

SEX IN PSYCHOANALYSIS AS A NEGATIVE ONTOLOGY

Rafael Kalaf Cossi^{1 2}, Orcid: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5659-4659>

ABSTRACT. The purpose of this article was to defend the thesis that sex in psychoanalysis has an ontologically negative character. Since Freud, we have known that sex is not limited to specific practices or attached to predetermined objects – sex is seen as instinctual; therefore, perverse, polymorphous and childish. In this case, it is a non-positivized object that manifests itself in negative phenomena, such as the formations of the unconscious – sex, unconscious and not-knowing are intimately associated. The radical ontological impasse concerning sex makes up the Lacanian developments concerning desire and jouissance. Keeping to the negativity that is proper to it allows to draw other consequences from the aphorism ‘there is no sexual relationship’ – in addition to the idea of obstacle or impediment, the negative ontological face of non-relation is problematized, corresponding to the link between symbolic and real, which can be formalized in the matheme S (\mathcal{A}). The article also highlights clinical incidences of this proposal – recognizing that ontological irreducibility of negation diverts us from positive determinations that support identity norms in the clinical horizon.

Keywords: Sex; psychoanalysis; negative ontology.

O SEXO EM PSICANÁLISE COMO ONTOLOGIA NEGATIVA

RESUMO. O objetivo deste artigo é defender a tese de que o sexo em psicanálise apresenta caráter ontologicamente negativo. Desde Freud, sabemos que sexo não se restringe a práticas específicas nem se aferra a objetos predeterminados – sexo é encarado como pulsional; sendo assim, perverso, polimorfo e infantil. Desta feita, trata-se de um objeto não positivado e que se manifesta em fenômenos negativos, como as formações do inconsciente – sexo, inconsciente e não saber estão intimamente associados. O impasse ontológico radical concernente ao sexo compõe os desenvolvimentos lacanianos referentes ao desejo e ao gozo. Ater-se à espécie de negatividade que lhe é própria permite extrair outras consequências do aforismo ‘não há relação sexual’ – para além da ideia de obstáculo ou impedimento, problematiza-se a face ontológica negativa da não relação, correspondente à ligação entre simbólico e real e que pode ser formalizada no matema S (\mathcal{A}). O artigo também põe em destaque incidências clínicas desta proposta – reconhecer a irredutibilidade ontológica da negação nos desvia das determinações positivas que sustentam normatizações identitárias em horizonte clínico.

Palavras-chave: Sexo; psicanálise; ontologia negativa.

¹ Universidade de São Paulo (USP), São Paulo-SP, Brazil.

² E-mail: rkocsi@hotmail.com



EL SEXO EN EL PSICOANÁLISIS COMO ONTOLOGÍA NEGATIVA

RESUMEN. El objetivo de este artículo es defender la tesis de que el sexo en el psicoanálisis tiene un carácter ontológicamente negativo. Desde Freud hemos sabido que el sexo no se limita a prácticas específicas, ni se aferra a objetos predeterminados: el sexo es visto como pulsional; así, perverso, polimorfo e infantil. Esta vez, es un objeto no positivo que se manifiesta en fenómenos negativos, como las formaciones del inconsciente: el sexo, el inconsciente y el no-saber están estrechamente asociados. El impasse ontológico radical sobre el sexo constituye el desarrollo lacaniano sobre el deseo y el goce. Cumplir con su propio tipo de negatividad nos permite extraer otras consecuencias del aforismo ‘no hay relación sexual’: más allá de la idea de obstáculo o impedimento, el aspecto ontológicamente negativo de la no-relación, correspondiente al vínculo entre lo simbólico y lo real, se problematiza. Este marco teórico se puede formalizar en el matema S (\bar{A}). El artículo también destaca las implicaciones clínicas de esta propuesta: reconocer la irreductibilidad ontológica de la negación nos desvía de las determinaciones positivas que sustentan las normas de identidad en el horizonte clínico.

Palabras clave: Sexo; psicoanálisis; ontología negativa.

Introduction

In ‘Sobre psicanálise “selvagem”’ (2013), Freud exposes the case of a woman who comes to him, very distressed, due to separation from her husband. She tells him that before this meeting, she had consulted a young doctor, a presumed psychoanalyst, who would have told her that the cause of her suffering was sexual lack, suggesting, then, three ways out: first, to return to her husband; second, take a lover; third, satisfy herself. From such recommendations, his current therapy is inferred, and Freud (2013, p. 330) states: “[...] in these therapeutic alternatives of the supposed psychoanalyst, there is no room left for – psychoanalysis”.

