

DEATH OF THE SUBJECT: REPRESENTATION AND REAL LIMIT IN THE CLINIC OF PSYCHOSIS*

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ABSTRACT: The paper discusses Lacan's proposal that Schreber's stabilization was made possible by a moment of 'death of the subject.' The advent of the subject is related with the 'death' of the thing itself perpetrated by the signifier. Here, Lacan mentions its relation to psychosis, in which there's a non-symbolization of castration. We discuss the notion of 'second death', related to Socrates, Antigone and Cotard, and the *Bejahung* as an original affirmation which includes the negativeness. We conclude that the 'death of the subject' can be an opening to the representation or a 'real' limit to the psychotic, presenting the risk of passages to the act and 'dementia-like' evolutions.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, symbolic, psychosis, subject, delusion.

RESUMO: Aborda-se a formulação lacanianiana de que, em Schreber, houve um momento de 'morte do sujeito' que permitiu a construção do delírio estabilizador. Se o advento do sujeito é tributário da 'morte da coisa' perpetrada pelo signifiere, Lacan fala aqui da psicose, constituída pela não-simbolização da castração. Discute-se a noção de 'segunda morte', forjada a propósito de Sócrates, de Antígona e do Cotard, e a *Bejahung* como afirmação primordial que inclui a negatividade. Conclui-se que a 'morte do sujeito' pode ser uma abertura para a representação ou um limite real para o psicótico, expondo às passagens ao ato e evoluções demenciais.

Palavras-chave: Psicanálise, simbólico, psicose, sujeito, delírio.

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In “On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis”, Lacan formulates the idea of “death of the subject” referring to that precise moment in Schreber’s psychosis that, according to Lacan, opened the possibility of transformation of the delusion into the final solution that stabilizes that psychosis (LACAN, 1958/1998, p. 574). A little before that, Lacan had already connected the advent of the subject to the death of the thing perpetrated by the symbolization itself (Id., 1953/1998, p. 320), but it is surprising that he states it concerning psychosis, a condition defined precisely by the fact that the castration is refused in the symbolic order (Id., 1955-56/1992, p. 21). Never again will Lacan, during his teaching, use this expression concerning psychosis and even in “On a question preliminary...”, it won’t be developed. Perhaps this is why it is not much explored in analytical literature related specifically to psychosis. In the present paper, we will refer only to Czermak (1996), Jean (2004), Cacho (2006) and Hergott (2009), who develop the formulation that we want to explore: the one according to which the “death of the subject” is an element of the psychosis structure that can be either a moment of recomposition through the delusion, either a limit concerning the register called by Lacan the Real. Hence, our objective will be not to criticize the formulation in the sense of refuting it, nor to cover exhaustively the reading possibilities of the theme, but, rather, to develop and explore the consequences of a hypothesis that, in our opinion, enlightens the radical status of what we face when dealing with psychosis.

The formulation according to which a (psychotic) subject must have “died” to accede to the possibility of a recomposition through the delusion is original enough as to deserve a closer examination. On the other hand, the clinic of psychosis shows us several occurrences of clinical states similar to those lived by Schreber that, however, manifest, not an imaginary recomposition but, rather, evolve towards the mortification of the subject. In both cases — opening towards stabilization or real limit in the evolution of a psychosis —, Lacan’s formulation can enlighten a structural aspect, not only of the psychotic but of the subject itself. In the present paper, we will approach the notion invoking other references of Lacan, more specifically the “the second death” that Lacan discusses on different occasions: the one perpetrated by the signifier and gives the condition to the advent of the subject (see, among others, LACAN, 1960/1998, p. 825).

LACAN’S FORMULATION

Considering the absence of other references to the notion, let’s stop at the context of its formulation, that precise moment of Schreber’s evolution in which it appears in Lacan’s analysis. The idea that the subject has died is a statement of Lacan, proposed as necessary passage to make possible to Schreber to accept his

transformation into a woman, even taking it as a solution. As we know, to be given to Flechsig for sexual ends is Schreber's first form of delusion, a persecutory one experienced by him with great indignation (SCHREBER, 1903/1995, pp. 67-68). Afterwards, Schreber accepts the transformation into a woman as something required by the "Order of the World", giving to him, Schreber, the important role of being impregnated by divine rays and breed a new humanity (Ibid., pp. 147 e segs.).

