

Associativity and Non-Verbal Language

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Situating the problem

One of the fundamental issues confronting the future of psychoanalysis seems to be to inquire into the direction of the possible extensions of the psychoanalytic method. This is centred on listening to psychic associativity directed at the analyst and the imperative of taking into account the narrativity resulting from this address.

If the rule of free association defines the fundamental rule of psychoanalysis, what distinguishes psychoanalysis even more critically concerns above all the way psychic associativity is listened to by the psychoanalyst. It appears in effect increasingly probable, in light of neuroscience, that the associativity regulated by inhibitory processes characterizes the very functioning of the brain and the ensemble of psychic life, and that it thus cannot by itself define the psychoanalytic method. In my view, we must now distinguish this method not only by the so-called fundamental rule, but additionally by the specificity of the psychoanalyst's listening, a specificity of the listening that I would define in the following way: the psychoanalyst listens to psychic associations with the hypothesis that what is associated possesses a link that is, at times, manifest—when, for instance, the association yields to the logic of the secondary processes—and, at others, unconscious—when, on the contrary, it does not appear to yield to such logic. This is the idea that, in all cases, an association reveals the existence of a link between the associated ideas, a link at times organized by an episode or a moment in the history and at others, produced by the impact of unconscious psychic organizers such as originary fantasies or large formations of unconscious psychic life.

I wish to take advantage of this to emphasize in passing that such a clarification enables us to draw a simple but relevant contrast concerning the action of psychoanalysis versus that of cognitive and behavioural therapies. The latter tend to regulate the basic associativity of psychic life by developing the inhibitory processes of associativity whereas, on the contrary, psychoanalysis is predicated on the idea that the progressive freeing-up of associative liberty will make regulation possible by means of becoming conscious and through psychic reflexivity.

Approaching the problem that has brought us together through this angle means situating it in these terms: the question with which the form of unconscious communication confronts the psychoanalyst is that of the homogeneity of the associations or that of their heteromorphism. Extending psychoanalysis to borderline and even psychotic patients, its exploration of the forms of the antisocial tendency or perversion, its developments in the direction of psychoanalytic work with the different forms of child psychopathology, indeed, of groups and human groupings,

encounters head-on the question of the forms of associativity that may not only be confined to the verbal register. This is obvious when working with children but it is no less central in the other clinical pictures I referred to in which the body, and its train of sensations and perceptions, and the act, and how motility is put into work, 'blends in' with the psychoanalytic 'conversation', to use Freud's expression.

The problem posed by the heteromorphism of the thus implicated psychic components may be summarized in the question of knowing how far the manifestations directly born of the body may be considered as 'forms of language', or still more of knowing what is necessary so that they appear as forms of language that may be used in psychoanalytic listening. The working hypothesis I am submitting for your reflection is precisely that corporal (and even somatic) manifestations and acts must be understood in psychoanalysis as forms of 'narrations' born of body language or 'incomplete' acts (Freud, 1913), or as forms of body language and of potential acts. 'Potential' signifies here that they will become so only if they are understood and treated as such. This hypothesis rests on the complementary hypothesis, to which I shall return, that the drive is a 'messenger' that is expressed with the help of three languages born of three forms of representance: the word presentation-representative for verbal language; the thing (and action) presentation-representative for the language of the act and of corporal expressiveness; and the affect-representative for the 'language of affect' adumbrated early on by Charles Darwin. It is thus the attunement and adjustment between these three forms of expression and language that organizes psychoanalytic work.

Here then is a summary of the argument.

The act and the body as refuse of the psyche

One fundamental characteristic of the psychoanalytic approach is to consider that what is generally taken as waste or refuse of psychic or human activity, and thus non-sense, in fact bears a hidden meaning that is expecting to be revealed, discovered and, indeed, constructed. Psychoanalysis thus reconsiders what learned psychology tended to think of as irrelevant. It emphasizes what appears not to have meaning but which, in fact, possesses another meaning and complies with forms of logic differing from those that are typically considered as such. Thus historically it has been a matter of the dream, Freudian slips and parapraxes as well as psychopathological symptoms and productions of human madness or, in other words, everything Lacan called the 'formations of the unconscious' (1966).

Even at the present time often enough the forms of bodily expression, those passing through psychosomatic symptoms in particular, are considered by most somatians and even certain psychosomaticians as devoid of meaning. Some would even call them 'stupid'. In the same way, in the way given by the psychiatric notion of acting out, some see in the recourse to the act and to taking action that one may observe in certain forms of psychopathology, merely an inclination towards 'discharge',

merely an avoiding or emptying out of psychic contents. There again human activity, however complex at times, is considered as insignificant, or rather as signifying nothing other than the refusal of meaning, as only an attempt at emptying it out.

