

"THIS BRIDGE BETWEEN US"

LUIS KANCYPER

Following their interest in my work on the sibling complex, the members of the Bridges Committee have invited me to participate in a new journey. On the basis of their synthesis of the key ideas of J. Mitchell and R. Kaës, they were interested to know how our respective theoretical stances on the psychic structure of the sibling complex could be compared.

This exchange, this bridge between us, is an eloquent manifestation of the positive fraternal complex driven by fantasies of fraternity and complementarity. This is in contrast to other more furtive and excommunicating fratricidal fantasies that have existed since the dawn of civilization with very damaging effects.

I will begin by dialoguing with Mitchell.

I agree with the author's theoretical position that it is important to address the two axes, the vertical Oedipal axis and the horizontal sibling axis, in order to be able to capture the complexity of the human soul. Although Freud indicated that the Oedipal complex was not the only one, he saw it as central. In fact the sibling complex presents its own structural dimension on the paradoxical dynamics of the double. Both complexes complement and supplement each other, and neither exists without the other.

I also agree that the sibling complex has been scarcely studied. It is somewhat like the Cinderella of the psychoanalytic theoretical framework.

J. Mitchell's most important themes are the law of the mother and the concept of seriality. These important issues could have certain connections with some of the ideas that I developed in my writings around the unicato and the parental complex—a Freudian concept in which the three dynamics converge: Oedipal, narcissistic, and fraternal.

As I understand it, the theme of the “other sibling,” threatening the singularity of the subject, is a painful wound to both narcissism and omnipotence, because “for anyone who aspires to be king, each brother is a hindrance” (De la Barca, 1948).

I use the term *unicato* to describe these drive-passions for omnipotence. The fraternal presence operates as a powerful antidote, neutralizing the fanaticisms within the subject, between subjects, countries, and religions.

I wonder how the fantasy of the *unicato* would be regulated in Mitchell’s theory. Who would introduce the assumption of seriality among the siblings in her conception? For Lacan, it is the law of the father, yet for Mitchell, it is the law of the mother.

I would suggest that the Freudian term *parental complex* could be also included as a third theoretical reference that could shed light on the labyrinthine theme of sexual identity.

I think it is important to differentiate the parental complex from the maternal and paternal complexes. In the latter, the dual pre-Oedipal relations are prevalent: the ambivalence of the child, the love and hate of the mother, of the father, and vice versa. On the other hand, what comes to light in the parental complex is the narcissistic dimension of the child in the triangular intersubjective field of the Oedipal complex and its intimate connection with the influences of the sibling complex.

In fact, in the parental complex there is an intersection and union of the multiple influences arising from the pre-Oedipal, Oedipal, and fraternal dynamics. A particular idiosyncratic configuration is woven between them.

I will turn now to a dialogue with Kaës based on the conceptual synthesis of some of his ideas.

I think that we have similar points of view about the structural importance of the sibling complex in the construction of individual psychic and social structure.

Moreover, we share similar views on the metapsychological importance of the fraternal, in particular on the paradoxical and narcissistic dynamic of the double reflected in an imaginary and symbolic sibling, either dead or alive. I would suggest considering as well that the sibling relationships also involve intricate trans-generational identification processes.

Kaës’s distinction between the double and bisexuality was very enlightening for me. I also agree with his distinction between castration anxiety, which is inherent to the Oedipal configuration, and pre-phallic fantasies rooted in the sibling complex, with both lethal and positive facets.

In the same vein, I distinguish four doubles within the narcissistic double: the immortal double, the ideal double, the specular double, and the bisexual double. The last is personified in the Pausanias myth in which Narcissus sees his sister's image reflected in the water.

The difference he establishes between the two forms of the sibling complex, the archaic form and the form inscribed in the rivalrous triangle, reminds me, in a way, of my conception of the three fantasies inherent in the sibling complex, with their regressive and undifferentiated aspects: the imaginary twin, the imaginary Siamese, and the communicating vases.

These conflictual links between siblings are often displaced onto friendship couples and, even within the subject, in the fluctuation between sado-masochistic positions, from victim to victimizer.

Prior to concluding, I want to rectify what I presented in earlier writings. I upheld that friendships maintain a close connection with the sibling dynamic and moreover that they are a manifestation of sublimatory aspects of the sibling complex. I have modified what I previously argued and consider that the friend, like a non-consanguineous double, has its own structural specificity and is located in the intrapsychic intersubjective dynamic as an other, with no genetic ties, as a stranger "other": caring, reliable, possibly supplementing and compensating the elaboration of Oedipal and fraternal relations.

Taking this new conception of the role of friendship in the structure of intersubjectivity as a starting point, I now differentiate between Oedipal and narcissistic fraternal transferences and transference friendship in the psychoanalytic field.

REFERENCE

De la Barca, C. (1948). *La vida es sueño*. Madrid: Biblioteca nueva.

Luis Kancyper
kancyper@uolsinectis.com.ar

COMPLEMENTARITY IN SIBLING THEORY

JULIET MITCHELL

It is a “construction” when one lays before the subject of the analysis a piece of his early history that he has forgotten, in some such way as this: “Up to your *n*th year you regarded yourself as the sole and unlimited possessor of your mother; then came another baby and brought you grave disillusionment.”

—Freud, 1937, p. 261

Dear Mina Levinsky-Wohl,

I would like to start by thanking you and your colleagues very much indeed for your act of “linguistic hospitality.” It is a wonderful initiative; I have found your own work and commentaries, as well as your introduction to that of René Kaës and Luis Kancyper, inspirational. There is so much here that I can offer only some small reflections in which I will highlight differences between Kancyper, Kaës, and myself, rather than our observational and theoretical similarities. I do not think one of us is simply “right” and the others “wrong”—I see our work as complementary.

Siblings came to me like a revelation in the late 1990s after I had spent many years thinking there was something “missing” in our understanding of hysteria. That work had been oriented around male hysteria, in which the traumatic etiology is always highlighted. From the time of Charcot, there has been a link between trauma as sometimes a key theoretical postulate and sometimes as not, and the presence and absence of male hysteria. With hindsight, it must have been this “now it is there, now it is not” of trauma and male hysteria in the theory and practice that must have brought the missing sibling into my consciousness. Hence siblings and their trauma swam into my ken at the same moment—and have stayed tightly bound