

Beyond the Pleasure Principle

by Sigmund Freud

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LACAN AND FREUD: BEYOND THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE

Introduction

“Lacan and Freud: Beyond the Pleasure Principle” sets out to explore Freud’s (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, so as to rediscover important themes and concepts which could influence a contemporary understanding of Psychoanalysis. Lacan and Freud are presented side by side, not only to demonstrate the influence and effects of Lacan on Psychoanalysis, but also the effects of Freud on

Lacan. Consequently, the emphasis isn't placed on Lacan's "return to Freud", as Lacan has introduced concepts and terms that have altered the way Psychoanalysis is perceived today.

This thesis is a sustained analysis of Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. It argues that this text is seminal, not only for Freud's subsequent works, but also for the works of Jacques Lacan's. This is not a free interpretation of Freud or Lacan, but a rigorous reading of the primary texts. What makes this thesis different and new in many regards is the incorporation of Freud's (1950) *A Project for a Scientific Psychology*, a posthumously published manuscript that provides a different framework to describe and define the pleasure and the reality principle. It therefore becomes a question as to how Freud's (1950) *Project for a Scientific Psychology* changes or adapts our understanding of the pleasure principle and in turn, of Psychoanalysis.

The thesis poses challenge to mainstream understandings of Psychoanalysis, especially in the discipline of Psychology. This point is illustrated through, for example, the reality principle. An undergraduate psychology textbook, written by Pervin and John (2001) define the reality principle as follow: "gratification of an instinct is delayed until the time when the most pleasure can be obtained with the least pain or negative consequences" (p. 81). This thesis agrees with half of their definition, as to the reality principle being the delaying of gratification; however, the reality principle is not goal orientated, as signified when Pervin and John write "until the time...". The relation between the reality principle and the pleasure principle can best be explained in terms of a movie, for example about the delivery of an object. The pleasure principle would be the delivery of the object, i.e. the goal. If the goal was achieved immediately, there would be no film or it would be a very short film. The reality principle is what prevents the achievement of the goal. In the example of the movie about the delivery of an object, a flat tyre or a wrong phone number would constitute the reality principle. Every action that results in the delay of the achievement of the pleasure principle is the reality principle. To quote Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*:

The latter principle [the reality principle] does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but it nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure. (p. 7)

Freud's words might seem to corroborate Pervin and John's definition of the reality principle. However, Freud illustrates that the reality principle is the delay of pleasure until it can be achieved, which means that *the reality principle is not a conditional principle* that aims for a delay until maximum pleasure can be obtained.

Another example in an undergraduate psychology textbook is Meyer, Moore, and Viljoen's (2003) definition of the reality principle:

This contains the idea that the ego takes physical and social reality into account by using conscious and preconscious cognitive processes such as sensory perception, rational thinking, memory and learning. Instead of the id's futile attempts at drive satisfaction by means of fantasy and wish fulfilment, the ego uses reality testing, object choice and object *cathexis*, which means that the ego tries to establish on rational grounds whether or not an object is serviceable. (p. 54, their italics)

Their conception of the reality principle is also connected to a conscious and rational thought process, whereby the reality principle is also a conditional procedure that only functions under certain circumstances. They go on to define the secondary process as follow:

This means that the ego evaluates and weighs up a situation before any action is undertaken. Unlike the id, which insists upon the immediate drive satisfaction (primary process); the ego is therefore able to reflect upon and plan the satisfaction of drives, and to postpone satisfaction to an appropriate time and situation (secondary process). (p. 54) However, in Freud's (1950) *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, the reality principle is established as synonymous with the second principle. Meyer, Moore and Viljoen's (2003) description is not necessarily wrong, as Freud (1970) has formulated the reality principle in a similar fashion: "the reality principle, which at bottom also seeks pleasure – although a delayed and diminished pleasure, *one which is assured by its realization of fact, its relation to reality*" (p. 365, my emphasis), but Freud also writes - validating the description presented in this thesis - "Then it appeared that from the outset they each have a different relation to the taskmistress Necessity, so that their developments are different and they acquire different attitudes to the reality-principle" (p. 419). Therefore, when Freud speaks of the reality principle as a necessity, he does not propose an alternative to the pleasure principle, but posits that the reality principle occurs when the pleasure principle cannot be sustained. Meyer, Moore and Viljoen's description is difficult to follow and not always concisely worded. Their argument is an over complication of the reality principle. Consequently, their reading is difficult to incorporate in the larger corpus of Freudian Psychoanalysis.

