



The Impossible Selfie: Let's Talk About the Body and its Emotions

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Commentary

Volume 6 Issue 1

Received Date: December 14, 2020

Published Date: January 18, 2021

DOI: 10.23880/pprij-16000262

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Eric Laurent, in his text "The Reverse of Biopolitics"¹, argues: "whether it be the attempts of self-portrait of the body by science, the democratic self-portrait of the selfie or the self-portrait of the artist in all its declinations, all of them, in their limits and their failures, lead to the psychoanalytic experience of the impossible self-portrait of the subject that Lacan ended up designating as a *parlêtre*" (Jacques Lacan² proposes this signifier "*parlêtre*" to account for the Freudian unconscious).

What is a selfie? a signifier of common use introduced in our daily life as something else, who has not taken a selfie? The English voice selfie is a self-portrait made with a camera, digital camera or cell phone.

It did not have connotations until the beginning of the 21st century when the term became popular. The first known use occurred on September 13, 2002 on ABC on line, an internet forum owned by the Australian public television.

The important thing about selfie, given that it is associated with social networks, doesn't seem to be so much the selfie itself, the instant or the moment the photo is captured, what matters is the number of likes it gets. So, we can think of a use. In other words, in a way, the selfie includes us in the group of those who make selfies. And there, the body, which is captured by the image, is not exempt. Precisely, capturing the body in an image makes the feelings of contradiction generated by the body itself seem diminished.

We must take into account two aspects of this contemporary phenomenon, on one hand, the body becomes a machine and sticks to machines which are increasingly

more pluralistic and complex, and on the other hand, it becomes an unified image on increasingly diverse screens.

We believe that this possibility of sticking to machines will give us the answer to the question: what is our body? That we have it. But we are verifying how difficult and distressing is to place ourselves before our own body. We would say that there is a way of trying to solve something which is distressing: the impossibility of the identification of the speaking being with his organism. According to Eric Laurent in the text mentioned, there are three successive aspects: the machine, the image and the idea of the identification.

With the evidence of the image, we believe we have a body and in that sense, the selfie captures it through the machine; leading us to a false identification with what we see (we also know about the existence of gadgets that allow us to modify what we do not like). The body at stake and in its use. This capture that the selfie proposes us differs from the conception we have of the body in psychoanalysis.

Freud's experience with hysterical subjects already forces us to determine that we cannot consider the body as something that biology gives us, instead, we consider the body as the effect that a language makes on that subject. Because of what we have just mentioned; it is produced a transformation of the organism into a living body affected by language

Then we should ask ourselves: what is the body for psychoanalysis? the body is not the perceptive body, there is a whole path that opens up to construct it, we constitute ourselves as a body; we can say that human beings are not born, they are made. We know well that sexual identity is not sustained in anatomy, that everything is under construction and depends on the effect that the encounter with language has on the subject, which is always traumatic.

1 Laurent, Eric. "El Reverso de la Biopolítica". Editorial Grama. Buenos Aires-Argentina, 2016

2 Lacan, Jacques. Psicoanalista Francés (1901/1981)

For Jacques Lacan, the body is separated from the being and because of that, we can affirm that we are not a body, we have a body.

In this first operation he shows us how the body which has being separated from the organism, has not only lost its totality but also its insubstantial.

It is from the symbolic that Jacques Lacan can locate the status of the body articulated to the signifier. And it is in this encounter between words and the body that something is outlined, he argues at the Conference on the Symptom in Geneva³.

We know that from the seminar *Aún*⁴, which initiates the last part of Lacan's teaching, he asks himself: What body is it about? it is about the body that speaks and enjoys through the singular event which is its symptom, a particular enjoyment.

3 Lacan, Jacques. "Conferencia sobre el síntoma". *Intervenciones y textos*. Ed. Manantial. Buenos Aires-Argentina, 1992.

4 Lacan, Jacques. *El Seminario libro 20. "Aun"*. Ed. Paidós. Buenos Aires-Argentina, 1992.

We could say that we have some idea of the body, but there isn't a totalitarian image of it. "One comes to have a body, without being able to completely confuse it from the imaginary consistency of its unity...that is why sometimes it is strange⁵. In fact, the moment in which the idea of the body in its totality is lost, appears when a symptom makes an irruption; also irrumps the anguish in two aspects: whether to be excessively attentive to that symptom and quickly looking for the solution, so that the symptom will disappear as soon as possible, and the anguish will diminish with it, or, the other aspect is, the denial of the symptom with the aim of not taking account of the anguish.

What is left aside is precisely that only a living body produces symptoms. To recognize a particular symptom is to be in front of life in this event of our body. And in that sense, for psychoanalysis, in each occasion of this irruption there will be something to do with it. An invention.

In that sense, a "selfie" is an attempt to fix a complete image of our body, that is ... in that precise moment.

5 Bassols, Miquel. "Silicet, el cuerpo hablante de la AMP". *Sobre el inconsciente en el siglo XXI*. Ed. Grama. Buenos Aires-Argentina, 2010.