What comes from the body receives bad press and it often represents what must be accepted in order to exist, but which must remain mute, must remain silent since it is devoid of meaning. Those who claim, on the contrary, that the body and the act may conceal greater organization and meaning than it appears, are thus thought of as romantics of the ineffable, as dreamers projecting a meaning on to what cannot inherently possess it, and are thus not scientific or even rational.

Certain psychoanalysts have sometimes been accommodating with regards to these positions, which, one finds, originate in certain medical thinking in the name of taking into account economic factors, in the name of an epistemological separation of the fields, in the name of a definition of the 'psychic' that excludes the body, and of the 'mental' without the soma. Others, on the contrary, working within a more strictly Freudian tradition, are convinced that nothing in mankind may be bereft of meaning, and they try to discern the logic and languages underlying what may then be thought of as forms of expression, not only of the drive, but also of the subject animating it.

My reflection proceeds precisely in this direction. It develops, concerning the act, the work of re-evaluation that I began to outline previously¹ with regards to symptoms known as 'psychosomatic' (Roussillon, 1995) and to affects. It seeks to extend the Freudian position aiming at isolating a form of language of the act bearing a directed meaning. It is in line with a conception of drive life that recognizes a value of discharge in the drives with a view to satisfaction but also a value of mastery (Denis, 1992) in addition to a 'messenger' value (Roussillon). We shall take this point up again later in our reflection.

Freud's position, on which I wish to base my thoughts, is widely misunderstood by the majority of today's theoreticians. It is thus useful to recall a few of his principal propositions as we set out on this reflection.

The language of the act in Freud

In 1913, in a text entitled 'The claims of psychoanalysis to scientific interest' we read, 'in what follows "speech" must be understood not merely to mean the expression of thought in words but to include the speech of gesture and every other method, such, for instance, as writing, by which mental activity can be expressed' (p. 176). What follows in the article indicates that Freud is considering the 'language of the dream', that is, that of thing-presentation, but also that of body language, which

¹ Cf. in particular Roussillon (1995a) for the somatic symptom and Roussillon (2003a) for the affect.

he will explore. We will see later that he has already gone into the question of the non-verbal forms of language in hysteria and obsessive neurosis, that is, in the neurotic universe, but I should like to emphasize straight away that one may not summarize Freud's position by limiting it to the neurotic universe as he also mentions *dementia praecox* in the article. The attribution of the quality of language endowed with meaning is extended for Freud to acts, whatever the pathology or the psychic functioning of the subjects in question. It is a generic, structural and not a local statement, and it is one arising from a particular conjuncture of circumstances.

I wanted to insist on this point early on and now, having done so, we may go into the different milestones of this hypothesis in the course of Freud's thinking.

In 1907, in the article on 'Obsessive actions and religious practices' Freud mentions the ritual of a woman who is obliged to spin dirty water several times around a basin by her ablutions before draining it in a toilet. The analysis of this obsessive ritual not only showed that it is 'found that the obsessive actions are perfectly significant in every detail [and] that they serve important interests of the personality ...' (p. 120), but that they are, further, the direct or symbolic representation of lived experiences and thus that they should be interpreted either in function of a given historical conjuncture or symbolically. Thus, concerning the basin ritual, in the course of the analysis it takes on the meaning of a warning directed at the patient's sister who plans on leaving her husband—of not separating herself from the 'dirty water' of the first husband, before finding the 'clean water' of a replacement. I would like to emphasize here that for Freud the ritual does not only take on meaning in the relationship of the patient to herself, and thus intrapsychically, but that it is also in keeping with the relationship to her sister, as a 'message' directed at her. The obsessive action has a meaning, it 'tells' a story—the story—but, says Freud, it is moreover a story that is directed at, a message or a 'warning' to her sister.

The act 'shows' a thought, a fantasy. It 'recounts' a moment of the story, but it shows or tells to a significant someone; it is addressed, and this is so even if it does not fully assume its contents and even if the thought is hidden behind its form of expression. The act 'shows', it does not 'say'; it tells, but it advances as though it were concealed.

In 1909 Freud draws out his reflection concerning hysterical attacks and their mimics along the same lines he had begun to clear away in 1895 in *Studies on Hysteria*. In 'Some general remarks on hysterical attack', he then emphasizes that within them the fantasy is translated into 'motor language' that it is projected on to 'motility'. The hysterical attack and the mimic it constructs appear to him as the result of the condensation of several fantasies (bisexual in particular) or of the action of several 'characters' of a historical, traumatic scene. For instance, what was taken for the incoherent agitation of a woman, for a meaningless mimic, becomes meaningful if one is mindful to break down the overall

movement in order to bring out a rape scene. The first half of the body and the woman's body language 'figure', for instance, the attack of the rapist, who tries to tear the woman's clothing off her, whereas the second half of her corporal expression represents the woman attempting to protect herself from the attack.