The question of a "Order of the World" would deserve further developments escaping the scope of the present paper. We merely indicate that it seems to represent the subsistence, even in a psychotic subject, of the laws of language, an ultimate refuge for the symbolic law in the face of an unbarred and persecutory Other, a way of blocking the Other. This is what the following excerpt indicates.

In my case, that which was offensive from the moral point of view was the fact that God himself would place himself outside the Order of the World, also valid for Him. [...] On the other hand, the Order of the World conserves all its greatness and sublimity because, in a case so contrary to the rules, God himself was denied the proper means of power required to attain an objective contradicting it. (SCHREBER, 1903/1995, p. 70)

Schreber dates March or April 1894 the beginning of the conspiracy having for objective the feminization of his body for sexual abuse and afterwards abandoning him to putrefaction. In November 1895, "the signs of femininity appeared so intensely" on his body that "it was no longer possible to not recognize the immanent finality towards which all this evolution was heading" (Ibid., p. 147). During the previous nights, the only reason that prevented the transformation into a woman from taking place is that he still opposed to this his "sentiment of manhood" and his "decided will" (Ibid., loc. cit.). In all parts of his body, his impression was that of a feminine body.

A few days of continuous observation of these phenomena sufficed to determine a total modification in the direction of my will. [...] I had the absolute conviction that the Order of the World demanded imperiously of me my emasculation, whether this pleased me or not, and thus, *for rational reasons*, I had no alternative but to reconcile myself with the idea of being transformed into a woman. Naturally, emasculation could only have for consequence an impregnation by divine rays with the intention of creating new men. (SCHREBER, 1903/1995, p. 147)

Freud attributes Schreber's attitude regarding being emasculated to the dimension of greatness that arises when God becomes the interested partner in this

transformation with the intent of recreating mankind. Freud considers Flechsig's substitution by God as a "delusion of grandeur" which allowed Schreber the "reconciliation" with the delusion (FREUD, 1911/1995, p. 46).

Here, Lacan says that Freud "failed his own norms" (LACAN, 1958/1998, p. 573), once he had formerly refused to give the privilege to the dimension of the delusion of grandeur in detriment of the delusion's sexual dimension (cf. FREUD, 1911/1995, pp. 18-9). Lacan mocks the explanation given by Freud saying that it is a "partner trade" — changing Flechsig for God — that would satisfy the subject's self-love. Lacan proposes another reason: "the true cause of the reversal of the position of indignation which was first raised in the position of the subject by the idea of *Entmannung* [emasculatation] is precisely because, in the interval, the subject has died" (LACAN, 1958/1998, p. 574. Author's emphasis). Lacan lists the elements of the case that demonstrate this death of the subject: Schreber's narrative in which he tells that he read in the paper the news of his own death (SCHREBER, 1903/1995, p. 85); the medical certificate that, according to Lacan, confirms, at the time, a state of catatonic stupor (in SCHREBER, op. cit., p. 285); the "faithful portrait that the voices, the annalists I would say, gave him of himself as a leprous corpse" (LACAN, 1958/1998, p. 574). We stress that, saying of the voices that they are the annalists, Lacan is suggesting that what they were saying was faithful to what was taking place in the subject's structure.

Freud spoke of that moment of catatonic stupor as an "end-of-the-world" subjective experience, a step preceding the delusional solution and during which Schreber says that everything was buried, destroyed, and that he, Schreber, remained the only real man (FREUD, 1911/1995, pp. 63-5). It's the moment postulated by Freud as the moment of withdrawal of libido from the world (Ibid., loc. cit.), after which the sexual delusion can be considered as a rebuilding attempt (Ibid., p. 1911/1995, p. 65).

Lacan doesn't explicitly develop why this "death of the subject" might have permitted Schreber's position shift and the construction of a delusional solution. Coordinating it with the sequence of the text, we read that, around this death-of-the-subject phenomenon, Lacan locates a "symbolic determination" of the feminization as a solution for Schreber, for, in the sequence, he mentions the "relation of all of this to the homosexuality, certainly manifest in the delusion", in the sense of criticizing the erroneous understanding of what this supposed homosexuality would be. This supposed homosexuality, says Lacan, must be enlightened by its symbolic determination (LACAN, 1958/1998, p. 574).

