

## THE CIRCUITRY OF THE DRIVE

1

I would have liked to set up a seminar titled "Freud: a reader of Lacan" with two guests. To start, Lacan would present a series of lectures on his reading of Freud and then Freud at the end of each session would comment on what he had heard. I will leave you to imagine the misunderstandings that might arise from such a meeting.

As this meeting could never have happened in real-life, I instead worked to create an illusion of it by placing certain texts and concepts of Freud and Lacan side by side.

Just as if such a conceptual relationship really existed.

An imaginative debate was created, aided by my Swiss French colleagues; with psychoanalysts invited from all over Europe.

We organised a seminar that Marlène Belilos proposed to call "Lacan: a reader of Freud".

M. Belilos started the seminar with her commentary on the text of Freud's "Drives and Their Fates" written in 1914.

Dominic Miller then took over interpreting Lacan's seminar XI "The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis"- more specifically, chapters 13, 14 and 15.

To date, the first lecture series has just finished and we will continue the second year.

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This article could become the first in a series that, for now, remains a vague wish for the future.

It does not seek to describe exactly what was said because a complete report will probably be in the form of a separate booklet.

It proposes an addition to the theme of the drives, developed from the seminar in October 2010 and from the reading I managed to do in the months beforehand.

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I shall now stop this preamble to discuss what matters most.

#### The circuitry.

The Other occupies a crucial position as an object (1) in the circuit of the drive, which is characterized by the constant turning of the drive as it comes from the body and returns to the body.

Freud's conception differs in that it requires the field of the Other. Thus the flow of the drive is subjected to specific barriers belonging to social infrastructure such as kinship, debt, power and other instances in the field of Culture.

The body is the surface and the interface which separates the physiological process from the social process. The organic whole is the source and goal of the drive circuit that originates in the inconvenience of need and through the push towards the object before reaching satisfaction through a somatic effect.

However, this simplified, almost perfect schema requires an addition that lists the real obstacles to the fulfillment of this short circuit.

The discontinuity that hinders such fulfillment is found in the object, as it is at this point that the subject finds itself engaged in another circuit- that of receiving and making. In short, the circuit of exchange.

Lacan does not cease elaborating on the negotiable nature of the object that becomes an object of exchange (2). Before reaching this stage, the push is transformed into desire and demand, because it is demand which introduces the subject in this symbolic circuit.

From a reductionist point of view, this Freudian schematic could be perceived as starting

from the physiological, going towards the symbolic and returning to the corporal.

Another possibility would be to reverse the connection between the two circuits, following the model of Marcel Mauss and the Ecole Sociologique Française (3). Thus, the circuit of giving and exchanging becomes the offer that creates the demand of the subject, causing repercussions in the body's organs, creating and recreating both need and physiological changes.

Marcel Mauss emphasized the impact of the signifier in the workings of the body, which may appear only a superficial bodily technique. But he also described the profound effects of ideas on the physiological, even causing actual death (4). In the same vein, Levi-Strauss argues that culture determines biological evolution (5).

Another problem that could be developed is the difficulty of defining need. When Lacan speaks of anguish, he stresses that Freud refers to danger to life.

This idea is contiguous with that of vital need - which Freud does not explicitly elaborate on but is implicit in his definitions of the self-preservation drives.

Vital needs are few- breathing, eating, drinking, sleeping.

However, it is the sexual and aggressive drives that occupy the central part of his theory of drives and so the drives of preservation remain a good metaphor.

Yet sex and killing are not quite vital needs but rather the universal needs of a species.

When we leave the sphere of vital needs, we are entering a field where subjectivity prevails and any hope of accuracy disappears; we are in the field of psychoanalysis itself.

This is why Lacan has always avoided talking about need and carried out a debiologisation of the drive. There remains a trace of physiological need, of which hunger is the best example- it is discomfort, displeasure and irritation.

Instead unease becomes the new Freudian source of the drive.

Deadlocks of the aggressive drive in the present and future world.

