

About Desire at Hegel, Freud and Lacan

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Resumen:

La autora examina el fenómeno del deseo humano. Se basa en las investigaciones de Hegel, Freud y Lacan. En relación con la dialéctica hegeliana, muestra cómo el deseo humano puede liberarse del abrazo mutuo del *yo o usted* y encontrar su camino hacia un *nosotros* común. Con Freud, se explica la conexión entre el placer y el deseo; se pregunta sobre la aparición del deseo y su complicación en el campo de las relaciones intersubjetivas. En su interpretación *De vuelta a Freud*, Lacan vincula la *dialéctica del deseo* hegeliana con la *subversión del sujeto* mediante el análisis de su integración al lenguaje o al inconsciente.

Palabras clave:

Lacan, fenómeno, Hegel, deseo, inconsciente, lenguaje.

Summary:

The author examines the phenomenon of human desire. She draws on the research of the philosopher Hegel and the psychoanalysts Freud and Lacan. In relation to Hegel's dialectic, she shows how human desire can free itself from the mutual embrace of the "I or you" and find its way to a common "we". - With Freud she explains the connection between pleasure and desire, asks about the emergence of desire and its entanglement in the field of intersubjective relationships. - In his 'Back to Freud'-interpretation, Lacan links Hegel's 'dialectic of desire' to the 'subversion of the subject' by analyzing its integration into language or the unconscious.

Keywords:

Lacan, phenomenon, Hegel, desire, unconscious, language.

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I. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: The Dialectic of Desire

In his “Phenomenology of spirit (1807), Hegel opens the ‘dialectic of self-consciousness’ with an analysis of desire (Begierde), which is briefly sketched here: As a desiring being, man - in order to live - cannot remain limited to himself. He needs outer things, needs outer life. By incorporating what he desires (e.g. food), he seems to overcome the other - the reality of the object - and regain his integrity. However, this kind of satisfaction is subject to a deception, for “self-consciousness which is simply for itself, and immediately marks its object with the character of the negative, or is initially desire (Begierde), will therefore rather undergo the experience of the objects independence”. (Hegel 1807, 109 §168) The resistance of things cannot be abolished by the fact that self-consciousness negates the other by eliminating or destroying it. This simple kind of negation is reserved only for animals, “for they do not just stand stock still in the presence of sensory things as if they were beings in themselves, but, despairing of this reality and in complete certainty of their nothingness, they help themselves without more ado and gobble them up” (ibid. 72 § 109). At the level of this ‘destructive’ desire and its content for ‘selfish’ desire man cannot stand still, for this selfish desire never reaches its goal ‘absolutely’, but only ‘brings about progress into infinity’, so that self-consciousness remains on this level of immediacy in the dialectic between life in the face of another, stranger, and life in the face of nothing - the incorporated. This immediacy must be broken up: desire must bow to the impossibility of wanting the ‘thing in itself’ (the real in Lacan). It must endure a lack. Only in the ‘murder’ of the thing, in the renunciation of the ‘real’, is it possible to compensate for the lack to a certain degree.

But this deficiency also appears on the side of self-consciousness: by abolishing its own immediacy it becomes an ‘other’ ego, confronting itself as a different ego, but thereby rising above the selfishness of the merely destructive desire. Just as it cannot be “one” with its object by incorporating it, self-consciousness cannot be “one” with itself either, but must ‘double’ itself. Hegel emphasizes that self-consciousness has “come out of itself”, it has lost itself in order to “find itself as an other essence”. (1807, 113 §179) “for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness come to be for it; I, which is the object of its concept, is in fact not object; the object of desire, however, is only independent, for it is the universal indestructible substance” (ibid. 113 § 177). The dialectic of self-consciousness thus manifests itself as the ‘dialectic of desire’ itself, for the way desire must go is that which does not ‘merely destroy’ by destroying (incorporating) the object in a simple negation, but who overcomes the character of a thing in a constant negation. This negation does not eliminate what is denied. Similarly, the basic desire for self-consciousness can only be fulfilled by another self-awareness that finds itself in its otherness, giving up its oneness with itself. So man has to set his desire as the desire of others. What we encounter here is the transition from the realm of things to the symbolic, in the language of Hegel from the ‘special’ to the ‘general’. I would like to use a children’s game described by Freud to explain in more detail this transition from the realm of the thinglike to the symbolic,

in order to be able to better illustrate this essential structuring process:

