THE IDEALIZED FAMILY AND DISCOURSES ABOUT SAME-SEX PARENTING

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Abstract

Parenting performed by homosexual partners has met with resistance in society, which, though at times responding with legal arguments, is strongly rooted in a tradition of the heterosexual family. The analysis of arguments against same-sex parenting allows us to explore certain fundamental and subtle aspects of the prejudice against homosexualities, or their pathologization. This paper aims to highlight the dilemmas emerging at the start of parenting, at a time when new family constitutions have reached beyond the traditional, nuclear family. It addresses different positions vis-à-vis the changes in the imaginary and symbolic orders, the latter linking affiliation with gender and generation differences. These new family arrangements imposed on society denaturalize the concept of family. To replace the supposed natural love to the children, a rigorous analysis is called for of the constitution of parenting at the present time, and that of how the discourses that draw on the idealization of the family can intervene in this exercise. Current debates on this topic are geared towards supporting the illusion of a healthy family and a good psychic structure of the child, and mostly focus on the childhood, nostalgic cult and idealization of the family. Our focus, thus, is not on addressing the legitimacy (or lack thereof) of new forms of family organizations, but on highlighting the imagery processed by the child of an ideal, traditional family organization. Such imagery can hinder the conditions that enable parents or other tutelary people to embody the symbolic function for the *infans,* not as an a priori condition, because although the exercise of parenting is a symbolic inheritance, an authorization for the parental ghost is required. It is a challenge entailing the ways to build the necessary symbolic supports for transforming tradition in the social order.

Keywords: parenting; same-sex couple; psychoanalysis; tradition; same-sex parenting.

Gender and Sexuality

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There is a broad common sense among researchers currently that the family has undergone profound transformations. However, despite the changes in social life and the transformations in the concrete modes of family constitution, the traditional family remains as ideal in the imaginary field. This article discusses the resistance to social changes that runs through most of the debates about same-sex parenting. The term *homoparentalité* (same-sex or homoparenting) was introduced in France in 1997 by the *Association des Parents et Futurs Parents Gays et Lesbiens* (Association of Gay and Lesbian Parents and Future Parents) to denote a situation wherein at least one parent was assumed to be homosexual. Homo-parenting describes a situation whereby an assumed homosexual man or woman prepares a project of having, and raising, a child with a partner (Derrida, 2004).

But it is relevant to point out that the topic of family has never been so exhaustively addressed, as well as that of the importance of the presence of parents in the education of children. However, never before have so many unauthorized parents resorted to experts in order to obtain knowledge on how to position themselves in relation to their children (Kamers, 2006; Rosa, 2006). According to some theorists, this alleged fragility of the family is a sign of disruption, which corroborates the thesis that one day there were *structured* families, which are now in disarray. Others see these changes as consequences of discursive transformations in culture.

Since Modernity, we have witnessed a discursive hegemony that tends to place a family that is structured – therefore, healthy and necessary for a good psychic structure of the child – within the bourgeois family model. In this model, the man is assigned the role of provider and law enforcer, while the woman plays the role of home support and affection provider for the children.

If we embrace the premise that something is unstructured, that which necessarily comes to this scenario is the presupposition that there would be a structural model, a regulation, which, in our view, coincides with the model of the nuclear and conjugal family composed of father, mother and children.

The fact is that this scenario – if it has ever played out on a major scale – has changed. The structured family resembles more a nostalgia than a fact of reality. However, within the various disciplines, and here we include psychoanalysis, a number of formulations often refer to family crisis and a breakdown of what once seemed structured (Kamers, 2006).

The point is that the family as a discursive structure underwent – and still undergoes – profound culture-specific transformations. These refer to the different discursive places occupied by the child and the parental agents within a culture. However, when considering the family as an immutable, a-historic structure, one can only address the new family configuration as a breakdown, since that which is a transformation is taken as an imbalance, a disorder.

