

THE PSYCHICAL FRAGMENTATION IN THE PERSPECTIVES OF SIGMUND FREUD AND JACQUES LACAN

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the major causes and symptoms of psychical fragmentation in the perspectives of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. These perspectives are pertinent to explore libidinal desire, the psyche and repression, and the unconscious as the essence of selfhood. The basic structures of civilization which entail rules and codes stand as deterrents and restraints that lead to psychical division and introversion as continual danger. The split between libidinal demand and satisfaction forms psychological gaps and void, entangling the subject into unconscious struggle for well-being. The subject's sufferings from psycho-sexual repression, schizophrenia, neurosis, delirium and paranoia are implemented in fragmented discourses which imply repressed feelings, unfulfilled desires and unrealized dreams. These form the fragmented subjectivity. Henceforth, the subject resorts therapeutic strategies, seeking gratification and redemption.

Keywords: fragmentation; psychoanalysis, psyche, libido, desire, (un)conscious, discourse, repression, schizophrenia, neurosis, paranoia, gratification.

The exploration of the fragmentary gap between the conscious and the unconscious, as a complete piece of work, reflects the subject's actual state of selfhood and the psyche. Indeed, this gap forms the mutations from the conscious thinking of the subject to his/her unconscious actions. Freud maps out the relations between the id, ego and the superego, determining the schizophrenic character of the subject. In this context, Michael Meyer argues that

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given the enormous influence that Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories have had on twentieth-century interpretations of human behavior, it is nearly inevitable that most people have some familiarity with his ideas concerning dreams, unconscious desires, and sexual repression, as well as his terms for different aspects of the psyche – the id, ego, and superego. (1491)

Although there is a conflict between the instinctual demands of the individual and the prohibitive practices of sexuality, the subjects are unconsciously subjugated to the compulsion of impulsive desire. Their psychological temperament and frustration entangle them in the dilemma of castration and annihilation. Echoing this idea, in *On Metapsychology*, Freud writes:

We have learnt that the essence of the process of repression lies, not in putting an end to, in annihilating the idea which represents an instinct, but in preventing it from becoming conscious. ... Everything that is repressed must remain unconscious; but let us state at the very outset that the repressed does not cover everything that is unconscious. The unconscious has the wider compass: the repressed is a part of the unconscious. (167)

Freud's psychological views prove that the dissatisfaction of desire incarnates other drives in one self or in other selves. Wish-fulfillment is an escape from repression and psychological despair. The subject sustains libidinal desire as a means of survival. But the attainment of desire cannot bring complete satisfaction or redemption. It creates gaps, trapping the subject into more psychological fragmentation and disorder. The subject's unconscious desire remains an abstract wish, figured out in uncanny images and fragmented/incoherent expressions. Thus, repression and behavioral routines are expressed through coded language. Psychical fragmentation becomes an inherited character which can be depicted in ambiguous structures. Indeed, psychoanalysis¹ is the realm where the subject's identity and figure are linguistically constructed.

Freud's perspectives on the repressive process, in *On Metapsychology*, mirror the real condition of the psyche. He writes:

The division of the psychical into what is conscious and what is unconscious is the fundamental premise of psychoanalysis; and it alone makes it possible to understand the pathological processes in mental life, which are as common as they are important, and to find a place for them in the framework of science. To put it once more into a different way: psychoanalysis cannot situate the essence of the psychical in consciousness, but is obliged to regard consciousness as a quality of the psychical, which may be present in addition to other qualities or may be absent. (351)

Lust is a destructive urge which exposes the subject to a terrible state of breakdown. Incest is a psychological complex that shapes the life history of the neurotic subject in the domestic sphere. Subsequently, the schizophrenic is condemned to wrestle with reality principles, seeking sublimation through psychical satisfaction. Then, he/she can free his/her desire through violating incest taboos. In fact, the children, who suffer from schizophrenic troubles, are looking for sexual satisfaction and self-assertion with their parents. They cunningly plot for the liberation of their libidinal desires. They appear with schizophrenic behavior, opting for the seduction of their lovers. They are seeking gratification for the sake of pleasure. Yet, they are terribly fated to be punished for their perversion of moral codes. Indeed, sexual perversion is an unconscious trap which cannot be avoided whatever the form of redemption is.

