

## **“MELANCHOLY AND NEW FORMS OF SUFFERING”**

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The aim of this work is to consider the metapsychology of melancholy as a theory to think over the “new forms of suffering” met with in modern life.

The stress on the concept of melancholy is used to take into account a substantial portion of people who come to the doctor’s office these days. They bring to the doctor psychosomatic illness, panic disorders, depressions with endless mourning, lack of self-esteem and feel their own image as inconsistent and frequently refer to the bad luck of their destiny.

They are very anguished and turn infeasible any life project considering present, past and future. They are drug addicts, compulsive that fill up their emptiness with every material item, marking their bodies to stress their limits. They ask for constant holding and have little mobility in their interpretations. They seem to include secretly in themselves an empty space which steals functions from their ego, being finally fulfilled by a disqualified object.

Pain takes to the doctor and there comes medication; sometimes needed others covering each one’s questioning. Medication hides the subject in a mixture which rejects human difference and finitude.

Modern culture reinforces the homogeneous, the effacing of difference, the ordinariness of pain, the medication at all costs. These characteristics lead to a form of subjectivity considered as “new forms of suffering”. Such are Freud’s narcissical neurosis.

When we think about curing – who cures, how he cures and what is cured – we have in transference the possibility of leading man into finding his own desire. Using his creativeness the subject can turn feasible his history despite his original helplessness.

To understand that subjectivity I intend to place it as masochism – “destiny’s failures” in Freud’s 1920 text – “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”. There Freud shows the devilish aspect of a neurosis when pleasure comes hidden in an ego resistant to cure. It is about a masochist erotization, a traumatic experience where there is still no memory; only traces of perception, slight sensations.

Freud here is used as the main source; Lacanian reading of desire is bought over by Marie Claude Lambotte, where she points to a certain flaw in the articulation of Real, Symbolic and Imaginary in the melancholy. Abraham and Torok bring over the secret in the ego and the mechanisms of incorporation and introjection. The ways of trauma are shown by Ferenczi; Winnicott and Daniel Stern emphasized the first objectal relationships.

Exercising those concepts I focused on psychoanalytic transference while emphasizing affections and sensations. I consider this usage as means of better working the “new forms of suffering”.

In the Draft G (1895) Freud says that “affection corresponding to melancholy is mourning” (1); explains melancholy in neurologic terms and in 1897 in the Draft N he approaches psychologically the subject anticipating Oedipus Complex (2). In Psychoanalytic Society of Vienna speaking about his article of 1910 – in the Final Notes – he questioned what would so strongly oppose the life instinct, still seeing no solution for the psychological problems issue (3). Still in 1910, studying Leonard, Freud mentions Narcissus legend – a youngster who preferred his own image to any other one (4) – and thus justifies homosexuality as a “narcissistic choice” of object.

In 1911, analyzing Schreber he goes forward structuring narcissism as a fundamental part of the subject’s libidinal history. He quotes: “Recent researches take our

attention to a stage of development of libido between auto-erotism and objectal love. This stage was given the name of narcissism.” (5). In 1914 he publishes “About narcissism: an introduction”.

As most relevant in this later text we have the “new psychic action” which would bring together auto-eroticism directing it to unification of the ego (6). Freud’s erogenous body theory must be understood in the specificity of stimuli which evoke pleasant sensations. Erotogenic zones (7) are in every part of the body and are, therefore, connected to the fragmentary and incomplete, as Freud found out analysing child sexuality.

Narcissism would promote pulsional unification, the new psychic action, which can be understood as an introjective process.

This unification can be understood by the megalomaniac libido tendency of putting things together, of linking things up.

The concept of introjection was brought about by Freud and Ferenczi at the same time (8) when this later mentions the inclusive movement the neurotic makes in his sphere of interests.

We have then the sexual instincts gathering narcissistically in the constitution of an object – the ego – which is formed according to the perceived model of that object. We will see the melancholic introduce a flaw that establishes in this inaugural moment, the subject that desires through the eyes of the other – the mother as a function in that moment.

When we observe the attitude of parents towards their children, we recognize in it an updating of their own narcissism forsaken in the past. They want to give the child all the luck they did not have in life – “His majesty the baby” (9).