According to Cecarelli (2002), modernity inaugurated new forms of affiliation and conception, based on changes both in breeding – artificial insemination, sperm donation, adoption, surrogacy, frozen embryo – and in the affiliation process due to new systems of surname, in the case, for instance, of adoptive parents, 'artificial' parents, single parents and same-sex parents. These led to a new social organization and economic policy, generating discussions about sexuality, procreation, affiliation and, especially, the family.

> The reactions to this "new order" were immediate: there was talk of the end of the family, of the decay of morals and morality. The woman who worked out, and who had access to the pill, would be more exposed to the temptations of extramarital affairs; terrible psychological problems were predicted for children of divorced parents; a less effective presence of the father figure would undoubtedly lead to particular difficulties of subjectivity, and so on.
>
> (Cecarelli, 2002, p.90)

However, when we look back, we realize that these old prophecies were not fulfilled. Families still organize and reorganize themselves, marital separation became a common fact, the children of separated couples grew up and are well, separated women can raise a family again, and adoption is no longer a source of shame for parents and for foster children. The prophecies did not come true, but other issues have arisen, which have given new contexts to social, loving and parental ties. Thus, the neurotic soap opera goes on with different plots and characters.

The current debate on family focuses primarily on the consequences of same-sex parenting, an arrangement enabled in various ways, among which by the new reproductive technologies and/or the adoption of children by homosexual couples. In this debate, science and gender are elements that intertwine in crossing the constitution of parenting.

Mesquita (2013) posits that, in the absence of a definition of the concept, despite its frequent use, some authors have adopted the term 'parenting' with a meaning akin to that given by the French to *parentalité*, and the British to 'parenthood,' simultaneously referring to paternity and motherhood. In his view, as in ours, the enactment of this parental role fundamentally implies an involvement with the children, as well as that of a relationship with the other element of the couple, regarding issues that concern the practice of parenting.

We consider parental involvement and co-parenting as the two main dimensions in the operationalization of the concept of parenting. The use of these terms aim at meeting, on the one hand, the disjunction between the father/mother figures and maternal/paternal functions brought by Psychoanalysis and, on the other, the discussions on family and contemporaneity – addressing separated couples, single-parent families, recomposed families, gay families – and the debates on raising children. Julien (2000) highlighted the disjunction between the terms 'conjugality' and 'parenting' to characterize the contemporary family as no longer based on tradition, but promoting an unprecedented separation between the private and the public in the family. It is within this field that the debates on same-sex parenting are located.

We understand that some approaches to same-sex parenting tend to focus on the importance of (gender) difference and sexuality to the constitution of the subject, but these aspects deserve theoretical and conceptual developments that we will not develop in this article. What we highlight is that these issues, as well as the anomie that the discourse of science promotes, along with its impact on the formation and transmission of parenting (Rosa, 2006), are concealed. As a consequence, the public debate defines same-sex parenting more in terms of preserving the family's symbolic and imaginary dimensions than of creating and transforming the social and affective ties.

Thus, this discussion is not about the limits of parental functions, or the legitimacy (or lack thereof) of new forms of family organizations, but about highlighting a debate that is influenced by the infantile imaginary in the construction of an ideal of traditional family organization. We will demonstrate that this way of conducting the debate produces effects, insofar as such imaginary can hamper the conditions that allow parents or other tutelary people to embody the symbolic function for the infans. It promotes, a priori, a deauthorization of the parents, in itself harmful to – although not impeding – the establishment and practice of parenting. Ou seja, a constituição e exercício da parentalidade baseiam-se em uma herança simbólica e necessitam de uma autorização discursiva em relação ao modo singular deste exercício, que se expressa no fantasma parental. As transformações desta tradição se operam por um movimento de báscula que vai das alterações no campo simbólico para a constituição subjetiva e singular que permitirá cada pai e mãe encarnar esta função. (Because parenting is a symbolic inheritance, it relies on the discursive authorization from the parental ghost,.) It is a challenge concerning the ways to build the necessary symbolic supports for the transformations of tradition in the social order.

