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Desire and jouissance in the teachings of Lacan

Jouissance, the opposite pole of desire

On 5 March 1958, the theory, the technique, and the history of psychoanalysis were substantially changed. This change came about almost unnoticed by anyone, perhaps even unnoticed by Lacan himself, who could not have predicted where the path he had undertaken would lead. On that day, the teacher told his students that he wanted to show them what was meant by "... a notion ... that has always been implied in our reflections on desire but that deserves to be distinguished from it, and which can only be articulated after one is sufficiently imbued in the complexity that constitutes desire. It is a notion that will be the other pole of today's discourse and it has a name: it is jouissance."[1] He ended this lecture by referring to "the essential question of desire and jouissance of which I gave you, today, a first gram."[2] When editing that fourteenth session of the seminar, *The Formations of the Unconscious*, Jacques-Alain Miller justifiably gave it the title *Desire and Jouissance*.

The following twenty years of Lacan's teaching (who would have guessed the kilo that followed that first gram?) revolved around this opposition. Until then, the word jouissance had appeared in the Lacanian vocabulary simply as a word whose meaning – the conventional one – required no further explanation. Yet from that day on it became a term rich in nuances, a term that would get progressively more complicated, multiplying and defining itself until it was transformed into the foundation of a new psychoanalysis: a "notion" without which all else becomes inconsistent. Together with the topological elaborations of the same epoch, the concept of jouissance became a fundamental cornerstone of Lacan's thought, allowing him to say in 1966 that "with jouissance we meet the only ontic to which we may confess."[3] Soon afterwards, he turned it into a "substance," the "substance" with which we work in psychoanalysis (*S XX*, pp. 23–4).

From that inaugural day, the notion of desire, central in Freud (*Wunsch*) as well as in Lacan ("desire is lack of being," "desire is its interpretation,"

"desire must be taken at the letter," "desire is the desire of the Other," "desire is the metonymy of being," etc.), would be displaced and repositioned in an antinomic polarity to this newcomer, jouissance. The French word, given its indissoluble relationship to all the rest of Lacan's teaching, including his mathemes or his logical and topological formulae, is difficult to translate into English. Lacan himself was aware of the problem and favored a combination of "enjoyment" and "lust"[4]; however, all translators have noted the conceptual loss that is sustained in the use of these terms, and therefore the great majority prefer to keep the French word, without italics, as a word already recognized by the *OED* and as a psychoanalytic contribution to the English language. In German, jouissance translates faithfully into *Genuss*, a term used with some frequency by Freud; but here we should point out that in Freud, *Lust* and, sometimes, *Libido* are equivalent to jouissance.

These problems, however, should not disturb our readers: no fundamental concept of any relevant writer can go through the ordeal of translation without sustaining a loss of some kind, and nothing can relieve the author's own discomfort when he is obliged to use words whose meaning has either been loaded down or worn out by so much previous use. However, new wine always starts in old casks. By giving words a new or modified meaning, we seek a precision which enriches both the concept and the language. Jouissance is an equivocal word in French as well as in English, and therefore, at the same time that we take advantage of this ambiguity, we must also free ourselves from it. Fortunately, difficulties in translation are almost always incentives to conceptual rigor. If we think about the loss in meaning that is sustained in going from jouissance to enjoyment, we will realize that jouissance is not a feeling of pleasure or an experience of joy. This difference becomes evident in Lacan's less known but very enlightening statement made in his 1966 lecture on "Psychoanalysis and medicine":

> What I call jouissance – in the sense in which the body experiences itself – is always in the nature of tension, in the nature of a forcing, of a spending, even of an exploit. Unquestionably, there is jouissance at the level at which pain begins to appear, and we know that it is only at this level of pain that a whole dimension of the organism, which would otherwise remain veiled, can be experienced.[5]

It is unthinkable that anyone could translate this notion, as it is defined here, into "enjoyment." Another problem that the translator faces is the absence of a much needed English equivalent to the verb *jouir*, of which Lacan makes frequent and legitimate use and which, once more, cannot be translated as "to enjoy."

