

DIARY OF A TRIGGERING

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For six months I saw a young patient of twenty-seven, in a hospital setting. He had come into casualty one morning, accompanied by his father, asking to have an operation to turn him into a woman. This request for surgery was the result of a paranoia which had been triggered six months earlier and was his way of putting an end to an acute delusional state caused by analysis. He was directed to psychiatry rather than surgery. It was there that I met him and where he asked me to help him understand what had happened. There had been a conspiracy and he wondered whether his analyst was part of it.

The work produced interesting material, particularly because he kept a diary of his sessions. My talk will focus on the issue of the triggering, followed by the sessions which precipitated the delusional state. I will end by describing this state as he explained it to me.

THE TRIGGERING

At the art school where he studies model-making, he makes a female friend. He thinks he is in love for the first time and, although there is no sexual relationship, things go wrong at once. He is accused of having copied her work. He says it is the friend who has copied his, adding that 'everything got mixed up between us'. Paranoia bursts out. He feels that the whole school is talking about his relationship, that he is being watched and that there has been a conspiracy between his friend and the teachers. Then he has a dream that he is holding his dismembered genitals in his hands. It is a dream of real castration. He goes to see a doctor and complains of a 'spike in his heart'. The doctor tells him there is nothing wrong and suggests he sees an analyst. He concludes that he therefore has a 'heart neurosis'. He meets his therapist who says to him: 'What do you expect from me?' His answer: 'I want to change my life.' A posteriori he gives the following reasons: he lives alone with his father, he cannot continue his studies, he cannot have a girlfriend. Thus the father, gender and social ties come under the umbrella of 'changing one's life'.

This first paranoid episode shows the relationship to the friend and the teacher as a state of classic triggering defined by Lacan in his text on psychosis in 1958. The teacher accuses him of having copied from his friend: a figure of law, A Father, comes between him and his object in that place of the Other where it is foreclosed. The subject's response to the lack of signification is a delusional signification. It is the classic paranoid interpretation of conspiracy. The confusion of drawings and people gives the transitivistic dimension to the imaginary relationship.

The dream of the dismembered genitals and the complaint about the heart indicate a reality of the body in question in words, and thus schizophrenia.

THE DIARY OF SESSIONS WHICH PRECEDE THE DELUSIONS

He undergoes six months of analysis. He cannot bear silence and has the sensation of being in a void. He doesn't know what his analyst wants from him. If he has to undergo free association, it goes completely haywire. He keeps a diary of his

sessions and his condition in a large hardback notebook. The experience of analysis remains completely puzzling and beyond him, although he suffers violently from its effects. He writes with some detachment in his diary, using beautiful handwriting rather than just jotting down the words. I shall give you the expressions he used for the sessions which resulted in the therapeutic link breaking and led to his delusional state.

Session of 2nd May

He says to his analyst: 'I am afraid of the judgement of others. When I am judged I react aggressively. I feel that I am waiting for something external which is there to save me.' He then bursts out laughing and leaves the session. He passes a child on the stairs. He writes in his diary: 'A child saw me and said « love.... » whilst experiencing great joy looking at me.' He then has a feeling of immense joy. The same day he writes in his diary: 'The saviour is dead.' He draws a black well surrounded by brown.

Let us return to this session. He says: 'I feel that I am waiting for something external which is there to save me.' This sentence is important. It must be seen as a sort of appeal to the father, an intuition of the symbolic, of something outside him which should produce an interpretation. But the very fact of mentioning it shows the lack consisting of foreclosure: the appeal falls into the void. The clinical feature of unmotivated laughter is acknowledgement of the lack of the signification, followed immediately by an elementary phenomenon which is the child on the staircase, the talk of love, the immense joy. The figure of the child is the first sign of his delusion: another 'him' whom he meets for the first time in the form of a delusional double of indeterminate sex. As the bearer of a word of love it is the figure of the child-saviour that the completion of the delusion will reintegrate some days later in the patient's body when it is he who, in the form of Christ carrying the 'crucifilial' and supported by the father, asks the hospital to remove his genital organs. When, following this session, he writes that 'the saviour is dead', what is the evidence? He has never believed in God. From the very depths of his unbelief, the 'unglauben' of psychosis, is he not saying that he has lost what he never had?

Session of 6th May

A few days later, on 6th May, he writes: 'Birth of enormous unused energy.' He tells his analyst: 'Before doing something I sense that I am being judged. I feel guilty of committing a sin.' Part of the sin is not symbolised by the function of the father and metonymises itself in this permanent state of being judged, which feeds off him like a parasite and makes him suffer.

Diary of 7th May

He writes: 'Doubts on my progress, investigation into the causes in complexes.' He believes that he has gone through a 'castration complex' and an 'Oedipus complex' and that he currently has a 'superiority complex', borrowing words from psychoanalysis to refer to a reality of castration, maternal *jouissance* and finally of auto-eroticism, where he seemed increasingly to become a tenant in his own body again.

Session of 8th May

He notes: 'My analyst said to me: Let us go on to bed. Say everything that is going on in your head.' He writes: 'I am inclined to laugh for no reason.' So his analyst, who realises that things are starting to slip, but who evidently has not spotted psychosis, gives him a further, extended session. Technically this is very ill-judged but at the same time highly comical. Moving on to the couch is written as moving on to bed: it is an absurd moment, without signification for the patient.

Diary of 9th May

He writes: 'Giggles escape from the snout. Awareness of what one is. Little things crop up.' He is no longer like a person but an animal. He can no longer use the personal pronoun or the possessive adjective, the shifters, to use the term Lacan borrowed from Jakobson. Their absence shows the impossibility of maintaining an existential relationship, of connecting words to the statement, the code to the message.