The two definitions of the reality principle provided by two different undergraduate textbooks illustrate two varying yet similar descriptions. This thesis proposes a modest reading, where the reality principle proves more fruitful through a simplistic definition in line with Freud's (1950) *Project for a Scientific Psychology*. The application of this simpler definition increases its scope.

Another concept that provides difficulties is Lacan's description of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real. However, this thesis does not define, but aims to illustrate and demonstrate the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real. The reason for not defining and then applying the definition is that they are emergent properties¹, rather than *a priori* descriptions. The problem of defining the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real can be illustrated through Meyer, Moore and Viljoen's (2003) definitions. According to them the Imaginary "is associated with images and imagery, is ontogenetically older than the symbolic order" (p. 219). The most important description of the symbolic order is "Language controls the symbolic order" (p. 221). As for the Real: "The real, for Lacan, includes contact with that which lies outside the limits of meaningful structuring and which cannot be interpreted as a meaningful whole" (p. 223). Unfortunately, Meyer, Moore and Viljoen (2003) don't sufficiently explain the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real, or how they are connected. A better illustration is to explain the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real in terms of a game of chess. The Symbolic can be illustrated by the chessboard and pieces with the rules that dictate how the game is played, and includes as how the pieces move. The Imaginary is illustrated by means of the description of each piece whereby the Knight differs from the Bishop, and the Queen from the King. The Real is the indeterminable aspects, such as player skill, the impact of time control, or just pure luck. The Real is always the unknowable as illustrated in a chess game, which is why the outcome is always in doubt.

Jean Baudrillard is one of the biggest detractors of Psychoanalysis. His critique will be summarized here, as well as the relevant response. This will demonstrate the wider application of Lacanian Psychoanalysis. Baudrillard's (2000) *Symbolic Exchange and Death* criticizes the relation between the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real; he defines the Symbolic and its relation to the Imaginary and the Real as:

The symbolic is neither a concept, an agency, a category, nor a „structure“, but an act of exchange and *a social relation which puts an end to the real*, which resolves the real, and, at the same time, puts an end to the opposition between the real and the imaginary. (p. 133, his emphasis)

¹ Emergent property is used in the same way that Cilliers' (2000) *Complexity and Postmodernism* describes: "The concept „emergence" is often used in a way that creates the impression that something mysterious happens when „things come together". The way in which it is used here implies nothing ineffable whatsoever. It merely underlines the fact that nothing „extra", no external telos or designer, is required to „cause" the complex behavior of a system. Perhaps it would be better to employ the term „relational properties" rather than emergent properties" (p. 143n2).

Baudrillard's critique is that the symbolic overwrites both the Imaginary and the Real, and consequently "puts an end to the opposition". Lacan already acknowledges the primacy of the Symbolic and the destructive nature of the signifier, as seen when the signified is replaced by the signifier and consequently becomes known as the signifier. As Ferdinand de Saussure (1960) explains, the signifier is not the signified, but is connected through an arbitrary relation. For Freud and Lacan, the signifier is a close approximation, but since it is not an exact match, the Imaginary and the Real are lost. It is for this reason that Lacan emphasizes a language theory, which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2. For Baudrillard (2000), Psychoanalysis' understanding of the relation between the signifier and the signified can be summarized as follow:

It is certain, however, that Psychoanalysis has given the signifier-signified relation an almost poetic slant. The signifier, instead of manifesting the signified in its presence, is in an inverse relation with it: it signifies the signified in its absence and its repression, in accordance with a negativity that never used to appear in linguistic economy. The signifier is in a necessary (not arbitrary) relation with the signified, but only as the presence of something is with its absence. It signifies the lost object and takes the place of this loss. (p. 225)

Baudrillard criticizes Psychoanalysis' usage of Linguistics, specifically in Lacan and Freud. This is illustrated when Baudrillard (2000) writes:

The entire architecture of the sign must be demolished, even its equation must be broken, and it is not enough merely to multiply the unknown factors. Alternatively, then, we must assume that Psychoanalysis still makes room somewhere for a certain mode of signification and representation, a certain mode of value and expression: this is in fact precisely what Mannoni's „empty“ signified stands for – the place of the signified remains marked as that of the mobile contents of the unconscious. (p. 227)

