

VOICE, SUPEREGO AND VIOLENCE

*Dra. Araceli Colin*²³²

Autonomous University of Queretaro

Abstract

The ideology is constructed with a social discourse interweaved with the *unconscious desire* of the parents to the child, registered through *signifiers*. The plot that organizes all these modes of transmission and the way to incorporate and subjectivize them is the voice. The voices of the parents take place in the *superego*. The *superego* is a foundation for subsequent voices of authority, whether educational or political. The voices of the *superego* are fierce and imperative and does not admit doubt. From this basis we are going to do a critical reading to the governmental dispositive to attend intra-family violence in Mexico.

Keywords: Superego, Voice, Unconscious, Subjectivization

Introduction

Marx, in his *Preface to A Contribution to The Critique of Political Economy*, formulated one of his principal aphorisms and the foundation of a materialist psychology: "It is not the consciousness of the man that determines their being social, but their social being that determines consciousness"(1978:518) (1859).

The analytic practice confirms this Marxist postulate. Although they have had reciprocal influences, the differences between Psychology and Psychoanalysis are well known. The object of study of Psychoanalysis is the *unconscious*. Departing from the Marxist aphorism and adding this *unconscious* dimension, the same phrase could be restated as: "it is not the *unconscious* part of humans which determines their social being, but it is rather their social being that determines the *unconscious*."

Freud demonstrated that consciousness is a mere surface where thoughts and associations appear, but having an evanescent character. Lacan considers *the unconscious* as the condition for the social and the speaker being (*parlêtre*) (1973). "The *unconscious* is that part of concrete discourse qua transindividual, which is not at the *subject's* disposal in reestablishing the continuity of his conscious discourse." (Lacan, 2006: 214).

Language is emphasized by Lacan's notion of the social being (1989). Without language, the subject would not be a *subject of desire*. The *unconscious* derives from our being speakers. The discourse generates the social link and is the archive of the social experience. Because the child has a place in the discourse, it has later access to the word, although a *beance* is necessary. The complex subjective operations linked to castration are here intertwined with the power relations of the linguistic market to create dominance and *symbolic violence*.

Special emphasis will be placed on the way the superego is constructed, because it is the instance that internalizes the voice of interdiction and authority, and because this instance has close relations with the *ego* ideal, that is linked as well to the social ideal, as suggested by Freud.

²³² Anthropology doctoral degree from Institute for Anthropological Research, National Autonomous University of México. Psychology master's degree and Professor of *Clinical Psychology* at Faculty of Psychology, Autonomous University of Querétaro. She is a practicing Lacanian psychoanalyst.

The “social being” according to Marxism

Both the way of being and the social context that produces and nourishes it are designed by the social being, although the economic means of production are in fact in charge of creating the people’s way of being and acting, and not vice versa. When Marx proposed that aphorism, the notion of conscience was neither psychological nor neurological, but ideological, related to the *ego* of the *subject*, as an instance of the unknown (Lacan, 1981:368).

The dominant ideology is thus created by the owners of the means of production and imposed upon the rest of society. Ideology is in charge of creating, sustaining, and reproducing that same order.

This ideology is transmitted not only by discourse but also by subtle operations that escape the word, and as a consequence, the conscience. This was pointed out by Bourdieu when referring to the construction of *habitus*, which is transmitted avoiding language and conscience.

Subjectivation in Lacan and Freud

For Psychoanalysis, the social being is the result of subjectivation, which does not exist at birth, but is produced throughout life during key periods, like the first childhood and the adolescence. Freud defines *superego* as the instance of the psychic apparatus that interweaves the voices of parents, tradition, and culture. This *superego* is as well closely linked to the *id*, which is in turn a precipitation of transgenerational experiences. Ideology is then constructed with the social discourse that is intertwined with the *unconscious desire* of the parents for their child, recorded through the *signifier*, according to Lacan’s teachings.

There are two ways of subjectivation explained by Psychoanalysis: one is the produced by culture through family and education, the social order mediated by the transindividual discourse (either orally or in acts). The other one is produced by Psychoanalysis in the analytic act, which consists in the subjectivation of the *lack*. I turn firstly to the first form of subjectivation: At birth, the *subject* is inserted within a culture with political determinations of the social order that will be imprinted in its body, acquiring a place assigned by tradition and a name according to gender.