Thus, with jouissance we have a double polarity; first in respect to desire, as advanced in 1958, and then in respect to pleasure, according to conventional use. Jouissance is the dimension discovered by the analytic experience that confronts desire as its opposite pole. If desire is fundamentally lack, lack in being, jouissance is positivity, it is a "something" lived by a body when pleasure stops being pleasure. It is a plus, a sensation that is beyond pleasure.

Having distinguished jouissance from desire and from pleasure, a further distinction is necessary. It is becoming increasingly frequent to find jouissance linked to "satisfaction," and then to see this "jouissatisfaction" proposed as a goal to the psychoanalytic process in lieu of the supposedly old-fashioned, Freudian, proto-Lacanian notion of desire. So it is not so strange (although in this case, strange enough) to see Bruce Fink, the author of informed Lacanian essays, introduce in the analytical index of his 1997 book the following cross-reference: "Satisfaction: as term, 225 n 15. See Jouissance." And the note says: "In this book, I employ the French term Jouissance more or less interchangeably with Freud's term 'satisfaction.'" We also find other examples of this indistinction in his book, such as, for instance: "Jouissance (or satisfaction)."[6]

It is crucial to remind ourselves of the origin of this confusion, given the fatal consequences it unleashed on the theory and practice of psychoanalysis. In *Seminar VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan said:

> The problem involved is that of *jouissance*, because *jouissance* presents itself as buried at the center of a field and has the characteristics of inaccessibility, obscurity, and opacity; moreover, the field is surrounded by a barrier which makes access to it difficult for the subject to the point of inaccessibility, because *jouissance* appears not purely and simply as the satisfaction of a need, but as the satisfaction of a drive – that term to be understood in the context of the complex theory I have developed on this subject in this seminar.
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> As you were told last time, the drive as such is something extremely complex . . . It isn't to be reduced to the complexity of the instinct as understood in the broadest sense, in the sense that relates it to energy. It embodies a historical dimension whose true significance needs to be appreciated by us.
>
> This dimension is to be noted in the insistence that characterizes its appearances; it refers back to something memorable because it was remembered. Remembering, "historicizing," is coextensive with the functioning of the drive in the human psyche. It is there, too, that destruction is registered, that it enters into the register of experience. (*S VII*, p. 209)

Having said that, Lacan elaborated on the drive as the death drive, whose effects could only be defined in relation to the chain of signifiers. The problem for the Lacanian doxa started when Jacques-Alain Miller gave this section

of the seminar the subtitle of "Jouissance, the satisfaction of a drive" (*S VII*, p. 205); as a result, hundreds of well-intentioned commentators found a simple and economical definition of jouissance as "the satisfaction of a drive," without taking into account the more "complex theory" Lacan developed on this subject, where it is evident that the satisfaction proper to jouissance is neither the satisfaction of a need nor the satisfaction of a demand. It is also not the satisfaction of any bodily drive but one linked to the death drive and thus related to the signifier and to history, a satisfaction that consists of nothing that could be related to any kind of *Befriedigung*.

Let us be clear: the term "satisfaction" has a long Freudian lineage starting at the time when the founder spoke of the "experience of satisfaction" (*Befriedigungserlebnis*) (*SE* 1, p. 318) as the mythical moment that founded human psyche, and of desire (*Wunsch*, sometimes also *Begierde*) as the craving for the return to the jouissance inscribed in the newborn child as the passage from helplessness to satiety and whose model and object is his first contact with the nipple. But *Befriedigung* (whose root is *Friede*, peace, and which translates as appeasement or satisfaction) is a convenient term to use in reference to necessity as well as to demand. Satisfaction remits us to *satis*, a Latin term that means "enough," and is defined as a state of satiety, of completion, of glut.