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The public debate refers to the discussion brought about by three events: the moral and social impact of new reproductive technologies; the release in 1999, in France, of its Civil Solidarity Pact; and the Dutch bill enforced in May, 2001. On these occasions, marriage and adoptions by same-sex couples were regulated, provisions followed by Denmark (1999), the Netherlands (2001), Germany (2001), Sweden (2002), England (2005), Spain (2006) and Uruguay (2009).

In the Western world, behaviors and practices that were confined to the private and intimate area have become visible and increasingly numerous. However, that is a field full of preconceived ideas and clichés:

> [. . .] this expansion of erotic possibilities of the human aroused, on the other side, terrible fantasies and some general panic. The last attempts of science, including a part of psychoanalysis, supporting the defensive attitudes of humans who do not accept change, aim to continue to classify as deviations all these different behaviors that differ from the supposed "heterosexual normality", as if this were the only "natural" (reproductive) conduct, and therefore did not require explanations or directions.
>
> (Barbero, 2005, p.17)

These social changes caused a crisis in the imaginary and symbolic references, inevitably leading to the establishment of new orders, in our case, represented by a prior undermining of the representations of motherhood and fatherhood (Perelson, 2006).

The term same-sex family raises a good deal of questioning, insofar as it emphasizes the parents homoerotic sexuality in connection with caring for children. On the one hand, naming as same-sex parental household a – hitherto unnamed, hence invisible – family organization consisting of partners with the same anatomy, allows it to have a discursive existence (Zambrano, 2006). On the other hand, we realize that this naming choice, with the prefixes homo or same, alluding to sexuality between equals, is precisely the sticking point, full of inconsistencies, and conceptual and ideological misunderstandings at the heart of the reflections on the subject. The equalization between gender similarity and similarity in sexuality is a perspective that cannot be supported by Psychoanalysis or queer studies, among other such problems.

Times have changed, but biased conceptualizations of the homosexuality phenomenon, hence of same-sex parenting, seem to persist, currently emerging in the debate about the legitimacy of gay families. In other words, when faced with changes in the family, professionals from different fields have been turning to the psychoanalytic discourse in a caricatured manner to legislate on the legitimacy of parenting by a homosexual couple.

In her study, *Homossexualidade e Perversão na Psicanálise* [*Homosexuality and Perversion in Psychoanalysis*], Barbero (2005) pointed out that one of the origins of this concept can be traced to Psychoanalysis itself, through some psychoanalytic theories that combine homosexuality with perversion. The author stated that the psychoanalytic literature on homosexuality has always associated it with the idea of perversion. According to her, homosexuality and perversion mix and mingle in theory. The adjective perverse is associated with demonic images and, therefore, with disorder and pathology (Barbero, 2005). It is not by chance that homosexuality has long been considered a taboo in Psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic associations.

In our view, no discipline should put itself in the condition of regulating, judging or standardizing any practice in the field of human life. Also, neither the association between homosexuality and perversion nor the equalization between gender and sexuality is supported by a thorough psychoanalytic investigation, as various studies have shown.[1]

At the fore of this debate is the disjunction between the regulatory and the symbolic dimensions – imaginary and real – governing the establishment of paternity. The maternal and paternal functions are unprecedented: both are constituted concomitantly with the institution of the discursive place of the son/daughter. A child's birth is an event that, as an a posteriori effect, founds the distribution of discursive places, embodied by social rep-

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1   Besides the above-mentioned book by Graciela Barbero (2005), which conducts an extensive survey on the relationships between perversion and homosexuality in Freud's and Lacan's works, we also highlight the works by Marco Antonio Coutinho Jorge (2008); by Paulo Roberto Ceccarelli (2008, 71-93); (2011, p. 135-14; Patricia Porchat (2007). And, as basic readings in this area, Judit Butler (2003; 2004).

