

IS THE BODY THE PLACE OF TRUTH?

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In fact, it is well established that the decisive factor in a child's choice of gender identity is the name given to them by their parents and the imaginary investment that parents make in that choice. This is enough to remind us that gender identity is less the result of an innate mechanism than it is dependent on symbolic and imaginary considerations. Certainly, the reality of the body—anatomical sex—is commonly the tacit support for these parental considerations. But anatomy is readily taken as a symbol of a will that comes from elsewhere, from the Other, and it happens, as we know, that the parental wish, particularly the maternal wish, takes precedence over this will. It should be noted in this regard that when it is thus contrary, the maternal wish almost always tends toward the feminization of the boy. It is as if the traditional rivalry with the male were being continued in relation to him.

Is a homosexual choice of object likely to disturb these symbolic and imaginary considerations? On the contrary, we would be inclined to say. For it is accompanied by an idealization of the qualities of one's own sex, with an exaggeration of the traits of the imaginary representation and a tireless demand for symbolic recognition. Thus, "sissies" are not very popular among male homosexuals, nor is overly masculine dress among lesbians.

Transsexualism, on the other hand, blurs these lines. The affirmation of identity is based on an original dimension: pleasure. It is because pleasure is experienced from a female or male position that transsexuals demand recognition of their identity. This claim is not an incidental phenomenon; it brings into play the gaze of another as well as the satisfaction of the Other. It is based on the idea that nature has made a mistake: the contradictory nature of enjoyment is proof of this. This assertion is so powerful that it usually baffles specialists and catches their arguments off guard. If a specific sexual enjoyment is indeed the real reward given to naming, its confirmation, so to speak, then the reverse process may seem equally valid. Thus, the specification of enjoyment would in turn correct a name deemed contrary.

While this provision may seem convincing, even to the judge who ratifies the change of civil status, it is because it does not appear to contravene the laws of nature—castration, shall we say—but merely corrects the slight error of destination that it may have committed. It does not reject the game, but only the mount provided. Why not leave the choice to individual freedom?

The question may seem metaphysical, and indeed it has not been addressed so radically by philosophers until now: is it pleasure that determines my being?

A few clinical observations and structural reminders are needed to expose the invalidity of this question. In fact, it is less a privileged relationship with pleasure—a sensualist theory, in a way—than a relationship with the impossible that forms the basis of identification.

In the case of trans- sexuality is at the forefront: the relationship with the sexual ideal that can be momentarily approached but remains fundamentally unattainable. It is this failure that

establishes relationships with others, from whom imaginary acquiescence is sought, and with the Other, from whom symbolic recognition is demanded. Thus, it is the adoption of an impossibility that organizes a relationship that appears consistent with reality and makes a demand that no human authority has the power to satisfy appear "normal."

Civil recognition, religious marriage, and the adoption of children can never give transsexuals the guarantee they demand. They remain the object of a fundamental dissatisfaction. The foundation of a subjectivity? Certainly, and in this respect, it could be confused with that of the hysteric. However, the latter is secondary to an initial castration, and analytical work should make it possible to reclaim a desire that the demand has come to cover up.

What then allows us to say that transsexuals have not undergone this initial castration and are merely mimicking the hysterical demand? The obvious fact that if they had undergone castration, they would not have felt the need to create an impossible situation for themselves.

We thus come, without realizing it, to equate transsexualism with a psychosis stabilized by the neo-genesis of an impossible desire. The "push-towards-woman" aspect of psychosis would find its ultimate expression here. A final objection would be to invoke male hysteria. But in this case, male identification is a determining factor in the picture.

This journey allows us to return to our metaphysical question: is *jouissance* a determining factor in being? And to answer it in the negative. When the young Gide discovers the object of his sexual emotions, he embarks on a struggle that will yield the incurable nature of the impulse. But his behavior does not undermine a person whom nothing, except talent, courage, and intelligence, separates from the community of his fellow human beings. The very success of the work is proof of this.

Sexual pleasure is indeed outside the body, and the representation that the object gives of itself, as well as the behavior that leads to it, do not close the question of being. Certainly, the transsexual confuses the issue insofar as he no longer claims to be wearing a mask but to be a woman. Let's say it: it is this very demand that marks psychosis. For enjoyment closes the question of being but cannot prevent it from resurfacing in relation to the incorporeal on which the subject of desire is based: pure emptiness, it finds as its being only the object of its fantasy, itself a waste product external to the body. It is in this poorly filled void that the truth lies, unable to express either the sex of the body or the being of the one who desires.

It takes the current promotion of science and its idea of a unisex individual who has the right—in the form of human rights—to consume freely for transsexualism to find itself so misunderstood and mistreated, that is, exposed on the judge's bench and rectified on the surgeon's table. This seemingly liberal response shows how social psychosis can become intertwined with that of the individual.