The young doctor would have understood ‘sexual life’ as synonymous with coitus or masturbation, that is, a practice. But every time we reduce sex to a practice, we misplace sex from psychoanalysis. We imagine, alongside Zupančič (2017, p. 7), that in the face of the typical reprimand “[...] for Freud, everything is sex; Freud is a lecher [...]”, which he would not defend himself by claiming “[...] sex is natural!”, but which he would reply in the form of a question: “[...] what is sex? Are we talking about the same thing?”

As a curiosity: in 1926, in Russia, Andrei Platonov wrote a manifesto called *O anti sexus*, in support of the creation of an electromagnetic instrument that would appease our fierce sexual propensity – beneficial both to soldiers in war and to ordinary citizens. In addition to freeing us from the alleged immorality and animality that sexual practices would incite, it would make social life more courteous and friendly –it follows that sex would be an obstacle to civilized man. This manifesto became famous and even Henry Ford signed it. Perhaps as a response to Platonov’s manifesto, according to Schuster (2016), Stanislaw Lem publishes *Sexplosion* in 1979 – it consists of the narrative that a drug, called *nosex*, was created with the aim of containing the sexual urge of coitus. Despite the program’s success, an unpredictable effect ensues. Desire moves with force to orality and disorders related to eating break out – even ‘pornoculinary’ appears. This literary work is based on a powerful psychoanalytic precept: there is no way to escape the sexual drive –

it transits, focuses more on one erogenous zone than another, but it cannot be eliminated. By the way, since the *Três ensaios sobre a teoria da sexualidade*³, from 1905, we know about the unbearably drive disposition of human sexuality: perverse, polymorph and infantile.

In the conference 'A vida sexual humana', Freud (2014) is explicit: sex is not restricted to reproduction or coitus, as it includes acts such as kissing, masturbation and even childbirth. Initially, Freud will turn to perversion to research sex – perversion here is referred to sexuality that deviates from the reproductive function. In this investigation, he cites homosexuals, for renouncing reproduction; then to perverts who adopt preparatory actions (looking, touching, etc.) as the goal of their sexual desires; third, sadists and masochists; finally, to those who replace the search for satisfaction in reality with fantasies (they do not need a concrete object). Sexual satisfaction obtained in these conducts would not be of a different kind than genital satisfaction; neither would they be less, nor more sexual. The supposed deviations from the 'normal' goal, in these cases, are not considered as signs of degeneracy. In short, Freud will explore the theme of 'sex' in a terrain where common-sense sex is not.

If the most diverse parts of the body can be cathected, the organs that involve excreting and feeding us, for example, are also sources of sexual pleasure – polymorphy. So, what we have so far: the sexual drive is perverse (does not rely on the reproductive function), without a pre-established object and polymorphous (affects various regions of the body).

In hysteria, repressed sexual activity achieves satisfaction in the form of symptoms, such as paralysis of a leg – this would be a replacement. Freud states:

The countless sensations and innervations presented as symptoms in hysteria – in organs that apparently have nothing to do with sexuality – thus reveal their nature: they are accomplishments of perverse impulses, in which other organs have taken on the importance of sexual organs (Freud, 2014, p. 409).

Another condition is inferred from obsessional neurosis: sublimated sexual satisfaction would be combined with intellectualization: "[...] the components of the sexual instinct are characterized by this faculty of sublimation, of exchanging the sexual end for one that is more distant and of greater social value" (Freud, 1996a, p. 65). In this sense, the act of research would act as a sexual activity, as can be seen from the psychic dynamics of Leonardo da Vinci (Freud, 1996b).

Of course, such transmutability of the drive is not only highlighted in the manifestations of clinical conditions such as hysteria or obsessional neurosis – common infantile activity opens it wide: "[...] the pleasure achieved in the act of sucking, we characterize as sexual" (Freud, 2014, p. 416, authors emphasis). What does this mean? That sucking is not just about food. It is the fact of not being reduced to a 'natural' satisfaction – in this case, satisfying hunger – that makes sucking 'sexual'; because even satiated, the baby continues to demand the breast.