The drive, the Freudian drive such as it is understood and taken up by Lacan in his *Seminar XI* is a *konstante Kraft* (*SE* 14, p. 118), a constant force, an unending requirement imposed on the psyche due to its link with the body, an instigation that, in Mephistopheles' words, "presses ever forward, unsubdued." It "presses" (*dringt*), which suggests a relationship with *Drang*, the force of the drive, and with *Verdrängung*, or "repression," a fundamental concept in psychoanalysis. In this text by Freud (*SE* 18, p. 42) on which Lacan comments extensively and to which he adheres without reserve, the drive is a factor that, on finding closed the regressive path to the encounter with the lost object – the object of desire – is left with no alternative but to press forward, "truly without perspectives of ever ending the march or of reaching the goal." In this sense, the drive is jouissance, not because it has a calming effect, not because it achieves satisfaction or satiety, but because it builds the historical, it establishes the memorable in an act that is inscribed, in relation to the order of the signifying chain, as a deviation or even a transgression; the drive signals the appearance of a dimension of surprise which is essential to the psychoanalytic act and to the ethical acts that define, in a different way, the place of the subject.

In the chapter "The deconstruction [*démontage*] of the drive" (*S XI*, pp. 161–73), Lacan reiterates again and again: the whole object of the drive is to stress the impossibility of satisfaction. This impossibility is found in

neurotic patients and its name is the symptom, a paradoxical satisfaction, the jouissance of denying jouissance, an enjoyment in the complaint which is an accusation and a demand made to the Other. The drive is a constant force, not Freud's *momentane Stosskraft* (*S XI*, p. 164), not the force of a momentary impact that can go through cycles of tension and satisfactory relaxation. Jouissance is the dimension that opens beyond satisfaction precisely because the path of desire, which would lead back in search of the lost and impossible object, is closed and only "driving" is possible (here again we run into problems with language, since the English verb "to drive" sounds rather bizarre in this context).

In 1964, Lacan said that the drive does not reach its object in order to obtain satisfaction; rather, the drive traces the object's contour, and on the arch of the way back it accomplishes its task. Here again he is close to Freud: ". . . it is . . . the difference in amount between the pleasure of satisfaction [*Lustbefriedigung*] which is demanded and that which is actually achieved that provides the driving factor which will permit of no halting at any position attained" (*SE* 18, p. 42). Therefore, for Freud as well as Lacan, jouissance is what the drive "aims at" (in this instance it is Lacan himself who in his search for precision opts for the verb in English rather than in French). Lacan ridicules the idea that the aim of the drive is to reach a goal and be satisfied; he says almost dismissively, that such an image is "in harmony with the mythology of the drive" (*S XI*, p. 165). A week later, he states:

> When you entrust someone with a mission, the aim is not what he brings back, but the itinerary he must take. The aim is the way taken. The French word *but* may be translated by another word in English, goal. In archery, the goal is not the *but* either, it is not the bird you shoot, it is having scored a hit and thereby attained your *but*. (*S XI*, p. 179)

The example quoted shows that the *but* or "goal" is not on the side of the object and of gratification, but on the side of the signifier. Satisfaction, symptomatic or bodily, is linked to the displeasure-pleasure principle, while the jouissance of the drive "will permit of no halting at any position attained" (Freud), and this is precisely why it is memorable, transgressive, the forger of the historical. Jouissance is indeed the satisfaction of a drive – the death drive.