According to the schema of the Oedipus complex as Freud describes it, incestuous desire is accompanied by parricidal desire: killing the father to keep the mother. The prohibition of incest blocks desire but the prohibition of incest cannot exist without prohibition of homicide. The solution thus becomes the exportation of sexual desire through exogamy as well as the exportation of homicidal desire outside of family and cultural circles. It is forbidden to kill in the family and in the community, but it is mandatory and a civic duty to kill in Libya, Iraq or Afghanistan. If globalisation is moving towards a global ban on homicide, the subject will find himself compelled to reverse the homicidal drive toward him or defend the active action of the biological transformation of the human, which poses ethical problems.

In short, the fate of the aggressive drive is to find itself in an impasse.

Movement.

If we were to choose a drive it would be kinetic, because any drive is expressed as a push that could lead to action.

The death drive should not escape the “movement push”, which in this case would be an impetus of a degrading type.

Freud had not yet dreamed of the death drive when speculating on the drives.

However, he certainly had nightmares; he has passed down to us a delirious and anxious dream which he had during WWI.

Let us return to the kinetic aspect of the drive.

It is a potential movement that comes from a disruptive source; the virtual action that turns itself towards an object that can soothe the torment of a body that finds itself lacking.

The push does not cease; the attack comes from the body and occurs constantly. No escape is possible.

Nietzsche criticises the reactive man, he who is against a power, and he praises the active man who imposes his will (6). Freud, however, considers any action and any desire to be reactive; activity responds to the stimulation of the soma, which subjects the subject and which cannot be escaped (7).

The individual becomes a subject compelled to labour.

## 7

This seminar proposes to examine the history of the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis. So let's get going...

On hatred. In 1908, Adler advocated the idea of an aggressive drive. Freud needed 15 years of reflection before he could agree with the person whose very name was forbidden in the professor's house.

In 1915, the idea of hate was causing him problems because he could not conceive of an independent aggressive drive. Violence was represented only by its entanglement with love.

However, we can sense Freud's unease with his drive schema at the time. This shows us that a change in the classification of originating impulses was becoming inevitable.

Moreover, the concept of an aggressive drive posed a problem to the 1915 idea of a circuit whose source comes from the body. The aggressive drive pushes the subject towards the

object and returns to the body with the ultimate goal of satisfaction and pleasure.

In such a circular conception of the drive, the act of giving the aggressive drive an independent status creates the inevitable question: what would be the goal of the aggressive drive? What would be the rim, the erogenous zone of this drive?

It is well-known that aggressive jouissance oversteps boundaries. Sadism is not implicit in the anatomy; sadistic pleasure is in the representation, in the mental image, in the fantasy without necessarily involving the physical body of the sadist.

Whoever insists on introducing the body to this type of pleasure, must conceive of the flesh as a whole, from the inside, even its hormonal discharges.

Epistemophilic and gregarious impulses face the same difficulty: the site of pleasure.

However, the object of hatred can be seen as interchangeable and not fixed.

The arbitrary nature of resentment, hatred and negative transfers presents itself as commonplace in analysis.

The need for aggression differs substantially from that of hunger and love.

## 8

*"We cannot object to anyone resorting to the concept of a play drive, a destructive drive, a social drive, where the subject-matter calls for it and the limitations of psychological analysis permit". (8)*

These were the words with which Freud increased the secondary impulses.

However if drives are enumerated, they must be hierarchized. Dualism makes this necessary.

In 1915, the sexual and ego drives were considered the primary drives, while the others were mere duplicates.

These derivative drives are open to the intellectual capacity of analysts to be creative; drives such as the epistemophilic, aggressive, gregarious, kinetic and influential drives.

And later, the drives of life and death.

We know the following chapters- a revolution will ensue, the hierarchy will be shaken, the sexual and ego drives will be labelled together as 'life drives' and the destructive impulse will be promoted to the primary, independent drive.

The social drive will find its place amongst other Freudian concepts. Fourteen years later in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, the life drives will find themselves divided into two tendencies: that of individual happiness and that of attachment to humanity. From that moment, they risk fighting against each other inside each individual (9).