In his book 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (1920,12f.) Freud describes the play of a boy of one and a half years, which he discovered during the absence of his mother, to whom he 'affectionately adhered': "The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it. It never occurred to him to pull it along the floor behind him, for instance, and play at its being a carriage. What he did was to hold the reels by the string and very skilfully throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive 'o-o-o-o'. He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful 'da' (there). This, then, was the complete game – disappearance and return. As a rule one only witnessed its first act, which was repeated untiringly as a game in itself, though there is no doubt that the greater pleasure was attached to the second act." - This game impressively demonstrates the process of symbolization that begins before language learning. The boy tries to cope with the loss of the mother by leaving his spool in the gap, which ruptured the mother's absence. Holding the end of the thread firmly in his hand, he articulates her disappearance with his 'o-o' and lets her reappear with his 'a-a'. Presence and absence are mutually referenced in the playful action, in which the reel - the 'thing' that represents the mother - loses its 'thing' character and gains a symbolic meaning.

Expressed in the words of Hegel, this means that the 'thing-in-itself' loses its existence i.S. of 'being for me' and gains the form of 'being-for-others'. What is consumed is the essence of the 'being-in-itself'. By putting the other in itself, it abolishes its essence, that is, it divides them and gains beyond the divisiveness there a "unity" in which "I, that is We, and We that is I" (1807, 113 § 177)

In this sense, Lacan notes: "Thus the symbol manifests itself first of all as a murder of the thing, and this death constitutes in the subject the eternalization of his desire." (1956, 166)

In a footnote to this child's play, Freud remarks: "One day the child's mother had been away for several hours and on her return was met with the words 'Baby o-o-o-o!!', which was at first incomprehensible. It soon turned out, however, that during this long period of solitude the child had found a method of making himself disappear. He had discovered his reflection in a fulllength mirror which did not quite reach to the ground, so that by crouching down he could make his mirror-image 'gone'" (ibid. 13f).

In the identification with the adversary of himself, the mirror image, the awakening self-confidence of the child regains his lost unity with his mother and celebrates the triumph of this return by making himself disappear. Yet the boy's play not only embodies the pursuit of an imaginary position of desire that claims for love from the mother. For the play of repetitions proves to be a repetition of an alienation experience that does not remain "in itself" and not silent, but can be pronounced in the phonematic opposition of 'a-a' and 'o-o'. With this articulation, the child transcends the "stage of life" and brings about a movement of "desire" that leads

between the real and its imaginary mastery into the symbolic order of the universal, the language. With that, it has discovered a third, mediating position that is enduring and yet gives up its strangeness. In it, the subject can find “the unity of itself in its otherness,” since the other, the mother, acknowledges his desire.

But that also the stage of the intersubjectivity, the “mutual recognition” has its snares, shows Hegel in his famous chapter about “Independence and dependence of self-consciousness: lordship and bondage” (1807, 113 ff. § 178ff.). When Hegel emphasizes: “Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness,” he knows that the fulfillment of satisfaction sets certain claims: On the one hand, the subject seeks “the unity of itself in its otherness” (1807, 113 § 177). On the other hand, he is also concerned with being in the other with oneself “But the other is also a self-consciousness, an individual comes face to face with an individual ... each is indeed certain of its own self, but not of the other” (1807, 115 § 186). And it is precisely from the side of the other that the confirmation of oneself is needed. The latter aspect is impressively described by Goethe.

The latter aspect is impressively described by Goethe. In 1823 he published the following passage under the title “Significant promotion through a single ingenious word”: “I confess that to me the great and so important-sounding task knowing yourself, always seemed suspicious, as a cunning used by secretly allied Priests who want to confuse man with unattainable demands, and want to lead them from an activity against the outside world to an inner false contemplation. - Man knows himself only insofar as he knows the world, becoming aware of it if only within himself, and of himself only within it. (...) In mature years, therefore, I have paid great attention to how others might want to know me, so that in and on them, as in so many mirrors, I could become more explicit about myself and my inner self. “(Ibid 38) Goethe, who, like Hegel, mistrusts self-knowledge as a result of Descartes reflection or introspection, emphasizes here the importance of recognition on the part of the other. But inasmuch as the desire for recognition depends on the desire of the other, it enters the dialectic of reciprocity, which is characterized by an immense wealth of identificatory reflections. Hegel illustrates the dead ends of these mirror fixations in the famous dialectic of lordship and bondage: the lord who believes he is recognized in the servant negates the servant in his independence, because for him he is not really another ‘self’, but one reduced to submission to things. For the servant must work off directly against the resistance of things, must prepare and shape them for the lord in such a way that he benefits from the lack of ‘independence of the thing’. The desire of the lord for real recognition on the part of the servant can not be satisfied. Conversely, the servant feels that the lord does not accept him in his independence. He is dependent on him and experiences in this dependence the fear of the death of the lord and thus the fear of his own death. However, according to Hegel, he has the opportunity, in dealing with things, discipline and the fear of death, to reach the consciousness of himself as a thinking being and to become ‘free’, while the lord is approaching more and more the lethargic, consuming pole of the ‘I = I’.