Such is the basis of the opposition between desire and jouissance. Desire points towards a lost and absent object; it is lack in being, and the craving for fulfillment in the encounter with the lost object. Its concrete expression is the phantasy. Jouissance, on the other hand, does not point to anything, nor does it serve any purpose whatsoever; it is an unpredictable experience,

beyond the pleasure principle, different from any (mythical) encounter. The subject finds himself split by the polarity jouissance/desire. This is why desire, phantasy, and pleasure are barriers on the way to jouissance. As is satisfaction, the source of pleasure, inasmuch as it pacifies and blocks the way of the drive, which is closer to pain, and whose paradigm is found in those tensional states which allow the body to experience itself as such. In the sexual field, the orgasm, obedient to the pleasure principle, is the paragon of "satisfaction" and not so much of jouissance, since it represents its interruption; the orgasm demands the capitulation of jouissance to the commandments of a natural law. Never did psychoanalysis (with the exception of Wilhelm Reich) sing the praises of the orgasm. Freud could say, "I know that the maximum pleasure in the sexual encounter is nothing but the pleasure of an organ that depends on the activity of the genitals" (*SE* 16, p. 325), while Lacan later repeated that "The big secret of psychoanalysis is that the sexual act does not exist." He also considered copulation a "masturbatory concession."[7]

In one of his most suggestive remarks on the relationship between the two concepts, Lacan held that "desire comes from the Other, while jouissance is on the side of the Thing."[8] Without making an explicit reference to it, although using the same words, he falls back on the Hegelian opposition in the *Philosophical Propaedeutic* of 1810. For Hegel, mere pleasure – as the particular subjective experience – must be renounced in favor of *das Ding*, where the subject, through the exercise of his profession or art, transcends the experience of pleasure (*Lust*) and reaches beyond (*jenseits*) himself in *das Ding*: "Whosoever seeks pleasure merely seeks his own self according to its accidental side. Whosoever is busied with great works and interests strives only to bring about the realization of the object itself. He directs his attention to the *substantial and does not think of himself but forgets himself in the object.*"[9] Hegelian jouissance, such as can be obtained through the dedication to art or to a profession, results in the creation of the transcendental and sublime. This is not far from Lacan's formula that "sublimation raises an object to the dignity of the Thing" in *Seminar VII*, which leads him to note: "The sublimation that provides the *Trieb* [drive] with a satisfaction different from its aim – an aim that is still defined as its natural aim – is precisely that which reveals the true nature of the *Trieb* insofar as it is not simply instinct, but has a relationship to *das Ding* as such, to the Thing insofar as it is distinct from the object" (*S VII*, p. 111).

Another prevalent confusion which ought to be clarified is the statement so often made about the dialectical nature of desire and the non-dialectical nature of jouissance. One is told that jouissance is solipsistic and untransferable, but it is evident in all of Lacan's teachings that jouissance can only

be approached through language and that the Other is always involved. The jouissance of neurotic symptoms, the most common mode of encounter with jouissance in the psychoanalyst's experience, is a way of relating to the Other. Symptoms only exist insofar as they are actualized under transference. As Freud wrote, "Symptoms serve as a substitution for sexual satisfaction in the ill, they are a substitute for this satisfaction which is missing from their lives"; in short, they are "libidinal substitutive satisfactions" (*SE* 17, pp. 273, 404). Symptoms are not a mere subjective suffering as official psychiatry would like us to believe; they are a form of jouissance and are addressed by an other and to the Other. The jouissance to which the perverse subject dedicates his life is a will to jouissance that can only be understood in its relation with the Other, in fact, it could not even exist without the subjective division of the "victim." The psychotic feels engulfed by the jouissance of the Other who controls his thoughts and transforms his body. Lacan insists on the necessary presence of the other and the Other for the drive to manifest itself: "The subject will realize that his desire is merely a vain detour with the aim of catching the jouissance of the other – in so far as the other intervenes, he will realize that there is a jouissance beyond the pleasure principle" (*S VII*, pp. 183–4).

The jouissance involved in the utilization and the destruction of "goods" (for example in the institution of the potlatch as mentioned in *S VII*, p. 235) can be understood insofar as those goods are sundered from the use and exchange value they hold in society, and the prestige associated with their destruction passes through the value they hold for the Other. Jouissance is a sacrifice made at the altar of more or less obscure gods; it is the malefic jouissance of stripping the other of the goods he holds dear. Jouissance is linked to the law and so to its transgression. It is thanks to the law (and we must remember that the law is the other face of desire) that a certain act provokes the jouissance which the drive aims at. The drive does not aim at a visible, sensitive goal, but at the effect produced in its return, after having missed and gone around the target, after confronting the real, that is, the impossibility of full satisfaction. Thus we can say with Lacan that the real, the real of jouissance, is the impossible (see *S XI*, p. 167).