The life drives are therefore always lacking, as they must constantly fight between themselves due to the continual relationship between the libido and the aggressive drive.

## 9

Most of the elements that form the circuit of the drive are negotiable: the object, the content of the affects, the goal.

However, the push is variable.

The only fixed element is the source, but knowledge of the source remains mysterious. We can speculate about the source of hunger and sexual love, but the source of the epistemophilic, aggressive, gregarious, kinetic, influential, life and death drives would cause meta-psychoanalytical problems.

Lacan examines and reworks the Freudian circuit, ignoring the source and prioritising the goal.

He consequently opens up a bigger space for the action of the Other (10).

The coercion of the drives correlates to social coercion. The need of the drive is put into perspective, confronting itself with a present that has specific requirements, repeatedly disagreeing with the historical past or phylogeny.

Hunger cannot be satisfied auto-erotically, although it might be possible to deceive it with hallucinations, dummies and oral pleasure.

Thus we have to wonder what auto-erotic satisfaction would be possible.

Lacan suggests the need for love.

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### Debiologisation.

Lacan brought about the denaturalization and debiologisation of the Freudian drive. First, by noting that the push is not a rhythm because it is constant. Then he singles out the need drive insofar as it does not have a single, necessary object.

Lets recall that the dissociation of drive / instinct which has now has become commonplace even for the IPA, was a novelty in Lacan's time which forced translators to change previous conventions.

We can clearly see the influence left by the Ecole Sociologique Française.

The drive does not necessarily come from the body but it must pass through the body.

The subject of the drive as an active subject shows that any action becomes the sign of a subject, to the extent that the reflex processes of reactions to unpleasant stimuli disappears altogether from discussions on the drive; the act strongly distances itself from a potential final result deriving from a process of a biological origin.

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### From satisfaction to jouissance.

Satisfaction becomes subjective matter which is supported by the countless forms of gratification of desire; sublimation allows the disproof the mechanical nature of



satisfaction.

Patients are not satisfied with themselves and yet the symptom helps recovering from satisfaction. Lacan points out the ambiguous side to satisfaction in advancing towards the development of jouissance, he humorously sets out a paradox of pleasure and satisfaction. We must take pains and trouble to enjoy; effort and certainly some suffering is necessary.

Satisfaction is paradoxical, incomplete and partial.

"I can't get no satisfaction" becomes destiny.

Lacan condenses the source and goal in the erogenous zone in the same way that he narrows down pleasure and displeasure.

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### Of Reality

Cinderella's carriage becomes a pumpkin and the sexual object becomes a package of meat; the real defines itself by the desexualisation of the pleasure principle. The libidinal function of the drive reverses itself and desire becomes disgust- this is the other side of satisfaction.

And disgust returns to repulsion; the oral displeasure.

13

### "The drive controls the menu"

Satisfaction comes not from the object, but rather from the goal, the oral pleasure. Lacan puts the importance of the object into perspective, he does not fight against the object but rather against the adequacy of the object.

The object is equivocal and not univocal as it correlates itself to the mobility of investment, a key concept of Freudian thought.

Possible partial satisfaction would be within the realm of fantasy and the imaginary. Any gratification finds itself catapulted into the swamp of subjectivity.

Oral pleasure seems an insignificant remark made by Lacan. Yet this emphasis deserves a major consideration, since it constitutes the indispensable duo composing the reflex of satiety.

Oral pleasure is insatiable. Extra tidbits will find their place.

The object slides into a void that can be occupied by any object, and this lack of an object allows the emergence of fantasy; Faust sees the woman he longs for in all woman thanks to the the trickery of Mephistopheles.

The empty void of the object becomes a black hole that sucks in the bodily circuit of the drive, projecting it into a symbolic outline made out of transmissions and exchanges. This second journey distances the subject from the body which stays half-dissatisfied, half-satisfied- neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

## Bibliographic Notes

(1) It is in *Civilization and its Discontents* that Freud directly associates the outside world and culture. In *Drives and Their Fates* the object and the outside world are considered as a source of displeasure which persists throughout his work: "In the very beginning, the outside world, objects and what is hated are identical ".cf. S. Freud, G. Frankland, *Drives and Their Fates* in *The Unconscious*, p. 18, Penguin, 2005.

