



Ágora: Estudos em Teoria Psicanalítica

ISSN: 1516-1498

ISSN: 1809-4414

Programa de Pós-graduação em Teoria Psicanalítica do  
Instituto de Psicologia da Universidade Federal do Rio de  
Janeiro - UFRJ

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Ágora: Estudos em Teoria Psicanalítica, vol. XXIII, no. 1, 2020, January-April, pp. 49-56

Programa de Pós-graduação em Teoria Psicanalítica do Instituto  
de Psicologia da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro - UFRJ

DOI: 10.1590/1809-44142020001006

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## JOUISSANCE AND DEATH DRIVE IN LACAN'S TEACHING

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**ABSTRACT:** This article aims to analyze the Lacanian notion of *jouissance* and its connection to the notion of death drive. Our purpose is to highlight the evolution of the articulation between these two notions across Lacan's teaching. When Lacan first gives a theoretical basis to the notion of *jouissance*, he criticizes the validity of death drive as a concept. Ten years later, death drive is rehabilitated and partially assimilated to *jouissance*. Between these two moments, *jouissance* plays a central role in the French psychoanalyst's teaching.

**Keywords:** Lacan; Freud; death drive; *jouissance*; pleasure principle.

**Resumo: Gozo e pulsão de morte no ensino de Lacan.** Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar a noção lacaniana de gozo e sua conexão com a noção de pulsão de morte. Nosso objetivo é destacar a evolução da articulação entre essas duas noções através do ensino de Lacan. Quando Lacan primeiro fornece uma base teórica à noção de gozo, ele critica a validade da pulsão de morte como um conceito. Dez anos depois, a pulsão de morte é reabilitada e parcialmente assimilada ao gozo. Entre esses dois momentos, o gozo desempenha um papel central no ensino do psicanalista francês.

**Palavras-chave:** Lacan; Freud; pulsão de morte; gozo; princípio do prazer.

DOI - <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1809-44142020001006>

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In the seminar *The ethics of psychoanalysis*, Lacan criticizes the notion of death drive in Freud. He finds this notion “suspicious, neither true, nor false”. In the same seminar, the notion of *jouissance* begins to develop after some references in the previous seminars and before further wide development<sup>1</sup>. The notion of *jouissance*, little used in the preceding seminars, takes off, and is developed throughout Lacan’s teaching. It will later become foundational to the category of *the Real*.

I propose to analyze the relationships and tensions between these two notions, death drive and *jouissance*, in these two moments of Lacan’s teaching. To this end, I will focus on the criticism of the notion of death drive in the seminar *The ethics of psychoanalysis*, and on the development of the notion of *jouissance* since this seminar. Then, I will focus on the connections made by Lacan between the notion of *jouissance* and that of death drive in the seminar called *The other side of psychoanalysis*.

In this articulation and tension between these notions, I would like to enlighten one by the other. Breaks and continuities could then appear, from Freudian epistemology that builds on sciences of his time, to Lacanian structuralism in its metamorphoses.

## DEATH DRIVE, FROM FREUD TO LACAN

### Critical presentation from Pierre Kaufmann about death drive

In the seminar *The ethics of psychoanalysis*, Lacan initiates a reflection about ethics based on psychoanalytical experience. This sort of ethics cannot possibly be the one presented by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean ethics*, which asserts a sovereign good relying on pleasure as the foundation for human self-realization. Lacan refers to *Civilization and its discontents* as Freud’s essential work when it comes to enlightening “what must be our position towards the human being” (LACAN, 1959-1960/1986, p. 15). His reflection on death drive in this seminar takes place in this context. He tips Pierre Kaufmann into presenting the critical analysis of the notion of death drive in Freud performed by Bernfeld and Feitelberg (LACAN, 1959-1960/1986, p. 185-190). Bernfeld and Feitelberg distinguishes death drive and destruction drive, contrary to Freud who brings them together in *Civilization and its discontents* after having distinguished them in *Beyond the pleasure principle*.