Jouissance appears in guilt, in remorse, in confession, in contrition, more in paying than in being paid, in destroying more than in conserving. Its essence is the suspension of the reflex act, of the pursuit of satisfaction, of service to the community, of the "good reasons" governing rational behavior. It carries within it its own reason. Being ineluctably linked to the Other, its existence has an ethical and not a physiological substance. This is why we must emphatically affirm the dialectic nature of jouissance. Jouissance is the substance of neurosis, of perversion, of psychosis, and of the *sinthome*. We

know of it only by the way in which it manifests itself in transference and relation to others.

Twenty theses on jouissance

Since jouissance is not homogeneous, we must distinguish its different modalities. We can recognize modalities generated and preserved by language and thus linked to the signifier, but also those which do not depend on the articulation of speech. In order to explore this logic and its genealogy, I will sum up my argument in twenty theses:

1. In human beings, the satisfaction of necessities, of life itself, goes through a system of symbolic exchanges, thus trapping the subject in the net of language, through a discourse and a social bond that are induced and commanded by the Other.
2. The *infans*, even before acquiring the function of speech, is already submerged in a world of language in which the Other gives a name, signs of identity, a place in the division between masculine and feminine – ideals that will constitute his I when this I is established in the passage through the mirror stage. Through "deeds" he is given what is "properly" his, and so, indirectly, he is made aware of what belongs to others. He is introduced to the Law. This turns flesh into a body, an organism. The object becomes a subject.
3. In its state of helplessness (*Hilflosigkeit*) and out of sheer necessity, this proto- or archi-subject manifests itself with a desperate cry to which the maternal Other, interpreting the demand, responds by offering her breast. This act transforms a part of the body of the mother into the signifier of her desire.
4. The resulting state of extreme tension and release, characterized by Freud as the "experience of satisfaction," has as its sign the cry, which reveals the maximum closeness of the Thing and at the same time, the definite and irrevocable separation from it. From this moment on, life is lived in exile from the Thing.
5. The experience of despair and helplessness followed by an ideal, mythical satisfaction is inscribed, written, as a jouissance which is alien to speech, a bodily hieroglyphic that can only be deciphered after the incorporation of the subject in the world of language. We might call this initial state the "jouissance of being." The ineffable, primary jouissance of being corresponds with the unnamed and unnamable that Freud subsumed in the term *Urverdrängung* (primal or original repression) and which is the bedrock of the unconscious.