For Baudrillard, the relation between the signifier and the signified is at stake in terms of the production of meaning outside of the unconscious. He takes issue with Psychoanalysis because it continually connects the signified to unconscious processes whereby the unconscious has a fixed meaning, which Freud maintains is inaccessible. Properties that emerge from the unconscious are only fragments that do not give the full detail of the unconscious, but are just that, incomplete fragments. Baudrillard continues: There is no longer a means of unblocking the system, forever *caught fast in the obsession with meaning*, in the fulfilment of a perverse desire that comes to fill the empty form of the object with meaning. In the poetic (the symbolic) the signifier *disintegrates* absolutely, whereas in Psychoanalysis it endlessly *shifts* under the effect of the primary processes and is distorted following the folds of repressed values. (p.227, his emphasis)

Baudrillard's critique is therefore aimed at the source of the „value“ the signified has, and more specifically with the way that Psychoanalysis locates the source of „value“ in the unconscious.

This thesis explains how Freud pinpoints the source of values to the unconscious and how they become imbedded through the primary narcissistic stage, as well as the creation of the *ego-ideal* and the *ideal-ego* in Chapter 1. Consequently, Freud's response to Baudrillard's disagreement with Psychoanalysis' fixed unconscious is to locate and explain the unconscious in a developmental model.

However, Baudrillard's disagreement stems from his disappointment with the inability of the signifier and the signified to produce an “authentic”² meaning, as illustrated in Baudrillard's (2005) *The System of Objects* when he writes: “Collecting is precisely that kind of organization. Our ordinary environment is always ambiguous: functionality is forever collapsing into subjectivity, and possession is continually getting entangled with utility, as part of the ever-disappointing effort to achieve a total integration” (p. 92-3). Baudrillard highlights two aspects: function and possession. An object always has a purpose or a function in an ontological sense, but there is always another component attached: ownership of the object, which ties in with passion. This is clear when he writes:

Apart from the uses to which we put them at any particular moment, objects in this sense have another aspect which is intimately bound up with the subject: no longer simply material bodies offering a certain resistance, they become mental precincts over which I hold sway, they become things of which I am the meaning, they become my property and my passion. (p. 91)

The problem arises when this argument is combined with the argument against Psychoanalysis' usage of the signifier-signified relation: possession of an object is offset by the impossibility of possession. “What is possessed is always an object *abstracted from its function and thus brought into relationship with the subject*” (p.91, his emphasis). The argument Baudrillard tries to balance is the ratio between facticity and the added “imaginary” meaning. Baudrillard's critique is more focused on his own disappointment in establishing a complete description that accounts for “authenticity”, facticity and ownership. This is exactly what Lacan's language theory proposes when combined with the Symbolic, Imaginary and Real. A complete description that accounts for both the usage and ascribed meaning is impossible, as this equation is always disrupted by the Real - the unknown and indeterminable component that always distorts “authenticity”. Lacan's approach does account for how certain

² On „authenticity“ Baudrillard (2005) writes: “The demand for authenticity is, strictly speaking, a very different matter. It is reflected in an obsession with certainty – specifically, certainty as to the origin, date, author and signature of a work” (p.81).

properties are desired, committed to, and held onto. This is achieved by connecting the unconscious to the developmental model proposed by Freud through the introduction of the primary narcissistic stage, the Oedipus complex and the mirrorstage. Or as Lacan (2008a) put it:

That the unconscious is structured as a function of the symbolic, that it is the return of a sign that the pleasure principle makes man seek out, that the pleasurable element in that which directs man in his behaviour without his knowledge (namely, that which gives him pleasure, because it is a form of euphony), *that which one seeks and finds again* is the trace rather than the trail – one has to appreciate the great importance of all of this in Freud's thought, if one is to understand the function of reality. (p. 15, my italics)

This thesis consists of four chapters that consider the important themes that comprise Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The first chapter highlights the developmental approach as described by Freud in terms of the Ideal-ego, the Ego-ideal, and Narcissism, as well as Lacan's introduction of the Mirror stage. The first chapter consequently summarizes Freud's developmental model and Lacan's „return to Freud“ which demonstrates how Lacan builds on Freud.