Hence the Freudian boom: children have always been sexual beings, even if their sexual organs have not yet reached the biological function for the sexual act. And more: adult life does not overcome such a conjuncture – child sexuality continues in the adult. The maturity of sexual organs does not bury that sexuality that is not directed to genitality

³ Freud "[...] 'discovered' sexuality as intrinsically meaningless, not as the ultimate horizon of all man-made meaning. *Três ensaios sobre a teoria da sexualidade* (1905) remains a very important text in this regard. If one had to summarize his argument in a single sentence, the following would come close enough to expectations: (human) sexuality is an enigmatic-paradoxical [*paradox-ridden*] deviation from a norm that does not exist" (Zupančič, 2008, p. 3, authors emphasis).

and sexual reproduction – the partial drives that involve looking, touching and sucking, among others, remain active.

In short, sexual drive in Freud is perverse, polymorphous and infantile; the libido is sexual and participates in sublimation, obsessional thoughts and hysterical symptoms. The drives are never definitively unified, allowing the different partial drives to continue circulating, cathexing parts of the body and mobilizing the most diverse activities. After all, where is sex if it seems to be everywhere? It is as if there was a conceptual dispersion. Would we deduce from this that it was a Freudian theoretical malpractice? No, it is just that sex is not absolutely capturable or circumscribed. The problem is the ontological status of this object, which makes the decree ‘sex is that’ unfeasible.

The pretension to define it or to limit it in positive determinations is vain. Freud is led to come across this question because, even with contents being revealed, even with the patient ‘knowing’ (and being told) of the means to solve their sexual need – as can be seen in ‘Sobre psicanálise “selvagem”’ –, the symptoms continue. Deciphering or revealing the apparent sexual meaning behind the symptoms did not dissipate them – on the contrary, the clinical tactic of producing meaning in what concerns ‘sex’ only distances us from it.

From this angle, we argue that there is an epistemological passage, which becomes more evident with Lacan’s entry into the scene. From sex as a repressed content that, revealed, would ‘cure’ the subject, for the treatment of sex in its ontological instability. Ascribing predicates to sex, whatever it may be, dismisses its negative character. Moving away from a hermeneutics,

[...] ‘the sexual will be, for Lacan, the presence of the negative in the subject’. It will be the field of a fundamental experience of inadequacy that is revealed in the inability of subjects to produce adequate representations of objects of jouissance, as well as adequate representations of sexual identities [...]. This is why Lacan can claim that the advent of the sexual will always be linked to trauma arising from the ‘radical inadequacy of thought to the reality of sex (Lacan, S XIV, session 18.1.1967). Inadequacy that indicates how ‘the sexual is shown by negativities of structure’ (Lacan, AE, p. 380) (Safatle, 2006, p. 67-68, authors emphasis).

Hence, the tension within Lacan: how to recognize the sexual, if it remains outside the processes of symbolization, as it takes into account the negativity that is at the heart of the subject? Sex is an object that carries its own negation; but if there is a self-denial of its identity, this does not mean that it is an object that cannot be conceptualized. Lacan, by using Hegel’s turn to negativity⁴, attributes another ontological thickness to this object, resistant to being absorbed by any and all principles of positive, imagery or representational regulation – the intelligibility of sex is widened.

On the Lacanian horizon, the reality of sex does not suit thinking – of sex, as coextensive with the unconscious, it is not known. Copjec (1994, p. 207) states: “To say that the subject is sexed is to say that it is no longer possible to have any knowledge about him or her. Sex has no other function than to limit reason, to remove the subject from the field of possible experience or pure knowledge”. Sex would be the attestation of the subject’s own non-knowledge.

⁴ “[...] for Hegel, the negative is not a lack of determination or a positive in itself that appears as a negative only within an oppositional relationship. On the contrary, Hegel’s greatest effort was to think of a ‘negative in itself’, beyond its opposition to the positive. It is about restoring the ontological dimension to the negative, through the negativity of an essence that must take the form of an object and, even so, preserve its negative character, which perhaps indicates the true sphere of Hegel’s influence on Lacan” (Safatle, 2007, p. 183, authors emphasis).

In this sense, it is not that there is a lack of information about sex; what happens is that knowledge itself involves a gap, a non-knowledge, which runs in parallel with the incidence of the sexual – thus, according to Copejc (1994, p. 207), sex “[...] becomes what is not communicated, which marks the subject as unknowable”. Hence, it is crucial to highlight two points: not knowing is a type of knowing – it is an unconscious knowing, which radically differs from the ‘not known’; and ‘negative’ is not synonymous with absent – the negative appears as presence, as a present lack⁵. Therefore, it is not that there is a lack of data on sex or that the signifier of sex, something external to it, is lacking, but that it itself encompasses a non-knowledge; and the lack of a signifier is intrinsic to it.