6. A human being is a subject with certain demands, mostly oral, and at the same time the object of demands made by the Other, especially linked to bowel training. He or she enters into a system of exchanges and must be included in the registry of the word, alienating his or her being in the paths offered by the Other, substituting the direct jouissance of the body by rules imposed by the Other. Jouissance becomes possible on the condition of being de-naturalized, filtered through language.
7. Demand is a demand for satisfaction. However, the agent of the demand goes beyond necessity, it is the desire for absolute and unshared signifiers of the desire of the Other, in other words, for his/her love. Thus "satisfaction" (of the need and of the demand) always leaves a trace of disappointment: there is something missing in the object that the other offers. It is never enough (*satis*). And it is this unsatisfied remainder of "satisfaction" that engenders an object: the object cause of desire, the object of a surplus of jouissance and, at the same time, a lost jouissance (*plus-de-jouir*) which Lacan calls *objet a*. The *objet a* has no representation, it lacks a specular image and will forever elude the efforts of the most determined photographer.
8. In the initial state which we have called "jouissance of being," a mutual fulfillment exists between the *infans* and the Other, the mother. This "moment" comes prior to lack and desire. The necessary absence of the mother throws the child back into a state of helplessness. The subject thus appears, already and from the beginning, as the subject of a lost jouissance. The subject discovers his or her incapacity to be the "all and only" of the Other and must go through the mourning of a previous mythical union with the mother. The question arises: "What does the Other lack that I am unable to fulfill?" The desire of the Other for something which cannot be provided is revealed in the castration of the maternal Other, which institutes the phallus as signifier of this desire. "It is what predestines the phallus to embody jouissance in the dialectic of desire" (*E/S*, p. 319).
9. The subject realizes the impossibility of satisfying either his/her drives or his/her demand for love with any object whatsoever. The lack results in this condition as an eternally desiring subject, and the sentence that he or she will be obliged to serve for life: jouissance has to be filtered through discourse. This lack sends us back to the fundamental signifier, the phallus. "Castration means that jouissance must be refused, so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder of the Law of desire" (*E/S*, p. 324). Jouissance in the being who speaks (*parlêtre*) is jouissance of the signifier; it is a semiotic and phallic jouissance. It goes without

saying that this is true for both subjects placed on the masculine side as well as on the feminine side of the sexual divide, as explained by the graph of sexuation (*S XX*, pp. 78–89).

10. The phallus is a signifier without equal: as a number, it is perpetually odd. It cannot be coupled, has no opposite in any other signifier. Such is the fundamental condition of speech; it is simply the signifier of the inherent lack in the being who speaks, the divided subject ($), exiled from the real by the symbolic. Its representation falls upon the supposed bearer of the phallus, that other who would fulfill the maternal Other. It is here that a new signifier comes as substitute for the phallus: the Name-of-the-Father, which can function as Signifier one (S_1) and will allow the subject to be represented by it before all the signifiers that together make up unconscious knowledge, the system of the Other as language, culture, and the Law (i. e. the Signifier two or S_2).
11. The subject, having gone through castration, is incorporated into the world of humans. From now on he or she can be e-ducated, that is, led inside of a system of renounced drives, able to experience the jouissance of all who participate in "civilization and its discontents," producing and pursuing this surplus jouissance, which, emanating from him, nevertheless constantly escapes him (like the perfume in Süskind's novel), while pressing (*dringen*) him ever forward.
12. The subject recognizes himself or herself from the beginning as an object for the desire, the phantasy, the drives and the love of the Other. At the same time, the jouissance which a subject can experience leaves him/her unable to know what is involved in the "jouissance of the Other." One cannot *jouir* (that is experience jouissance) of the "jouissance of the Other," which, in any case, is only a supposition, a phantasy, something imaginary and impossible to apprehend, and therefore, something which belongs to the Real. Let us be clear: the jouissance of the Other is not in the Other (who anyway does not exist) but in the subject himself. A good example of this structure could be found in President Schreber, Freud's paradigmatic case study of paranoia.
13. Jouissance, just as much as desire, is dialectical and at the same time is not bound by universals, in spite of Kant's claims (systematically parodied in the Marquis de Sade's texts). The Other's jouissance is an ineffable mystery, beyond words, outside the symbolic, beyond the phallus. Its model is surfeit, a surplus, the supplement to phallic jouissance of which many women speak without being able to say exactly what it consists of, like something felt but unexplainable. The jouissance of the Other is therefore assumed as the jouissance of the

Other sex, an other than phallic jouissance, in other words feminine jouissance.[10]