Here again, an apparently meaningless mimic, which seems, on the manifest level, like wild excitement, is made comprehensible should one analyse and break down the different elements secretly organizing its scheme. What at first appears like 'pure discharge' then betrays the signifying complexity that inhibits it and is masked. The hysteria 'speaks' with the body, which shows what the subject cannot say. It thus hides it. Previously, regarding conversion, Freud had emphasized that the hysteric's body attempted to say the words that the subject could not accept saying and becoming fully conscious of. For instance, nausea would express the language fact of feeling 'queasy' (*mal au cœur*), and the ache of being 'queasy' (*mal au cœur*) would echo the metaphoric form of feeling pain in the heart (*peine de cœur*), that is, of being disappointed in love. The act, in a hysterical process, may be interpreted as the affectrepresentative was; it is a language of the act, it is the passage of language through the act more than acting-out.

It is directed language—directed at oneself, in a manner of speaking— but also directed at the other, perhaps with the expectation that what it is said without awareness, without saying as much, might be understood by the other and reflected by him. Beginning with *Studies on Hysteria* Freud noted the place held by what he called in 1895 the 'indifferent spectator' in the ensemble of the scenarios thus recounted and represented. The scene is directed at a particular spectator who, further, is an externalized representative of the ego, its double. It recounts 'for' the spectator and is further present as a 'directed message' to the other who 'becomes witness' to what was not historically incorporated by it.

And so again in 1920 when Freud undertook the analysis of a suicide attempt of a young woman who had thrown herself from a bridge. When this case was entrusted to him, he did as he had in the earlier ones. He analysed the meaning of the act—its language—and examined at whom it was directed, in this case the father under whose eyes the act was committed.

The examples that we have just noted in Freud's work belong to the neurotic universe. They exhibit the representatives of anal or phallic economy and they belong to a universe that is already distinguished by the language apparatus, that is, already organized by it and thus to a universe that is already structured by it. The body 'says', it displays what the subject cannot say, but what it might potentially say. The body metaphorizes the scene. The act's structure and staging is narrative here—Freud is clear about this: the scenes recount a scenario, a history, the history of a part of the life that the subject cannot come to terms with. It thus belongs to the language universe and its modes of symbolization, even if it is the body that 'speaks' and 'shows'. Further, if it attempts to

recount to the subject itself, it is also and perhaps first a narration for an other-subject.

We recall that Joyce McDougall (1996), in the texts she wrote on 'neo-sexualities', or on what one most often terms 'perversions', comes to a similar conclusion concerning these specific clinical pictures. The 'indifferent spectator' of the *Studies on Hysteria*, to whom the neurotic symptom is directed, will become simply an 'anonymous spectator', a variation, in the perverse scenarios now belonging to the narcissistic universe of the former.

In 1938, this time concerning the psychotic universe of delirious patients, and in the same breath as 'Constructions in analysis' (1937), in which he put forward the generalization of his statements of 1895 concerning the way the subject, even if he is psychotic, 'suffers from reminiscences', Freud extends to psychotic states the remark according to which psychotic manifestations are also played out under the eyes of an 'indifferent spectator', and thus also appear as a 'message directed' to this spectator. But from 1913, in the section dedicated to the claims of psychoanalysis for psychiatry, Freud had affirmed his faith in the fact that acts, even stereotypes observed in *dementia praecox*, that is, in schizophrenia, were not bereft of meaning but appeared as 'the remains of perfectly significant mimetic actions, which at one time gave expression to the subject's ruling wishes' (p. 174).

He then continues: 'The craziest speeches and the queerest poses and attitudes adopted by these patients become intelligible and can be given a place in the chain of mental processes if they are approached on the basis of psychoanalytic hypotheses' (p. 174).

The incomplete state of 1913 is complemented by two hypotheses he put forward in and around 1937. First, in 'Constructions in analysis' he underscored that the psychotic symptom 'recounts' the history of 'something that the child has seen or heard at a time when he could still hardly speak' (1937, p. 267), and thus before the age of 18-24 months. He then added, in one of the short notes written in London, that the episode is maintained as it was (the second hypothesis he put forward) due to the 'weakness of the power of synthesis' (1938b, p. 299) of the period.

In a certain way he thus implied that what was experienced during a time when verbal language was not yet able to give a form to subjective experience would tend to return in a non-verbal form—a form that is as archaic as the experience itself—and thus in the language of the time, that of babies and all small children, that is, a corporal language, a language of the act.

This intuition provides the starting-point for the main hypothesis I now wish to examine: through later acts—those of manifestations of antisociality, for instance, or, in a more general way, those accompanying the clinical pictures of narcissistic-identity issues—archaic experiences of a period preceding the mastery of verbal language attempt to express themselves and seek to communicate themselves, in other words, to make themselves known and shared.

Bodies and messenger acts in narcissistic-identity disorders

But before I can make this hypothesis fully clear it will be necessary to focus on the specificities of primitive experiences in so far as their particularities are in part found in the language of the act and of the body that we find in the modes of later recurrences observed in clinical work involving narcissistic suffering.

