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Hystérie et identification hystérique. De la conversion à la contagion

Bernard Chervet

Hysteria is at the origin of psychoanalysis, the discovery of the process of après-coup and the diphasic organization of psychic functioning. It is characterized by bodily conversion. This process succeeds in linking unconscious drive impulses and latent linguistic formulations through hallucinatory wish-fulfilment, giving rise to a language of the body. Two enigmas arise: that of the registration of the drives in the mind and that of the leap from the mind into the body. Conversion is involved in establishing the sensuality of the body as a whole and of its erogenous zones, a process that is essential if the sensual regression characteristic of erotic life is to occur subsequently. Hysterical identification teaches us that the failures of renunciation involved in hysteria are compensated for by group contagions of sensual and emotional feelings. Where there is a lack of renunciation, there is a need for sharing and community. The more the potentialities for mentalizing hysteria tend to be reduced, the more contagion tends to be transformed into collective psychology, narcissistic mutuality and mass community. Keywords: après-coup, conversion, contagion, sensual regression, hysterical identification, collective psychology