We see the child’s narcissistic ego come from the illusion of a completeness, based fancifully in an object that would bring about with it the lost unity.

Freud says that man rests on his ideal agencies – ideal ego and ego's ideal – to bear the position of “castrated”. If we observe the ideal ego starting from the parental narcissism projected on the child and if we consider a presumed “flaw” in the mother's look on this starting moment, we can consider the genesis of melancholy in an identification with the “nothing”. This is Marie Claude Lambotte's hypothesis that we would like to support at this moment.

This hypothesis refers to a certain flaw regarding the linking up of the categories of Real, Symbolic and Imaginary for the metapsychology of melancholy.

The subject's narcissistic constitution refers to the investment of the mirror image. This is a function of the subject's coming into the field of desire, which was opened by the eye of the Other. The mirror image delivers an artificial structure which allows the real and imaginary features to contribute to the forming of an ideal model peculiar to the subject. Such an ideal model comes to the subject from the Other who, in symbolic terms, gives the image a recognition frame.

Real, Symbolic and Imaginary interact in order that the subject may constitute psychically. We will try to analyze what happens to the melancholic subject who seems to try to break the ties of the three categories.

We would like to consider a certain “feeling of violation” of oneself that makes the melancholic question his own corporal limits, mixing up inside and outside, placing the maternal function in a position that seems to fit those subjects.

This “maternal function” seems to maintain an ideal image that identifies itself to the child's image, depriving it of its narcissistic reference. There is (for the mother) a deflection between the image she has of herself and the one given out by the mirror – and this deflection accuses the temporal changes that cannot be avoided. Such a mother would deny time and this fact would come to him in the form of a time suspension. This our

subject hangs from a negativism that makes him reject any investment for the fears the consequence of a catastrophe which he lost the origin.

The melancholic subject was dispossessed of the melancholic frame that would guarantee the generations limit. Instead of that frame we have the mother's wish which is to maintain the ideal image where she identifies with her child's life. What remains to him as a defense is the compulsive denial, the rebuffing.

If, as an example, we consider a child that cannot give the mother anything without being criticized in the name of an ideal that puts him into deep disillusion, we see that the child's expectation is broken and his desire was extinguished while calling up an ideal that does not belong to him and makes him powerless. Thus the power that would secure the mother's happiness is lost.

What constitution would have that child, object of the mother's desire and subject to such risks?

To answer that question – what nature and constitution would have the melancholic object – we will formulate the questions that appear to be relevant.

Back to narcissistic problem we can see the melancholic as being transparent to himself – he was transversed by the first look.

We are aware that the function of the mirror investment lies in the Freudian's narcissism. The way from self-eroticism to narcissism, as well as the development of narcissism under a new ego-ideal confirms the reference to the ideal-ego as the needed function to the mirror identification of the subject as well as the vindication of his after identity.

According to the thesis of Lacan's inverted bunch of flowers, when the mirror rotates 90 degrees the observer will do 180 degrees, going behind the mirror and discovering the construction of the illusion. Looking at the real image of the inverted flower which he had seen before as a virtual presentation, he is aware of the illusion images are made of. The

melancholic takes possession of this truth. Lacan remarks that the illusion that guides the search for truth has its end in a weaking process (11). In the lacanian analysis when the psychoanalyst takes the place of the Other, the subject can come out of his alienation and come near the ideal-ego without losing his ego-ideal, which he detects in the Other's eye.

Behind the mirror, while the subject observes what a simple rotation demonstrates, he can see the deception he was led to. Lacan stresses the fact that the mirror image coincides with the real image, gives substance to that image – imaginary and real operate on the same level; it is through the libido that an object becomes desirable – the libido makes the object exist for us (12). The objects are covered by a relationship between imaginary and real and it is possible to consider the case in which the imaginary covers the object without respecting its own characteristics.

In "Mourning and Melancholy" Freud shows the contradictions in the relationship where we have a strong fixation on the object and a weak investigation in the narcissistic choice of object; he mentions that substitute the objectal love for the identification is an important mechanism in the narcissistic pathologies (13).

The melancholic seems to project on the object the features of the ideal model which he did not abdicate for fear of a spacial collapse – he takes the risks of placing that ideal on the other taking the object as his ideal.

