

Smooth hell, creative fault

Inferno liso, falha criadora

Infierno liso, falla creadora

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes a reflection on Freud's assertion, "anatomy is destiny," considering Lacan's rereading. By revisiting the foundations of the Oedipus complex and castration, the text shifts the focus from anatomical difference to the structure of language, highlighting the phallic function as a symbolic operator that regulates desire and sexuation. Drawing on the notions of the signifier, object a, and jouissance, the article examines how the subject is inscribed within the structure and how it responds to the founding loss inherent to the symbolic order. What is commonly referred to as choice is reconsidered as a forced choice, determined by how knowledge, jouissance, and the object are presented by the Other. The prohibition of jouissance is conceived both as a universal condition for entry into language and as what grounds the singularity of the symptom. Finally, the article argues that confronting impossibility, rather than denying it, can open space for a less alienated desire, for invention, and for the realization of a genuine act.

Keywords: Anatomy. Destiny. Phallus. Symbolic. Act.

RESUMEN

Este artículo propone una reflexión sobre la afirmación freudiana «la anatomía es el destino», a la luz de la relectura de Lacan. Al retomar los fundamentos del complejo de Edipo y de la castración, el texto desplaza el enfoque de la diferencia anatómica hacia la estructura del lenguaje, destacando la función fálica como operador simbólico que regula el deseo y la sexuación. A partir de las nociones de significante, objeto a y goce, el artículo reflexiona sobre la forma en que el sujeto se inscribe en la estructura y sobre cómo responde a la pérdida fundadora de lo simbólico. La llamada elección es revisada como una elección forzada, determinada por el modo en que el saber, el goce y el objeto fueron presentados por el Otro. La interdicción del goce es pensada como una condición universal de entrada en el lenguaje y, al mismo tiempo, como aquello que funda la singularidad del síntoma. Finalmente, se sostiene que el enfrentamiento con la imposibilidad, y no su negación, puede abrir espacio para un deseo menos alienado, para la invención y para la realización de un acto verdadero.

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Palabras clave: Anatomía. Destino. Falo. Simbólico. Acto.

RESUMO

Este artigo propõe uma reflexão sobre a afirmação freudiana “a anatomia é o destino”, à luz da releitura de Lacan. Ao retomar os fundamentos do complexo de Édipo e da castração, o texto desloca o enfoque da diferença anatômica para a estrutura da linguagem, colocando em destaque a função fálica como operador simbólico que regula o desejo e a sexuação. A partir das noções de significante, objeto e gozo, o artigo reflete sobre a forma como o sujeito se inscreve na estrutura e como responde à perda fundadora do simbólico. A chamada escolha é revista como uma escolha forçada, determinada pelo modo como saber, gozo e objeto foram apresentados pelo Outro. A interdição do gozo é pensada como uma condição universal de entrada na linguagem e, ao mesmo tempo, como o que funda a singularidade do sintoma. Por fim, sustenta-se que o confronto com a impossibilidade, e não sua negação, pode abrir espaço para um desejo menos alienado, para a invenção e para a realização de um ato verdadeiro.

Palavras-chave: Anatomia. Destino. Falo. Simbólico. Ato.³

INTRODUCTION

Freud's (1924/1961, p. 178) well-known statement, “anatomy is destiny” (*Die Anatomie ist das Schicksal*), has, over time, prompted countless interpretations, defenses, and objections. While this maxim may appear to inscribe sexual difference in biological terms, Freud himself would later qualify it in subsequent formulations, acknowledging that masculinity and femininity cannot be captured by anatomy. This tension gives rise to one of the most fertile questions in psychoanalysis: what defines the subject's sexuated position? Departing from this question, the present article proposes a theoretical construction that shifts the focus from anatomy to language, advancing the hypothesis that the impossibility of closure within the Symbolic – far from representing a deficit – constitutes the very condition of subjective invention, desire, and the act. It therefore examines how sexuation, *jouissance*, and the symptom are organized, not based on a positive biological determination, but through the subject's structural relation to lack.