The delusional solution — to be God's woman — is an imaginary recombination, says Lacan. But in which are retroactively located determining symbolic relations. The solution has two aspects: a "trans-sexualist practice" consisting in looking at his image in mirror dressed in the trinkets of female dress, and

having, at the same time, a somatic perception in his body of the voluptuousness in the “nerves of female pleasure”; and, the second element, the “co-ordinate of divine copulation” establishing the promise of redemption, an aim to be accomplished, however, an endless postponed future. (Ibid., p. 575). Here, says Lacan, we have a “turning-point at which the line divides into its two branches, that of narcissistic pleasure [jouissance] and that of the ideal identification” (Ibid., p. 577). We can read: narcissistic pleasure [jouissance], the voluptuousness experienced in front of the mirror (our hypothesis: a mimicry an ideal ego); ideal identification, the wife of God role, the mankind’s redeemer (mimicry of an ego ideal). “And there too the line moves around a hole, more specifically the hole in which the ‘soul-murder’ installed death” (Ibid., p. 577).

We stress: Lacan introduces death as a hole around which turn the subject’s recomposition line. And it’s from this precise point — in which he introduces death — that he demonstrates the subjective’s structure in the end of the psychotic process and how it contains, at least as major lines, the same “geometric points” as the “schema R”, of the reality of the so called normal subject (that’s the development of the “schema I”, for the psychosis).¹ It is worth mentioning that the subject’s imaginary recomposition by the delusion reproduces, in a distorted way, the determinants of the language’ structure for every subject, “lines of efficiency” of an “elegant solution” to the problem, as Lacan puts it (Ibid., p. 578). But, for that to happen, it was necessary the phenomenon called by Lacan as the death of the subject.

DEATH THAT BRINGS LIFE

We remember the question proposed by Lacan in “The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious”: “We must know which death: the one that life brings, or the one which brings life?” (LACAN, 1960a/1998, p. 825).² The death which brings life is that one perpetrated by the signifier, which ‘kills’ the thing to make it exist at the signifier, to give it symbolic existence, the only one of the human subject, since he is submitted to language

¹ The “R scheme” is a graphic formalization done by Lacan at “On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis” of how the perception of the object and the field of reality are circumscribed (LACAN, 1958/1998, p. 559). The “I scheme”, formulated by Lacan in the sequence of the same article is the formalization of the distortion of the former scheme that takes place in psychosis, showing that this distortion contains, however, the same “geometric points” that the R scheme, indicating, thus, the work of recomposition present in Schreber’s psychosis (Ibid., pp. 577-8).

² The pun in French is overwhelming, by the minimum difference existing between the sentences expressing the two ideas: “Il s’agit de savoir quelle mort, celle que porte la vie, ou celle qui la porte?” (LACAN, 1960b/1966, p. 810).

(that's what Lacan develops also in "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis": LACAN, 1953/1998, p. 320). Second one if referred to physical death, in which every life will end, the death perpetrated by the signifier is, however, first, logically and chronologically speaking, since it gives life to the subject, as long as it leaves behind, lost, 'the being'. Paraphrasing the aphorism "the symbol is the death of the thing", we could say that 'the subject is the death of the being'. However, the mortifying aspect of the signifier also and specifically touches the subject itself that is born; born, in a certain way, mortified by the signifier as he is condemned to be represented by a signification that always has an imprisoning, freezing dimension. It's the subject's aphanisis in the process of alienation to the signifier that Lacan develops in *The four fundamentals concepts of psychoanalysis*: "when the subject appears somewhere as meaning, he manifests himself somewhere else as fading, as a disappearance. There is, hence, [...] the matter of life and death [...]" (LACAN, 1964/2008, p. 213). In different passages of his teaching, Lacan develops the mortifying dimension of the signifier through the expression "You are" and its homophony in French (*Tu es*) with the verb *Tuer*, to kill (see, among other, the seminar *The psychoses*: LACAN, 1955-56/1992, pp. 306-20 e 332-47).