In *On Metapsychology*, Freud problematizes the Oedipal model as a controversial issue assuming that Oedipal desire, unconsciously, determines the psychological disintegration of the nuclear family. The Oedipus complex is the substratum of psychic troubles of the subject in the nuclear family. Thus, the Oedipus complex² is rooted in the human psychical and physiological fragmentation. Actually, human beings are not immune to fateful complex errors which have direct effects on their psychological state. In this context, Freud states in *Civilization and Its Discontents*:

Whether one has killed one's father or has abstained from doing so is not really the decisive thing. One is bound in either case, for the sense of guilt is an expression of the conflict due to the ambivalence of the external struggle between Eros and the instinct of destruction or death. This conflict is set going as soon as men are faced with

the task of living together. So long as the community assumes no other form than that of the family, the conflict is bound to express itself in the Oedipus complex. (95)

In their psychoanalytical studies, modern critics owe much importance to psychological conflicts, the libido's function and the effect of the Oedipus complex on the autonomy of the family. Illegitimate sexual relationships lead to breakdown, which intensifies psychological tensions. Impulsive sexuality drives the subject into the violation of taboos and destruction of identity. Thus, "sexuality is understood almost as a psychological rather than a physical activity. It is related to ego needs and satisfaction rather than bodily needs" (Maurice 22).

Further, psychological fragmentation is mutated from one generation to another. Thus, the physical and psychological resemblances are evidences of familial determinism. For instance, children are predestined to be caught in psychological turmoil and conflicts inside the same family clan structure. They inherit the psychological fragmentation that has shaped the history of their family. This fragmentation renders the space, where the subjects long for salvation, suffocating, because the genes they carry are seeds of self-destruction. Passionate desire entangles the subject in a fictitious enclosed circle where he/she feels repressed by social and religious ethics. The history of the family relationships is manifested in psychological entrapment in claustrophobia. The members of the family become the patients who resort to elaborating schemes in order to liberate themselves from nervousness, looking for the fulfillment of incestuous desire. Thus, despite his/her endeavor to, psychologically, appropriate himself/herself, the patient becomes more alienated. He/she is neurotic, schizophrenic and blurred by the tension of the impulsive desire. Indeed, psycho-sexual repression has direct effects on the fragmentation of subjectivity.

Freud focuses on the concept of the Oedipus complex to confirm the theory of wish-fulfillment and incestuous patricidal desires as symptoms of self-fragmentation. Incest and patricide are prohibited wishes/desires repressed in the unconscious. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud connects modernity with some of the oldest traditions within western society to broaden the understanding of the family complexes. He argues:

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These Freudian psychoanalytical insights are embedded in behavioral deviations, from satisfaction of desire to its emancipation from fatal stasis. Freud's perception of sexuality and pleasure puts the concept of sex at its highest sense. Thus, "for Freud, sexual pleasure is the model for all forms of pleasure ... the desire for sexual pleasure begins pretty much with birth" (Klages 64).

The second pattern of Oedipal desire is Electra complex³. The latter is an unconscious drive which augments hysteria and delirium as symptoms of schizophrenic behavior, whether verbal or physical. Hatred and jealousy determine the young female's psychological and maternal relationship with the mother. Indeed, the Electra complex is a psychological trap, causing psychical distress. It drives the girl into the hatred of her mother, conspiring to avenge her father's honor. Here, the unconscious is unfolded as the essence of the mental state, exposing shattered thoughts. The subject is torn between reality and illusion. Actually, the Freudian and Lacanian perspectives on passionate/instinctive desire, as a driving impulse, show the repressed subject unconsciously deluded to act secretly against the standard moral regulations. Sexuality prefigures the subject's destination and fragmentation. The symptoms of hallucination, hysteria and madness can be expressed in uncanny language.

Furthermore, Bertens' argument is evident when he suggests that the Lacanian psychoanalytic model is heightened to show that the subject finds his lack in language, where fragmented desire can be neutralized. It seems that the subject has a large access to unconsciousness, and this creates ambiguity in the act of expressing the essence of desire. The latter is embedded in various tragic/pleasant discourses, and performed in destructive/constructive actions, shaping man's figure. So, from a Lacanian perspective, we have to fathom the unconscious psychical acts

of the subjects, and bring to the fore the reality of the dialectics of their desire, which lies at the core of sexuality. This analytical process necessitates digging into the secrecy of sexual desire in the unconscious, counting on Lacan's perception of the 'deconstruction' of the drive' in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (161).

There are drives putting the subjects on the track of perennial struggle with forces which prohibit and deprive them of satisfaction and redemption. Desire is fated to flow from one psyche to another, overdetermining the psychological state. The flows of desire lay, figuratively, between the flows of the fragmented utterances. They cannot be seized or centralized in particular sites or territories. They are dialectics in movement, because "what makes the human world a world covered with objects,' Lacan affirms, 'is grounded in the fact that the object of human interest is the object of desire of the other'", affirms Dews (59).