By revisiting concepts such as the symbolic *phallus*, the *signifier*, object *a*, and the *phallic function*, the article seeks to understand how the subject is inscribed in the structure of language, how the subject positions themselves in relation to *jouissance*, and how the symptom emerges as a singular response to the constitutive loss instituted by the Symbolic. The notion of the “choice of neurosis” is examined through the idea of a forced choice, as an effect of the symbolic marks left by the Other. The thread running through the text is the relation between structure, desire, and lack, supporting the hypothesis that the subject can

³ The English translation is the responsibility of the author. Artificial intelligence tools were used exclusively for the grammatical, orthographic, and fluency revision of the translated text; all conceptual content, interpretation, and final review remain the author's responsibility.

create something only from incompleteness. In this sense, castration ceases to be a paralyzing limit and becomes the ethical condition of invention and the act.

From a methodological standpoint, this article adopts a theoretical-conceptual approach grounded in the interpretative analysis of texts by Freud and Lacan, as well as by commentators who problematize sexuation, the phallus, and the structure of desire. This is not an empirical study, but a work of conceptual articulation in which passages from the relevant works are revisited, brought into tension, and placed in new relations so as to shed light on the central problem: how the subject is inscribed in a sexuated position, and how anatomy, the Symbolic, and *jouissance* come into play in this operation. The methodology follows the clinical-interpretative procedure characteristic of psychoanalysis, guided by a Lacanian structural reading and proceeding through approximations, cuts, and conceptual displacements. It does not claim to offer totalizing answers but instead constructs one possible reading from the interweaving of these concepts. Thus, the choice of neurosis, the phallic function, object *a*, and the status of the signifier are examined as structural elements, with particular emphasis on the internal logic of the texts and their implications for the theory of the subject.

ANATOMY IN QUESTION: FREUDIAN SHIFTS AND THE LACANIAN CRITIQUE

Was Freud right to say, “without further qualification” (Lacan, 1962-1963/2014, p. 177), that anatomy was destiny? What are we to make of Freud’s provocation in his 1933 *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, when he invites his listeners to reflect on what makes a person a man or a woman? As he puts it: “[...] make yourselves familiar with the idea that the proportion in which masculine and feminine are mixed in an individual is subject to quite considerable fluctuations. [...] You must conclude that what constitutes masculinity or femininity is an unknown characteristic which anatomy cannot lay hold of” (Freud, 1933/1964, p. 114). Did he change his mind between one formulation and the other? The 1933 statement does indeed appear to contradict, or at least call into question, the statement made in 1924. Could the 1933 declaration be an acknowledgment of the limitations of biological explanations in matters of gender and sexual identity?

By suspending the idea that anatomy determines a person’s destiny, Freud points to the possibility that more subjective and less phenomenological factors influence sexual choice. This position is more closely aligned with the Lacanian theory of the Oedipus

complex – the “paternal metaphor” – as well as with contemporary social perspectives on the complexity of each subject’s sexuality and the multiple articulations of desire. Lacan proposes a striking reading in Lesson XVII of *Seminar X*, in 1963:

Freud tells us anatomy is destiny. You know that at certain moments I’ve taken a stand against this formula over its incompleteness. It becomes true if we give the term anatomy its strict and, if I may, etymological meaning that emphasizes ana-tomy, the function of the cut. Indeed, everything we know about anatomy is linked to dissection. Destiny, that is to say, man’s relation to the function called desire, only assumes its full vitality inasmuch as the fragmentation of one’s own body, the cut that lies at the locus of select moments of its functioning, is conceivable. (Lacan, 1962-1963/2014, p. 236-237).