Diary of 11th May

He calls into question his father's God. For his father, a Jehova's Witness, the world will be saved by someone. Here is what he writes: 'You find nothing but pretence in the Christian religion. We believe that there is something else, a judge watching us. The need for a superior being is a symptom of feelings of inferiority.'

Diary of 14th May

He has to take a semiology test but he is ill and cannot face it. He breaks down and tries pathetically to present himself to his teacher as the student undergoing psychoanalysis. It doesn't work. His diary gives this dissociative state: 'Awareness of my situation. My acts hide my fear. My psychological symptoms are reflected onto my body. Father = Power. The body no longer follows the mind. I say things that no longer have any signification. Affectively and emotionally, I am incapable of reacting. My analysis would be a lie to let the year go by. The teacher probably thinks I am a mythomaniac. He probably thinks that I am not able to undergo analysis. He said to me: 'It's not difficult if you're Italian'.

Session of 14th May

That day at the session he tells his analyst: 'I have the impression of having wanted to be something.' This may be seen as evidence of difficulty in identifying himself, of resorting to analysis as a way of identification under the term 'I am having analysis'.

Session of 20th May

In this session he talks about the first names in his family and of the origin of his own. The analyst asks him: 'Where does your name come from?' He answers: 'From my mother's region.' Later, he will tell me that he replied: 'From my father's region.' He thinks it was a good reply as, using an abbreviated quotation from Lacan, he says: 'The Name-of-the-Father is the place of the Other and the place of the Law.' Then, realising that he gave two different answers he will tell me: 'Father's region, mother's region - I mistook one for the other.' The question of the name is symbolic. He answers it with the reality of a place where a law is operating and, in confusing

the father's 'region' with the mother's 'region', he is making his objection to the sexual order heard. At this session he adds: 'I feel that I have always wanted to do everything that is forbidden to show that I am here.' So he is 'trying to operate a law whilst going against it. After this session he suffers an 'explosion', goes home, spends two nights and a day in total delusion, then, the day he is due to go back to his analyst, he chooses to go to hospital.

BODILY SENSATIONS, HALLUCINATIONS, DELUSIONS

The triggering circumstances at school had turned into a paranoid delusion. His analysis in a way takes it further to the heart of foreclosure. The call to the Father falls into the void, he is given up by the saviour, then by the father and probably also by the silence of his analyst. It opens up a sequence of phenomena where we can distinguish the physical sensations of a schizophrenic type, hallucinations and the beginnings of delusion.

This is what he describes about his body. He has the sensation that all truths are revealed to him but, just as he wants to seize them, he is overcome with sickness. His head is pulled backwards. It is the materialisation of the sentence addressed to him by his semiology teacher: 'Genius, madness, what does it matter - everything goes on at the back of the head.' The teacher told him this using his hand to show the back of his head. He is losing what he calls the five senses, particularly touch and taste, and says that at that moment his penis is dead: 'It was blue, it stank, it was just a piece of dead flesh, a corpse.'

In the register of hallucinations, he interprets some occurrences as being produced for his benefit. He hears a woman wearing high heels walking in the street. It is the prostitute with whom he had his first and only sexual encounter at the age of twenty-three. Immediately afterwards he hears a shot and it is he who is dead. Minor as it is, this is indicative of what in psychosis is called the death of the subject. Lights are on in the offices of the Palais de Justice, therefore they are meeting to judge him. In the street a man moves his hand to the back of his head, telling him he is mad. Once again the child appears in a brief scene. When he leans towards the street he sees a woman calling 'don't cry' to a child. Who was it? The way he told me about it is precise: it was not him but it was a message for him. A double, then, in the child and the sexlessness of psychosis, but also in a very Schreberian way a new birth after the death of the subject.

The last evening he writes a letter to his father. It is a curious letter, apparently addressed to no one. He kept it, thinking that it would have been worse to hand it over. Here are the main sentences:

- too much severity is perversion
- if you can't go with your mother then every woman is forbidden
- I have broken the rule of touching without loving
- now I love but I am dead
- the symbolic image of the father of the divine law was my mother
- why did no one teach me the act of love-making?
- I felt abandoned by the father
- a pervert does not know how to desire; he only loves himself
- I had too much pride to want to live
- Father, why have you forsaken me?

This letter of love for the father says that the use of the father does not work and that phallic signification is lacking. His interpretation of incest being forbidden is curious. One sees here that for lack of phallic signification sex is taken in a reasoning of formal logic:

the mother is not allowed
the mother is a woman
therefore women are not allowed.

Is this the beginning of a delusional solution to the question of sex?

In any case, the following morning he explains to his father that his having a man's body is a mistake; he should be a woman. He asks his father to drive him to hospital so that he can have an operation. At that moment, he has the notion that he is Jesus Christ carrying his cross and that the crucifixion - and hence the sacrifice - will be the operation to remove his genital organs. This ultimate request made to the father is a very clear example of the comment made by Lacan on the subject of the insistence of psychotic subjects on obtaining permission, indeed assistance, from their father to rectify the sex to which they belong (*Écrits*, page 568).

I should like to end my talk with his conclusion:

'Then at the hospital I was put in with all the others. I told myself that psychoanalysis had made me mad and so I was amongst madmen.'

This statement, far from being a reproach, had a resolute, pacificatory character: he was that and he was it amongst others, the mad, his kind. Today, he is still asking himself questions and testifying to the enigma and the importance of his analysis. He has found work and considers that his life has changed.