

# Electra complex: alienation in the depths of self-motivated involution

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## Abstract:

In recent years, “involution” as a hotly debated social phenomenon has generally appeared in front of people, and it is widely accepted that involution in general, and passive involution in particular, must be a kind of human alienation. However, there are different arguments for self-motivated involution. The point of this paper is that when a subject’s behavior is defined as “involution,” it is already alienation. Even if this “involution” is full of the subject’s own volition, it is strongly self-motivated and is interpreted in the context of psychoanalysis, i.e., the Electra complex.

**Keywords:** involution, psychoanalysis, Electra complex, alienation

## 1. Brief description of “involution” and its current situation

In recent years, the so-called involution has gradually evolved from a description of a saturated cultural pattern to a description of a specific social phenomenon, i.e., the irrational and disorderly competition for relatively limited resources within a certain group. In this case, the payoff is often disproportionate to the effort, which can be called “inflation” of effort. For the general sense of involution, often with coercion, the subject is forced into this irrational competition, it is difficult to get out, reduced to the tool of involution. The fruits of the subject’s output are also often separated from the subject: the fruits are ostensibly owned by me, but in reality they are owned by the Big Other - the one who forces me to internalize. It is not the desire of the “I” that is satisfied and realized, but the desire of the Big Other in the field. The relationship between people is also alienated in this “inflation” of the satisfaction of the desires of the Big Other: the subjects are hostile to each other, and only the winner has the right to enjoy an advantageous position in the distribution of the relatively limited resources.

## 2. Electra complex perspective on self-motivated involution

In the case of non-coercive, self-motivated involution, the alienation seems to have improved, and the “I” seems to have joined in voluntarily and to enjoy it. In fact, the alienation does not disappear or diminish; it is merely hidden in the depths of the behavior. Self-motivated involution implies that the subject shares the desires of the Big Other, coincides with the gaze of the Big Other,

consciously or unconsciously competes with others, and, while enjoying it, becomes an instrument of the Big Other’s pleasure. The subject shifts from fulfilling the Big Other’s desires, which is typical of involution, to identifying with the desires of the Big Other. In other words, “Man’s desire is the desire of the Other...” [1].

This alienation of self-motivated involution is particularly evident in the Electra complex, which, despite its own controversy and criticism, does not prevent it from being interpreted in this way, for the law of the father is actually present, and the prohibition of incest continues to play its irreplaceable role.

Young girls in the genital period (three to six years of age), upon realizing that they do not have a penis, develop a penis envy, believing that their penis is missing because their mother gave birth to it, and that this lack needs to be filled. Their pleasure shifts from the clitoris to the vagina as they develop physically. At the same time, they realize that their mothers, who were treated by them as the almighty Other, are not able to satisfy all their desires at this time: not only the desire to be filled by the absence of the penis, but also the desire to be fulfilled in all its aspects. These desires can be fulfilled by the father. So young girls believe that if they make love to their fathers and possess them completely, as their mothers did, they will be satisfied. “The same is true for the little girl: she becomes emotionally attached to her father and wants to get rid of her mother and take her place [2].” So they try to take their father with their mother and fight for his phallus, and if we do not suppress their desire for their father, we will see a scene that is taboo for the orthodox ethic: mother and daughter fighting for the exclusive possession of their father.

In this taboo fight, absent from orthodox ethics, the daughter and the mother engage in the self-motivated “involution” mentioned above in order to seize the father, or, to be precise, the phallus. They groom and make up their appearance to make it more in line with the father’s aesthetics, and mold their personalities to be more obedient, so as to gain more of the father’s favor. Until finally, an irrepressible aggression erases the existence of one of them in the father’s world - matricide or dystroicide. For example, the novel *Lolita* shows that “Lolita knew that her mother loved Humbert, which subconsciously made her resent her mother. Mrs. Haze sidetracked Lolita to be alone with Humbert, and she immediately showed strong resentment and argued with her mother [3]”. They both desire the same father, the father’s phallus, and the father desires, as they do, the very phallus that makes him the father, the center of this forbidden game: only by possessing the phallus is he the father, the center. In other words, he desires the complete and total possession of the phallus, thus confirming his own existence as the center. This desire for possession is fulfilled in the endless devotion of mother and daughter to the father. Through their devotion, the father confirms his true possession of the phallus: everything in the game can still revolve safely and smoothly around him as the center. The mother and the daughter fulfill his desire for the phallus in an invisible way.