The habits of the *subject* will be modeled regarding its social class, organizing a map of the social world, and of its condition, as well as of the condition of the others’; the infant will pick the thread that defines its style, the ethics and aesthetics of its being, its way of dressing and its habitat. In its constitution, the body collects the social, political, and cultural orders, and the real unconscious of each *subject*.

The infant will belong to a family, or an institution in the case of orphanage, no matter its structure and dynamics. It will become a speaker of the language provided by the mother, but this fate will develop mostly in an unconscious way. The infant, in its prematurity and weakness, will be submitted to depend on the adults, that will help, and at its best, love and recognize it in filiation.

Freud acknowledge both the way in which culture was mediated by parents and educators in the first childhood, as well as the way in which voices that are constitutive of the intergenerational transmission were collected in the *id*.

The notion of the *id* proposed to Freud by Groddeck (Freud, 2008a, XIX: 25) is discursive; it is the thoughts that stalk the *subject* and cannot stop; they either impose when the *ego* tries to forget them, or they are back deformed.

The *id* governs the *ego* like a horse governs the rider, or more precisely like a serf: (Freud, 2008a, XIX: 27). The threads of the *id* are collected fragmentarily in the enunciations of the others and in the way the family myth is conveyed.

Culture and the *superego*

These threads updated by the voice that parents direct to children, creates uncoordinated and heterogeneous tendencies. It is the voice that incorporates and subjectivates them, in an absolutely singular way. The *superego's* complex nature, due to the relations it has with the *id* and the *ego*, is the instance that collects these voices.

In the Greek tragedy, for example, the voice was extremely important. The voice of the actor gave the text atimeless haste and anupdated drama. That is, the voice updates the forebears' desires. There we have the *Other*, in the sense of Lacan.

The *superego* is an instance that subjectivates a basic law of social order since it results from identification with the father, who is the cultural carrier of the law of interdiction of incest. It is based on a first organizing identification, subsequent to the rest. (Freud, 2008a, XIX: 49).

It is the unsatisfied demand that precipitates the infant to the first identification, commanded by a first *signifier* that will be completed in three moments (Lacan, session 22-I-58).

The *superego* is an instance that settles the parental voices heard by the *subject* on its early childhood. The voice will be the *signifier's* vehicle that will support the step to the word. (Lacan, session 23-IV-58).

Because of that, the *superego* is asurrogate of the *id*, the voice that transforms a speech fragment into *pulsion*, the voice that cuts the pulsional reservoir and translates it into a mandate, often tyrannical, towards the *subject* and towards the others.

The *superego* is the representative of the parental instance that keeps in record the otherness of "you".

The voices of the parents are often made of requests and misunderstood phrases; although these voices are not always directed exclusively to the child, it will eventually grasp them. Upon the foundation of these parental voices, the voices of educators and politicians will also hook.

The voice is not only the vehicle of the word, of the enunciative act, but also the support of the registration of the *real*; it carries the enigma transmitted in the beat, the volume, the pitch, and the tune that do not carry out explicit meaning, but have the possibility of transmitting ambiguity for the things that are not said between voice and silence. The voice has the possibility of conveying the slip; the enunciation always says more than what the *ego* wants to say.

The voice is the place "that sediments" affection, and that produces in turn affection in the body of the infant; affection is just a thread of the unspeakable phallic enjoyment (*jouissance*)(Lacan, 11-06-1974) and the misunderstandings of why the parents gave this child to themselves.

The voices of greater significance for the child are those it retained because they were not understood but they acquired signification later, interweaving with representations of things that were seen, mixing what was heard with what was seen. In this way, it is in fantasy that the past of the parents and the forebears combines (Freud, 1986, I: 289) with that seen for oneself.

The voice of the *Other*, once its sonority is lost, enables the *invoking pulsion* in the infant, first held for its crying in the way of a call, and then by *lalangue* (Lacan, 4-XI-1971): This notion differs from the psychological theorization of "baby talk," because it involves all the operations that will later bear the speaking being (*parlêtre*) thanks to the phallic function. This deployment occurs at the time of the *child's transitivity* studied by Bühler (1935).