The baby's subjectivity is not a unified subjectivity. It goes through different subjective states and the 'weakness of the synthesizing capacity' Freud mentions does not at first enable these different experienced moments of subjectivity to be unified. The infant lives in a 'nebulous subjectivity' (David, 1997), its ego is constituted by 'agglutinated' cores (Bleger, 1967) before they may be brought together into unities constituting an 'emerging ego-subject'. The consequence of this is that early experiences may be without any links among them, which is not due to splitting but to a lack of an integration of the ensemble. They may be 'partial' and filed away with this characteristic. I agree here with Winnicott, who emphasizes that the non-integrated state does not resemble the process of disintegration of an already integrated state. In the second case, the idea of splitting takes on meaning, but when the subjective states have not yet integrated, the notion of splitting is without subjective signification.

Primitive subjective experiences are closely related to body states and sensations originating in them. The corporal sensation is thus at the centre, it is accompanied by motor movements into which it is closely blended, which makes the idea of sensori-motor processes pertinent. They may thus be of an erotic nature and subordinated to the principle organized by the pleasure-unpleasure affects couple. But the erotic element that they contain is not of an orgasmic kind; it is a matter of the difference between infantile sexuality, even early or 'primordial' sexuality (C. & S. Botella, 2001), and adult sexuality. They may be called 'homosensual'.

They are not experienced outside time, or in any case outside chronological time, which signifies that, whatever their real length, they tend to be without a beginning and without an end, in particular when they are charged with unpleasure. When they are charged with pleasure, they tend to be inscribed in elementary rhythmic forms (Roussillon; Stern, 1985; Marcelli, 1983) organizing them into rudimentary forms of temporality.

Basing ourselves on this, we see that they are not subject to recollection and may not form themselves into memories. Thus they are not included among the form of memory known as 'declarative'. On the other hand, they may contribute to the creation of memorial systems, or to memories known as 'procedural', which create 'internal working models' (Bowlby, 1951, 1969) and systems for the treatment and organization of experience. They tend to give their shape to subsequent experiences. An important consequence is that they exist 'throughout time': they tend to cross time and thus be reactivated and brought back

up to date in a hallucinatory mode. They tend to be imparted and are presented as 'actual', as always actual.

When they do become reactivated, it is not in a form that is imparted to subjectivity as a re-presentation, but as a presentation (*Darstellung*), and this is so even if they attempt to 'recount' themselves with the help of this reactivation. They are thus imparted as always present. What makes it difficult to locate their reactivations as such is that they blend in with actual perceptions and become confused with them. They further contribute to the present experience, whose feeling of a hallucinatory imprint they 'bloat', but they may also be modified retroactively. They are thus expressed electively through the different forms of affect, 'a traumatic perturbation of the entire being', according to Freud (1926), that of somatic expression and by means of the act. This, furthermore, may potentially occur at any age.

They seek to be communicated (McDougall, 1996), acknowledged (Dornes, 2002) and shared (Parat, 1995) by the significant individuals of the most intimate circle. But their communication and sharing, or acknowledgement, pose a problem since they are always more or less charged with ambiguity and subject to interpretation.

On the one hand, because they are expressed in barely digitalized language, which remains distinguished by analogy and models of thing-presentation, the language of affect, that of the miming-gestural-postural register or that of acting. On the other, because a part of their meaning is incomplete and closely depends on the way it is interpreted by the othersubject to whom it is addressed.

In fact, it is the intimate circle's response, which, by acknowledging it as such, gives it its value as a message and which defines it as a signifying message. If this is not the case, it 'degenerates' and loses its potential proto-symbolic value. It is threatened with becoming but an insignificant evacuation and its expressive and proto-narrative value is nullified.

My clinical hypothesis is that such experiences are attempts at communicating what, by dint of not being acknowledged as such and of not being qualified by the intimate circle's responses, will express itself in psychopathological pictures of the child, adolescent or adult, and in particular in the symptomatology of narcissistic-identity disorders having a corporal expression, that is, acting or psychosomatic. On the one hand, the ego is made globally fragile by the narcissistic harm implicating the disqualification or the non-qualification of corporal and affective communication; on the other, their un-signified forms represent a flood of enigmatic points for the ego, which sees itself as inhabited by meaningless movements.

The full intelligibility of these utterances presupposes the complementary hypothesis that the experiences thus preserved originate in subjective experiences having a traumatic nature and having thus mobilized, at the particular moment and afterwards, modalities of primary defence that have thus shielded them and, along with them, entire sections of the ego's subjectivity and organization (cf. the ego's archaic

functions Freud mentions in 1923 as being 'sedimented' in the 'severe and cruel superego' that one may observe in the negative therapeutic reaction) from a later evolution. The complement I am putting forward presupposes that the separating is made among archaic experiences or between those capable of being secondarily taken up and signified during later experiences, and those that have been kept separate from these forms of retroactive resumption and are then presented as '*fueros*', to use the metaphor Freud suggested in 1896.