The ideal model of the melancholic subject adapted his features and this fact makes him project that model on the object to be able to dominate the features the same way the ideal stole his own. This projection protects the subject from being sucked by the "psychic hole" quoted by Freud in the Draft G of 1895: "an inside retraction may happen (so to say) in psychic sphere, which produces a sucking effect over the qualities of contiguous excitement."

The melancholic reveals a "lack" of imaginary in the meaning of not being able to resort to fantasy when the libido goes to the ego and is aspired by the psychic hole.

Thus we can see in melancholy a mirror structure where the projections reveal the omnipotence of the ideal model while his own image is almost non-existent.

To explain the fact of the melancholic being subjected to the features of somebody else and not knowing his own image, we are going to use the fictitious construction of the first imaginary and symbolic relationships that have founded the ego.

We would like to think about the mother's regard – the absence of the mother's eye would place the subject in a place in the field of desire from which he is subtracted, not identifying with his own image.

Not being able to come away from an empty look which transverses him once the melancholy tries to give shape to the "nothing" that is inside him. Lacan gives an answer to some questions concerning the regard by means of one of the functions of the "a object" which is to explain dissatisfaction and incompleteness.

Considering the standing of the melancholic subject in relation to the "a object", we can see him go behind the mirror, reversing the meaning of the relationships with the object and asking for a place before the development of the ego, in the nothing where he sees himself.

The Freudian narcissistic movement and Ferenczi's introjection concept help to consider the construction of our imaginary ego, which we refer to when threatened. We need this illusion of complete past and possible future to be able to bear neurotically our existence.

This idealization does not seem to work in melancholy causing the ego not to tolerate the temporal representation of the body.

Anguish comes together with the knowledge that identity is made through an illusory construction.

The temporal mobility – present, past, future – points to the difference between hysterical and melancholic identification. The first has an ego where the libido movements

show the object's desire. The last has an ego in a unique relationship where the object, concrete and flawless, desires and sticks to the subject.

In "Mourning and Melancholy" Freud tells that "the shadow of the object fell on the ego" (15). He speaks about the unique objectal relationship where mourning is impossible, opposed to an objectal relationship that slowly places the external world and frees the ego.

In "The ego and the id" Freud states that, in the melancholy, the lost object is replaced in the ego, that the object *catexy* was substituted for an identification. He says that in the oral phase object *catexy* and identification do not differ and that if the object is abandoned, the ego changes so that the object may *enter* it. "It might be an introjection" says Freud (16).

Abraham and Torok can help in reflecting about mechanisms of introjection and incorporation in melancholy (17).

In Ferenczi, we can understand the trauma (18) as a result of a shock between the child and the adult. In his work "Language misunderstanding between adult and child" (19) he explains that the child, moved by tenderness and the adult by passion, perform a dialogue where the child immaturity leads to a language mix-up. The child obeys the aggressor – adult and identifies with him, introjecting his feeling of guilty, using the passive masochist components, while he tries to connect what was broken. Torok says the identification to the aggressor is an incorporation, not an introjection.

In Lambotte (20) we see the subject in the mirror phase (1<sup>st</sup> phase of Lacanian Oedipus) in search of being desired, trying to be (or not) the object of his mother's desire.

Because in this maternal function lacks a "certain" look that can open the desire field in the child, our melancholic cannot identify with this powerful image and compares himself to nothing.

Winnicott was an author that dealt with the external atmosphere around the baby – the mother would be the auxiliary ego that intermediates the world for the child (21).



We suppose – together with Lambotte – that melancholic negativism is consequence to this hostile atmosphere. The negativistic compulsion escaping the subject's control, talks us near death's drive.

Studying “vitality affections”, Daniel Stern (22) describes the baby experiences in the beginning of its life, which stay forever into itself. Reflecting about this category makes possible the understanding of what is at stake in transference, prior to memory, specially in the narcissical neurosis. When handling transference, this knowledge allows the overflowing of ways of expression which cannot be otherwise understood.

In “Reflections about trauma” (23) Ferenczi estimates the reaction to trauma as disorientation. Perception, not being able to seize what is bad, endures less suffering. Such is the expulsion by the melancholic of any external investment. In this way he does not run the risk of suffering a loss which he knows beforehand he will nor be able to manage.

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