Gender and Sexuality

resentatives – usually the parents – to account for this reality. The parental function writes the instinctual real linked with the social imaginary and the symbolic Law, constituting a discursive place for parents and children, and allowing the child to be registered with a name, thereby instituting its place in the symbolic order. In turn, that will ensure the mode of insertion of the child and/or son/daughter in the discursive structure (Rosa, 2006).

Within this context, maternity and paternity are discursive places attended by libidinal, social and political components. These are places established by a symbolic function that transcends the family scope, which touches the real and writes this relationship. This writing founds the birth of a child as an event and has the effect of allocating discursive places. When this fabric is not established, the conditions for building and   performing parenting functions are shaken, which throws the child to the helpless discourse that is at the heart of certain phenomena of neglect or abuse.

It is in this sense that we discuss the weight of parental authorization in terms of the parental ghost, which can be tacked *only on a one-by-one basis*, but taking into account the authorization of the social discourse of an epoch (Kamers, 2006). This social discourse can impair this support and, hence, the subjectivization. The current debate ignores these substantive issues and has given rise to at least three different positions. The first denounces the perversion contained in homoerotic practices and homoparental organization. The child is placed as a victim, the object of "enjoyment" of "homosexual parents." This position can be seen, for instance, in the formulations by Charles Melman, publicly announced in France and published in the book, *Novas formas clínicas no início do terceiro milênio* [*New clinical forms at the beginning of the third millennium*] (2003). The second does not express an opinion about homosexuality or same-sex affective relationships, but opposes same-sex parenting based on the argument that this relationship excludes sexual differences, thereby failing to provide the minimum conditions for the child to become a subject. This position was publicly taken in debates in France by Pierre Legendre (2001) and published in *Le Monde*. A third position, contrary to a 'psy' opinion on the issue, points to the need for recognition of the family in its various organizations (Perelson, 2006; Zambrano, 2006; Uziel & Grossi, 2007). Psychoanalysis can bring a clinical perspective – the psychoanalytic listening highlights the impasses, impediments and ways of overcoming that are present in homoparental couples and their children (Passos & Rosa, 2010)[2].

These are different positions vis-à-vis the changes in the imaginary and symbolic orders, the latter linking affiliation with the difference between the sexes and generations. These are the new family arrangements imposed on society that allow the (de)naturalization of the concept of family and give more attention to the complexity of the constitution of parenting, fundamental to the subject's constitution.

On this issue, Passos & Rosa (2010) exposed the numerous issues that intersect in same-sex parenting in a clinical case:

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2   Few articles in Brazil bring clinical reports. We highlight other articles by the one of these authors, Maria Consuelo Passos (2007; 2009; 2011; 2012).

We find in this case a number of issues entailed in (same-sex) parenting: (i) the vicissitudes of establishing paternity at the birth of each child, (ii) the different positions of the children in the family –the couple's daughter joined the family; the son separated it: would this have happened because it was a boy? (iii) the mourning for the biological infertility, (iv) the dilemma about how to talk to kids about who the father is, the truth about their father, (v) the issue of transmission: what to say to the children? How to convey values, if the history of the parents/ country is not considered adapted or praiseworthy on all planes?,; and (vi) the union and isolation due to the fear of social prejudice.

(p. 81)

We emphasize that none of these impasses is exclusive to a same-sex couple, although their sum characterizes the complexity required for the establishment of parenting.

It is now necessary to deal with a paradox. To have their civil rights recognized, the new arrangements must become visible in the public space. However, because this visibility opposes the normative imaginary, the new schemes, such as those of same-sex families, are associated with deviation, sin and disease. Thus, in order to protect themselves and their children from social prejudice, many individuals with a same-sex affective orientation or same-sex families end up restricting their movement to ghettos, or in extreme cases, to a confinement in a private space, in which case, constituting a problem. As Rodriguez and Paiva (2009) noted in their work:

The exercise of parenting is affected by the absence of social support networks available to these families, which shows that society's prejudice also hinders the proper exercise of parenting. The couples surveyed reported difficulty in the exercise of same-sex parenting without the support of their families of origin, community and society in general. The lack of support for couples who are trying to start a family emerged as the key factor in the survey.