Kaufman notes two principles distinguished by Bernfeld and Feitelberg in their analysis.

*Death drive*, with death as internal principle, is a matter of entropy<sup>2</sup>, which is an energetic and thermodynamic principle. The *Nirvana* principle, in which tension is lowered down to zero, can be linked with entropy. Death drive refers to entropic trend of all systems in nature. It’s a biophysical notion, which hides the singular determinations of the Subject. It doesn’t teach us anything. Its signification is theoretical.

### Lacan’s criticism of death drive

Introducing Kaufman’s presentation, Lacan refers to Freudian epistemology and to the epistemological context in Freud’s time. As a comment he indicates that he considered the notion of death drive suspicious. In this notion, he sees a naturalization of the Subject, a biologization reflected by the notion of instinct. He notes that for Freud, it was necessary to structure the field of the impassable, of the *Thing*.

In a conference, on March 10th, 1960, Lacan calls the Freudian *Trieb* a “primary notion, the most enigmatic one in the theory”, and says that this notion “stumbled [...] on the formula and the form of the instinct of death.” (LACAN, 1960a, p. 6).

Throughout this seminar, Lacan frequently uses the word *Trieb*, without translating it. He also uses the words *drive* (*pulsion*) and instinct. He makes it clear that *der Trieb* was not purely instinct itself. It is a fringe concept between somatic and psychic. He prefers to insist on its link to signifiers. The game of substitutions for *Triebe*, as described by Freud, is one of significance, rather than a mere description of the relationship with natural environments by human beings.

Within the death drive, Lacan dismisses the entropic dimension, that of death instinct. He only keeps the historical dimension, implying the dimension of event, which corresponds to the destruction drive. More specifically, Lacan links the historical dimension with the Signifier. Thanks to the signifying chain “all that is implicit, immanent, all that exists in the chain of the natural events can be considered as dominated, as such, by a drive called death drive” (LACAN, 1959-1960/1986, p. 251).

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1 For a complete analysis of this notion throughout Lacan’s teaching (in French), see *La jouissance au fil de l’enseignement de Lacan* (JADIN; RITTER, 2009).

2 Entropy: the second Law of thermodynamics establishes that physical phenomena are irreversible, in particular when it comes to heat transfers. Entropy is assimilated to the notion of disorder, which can only rise through these transformations (ROCARD, 1967).

For Lacan, death drive, as destruction drive, is to be considered in a broader context, that of the relationship between death drive and Signifier. That is explained in the seminar *The four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis*. Death drive is presented as one of the four fundamental concepts together with the unconscious, the repetition and the transference. In the details given by Lacan, we can find at least three differences with Freud's notion of drive.

1/ The notion of drive diverges from instinct or tendency, the latter being linked to the speciated part of human existence. Instinct works in the perspective of finality, which is not the case of the drive (LACAN, 1964/1973, p. 154).

Freud builds the drive on the biological model of physiological stimuli, then differentiated between the two. The biological model is that of tendency, or of adaptation: one of the functions of the nervous system is to discard stimuli in order to bring them back to the lowest possible level (FREUD, 1915/1968, p. 15). The drive is an excitation for the psyche. However, unlike physiological stimulation, the drive acts from within the organism and with constant strength. The sexual drive accounts for sexual needs, not only in humans, but also in animals (FREUD, 1905/1987 p. 37). It has a double function: sexual satisfaction of the individual, and conservation of the species (FREUD, 1915/1968, p. 22). The neurotic symptomatology is at stake in the confrontation with the real requirements of sexuality, between thrust of the drive and resistance opposed by the refusal of sexuality (FREUD, 1905/1987 p. 79).

2/ For Lacan, each drive is only partially tied to the biological end of reproduction. He rejects the genital drive (LACAN, 1964/1973, p. 173).