Sex turns to the flaw inherent in the field of language. However, when Copjec speaks of ‘language failure’, he is not referring to the insufficiency of a pre-discursive object, but to the contradiction that language carries within itself – sex coincides with this failure, this inevitable paradox, while structuring. Thus, the author condenses her position: sex is “[...] the structural incompleteness of language, and not that sex is incomplete in itself” (Copjec, 1994, p. 206).

Therefore, the difficulty would not come from our inability to elucidate the sexual or from its slippery mutant aspect, as if its meanings were always in process, but from the opacity of its status as an object - opacity found both in the discursive scope and in the symptomatic and symbolic productions and the temporality that is specific to it.

Sex cannot be housed in a biological or cultural domain – by the way, sex does not have a domain of its own. Therefore, it manifests itself in negative phenomena. If, according to Lacan (1964, p. 81) “[...] the reality of the unconscious [...] is the sexual reality[...]”, then sex is alongside the formations of the unconscious, as lapses and symptoms — interruptions that point to discontinuity and disorder, corrupting the causal chain maintained in chronological time. Copjec (2012) interprets the Emma case in this way.

At first, when she was 8 years old, Emma was approached by a store salesperson who, laughing, touched her genitals. Such a scene, however, was not configured for her as an invasion or sexual abuse at that moment; only years later, when she entered a clothing store alone, Emma ran out of there, frightened, to witness two salespeople laughing, thinking they were making fun of her dress. For Copjec (2012), this second incident updates the previous scene, bringing its sexual character to the forefront, as if it were the first time. The emergence of the sexual, and its trace of ungraspability, unfolds in two phases: in the first, sex is outside the experience; in the second, in turn, it is absent from the action that would provoke it. Sex appears as an enigma, as a function of suspension of meaning. In Emma’s condition, it can be seen in her productions of symptoms – such as not going into stores alone.

In Emma’s anachronism, the past is infected by the displaced present - introducing, today, an early sexuality to be experienced at the time - just as the present seems to be hit by the past also out of place. This is important in order to go against a developmental view – like the one typical of common sense that, preliminarily, children are asexual, and only then are sexualized. The point is that the sexual is not foreshadowed (nor postponed); only reap its effects. Sex is not located in chronological time, in speech or exactly in what act.

Finally, returning to the ontological vein, sex, corresponding to unconscious non-knowledge, is not a being qua being; nor a substantialized non-being. Sex is breaking;

⁵ To exemplify this kind of negativity, Zupančič (2012, p. 9) brings an anecdote: “A guy enters a restaurant and asks the waiter: Coffee without cream, please. The waiter replies: I’m sorry sir, we don’t have cream. Could it be coffee without milk?”. It is not just coffee, but coffee with a lack – a lack belonging to coffee.

something never definitively fulfilled and that testifies to a short circuit: sex is antagonistic to being and, paradoxically, it is part of it – the plot that sustains this rationality is called ‘negative ontology’. Zupančič (2017, p. 16) concludes: “The unconscious is the very form of the existence of an ontological negativity pertaining to sexuality”. So, the link between the unconscious, sex and knowledge requires operations that assume negativity in ontological extension.

Clinical developments

The roots of this whole conjuncture regarding the negative and its ontological thickness can be inferred from Lacan himself. In seminar 11, when approaching the unconscious through the structure of the gap, he states: “[...] it is an ontological function that is involved in this gap, in this fundamental structure, for which he considered it necessary to introduce as the most essential, as being the most essential to it, the function of the unconscious” (Lacan, 1964, p. 16) Further on, regarding the order of the unconscious: “[...] it is that it is neither being nor non-being, it is something unfulfilled” (Lacan, 1964, p. 16). The unconscious comprises a gap or a hiatus whose structure disturbs the metaphysical system of opposition between being and non-being.