Chapter 2 describes Freud's neurological model that determines the conditions whereby pleasure is achieved. This is described in terms of Freud's (1950) *Project for a Scientific Psychology* that emphasizes how the pleasure principle and the reality principle are defined, and sets the tone for Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Chapter 2 also introduces Freud and Lacan's language theory. Freud's rudimentary language theory was conceived to illustrate how the unconscious and the contents of the unconscious can be known. Freud's terminology is the *Sachvorstellung* and the *Wortvorstellung*, which Lacan links to Saussure's signified and signifier. What the language theory proposes is that there are discrepancies between the object and the word that the object is known as. Lacan takes Freud's conception further, even so far as to say that the object becomes the word, and as a result, any “authenticity” is lost. Chapter 2 establishes the implications of the pleasure principle with regard to 1) Freud's notion of the unconscious, 2) Lacan's explanation of *das Ding*, 3) the difference between *jouissance* and *plaisir*, and 4) the relationship between *das Ding* and the Law.

Chapter 3 focuses on two important Freudian aspects presented in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), namely the repetition compulsion [*Wiederholungszwang*] and the case study of Fort/Da. It was in the Fort/Da case study that Freud found justification for the repetition compulsion whereby Freud demonstrated how a previous trauma repeats and manifests in subsequent behaviour. Lacan's Lschema is also discussed to clarify a psychoanalytic description of an intersubjective theory, for

example the relation between the Subject and the Other, or as presented in the Fort-Da case study, between the child and the mother.

Chapter 4 centres on the most controversial aspect of Freudian Psychoanalysis, the Death Drive. This chapter focuses on Freud's description, Lacan's rewording, and the relevant criticisms. That chapter forms the crux of this thesis, as Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* has been rejected by many based on Freud's inconsistent wording.

Chapter 5 is a conclusion, and a description that ties this thesis together. Each chapter can be read individually. Chapter 5, however highlight and emphasize the themes that tie the concepts and terminology together.

There is plenty of repetition throughout this thesis, which stresses the multitude of ways that Lacan's descriptions are applicable. This thesis also has plenty of footnotes, which might not always be clear, but were added by the author for clarification and more importantly for reassurance. The reassurance also acts as a validation for the arguments.

Chapter 1

1.1. Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis focuses on Freud's articles preceding *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). The aim of this chapter is to establish and elaborate on the vocabulary that Freud developed. The single most important aspect discussed in this chapter is the development of the ego. Any notion of the conscious or unconscious is described in terms of the ego.

Therefore, the ego first needs to be described and defined, and this is done, first, through the development of the ego through Freud's conception of Primary Narcissism and the distinction between the Ideal-ego (*Ideal-ich*) and Ego-ideal (*Ich-ideal*); second, Lacan's focus on the development of the ego through the mirror stage, which is when and how Lacan states how the initial commitment to the ideals imposed by the primary caregiver³ take place. Lacan's mirror stage is read in two distinct

³ Primary caregiver is used to denote the parents, whether they are the biological parents or otherwise. ⁴

All translations of the Dutch articles or texts indicated in the square brackets [] are my own.

ways, from an anthropologicalbiological viewpoint, and a symbolic viewpoint. The mirror stage demonstrates the difference between the self and the representation of the self, or as Lacan shows, through the self and the reflection of the self in the mirror. Therefore, self-identity is not given from the outset, but has to be found in the mirror. Van Haute (1989) summarizes this as follow: “Het ik is niet van bij de aanvang gegeven. Het moet dus ontwikkeld worden” [The I is not given in advance. It therefore has to be developed]⁴ (p. 14).

According to Moyaert (1983) “Twee perspectieven hebben voortdurend en afwisselend Freuds metapsychologische zoektochten georiënteerd” [Two perspectives have, perpetually and varyingly, orientated Freud’s meta-psychology] (p. 392). The emphasis of the first perspective emphasizes the constitution of the I as a surface organ, whereby the ego acts as an extension of the body, and whereby the I must adapt to the limits of reality and rationality of consciousness. The ego, therefore, is an adaptive measure constrained by the undifferentiated ego. The emphasis is on the rational and reasonable ego to control the unconscious drives and impulses. The problem arises when the rational ego fails to control the unconscious drives and impulses. This failure results in the failure of the ego to adapt to reality, in what can be considered a rational, objective, and universal explanation.