The desire for recognition - which I would like to call Lacan’s ‘imaginary demand’ for

the other in the field of reciprocal mirror identification - ultimately remains captured between the poles of constitution and submission, of domination and bondage, of you or I. But this duality that is full of cunning can reach a duel characteristic who can exploit the whole repertoire from ardent love to deadly hatred. J. Genet (1957) shows this e.g. impressively in his piece 'The Maids'.

But already 2000 years ago, in the myth of 'Narcissus' (Metamorphoses), Ovid visualized the circularity of this dialectic: the desire to be one with the fascinating other - his reflection in the water - leads to a profound aggression. As a way out of this entanglement, Narcissus can only choose his death. In Hegel, too, we find the relation to this suicidal tendency: "Similarly, as each stakes its life, so each must aim at the other's death; for it values the other no more than itself; its essence presents itself to it as an other, it is outside itself and must sublimate its Being-outside-itself ... However, this trial by death sublimes the truth which was supposed to issue from it, just as it thereby also sublimes the certainty of itself in general" (1807, 116 § 187, 188). In the death of the other, Narcissus can not survive. Having become his own rival, he dies with this Other, for the Other is not only the Other, but also himself, insofar as his identification with him was his nature.

But how does the subject find out of that circularity of the you or me that has the narcissistic claim to recognition? The way to a real mutual recognition was hinted at by Hegel. It begins where the "I, that is we, and we, that is I" (1807, 113 § 177). This path can only be walked on if a third moment that goes beyond the two-pole duality comes into play. A moment that allows the desire of one and that of the other to be valid in its own particularity, yet makes it correlated to one another in a general law. Real desire must therefore be located in space beyond real incorporation - the satisfaction by the thing - and on this side of the narcissistic-imaginary claim to the other. To explore it further, we first follow the theory of Sigmund Freud, who can give an answer to the questions: How does desire arise? How are desires structured? What are they aligning with? What is your relationship between nature and culture, between me and you, between individual and society?

II. Sigmund Freud: The Genesis of Desire

Freud's preoccupation with neurosis, dream and fantasy gave him reason to revise the 19th century image of man as an 'animal rational'. He shows that man is by no means master of all his actions. These are all too often influenced by unconscious desires and motifs that are in discrepancy with rational reason. Rather, man is a 'desire being' in the sense of narcissism, who obeys the pleasure principle.

Freud describes the unconscious connection between need and desire on the basis of a model of the 'psychic apparatus' (1895, 1900). The driving force of the psychic is the 'plight of life' or the 'initial helplessness of man' (1895, 326). The path to the satisfaction of one's desires cannot be walked 'independently', but can only be taken through 'external help'. This originally consists in the fact that "the helpful individual" (the mother) nourishes the infant in a "specific action" (the food supply). In this action the infant makes the 'experience of satisfaction' (ibid. 326) This remains in the memory as an affectively occupied memory image. If the need reappears, it evokes a 'psychic impulse' that sets the memory image in motion and strives to restore the first experience of satisfaction. In Chapter VII of the 'Interpretation of Dreams' (1900) Freud defines this 'psychic impulse' as "what we call a wish; the reappearance of the perception constitutes the wish-fulfilment, and the full cathexis of the perception, by the excitation springing from the need, constitutes the shortest path to the wish-fulfilment ... in which the wish ends in hallucination. This first psychic activity therefore aims at an identity of perception: that is, at a repetition of that perception which is connected with the satisfaction of the need. (571) - The decisive movement in this process is the tendency to restore the experience, which inscribes itself in the dimension of desire in the child's body from then on. The primary way of fulfilling the wish is the 'perceptual identity', if the satisfaction fails to materialize, the experience of satisfaction is hallucinatory. Although real satisfaction is objectively lacking, it is subjectively experienced as real. Lacan later describes this dimension of wish fulfillment as the 'real' and distinguishes it from the 'imaginary' and the 'symbolic'. When Lacan stresses: "The real is absolutely without fissure" (1954-55, 128), he means that here inside and outside, subject and object, fantasy and reality coincide. Omnipotent experience and the principle of pleasure are embodied in their purest form. We encounter this form again in nocturnal dreams, in borderline situations of existence, such as trauma or psychotic delusion.