Freud’s Oedipus complex has been misinterpreted. Throughout Lacan’s work, one can therefore observe his sustained effort to situate the Oedipus complex and its articulations with other concepts by taking the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary into account. The Oedipus complex, the castration complex, and their consequences for the subject ceased to be a matter of mummy and daddy, of an incestuous relation to the mother, and of rivalry with the father. Anatomy is not destiny, and the phallus is not the penis, the latter being merely an imaginary representation of the phallus.

In the paper “The Infantile Genital Organization” (Freud, 1923/1961), we find a reflection on the consequences of the difference between the Oedipus complex in girls and in boys, the consideration of castration anxiety as the nodal point of its resolution, and the introduction of the idea of the phallus as the object of desire: for both sexes, only one genital, the male one, comes into consideration. These concepts cannot be understood in their full scope and complexity unless the Symbolic is considered.

THE RULE OF THE *PHALLUS*: STRUCTURES, JOUISSANCE, AND SEXUATION

According to Lacan, the true essence of what Freud developed in the theory of the Oedipus complex and the castration complex lies in the symbolic structure that founds and orients desire within what is subject to the phallus-castration dialectic. The symbolic value attributed to the phallus derives from its characteristic of not being bound to any object while, at the same time, being capable of becoming attached to many. This is not a phallus in the sense of something that either exists or does not exist, but a “symbolic phallus” – that is, a *signifier*. The symbolic phallus, in the position of master signifier, founds the symbolic Law based on castration and regulates the matrix of possible modes of

jouissance. At the same time, castration entails the impossibility of any empirical object being adequate to jouissance and desire.

The Signifier and the Loss of the Object

The main characteristic of desire is that it is devoid of objectification, since it is necessarily without an object. Desire is the desire for nothing that can be named; it is the desire for desire, the desire for something else. It is the speaking being who requires the support of the object and brings it into existence in three dimensions within phenomenological experience. Desire is the pure revelation of an emptiness:

Desire, being the revelation of an emptiness, the presence of the absence of a reality, is something essentially different from the desired thing, something other than a thing, than a static and given real being that stays eternally identical to itself (Kojève, 1939/1980, p. 5).

Lack is neither this nor that. Lack is structural – that is, an *a priori* condition for the constitution of the subject, the world of objects, and desire.

The symbolic Law determines the subject's conduct, with no possibility of reversal. For Lacan (1955-1956/1993), however, the symbolic Law is at the service of desire. But whose desire? To consider this question, it is essential to examine the notion of the “pure signifier”. The pure signifier is the sign of an absence. Pure signifiers are devoid of denotative force; they denote no referent outside the symbolic chain. “[...] every real signifier is, as such, a signifier that signifies nothing”. And “[...] the more the signifier signifies nothing, the more indestructible it is” (Lacan, 1955-1956/1993, p. 185). According to Lacan:

The signifier is a sign that doesn't refer to any object, not even to one in the form of a trace, even though the trace nevertheless heralds the signifier's essential feature. It, too, is the sign of an absence. But insofar as it forms part of language, the signifier is a sign which refers to another sign, which is as such structured to signify the absence of another sign, in other words, to be opposed to it in a couple. (Lacan, 1955-1956/1993, p. 167).

Seventeen years later, Lacan reaffirms the same structural logic in a retrospective reference to *Seminar III*:

Everything that I said back then about the signifier—at a time when, in '56, it can't be said that it was in fashion—is still struck in a metal that I have no need to retouch.

What I said in this regard is precisely that what distinguishes the signifier is that it has no signification. I said it in a forthright way because back then I had to make myself heard by my audience. (Lacan, 1971-1972/2018, p. 201).

