

PSYCHOPATHY OR EXTREME ATTEMPT OF BEING AS AN ACTION

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[...] *respect to psychopathy, we should see in the passage to action an event with a true act of existential status that is an event that shows and compromises a complete way of existence [...].*

(Kinable, p. 108)

I. BETWEEN ILL TREATMENT AND DEFENSE

Beyond the clinical description of the called “behavior disorders”, we are interested in showing how the *passage to action* constitutes a specific way of being¹, where it crystallizes, and defines a lifestyle from which behavior is organized.

Psychopathy is placed in an ample frame, from patients who suffer from social personality disorders to those who also suffer a severe psychopathy and whose diagnosis towards treatment is much gloomier. Precisely, the latter ones are the ones who are more in contact with the judicial system rather than with the health system.

Although they may look very normal, even socially attractive, their vital history reveals multiple alterations, from lies, repetitive misbehavior, quarrels with others, addictions, home abandonment, illegal activities. In this sense, diagnosis is rather done with data provided by those who know him/her along time, because they convince and seduce the interviewer. Häfner describes as “façade” this *way-of-being with*

¹ From the nosographic point of view, the “passage to action” can be considered as a symptom of any psychic disorder.

(*Mitsein*). He/she is characterized by a poor means of communication and a disorder in the reciprocity of the aspirations.

Many times, physically, emotional and socially ill treated, and used to defending himself/herself, life presents to the psychopath full of challenges.

With a childish *past* made up of deficiencies and rejections, of violence and failures, he/she lives in a constant await of finding a mother good enough and an ideal father. But this search will lead her/him from failure to failure upsetting time of *illusion* in *disillusion*, generating aggressiveness, disruptions and violence.

With a mother little containing or not containing at all, with a paternal image that cannot warranty him/her certain security, he/she can only create difficult emotional bonds, that in most cases, end broken. This failure in the triangulation will appear all through his/her life.

Their precocious experiences of early separation made them experiment the hardness of the world upon which they can only react with a minimum of autonomy or with the common aggressiveness of childhood. Nevertheless, this will happen after the use of *persecutory introjections*, so that he/she can wall himself/herself in a defense against all the ones seen as perverse. But this suffered I, resistant and aggressive that walls himself/herself in the frontiers is only useful to hide a vulnerable and even affable I.

The poverty of the *parental and socio-cultural identifications*, makes fail the internalization of good objects from which an existence is constituted.

The image of himself/herself and of the body is presented in a continuous attempt of elaboration. This bears a brutal pulsional emergency that gives evidence of the lack of object-like relationship of these subjects and the absence of psychic organization.

II. FROM THE BODY AS EXPRESSION TO THE BODY AS REACTION

«The body and its reasons», Nietzsche affirmed. It is through the body as significant, as opening capacity, that we place our signification and we place ourselves in the middle of the world. Even more, the man also has to his disposal words and he manages them as «possible uses of his body» (Merleau-Ponty, 1945).

These patients, on the contrary, can only express themselves through his body due to the lack of access to an authentic symbolization. Action replaces meditation, more than an answer there is a reaction. Unable to

dominate aggressiveness, they answer with a “passage to action”, testimony of the failure of inhibition. The act occupies the place of thought.

Some of them even get to use tattoos as true *acting*, showing these wounds and scars as real ornaments of their bodies (André *et al.*). In their attempt of replacing a problem of filiation, expression of their deficiencies and challenges, the tattoos constitute a “recognition mark”, that is to say an attempt of belonging to a social group. As G. Marcel would say (p. 27):

«*I exist: this is that, I have means of making myself known or recognized, either by another one, or by myself*».

Thus, this fragile personality tries to reach an identity difficult to access by other means. The skin tattooed by these “physical marks” is the last resource to know himself and be recognized.

Moreover, upon the urgent need of putting into act an immediate satisfaction that cannot be expressed in words, neither mediatized or differed, he can only react with a motive discharge. These acts seem to fulfill a particular function for the constitution of the subjectivity: his/her identification and feeling of himself/herself. However, they do this from such a risky and dangerous implication that the body is permanently confronting death, that paradoxically it serves the subject experiment himself/herself as being alive. Suicide *actings* allow him/her prove and know the limits of that ill integrated body, and get, with that, to increase even more his/her megalomaniac pretensions. Then, those dangerous behaviors, at putting in risk his/her life confronts him/her with death where he/she looks for his/her reason of being. Upon doubt about the *sense* of his/her existence leads him/her to move the only option left: *to prove himself/herself in order to be*.