14. The function of speech permits us to separate the three modalities of jouissance: (a) Jouissance in the word, of the speaking being as such, phallic jouissance, subservient to castration, the Law, and the Name-of-the-Father; (b) Jouissance before the word, experienced in relation to the mother's jouissance, to the proximity of the Thing, a jouissance written on the body, but unnamable, mythical, a retroactive creation, impossible for the subject already immersed in speech to objectify and consequently, forever sundered from it, a jouissance of being; and (c) Jouissance beyond the word, beyond the regulation of the Law and of the phallus, jouissance of the Other, feminine jouissance, which for the very same reason – lying somewhere beyond speech – is equally impossible to objectify, impossible for the *parlêtre* to articulate. It is this jouissance which prompts Lacan to say, "Naturally, you are all going to be convinced that I believe in God. I believe in the jouissance of the woman, insofar as it is extra (*en plus*) . . . Doesn't this jouissance one experiences and yet knows nothing about put us on the path of ex-sistence? And why not interpret one face of the Other, the God face, as based on feminine jouissance?" (*S XX*, p. 76–7). It may be relevant to point out that after this remark in *Seminar XX*, *Encore*, Lacan never again referred to feminine jouissance. It is fair to ask: why?

15. We can now establish a logical sequence in the substitutions already noted. The Thing and jouissance of being are displaced by the phallic signifier. The symbolic phallus is uncoupled and leaves its place to the signifier as the Name-of-the-Father, which can be articulated with the set of signifiers, the Other; thus the subject can be included in the symbolic system. He/she speaks, we speak, but all our talk cannot bring back our lost jouissance, except through the path of castration offered by speech and discourse. Lacan wrote, "But we must insist that jouissance is forbidden to him who speaks as such" (*E/S*, p. 319). The object that escapes being caught in the chain of signifiers is the *objet a*. The remainder left by the inclusion of the subject into the world via castration and the Oedipus complex is phallic jouissance and its multiple fates – neurotic symptoms, perverse acts, psychotic engulfment, and the production of objects of sublimation that aim to have access to the place left empty by the Thing, objects Lacan termed *sinthomes*. Then we can think of the other jouissances: feminine, mystical, literary . . .

16. The passage from jouissance of being to phallic jouissance and, eventually, to the jouissance of the Other demands a progressive system of transcriptions that lead from one to the next. As Freud presented it

in letter 52 to Fliess,[11] these systems are at least three: first, perceptive signs (*Wahrnehmungszeichen*) that would correspond to the jouissance of being, not linked to the signifiers of the Other; secondly, the system of the unconscious (*das Unbewusste*) where jouissance is already subject to the phallic signifier but in which the primary processes still rule: there is no contradiction, no representation of death, and synchronicity reigns; and thirdly, the preconscious system (*das Vorbewusste*), the one of the "official" I, the secondary processes, and the logic of discourse.

17. These systems of inscriptions require a process of translation allowing the passage from one to the other. Since in the first of these systems there are no signifiers, I will call "deciphering" the passage from the jouissance of being (beyond the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real) to the unconscious, and keep the term "interpretation" for the passage from the unconscious to the preconscious. As Lacan stated in *Television*: "Now, what Freud articulates as primary process in the unconscious . . . isn't something to be ciphered, but to be deciphered. I mean: jouissance itself" (*T*, p. 18–19; translation modified).

18. Allow me to read Freud's *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*[12] as describing the place where the jouissance of the subject has been lying, buried and mute, locked up in symptomatic coffins; from here jouissance must find its way towards speech, as a key to the act that incurs the risk of transgression and that impels the subject to another jouissance. Through the analyst's acts, which includes the performative act of interpretation, psychoanalysis steers towards the deciphering and the putting into words of jouissance, transcending the barriers of meaning and satisfaction, beyond convention and the mere tending of one's possessions.

19. Clinical structures constitute organizations of barriers built against jouissance: repression, subjection to the Law and to the other's demand in neurotics; disavowal, as the foundation of the pervert's relation with the Law; foreclosure, as the invasion of the body and the apparatus of the soul of the psychotic by the ineffable jouissance of the Other. The diaphragm of jouissance closes intermittently in the neurotic, it is fixed and immutable in the pervert, and destroyed or non-existent in the psychotic. This metaphor – the word as diaphragm of jouissance – allows us to understand why the direction that the psychoanalytic cure must take has to be organized in radically distinct ways according to each of these different clinical structures.