In this sense, the pure signifier may be understood as the impossibility of language fully corresponding to sensible things. It is an element of language that represents nothing, whether an object or any content outside the symbolic field. It does not denote or refer to anything empirical, and its function within the structure is to mark an absence. Its efficacy lies in its opacity, in sustaining a difference and in instituting a position within the symbolic chain. The signifier eliminates the possibility of a one-to-one relation. It is precisely from this impossibility of a complete correspondence between language and object that the centrality of lack in psychoanalytic theory derives. If the signifier never reaches the Thing in its totality, desire likewise cannot find an object capable of satisfying it definitively. Phallic logic arises from this structural impossibility and organizes the subject's attempts to respond to it. It is therefore impossible to formalize an absolute identity between desire and the objects of the world.

An object that brings completion might, on the face of it, provide a definition of the concept of the phallus; in fact, however, it is merely a means of dealing with lack. The phallus is thus only the symbol of negativity, since it can reveal nothing about the object.

There is, therefore, a radical inadequacy between the subject's desire and the satisfaction promised by the objects encountered through the narcissistic logic of the Imaginary, sustained by the phallus as an image of completeness – the “imaginary phallus”. It is impossible to attain positive knowledge of this object presumed adequate to *jouissance*. What is at issue is impossible knowledge, transmitted through lack:

Wasn't it charitable of Freud to have allowed the misery of speaking beings to say to itself that there is – since there is the unconscious – something transcendent, truly transcendent, which is but what the species inhabits, namely, language? Wasn't there, yes, charity in the fact of announcing the news that his everyday life has, in language, a more reasonable basis than it seemed before, and that there is already some wisdom – unattainable object of a vain pursuit – there? (Lacan, 1972-1973/1998, p. 96).

Nevertheless, the subject can be recognized as a subject only insofar as they assume their identification with a Law that is a pure, empty form, devoid of positive content: the paternal phallic Law, the identification of desire with the Law – the paternal metaphor. Yet there is the Real, this impossible, and its expulsion as a necessary condition for the

emergence of the phallic signifier. The subject's distance from the Real is inherent in the structure; it is a condition for the constitution of the *parlêtre*.

In "The Signification of the Phallus", Lacan (1958/2006) states that clinical facts demonstrate a relation between the subject and the phallus that is established independently of the anatomical difference between the sexes. The phallus is therefore a regulator related to the idea of a common measure, *ratio*, or reason, as in mathematics, whose function is to operate in the dynamic structuring of symptoms. The phallus thus plays a fundamental role in the establishment of a subjective position.

The Phallic Function and Sexuation

It is within this interweaving of desire, Law, and language that Lacan formulates the phallic function, the core of the partition of *jouissance* and of the formulas of sexuation. The phallic function partitions the field of *jouissance*, dividing it between two identifiable sexes: Man and Woman. The phallus was present in Lacan's teaching from an early stage, but it was in *Seminar XX*, in 1972, that he raised it to the status of a function, formalized through the formulas of sexuation. These formulas contain not only a reading of the Freudian postulate of the primacy of the phallus for every speaking being, but also an indication of a blind spot in Freud's theory: the dark continent of the feminine, that opaque and unsettling territory that Lacan calls the not-all. On the man's side, the phallic whole is organized around the exception: although every speaking being is subject to the phallic law, there is at least one who escapes this subjection, thereby instituting the exception to the universal. On the woman's side, a different logic is inscribed: there is neither exception nor totality. Freudian theory allows any speaking being, regardless of their anatomical attributes, to be inscribed on this side. Here, however, no totalization is possible.

The Not-All and the Structural Remainder

Within phallic logic, there is an attempt to neutralize the not-all, but it returns in its Real dimension through the formation of collective and individual symptoms. The neurotic structure attempts to mask the lack characteristic of the not-all, for neurosis wants to know nothing of castration. The neurotic subject therefore conceives the not-all as phallic impotence and is driven by the imperative to attain a flawless phallus – that is, to make "One" without remainder. Yet, as Gödel demonstrated with his incompleteness theorems,