Pulsions do not preexist in the *id*, as suggested by Freud when he affirmed that there was a *pulsional reservoir* or an instance of *pulsional motions* (2008b, XIX: 156). *Pulsions* are already a cut and a selection of the sayings of the *id* that have been embodied, and participate of the unconscious *ego* in that way. Before the *pulsion* is weaved with the child's

body, it is not yet *pulsion*. It is just a saying with potential effects on the possibility of binding or not, to the body of the infant.

Considering, like Lacan, that *pulsion* makes loop contours around the *a object*, this object will not exist prior to the subjective *Spaltung*. The *pulsion* is the echo in the body that has a saying. (Lacan, 18-XI-1975). Not everything heard echoes in the body.

The parents' watchful eye is internalized in the *superego's* watchful eye; it haunts the *subject*, guides its behavior, and stalks it with feelings of guilt that tyrannize the neurotic at the least transgression, or even at its thoughts. Freud pointed out that the enigma of this *superego's* sadistic cruelty was not well elucidated.

Freud raised the point that hatred is older than love (1976, XIV: 133). Because of its precocity, the *superego* is the foundation that collects the hatred of dissatisfactions, that lead to the first identification; this way hatred towards the frustrating object, initially rejected, turns against itself by way of identification.

Hence, the *superego* gives place to violence in the *subject*, violence that in an act of desperation is commanded by a poorly subjectivized *lack*, and by a not assumed incompleteness. The *superego* possesses knowledge about the *subject*; when speaking from the position of the *superego*, the *subject* stalks others. It becomes a master that "knows," telling others what it thinks they must do; it is dominated and seeks to dominate others as well.

For Lacan, such first identification is possible due to a first *signifier*, cornerstone of the subjective foundation. It is the master *signifier*, the *one* of pure difference; but because of its early inscription, it does not fall from its position of *signifier*, as easily as others (Rodulfo, 1996:61).

It is not enough to enunciate it to become signification; it resists entering chain. That quality gives a compulsive, uncontrollable and destructive character towards the *subject* itself. The *superego* contains the voice of otherness, the "you must..." the imperative, impossible to defer.

The *superego* is also inhabited by ideology interweaved with the *subject's* fantasy about what is expected of itself, to the extent that the voices of the parents are half encrypting imperatives of what they expect from their son. The son is asked that which restores the parents' narcissism and is affected by culture, the precise historical moments they live, and the social class that they belong to.

Through the *superego*, the subject endorses many plans unconsciously adopted like someone does when hypnotized. It is an internalized master whose consequences are huge for the political order.

Both in the hysterics' hypnosis and in the mass "hypnosis" that happened when following a leader like Hitler, there is a voice mediating in what it is said and how it is said. It is the master's voice that picks from the other(s) the resource of its power, in a situation of helplessness or fragility.

The internalization of authority is a great cultural achievement. Moral conscience is no longer a foreign coercion that acts from within the *subject*. A new stage is then reached. (Freud, 1976, XXI:121).

The subjectivation produced by the analytic act

Through analysis, the *subject* produces a critical turn on its subjectivation. It is the analytic listening that enables the *subject* to listen to those voices and to make "those choices" adopted passively. But it suffers for not making them conscious. The analytic act points to the subjectivation of the *lack* in a symbolic sense; it is the idea proposed by Allouch about "the clinical is grief" (1995:373), the duel for the phallus that will result in the subjectivation of the *lack*. Once the *lack* is subjectivized, the master stops being such.

Critique of the notion of violence

The *superego* is paradoxically the place that reflects the social law, but it is also the place of violence since it does not question the certainties that emanate from this instance. It has internalized the social coercion, as well as the first child's hatred towards the object, that does not satisfy its demands.

Violence is a desperate resource used to submit the other. Violence is too the background of every social organization. It is against violence that society creates norms and rules for social interaction, since it permanently threatens with destroying every link. As an heir of ancient thinkers like Hobbes or Rousseau, Freud proposed that *superego* is a cultural achievement, since it operates like an internal *pulsions'* control, for the sake of keeping the social group's integrity. (Freud, 1976, XXI: 94).

Violence lies within the *subject*, and it does not need many conditions to be triggered (Lacan, 1989: 360). The word is the possibility of the covenant, a liberating possibility that stops or keeps away violence. When distress, anguish, or suffering is lasting, the *superego* positions get stronger, and the dialogs with the others cease.

