

## BE ILL AND BE QUIET...

*'Remain mad but behave like normal people,  
Run the risk of being different,  
But learn to do so without attracting attention,  
And let your true self show.  
What is true self ?  
It is what you are and not what people have made of you...'*  
Paulo Coelho<sup>1</sup>

To be ill, as defined by the Larousse Dictionary, is 'to feel some deterioration in one's health and be in a general state of malaise.'

'Be ill and be quiet !'... :  
Who is speaking to whom ?

Is this the order of the subject to themselves ?

That of an 'other' addressed to the one who no longer even enjoys the status of a subject except in the space of the suffering which is in the limelight ?

That said from childhood to the one whose life<sup>2</sup> and expression are allowed only through the language of the body in which the illness appears ?

That showing the rigidified mark and stereotyped closing of a system which is expressed by the doctor's words ? : conveying a message full of meaning in a world where everyone's place depends on preconceived ideas, it represents a threat...

Of course those veiled orders which can be spotted through the somewhat prolonged disorders whose importance is overemphasised, with the secret aim of keeping their monitoring going, by not very reliable people functioning outside the scope of the usual medical ethics are put to one side.

The body tells things, the body speaks... and, through what it reveals, it 'says'...

It says the subject's history...

That of the non-recounted, non-expressed history..., that of the past, of heredity...

It says the gaps to 'say', it says the gaps to Be...

It also says the future... : what is implicit in the already visible or still almost invisible marks and will reveal the subject's ulterior progression.

It says the non-'said', non-symbolised words, which are not 'said' and which are needed to Be.

The illness opens the space of the hidden, twisted words...

It also opens that of stranded words.

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<sup>1</sup> *Veronika Decides to Die.*

<sup>2</sup> From the verb *ex-sistere*, come into being.

To talk about the silence and the order to be silent is to evoke what cannot be controlled or internalised and will be, in the person constrained to the absence of words, spoken to, irritated, upset to the extent that it will be unbearable, with only the language of the body left to talk about what cannot be communicated to others.

The order of the subject to themselves to stifle their revolt, emotion, sadness or rebellion and therefore find a place in the sun and be entitled to it ?

The order of a subject to another, either a parent, doctor or society so as to hide the truth from everybody... , one's background, family, clan : to hush the other... to hush something inside oneself... ? The language from the unconscious to the conscious, from the conscious to the unconscious, or from the unconscious to the unconscious... everything may block the words of the one who gives orders as much as those of the one who hears them and reacts to them.

*To talk about the illness is to talk about the subject.*

Who is ill ?

From what do they suffer ?

In what way do they suffer ?

*Who is ill ?*

Through the subject, who is ill ?

The subject themselves, in the space of the words which are lacking and tell one to be quiet, the wordless space woven between oneself and the other, a very sad reminder of the original silence ?...

The all-powerful 'system', the family, or society ? What grants the subject a place and leads them, in their conscious or non-conscious desire to fit into it, to hush their true words and brings about the word-symptom ?

One should bear in mind the words of a Spaniard who had come to consult a French doctor because, as he put it, 'the area where he lived - and therefore his child, the object of his worry - was dying from the ancestral religiosity which makes the doctor's words into the gospel truth.' Was he expressing a subject's secret revolt against the established order ? Or the conscious attempt to find in another space someone listening to him about a disorder that had been labelled much too hastily ?

*From what does the subject suffer ?*

What unspoken suffering have they inherited or of what unspoken suffering do they perpetuate the secret ?

To whom must the paternity of the suffering be attributed ?

Is it to the subject themselves in their non-consciousness of what gives them a rough time, compels them or immobilises them ?

Is it to something written and hidden in their cells, their family's or, quite simply, in the laws of life ?

Jean Guir set the tone in his book, *Psychosomatique et cancer*. He placed the leukaemic child within the family suffering expressed by one or other of the generations through a given subject but which is written in the next one in a place where the cell will engender a

transformation whose unknown code will only be plain for all to see and leave the individual as a whole to the burning sensation of their strength.

'Be ill to unite / bring together' parents, family, generations...

'Be ill to disunite / scatter' parents, family, generations... so that the cycle may be broken and the link may be transformed...

'Be ill to ask questions'... : as if the body, a silent hostage, an offering or a sacrifice, could compensate for, return, respond to, fill or gather something :

- to compensate for / make up for the gaps left by people,

- to respond to the gap left by the mother, fill the need for her : phobias... to

pretend to be dead in silence...

- to gather together by trying to be like... : to fill the gap one or the other feels, perhaps like a mirror. To do so in an attempt at an impossible fusion : migraine, asthma, like the mother... the father... or the grandfather...

*How is the subject ill ?*

Through which part of the body do they show that they suffer and no longer want to speak ? All things considered, this may be summed up by the laconic phrase :

'Be ill' *to be quiet elsewhere*, but 'Be ill' *to say where it hurts...* :

- Ulcers : to say the hunger for love,

- High blood pressure, to say the blocked will,

- Cancers, to 'say' the words gone mad,

- Asthma, to say the tears held back or the peremptory and stifling weight of constraints.

To say without saying... to be quiet but evoke, express, show what cannot be either conveyed, exchanged or expressed in another way...

- *First, to say it to oneself* : the body is a source of questioning.

- *Then to say it to the other* in a desperate and unconscious effort to be heard : *the symptom is a language*.

- *To 'say' it differently, in a very ordinary way* to try to get rid of the emotion held in an aborted attempt to express it... To free oneself from it at last...

To find the reason, the reasons, to discover the element inside oneself which will constitute the breeding ground for the illness is important.

To discover the exterior element which puts pressure, suggests, insists and often finally achieves its aim by getting rid of all criticalness or reflection is too, therefore generating 'too (much)' or 'not enough' in the responses given to the recommendations coming from the treatment...

What already emerges comes from the many influences that finally make the illness into the enemy to fight absolutely and quickly at all costs. Active prevention plays a role although it sometimes forgets in certain of its measures that the organism also has its own resources and remarkable adaptive solutions which deserve to be used. The illness is a sign that deserves to be seen, clarified and included in a life process in which death has its place and should also be taken into account.

The final end, of course, but also a space that should not be overlooked, if not denied or hidden, in the progression to which its presence constantly invites. If people today try harder and harder and with some brio to obliterate its existence without succeeding in lessening the secret or apparent fear of it, it pervades 'disaster films'.

They are nonetheless one of the expressions of it, if not a masked witness which, through its presence, plays a most subtle role. Present in the shadow of what is unconscious but haunts many current reactional modalities, it is not less active...<sup>3</sup>

To be continued...

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<sup>3</sup> Translated by Pascale Tempka