From this perspective, in which the subject is born as an effect of the mortifying dimension of the signifier, could we propose that the "death of the subject" would be a sort of psychotic equivalence of this, giving, thus, the chance for Schreber to, so to speak, be represented as a subject by the designation God's Woman?

Rigorously speaking, we shouldn't say 'represented', but 'signaled' or 'localized' as subject. However, we dare say 'represented' to propose that what happened in this case is a work of the structure that went further, for example, than what is described in the famous example from *The psychosis* seminar of the hallucination "Sow", where there was a simple and injurious designation of the subject (LACAN, 1955-6/1991, p. 59-65). Thus, our interpretation is that this death of the subject phenomenon could be, during the evolution of a given psychosis, a sort of opening to the representation of the subject in the signifier chain, or, at least, an opening to the existence to an assigned place for the subject in the signifier chain.

Cacho (2006, p. 115) observes that Schreber receives news of his death having read it on the paper, raising the question of the subject as a writing. A question of such complexity (the writing of the subject) is not comprehended by the scope of the present paper but we indicate its proximity with the question of representation. Cacho proposes that the writing \$ (barred subject) is, outside psychosis, "death of the ordinary subject", that is, "an operation of the structure itself" (CACHO, 2006, p. 116), what we understand as an indication

that the death of the subject in psychosis is equivalent to the bar put on the subject by the signifier.

But 'equivalent' is not 'equal'. The signifier's mortifying nature gives birth to the subject neurosis because the negativeness that it introduces is admitted (affirmed, so to speak) in the symbolic, operating, hence, there. The inscription of this negativeness is, effectively, equivalent to the establishment itself of the symbolic or of the subject in the symbolic. It is what we read under *Bejahung* in Lacan's commentary on Freud's *Negation* (FREUD, 1925/1993). *Bejahung* — "assertion" or "affirmative answer" in German (LANGENSCHIEDT, 2001, p. 706) — corresponds to the "creation of the symbol", "mythical" moment concerning the "relation of the subject to the being" (LACAN, 1954a, p. 384). As a "primordial symbolization", it contains the impossibility of representing everything, constituting, thus, the Real (Ibid., p. 390). That is why, as França Neto (2006) observes, *Bejahung* is an assertion "that carries with itself a negation" (FRANÇA NETO, 2006, 155).

But, says Lacan, there can be a lack of *Bejahung* itself. In the seminar *The psychosis*, Lacan uses this notion to differentiate the structuring mechanism of a psychosis and a neurosis: while the repression is the negation of something that was, however, previously admitted in the symbolic system, what happens in psychosis is that, this first admission itself, this primordial admission in the symbolic order, didn't take place (LACAN, 1955-56/1992, p. 22). Instead of *Bejahung*, there was *Verwerfung* (rejection), a term used in a non-systematic way by Freud and that Lacan translates conceptually as corresponding to the foreclosure, a mechanism in the structure of psychosis (Ibid., p. 360). In the absence of *Bejahung*, negativeness is not operated through symbolic means; "what is refused in the symbolic order, in the sense of *Verwerfung*, reappears in the Real" (Ibid., p. 21).

In neurosis, the mortifying aspect of the signifier is intermediated by the phallus as a signification of the desire and, thus, of the Other's desire: Lacan represents the phallus as a stick placed inside the mouth of the crocodile preventing it from closing, a stick preventing the Other's mouth from devouring the subject (LACAN, 1969-70/1992, p. 105). The negativeness introduced by the phallus is a negation produced by the same agent and during the same process of the primordial operation of representation in which the acceptance of this negativeness on the part of the subject is implied: "the subject is faced with the question of accepting, of registering, of symbolizing himself, of giving a value of signification to this privation of which the mother reveals herself as being the object" (Id., 1957-58/1999, p. 191).

If psychosis is what happens when this negativeness doesn't inscribes itself, the importance of the death of the subject would consist in introducing the

negativeness where this one is structurally missing. But what kind of negativeness can one forge in psychotic structure?