In other words, in the 'natural', or at least sufficiently maturational, integrative future, the experiences preceding the appearance of the language apparatus are at least in part taken back up into the language universe. This occurs in three possible ways.

First, through the binding of memory traces and thing-presentations with word-presentations established afterwards. Subjective experience is named retroactively, and sensations and affects comprising it are named, analysed and thought about 'detail by detail' due to their secondary binding in the linguistic forms. The verbal language apparatus, and the verbal binding that it makes possible, transforms the relationship that the subject entertains with his affects as with his mimicry, gestures, postures and acts, and so on. Verbal binding makes possible the containment and transformation of affective networks and those of the thing-presentations; it is then in the associative chain itself that one must seek its impact. The miming-gestural-postural expressions may then accompany verbal narrations; they give form or expressiveness where the subject fears they are inadequate, or where words do not succeed in transmitting the 'entirety' of the thing experienced. Children and adolescents are used to the corporal expressiveness of accompanying, but it never entirely disappears from adult expression. In still more elaborate forms, the playing with language or words that comprises it takes up, buttresses and develops the former games with things, the miming-gestural-postural register and affects.

Next, through a transference into the non-verbal aspects of the language apparatus, that is, in prosody. The voice 'says' the experienced breakdown by itself breaking down. The rhythm of its enunciation is broken up and its intensity attempts to express the variations in intensity of what is felt ... What is felt, by transferring itself into the verbal language apparatus, affects it in the most 'economic' aspects of its functioning.

And lastly, after adolescence, through a transference into the very style of the language utilized and into the practice that it confers to the utterances, and which makes possible—between the words, in their very organization—what is to be transmitted and communicated. I have shown elsewhere (1994) how Proust's style, and in particular his handling of punctuation, conveys an 'asthmatic' shortness of breath to the reader without which nothing, or almost nothing, would betray this feeling in the contents of the text itself; in short, entirely unconsciously. It is thus that the reader must feel what the subject does not say but feels, but which he conveys 'through' his verbal style. However, the capacity to transfer into

the style of the enunciation the wealth of feelings is not attributed equally to everyone and, in any case, not before the reorganization of the adolescent's subjectivity. Children do not yet possess a veritable verbal style.

One may thus, by merely listening to the verbal associative chains, retrace the history of the way certain early subjective experiences were taken back into the language apparatus. When the integrative resumption is adequate, the three registers of the language apparatus that I have just mentioned conspire together in order to recapture the early subjective experiences and give them a certain secondary representative status in order to symbolize secondarily the primitive experience.

These different forms of the transference of the primitive subjective experience into the language apparatus do not impede the mimics, gestures and corporal postures from accompanying verbal expression. It is in these three registers of expression of drive life and psychic life that the subject expresses it. He speaks with the word-representatives and conveys the thing-presentations and 'representations' (in Vincent's apt expression, 1983, 2006) that move him through his gestures, mimicry, postures and acts, and he expresses with his entire body the presence of the affect-representatives accompanying the other forms of expressiveness. The domination of verbal language in self-expression must not make us forget how much it is accompanied by corporal expressiveness—without which it can but perform its function poorly. Verbal expression cut off from any affect and any corporal expressiveness produces an effect of malaise in the interlocutor. It makes empathy difficult and reveals how the subject is split from the child he was, in addition to the depths of human affective experience. The first forms of language—the language of affect and the language of miming-gesturalpostural expression, which were witness to the first moments of psychic life and the first attempts at exchanging and communicating—are maintained throughout life and remain necessary for expressiveness, and this is so even when verbal language has secured its domination over the forms of expression.

The central clinical question—the one whose details in Freud's thought we have outlined and which we would now like to focus on—is what becomes of the early subjective experiences that have not been secondarily sufficiently recaptured in the verbal language apparatus. I specify 'sufficiently' as one cannot exclude, even for those forms having a traumatic and disorganizing aspect, a certain form of recapture within the language apparatus, at least for what concerns a part of the narcissistic 'states', indeed, even psychotic 'states'. But what I find of special interest here is what, having early on been removed from the process of language symbolization by repression, splitting or projection, will seek and find non-verbal forms of expressiveness.

In all the forms of narcissistic-identity suffering that I have focused on, a part of the displayed clinical picture surpasses single verbal associativity and is expressed by a pathology of the affect or of action that

seems to attest and extend the hypothesis put forward by Freud concerning the 'reminiscence' of subjective experiences preceding the emergence of verbal language.