In the same seminar 11, now starting from the discussion about the phenomenology of the gaze in Merleau-Ponty, Lacan clarifies his position regarding ontology:

This is an opportunity for me to define, to remember, what certainly in my speech ‘is not’ (n’est pas). As [...] of those who have followed me long enough since my *Écrits* to review what is contained in such a note [...] to say that I seem to pursue the particular objective of the search for an ‘ontological status of psychoanalysis’ supported by the foundations of a philosophical coherence from which all aspects of Freudianism would be reinterpreted, what we used to call ‘naturalism’. Despite the ‘impasses’ where it seems to lead, maintaining it seems indispensable, because this perspective is one of the few attempts, if not the only one, to ‘embody the reality of the psyche without substantiating it’. And of course, I will say, I have my ontology – why not? – like everyone else at the level of a philosophy, whether naive or elaborate (Lacan, 1964, p. 36-37, emphasis added).

There is an ontological function of the gap that structures the unconscious, and through which it operates. Such a gap, however, should not be substantiated (either as a being or as a non-being). The ‘Lacanian ontology’ passes through the ‘is not’. This non-being is not synonymous with deprivation or a precarious void of determinations: we have here a “[...] mode of negation that is a mode of presence of what remains outside of reflexive symbolization with its identification protocols, without this necessarily implying in some form return to the ineffable” (Safatle, 2007, p. 178). The mode of negation active in this modality of ontology, and which is not based on the notion of substance, as we can rescue in Lacan, has the impasse as a mark.

Authorized by Lacanian passages such as those exposed above, the works of Vladimir Safatle and Christian Dunker extract clinical implications from a coveted program of reading conceptual operators of psychoanalysis via negative ontology.

Safatle (2006), based on Hegel and post-Lacanian authors such as Žižek and Badiou, argues that, in the confrontation between subject and object, structures of recognition of an ontological negation participate in and, from this perspective, examines the notion of drive. Safatle offers a critical perspective on Lacan's canonical ways of reading, going beyond the prism of Lacanian Kantianism – if useful in an epistemic aspect, it also allows for a reconsideration of segments of the clinic. The ontology that starts from the discursivity of being as a being underlies the regime that lends itself to the

normalization of the field of praxis, determining a priori the configuration of its possibilities - as an alternative, Safatle (2007) proposes an ontology whose regime is based on experiences of denial, to then reorient clinical decisions that are no longer supported by positive determinations. This disposition would restore the dignity of indeterminacy and contingency in the clinical sphere against, for example, the illusion that the adaptation to identity conditions corresponding to the sexual norm would necessarily reduce suffering, and that, consequently, should serve as a beacon or reference from which therapeutic success would be equated.

If, according to Safatle (2007, p. 151), “[...] one of Lacan’s most important contributions consists in the defense that psychoanalysis is solidary of a complex but decisive articulation between clinic and ontology [...]”, the author maintains that, in the Lacanian version of drive theory, it is intruded “[...] an ontology founded on the recognition of the ontological irreducibility of negation” (Safatle, 2007, 150) – to be verified, for example, in the negation impulse that the death drive entails and that is shown when the imaginatively constituted objects are distorted or annulled by the signifying vein. For Safatle,

[...] the death drive is an ontological concept. This is because, by linking the death drive to what is satisfied through the negating power of language, when it frees itself from its realistic illusions, Lacan completely reorders the traditional notion of symbolization as submission to the organizing power of representation (Safatle, 2007, p. 174).

In short, the Lacanian step that displaced the death drive from the mere compulsive repetition of the instinct of destruction “[...] opened the possibility of structuring a new way of reflection on the figures of the negative in the clinic” (Safatle, 2007, p. 167).

Also, for Dunker (2007), the program of a negative ontology would enable dialogue between different clinical projects in psychoanalysis, as well as would highlight interesting points of contact between philosophy and psychoanalysis. Dunker explains this proposal both when dealing with the relationship between negative ontology and the paradigm of melancholic subjectivity, an entity that would converge to the advent of psychoanalysis in modernity; as for indicating its determining role for thinking about the real in 20th century philosophies. In this case, Dunker (2007) highlights the powerful resources of negative ontology for the ideation of the epistemological aspect of the real in face of reality and for the distinction of similar notions, such as knowledge and truth, knowledge and ignorance.

The theoretical absorptions undertaken by Lacan throughout the course of his work show the diachronic seal of negative ontology, as

Kojève’s dialectic with negative emphasis; language considered as a system of elements without their own positivity, in Saussure and Lévy-Strauss; the axiomatic function of zero and the empty set in Frege’s logic; the writing of the not-all extracted from the mathematics of Cantor and Gödel. However, it should be noted that this effort to de-transcendentalize the subject (through the negative) is accompanied by ontological reflection around the object (theory of jouissance and sexuality, conception of object ‘a’, etc.) (Dunker, 2007, p. 230, authors emphasis).