With regard to the clarification of the term, it should be noted that the Freudian term 'desire' (Wunsch) implies what I call 'desire' (Begehren) in relation to Hegel's expression 'desire' (Begierde) and Lacan's expression 'désir'. Desire (Begehren) is not identical with the need (besoin, Bedürfnis), which is directed towards satisfaction by the object. It also distinguishes itself from the imaginary 'claim' (demande) to the other.

What can we deduce from Freud's 'hallucination theory' about the nature of desire (Wunsch) and desire (Begehren)? Unlike the need arising from the state of endogenous excitement, which finds its satisfaction in a specific object (e.g. food), the desire (Wunsch) associated with 'traces of memory' strives for fulfilment and identity beyond lack and difference. His metamorphosis consists in the fact that he escapes reality, turns to the promises of pleasure and settles predominantly in illusionary or imaginary realms. In its original form, it presents that which in reality does not exist. Of course, Freud also knows that "such an organization, which indulges in the pleasure principle and neglects the reality of the outside world, could not keep itself alive for the shortest time" (1911, 232) For the pure 'pleasure principle' is broken up by the experience of lack and dislike, which creates

a discrepancy between hallucinated and actual perception. In the development towards the 'reality principle', the 'expectation' (1895, 368), which compares desire (Wunsch) with reality, joins the 'state of recovery of desire (Begier)'. Desire (Wunsch) gradually detaches itself from the promise of the hallucinatory and situates itself in the realm of fantasy, which henceforth serves man as a place of mediation between desire and reality (cf. Pagel 1984). But even under the rule of the reality principle, desire (Wunsch) remains the driving movement of the psychic being. Freud emphasizes: "Actually, the substitution of the reality principle for the pleasure principle denotes no dethronement of the pleasure principle, but only a safeguarding of it. A momentary pleasure (Lust), uncertain in its results, is given up, but only in order to gain in the new way an assured pleasure coming later." (1911, 235). What continues to drive the psychological apparatus on this secondary process-like level, in which Freud establishes the formation of the 'I', is not the ad hoc fulfillment of desires (Wunscherfüllung), but the search for the fulfillment of desires.

In this context Freud speaks of 'desire' (Begier): "The education and development of this original ego take place in states in which there is a repetition of the craving, in states of expectation." The ego learns that it must wait until "certain conditions have been fulfilled on the perceptual side. It learns further that it must not cathect the wishful idea beyond a certain degree, because, if it does, it will deceive itself in a hallucinatory manner. (1895, 368).

'Desire' (Begierde): that is the desire (Wunsch) in its 'state of expectation', the lurking and lustful desire that paves the way for the initial 'I', which leads to those signifiers in which it is announced what resembles or is similar to what is forever lost.

Desire (Begierde): this is also desire (Wunsch) in its state of deficiency; its relation to deficiency is that desire forges deficiency, gives it literal form, for it is ultimately waiting for the return of that which is still missing forever.

And finally, the state of desire (Begierdezustand) is characterized by its constant repetition, which sets in motion a game of differences between repetitive and repeated experiences of satisfaction. In the play of these differences, imagination and thought are born, the realm of the imaginary opens up and the laws of the symbolic come to light. The repetitive movement can by no means be reduced to a reproduction that doubles again and again, but is characterized by flexibility, variability and creativity. In the 'state of desire', wish fulfillment is recorded as imagination - although the real lack brings with it a certain degree of listlessness - while the 'psychic attention' is directed in a 'groping thrust' towards the object world and 'tastes' it through 'associative comparison' whether it is identical with the wish idea or at least partially coincides with it. "Apropos of states of desire, what Freud puts into play," Lacan later notes, "is the conquest, the structuration of the world through the effort of labour, along the path of repetition. To the extent that what appears to him corresponds only partially with what has already gained him satisfaction, the subject engages in a quest, and repeats his quest indefinitely until he rediscovers this object." (1954-55, Sem II, 131f.).

In the state of desire and on the path of repetition, desire enters not only into the dimension of space, but also into that of time: it draws a bow to memories, in expectation it reaches for possible future fulfillment, and in the present it can be felt as deficiency. As Freud emphasizes, here the “past, present and future are threatened, as it were, on a string of the wish that runs”. (1908, GW VII, 217f). Thus desire moves in that dichotomy that sustains the infinite movement of lack and fulfillment, of unity and division in man.