Partial drives correspond to organs, cutting out erogenous zones on the body (FREUD, 1905/1987, p. 84). Freud links some of these drives to the developmental stages of sexual organization: oral, anal-sadistic, then phallic. The genital stage comes after these stages called pre-genital. It realizes a synthesis of the partial drives, and subordinates them to the primacy of genitals as reproductive organs (FREUD, 1905/1987, p. 130). The finality of the genital stage is reproduction. Freud acknowledges partial drives in adult sexuality, but as preliminary pleasure (FREUD, 1905/1987, p. 148-149) that can carry a hazard, that of taking the place of the normal sexual goal. It is the mechanism of numerous perversions (FREUD, 1905/1987, p. 149-150). Surely this "normality" should not be understood in a moral sense, since Freud mentions that the predisposition to perversions is an element of the so-called normal constitution (FREUD, 1905/1987, p. 88). By rejecting the genital drive and the associated finality of reproduction, Lacan steps aside from the biological portrait of the drive serving the species. For him, drives take place alongside with the Signifier and the constitution of the Subject (LACAN, 1964/1973, p. 158). He builds on the resources of the language associated by Freud with the partial drives. For Freud, a partial drive is related to a verb – for example the verb *to look* for the corresponding drive. The different voices – active, passive and reflexive – organized themselves in a process that lets a new Subject emerge (LACAN, 1964/1973, p. 162).

3/ At last, for Lacan, any drive is both a sexual drive and a death drive, representing in itself the part of the death in the sexual living (LACAN, 1964/1973, p. 187).

Freud maintains a dualistic conception of the drives throughout his transformations, initially opposing a sexual drive and an ego-drive, or self-preservation drive, and then life drive and death drive (FREUD, 1915/1968, p. 101). These oppositions have to be nuanced. In the study on narcissism, Freud argues that the sexual drives operate in the ego (FREUD, 1915/1968, p. 101). In *Beyond the pleasure principle*, he establishes the duality life drive/death drive. Any drive has a conservative nature which orientation is a return to an initial state preceding life, because "the aim of any life is death" (FREUD, 1920/1981, p. 82). What differentiates the life drive is a longer path to this initial state (FREUD, 1920/1981, p. 85). Death is also the finality to which any drive leads to. However, the drive dualism is never reconsidered by Freud. The destruction drive results from a link between death drive and Eros – life drive (FREUD, 1923/1981, p. 286). In *Civilization and its discontents*, the destructive or aggressive drive finds a new importance, by being partially disconnected from Eros. The dualism of drives then appears as a struggle between destruction drive and life drive, and that is precisely the meaning of the rise of civilization (FREUD, 1929/1995, p. 62-64).

The details given by Lacan on the drive characteristics show a portrait quite different from that of Freud throughout his elaborations and hypotheses, even if Lacan seems to downplay, even minimize, these differences by attributing a part of his own conceptions to Freud.

Indeed, a link appears between death and drive, but it is present in each drive. The dualism of drives as described in all Freudian re-orderings, has disappeared. Meanwhile the particular field of the drive gets smaller. The link with biological events becomes weaker whereas the Signifier comes to the forefront. Freudian metaphysical, and even metabiological, speculation has been left aside. The double articulation of the drive, in the sexual field and with the Signifier, becomes the center of Lacan's theorization. In Freud, the genital

drive is the last stage of the drive and appears as the finality of the sexual life (FREUD, 1905/1987, p. 130; FREUD, 1923/1981, p. 255). This conception, to which he will always remain faithful, can induce a certain kind of normativity in the psychoanalytic cure. By rejecting the notion of genital drive, Lacan opens an area of de-naturalization of the sexual, which is one step towards other elaborations leading to the formula “there is no sexual relationship” (LACAN, 1972/2001, p. 455).