IMMORTALITY AND LIFE IN THE 'IN-BETWEEN TWO DEATHS'

The moment of Schreber's evolution that Lacan called death of the subject corresponds to an entire chapter of the *Memoirs* in which Schreber describes the 'twilight of the world', so valued by Freud, and an entire symptomatology of destruction of the body's organs (SCHREBER, 1903/1995, pp. 127-35). Czermak (1996, p. 214) observes that this moment "includes all the power lines of a delusion of negation".

The delusion of negation, or Cotard syndrome, is a psychiatric condition that, according to Lacan, "belongs to the psychotic nucleus" (LACAN, 1960-1/1992, p. 106-7). It is a hypochondriac delusion that, in its pure form, takes place in melancholia, but also appears in other psychosis as well. It consists in the delusional conviction according to which one doesn't possess brains anymore, or nerves, breasts, heart, stomach, blood and, sometimes, not even a body. Some imagine that they are rotting and that their brains got soft. The negation can extend itself to the subject's "moral personality" (he has no more intellect or virtue, he no longer reasons etc.); to the "physical personality" (he no longer has blood, brains, genitals etc.); to the objects of the outside world (there is nothing around him, he is in the void); to abstractions (there is no more virtue, soul, God) (SÉGLAS, 1894/2006). From the hypochondriac ideas comes, logically and paradoxically, the idea of immortality: they won't die because their body are not subject to the ordinary conditions of organization, "they're in a state that is neither life or death: they are living dead" (COTARD, 1880/2006, p. 209). Thus, the idea of immortality is not delusion of grandeur, but a hypochondriac idea. Finally, spatiality disorders can be observed, the subject having the experience of being scattered around the space as the objects themselves, enormously at first, and then, very small; temporality disorders also, in which time stops, freezes, becomes infinite. Leuret (1834) coined the expression "moral hypochondria" to name the mental state of patients such as this one whose interview he reports: "I don't know your name, please say it to me. *The person of myself has no name; it desires you not to write. What is your age? The person of myself has no age. Are your parents alive? The person of myself is no one's daughter; the origin of the person of myself is unknown; it has no memory of the past*" (LEURET, 1834/2001, p. 224-5).

In an initial moment of his seminars, Lacan evokes patients that he treated as a young psychiatrist and who told him that they had no stomach or mouth and that they would never die:

That to which they identified themselves is an image with a total lack of hiatus, of any aspiration whatsoever, of any puncture of desire, that is, that which properly constitutes the property of the oral orifice. As the identification of the being to its pure and simple image operates, there is no room for change, that is, for death. That is what is about in their topic — they, at the same time, are dead and can't die anymore, they are immortal — just like desire (LACAN, 1954-55/1995, pp. 299-300).

Afterwards, in the seminar on *The transference*, Lacan will treat this delusion as an “absence of metaphor”, posing a “formidable metonym” that leads to the affirmation of immortality. It's when Lacan says that Cotard “belongs to the psychotic nucleus” (LACAN, 1960-61/1992, pp. 106-7). But the reference to the psychiatric syndrome is, there, lateral. Lacan evokes it in order to talk about Socrates' lack of fear in the face of his death sentence: what is at stakes in Socrates position is what Lacan calls “second death” (Ibid., p. 106). Forged concerning Sade, the notion of second death has different ramifications in Lacan's teaching. Here, it is invoked to pose the idea of immortality with which Socrates accepts his death sentence. “He tells us that in this second death — incarnated by the fact that he elevates the coherence of the signifier to an absolute potency, the unique fundament of certainty potency —, he will find eternal life” (LACAN, 1960-61/1992, p. 106). However, for Lacan, this immortality, being the result of the fact that Socrates has developed in his questionings, throughout his whole life, a “formidable metonym” (with no metaphor? we ask), is a “still, sad dark and golden immortality [...]” (Ibid., p. 107).