But what relation does the subject’s desire have to the objects that promise fulfillment? In answer to this question, we come across the controversial concept of ‘drive’ in Freud’s work. As four essential determinants of drive, Freud named the ‘source’ of drive, the ‘urge’, the ‘goal’ and the ‘object’. Always subject to a different order than the natural one, the urge is not subject to the direct cycle of urge stimulus and satisfaction that is reserved for biological instinct reduction. For as Freud points out, drive “never operates as a momentary impact but as a constant force” (1915, 212). The ‘urge’ of the drive thus manifests itself as uninterrupted movement, in whose temporal pulsation the ‘desire’ of the subject repeatedly emerges and disappears. Freud notes “how it happens that the perceived pleasure avokes the desire for greater pleasure, that is the real problem. (1905, 111) and thereby refers to the character of the irrepressible, the ultimately non-inhibitory. Located in the field of pleasure, at home in the dialectic between subject and object, no ‘specific saturation’ and no specific object seems to satisfy the drive.

Goethe’s formulation in Faust I (1808) : “And so I stagger from desire to enjoyment. And in enjoyment I languish for desire” (scene forest and cave, 3249)) and Nietzsche’s saying: “But all joy wants eternity. Wants deep, wants deep eternity” (1883, Zarathustra III. part) indicate this.

In this respect, Lacan speaks of the “circle of drive”, on which the ‘goal’ is less a fixed point than the path taken by the drive. It compares the form of the goal with archery: “It is not the bird you shoot”, but “it is having scored a hit and thereby attained your goal.” (1964, 187f.). But it is precisely this shot into the black that leads to deception, because we all too often confuse the ‘object’ of the urge with what the urge closes over. For as in archery, the object in its reality turns out to be only a piece of dead flesh. Thus, it cannot owe its relation to the circular path of the drive to the fact that it was ‘a priori’ the original source of desire and food, but that no pleasurable food would ever satisfy the drive, “unless,” emphasizes Lacan, “it orbits the eternally missing object”. (ibid. 198). But why does the object get lost forever and how does this loss come about?

Since the search for pleasure prevents man from remaining lonely, he is dependent on the other, on his fellow human beings. This applies above all to the sexual instinct, and it is not surprising that Freud defines it as the ‘prototype’ of all drives. Since the drive in its original form can only express itself and deprive itself in the other’s place, it depends on whether and how the other breastfeeds it. This dependence on the order of the other alienates the drive from an object that would be fixed once and for all.

This is shown by the example of hunger: In the oral phase (0-2 years), the child's sphere of experience is predominantly tied to the 'source' of food and centered around the erogenous zones of the mouth. The mother's breast occupies a significant place on the path of finding objects. This is primarily perceived by the child as belonging to its own body. Although it believes itself to have merged symbiotically with it, the object nevertheless shows itself to be resistant, since it reappears on the side of the other, the mother, and therefore remains denied to it as part of itself or as an object that it could incorporate. In the detachment from the object (mother's breast) the libido finds expression, so to speak, at the 'edge' of the experiences of satisfaction, in the area of the oral zone, which from now on becomes the 'source' of the drive. The loss of 'oneness' with the mother and thus the symbiosis of subject and object leads to a deficiency that pushes the urge onto the 'circular path'.

In the search for security, love and togetherness, the subject encounters an abundance of 'food-giving' objects that substitute the lost in a way that always demands more. This happens in the realm of orality, e.g. when children suck their thumbs, but also in the game of culinary delights, which is created at the sight of a menu or when they reach for cigarettes and addictive substances. Lacan describes the promising objects as 'objects petit (little) a'. They belong to the imaginary realm that desire revolves around, but without being absorbed in. For desire is committed to a different order. We also find this order outlined in Levinas: "The desired does not fulfill it, but hollows it out, nourishes me, so to speak, with new hunger" (1963, 220).

In the plasticity of the instinct, the shiftability on the level of the objects and in its proteus-like changeability we can recognize how desire detaches itself from object-related neediness and intervenes in a chain of symbolic realizations, how the instinct circulates in a network of intersubjective relationships and shifts its 'goal' to infinity, so to speak. In this respect, Lacan can say: "it is not that desire clings to the object of the drive - desire moves around it, in so far as it is agitated in the drive. (1964, 255)

Hegel's philosophy has already shown us how the desiring subject succeeds in freeing himself from the substance of the 'thing' - the real - and from the imaginary claim to the desire of the other, on whose side the abundance of objects reappears and find his way to a third mediating moment. It showed us how desire (Begierde) moves from the stage of life to the stage of intersubjectivity and from there to the stage of mutual recognition that is decisive for man's actual desire (Begehren). With the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan I would like to analyse this in more detail.