The hypothesis I am advancing as a complement to Freud's is that these subjective experiences will tend to express themselves in forms of non-verbal language that borrow their privileged forms of expressiveness and associativity from the body, the soma, motility and the act. In the same way that the 'preverbal' child uses affect, the soma, the body, motility, the miming-gestural-postural register, and so on, in order to communicate and make his states of being known, subjects who are prey to forms of narcissistic-identity suffering in connection with early traumatism will also use these different registers of expressiveness and associativity in an attempt at communicating them and making them known, and this occurs in a central way in their psychic economy.

Another way of expressing the essential point that I wish to consider is to say that the drive representance—and this is why I could advance the idea that the drive was necessarily also a 'messenger'—is developed and conveyed according to three 'languages' potentially related between them but nevertheless disjointed: verbal language and wordpresentations, the language of affect and affect-representatives, and then the language of the body and the act and their different expressive capacities (mimicry, gestures, postures, acts, and so on) which correspond to thing-presentations² (and representactions). Should we take psychic associativity into consideration we will not only hear the connections operating between the verbal signifiers but also how the language of affect and that of thing-presentations and representactions blend in with the former. One may hear the polymorphism of psychic associativity.

The subjective traumatic experiences I am referring to in my hypothesis concerning narcissistic-identity suffering are subject to primitive forms of the drive, to primary anality (Green), but also to primary orality, that is, un-reorganized under the primacy of genitality, even when it is that of 'infantile genitality' (Freud). These are subjective experiences that reach the subject before the organization of the 'no' (Spitz's third organizer, 1965), before the first forms of the 'mirror stage' (Wallon, 1931; Lacan, 1966) and the emergence of reflexivity, before the organization of the continuous representation of the object and the organization of secondary anality (Roussillon), that is, so as to give an approximate idea, before the reorganization of the subjectivity that most of the time intervenes between 18 and 24 months of age.

I am emphasizing these different 'analysers', these different 'markers' of subjectivity, since their lack of organization colours the kind of communication conveying the forms of non-verbal language I am treating

² For more detailed metapsychological developments, see Roussillon (1995b), and Roussillon (2003b).

here in a specific way. They often attest in effect to a 'primary' and barely organized drive organization, to great difficulty in the expression of negation, to a failure in and a quest for reflexivity, and to a dependence on forms of perceptive presence of the object. One might say, to paraphrase Freud, that 'the shadow of the object hangs over and falls on to non-verbal languages'.

As such the languages of the act and body remain in effect fundamentally ambiguous. They bear a potential, virtual meaning, but one that depends on the meaning that the object, to which it is directed, gives to it. It is a language which, more than any other, must 'be interpreted'. It is but the potential for meaning, the bearer of potential: it is meaning that has not yet been finished (Freud would say that it is incomplete). It seeks a respondent, it does not exhaust its meaning in a single expression, and the reaction or the response of the object is necessary for its signifying integration. This is also why our clinical practice most often displays it in a 'degenerate' form, that is, in a form in which, when the respondent has not been located or has not given an adequate subjectifying reply, the potential meaning loses its generative power.

Here is a first example that will help us grasp what I wish to say. We are familiar with a classic stereotype observed among certain autistic or psychotic subjects who are fascinated by a movement of their hands that appears to turn and return infinitely towards the subject. Authors of a post-Kleinian orientation would speak of a form of auto-sensuality. Undoubtedly, as far as I am concerned, I understand that such a gesture 'recounts' the history of an encounter that has not taken place. The first part of the movement seems in effect to move towards the outside, towards the object. I then imagine an absent, or unavailable or ungraspable object, an indifferent object, an object upon which the gesture of the encounter 'slides' without being able to grasp even a fragment of a reply. It then returns towards the subject as the bearer of what did not take place in the encounter. It spins in the emptiness and gestures towards a virtual other. It returns to itself and forgets in the return what it had extended itself to; but this emptying out, or forgetting, is full of what did not take place. The emptiness potentially 'recounts' what did not occur in the encounter. The shadow of the un-encountered object falls upon the gesture, it falls upon the act 'in the hollow', in the shadow. I wonder if certain formal signifiers described by Didier Anzieu (1974, 1989) are not shaped in such a way, like the first motor 'narrations' of the experiences of encounter and non-encounter with the object.

But the shadow of the object also falls upon the body and its gestures. I hypothesized (1995) that listening to the forms of sensorial, sensorimotor manifestations present in psychosomatic affections that are considered as traces of forms of communication of disqualified, primitive experiences, remains in part possible. Here is a brief clinical vignette in which this question emerges.