III. THE OTHERS REDUCED TO BE OBJECT OF THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES

Before the others, this fragile *oneself* is presented with multiple and changeable stages according to the circumstances but always supported by the wish of seducing his his/her interlocutor, without keeping any contemplation on his part. The other one is reduced to be an extension of his/her needs. Eguier calls this “moral perverse” because of that attitude of malignity or perfidy.

At being unable of keeping object-like relationships, the psychopath is exposed to the envy of the *good* aspect of the other, which reactivates

his/her aggression so as to reduce the feelings almost unbearable that come upon him/her. In the Rorschach test, it can be seen how he/she blends in a symbiosis with the object and how he/she receives from the latter the image in the mirror. This would let us explain partially why they are constantly attacking the others, or why the deceit to the other moved by envy is accompanied by exaltation and disregard.

He/she cannot refuse an unpleasant feeling without getting into an aggressive or sexual behavior, he/she can neither feel depressed as he/she would be exposing himself/herself to a depreciation, due to his low capacity of frustration.

The emotional life of the patient is guided by the feelings of anger, extreme sensibility towards shame or humiliation, of envy, of boredom, of contempt, of joy and of the pleasure in the domination. He/she enjoys keeping in secret the goals of his/her projects, activities and tricks. When he/she tries to reveal to the other that he/she has been deceived, he/she experiments a feeling of supplementary success, at verifying the humiliation he/she has just caused.

His/her "being with" only moves according to a sadist or aggressive modality that alters or co-exists with a cold indifference. Therefore, he/she has severe deficiencies in the capacity of living experiences such as reciprocal pleasure, gratitude, empathy, happiness, sympathy, mutual eroticism, guilt or remorse, because all of them imply taking *the others as others*.

His/her chaotic biography refrains him/her from searching and finding authentic emotional bonds, where it is possible to respect his/her body and the one of his/her couple. The body, in the heterosexual as well as in the multiple homosexual relationships, is used as object of transgression, expression of joy at challenging the moral (André *et al.*).

The remains of the ill treatment suffered in childhood, sometimes sole memory of a parental relationship, shows a sexuality dyed of *sadomasochism* that reproduces a life framed among ill treatments and defenses.

IV. THE ACTION BETWEEN INTERDICTIONS AND OBSTACLES, BETWEEN OCCASIONS AND PRACTICABLE MEANS

«The possibility of my action is determined by a whole real order of events that offer a point of application to my action, that is to say, by a group of interdictions and of occasions of obstacles and of practicable means» (Ricœur, pp. 66-67).

The world we live in is a complex group of resistances and points of support, of walls and of roads, affected by a variable index of certainty. Moreover, the ultimate decision of willingness is always preceded and sometimes accompanied by hesitation, by postponement. The psychopath, instead, moves

«[...] *sans pouvoir différer ni élaborer cette mise en acte, sans répression ni restriction et ce par absence ou défaut des structures mentales, intrapsychiques, susceptibles de suspendre et de postposer, d'interdire et de censurer, de fournir le travail psychique voulu [...]*»² (Kinable, pp. 107-108).

There is, however, a voluntary act and performed with pleasure, with knowledge and awoken consciousness, in full use of his/her abilities. Then, what are the reasons to act in such a way?

The subject tries to personally approve in a *know-do* always better, but also to clam himself/herself down otherwise anguish could appear. The *passage to act* leads to an initial exercise that needs permanent verification in the “experience”, so as *to prove himself/herself*. To experiment oneself in this way, in this hard “job” shows the challenge that this business requires. It is not a question of “taking something for need”, but for pleasure: «for the pleasure of having and then throwing it away».

However, more than a *transitive act* – such as “steal to” achieve a goal –, it is about an *immanent act* that includes in itself its objective. You steal because you steal. Many times they do not know what to do with the stolen things.

Besides, this act runs an *endless circularity*, thus it needs constant re-feeding with a new one and so on. The only limits come determined by the same activity, and not by exogenous restriction, as repression, the opposition, the inhibition or the interdiction could be.