every consistent logical system bears within itself the impossibility of becoming entirely complete: there is always a point that escapes – a truth that cannot be formalized. Laurent brings this structural impossibility into proximity with Gödel's formulation by recalling that, even in consistent formal systems, "there are always true propositions that cannot be proven. Truth, therefore, cannot be reduced to knowledge" (Laurent, 2016, p. 29, *our translation*). In the subjective structure, too, there is a point that resists complete formalization, preventing the symbolic field from achieving closure. At this point, truth presents itself in the form of an enigma, "something that presses us for a response in the name of a mortal danger" (Lacan, 1969-1970/2007, p. 103). The same applies to sexuation: however much the neurotic subject attempts to totalize their phallic position, a void always remains; the not-all returns, irreducibly, as a structural remainder.

Neurotic Fantasy and Forced Choice

The neurotic symptom is therefore the return of truth. It is in this way that object *a* is present in fantasy. Through the scenario of *jouissance* produced by fantasy – a mixture of detached signifiers, images, and experiences of *jouissance* – the subject attempts to approach and crystallize *jouissance*. This attempt is invariably marked by failures. As Laurent observes, the subject attempts to approach *jouissance* through fantasy, crystallizing it "in an object or in a more or less ritualized scenario". This attempt, however, necessarily remains unsuccessful, "for the body does not, in fact, have a stable locus in which to accommodate *jouissance*" (Laurent, 2016, p. 19, *our translation*). The object of fantasy does not definitively stabilize *jouissance*; it merely organizes an approach to the Real that is always partial and equivocal. The object *a* of fantasy is an interpretation of the object-cause of desire, the Real face of the phallic signifier. It is no longer pure Real, but a Real articulated with the Symbolic and the Imaginary. Yet whereas in hysteria the subject places themselves at the service of the master-phallus, reinforcing its authority while simultaneously offering themselves as an object – as the remainder that escapes imaginary capture – in obsession the subject likewise places themselves at the service of the phallus, but attempts to conceal the remainder, lack, or castration.

When invested by the ego ideal – I(A) – the master signifier, in its two aspects, becomes a phallic referent for what the subject believes they ought to be, but which always appears displaced. I(A) covers over the face of the Real, the singular trait of *jouissance* that

remains as a mark, a scar that endures for as long as the body lives and propels the subject towards the promised *jouissance*.

Symbolic castration divides subjects between man and woman. In choosing their sex, the subject must decide, must choose, precisely at the point where phallic signification has left a remainder. This implies that the subject must situate themselves in one of these positions, taking a side, yet without knowing what the choice entails, without knowing what one position or the other means, without knowing what they are. Some subjects seem to suffer more acutely from the question of the remainder.

This logic is also reflected in what Freud called the “choice of neurosis”. Lacan, however, subverts what Freud conceived as a voluntary choice or one determined by moral conflicts: it is not a free choice, but a forced choice structured by the offerings – or the lack thereof – that the subject received from the Other. This choice is not made by the subject consciously or deliberately; rather, it is a structural determination arising from the way in which knowledge, *jouissance*, and object *a* were presented to the subject in the field of the Other. The so-called “choice” is nothing other than the fixation of a subjective position in the face of the structural loss that founds the subject’s entry into language.

In “The Neuro-Psychoses of Defense”, Freud maintained that the splitting of the content of consciousness was the effect of “an act of will on the part of the patient” (Freud, 1894/1962, p. 46). In “Draft K”, appended to the letter to Fliess of 1 January 1896 (also known as “The Neuroses of Defense” or “A Christmas Fairy Tale”), Freud (1896/1966) asked what determines the choice of neurosis, regarding it as the outcome of a psychical decision, albeit an unconscious one. In rereading these texts, however, Lacan (1968-1969/2024) introduces a decisive twist: instead of a choice made by the subject, there is a compulsory positioning in relation to the structure, based on the marks left by the subject’s relation to parental desires and to the field of the Other. Lacan articulates knowledge, *jouissance*, and object *a* with that which determines the subject’s experience:

Its sole mainspring is always, of course, found in the way in which the father’s and mother’s desires presented themselves – in other words, the way in which they in fact offered knowledge, *jouissance*, and object *a* to their child. This is what must consequently incite us to not merely explore the subject’s history, but the way in which each of these terms was offered to him. Therein lies what we improperly call “the choice of neurosis,” or even the choice between psychosis and neurosis. **There was no choice**, for the choice was already made at the level of what was presented to the subject, but that can only be located and perceived as a function of the three terms I have just tried to bring out for you. (1968-1969/2024, p. 288, *emphasis added*).

