

MONSTROUS LOVES

NOTHING IS MORE INHUMAN THAN LOVE

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In the beginning of love is the encounter, a contingency. What follows that moment is not necessarily of the same order. Speech comes into play, and with it the unconscious, which can take the form of destiny, fantasy or delusion. In the aftermath, we can say that ‘it was written’ in the stars all along! A necessity is then inferred. But this is not enough to reassure every One concerned.

The fact that it has been written all along is no guarantee that it will last forever. That's why you have to demand it, again and again. Love demands love, and it demands it in the form of a sign. “Love, of course, constitutes a sign and is always mutual. [...] That is why the unconscious was invented – so that we would realise that man's desire is the Other's desire, and that love, while it is a passion that involves ignorance of desire, nevertheless leaves desire its whole import. When we look a bit more closely, we see the ravages wreaked by this.”¹

What is ignored, passionately, is the dependency, the subjection of human desire to the desire of the Other. “To love is, essentially, to wish to be loved.”² It is this reciprocity that makes love specific as a passion of being.³ It is only through narcissism that love finds its satisfaction. Its true object is one's own ego.

And yet, when it comes to satisfaction, Lacan makes “a radical distinction between *loving oneself through the other* [...] and the circularity of the drive.”⁴ Freud himself had to come to terms with the fact that neither love nor hate are avatars of the drive⁵, which is not to say that they are not articulated.

If love is a demand, the drive is not less so. It is a silent demand whose only aim is to be satisfied. The object with which it is satisfied is only episodic.

Neither love nor drive, then, really have an object as their object. It is only through fantasy that an object is found to occupy the place between the fiction of a love story and the real of drive satisfaction. Their objects, if we can call them that, have nothing to do with each other. Hence the question: ‘Where you are enjoying, do you love me?’

¹ Lacan J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: Encore, On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. B. Fink, Norton, 1998, p. 4.

² Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. A. Sheridan, New York/London: Norton, 1977, p. 253.

³ Hatred does not need this reciprocity, and that's precisely what makes it so solid.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁵ Freud S., “Instincts and their Vicissitudes” (1915), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV*, London: Hogarth Press, 1961, p. 137.

“The drive is what remains when the Other of love disappears.”⁶ Freud's Contributions to the Psychology of Love are based on their disjunction. This disjunction maintained in the transference by the analyst's desire is even “the fundamental mainspring of the analytic operation.”⁷ In their confusion, as in hypnosis, “few subjects can resist succumbing, as if under some monstrous spell”, to “the offering to obscure gods of an object of sacrifice”.⁸ In order to obtain “evidence for the presence of the desire”⁹, of the lack of this obscure Other, what is given as sacrifice is not of the order of lack but of loss.

The “monstrous” in question is the return in the real of what is *verworfen*, rejected in love, and which is the truth “that gives the meaning of Eros.”¹⁰ The meaning of Eros, as we read in the last chapters of Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents*, is Thanatos. It is the death drive that, through the superego, its mouthpiece, will do the dirty job of achieving the programme of Eros in the service of civilisation: that of becoming One. So, love is not just a matter of Eros. When “love manifests itself in the real by the most inconvenient and depressing effects”¹¹, we can read in it the effects of discontent and guilt resulting from the impact of the superego. That which began in relation to love ends in relation to guilt.

For a couple, a family or a nation to hold together, there has to be a *Triebverzicht*, a renunciation of the drive. This is done in the name of love, and above all, on the basis of the anxiety of losing the love of the real Other, first and foremost parental, without which we fall into distress, *Hilflosigkeit*, with its corollary of anxiety. We need this Other to satisfy our needs, to survive. Notions of good and evil will be introjected according to what the child learns as the consequences of its actions. Some satisfactions lead to the loss of parental love: *This is bad*. This is what constitutes the Other as Ideal, I(A). This locus from which I like to be seen, from which I see myself loved, consequently becomes an instance of censorship. According to this calculation, of having to go through the Other, “only love allows jouissance to condescend to desire.”¹² To *condescend* is to say that love does not necessarily pull us upwards, that love is not necessarily at the service of the Good, be it sovereign, and that it therefore falls within the domain of ethics.

The renunciation of drive satisfaction in the service of desire through love gives rise to the superego.¹³ For the ego ideal, by virtue of being the introjected extension of the real Other, it

⁶ Miller, J.-A., “Más allá de las condiciones de amor”, *Introducción a la Clínica Lacaniana. Conferencias en España*, Barcelona, ELP-RBA, 2006, p. 182.

⁷ Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. A. Sheridan, New York/London: Norton, 1977, p. 273.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ “If this truth is the source of the monster whose effects we know so well in everyday life, it is because it is rejected in love.” Lacan J., *Le Séminaire, book XIV, La logique du fantasme*, text established by J.-A. Miller, Paris, Seuil, 2023, p. 144.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X: Anxiety*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. A.R. Price, Cambridge: Polity, 2014, p. 179.

¹³ Freud, S., “Civilisation and its Discontents” (1930), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXI*, London: Hogarth Press, 1961, p.127.

is not so much a question of acts as of thoughts. All it takes is the intention, the mere thought of satisfying oneself, for a feeling of guilt to arise.

When this instance of the Ideal, the moral conscience, which scrutinises and criticises unconscious desires, is endowed with a drive-based punitive power, then the superego is born. Where it was still possible to get even with parental authority by renouncing wrongdoing, the superego is aware of any desire to transgress and turns it against the subject. It is from this renunciation¹⁴ that the superego draws the libidinal quantity to attack the subject. The superego feeds on these intentions and its ferocity increases with the amount of drive satisfaction renounced. The drive imperative thus becomes the moral imperative of the superego.

Whether the inhibited drives are libidinal or destructive, they have the same destiny: the superego transforms them into punishment of the subject, a moral pain.¹⁵ Eros and Thanatos, the two fundamental Freudian drives, are thus brought together by the superego. At last, they become One, in pain!

¹⁴ *Versagung*, which is not simply “frustration”, as it has been mistranslated. Lacan dedicated a lesson to it in his Seminar on Transference.

¹⁵ Miller J.-A., “*L’orientation lacanienne. Les divins details*”, lecture given in the department of psychoanalysis, at university Paris 8, lesson of 7 June 1989, unpublished.