If the Hegelian resources were decisive for the composition of the perspective Lacan finds in psychoanalysis, and if there are several consequences of this incorporation, we highlight, for our research purposes, their role in the “[...] subversion of the object of knowledge as an epistemological category” (Dunker, 2007, p. 229). Thus, we maintain that the negative key offers another angle of analysis of the epistemological category of the object ‘sex’ – and that it can precisely be based on deparations of the Lacanian aphorism “[...] there is no sexual relationship”.

Sex as non-relationship

In order for there to be sex, an operation is required. The body in Plato's *O banquete* is not a sexed body. Androgyny is the overriding principle. Sex approaches the Latin *secare*, to cut – in this sense, the androgyne has no sex; it was cut in half and the two separated beings 'sexed' differently. The cut, as an effect of language, elevates the being of nature to the subject of the unconscious – since then, it has been transformed into the fantasy of mythical completeness, in an attempt to imaginatively restore the totalized One. The cut produces the idea that there was the One to be reestablished, but in vain: there is no one plus one – two; two corresponding parts that, together, would recompose the One. Perhaps 'sex' is the name of the non-reconciliation between one sphere and another that the cut made heterogeneous.

This panorama requires giving up basic principles such as the one governing the model of sex reproduction – or the myth of the androgyne –, which predicts an essentialized being in contact with another essentialized being, symmetrically opposed and that, together, would come into relationship. Therefore, sex does not point to a relationship, but to a non-relationship (rapport) – no proportion between one and the other; and Lacan will dedicate himself to logically formalizing, with his theory of sexualization, what makes “[...] from one obstacle to the other” (Lacan, 2012, p. 99).

The no relationship can be viewed in two ways. Or as the absence of relationship – the eternal mismatch of lovers, 'men are from Mars, women from Venus' etc., that is, attributing asymmetrical predicates to man and woman, dissonant qualities that make harmonic conjunction unfeasible; or as a 'non-relationship' – that is, ontologically, but in a negative way, as Zupančič (2017) argues. Following the same rationality: non-relationship exists as long as it does not exist; or exists while non-existent. According to Žižek (2013, p. 485, authors emphasis):

It is easy to see how this passage from 'there is no sexual relationship' to 'there is a non-relationship' evokes a Kantian passage for the negative judgment of infinity: 'he is not dead' is not the same as 'he is undead', just as 'there is no relationship' is not the same as 'there is a non-relationship'. The importance of this passage, with respect to sexual difference, is that, if we stop at 'there is no relationship' as our decisive horizon, we remain in the traditional space of the eternal struggle between the two sexes.

There would then be a change of principle in the Lacanian itinerary – “[...] from the ontological principle of non-contradiction to the principle that there is no sexual relationship” (Žižek, 2013, p. 485). Safatle (2006, p. 133), under the same prism as that of the Slovenian philosopher, concludes that “[...] sexual intercourse becomes possible *through* its failure. [...] it is thanks to its failure that the object can unveil the ontological negation that engenders it”.

Let us not be deceived by the pessimistic aura that such developments and their related terms tend to evoke in terms of love and eroticism – if common sense tends to associate them with defeatism or resignation, on the other hand, it is the inescapable non-relationship that strictly promotes that the most diverse modalities of love bonds and erotic connections are conceivable; that multiplicity is an emblem of sexuality – non-relationship allows freedom. Otherwise, we would live endlessly tied to the ideal of complementarity – concomitant with the genital sexual act –, that is, to a heteronormative panorama that would confine us to a pre-established and limiting framework. Lacan states in seminar 18:

[...] serious people, to whom these elegant solutions are proposed that would consist in the domestication of the phallus, well, the curious thing is that they refuse to accept them. And why, if not to preserve the so-called freedom, insofar as it is precisely identical to the non-existence of the sexual relationship? (Lacan, 1971/2009, p. 69).

In short, the sexual relationship as non-existent is what endorses the plurality of forms of relationships, which leads us astray from a unilateral and pre-programmed route towards the objects of drive satisfaction - such non-predetermination frustrates the scope of total satisfaction or harmonic encounter between subject and object, keeping the unformatted antagonism and the sex in force, never bowed to the norm. Libertarian horizon, coextensive with access to the symbolic order and phallic regency.