He/she does not have any doubt at all, not as noetic experience neither as pathetic doubt, that is to say caused by passions, feelings or wishes. Conflicts that a regular person can encounter with deep ambiguity, in the psychopath do not exist.

What does the verb *go by* say in this *passage to act*? “*Go by*” indicates to exceed, in the double sense of *exceeding* as well as *going further, transcend*:

² «[...] without being able to differ or elaborate this putting into stage, without repression or restriction and this due to defects in the mental structures, intra psychic, susceptible to suspend and to postpone, to prohibit and censor, to supply the tidy psychic task.»

1) “Go by” as *exceed*, points out certain notion of transgression in three senses:

– From the *temporality* point of view, the notion of *passage to act* shows a way of wasting stages or not having them into account, but in both cases without having the necessary elaboration. The *act* goes round the *absolutism of the present*, free of antecedents and consequences. It appears as *ex nihilo*, and it will happen instantaneously, with the sole motivation of the sovereign pleasure that the immediate achievement of the goal causes, independently from all past and all prospective future. The intention is already its fulfillment. To pass to the act is as if the act could do with everything: could make itself forever real, or really change indefinitely all possibility of the moment (Minkowski, (1968)).

The *present* is elaborated in a kind of absolute that reduces to nothing everything that does not belong to him/her: nothing equivalent or that can substitute it may exist. There is no place for hesitation neither for dialectic mediations. Possible contradictions are crossed out or rejected changing them into proper modalities or they are broken in their differences.

All question of principle, of reasons, of legitimization, of justification or of grounds will not be considered substantial and will not have to be questioned. *This urgent domination* has as inference the sovereign of the *instant*, of the *actual*, of the *present time*. The act seeks to impose itself without conditions and tries to occupy all the place.

– From the point of view of the *space*, the idea of *passing to the act* indicates to invade other places, to get into an opposing or improper register, that is to say to be outside certain regulations. Precisely, the act imposes another regulation: that of the fulfilled fact, before which everyone has to recline.

However, it would be appropriate to wonder to which extent specific conditions of socialization have allowed this subject subscribe himself in a determined social order. The I does not only originate through a process of meaningful interactions between the I and the others, but also by the kind of social structure that is organized around him. Many times, the personal identity is the outcome of having gone out of a broader social unity and of the small techniques with which he resists to pressure. The I does not only constitute itself in the solid basis of the world but also in its fissures (Rovaletti, 1990).

– From the point of view of the *language*, the *meaningful expression*, the *passage to act* makes facts *talk* but imposing on them a

sole valid language: that of the facts made. *Something is said* at the same time of *imposing silence* to all deliberation, dialogue or doubt. Cards are played. Here we have a new *categorical imperative*, inversion of that Kantian other. It is a fact, there is nothing to say or interpret, it is just to verify.

2) “*Go by*” as *transcend* also means to come into action, leave a state of apathy, of inertia, of indifference but also of boredom, of existential emptiness. The act seeks to break everyday *routine* and to strengthen an Omni-power of realization, beyond all impediment, risk or danger.

At the beginning, the act experiments itself as something very strong, and all the rest is nothing but full recuperation from that glorious moment. At identifying with these “heroic” actions, it achieves an I that can exhibit itself with advantage in its present circumstances. That cartesian *cogito* turns now in an «I act, ergo I am». To act at any price, also with the sacrifice of the I, precisely in order to be able to be someone, to be able to change into a person.

In this way, the passage to act presents itself as a *compensation* (Minkowski, 1995 and 1999). A way of defense against a depression (Fenichel)? An answer to the existential *non-sense*?

It is about acting for the “need of being”, to experiment real life and to be able to do it continuously. Why then psychopathy is not considered as an *extreme attempt of being as an action*?

As it is firmly stated – in “Parole de bandits” de D. Arousseau y M. Laborde³ –, one of them driving a steal car said:

«[...] it is in fact there where you are YOU. It is a different person the one who is in your place. This is not a myth».

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³ Arousseau D., Laborde M.: “Parole de bandits”, Seuil, Paris, 1976. Quoted by Kinable J., p. 111: «[...] *c’est vraiment là que tu est TOI. C’est personne d’autre qui est à ta place [...]. C’est pas un mythe ça!*»

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