Moyaert describes the second perspective as follows:

Naast dit eerste model dat sporadisch opduikt in het oeuvre van Freud is er evenwel een tweede dat bij de konstitutie van het ik rekening houdt met belangrijke fenomenen en concepten als identifikatie, idealisatie, narcisme, auto-erotisme, ikideal, ideal-ik. [In addition to the first model, emerging sporadic in the oeuvre of Freud, is also a second, that constitutes the I with recognition of the important phenomenon and concepts such as identification, idealization, narcissism, auto-erotism, Ideal-ego, Ego-ideal] (Moyaert, 1983, p. 394)

This chapter falls within the second perspective of the development and constitution of the I, linking concepts such as narcissism, idealization, auto-erotism, Ideal-ego and Ego-ideal; each is dealt with in its own subsection. This is also the perspective prevalent in Lacan, which is illustrated in the mirror stage.⁵ Starting with Narcissism, this chapter will connect the abovementioned terminology, and end with a discussion on how narcissism manifests in everyday gestures and behaviours, as based on the preliminary definition of the pleasure principle as “the avoidance of pain and the production of pleasure” (Freud, 1920, p. 4).

A variation of this chapter was presented at PPA Colloquium *Locating Consciousness in the Pleasure Principle using Freudian and Lacanian theory* (P.L. van der Merwe, 2008a)

1.2. Freud's Primary Narcissism

Freud aims to explain the ego in biological-anthropological terms, and has to find a starting point. Freud identifies the first innate location of sexual satisfaction, also known as the erotogenic zones. Importantly, erotogenic zones are preceded by auto-erotism, which denotes an automatic, innate perception to stimulation and excitation. Thumb-sucking, for example, "is determined by a search for some pleasure which has already been experienced and is now remembered" (Freud, 1905, p. 181). Freud is referring to remembrance of the past as well as a symbolic return to that past, whereby the sucking of the thumb is connected to the act of breastfeeding, but specifically connected with the *pleasure* gained from the act of breastfeeding. "Door te zuigen aan zijn duim zal het kind, bij onstentenis van de moederborst, in de mond de oorspronkelijke lustervaring opnieuw trachten op te wekken" [Through thumb-sucking, the child will, by default of the mother's breast, through the mouth attempt to awake (arouse) the original desire-experience] (Moyaert, 1983, p. 396). Freud is very specific about the nature of the satisfaction gained, which is not reducible to sexual pleasure, but this pleasure does become affiliated with sexual pleasure. "To begin with, sexual activity attaches itself to functions serving the purpose of self-preservation and does not become independent of them until later" (Freud, 1905, p. 182). Freud continues: "the need for repeating the sexual satisfaction now becomes detached from the need for taking nourishment" (p. 182). In other words, the constant is not the body part, nor the purpose of that body part, but precisely the level of excitation that is experienced. "The quality of the stimulus has more to do with producing the pleasurable feeling than has the nature of the part of the body concerned" (p. 183). The significance of Freud's argument places pleasure in a genealogical context, in which the pleasure experienced is described in relation to the first experiences of pleasure. For Freud, the biological processes at work in the initial moments that produce pleasure are the same biological processes at work later on, in what is more commonly described as sexual pleasure. In other words, the same biological factors are involved from the beginning, which necessitate Freud's developmental stages to explain how the initial moments of pleasure become sexual pleasure later on: "[P]recisely as in the case of sucking, any other part of the body can acquire the same susceptibility to stimulation as is possessed by the genitals and can become an erotogenic zone" (p. 184).

The conceptual scaffolding which we have set up to help us in dealing with the psychical manifestations of sexual life tallies well with these hypotheses as to the chemical basis of sexual excitation. We have defined the concept of libido as a quantitatively variable force which could serve as a measure of processes and transformations occurring in the field of sexual excitation. (p. 217)

The definition of libido that Freud provides emphasizes the quantitative measurement of libido and pleasure. Libido is accordingly described in terms of biology and neuro-chemical processes. The introduction of libido is also a measure to distinguish between the different forms of psychical energy and the production of pleasure. Since pleasure cannot solely be attributed to an erotogenic region, libido becomes the intermediary, which makes erotogenic zones possible to begin with; in other words, to develop an erotogenic zone, instead of assuming a fixed/automatic erotogenic zone. Freud's developmental stages assume replacement and substitution, which Freud only develops in greater detail in *On Narcissism: an Introduction* (1914) and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920).