The self is unstable. The formation of the psyche is a continuous interaction between the conscious, the unconscious and the force of laws, leading to turmoil and anxiety. In addition, Maud Ellmann advocates the idea that desire is not triggered by the object, but by the desire of the other: " Desire is mimetic before it is anything else ...Mimesis is...the matrix of desire and, by the same token, the matrix of rivalry, hatred, and (in the social order) violence: 'I want my brother, my model, my idol wants - and I want it in his place.' And consequently, 'I want to kill him, to eliminate him.' "(14). Repressed desires lead to violent acts and shattered efforts in stagnant conditions.

Libidinal desire is a natural instinctive inclination, leading to the worst form of neurosis and delirium. It is represented in a figure that cannot be definitely grasped, because it is very fluid and changing. The subject who fears that his/her desire may disappear become very anxious and paranoid. Lacan's view in *Ecrits*, paranoia results from desperate, mad and empty desires, which constitute a big "margin in which demand becomes separated from need: the margin being that which is opened up by demand, the appeal of which can be unconditional only in regard to the Other, under the form of the possible defect, which need may introduce into it, of having no universal satisfaction (what is called 'anxiety')" (311). In fact, this margin forms the threat of fragmentation; the subjects express their anxieties, recognizing themselves through revolutionary speech acts, especially in monologues. Unconscious

impulses make unrecognized desires fragmented in the mind, forming the central entity of the psyche.

Like Freud, Lacan focuses on unconscious motives and emotions. He claims that desire is a central drive that unconsciously determines man's actions. The unconscious seems to form the essence of selfhood. The true self lies in the unconscious. The individual's thoughts are inspired from the inner truth of the psyche. Thus, modern critics and discourse analysts attempt to explore "the unconscious which is structured like a language." The fragmented psyche is transcribed in fragmented speech acts, interrupted by recurrent pauses and silence and full of disjointed images and metaphors. Modern subjects are unconsciously driven by libidinal desires to confront their fate in the actual world. Indeed, Jacques Lacan tries to free the psychical desires from the Freudian fixed scheme. Instead, he looks at its dialectics⁴. Thus, Oedipal desire can be understood and recognized through "the discourse of the Other." Bertens states that "for Lacan, we need the response and recognition of others and of the Other to arrive at what we experience as our identity. Our 'subjectivity' is construed in interaction with 'others', that is, individuals who resemble us in one way or another but who are irrevocably different. We become subjects – that is to say, ourselves – by way of the perspectives and views of others" (126-27).

Discourse, which effectively makes the libido of the desirer present and active, constitutes the substance of the unconscious. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, Lacan argues that "if psychoanalysis is to be constituted as the science of the unconscious, one must set out from the notion that the unconscious is structured like a language" (203). Here, "Lacan reinterprets Freud in light of structuralist theories, turning psychoanalysis from an essentially humanist philosophy or theory into a poststructuralist one" (Klages 74). The development and the change, or the dialectics of the subject's desire, are determined by the effects of speech. The deconstruction of the drives and dreams is an attempt to reproduce the subject's discourse, and diagnose the complexities of human instability and crumbling.

The unconscious is the reservoir of symptoms which reflect not only the fixtures of the self. Probing the unconscious entails fragmentary constituents, bringing to the fore the subject's neurosis, paranoia and alienation, especially when the subject feels unable to attain the desired object. To confirm this, Ward concludes that "Lacan thinks that Freudian psychoanalysis has clung for too long to supposedly permanent fixtures

of the self. Selfhood is really nothing but a fleeting, unstable, incomplete and open-ended mess of desires which cannot be fulfilled" (149). All forms of psychical fragmentations are structured like a language. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, Lacan contends that the unconscious is processed in psychical speech:

The unconscious is constituted by the effects of speech on the subject, it is the dimension in which the subject is determined in the development of the effects of speech, consequently the unconscious is structured like a language. Such a direction seems well fitted to snatch any apprehension of the unconscious from an orientation to reality, other than that of the constitution of the subject. (149)

The weight of unconscious feelings is a burden of fragmentary thoughts that the subject cannot carry on in his/her psyche. The burden is unloaded in brutal speech acts reflecting frustration, distress and anxiety. Lacan and Freud seem to converge on the same matrix of the following conception in *On Metapsychology*: "The repressed is the prototype of the unconscious for us. We see, however, that we have two kinds of unconscious – the one which is latent but capable of becoming conscious, and the one which is repressed and which is not, in itself and without more ado, capable of becoming conscious" (353). So, the kernel of desire is adequately figured out in uneven speech acts.