The terrible idea that life might continue indefinitely in the zone qualified as ‘in-between deaths’ is also the situation of Antigone, developed by Lacan in the seminar on *The ethics of psychoanalysis* (1959-60/1991). Antigone, not following Creonte' sentence that forbids not to bury her brother, places herself, from that moment on, on the frontier between the worlds of the living and of the dead, for she knows that, from now on, she is condemned to be buried alive in a tomb. (cf. LACAN, 1959-60/91, lessons XIX to XXI, pp. 295-346). It's from this zone that she wants to free her brother, himself condemned to remain unburied. Remain unburied meaning demoted from the symbolic dignity that characterizes the human subject for being represented in the signifier. It's the signifier inscription what is denied to Polynices. An inscription that he, however, had. Antigone's obstinacy is the affirmation of a law of the language, of the symbolic system, “that says that whatever is, cannot enter again the void from which it came from” (cf. Ibid., p. 316). The signifier creates the subject *ex-nihilo*, but, once created, once existing in the signifier, we can no longer cease to exist in the signifier; we can die the physical death but can't ‘not have existed’ in the signifier, we can't go back to the void from which we came from. The inscription

in the tombstone is the expression — it's not the only one — of this symbolic existence. To deny it, is the equivalent to what Lacan, in Sade, localizes as to cross the limit of the "second death" (cf. *Ibid.*, p. 301). This being done to Polynices is what Antigone refuses, even with the price of entering herself in this second death zone or "in-between-two-deaths" (*Ibid.*, p. 327).

Another literary reference, a contemporary one, helps to localize what it means to inflict the second death on a subject. *If this a man?*, by Primo Levi (1947/1997), can be read as the description of how was accomplished, in a concentration camp, the operation consisting in removing the minimum dignity that constitutes the subject, in removing the humanity, killing the subject in order to, only afterwards, kill the man. A second degree destruction. To cross the limit of the second death would be, then, to erase the signifier dimension that still represents that subject and, by that, to leave no trace of its being. It's what we tragically hear in the sentence of Elie Wiesel, Nobel Peace Prize, himself a survivor of Auschwitz and Buchenwald. When, in 1997, Primo Levi died — whether it was an accident or he committed suicide, it is still unknown — Wiesel said: "Primo Levi died in Auschwitz forty years later".

Lacan observes that tragic heroes always are in this transposition zone of the ordinary limits of life, limit zone between life and death (LACAN, 1959-60/1991, p. 330). "Her ordeal will consist in being locked, placed in suspension, in the zone between life and death. Without being yet dead, she is crossed from the world of the living", says Lacan concerning Antigone (*Ibid.*, p. 330). "They believe themselves as being out of the world in a indefinable existence that is not real life anymore but without the rest of physical death, in a sort of painful survival that, for them, is nothing but a kind of death", says Ségla concerning 'cotardized' patients (SÉGLAS, 1894/2006, p. 224).

Let's maintain, however, the difference between the tragic hero that makes us see "the line of sight that defines desire" (LACAN, 1959-60/1991, p. 300) and the cotardized, immortal like desire, says Lacan, but, precisely, excluded from it. Antigone went to that place by means of her act, an act connected to her radical submission to the laws of language and the desire that are tributary of it. The right she invokes and defends with her gesture is the right "that emerges in the language of the ineffaceable character of what is — ineffaceable, that is, from the moment when the emergent signifier freezes it like a fixed object in spite of the flood of possible transformations" (LACAN, 1959-60/1991, p. 337). The "register of being of someone who was identified by a name" must be preserved by funeral rites.

Antigone's position represents the radical limit that affirms the unique value of his being without reference to any content, to whatever good or evil Polynices may have done [...] That purity, that separation of being from the characteristics of the

historical drama he has lived through, is precisely the limit or the *ex nihilo* to which Antigone is attached. It is nothing more than the break that the very presence of language inaugurates in the life of man. (LACAN, 1959-60/1991, p. 338)

Therefore, it is because he imposes castration upon himself the, because he submits himself to the laws of language that the hero is there. The cotardized, on the other hand, manifests the consequences of not having ascended to this 'registry of what can be localized by a name', it is worth mentioning, the register of the name, the signifier. Rigorously speaking, the expression according to which it is the register of being that must be symbolically preserved is to be understood, from our point of view, in reference to what Lacan said right before, the reference to "ineffaceable character of what is", since it "is" in language (see: LACAN, 1959-60/1991, p. 338).

WHAT KIND OF NEGATION IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT *BEJAHUNG*?

In the commentary of Freud's *Negation* (FREUD, 1925/1993), Lacan says that the negativeness of the discourse raises the question of knowing "what the non-being that manifests itself in the symbolic order [we read: the subject] owes to the reality of death" (LACAN, 1954b/1998, p. 381).