Marine undertook a psychoanalysis (with a 'standard' French setting consisting of three weekly sessions on the couch) apropos an ensemble

of pain in her sexual and affective life, which she only spoke about with difficulty and which were accompanied by important depressive and selfdeprecating feelings. The first part of the cure centred on the analysis of a 'paternal' transference—to put it briefly and in a hardly 'conventional' way—and of the effect of the 'paternal' demands on her psychic economy and, in particular, that of her sexuality. The analysis of a masochistic fantasy—in order to make love with pleasure, she had to imagine herself trapped in an impasse, 'coerced' and raped anally by an older man at the same time that her real partner was sodomizing her—was one of the organizing axes of the work of this period during which the affect of intense shame, which this sexual practice marshalled in her, was integrated. The 'pleasure theory' of her father—in order to take advantage of life's offerings, you had 'to be coerced', the only 'good' pleasure was that which was obtained when one was obliged—was thus elaborated beginning with its displacement on to a 'masochistic' theory of the analysis by turning it into an intrusive coercion. Imperceptibly, beyond this 'first' transference layer, a maternal transference backdrop began to become more perceptible and analysable, which at first, and above all, was dominated by feelings of intrusion—first they were 'anal' but little by little they would echo the initial 'oral' interrelations. Here again, I've put this very briefly.

At the time, a somatic symptom—a painful ulceration of the stomach with sharp burning sensations within a cortege of digestive dysfunctions—began to occupy a greater place in the analytic sessions. The somatic symptom had been present for a long time and it varied in intensity without disappearing when it became almost permanent one year before the beginning of the analysis—at the time when she began a romantic relationship with her present partner, a man who was much older than her. It rapidly regressed during the first part of the analysis only to reappear at the time of the sequence I wish to mention.

The fragment of the session that I am going to relate thus appeared at the end of a little more than three years of analysis and within this double clinical context: a 'primary' maternal transference of an intrusive kind and an accentuation of the stomach ulceration.

For an instant at the beginning of the session Marine was tense and wincing in silence, as was often the case during this period of the cure. Then she began to speak about a burning sensation that had assailed her just as she had come to the session. She 'hurt, it was burning'—she placed her hands on her sternum as if this was the unnameable location of her pain. I waited for her next associations before intervening. However, the pain continued and it was sharp. She was entirely taken up a paroxysm of pain and it manifestly occupied what was available in the entire field of her psyche. I was feeling physical and psychic tension as an echo of her own, and I then thought it necessary to intervene in an attempt at signifying the burning sensation. I thus ended up by venturing: 'When you were a baby the bottles your mother gave you were too warm, they burned you'. Marine fell quiet for a moment and then said: 'I can't

say, but when you said that to me I thought about the coffee my mother always served, it was burning, and she always insisted that it should be drunk like that. She herself always drank it very hot'. The pain disappeared when Marine mentioned the burning coffee given by her mother.

The end of the session and the sessions of the weeks that followed worked through the 'burning' aspect of the mother, first by a series of memories dominated by their 'perceptive' aspects and then, in an increasingly metaphorical way, in order to evoke the stimulating and stimulated aspects of the maternal attitude concerning her that her father could not really 'cool down' and which, on the contrary, he tended to augment. Simultaneously the digestive disorder attenuated and then disappeared, and the stomach ulceration became 'but a bad memory', in her expression.

This interesting outcome does not, by itself, illustrate the validity of an interpretation or a construction. I only mention it in order to emphasize how a new psychic movement was thus mobilized, as if the suffering in the burning sensation could receive a representative outcome and 'enrich' the mother's object representation and its lack from the moment it could be understood as a message and form of 'narration' of a fragment of her early history.

Marine's state of consciousness during the session was overwhelmed by pain that presented itself as 'actual' and whose intensity did not allow her to interpret its sensation in relation to the maternal transference, nor even to suggest the least association. Marine needed me to make this connection and the associations for her; I had to hear the mode of primitive communication that her pain was potentially conveying. The fact that she indicated where the pain was emerging, but without naming it, made me think and then evoke an 'experience preceding the organization of verbal language'—hence my reference to the bottle, the breast itself incapable of burning. I used this index as a kind of historic 'marker', that is, as an index of the moment in her history that had been mobilized in the transference.

In Marine's case, her 'body' could begin to speak and blend in with the conversation only when the working-through of the defences produced a disintegration of the earlier splitting. But quite often the splitting leaves the expression of the modes of communication originating directly in the primitive experiences unhindered. Thus, for instance, another patient systematically 'sniffed' every time I shook her hand and as she walked by me. She 'sniffed me' and smelled me without any consciousness whatsoever of what she was doing, and as such she expressed her early universe. Another, whose work was carried out face-to-face, systematically placed her hand over her mouth with her palm turned towards me each time I gestured that I wished to speak. If what I said did not suit her, she drew her hand aside and half-opened her mouth. The expression on her face then became that of a very little girl. Still another patient tightly closed her mouth when she did not want to let what I had said seep into her. But once more I am going too quickly.

I now wish to go into the question of the more sophisticated forms of the presence of primitive experiences in body language and sexual language. I have in mind in particular the question of sexual fetishism. When Freud considered this question, he attributed the origins of the fetish to the traumatic character, in certain subjects, of the distinction between the sexes and especially of the sight of female genitals interpreted as a sign of castration. The fetishist then makes a choice in function of its proximity to the place of the discovery, which is often the last thing perceived before it: a stocking, a boot, a shoe, and so on. Its interpretation thus refers to the infantile dimension of the symptom. But this hardly explains why the discovery is traumatic for certain subjects and not, or less so, for others.