The mother and the daughter revel in the satisfaction of their own desires, in the jealousy of the father’s preference for the other, and in the pain of the alienated relationship between mother and daughter. The father, on the other hand, enjoys himself at all times in this game, whether in the fulfillment of the mother and daughter, or in their jealousy or pain. The fulfillment of the mother and daughter is also the fulfillment of his own desires, and he continues to derive satisfaction from the fact that the mother and daughter fight over him and even become jealous of each other. This game of struggle is essentially a grand phallic cult centered around the father and his phallus.

But the orthodox ethic is always present, and so we can extend the above discussion of the Electra complex from the incest between father and daughter to the entire symbolic system, because that is how the entire symbolic system (the symbolic field) is built. That is to say, “the symbolic field that Lacan speaks of signifies the substitution of the mother’s desire for the nominal father. For it is through language that we are socialized, and it is through language that we learn the rules and precepts of society, which are created in the name of the father. That is to say, by those in power, past and present [4].”

“Like the Oedipus complex, the Electra complex is normally repressed in the unconscious and only manifests itself in psychopaths with disorders of balance or as mod-

ified dreams [5]. After the Oedipal complex has been repressed and emasculated, the young child enters the symbolic order by identifying with and emulating his or her parents. The object of our desire is no longer the concrete individual parent. The father, replaced in the symbolic order by social rules such as orthodox ethics or moral law, becomes a symbolic function, the center of the symbolic system, the Great Other in the true sense of the word. The subject, on the other hand, remains the infant daughter in the Electra complex, except that the subject is already the product of successful repression: desires that do not conform to the requirements of orthodox norms are forced to lurk in the unconscious and to adopt the desires of the Big Other as their own and the language of the Big Other as their language. The so-called motivational self-involvement is nothing more than a harmonious replica of the Electra complex cloaked in rationality, where we offer ourselves in a civilized way to the Big Other in a righteous scramble to be the first to worship the Big Other’s skirts, revolving around the phallus as an empty energetic value, in an attempt to get something out of this worship, to satisfy the desires that we so much as think are all ours, and where we are mutually hostile, constantly preying on each other. Even if we seem innocent and have not really taken anything from the other.”

At the same time, the object of the subject’s desire itself is also a “lack” that can never be filled. The subject does not really know what the Big Other desires, but only what “I” imagine the Big Other desires. As in the case of the hysterical patient, it can be clearly seen in Freud’s famous case of the young girl Dora, that Dora does not really know what kind of woman her father really desires, but only imagines that the woman her father desires is not her mother’s kind of woman, but a woman like Mrs. K. She can only imitate and identify with Mrs. K., but she can’t be the woman that her father really desires. become a woman whom her father truly desires. The object to which true desire is directed is a perpetual riddle for the subject, what Lacan calls object a, whose place is forever occupied by some substitute like Mrs. K. On the other hand, this substitute can occupy the place of Mrs. K., but not the place of Mrs. K, who can only imitate and identify with her. On the other hand, this substitute is able to occupy the sublime position of object a, to become its embodiment, essentially chosen by the Big Other itself; Mrs. K. does not become the object of her father’s desire and of Dora’s identification as a matter of course, but is actually so, after having been “chosen” by her father.

### 3. Conclusion

As far as psychoanalysis itself is concerned, even if it is

possible to cross the illusion and reach the real, the realm of the real is a desert in itself, and after the discovery of the individual's idiosyncrasy, it is still not able to exist independently of the symbolic order at the end, as mentioned in the Syllabus on Feuerbach: 'The nature of man is not an abstraction inherent in a single individual; in its reality, it is the sum of all social relations.' [6] Therefore, the hedonistic pleasure of being at one with the desires of the Big Other at the level of reality, the sense and degree of satisfaction that the subject can derive from it, and the realization of the reproduction of desires are sufficient reasons for this self-alienation and for falling into a different kind of reenactment of the Electra Complex."

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