We see that the existence of the subject depends on a negativeness. The negativeness introduced by the signifier that makes the subject a subject only represented by a signifier, which is related to the negativeness introduced by the phallus as a symbol of the loss of the object and directive signification of the desire. We know, with Lacan, that the subject depends on hiatuses instituted by language, the first of them being the extraction of the object that discompletes the subject, solidary of the fact that the subject itself, now only represented by the signifier, discompletes the signifier chain. Even if, chronologically, it comes first, it depends retroactively on the phallic signification to inscribe and structure, on one hand, a subject marked by something that is missing and by death and, on the other, the object as being lost. Lacan's well known aphorism according to which, for the psychotic, the body has all the importance (when, for the neurotic it is the Other) is formulated in reference to the idea that, in the phantasy (neurosis), subject and object are "tied" by the function of the cut (LACAN, 1961-62/s/d, lição de 13/6/62, p. 378). The cut is what separates the subject from the object and is also what ties them, it is the way the subject is tied to the object. The object's function structuring the desire depends on it being occult, veiled: "we see how, in a moment, everything steps back, everything is erased in the signifier function, in the face of the ascension, of the irruption of this object" (*Ibid.*, loc. cit.).

We can conceive the death of the subject in psychosis as this erasing of the signifier function, visible in the petrification of all that is flow, movement, like time and the physiology of the body — “identification to a Real that lacks nothing, a Real with no hole: is there something more authentically terrible?” (CZERMAK, 1996, p. 216). Pointing, as the classics have already pointed out, that negations delusions also take place in the context of others psychotic evolutions, Czermak says that “this point is where the unicity of psychosis is indicated, the central aspect, in every psychosis, of the phenomenon of death of the subject, the identification to the corpse, to the void, to *a*” [object *petit a*] (Ibid., p. 215).

Therefore, what is the negativeness in the death of the subject? Czermak proposes an inversion: the ‘denier’ that is the cotardized actually affirms his replenishment. “It’s an affirmation that uses the negation mode, affirmation of having no longer any orifice, that all tubes of the body are closed” (Ibid., p. 203).

In that same sense, Melman observes that Cotard’s negation is a specific type of negation coming from the Real, in the absence of the role of the phallus and in the absence of *Bejahung*: “an opposition coming from the Real to everything that would pretend to exist, once the founding and legitimizing instance is missing” (MELMAN, 2001, p. 250). It seems to us that the reach of this observation consists in showing that the Real is in opposition to everything pretending to approach it from outside castration, it is worth mentioning, without the acceptance of a limit to the representation. The phallus, at the same time that it opens for the subject the access to representation, does it by accepting the impossibility of representing everything, that is, constituting the object *petit a* as a negativeness. “The negation proper to Cotard’s syndrome comes, then, from the Real, as it has the singularity of refusing, of abolishing everything that proposed to represent it and contain it” (Ibid., p. 251-2).

Cotard’s syndrome shows the consequences for a subject of a subsistence having for only support the Real. The subject is an effect of the signifier; in this sense, he is also an invocation, a charge, a demand posed by the signifier. Each subject, neurotic or psychotic, is — or will have been — an articulated answer in the Real for the injunction that comes from the incidence of the signifier. The neurotic resorts to the phallic instance that gives him the shelter of phantasy, support of the desire. But, nevertheless, he encounters the limits of this, since the phallus is nothing but an operator of the discourse that gives the subject the possibility of sustaining the desire through its own acts and at its own expenses, under the condition of submitting itself to the structure disposed by the signifier. In “Subversion of the subject ...”, Lacan says that the subject is constituted by subtracting itself from the signifier chain, discompleting it. At the same time, it is constituted by “counting itself in it, and playing only the function of something that is missing” (LACAN, 1960/1998, p. 821). The limit of the neurotic subject

is, therefore, located between the risk of fading under the signifier — in favor of an ego-prevalence that freezes itself as an image —, and his as decentration as “ego” in order to submit himself to the signifier and ensure the desire, assuming the responsibility for the loss of *jouissance* that is implied.