In this sense, then, everything depends on how the subject was marked by the Other. This “forced choice” therefore corresponds to a particular mode of *jouissance* inscribed as a response to the Real. The subject finds themselves confronted with an founding absence – the loss that founds the Symbolic – and responds to it by organizing *jouissance* in accordance with the symbolic resources available. This response is, in fact, the effect of what was presented to the subject: the way in which the Other offered them knowledge, object, and *jouissance* delimits the field of possible identifications and defensive structures.

Thus, there is, strictly speaking, no choice between neurosis and psychosis, but rather a determination that takes shape at the intersection between the inscription of lack and the way in which the subject positions themselves in relation to it.

The imposition of the master’s discourse distinguishes the sexes. The misrecognition of lack and of the structure as incomplete forms part of the subject’s constitution, allowing the subject to be recognized within language. The master’s discourse, or the discourse of the Other, is the discourse of the unconscious that establishes the hierarchy of the phallus. The prohibition effected by castration is, in fact, a consequence of the existence of language and of its logical precedence over the subject. The recognition that *jouissance* is forbidden to the speaking being leads Lacan to rethink the Oedipus complex as the process through which the subject positions themselves in relation to a prohibition of *jouissance* that has always already been present and operative. In other words, it is not the father who determines castration, but language: castration is structurally produced by language. In this sense, Éric Laurent proposes a trajectory that presents the traumatization of the body by *lalangue*, a language prior to language (Laurent, 2016, p. 14), since, wherever there is language, we are all castrated. *Jouissance* is forbidden to the speaking being. It is not that full *jouissance* once existed and was subsequently prohibited by culture; rather, *jouissance* is forbidden to the speaking being. Castration thus ceases to be understood as the contingent effect of paternal authority and comes to be situated as a structural consequence of the subject’s entry into language. The Real is likewise present from the outset as the remainder that cannot be grasped by the Symbolic. In neurosis, castration is a universal means of dealing with this lack. Psychosis entails a different logic: being outside phallic logic, the psychotic subject depends on a solitary construction. The absence of a phallic reference in psychosis situates the subject on

the side of the not-all, which characterizes the push-to-the-Woman [*pousse-à-la-femme*] in psychotic subjects.

Far from being merely a limit, this remainder that cannot be grasped by the Symbolic is also what makes invention possible. The failure of the Symbolic is, paradoxically, the very condition of its vitality. It is precisely because the Symbolic cannot fully absorb the Real that the subject does not remain entirely enclosed within the automatic repetition of meaning. The remainder that escapes symbolization prevents the complete closure of the structure and opens a space for invention, the symptom, and the act, for it is what propels the creative force. A Symbolic without remainder would be a closed universe. It would therefore be a world in which everything was predictable and utterly dead, without invention, art, love, or symptom. It would be a totalized and totalizing universe, without lack – an unbroken, smooth hell. “We are already in hell”, states Lacan (1968-1969/2024, p. 128). Let it at least not be smooth but gently stirred. If the symbolic universe does not close, if there is no ultimate knowledge, then creation, novelty, surprise, and astonishment remain possible. An excess of meaning and certainties nullifies the new potentialities that can arise only when the mask of meaning and the imaginary crutches that plug the lack fall away.

