only Sexual Pre-Determiners (Mother/Father, Daughter/Son). For instance, a daughter has the same Pre-Determiner than her father; not the same gender but the same symbolic transmission and identity. And who is this daughter's mother? She is the opposite Pre-Determiner. And who has the Power? The Sexual Pre-Determiners "Mothers" and "Fathers." Power is not gendered; it is Sexual.¹

THE SYMBOLIC AND FAMILY

Following this logic, the problem with the notion of Family is the Symbolic Alliance existing between a daughter and her father, and a mother and her son, "against" the Other. *The problem is that a couple is not a Real couple.* What does this mean? It means that it is under the Symbolic's Power and its Parental Language; and a symbolic couple can only make symbolic children.

THE SYMBOLIC AND POLITICS

Language is a story of men. And Religion, made by men, was men's first political power. This way, very early on, men took the power over Language, which is the basis for all political powers and for power more generally, over men or women.

Originally, women's power was real: power over the family, children's education, and other different responsibilities. Their actions are what led them to power, not a real taste for it. And by wanting to resemble men and to have the same priorities (same rights, same social level, earn money, a living, etc.), many women were tempted, little by little. But do women have a real desire to take or to have power? Contrarily to men, it does not seem to be their nature.

Men's politics often used a symbolic logic to authorize war and violence, "in the name of..." Here is the danger: political logic staying at the service of a symbolic logic, which does not take values of life into account but only symbolic values, the source of all inequalities.

¹ See Dr Maryse Touboul's theory on the Unconscious' Laws of Transmission of the Sexual Pre-Determiners, and the transition from a transmitted Sexual Pre-Determination (Father/Mother - Son/Daughter), to a Gendered Determination (man - woman.) [Click here to access the text and diagrams about the transmission over three generations \(pdf, 83kb\).](#)

Somehow, women seem to have escaped this symbolic logic's power. And, even if the temptation to be men's equals remains, women can only move away from it over time, toward a much more real language, and attentive to the common needs of a society.

WOMEN AND THE POWER OF SEDUCTION

Since childhood, a girl knows that her body is an important center of interest and seduction; it is an important Power on the Other—boys first, then men. Thus, women built their identity in relation to men, starting with the father, the brother, the “family man,” etc.

This “desire” to be the Other's object of desire is at the center of psychoanalysis, which is based on the story of the Hysteric woman's language. So, the Unconscious, which is at the center of psychoanalysis, is this of a woman! But the Hysteric woman cannot stand being an “Object” of desire, instead of the Subject of her own desire; and her body reacts to the frustration of lacking a desire of her own. Having to seduce a man is not a free desire; it is the expression of a role to play, like an actor, to win a form of Power, that of seducing a man. This is the Power of seduction: a woman's power dominated by the desire she gives to a man! But in the Unconscious, the language of “Lack” of the Other dominates not only women but men also.

POWER IDENTITIES

Women and men can have the same powers over their wife or husband, their children, their parents, the others. The notion of power is very complex and there so many different kinds of power that we have to define what kind of power we want to speak about. Power Identities include: Parental Power, Economic Power, Political Power, Professional Power, and so on. These different forms of power have their place at each level of society. Everyone from their own place can exercise power and abuse it, or not. **All powers are vertical, from top to bottom.**

WHAT ABOUT WOMEN AND POWER?

Who made the first man? Nature? God? Or a real woman? We don't know. What is sure today is that women are not a part of men, but a whole entity to themselves. Who made the first woman? Nobody knows either. But giving or killing life is a Power. In a general sense, women are said to have the power of giving life and men the power of giving death. This is the first big difference between men and women. Women are caught in a transmission structure, but they give Life, which means that their instinct materializes through a reality: their body giving birth to another body. It is their Nature. From this point of view, they are freer than men.

Women's first power was to obtain rights: from men rights to women rights. This was a difficult intellectual conversion, and a real revolution of mentalities. It was also a real determination for women to free themselves, and to open to a society where they could have a place and responsibilities, which, little by little, would make them gain the possibility of becoming influent on their children's lives, through school, work, a social link with them. More and more rights, up to voting, which came so late! As if men—not all of them—slowly

recognized that women also had a right to have a mind and to think, and not necessarily had to be obedient.

WOMEN AND POWER IDENTITIES

Mothers have power over their family;
Wives have power over their husbands;
Daughters also have power on their parents.

Indeed, even if men did not give power to women, even if men's superiority was the rule, in reality, women often have a big influence on men, even in politics.