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III. Jacques Lacan: Desire is the desire of the Other's desire

Lacan's teaching is understood as a "Back to Freud", whose texts he studies

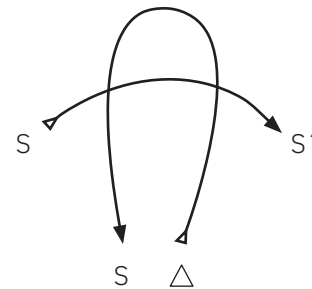
meticulously. He encounters the connection between desire and language. For him, psychic being proves to be embedded in a symbolic order that remains largely unconscious in its virtuality. Not only all thinking and recognition are carried by this order; it inscribes itself in the most hidden corners of our imagination and our corporeality.

Lacan's justification refers to the helplessness at the beginning of human life, which, due to a lack of instinct security and dependence on care, leads to the fact that the meaning of needs only differentiates itself through the relationship to another. It is this neighbour, the Other, who gives the neediness of the infant the meaning of a "need" or a "lack" (cf. "Needs of Life in Freud"). A need which he accepts, answers and interprets because he has the possibility of language and is thus integrated into an order which already structures the history of his own desires and his own experience. Thus, however, man's need proves to be de-naturalized from the very beginning, it belongs to a different order than the purely biological one, because it must pass through the universe of language - through the chain of signifiers SS' - as

we see here in Lacan's illustration, which depicts the constitution of the subject and the immersion of desire in the signifying chain (Lacan 1960, p. 179).

Let us take a closer look at this immersion in language and the emergence of desire. The vital need (triangle bottom right) of the infant, which aims at pleasure fulfilment, requires articulation. But by turning to the other (the mother, the father) as its demand, the latter encounters his speech, is taken up by her and, as it were, structured

Signifikantenkette bzw. Sprachordnung (SS')



retroactively as meaning. With this, however, it has left its biological origins and entered the linguistic order. The demand is essentially not directed at concrete objects, but shows itself as a claim to affection and love. It is essentially this demand for love that constitutes the insatiability of human desires. Since the demand to love can only be unconditionally directed at the other, it is receptive to all reflections as they appear between the ego and the other. However, at the price of a deception, since it gives up to the other to fulfill complementarily what one does not have oneself. According to Lacan, this becomes particularly clear "if the other, which has its own ideas about his needs, interferes, and in place of that which it does not have, stuffs him with the choking pap of what it has, that is to say, confuses his needs with the gift of its love."(1975, S I, 219)

The demand on the other, however, involves the need in the dialectic of desire. For desire wants to be recognized. This is only possible in the difference to the Other. So unlike the need that aims at real satisfaction and unlike the claim that takes place in

the realm of the imaginary, desire has its seat in the linguistic order. As a speaking being, the subject (S) finds itself in this order. But it finds itself as split (S crossed out), which from now on is subject to a defect that ties it forever to a lost thing. The ideal, the absolute, has slipped away from it and as often as it tries to save itself from the flow of signifiers, be it in the elimination of the deficiency through its claim to love, be it through the bondage in the mirror image, it finds itself captured in the net of a significant articulation, which is already in its origin “desire of the Other”.

In desire, need and demand enter into that dichotomy that entertains the infinite movement of lack and fulfillment, of unity and division, of away and here.

Even here it becomes apparent that Lacan’s “dialectic of desire” is very closely linked to the phenomenon of fear. For fear then appears “when there is too much lack and, this may sound paradoxical, too little lack, too little emptiness”. (Lang 2016, 124). How can we understand this?

The “deficiency being of man” is not only subject to the plight of life, but is also exposed as a “being of language” to a fundamental deficiency, an emptiness, which we can call “real” with Lacan. (Lang 2016, 124) For language is both ambiguous and complex. There is in it neither a first nor a last word, always something remains an indissoluble residue, an unspeakable, uncontrollable one. The real is not identical with reality, but denotes the experience of being in its primary undifferentiatedness and positivity, as according to Freud it is suitable for the subject in the initial stage.

Lacan, who likes to use the saying “The gods belong to the field of the real” (1964, Sem XI, 51), speaks in this respect of the “jouissance” - of absolute enjoyment, which can assume a paradoxical, even obscene character. So, for example, in an “amour fou” unconditional desire for love, whereby the other is intended and seen more and more as the fulfilling “thing in itself”, i.e. as the filling of the real, the emptiness. The subjectivity of the other is negated, total submission demands are made on the other in order to finally satisfy desire in an absolute way - a catastrophe is the result of this supposed bliss”. (Lang 2016, 127) Highest pleasure here enters into a close connection with pain, deep suffering, weariness and anguish.

But not only the encounter with the “too much” of lack can overwhelmingly trigger fear, but also its downside, be it in an overabundance of being or in the absence of any lack. We already saw this in the dimension of the claim in the example of the mother, who imposes the breast on her child before even a desire for it manifests itself and thus nips desire in the bud. Here it is not the “Fort” of the objects of love that evokes fear, but an unrestricted presence in which there is no alternation between ‘Fort’ (away) and ‘Da’ (here).