Confrontation with castration may be interpreted as an experience of impotence. It is experienced in this way by those who naively sustain, within their Imaginary and through their narcissistic identifications, a fantasy of omnipotence or a belief in a supreme Good. A genuine choice requires a genuine act. In the act, the subject may break with established meaning, with a normative meaning. In the act, the subject betrays the given Law and may redefine their destiny, knowing that, to some extent, the choice is theirs. Through the recognition of the Real – that without which the sexual relation might come to exist – impotence gives way to impossibility. The perspective of impossibility may make room for the restoration of a desire without omnipotence, one that is less alienated and capable of consenting to lack and relinquishing the fantasy of completeness. Impossibility does not belong exclusively to the subject as an individual failure or a contingent injustice; it is inherent in the structure. It is precisely from this constitutive impossibility that desire, invention, and the possibility of an act may emerge.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The path traced in this article began with a critique of the idea that anatomy determines subjective destiny, showing how it is language – and not the body taken as a natural given – that founds the subject and organizes their relation to desire and *jouissance*. By shifting the debate from anatomical difference to symbolic structure, the article has sought to maintain that destiny, in psychoanalysis, is synonymous neither with biological determination nor with fatalism, but concerns the singular way in which each subject responds to the constitutive lack inscribed by language.

The Lacanian rereading of the Oedipus complex made it possible to situate the phallus as a signifier rather than an organ: a symbolic operator that regulates sexuation and the possible modes of *jouissance* but, in doing so, introduces an irreducible remainder. This remainder – the effect of the impossibility of totalizing the Symbolic – marks the point at which the structure fails, preventing any closure of meaning. Far from representing a *deficit* to be corrected, this failure is precisely what makes possible the subject's singularization, their symptomatic invention, and an opening onto a desire that cannot be reduced to the imaginary repetition of completeness.

Within this context, the so-called choice of neurosis was reconsidered as a forced choice. While Freud still conceived it as an unconscious act on the part of the subject, Lacan demonstrates that such a choice is determined by the way in which knowledge, *jouissance*, and object *a* were presented to the subject by the Other. It is less a decision than structural positioning in relation to the inaugural loss that accompanies entry into language. This determination does not, however, annul the subject's ethical dimension. On the contrary, it is precisely from this point of determination that the possibility of an act arises.

The act, as conceived by Lacan, is neither a voluntary action nor an illusion of sovereign freedom. It emerges in the confrontation with structural impossibility, when the subject ceases to interpret castration as personal impotence and comes to recognize it as a universal condition of speaking existence. This passage is decisive: whereas impotence keeps the subject bound to complaint and to the fantasy of a lost, full *jouissance*, impossibility allows for an ethical reorientation of desire. The act therefore entails a break with pre-established meaning, normative ideals, and the identifications that stop up lack.

The notion of a “smooth hell”, evoked throughout the text, names precisely the risk of a totalized symbolic universe, without failures, remainders, or surprise. Such a world would be entirely predictable, closed to creation, art, and love. In maintaining that the failure of the Symbolic is its condition of possibility, this article argues that incompleteness is not an obstacle but the driving force of psychical life. It is within this incompleteness that the subject can invent new forms of social bond, new modes of *jouissance*, and new responses to the Real. In this sense, the symptom appears not only as an expression of individual suffering, but as a body event produced in the bond with language and the Other. As Laurent states, “the symptom as a body event does not condemn us to either solipsism or individualism. It arises in a body caught up in language” (Laurent, 2016, p. 23, *our translation*).

Finally, by reconsidering the questions of anatomy, destiny, and choice from the perspective of structure, this article seeks to contribute to an understanding of sexuation that lapses into neither biologism nor absolute relativism. Psychoanalysis offers no guarantees of identity and promises no total solutions; rather, it upholds the wager that, by consenting to lack and impossibility, the subject can make something singular out of what they have been given. It is at this point that destiny ceases to be a condemnation and becomes articulated with the ethics of desire and the possibility of a genuine act.

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