We can then perceive [libido] concentrating upon objects, becoming fixed upon them or abandoning them, moving from one object to another and, from these situations, directing the subject's sexual activity, which leads to the satisfaction, that is, to the partial and temporary extinction, of the libido. (Freud, 1905, p. 217)

The argument that Freud is developing, is that it is not the body part that has an inherent potential to be an erotogenic zone, but it is through libido that any body part can gain that role. This is exemplified when Freud writes in *On Narcissism*:

Let us now, taking any part of the body, describe its activity of sending sexually exciting stimuli to the mind as its „erotogenicity“, and let us further reflect that the considerations on which our theory of sexuality was based have long accustomed us to the notion that certain other parts of the body – the „erotogenic“ zones – may act as substitutes for the genitals and behave analogously to them. (p. 84)

The progression of Freud's argument leads from auto-erotic zones to libido to narcissism. The classical definition of narcissism is described by Paul Näcke and taken as a starting point by Freud in *On Narcissism*. Freud (1914) rewords Näcke's definition of narcissism: To denote the attitude of a person who treats his own body in the same way in which the body of a sexual object is ordinarily treated –

who looks at it, that is to say, strokes it and fondles it till he obtains complete satisfaction through these activities. (p. 73)

Narcissism entails the focus of libido onto the self, in which the body is seen as a source of pleasure and satisfaction. It is not just any body, but the own body. Freud's definition of narcissism (in line with the classical definition) is therefore: "The libido that has been withdrawn from the external world has been directed to the ego and thus gives rise to an attitude which may be called narcissism" (p. 75). This definition of narcissism and libido allows for greater manoeuvrability, whereby it allows libidinal investment onto the ego, as opposed to libidinal investment onto the body. The outcome of Freud's definition of narcissism allows different definitions of the self to be deemed narcissistic, compared to the classical definition which focuses on a body and the satisfaction derived from the presence of the body.

This argument is also present in Lacan's mirror stage, by exemplifying this relationship between the ego and the body. Lacan also incorporates Freud's definition of narcissism. Consequently the mirror stage demonstrates the gap between the self as an object and the self as an abstract concept, or in Lacanian terms, between the self and the representation of the self.⁴

The more pertinent question to ask is, how does the separation in libido occur that distinguishes between pleasure produced through stimulation of the erotogenic zones (for example the genitals, etc) and the pleasure produced from an abstract concept, (for example a photograph, etc.)? Freud asks two important questions, focusing on the difficulties and relevance of the article on narcissism. First, "what is the relation of the narcissism of which we are now speaking to auto-erotism?" (p. 76). Second, "if we concede to the ego a primary cathexis of libido, why is there any necessity for further distinguishing a sexual libido from a non-sexual energy pertaining to the instincts?" (p. 76).

Freud's solution to the first question is achieved through two explanations. First, by acknowledging the development of the ego, in terms of a linear explanation relating concepts back to an initial moment of pleasure (which forms the core of Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*⁷). Second,

⁴ The self and the representation of the self is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, especially with regard to Lacan's adaptation of Saussurean Linguistics, i.e. the signifier and the signified. ⁷

Illustrated in the Fort/Da case study in Chapter 3, the repetition compulsion in Chapter 3, as well as the Oedipus complex that initiates desire within a chain of signifiers.

by achieving this linearization through connecting narcissism with auto-erotism. Essentially Freud is explaining the development of the ego using primordial autoerotism as the starting point.

Freud's answer to the second question is more pertinent; he examines three reasons to differentiate between different types of libido.

Firstly, by differentiating between the sexual instincts and egoinstincts can also be seen as the "the common, popular distinction between hunger and love" (p. 78). The difference is between concrete physical stimulation and an abstract conceptual stimulation.