As Lacan has shown since the 1950s – the entry into language removes us from the scope of necessity; demand is demand for love and recognition. In this process, a remainder is produced, the desire – which is not pleasure, is not the result of the discharge of accumulated tension. Desire is unconscious and is not satisfied with empirical objects – desire brings in itself a pure negativity that transcends imaginary adherences and that frustrates being fulfilled through the phenomenon; it is precisely its emptying that makes desire *sexual*.

However, the negative figure of the void denotes a contradiction pertinent to sexual reality - if resistant to substantiation or symbolic capture, which would bring sex closer to the register of the real and to the category of the impossible, on the other hand, sex does not occur without the symbolic. There is an impasse applicable to the registration of the real – there is no real outside of language. In a way, the real is registered in the symbolic sphere, but as a limit or paradox: “[...] the real is an obstacle inherent to the symbolic [...] it would be an impossibility inherent to language, which is defined in and through it” (Goldenberg, 2019, p. 161). In this reading, there is a short circuit: it is part of the structure, at the same time it is incompatible with it – the title of this collapse is ‘sex’. If the real does not cease to not be written, and if sex – real, which is not without the symbolic – points to non-relationship, then the non-sexual relationship does not cease to not be written. The non-relation maintains itself by not inscribing itself in language – or, to another extent, inscribing itself as something that cannot be inscribed. Let us be clear: it is not that it does not inscribe itself completely, that it inscribes itself only partially, but, from this point of view, that it inscribes itself insofar as it is not inscribable.

If, for Goldenberg (2019, p. 125), “[...] the abandonment of hope of a properly psychoanalytic ontology is verified in the elaboration of the category of the real [...]”, we argue that the real does point to an ontology, but a negative one. If the real is not a being as being, but triggers its impasse point, such point, in turn, does not succumb to positivation – on the other hand, it can have its respective negativity treated ontologically.

It is only through this prism that we approach the statute of Lacanian concepts that make up the field of sex as a non-relationship – among them, *jouissance*, testimony of the disturbance between the real and the symbolic. In this sense, for Zupančič (2012, p. 5, authors emphasis): “[...] sexuality (like the real) is not something that exists ‘beyond’ the symbolic; it ‘exists’ only as the bending of symbolic space that arises because of something additional produced with the signifying gesture”.

It is never too much to emphasize that Zupančič considers that, in this context, records should not be taken by themselves⁶ — there would be no ‘symbolic sex’ or ‘real sex’; or that sex would have a symbolic aspect and one more, the real one. Otherwise, sex

⁶ In terms of Safatle (2006, p. 226), “[...] the dialectical core of Lacanian psychoanalysis must be sought in the logic of negations supporting the relationship between the Real and symbolic determinations”.

must be thought of in the intercurrency between both: the real would 'curve' the symbolic, distorting its binary operability - signifier/signified, synchrony/diachrony, for example. This would open the door to another mode of operation – perhaps to be portrayed by Klein's bottle gear – which would even allow considering non-binary ways of conceiving sexual difference (Cossi, 2018).

Finally, sex as an ontologically negative non-relationship runs parallel to the not-so-obvious connection between symbolic and real. The real is in internal contradiction to the symbolic and it is from this structure, from this not evident bond that sex springs; or sex designates this accident. In any case, what theoretical element would attest to such a conjuncture? According to Zupančič (2017), it would be the matheme $S(\bar{A})$: an element that is heterogeneous to the symbolic order and that, at the same time, belongs to it. The emergence of this structure coincides with the non-emergence of a signifier, while there is a signifier of this lack of a signifier – and the signifier of the lack of a signifier does not complete the \bar{A} (barred Other). The fault remains 'internal'. Therefore, it is not that the signifier of sex is missing, but that sex is the consequence of the lack of a signifier, of this gap – a gap whose inconsistency reveals “[...] the sexual as the concept of a radical ontological impasse” (Zupančič, 2008, p. 11).

This whole plot causes a disturbance, leaving a particular trait: *jouissance*. In seminar 20, Lacan (1972-73, p. 31) speaks of 'jouissance substance', which would seem contradictory to our purposes – since Lacan uses the term 'substance' –, if we do not stick to his previous assertion: “But what is *jouissance*? This is exactly what, for the moment, is reduced to a negative instance for us: *jouissance* is what is of no use” (Lacan, 1972-73, p. 4). We can say that sex coincides with the antagonistic gap to being, insofar as it is included in it – real with symbolic –, and that it has *jouissance* as a product; substance which, in turn, counts for its intrinsic negativity.