Nowhere throughout his teaching, Lacan excludes the psychotic from the assertion according to which the subject is supposed by the signifier. Not even when mention the problems of the psychotic structure at the level of the signifier itself. When speaking of holophrasis, Lacan says that the abolition of the interval between signifiers gives the model a whole series of cases: the psychosomatic phenomenon, the mental debility of the child and psychosis, “even if, in each one, the subject doesn’t occupy the same place” (LACAN, 1964/2008, p. 231). What place it occupies in the psychosis? In his “Petit discours aux psychiatres” (“Little speech to psychiatrists”), Lacan says that the language makes the subject, makes it because it gives birth to the fact that the object cause of desire, the subject must seek it in the Other. The psychotic, on the other hand, his cause, the object *petit a*, he didn’t separate himself from it; he carries it on himself, he has the object *petit a* “in his pocket” (LACAN, 1967, p. 13). Thus, the neurotic benefits from the object put between parenthesis — a reference to $i(a)$ and to the separation of object in the phantasy by the function of the cut —. Therefore, he can suppose that he suffers because of the misencounter with the object, when, in truth, he suffers from the cut of the signifier. On the other hand, the psychotic suffers from the object, from the real and oppressive presence of the object within his field, colonizing the field that would belong to the subject. In this sense, the psychotic subject is in a position so collapsed with the object that he confounds himself with it — a situation that constantly puts him in the imminence of succumbing to what Lacan called the death of the subject.

That the subject has died, it is, as we have seen, an original formulation produced by Lacan in order to localize what allowed Schreber to ascend to some sort of inscription of himself as a subject in the delusion. Here, we developed the notion following two directions: as a moment during the evolution of a psychosis that opens a more favorable position; and as real limit against which the psychotic is confronted, radical limit that circumscribes the structural elements of psychosis. In the first case, the death of the subject and the imaginary recomposition are two moments of a same process. In this sense, the death of the subject can be, in a given evolution, a sort of psychotic equivalent of what, in a neurosis, make possible the representation of the subject. In this case, would it be a sort of *Bejahung* that, by structure, didn’t take place? Would it correspond to a sort of ‘original affirmation’ in psychosis, as it would allow to operate, in a certain level, with the negativeness (in the sense that we previously used *Bejahung*)? We won’t go as far as to say it assertively, for it would demand a broader

addressing of the of *Bejahung* which wouldn't be possible considering the scope of this paper. However, the way that we developed the question here certainly permits this hypothesis, since if it's an opening in the direction of an imaginary recomposition via delusion, it implies a certain level of representation. Thus, beyond the clinic of psychosis, it enlightens this dimension in which the subject depends on death e allows us to say, with Lacan, that "the intermediation of death is recognizable in any relation in which man enters the life of his story" (LACAN, 1953/1998, p. 320) — even in psychosis.

In the second case, it's as real limit that the death of the subject is profiled in the horizon of psychosis. In that sense, it corresponds to the permanency of the subject in the clinical condition that, in Schreber, was transitory (stupor, delusional representations concerning his being dead, cotardization, and, so to speak, 'demential' evolution), or to the transposing of the limit that Czermak called "point of act" (suicidal passages to the act, self-mutilation and others, sometimes with criminal consequences) (CZERMAK, 2012, p. 192). Psychoanalytically — provided we don't reify the notion, a notion that is, essentially, signifier and operative —, it indicates psychosis' thrust towards being, the ever imminent "reversion [of the subject] with the a object" (Ibid., loc. cit.).³

We see, then, that is not about posing the question, always infinite and depending on each case, whether there is or not a subject in psychosis, since the question of the subject is an ethic exigency, at the same time that its advent is an effect — but to interrogate the manner by which, in the clinical practice, in treatment institutions, in brief, in the transference, we deal with the this condition of imminent ejection of the subject proper to psychosis.

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³ The hypothesis that we sought to explore in the present paper was that the death of the subject is an element of the structure of psychosis that can go in the two directions mentioned above. If the experience shows these two possibilities of evolution, the fact that they are derived from the same element of structure compels to not consider them completely separated and would open the possibility of approaching the question by other ways that we didn't circumscribe here — for instance, through the delusion, present in both cases

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