Moreover, in Freud's psychoanalytical perspective, there is tremendous interest in figuring out domestic tragedy which is centered on repression as the initial unconscious drive, creating barriers between wife and husband, and nourishes, later on, feelings of alienation, abhorrence and despair. Sexual repression leads the patient to adultery and what Freud calls "modern nervousness". Indeed, the unrecognized sexual identity is the reason behind the wife/husband's neurotic condition. In *On Metapsychology*, Freud advances that "the state in which the ideas existed before being made conscious is called by us repression, and we assert that the force which instituted the repression and maintains it is perceived as resistance during the work of analysis" (353).

Again it is worth extending the issue of repression which alienates the spouses from each other. In the Freudian and Lacanian perspectives, repression is equated merely with psycho-sexual repression. Desire is prohibited by the system of taboo. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud states:

Taboo expresses itself essentially in prohibitions and restrictions...The taboo restrictions are different from religious or moral prohibitions. They are not traced to a commandment of a god, but really they themselves impose their own prohibitions; they are differentiated from moral prohibitions by failing to be included in a system which declares abstinences in general to be necessary and gives reasons for this necessity. (821)

The spouse lives in a conflict between pleasure and reality principles. S/he becomes the patient evolving between the tension of sexual passion and repression. S/he suffers from hysteria and phobia that result from the absence of mutual love. The Freudian statement in *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love* is relevant and applicable to this state of disintegration. Thus, "whoever knows how to interpret the language of hysteria can perceive that the neurosis deals only with the patient's repressed sexuality"(18). Indeed, libidinal drives and psychical repression manifest in phobia, acute distress and disorders. These aspects of fragmentation shape the psychological discourses of modern subjects in a confined family life.

To conclude, the fragmentation process may lead not only to deception and betrayal, but also to murder in a delirious state, succumbing to libidinal necessities. The needs of the libido are (un)consciously acted out. Adultery, incest and murder are evidences of psychological disorder. The subject is lured by irresolvable tension in a hysterical sphere. Indeed, lustful drives are challenging forces to the desire of the Other. They seem to be implacable threats to peace and security. It seems that sexual desire has no proper outstanding figure. It is the dynamo of awful mutations which alienate modern subjectivity from its standard configuration. However, in the postmodern philosophical thought, psychic fragmentation is no longer a sign of breakdown, but, rather, a breakthrough. It becomes a process of transformation to create new reality. Then, If Freud and Lacan psychoanalyze the subject's potential for sexuality in subjective condition, the postmodern theorists, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari schizophrenize the subject to liberate the flows of desire in the body.

Endnotes

1/ Psychoanalysis is concerned with the interpretation of dreams, unconscious desires and sexual repression. Freud's technical strategy is to explore the behavior and drives of the subject to attain his/her desires. Dreams, Oedipal desire, psychical repression as well as the id (the wholly unconscious of the mind, consisting of the drives and of material later repressed), the ego (which is partly conscious and contains the defense mechanisms and the capacities to calculate, reason, and plan) and the superego (also only partly conscious, which harbors the conscience, and beyond that, unconscious feelings of guilt) form a big parcel of psychical probes.

2/ The Oedipus complex is the substratum of psychic troubles of the subject in the nuclear family. In *Psychoanalytic Criticism*, Rob Lapsley postulates that "at its simplest the Oedipus complex is the notion that every child sexually desires a parent and wishes to be rid of its rival, the other parent" (69).

3/ The Electra complex is the opposite of the Oedipus complex. It is a term used to describe a daughter's unconscious rivalry with her mother for the honor of her father. The name comes from the Greek legend. Sophocles writes a revenge tragedy entitled *Electra*. The protagonist, Electra, is entangled in unconscious conflict with her mother, Clytemnestra, because the latter has killed her father, Agamemnon. Electra is mourning the loss of her father. She is determined to murder her mother to avenge her father's death. The Electra complex is the opposite of the Oedipus complex. Michael Meyer provides a definition of the Oedipus complex as "a Freudian term derived from Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus the King*. It is a psychological complex describing "a boy's unconscious rivalry with his father for his mother's love and his desire to eliminate his father in order to take his father's place with his mother. The female equivalent of this complex is called the Electra complex "(Meyer 1597).

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