### **Death drive and *jouissance***

In the seminar *The ethics of psychoanalysis*, the criticism of the notion of death drive is associated with the central role given to the notion of *jouissance*. Lacan places the notion of *jouissance* beyond the pleasure principle. In this text of Freud, he notes that the use of the pleasure principle is to keep us away from our *jouissance*. In this interpretation by Lacan of Freud’s text, the opposition between *jouissance* and pleasure principle takes the place of the opposition between death drive and pleasure principle. The *jouissance*, as conceived by Lacan at that moment, is linked with the idea of drive satisfaction. But it is also a notion which he links to the idea of destruction, to the idea of hurting one’s neighbor, on the basis of the text *Civilization and its discontents*, in which Freud criticizes the commandment “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” as impossible to keep (FREUD, 1920/1981, p. 86).

## **JOUISSANCE AGAINST DEATH DRIVE**

### **Jouissance and drive**

In the seminar *The ethics of psychoanalysis*, Lacan’s elaboration of the notion of *jouissance* is connected to that of drive. The *jouissance* is the satisfaction not of the needs but of the drive. It can be a sexual *jouissance*. It can be linked to the idea of evil, as *jouissance* of destruction. Hence it appears a proximity between the idea of *jouissance* and the idea of death drive, from which *jouissance* recovers some attributes. Lacan raises this double aspect of the *jouissance*, sexual and destructive, by focusing on Sade’s writings<sup>3</sup>.

This double aspect of *jouissance* is what can be found too in the notion of entanglement between life drive and death drive. Leaving aside the death drive, that he considers as a theoretical dead end in Freud, Lacan replaces the Freudian drive dualism with a monism. Each drive is both a life drive and a death drive, and *jouissance*, as drive satisfaction, may be both sexual *jouissance* and destruction *jouissance*.

### **The beyond-of-the-pleasure-principle: forbidden *jouissance* of the Thing**

In the seminar *The ethics of psychoanalysis*, Lacan mentions the fundamental moral Law, the prohibition of incest. There is a fundamental desire that mustn’t be satisfied. It concerns a sovereign good, the Mother, also named The Thing. This good is forbidden, and there is no other. It is a reverse foundation of the moral law. This Thing is both “strange to me, while being in the heart of me” (LACAN, 1959-1960/1986, p. 87).

Beyond the pleasure principle means to Lacan the impossible reunion with the Thing, which is the sovereign good. The *jouissance* of The Thing is impossible. While, for Freud, the beyond-of-the-pleasure-principle is the death drive, which fundamental principle is a return to an inanimate state. We might say that Lacan brings back the issues of the beyond-of-the-pleasure-principle to the clinic, to the question of prohibition of incest. He leaves the question of the death to speculation. The notion of *jouissance* would then have a more clinical dimension, less speculative, than the notion of death drive.

With the death drive, Freud holds a critical position towards an ethic that he finds impossible to maintain, that of the commandment “You shall love your neighbor as yourself”. He confronts it with a so-called natural ethic, where a narcissistic satisfaction is emphasized, the satisfaction of considering oneself as better than the others (FREUD, 1929/1995, p. 87). With the forbidden *jouissance* of The Thing set up as the sovereign Good, Lacan takes a step forward in terms of ethics. He tries to ground ethics in analytical experience.

The *Thing* is the centerpiece of the process of reality-building within the Subject. It is in the field of the *Thing* that the discovery of the *object*, i.e. the object of love, as a recovered object, can take place. That *Thing*, that analytical ethics deems inaccessible, has an aesthetical side which is vectored through sublimation. Lacan takes courteous love as an example, where the Dame is simultaneously idealized and de-humanized, because of how unreal the depictions of her and her expectations were across that aesthetical movement.

### **Coordinates of *jouissance***

In his article called *Subversion of the Subject and dialectics of desire*, Lacan reminds us that psychoanalysis recognizes no such thing as unity of the Subject, since the actual Subject is not the subject of knowledge, nor is

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3 In particular on the text called *Frenchmen, one more effort, if you want to be Republicans*, a speech inserted in the 5th dialogue of the *Philosophy in the bedroom* (SADE, 1795/1976).

he a conscious one (LACAN, 1960b/1966). When you lay the hypothesis of the unconscious, the Subject becomes that of Freud's formula, "Wo es war, soll ich werden", which can be roughly translated as "Where *It* was, shall *I* become". The Subject is caught in the net of the Signifier, between desire and demand.