20. Let us note the similarity among the statements made by Lacan in diverse moments of his teaching and which, in appearance only, differ drastically in the themes they deal with. "Castration means that

jouissance must be refused, so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder of the Law of desire" (*E/S*, p. 324). "One can dispense with the Name-of-the-Father on condition one makes use of it";[13] "The analytic act is determined according to jouissance and, at the same time, by what is needed to protect oneself from it."[14]

To end, I would like to frame the following two references taken from the crucial Seminar X on *Anxiety* (1962–3). In his graph of subjective causation, Lacan inscribes anxiety at the point of a passage from the jouissance of the subject – taken as point of departure – to the desire of the subject – seen as point of arrival. Just after this, as if he was asking forgiveness for the new pastoral tone of his discourse, Lacan provides this gnomic formula: "Only love can make jouissance condescend to desire."[15]

Few references are as decisive for the development of our theme (jouissance and desire) as these, in which the two terms are conjoined and presented not as mutually exclusive but intimately connected: two real keys for our reflection and for the practice and the ethics of psychoanalysis. Regrettably, after Lacan's death in 1981 and with the passage of time, Manichean formulations have arisen that tend to oppose the two terms, provoking a forced choice loaded with hidden agendas between the first Lacan (the Lacan of the signifier and of desire, allegedly a "primitive" or "archaic" Lacan), and the second Lacan (the Lacan of jouissance and the *objet a*, who would be the desired one, a point of arrival that only "advanced" Lacanians could reach). It is important, therefore, to emphasize the ethical basis of these two propositions taken together: between jouissance and desire there are two alternatives: anxiety or love. Both the subject and the psychoanalytic experience have to choose between the two modes of passage. Now, if jouissance has to be refused so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder of the Law of desire, then love is left as the only recourse capable of allowing "desire to condescend to jouissance."[16]

Translated from the Spanish by Tamara Francés

NOTES

1. Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire V. Les Formations de l'inconscient, 1957–8* (Paris: Seuil, 1998), p. 251.
2. Lacan, *Le Séminaire V. Les Formations de l'inconscient*, p. 268.
3. Jacques Lacan, "Compte-rendu du Séminaire 'La Logique du fantasme'" (1966–7), *Ornicar?* 29 (Paris: Navarin, 1984), p. 17.
4. Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire XIII. L'Objet de la psychanalyse, 1965–6*, seminar of 27 April 1966. Unpublished.

5. Jacques Lacan, "Psychanalyse et médecine" (1966), *Lettres de l'école freudienne* 1 (1967), p. 60.
6. Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 226 and index.
7. Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire XIV. La Logique du fantasme, 1966–7*, seminar of 12 April 1967. Unpublished.
8. Jacques Lacan, "Du 'Trieb' de Freud et du désir du psychanalyste," *Ecrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), p. 853.
9. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophical Propaedeutic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 39. Italics in original.
10. Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire XIII*, seminar of 8 June 1966. Unpublished.
11. *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, ed. Jeffrey Masson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 207. This letter from 6 December 1896 was formerly known as Letter 52: see *SE* 1, p. 317.
12. See *Ecrits* pp. 128, 136, 171, 279, and 299 for Lacan's various retranslations of Freud's famous sentence.
13. Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire XXIII. Le Sinthome, 1975–6*, seminar of 13 April 1976. Unpublished.
14. Jacques Lacan, "Compte-rendu du Séminaire 'L'Acte psychanalytique'" (1967–8), *Ornicar?* 29 (Paris: Navarin, 1984), p. 24.
15. Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire X. L'Angoisse, 1962–3*, seminar of 13 March 1963. Unpublished.
16. See Néstor A. Braunstein, *Goce* (México: Siglo 21, 1990), p. 244. French version: *La Jouissance: Un concept lacanien* (Paris: Point Hors Ligne, 1994), p. 328.