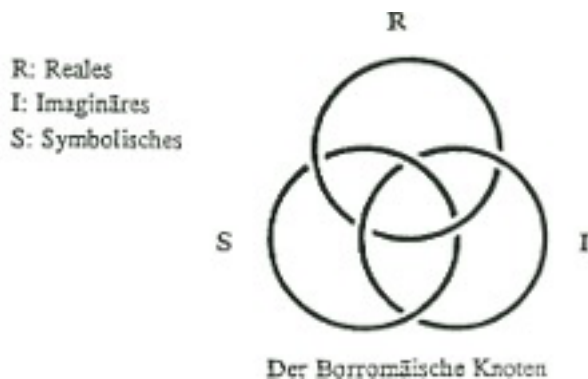
Be happy without wish! Isn’t this the mode of an affluent society that shows us the “lack” every day? Sophisticated advertising strategies combine desire and need to the extent that they suggest to the desiring subject that there is still a need to be satisfied. Even phenomena such as love, virtue, a good conscience, etc. seem

purchasable. The strategy of advertising consists in situating the symbolic deficiency - which cannot be satisfied - on the level of the 'material' and promising it objects there at which it can (apparently) saturate itself (Barthes 1967). This creates the cycle of a compulsively structured desire - as we find it, for example, in shopping addiction - that weighs in the fascination of imaginary images of 'abundance', that lets itself be carried by the desire to have and the fear of never being able to get enough. In the light and vastness of the 'society of desire', the spectre of consumption goes for prey and throws its veil of images, motifs and scenarios in the form of pleasurable appetizers over us - burying the actual desires. What is this 'wishless misfortune', as Handke (1972) aptly put it, if not the fragment of a taboo behind which desire - itself speechless - lurks?

"Never drop of your desire! - Lacan emphasises. Ultimately, desire remains without an adequate object of possible satisfaction, remains intransitive. "Desire desires. If desire becomes transitive, it is an object, a certain satisfaction, then we speak of "demande", of "claim". (Lang 2016, 129)

In Lacan's scheme of the Borromean knot we see the dialectic of desire clarified. Lacan also speaks here of the "basic structures of being" or the "typology of the psychic". Three rings are linked in such a way that when one ring is cut through, the other two become free as well. This should make clear that the three are always to be understood only in their mutual concatenation, i.e. none can consist of itself, since each reaches into the other and is also a part of it. If, for example - as in psychosis - the reference to the symbolic order is dissolved, then even the real and the imaginary can no longer be sufficiently differentiated from each other. In contrast to the neurotic symptom, which functions as a substitute for the repression of an unconscious symbolic meaning, here the underlying symbolization itself is destroyed. - These rings have their name from the Italian family of the Borromean, which they carried in their family coat of arms.

The real (R) we already got to know as the experience of being in its primary



undifferentiation and positivity. It is that which cannot be represented, which can neither be articulated by images nor linguistically.

It marks the dimension of the impossible, which eludes any conceptuality, but is echoed in the human longing for total presence, symbiotic immediacy and absoluteness. In Kant's words it is the "thing in itself", unrecognizable and beyond

appearances. It corresponds to the level of having in the sense of an immediate, omnipotent satisfaction of needs, an absolute enjoyment.

According to Lacan, fear is an excellent “signal system of the real”. No wonder, since this triggers a fundamental fear of existence. For as we saw, it incarnates in the borderline situations of existence, such as in the hallucinatory thrusts of psychosis or in the nameless fears of annihilation, where, according to Lacan, it manifests itself as “that something” “in the face of which all words cease and all categories fail” (Lacan 1980, p. 210).

The imaginary (I), on the other hand, is the place of images, illusions and ideals. It marks the dimension of the subject’s relationship to its structuring identifications. The claim/demand to love and self-discovery in the other that is attached to it is deeply narcissistic. It goes beyond the need: does not demand the fullness of things, but desires fulfillment by the other, directs its desire to the other serving as a mirror in which it can find itself and at the same time find recognition. The emotional relationships with the other also always carry an imaginary trait in themselves, inasmuch as they turn to the other as an unconditional claim, as a claim to presence and absence, to admiration and recognition. Thus the illusion of an ideal unity becomes visible in the area of the claim, which is supposed to cover up again the lack that the articulation of desire has just torn open. Lacan regards the imaginary as the matrix of all identification processes in man. On this level, the mode of having is not in the foreground, but that of being. In this area the object (little) a also has its place, which Lacan ascribes to fear, because the subject - bound to the claims of the other - does not know exactly what the mirror-other wants from him and whether the objects can ever satisfy his desire. For unlike the need that satisfies itself in the object and returns to itself, desire orbits its object a, charges it with meaning, feeds the forbidden with promises, and lets the lack arise anew where it seems to have overcome it. “The desirable does not fill up the desire, but hollows it out; it nourishes me, so to speak, with new hunger,” we read in Levinas (1963, 220).