In this article, Lacan bestows coordinates for *jouissance*, in a teaching centered around the primacy of the Symbolic, i.e. of the Signifier, and of the Unconscious structured as a language. Lacan takes as a starting point *jouissance* as forbidden to whomever speaks. *Jouissance* is forbidden to the Subject by the Law. The Law evoked here is that which both founds the word and the prohibition of incest. The forbidden *jouissance* is what is at stake in castration and that which gives way to the dialectics of desire. A symbol is attributed to *jouissance*: the phallus. The phallus gives substance to *jouissance* within the dialectics of desire. The forbidden *jouissance* returns by inscribing itself in its dialectics with desire.

The coordinates of *jouissance* are specified from the perversion. In the perversion, the Subject becomes the instrument of the *jouissance* of the Other. Perversion only accentuates the function of desire as the Other's desire, in the bringing into play of fantasy. The formula of fantasy,  $\$ \diamond a$ , situates the articulation, both conjunction and disjunction, between the Subject and *object a* situated in the place of the Other. Desire is presented as an interdiction to overstep a certain limit in *jouissance*. The fantasy seems to be the place and the scene where this limit operates.

### **From the central field of *jouissance* to the field of *jouissance***

In the seminar *Anxiety*, Lacan continues his elaborations concerning what he calls the central field of *jouissance* (LACAN, 1962-1963/2004, p. 213). He distinguishes *jouissance* from desire and love. The symptom is presented as something beyond the principle of pleasure, where *jouissance* shows itself as *Unlust*, as displeasure. The relation of *jouissance* of being to the Other is specified. The *jouissance* does not know the Other, except through the rest that is the object *a*. Desire is presented as a will to bring in *jouissance* instead of the Other. This operation produces a remainder, the object *a*, which represents what resists the passage to the Signifier.

The *jouissance* is anchored in the body. Lacan forges the aphorism "There is *jouissance* only of the body" (LACAN, 1966-1967, p. 265). He goes so far as to propose that the Other is the whole of the bodies. He associates truth and *jouissance*, knowledge and *jouissance* (LACAN, 1965-1966, p. 262). In this gradual extension of the place given to *jouissance*, a link between discourse and *jouissance* appears. *Jouissance* is a possible effect of discourse: "Discourse holds the means of *jouissance* insofar as it involves the Subject" (LACAN, 1968-1969/2006, p. 18). This effect, this product of discourse, Lacan calls it *plus-de-jour*, a notion that he bases on a homology with the notion of surplus-value in Marx (LACAN, 1968-1969/2006, p. 19). The *plus-de-jour* is *jouissance* envisaged as a loss, and represented by *object a*, it is also an aim that animates the Subject, as the cause of the desire to know. The *plus-de-jour* is a *jouissance* that is integrated into the economy of discourse, considered as a productive process.

In the seminar *The other side of psychoanalysis*, Lacan formalizes 4 discourses involving the Master, the Hysteric, University and the Analyst. These discourses are articulated logically around four elements,  $S_1$ ,  $S_2$ ,  $\$$  and the object *a*, and from four places, one of which is that of the *plus-de-jour*, as product and as loss<sup>4</sup>. With this formalization, the links between *jouissance* and discourse have thus been clarified. Discourse refers to *jouissance* and has its origin there (LACAN, 1969-1970/1991, p. 86).