(2009, p.24)

It is curious to note that prejudice emerges even among subjects who assume the so-called homosexual identity. On this issue, Uziel et al. (2006) posit that these groups reproduce the same discourse of the risk of the lack of the other gender, and many of them are not convinced about the ownership right to exercise parenting by same-sex individuals. This reveals that many homosexuals do not even think they have the right to establish a family because they feel they do not conform to society's normative standards.

However,

"refusing to call these arrangements as 'family', denying the existence of a family link among its members (albeit these bonds can have a polymorphic and varied aspect) and preventing them from having a legal status means 'fixing' the family within a single format, which does not match the diversity of expressions it adopts in contemporary societies"

(Zambrano, 2006, p.129).

The idealized family and discourses about same-sex parenting

M. D. Rosa and M. Kamers

Gender and Sexuality

The ideal of family and the nostalgia of parenting

Based on the considerations so far, we understand that what these debates have in common is precisely that they feed the illusion that there would be a healthy family for the good psychic structure of the child.

In this sense, the debates on the legitimacy of same-sex families or the exercise of parenting by homosexual couples are not issues pertaining only to the field of reflections on the family. Moreover, history shows us that homosexuality, and different conjugal and family arrangements, have existed since immemorial times. But those discussions are presented as "just one more" among many others present in a discursive series constituted around trying to *predict*, or better, to *ensure*, what conditions of the family – naturalized and idealized – should be present to produce the idealized child, translated as a child without questions, without debate; in other words, with *no faults*. In this context it is legitimate and necessary to place the following statement: on behalf of the idealized family, all others are denied! As pointed out by Donzelot (1986):

> Encrusted in this double social network of tutors and coaches, the family appears as colonized. They are no longer two instances facing each other: the family and the unit. But, around the child, there is a series of concentric circles: the family circle, the circle of technicians, and the circle of social tutors. A paradoxical result of the liberalization of the family, of the emergence of a right of the child, of a rebalancing of the man/woman relationship is: the more these rights are proclaimed, the more the oppression of a tutelary power closes around a poor family.
> (Donzelot, 1986 p.98)

And we would say that it closes not only around a poor family, but around all those who do not fit into the social imaginary that feeds the neurotic fantasy of the idealized family.

According to Sauret (1998), child psychology emerged in the late nineteenth century in order to see in the child the minimal structure of the human. By being placed as the physical and emotional matrix of the future adult, the child became the focus of a specialized discourse that seeks to find in the family the determinants of the psychic health of the future adult.

According to Lévi-Strauss (1980), the study of the family raised some of the biggest polemics and controversies in the history of anthropological thought. For a long time, an attempt was made to locate in the European cultures the evolutionary ideal of the so-called structured family, to the extent that any differences found in relation to this ideal were closely related to a trace of cultural backwardness.

> Thus, after they had claimed for about fifty years that the family, as modern societies know it, could only be a recent development and the outcome of a slow and long-lasting evolution, anthropologists now lean toward an opposite conviction, i.e., that the family, consisting of a more or less durable union, socially approved,

of a man, a woman, and their children, is a universal phenomenon, present in each and every type of society.

(Lévi-Strauss, 1980, P.09)

A beautiful example of this universality of the family, and that of how its organization is not present in reality, was given by Lévi-Strauss (1980) when he described the organization of the Nayar group, who lived on the Malabar Coast of India.