Hitler gave women the feeling they were essential for the progress of society, for children's education, and in exchange he promised them a place in society. Women's vote was important to Hitler, but officially, all the rights were for men, not for women.

Women's emancipation came with their right to study, to learn, to have their own thoughts, and with their will to change some unbearable rules in family, school or society. Some men, such as Marx or Engels, participated to this emancipation.

Every stage of society's evolution has been marked by something changing in the condition of women, but not only women, all abuses of power, all authoritarianisms, all racisms. Then revolutions led people toward more consciousness of their rights and toward the necessity to struggle to win.

WOMEN IN POWER: WHAT MOTIVATIONS - WHAT DIFFERENCE WITH MEN?

Women in power is not a recent story: Queens of England, Spain; in many countries, women had Power by transmission. The question is, Do women love power as much as men do, and is their motivation the same as men's? What does it mean for women to be in power? And why have power? For narcissistic or blood superiority? Or for something else?

Women are primarily biological and instinctual beings; they are guided by the language of the Instinct, which men usually don't have. Women's nature is linked to daily life's reality and sociality. Thus, their first preoccupations using Power in Politics is to transform real inequalities with men. For instance, why is a woman paid less than a man for the same work, in democratic countries like France? What does it mean? It is a humiliation, as if women's only use was to serve a Symbolic transmission and to remain stuck within it, with no real place or personal value in life. Even when a woman speaks, men listen more or less based on whether she is pretty or exciting or not. As if women's minds were "inferior" to men's. No, it is not inferior, *but it is different, yes!*

Women are linked to the values of Life. Women want to fight some unbearable inequalities, and it is unbearable that men have the power to make laws about women's lives. It is an abusive power. No man could have passed the Law on abortion, because women want to

protect their life and to be able to choose to give life or not. Each person should be the only master of his or her own acts.

THE POWER OF SUPERIORITY ON THE OTHER – THE POWER OF “I CAN” ON MYSELF

What is the future of the power of superiority? This is an old story; its place is in the Unconscious, and its language is Parental, a language of domination by one over the other. There can be no Adult Language in the Unconscious, only Parental Language; no Action in the Unconscious, only Reaction; no love in the Unconscious, only drives, passion, and fusion; it is a Parent / Child relationship.

The power of one over another is on the way to its end, because the Unconscious starts to become more and more Conscious. Today, we know that suffering, violence and hate exist, in the Unconscious, in a place unconnected to our will, our desire, our humanity, our gender. The Unconscious is the place of a transmitted language governing our lives, and pre-determining our place before we were even born. There are no real values of life in the Unconscious, only symbolic values and beliefs, which are responsible for all the horrors committed by dictators and for the craziness of men fighting each Other “in the name of...”

Today, women or men need to speak the same language: an Adult Language.

THE POWER OF REAL TIME

Time is wonderful because it is in movement; it is a real master of and for a New Language, for both men and women: an Adult Language, with which everyone will become responsible for his or her own life and choices, no longer made based on another, but separate from the other.

Real Time is the big master of life: it can only be conscious because we become what we do of it, real Subjects. Symbolic Time is the master of desperation from life, because we are spoken by it, and thus objects of it. Our desire is to become the Real Subject of our self and to push back the Symbolic Subject of lack and the Symbolic Language of the Unconscious.

Real Love between men and women is for the future, and its language cannot use the same origins than that of the Language of the Unconscious.

TOMORROW, MEN AND WOMEN TOGETHER IN THE REAL

Men and women’s real desire could be the same: an Adult language, out of Parental and Symbolic Laws. But to make this “parity” come true, men, generally speaking, have to accept that women are not an under-developed product but a Real Other with whom a man wants to be; different but completely talented with life.

SYMBOLIC - REAL - IMAGINARY

In the Unconscious, the Imaginary's language is one of Fantasy, at the origin of every neurotic way of functioning. This fantasy is what psychoanalysts have to "resolve" by the end of a psychoanalysis. Its origin is this parental language, above us, with its Laws and its interdictions, which have to be transgressed or sublimated: in both cases, the solution comes from the other's the desire, not from our own.

A real Imaginary is the realization of a mature dream, with us every day of our life, and connected to our nature. This new language inside of us can give our life another meaning of autonomy and union between one another: women and men, but not only, have to create a link outside of dependence, outside of the racism of differences.

The Unconscious is the place of inhumanity.

Consciousness is the place of humanity, relativity, and human community.

This dream needs to be individual to become universal.

Inhumanity is Sexual.

Humanity is gendered.

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