Therefore, the symbolic (S) can only arise through the separation from presence and from the libidinous narcissistic embrace. The path of desire to the symbolic is only possible on this side of the real satisfaction of the need for the object and beyond the imaginary claim to the other. Lacan emphasizes that it is not “about the satisfaction of desire ... but, quite precisely, about the recognition of desire. (1978 235) But recognition can only be achieved where the difference to the other is kept open, the lack of abundance and fulfillment is accepted, and where there is no lack of lack. This is possible neither in the realm of the “real” nor in the mirror realm of the “imaginary”, but only in the order of the symbolic.

The symbolic thus marks the place of lawfulness or the place of language, of social order. The instance that guarantees this order is the great Other (A), the mother, the “name of the father”.

Lacan’s famous formulas “The unconscious is the discourse of the Other” and “Mans

desire is the desire of the Other” underline these aspects. However, the dimension of the symbolic does not mean to eliminate the real and the imaginary, but to transform them to a level in which mutual recognition is possible.

It is important that these three areas - also referred to by Lacan as the “Borromean knot” - are not to be understood as stages of development, but rather determine the being of each subject from the very beginning. They form a unity, condition each other and thus represent a structure that exists for life.

But how does this triadic structure influence the field of intersubjective relations? We had said that desire at the level of the real initially appears as a need (*besoin*) which, however, knows no definite satisfaction and therefore passes into the articulated claim (*demand*) for love. From here, the imaginary space of the mirror stage opens up, in which the subject constitutes itself as an image of the other. Yet all thinking and recognition here remain within the framework of a mirror image of a relationship between two, i.e. in the state of a deceptive, narcissistic presence. According to Lacan, a third, symbolic element is needed to find a way out of this unity.

On the other hand, when Lacan speaks with reference to Hegel of the fact that the symbol arises as the “murder of the thing” (1953, 166), he means that only by renouncing the immediate ‘real’ can anything be shown, said and recognized at all. For thinking does not ignite in the realm of mute things, but at the court of the symbolic meaning that the other gives them. Here we encounter a decisive structural feature of the symbolic, namely the absence of immediate presence and the ability to endure the deficiency, the difference. Thus in the area of the symbolic - as in the *Fort-Da!* game described by Freud - the absence of the object and the presence of meaning are directly intertwined. And thus the symbolic forms a third space of difference beyond the imaginary identification of the mirror stage and beyond the real presence of the objects. It is this difference that allows us to distinguish between sign and what is designated, between word and meaning. But it is also the area of spatial differences between ego and alter ego, between subject and world. And it is not least the temporal distance that separates the subject from a closed notion of identity and historicity. The symbolic forms the structure that mediates between these differences without ever setting them identical. It is the non-identical and in this sense at the same time the instance that forbids being ‘one-in-two’ or ‘me and you’.

In Lacan, the position of this third is represented by the symbolic Other (father/mother) as the bearer of the name and the linguistic order, which interrupts the dual attachment of the educator and the child. For the intersubjectivity of the mirror stage as such would never find its way out of the interplay of symbiosis (‘I and you’) and destructive clinging (‘I or you’; “lordship-bondage relationship” in Hegel’s (1807) *Dialectic of Self-Consciousness*) if there were not a “great other” (*grand Autre*) who sets limits to this relationship and structures it precisely in this way. In this place, according to Lacan, there can be neither a definitive satisfaction nor a complete fulfillment of the claim for love, but rather an acknowledgement of one’s own desire by the desire of another.

Just as the claim wants more than just biological satisfaction, so what Lacan calls the recognition of desire goes beyond the narcissistic claim to self-knowledge. For whom or what should the subject wish to recognize, if not for the desire of another, by whom it in turn wishes to be recognized? Thus the symbolic structure of the Oedipal situation designates the condition of the possibility of mutual recognition without complete identity and presence. And so the satisfaction of desire can always only be a symbolic one, because the desire of the subject refers from the beginning to the desire of another. This intersubjective constitution of human desire, mediated by the order of the symbol, embedded in a dialectic of recognition, is the structure which Freud has described as the structure of the unconscious desire. According to Lacan, it is at the same time the structure that is given to all thinking, feeling and recognizing.

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