In this group, the wedding was just a symbolic ceremony that did not create permanent links between man and woman. This allowed married women to have as many lovers as they wanted, and the children belonged exclusively to the maternal line. The anthropologist and ethnologist explained that the characteristics of this group can never be seen as an anomaly or exception, but otherwise, insofar as they meet the structural and non-phenomenological conditions for the existence of the family structure. "In fact, the examples that we choose respect, at least to some extent, gender duality, which seems to be a prerequisite for marriage and for establishing a family" (Lévi-Strauss, 1980, p.27).

However, he cautions against confusing this gender duality in reality with its symbolic dimension, as described in the following example:

> But in some parts of Africa a woman could marry another; the first woman would be the "father" of the children of the other woman, who would have these children by unrecognized men lovers. And the first woman would transmit to the children, according to the prevailing parental rights, her name, her social status and her wealth
>
> (Lévi-Strauss, 1980, p.27).

These examples help us discuss the much recurrent idea of seeking to locate in reality the symbolic condition necessary for the existence of the family. What Lévi-Strauss teaches is that the condition implies the existence and universality of the rule, and not that of a phenomenology relative to the characters involved. That is, if the family is a fact of culture and not of nature, that which reigns in its organization is the very same artificiality of the rule of incest prohibition, which specifies that individuals considered as a father, a mother or son/daughter cannot marry one another, even if the father is, in fact, a woman, and even if the child is not, in fact, legitimate. This rule requires a family not to close on itself, insofar as the prohibition of incest claims that families (whatever their organization) can marry among themselves, but not into themselves (Lévi-Strauss, 1980).

The family is an institution ordained by kinship systems. However, defining it solely from the anthropological viewpoint is not enough. Because the family is a structure, it has variants in different cultures. Thus, conceptualizing it as a symbolic structure and, thereby, having a discursive reality, necessarily entails putting into question universal, naturalized definitions.

According to Kehl (2001): "[. . .] we always tend to reproduce the family with its traditional roles – father, mother, children – but these roles are not necessarily played by people

Gender and Sexuality

who, in the kinship structure, correspond to father, mother and children" (p.30). And we would add: we tend to locate the model family in the typical bourgeois nuclear, conjugal family which, according to our imaginary, we consider as structured. This type of logic means that every family diverging from this model is expected to be seen as pathological!

> Moreover, the structured family has produced the Oedipal fixation of the children to the mother, which is not the same thing as passing the Oedipus complex. It is not mandatory that the passage through the Oedipus produce fixation of the children to the mother. But in order to sustain the mother's place in a bourgeois family as queen of the home, which was a necessity of the emerging capitalist society, a huge amount of knowledge has been produced [...] which insisted on the "feminine" nature as narrowly defined by the women's reproductive functions.
>
> (Kehl, 2001, p.32)

The fact is that the family underwent (and is undergoing) profound changes. In traditional societies, the family order was centered on patriarchal authority and on the place conferred to sociability. The community was organized based on pre-determined symbolic places given to every individual since birth. The purpose of the family was to preserve its heritage, blood ties and the honor of its name. Emotional exchanges were conducted primarily outside the family. This implies recognizing that the family's social function was different from the one we are presently witnessing (Kamers, 2006).

> From now on this will not be seen only as a kinship structure that restores the father's defeated authority, or synthesizing the passage from nature to culture through the forbidden and symbolic functions, but as a place of decentralized power and multiple appearances. Instead of defining a spiritual, biological or anthropological essence of the family, based on gender and sex or the laws of kinship, and instead of the existential one, induced by the Oedipal myth, another was instituted, horizontal and multiple, invented by modern individualism, and soon dissected by the discourse of experts.
>
> (Roudinesco, 2003, p.155)

It appears that the central issue is that traditional societies had a clear view of what was expected from the individuals and how they should respond, since the rules were clear and the places pre-determined. Marriage was a contract performed according to the interests of the patrimony. Sex and love were outside the union. The order rested on the husband's authority, women's submission and children's dependency (Cecarelli, 2010).