Final considerations

The effect of the signifier makes us subjects, removed from animal nature; hence the drive does not submit to the model of sexual reproduction, which prescribes a certain choice of object and a specific activity as a target (genital sexual practice). The drive is partial – perverse, polymorphous and infantile – and remains unified, insuperable. Therefore, we have to take a new stand in the face of models based on the imaginary and normative ideal of complementarity or proportion between one and the other, and which predicts a restricted relationship. We go in the direction of the impossibility of relationship when we talk about sex which, if linked to the idea of an obstacle, paradoxically is what makes us free and allows different expressions of sexuality to exist. It is because there is no relationship that sex can appear, even in negative phenomena, such as the manifestations of the unconscious – otherwise, sex would be circumscribable, locatable and randomly restricted to a particular action. The transition from the inexistence of a relationship to the existence of a non-relationship concerning sex admits an ontological impasse, a short circuit of language that demands a recapitulation of the negative – the junction of the real with the symbolic, which has *jouissance* as derivation and the matheme $S(\bar{A})$ as insignia.

References

- Copjec, J. (1994). *Read my desire: Lacan against the historicists*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Copjec, J. (2012). The sexual compact. *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities*, 17(2), 31-48.
- Cossi, R. K. (2018). *Lacan e o feminismo: a diferença dos sexos*. São Paulo, SP: Annablume.
- Dunker, C. I. L. (2007). Ontologia negativa em psicanálise: entre ética e epistemologia. *Discurso*, (36), 217-242.
- Freud, S. (1996a). Cinco lições de psicanálise. In S. Freud. *Obras psicológicas completas de Sigmund Freud: edição standard brasileira* (Vol. XI, p. 17-66). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Imago. Trabalho original publicado em 1909.
- Freud, S. (1996b). Leonardo da Vinci e uma lembrança de sua infância. In S. Freud. *Obras psicológicas completas de Sigmund Freud: edição standard brasileira* (Vol. XI, p. 67 - 142). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Imago. Trabalho original publicado em 1910.
- Freud, S. (2013). Sobre Psicanálise “Selvagem”. In S. Freud. *Obras completas* (Vol. IX, p. 324 - 333). São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras. Trabalho original publicado em 1910.
- Freud, S. (2014). A vida sexual humana. In S. Freud. *Obras completas* (Vol. XIII, p. 404-424). São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras. Trabalho original publicado em 1917.
- Goldenberg, R. (2019). *Desler Lacan*. São Paulo, SP: Instituto Langage.
- Lacan, J. (1964). *Le séminaire, livre XI – fondements*. Paris, FR: AFI. Recuperado de: <http://staferla.free.fr/S11/S11%20FONDEMENTS.pdf>
- Lacan, J. (2009). *O seminário, livro 18 – de um discurso que não fosse semblante*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Jorge Zahar.
- Lacan, J. (2012). *O seminário, livro 19 – ...ou pior*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Jorge Zahar.
- Lacan, J. (1972-73). *Le séminaire, livre XX – encore*. Paris, FR: AFI. Recuperado de: <http://staferla.free.fr/S20/S20%20ENCORE.pdf>
- Platonov, A. (2016). The anti-sexus. *Stasis*, 4(1), 10-19. Trabalho original publicado em 1926.
- Safatle, V. (2006). *A paixão do negativo: Lacan e a dialética*. São Paulo, SP: Editora Unesp.
- Safatle, V. (2007). A teoria das pulsões como ontologia negativa. *Discurso*, (36), 151-192.
- Schuster, A. (2016.) Sex and anti-sex: introduction to Andrei Platonov's “The Anti-Sexus”. *Stasis*, 4(1), 41-47.

Žižek, S. (2013). *Menos que nada: Hegel e a sombra do materialismo dialético*. São Paulo, SP: Boitempo.

Zupančič, A. (2012). Sexual difference and ontology. *e-flux jornal*, (32). Recuperado de: <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/32/68246/sexual-difference-and-ontology/>

Zupančič, A. (2008). Sexualidade e ontologia. *Revista Estudos Lacanianos*, 1(2).

Zupančič, A. (2017). *What is sex?* (Short Circuits series). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Received: Nov. 05, 2019

Approved: Mar. 29, 2021