And the words, far from facilitating the covenant during the conflicts, turn into stones or darts, and the necessity for a divine master to solve them, gets imperious.

The strategy for the social attention to domestic violence in numerous state programs in Mexico is unfortunately reduced to its legal dimension. In criminal situations, the legal system assigns two places: victim and victimizer. Using this for family issues represents an advance, especially when transgression is present.

Although this is not enough if other social disciplines do not participate, operating pre-established programs but also making a profound criticism of the logic and the "theory" (read ideology) behind them, because this logic evades the origin of violence. State liability is thus completely avoided. This Manichean logic that misunderstands gender conceptions is favored by the state: Evil is set on the side of men as perpetrators, and Good on the side of women, as victims.

This logic perpetuates violence, does not resolve it since who suffers violence also exerts it on others. The violence that plagues many couples comes not only from them, but it is also from the social, economic and political situation.

It is not a problem located in a body or on a genre. Violence is relational and is fed or not from each of the conflicting parties, but it is generated beyond the limits of the couple. The legalist strategy freezes *subjects* in dispute and not held responsible to one side.

Who is put as a victim does not have to ask anything, does not question why one is part of that relationship and how one feeds the conflict. On the other hand, one only expects that the legal and psychological devices relate their suffering condition. The so called "offender" will also be the scape goat of the state.

Violence underlies in each human being, no matter their gender or age, and their responsibility grows according to age and social role. The continuation of the struggle from civil society organizations to achieve the full realization of human rights of men and women is indispensable.

The invitation is to deconstruct the mentioned Manichean dispositive that perpetuates violence instead of combatting it. This dispositive prevents professionals that provide care to read what is at stake in those demands and to take a certain position to face them. We must be aware that these do not generate *symbolic violence* in turn.

References

- Allouch, J. (1995). *Erótica del duelo en el tiempo de la muerte seca*. [421 pp.] Buenos Aires: Edelp, 1ª edición en castellano (1995).
- Bourdieu, P. (1985). *¿Qué significa hablar?* [160 pp.] Madrid: Akal. (2001).

- Bühler, Ch. (1935). *From Birth to Maturity*. [pp.53-76] London: Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD. (1968).
- Freud, S. (1923). El yo y el Ello. En: *Obras Completas*. [pp. 1-66] Buenos Aires: Amorrortu (2008).
- ____ (1897). Manuscrito L de la carta 61 a Fliess, En: *Op cit.* [pp.289-292] t. I. (1986).
- ____ (1924). Neurosis y Psicosis. En: *Op.cit.* [pp. 151-160] t. XIX (2008).
- ____ (1915). Pulsiones y Destinos de Pulsión. En: *Op.cit.*, [pp.105-134], t. XIV (1976).
- ____ (1930). Malestar en la Cultura. En: *Op.cit.* [pp. 57-140], t. XXI (1976).
- Lacan, J. (1975). *Séminaire 23, Le Sinthome*. Inédito.
- ____ (1964). Posición del Inconsciente, *Escritos 2*, [pp. 365-386] México: Siglo XXI. (1981).
- ____ (1964). *Séminaire 11, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*. (Sesión 27 V 64) Inédito.
- ____ (1973-74). *Séminaire 21, Le non-dupes errent*. Inédito.
- ____ (1953). Función y campo de la palabra y el lenguaje en psicoanálisis, *Escritos 1*, [pp.227-310] México: Siglo XXI. (1989).
- ____ (1954). Introducción al comentario de Jean Hippolyte. En *Escritos 1*, [pp.354-365] México: Siglo XXI. (1989).
- ____ (2006). The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis. *Écrits*. Norton: New York. Translator. Bruce Fink.
- Marx, C. (1859). Prólogo de la Contribución a la Crítica de la Economía Política. *Obras Escogidas de Marx y Engels* [pp.516-520] Moscú: Progreso (1978).
- ____ (1846). Tesis sobre Feuerbach. En: *Op.cit.* [pp. 7-81]
- ____ <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/cw/index.htm>
- Rodulfo, R., (1989). *El niño y el significante*. [pp.55-75] Buenos Aires, Paidós. (1996).