However, the new place given to tradition, along with the Christianization of the customs and the advent of capitalism, led to a new mode of social organization based on individualism, which produced a new social structure, intimist and narcissistic (Sennett, 1988). These changes gave rise to a series of changes within the family, which, in our view, founded a new type of family relationship, based on narcissism, since the child has come to occupy a central place in the family's libidinal economy.

As Deutsch (1960) posited, parenting should not be thought of as an expression of a biological process, but as an experience related to the social discourse of an epoch. However, she warns that the research on the family is concentrated on the imaginary of the patriarchal family, built upon the assumption that men, thanks to their greater physical strength, have always been the head of the family, while the "natural" role of motherhood fell to the women.

In this sense, Deutsch still clarifies that anthropologists currently accept to speak of two kinds of family: the patrilineal, which finds its basis in Roman law and prevails in modern societies, and the matrilineal, in which the kinship is derived only from the maternal lineage.

Nevertheless, Deutsch (1960) makes an important distiction in denouncing the excesses and passions raised when addressing this issue. On the one hand there are advocates of the matrilineal theory, which the author sees as a form of protest against the alleged social inferiority of woman, and where motherhood appears as a way of valuing women. On the other hand, there are those who advocate the patrilineal family theory which fervently defends the father's power within the family. But both positions seem to converge at the same corner point: the child's nostalgia present in worshiping and idealizing the family. Here, we do not intend to only heat up the debate on the legitimacy or not of the new family organizations, but to give visibility to the infantile imaginary present in it.

The idealization of the family: decline of the patriarchate, symbolic orphanhood and social antagonism

Returning to the formulation by Lajonquière in the book, *Figures of the infantile* (2010), the idealization and nostalgia around the child, and we add, the family, have given rise to a number of theories.

> Within the education, teaching and "psy" fields we find numerous formulations focused on the ideal conditions for upbringing a child: 'The psychoeducational assessment of a long class', 'Problems in school performance of slum dwellers', 'Correlation between parental punishments motivated by drinking and non-learning children aged 5 years, six months and five days.
>
> (Lajonquière, 1999)

And in the field of family studies, the current thought is not very different. It could be characterized by the following formulations: 'Analysis of child development of a child raised by two women,' 'Parental performance evaluation of men and women who work twenty hours per week,' 'The interference of family religiosity with children's education,' 'Issues in identification and in the Oedipal process in same-sex parental affiliation,' among others.

According to Cecarelli, what is at stake is precisely that which has, since immemorial times, been accepted as the only possibility of subjectivity: a reference to the father:

The idealized family and discourses about same-sex parenting

M. D. Rosa
and
M. Kamers

Gender and Sexuality

> The presence of someone who separates the narcissistic mother-son cell is a foundational condition for the subject to be constituted. However, calling it the name-of-the-Father or paternal function is a reflection of patriarchy. What happens is that the need (imaginary) that this place has to go through the man (through the one who has the organ) has been changing. Under this perspective, the crisis of masculinity is, in fact, a crisis of men, to the extent that they are less and less often summoned to occupy the second time of the Oedipus complex.
>
> (Cecarelli, 2002, p. 91)

Thus, what is at play is a type of cult and nostalgia to a supposedly had, and lost, imaginary family condition: a loving mother and a powerful father. "Undoubtedly, the issues raised by these new family configurations submit some psychoanalytic precepts to a hard test. Indeed, we are tackling questions that will allow us to separate what in fact reveals in the domain of psychoanalysis from what belongs to the ghost" (Cecarelli, 2002, p. 91).

The revaluing of the father by psychoanalysis emerged as a reaction to the various displacements of the value given to him in the discourse. According to Roudinesco (1995), Psychoanalysis is born not only out of questions about what is called a decline of patriarchy, but also out of an attempt to answer them using a conception of family in which the father's place would be revalued. "Thus the father, stripped, humiliated and beaten reappears, invested by the power of language: he could effectively give a name to his children, symbolically recognizing them" (Roudinesco, 1995, p.101).