The moment of this formalization is that of a change in the status of *jouissance*. *Jouissance* is no longer merely a remnant of the division of the Subject by language what escapes from the Signifier. The Signifier becomes an apparatus of *jouissance* (LACAN, 1969-1970/1991, p. 54). It is at the service of *jouissance*. This change in the status of *jouissance* appears to be a reversal of perspective in which *jouissance* is an effect of discourse and participates in its cause. Truth, in the position of causing discourse, is sister to *jouissance*. *Jouissance*, as *plus-de-jour*, is in the place of production, as final cause. This perspective questions the primacy of language in psychoanalysis, as Lacan introduced it at the beginning of his teaching<sup>5</sup>. It opens up a field of *jouissance*, a Lacanian field to use Lacan's expression – the bases of which he says he would certainly only have time to sketch out (LACAN, 1969-1970/1991, p. 93).

## **JOUISSANCE, WITH THE INSTINCT OF DEATH**

### **Discourse, field of *jouissance* and repetition**

The formalization of discourses is a contribution to this field of *jouissance*. Lacan inscribes this formalization

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4 For an analysis of these 4 discourses, plus one, the capitalist's discourse, see: CLEMENT, J. The "discourse of neoliberalism" as a new reading of the capitalist's discourse. *Revista Ágora*, Rio de Janeiro, v. XXII, n. 3, September/December 2019.

5 See: *Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse* (LACAN, 1953/1966).

in a Freudian conception of discourse where the Subject not only does not know himself as the Subject holding the discourse but does not know who is uttering it. Knowledge speaks for itself; it is the unconscious (LACAN, 1969-1970/1991, p. 80). What is the basis of this *jouissance* of discourse, what is its economy? *Jouissance* of discourse comes in the place of a prohibited *jouissance*, because of *the Oedipus* (LACAN, 1969-1970/1991, p. 85).

In analytical experience, repetition as an exploration of the unconscious, is a trait that commemorates a surging of *jouissance* (LACAN, 1969-1970/1991, p. 89). The repetition may well not be anchored in pleasure, but also in displeasure. This description of *jouissance* as repetition on the side of displeasure evokes death drive in Freudian theory.

For Lacan, repetition, insofar as it is inscribed in dialectics of *jouissance*, is what goes against life, and is what Freud articulates as the death instinct (LACAN, 1969-1970/1991, p. 51). Lacan then reminds us that instinct is not to be identified with the Unconscious. Repetition “is not only a function of the cycles that life involves, cycles of need and satisfaction, but of something else, of a cycle that brings about the disappearance of this life as such, and which is the return to the inanimate” (LACAN, 1969-1970/1991, p. 51). Lacan concludes by saying that the inanimate “indicates perfectly [...] what it *jouissance* is about”.

### **Jouissance and instinct of death**

Here, Lacan assimilates the instinct of death and *jouissance*, which becomes a general principle associated with the living, overflowing largely beyond the speaking being, the human being. He evokes the *jouissance* of the animal, that of the plant. This is a change in his position in relation to the seminar *The ethics of psychoanalysis*, where he criticizes the notion of the death drive and the death instinct<sup>6</sup>.

In the seminar *The other side of psychoanalysis*, *jouissance*, much like Freud’s instinct, is both a general principle of return to the inanimate and a clinical notion associated with repetition. The clinical experience of repetition is presented by Lacan as the return of *jouissance*, as the loss of *jouissance* (LACAN, 1969-1970/1991, p. 51).

Both *jouissance* and the instinct of death are opposed to the principle of pleasure, which is a principle of lesser tension, of minimal tension to be maintained in order for life to subsist. The pleasure principle sets a limit to *jouissance* but can be overwhelmed by it as well (LACAN, 1969-1970/1991, p. 51).

### **Field of jouissance and energy field**

Lacan presents the field of *jouissance* as an energy field, but different from that of physics. It would require other structures (LACAN, 1969-1970/1991, p. 93). Entropy is a principle of disorganization, of the loss of energy of any physical system<sup>7</sup>. Lacan associates this notion of entropy with pleasure, where *jouissance* appears as loss (LACAN, 1969-1970/1991, p. 94).