Secondly, by differentiating between sexual instincts and egoinstincts Freud emphasizes a double function: "The individual does actually carry on a double existence: one to serve his own purposes and the other as a link in a chain, which he serves against his will, or at least involuntarily" (p. 78). This passage can be interpreted in a few ways. For one, the paradox between a Darwinian evolutionary-developmental model which is structured with rules and norms, as opposed to a hedonistic, pleasure-seeking, rule-ignoring (not subverting or undermining, but dismissing) behaviour. A second interpretation focuses on the separation between conscious and unconscious motivations. "He is the mortal vehicle of a (possibly) immortal substance" (p. 78). This quote refers to the germ-plasm theory discussed in greater length in Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. However, the possibility of a germ-plasm theory connects one with a natural meta-historical progression that connects biology to a greater history that would connect the body to a purpose, but Freud abandoned the germ-plasm theory. The third and most prevalent interpretation emphasizes that the flow or focus of libido is not under the sole control of the ego, i.e. libidinal investment isn't done through a conscious-directing of libido.

Thirdly, Freud acknowledges biology where the instinct is connected to an organic substructure. "We are taking this probability into account in replacing the special chemical substances by special psychical forces" (p. 78). Freud's emphasis on biology and relating psychical forces to a biological purpose connects any psychical phenomena to a biological foundation. In other words, love and hunger are both explained in terms of biological processes. However, Freud finds it difficult to explain all phenomena in terms of biology.

As a result, Freud changes his focus from biology to the conditions during early childhood. He thereby changes his focus towards the relationship between the child and the primary caregiver, also known

as attachment. He identifies two types of attachment, namely the narcissistic type and the anaclitic type [*Anlehnungstypus*]. The difference between the two is the focus of libido, highlighting the inside/outside separation. In the anaclitic attachment type libido is focused on the primary caregivers, whilst in the narcissistic type the libido is focused internally, on the self.

Freud (1914) describes the two types of attachment as follows:

A person may love: -

(1) According to the narcissistic type:

- a . What he himself is (i.e. himself),
- b . What he himself was,
- c . What he himself would like to be,
- d . Someone who was once part of himself.

(2) According to the anaclitic (attachment) type:

- a . The woman who feeds him,
- b . The man who protects him,
- c . And the succession of substitutes who take their place. (p. 90)

Freud doesn't abandon the biological approach, but attempts to describe attachment in terms of development and sexual development. For Freud the type of preferred attachment is connected with the initial auto-erotic sexual gratification. Freud (1914) writes: The first auto-erotic sexual gratifications are experiences in connection with vital functions in the service of selfpreservation. The sexual instincts are at the outset supported upon the ego-instincts; only later do they become independent of these, and even then do we have an indication of that original dependence in the fact that those persons who have to do with the feeding, care, and protection of the child become his earliest sexual objects: in the first instance the mother.

(p. 87).

The relationship between the child and the primary caregiver is more complex than just the feeding, caring and protection of the child. "In the child to whom they [the mother] give birth, a part of their own body comes to them as an object other than themselves, upon which they can lavish out of their narcissism complete object-love" (p. 91). The role of the child in the mother-child relationship is therefore one of receptor, to receive the messages, hints and intentions of the parent, who – in turn - imprints their own ambitions onto the child.

Moreover, [the parents] are inclined to suspend in the child's favour the operation of all those cultural acquisitions which their own narcissism has been forced to respect, and to renew on his behalf the claims to privileges which were long ago given up by themselves. (p. 91)

The privileges that Freud is referring to are explained: "He is to fulfil those dreams and wishes of his parents which they never carried out" (p. 91). Freud's argument is therefore incompatible with the notion of children born *Tabula Rasa*, whereby there can be no *clean slate*. "Parental love, which is so moving and at bottom so childish, is nothing but the parents' narcissism born again, which, transformed into object-love, unmistakably reveals its former nature" (p. 91). This is one of the first forms of repetition that Freud identifies. The narcissism leads to the creation of an ideal or a goal to which the child aspires. The dreams and ambitions that the parents project onto the child and which the child makes its own, is called the *Ideal-ego (Ideal-ich)*. This projection, however, cannot be maintained, and leads to the formation of a sublimated version, which he termed the *Ego-ideal (Ich-ideal)*.

The next section is focused on these two concepts, *Ideal-ego* and *Ego-ideal*, their formation, and how the two terms relate to narcissism.