Thus, the topic of the idealized family has been established as the nerve-center of discussions about new ways of parenting. And in its name we sustain the idealized father, mother and the child. However, this presents two sides: on the one hand, the imaginary ideal of the child, and consequently that of the family, and on the other, the family and child as sources of social rejection. It is to this idealized child and family that we look up. We want to find the child that we were not and the family that we did not have, but which we suppose to have been the one expected by the Other. And this does not seem to be a mere assumption.

Indeed, the family's social imaginary makes not only parents, but also children, feel wronged in relation to the family they should have. And the way children have received the ideal of the family should not surprise us. If parents are not as they should be and do not give what they should, it seems clear that the children react, claiming something that the social sphere points as a right beforehand. From the trip to the supermarket to consultations with pediatricians, an entire social arena lurks, in a position to judge the conduct of those who exercise terrestrial parenting, and we can say, in passing, human. But because we live in the moon's world, where parenting is thought of on the ideal-celestial plane, even pretentiously placed as likely to be regulated by numerous psychoanalysts and theorists from diverse fields, the only choice for *earthly* parents, be they heterosexual, homosexual, etc., lies in the position of being in debt vis-à-vis the idealized child.

Thus, we are in line with Lebrun's thesis in his book, *Malaise dans la subjectivation* [*The malaise of Subjectivation*], where he tells us that:

> For the first time in history, we witness a fracture in the solidarity between the social and family functioning, and the family goes to a position of antagonism to the social system. The consequence of this fracture is evident in the fact that the child, no longer forced to enroll itself in the social through its first others, is spontaneously invited to refuse the work of subjectivation that ordered it to renounce its infantile omnipotence and to separate from its parents at the same time.
>
> (Lebrun, 2010, p.06)

Indeed, Lebrun (2010) is extremely consistent in his assertion because, if the family finds neither reception from the social context, nor a symbolic reference that can delimit its operation and position vis-à-vis the child, it seems that the only way out is a position of social antagonism.

On the one hand, the family narcissistically closes onto itself – a fact that we can glimpse through the intimidated relationship that today's parents establish with society. In this position, parents feel extremely identified with the children in the task of protecting themselves against social demands. In this context, it does not seem to be a random event the fact that the school, as First Social Other unfamiliar to the child, has appeared, on behalf of the discourse of bullying, as the scene of massacres carried out by the students themselves, who feel wronged by it.

On the other hand, we find families who let themselves be captured and dissected by the specialized discourse, now in their condition of full object of enjoyment of specialists engaged in the task of legislating and regulating the functioning of the child and its parents (Rosa, 2006). The current discourse, by raising the child and family to the condition of an object of enjoyment of science, can ultimately hinder the symbolic support of parenting, insofar as it discredits and disqualifies those who do not fit the imagery of the family. The subject does not respond to the psychology of the other, of its father or mother, although there is a tendency to consider that a particular kind of father or mother would entail or lead to such kind of a subject.

The entirety of psychology is built upon the idea of typology; that is, 'a certain kind of father + a certain kind of mother = a particular type of subject' (Sauret, 1998, p.51). However, "although the specialists in charge of therapeutically reeducating the family understand that the breakdown is a social fact, they seldom realize that the educational therapies are active components in manufacturing this fact" (Costa, 1999, p.16). The point is that the specialists see this deauthorization of the child's tutelary agents as evidence to justify an intervention to put "in order" this supposed destructuring.

Our effort in the present article was to demonstrate that the conditions that allow parents or other tutelary people to embody the symbolic function for the infans are not given as an a priori knowledge. After our analyses and considerations, we maintain that beyond the discussion about same-sex families, another challenge should be put in place, concerning the ways to build the symbolic authorizations required for the transformations of tradition in the social order.

Gender and Sexuality

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