He evokes knowledge as a means of *jouissance* producing entropy (LACAN, 1969-1970/1991, p. 57) and knowledge as implying the equivalence between this entropy and information (LACAN, 1969-1970/1991, p. 94). He mentions Brillouin, but does not cite the idea of negentropy<sup>8</sup>, as a principle of limitation of entropy, which might have allowed him to draw the contours of a field of *jouissance*<sup>9</sup> a little more clearly.

## **THE EXTENSION OF THE FIELD OF JOUISSANCE**

Lacan’s reversal between Signifier and *jouissance* upon formalizing the *Discourses* is that of an extension of the field of *jouissance* within his teaching. The Signifier becomes an apparatus of *jouissance* (LACAN, 1969-1970/1991, p. 51), discourse is associated with *jouissance* as aim and as an effect. The continuation of his teaching sees a focus on the Real that is based on the notion of *jouissance*<sup>10</sup>. Attempting to think about the Real is done in a

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6 In *Seminar 17*, Lacan takes up the notion of death instinct and also uses the expression *death drive*. He thus reopens a question which he seemed to have closed previously, for example in *Seminar 11*, when he clarifies the notion of drive by distinguishing it from instinct. See the above paragraph on the drive in Lacan.

7 See footnote 2 on entropy.

8 The term *negentropy* was coined by physicists to explain the presence of “order” within living beings and their tendency to oppose the chaos and disorganization that governs physical systems. It was further developed from the work of the mathematician Claude Shannon by the French physicist Léon Brillouin.

9 For example, knowledge could be considered, questioned, as a principle of pleasure limiting enjoyment as loss. This relationship could be part of the sketch of a field of *jouissance*.

10 It should be noted that in *Seminar 11*, the notion of the Real is based on the notion of repetition, with its two modes, *tuchê* and *automaton* (LACAN, 1964/1973, p. 64-65).

weaving, a knot between the clinical notion of *jouissance* and the logical category of the impossible. In *Seminar 18, Of a discourse that would not be fake* (LACAN, 1970-1971/2006) and in *Lituraterre* (LACAN, 1971/2001), the rise in importance of the Real is based on letters, and on writing. The Real is no longer a kind of remnant, i.e. that which has not yet been caught in the net of the Signifier, but rather becomes an autonomous location. The letter is a frontier, or rather a coastline, between the Real and the Symbolic, between knowledge and *jouissance*. The idea of coastline (*littoral*) underlines the heterogeneity of the domains it separates.

In the seminar *Encore*, language is an apparatus of *jouissance* (LACAN, 1972-1973/1975, p. 52), in the continuity of *Seminar 17, The other side of psychoanalysis*. *Jouissance* is an interesting angle of approach for this seminar. Each of the types of *jouissance* evoked there could be situated in its relation to the pleasure principle and to the *beyond-of-the-pleasure-principle*. Phallic *jouissance* comes in place of the absence of sexual intercourse indicated by the formula "There is no sexual relationship" (LACAN, 1972/2001, p. 455). The sexual relationship in question could be that of a reunion with The Thing, a mortal reunion of an unlimited *jouissance*, a realization of the death instinct.

Phallic *jouissance* involves a third element, the phallic function. It is a pleasure that is contained within certain limits, which have to do with castration. Female *jouissance* and mystical *jouissance* are two modes of subversion of phallic *jouissance*; two modes of an all-phallic step of *jouissance*, of a step as infinite. Phallic *jouissance* and *jouissance* that are not all phallic are inscribed between a principle of pleasure that they undoubtedly cross and a principle of Nirvana as a return to the inanimate, as an instinct of death.

The *jouissance* of knowledge, of speech, of *lalangue*, as well as the *jouissance* associated with discourse, should also be inscribed between these two limits, a principle of pleasure and a principle of Nirvana. But perhaps they are second, substitutes for sexual *jouissance*, and as such, they would have a stronger ground in the principle of pleasure.