(2) In Seminar XI Lacan comes back what he has already extensively developed since the IV Seminar:

“Well! This is precisely borne out by what we learn in the analytic experience, namely, that the genital drive is subjected to the circulation of the Oedipus complex, to the elementary and other structures of kinship. This is what is designated as the field of culture- somewhat inadequately, because this field is supposed to be based on a *no man's land* in which genitality as such subsists, whereas it is in fact dissolved, not reassembled, for the *ganze Sexualstrebung* is nowhere apprehensible in the subject.”cf. J. Lacan, A. Sheridan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 189, Penguin, 1977.

(3) The model of the gift comprises of three obligations: that of giving, receiving and giving back. Marcel Mauss developed his studies from his research on tribal societies but he has extended them to Western civilization: “Let us extend our observations to the present day. Much of our everyday morality is concerned with the question of obligation and spontaneity in the gift. It is our good fortune that all is not yet couched in terms of purchase and sale.”cf. M. Mauss, I. Cunnison, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, p. 63, Cohen & West LTD, 1966

Note that he defines these obligations as “obligations and spontaneity”. This surprising mix of obligation and spontaneity was not taken into consideration by his commentators, starting with Levi-Strauss' attempts to reduce these three obligations to the notion of exchange. Other critics did not understand the concept of the obligation to return gifts.

The logic of the gift tends towards exchange as long as the three obligations are met but not all the time, as they are moral, not legal obligations, and therefore are not liable to punishment. The example of the "Kula" is confusing, but this article is not the place to

enter this fascinating debate.

(4) cf. Marcel Mauss, Nathan Schlanger, *The Techniques of the Body* in *Techniques, Technology and Civilization*, Berghahn Books, 2006 and

Marcel Mauss, R. Littlewood, S. Dein, *The Physical Effect on the Individual of the Idea of Death Suggested by the Collectivity* in *Cultural Psychiatry and Medical Anthropology: An Introduction and Reader*, Bookcraft, 2000.

(5) The text "Race et Culture" has hardly been commented on, particularly those parts regarding the effects of culture on the gene pool: "Far from having to ask whether a culture is or is not a function of race, we are discovering that race -or what is generally meant by this term- is one function among others of culture.

And how could it be otherwise? The culture of a group determines the geographic limits it assigns itself or submits to, its friendly or hostile relations with neighbouring peoples, and, consequently, the relative importance of **genetic exchanges** that can result from intermarriages that are permitted, encouraged, or prohibited." (My emphasis.)

In this sequence we see that natural selection, as regards the human species, is marked by cultural selection:

"In this case, it would be correct to say that each culture selects genetic aptitudes, which have a reciprocal influence on the very culture that originally contributed to reinforcing them." cf. C. Levi-Strauss, J. Neugroschel, P. Hoss, *Race and Culture* in *The View from Afar*, p. 15 and 19, University of Chicago Press, 1992.

(6) "(...) in order to come about, slave morality first has to have an opposing, external world, it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all, -its action is basically a reaction. The opposition is the case with the noble method of valuation: this

acts and grows spontaneously, seeking out its opposite only so that it can say yes to itself even more thankfully and exultantly (...)"cf. F. Nietzsche, C. Diethe, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, p. 20, Cambridge University Press, 2007

(7) cf. S. Freud, *Drives and Their Fates* in *The Unconscious*, p. 15, Penguin, 2005

(8) cf. S. Freud, *Drives and Their Fates* in *The Unconscious*, p. 18, Penguin, 2005

(9) cf. S. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, Penguin, 2004

(10) The end of this article is a draft review of the third part of the XI seminar called *The Transference and the Drive*. cf. J. Lacan translated by Alan Sheridan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 189, Penguin, 1977.

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