In 1927, in his article on fetishism, Freud went into the case of the fetish of the Wolf Man, a unique fetish since it had to do with the necessity of the presence on the face of the beloved woman, if he were to desire her, of a 'shine on the nose' (p. 152). The text wavers from English to German and between a shine on the nose and a look that 'shines' the nose, to put it rather concisely. The fetish is unique; it is on the face and a part of the body that is not particularly near the female genitals. In other words, Freud's hypothesis according to which the fetish is chosen due to its perceptive proximity to the female genitals may be applied but loosely. One may of course still suppose, like Freud, the hypothesis of a displacement from below to above, but one may also wonder why such a displacement would be made and if it does not mean something else. At about the same time (1922), Freud was also working on fright when faced with Medusa's head. There again he interpreted the presence of hair in the form of snakes adorning the forehead of Caravaggio's Medusa, which he took for an exemplary figure in his analysis by introducing its pictorial representation into his text in connection with an undone representation of feminine 'castration'. However, the figuration that Caravaggio proposes is distinguished by the fact that Medusa's head is itself filled with fright. Medusa is supposed 'to petrify' (in French, *méduser*) the other with fright and her face is itself that of fright, as a kind of mirror reflection.

In the two cases referred to by Freud, he interprets the contents in function of castration anxiety. We haven't any reason not to follow him along this path. But this interpretation can exhaust neither the question nor the signifying material that Freud suggests to us. It does not explain, in effect, that in each case it is on to the face that the question of castration seems to be displaced nor why the face is chosen if it is the last perception preceding the discovery of 'the horror of castration' that ought to be used to determine the fetish, as Freud argued on several occasions. The hypothesis I am suggesting as complementary attempts to give meaning at once to the fact that it is a question of the face, and that it appears to function as a mirror—a mirror of the shining gaze that makes the nose shine, a mirror of the fright that Medusa is supposed to provoke.

Winnicott emphasized that the primitive function of the mother's face,

and thus the connection in his conception to the primary feminine, is to reflect her own states of being on to the child and, thus, to function as an initial form of the mirror of the soul. It is not so difficult to take a further step forward and consider that, in the experience of the discovery of the secondary feminine, represented by the female genitals, is blended the trace of an experience of the primary feminine—of what the mother's face reflects, then. That upon the discovery of the distinction between the sexes is also transferred a primitive experience in connection with the expression of the mother's face and the threat, for example, of an extinction of the 'shine of her eyes', as the initial signifier of her desire and her pleasure at contemplating her son. The first forms of the child's encounter with the feminine are blended in with his secondary 'conversation' with the figure of the female genitals.

I could very well add to these examples, but I should like to emphasize, as a conclusion and extension to what I have just evoked, that the idea of a language of the act has a value that goes well beyond the psychopathological register.

First, I will mention the sexual act in particular, which seems to me to be entirely interpretable along the lines I am proposing. The meeting of the bodies, the way they are encountered, how one penetrates the other, the rhythm of the 'comings and goings', the gentleness, the brutality, the postures, the intensity bestowed in the self's engagement, and so forth, 'recounts' the self's drive to the other, but also how, in the 'preverbal' primitive body contact with its early objects, the bodies are encountered and penetrated, and how they may be taken back up, integrated, mediated and symbolized in adult sexuality. The bodies 'speak' the sexuality, and the sexual act 'recounts' the experience of the self and the history of the experience of the meeting with the object.

My final example is drawn from body language as it is observed in the animal kingdom. 'Taming' dolphins conforms to an interesting ritual that, moreover, may also be found in certain forms of the sexual act or corporal encounter among humans. The trainer must begin by presenting a part of his own body—his arm, for instance, his limb, then—to the dolphin's mouth, which is full of sharp teeth. The dolphin may, in a bite, slice what has thus been given to him, but he is happy merely to apply some light pressure on to the given limb, the arm. He makes it 'felt' however that he could cut or damage it, but he stops himself short of wounding the trusting 'trainer'. Then the latter withdraws his arm and the dolphin turns over and offers his abdomen, that is, the most vulnerable part of his anatomy. The trainer in turn places his hand on the abdomen and applies a slight pressure signifying that he can exercise his power over this vulnerable part, but that he does not. Here then is a corporal 'dialogue', which seems to me to be the corporal prototype of the operations at the bottom of what one may call the 'basic transference' that may be observed when a psychoanalytic cure is going well. Of course such a dialogue is polysemic; it may be interpreted in many different ways—from the viewpoint of the forms of engaged sexuality, from the

viewpoint of the narcissistic stakes of vulnerability and security, and so on. But it is likewise a fundamental characteristic of the language of the act and, more generally, of the body.

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