The extension of the field of *jouissance*, which does not seem to stop, does not allow for a conceptual grasp of the notion. The variations in Lacan's position on the notion of death instinct or death drive seem to somewhat blur the distinction he makes between instinct and drive. Rather than a lack of definitional or conceptual rigor, Lacan's path testifies to a clinical position that constantly widens the field of *jouissance*. This extension makes it a paradoxical notion, which can be posed by Lacan as equivalent to the death drive, as well as accounting for the symptom, the sexual, the discourse and language.

In Freud, death drive dominates over life drive, and both are oriented towards death, albeit via different paths. In Lacan, *jouissance* is, on the one hand, the deadly enjoyment of the symptom and, on the other hand, the jubilation of *lalangue* in a single word. Between the two, sexual *jouissance* and that of discourse carry an ambivalence that is that of the word *jouissance* in its double polarity between a principle of pleasure and its beyond. This very extension of the field of *jouissance* distinguishes it from the death drive. Another differentiation would be that of the more speculative and anthropological nature of death drive as a concept, hence the appropriation of the term in other fields of knowledge, and more clinically centered stakes for *jouissance*. Finally, the reach of this notion of *jouissance* also raises the need of a critical analysis of its use in clinical psychology.

## **JOUISSANCE AND EPISTEMOLOGY**

In Lacan's teaching, two distinct periods appear in regard to the articulation between the notions of death drive and *jouissance*. The first moment consists in parting ways with Freudian epistemology in its biological referentiality. This divergence takes place under the guise of structuralist thought, grounded in linguistics, with the Signifier, as well as structural anthropology, with the elementary structures of social functioning (LACAN, 1964/1973, p. 138). One formula for this is to refer to the unconscious as *structured like a language*. Lacan distinguishes between instinct and drive. Instinct is on the side of biology, the drive however is being associated with the Subject, in a signifying logic. In the signifying game, between desire and want, the drive represents the pole of demand, formalized  $\$ \diamond D$ , where  $\$$  represents the divided Subject and  $D$  the demand. The moment when Lacan takes up the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis is also the moment when the concept of object  $a$  receives a particular development, seeming to eclipse in part the concept of drive (LACAN, 1964/1973, p. 65-108). This concept of the object  $a$  is inscribed in a structural epistemology, as the remnant of a signifying operation, between the Symbolic and the Real. *Jouissance* is not related to the life/death couple, rather it is inscribed in an articulation between the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary.

A later time in Lacan's teaching sees the gradual widening of the field of *jouissance*. This time, the Real is given a newfound importance, and epistemological references to structural linguistics are abandoned as linguistics gives way to linguistry and *lalangue* (LACAN, 1972-1973/1975, p. 20, 93). The importance given to the Real is clinically based on the notion of *jouissance* and theoretically grounded on logical and topological formalizations,

named mathemes. The articulation between the notion of *jouissance* and the formulas of sexualization shows this connection between theory and clinical practice (LACAN, 1972-1973/1975, p. 73-77). This orientation seems to distance Lacan's teaching even further from Freudian epistemological references. However, the teaching on *jouissance* goes back to the death drive and to an energetic reference present in Freudian teaching, where the libido corresponds to the energy of sexual drives (FREUD, 1920/1981, p. 99). The field of *jouissance* is an energy field, for which Lacan envisages references to the economy, based on the notion of *plus-de-jouir*, rather than to physics (LACAN, 1969/1991, p. 93-94). The evolution of Lacan's epistemological references, such as those found when investigating the notion of *jouissance* in his teaching, shows both a dialogue with the sciences of his time and a relentless will to elaborate an epistemology for psychoanalysis.

**Received:** June 4, 2018. **Accepted:** December 8, 2019.

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11 O autor Bruno Vincent traduziu a primeira parte do artigo e Lucas Magdalena a segunda, assim como também fez a revisão final de toda a tradução.