1.3. Freud's Ideal-ego and Ego-ideal

It has been described how the *Ideal-ego (Ideal-ich)* and the *Egoideal (Ich-ideal)* come to be, but the extent of the *Ideal-ego* and the *Ego-ideal* will be taken further in this subsection. The *Idealego* and the *Ego-ideal* is discussed in Freud's *On Narcissism* (1914) and also in *The Ego and the ID* (1923).

This means that the subject is continually confronted by the ideals created, and this results in a divided subject; or as Moyaert (1983) puts it: "Er is, volgens Freud, geen originele eenheid in het individu aanwezig, die met het ik te vergelijken valt" [There is, according to Freud, no original unity present in the individual, to which the I can be compared] (p. 396-7).

Freud does not connect the ambitions and descriptions the parents have of the child with rationality or reason: "[the parents] are under a compulsion to ascribe every perfection to the child – which sober observation would find no occasion to do – and to conceal and forget all his shortcomings" (Freud, 1914, p.91). The problem arises with the impossibility of living up to the ideals envisaged by the

parents, or even the ideals ascribed to the self. Therefore narcissism can be defined as the love of the self as corroborating with the ideal.

This Ideal-ego is now the target of the self-love, which was enjoyed in childhood by the actual ego (*wirkliche Ich*). The subject's narcissism makes its appearance displaced on to this new Ideal-ego, which, like the infantile ego, find itself possessed of every perfection that is of value. (p. 94, his italics)

"We can say that the one man has set up an *ideal* in himself by which he measures his actual ego, while the other has formed no such ideal. For the ego the formation of an ideal would be the conditioning factor of repression" (p. 93-4, his italics). Repression is done for the protection and self-preservation of the ego. The Ego-ideal takes shape because the Ideal-ego cannot be maintained through successful repression⁸ (also known as sublimation⁹).

To recap: the initial impression that one has of oneself is always in reference to the Ideal-ego, which is mostly created by the

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Repression is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2. ⁹

On sublimation, Lacan (2008a) writes: "in the definition of sublimation as satisfaction without repression, whether implicitly or explicitly, there is a passage from not-knowing to knowing, a recognition of the fact that desire is nothing more than the metonymy of the discourse of demand" (p. 360)

primary caregiver. The definition therefore of primary narcissism is thus the love of the ideal, or more specifically the love of the self as complying with the ideal. The Ideal-ego precedes the development of the ego, which implies that even before the birth of the child, there is already an ideal created. Freud links the initial Ideal-ego with the lost narcissism of the parents. The biological developmental approach favoured by Freud links the formation of the Ideal-ego with auto-erotism. Therefore the formation of the Ideal-ego is conditioned through the libidinal investment into the Ideal-ego. The libidinal investment was made possible through the primary caregivers' nurture and protection, which he explains and describes as the satisfaction of selfpreservation. It seems that there is a coercion at work in which the infant is duped into accepting the ideals created by the parents.

However, the emphasis of this chapter is not on how these ideals come to fruition, but how these ideals are the platform for further understanding of the self. The primary narcissism of the child is the love of the self as the ideal. Consequently, the representation of the self, or how the self would like to

be seen, is greatly influenced by narcissism as shaped through the Ideal-ego. This is how Freud (1914) views the development of ego:

The development of the ego consists in a departure from primary narcissism and gives rise to a vigorous attempt to recover that state. This departure is brought about by means of the displacement of libido on to an Ego-ideal imposed from without; and satisfaction is brought about from fulfilling this ideal. (p. 100).

The Ego-ideal (*Ich-ideal*) replaces the Ideal-ego (*Ideal-ich*), and it will be explained that this replacement occurs out of logical necessity. Because the Ideal-ego retains a purity and perfection, the Ideal-ego has to be adapted and changed to a more accommodating version that includes perversions and distortions. The definition Lacan (1988) provides for the Ego-ideal denotes “an organism of defence established by the ego in order to extend the subject’s satisfaction” (p. 3). The definition of Ego-ideal therefore serves two purposes. First, through the inclusion of satisfaction experienced by corroborating with the ideal; and second, that the development of the Ego-ideal is pleasure oriented, which means that through the sublimation that occurs, the Ideal-ego has to change into a more acceptable and achievable version. From a developmental perspective, Freud is arguing that the Ideal-ego is not necessarily the ideal to which the subject aspires, since the process of sublimation does not guarantee the preservation of that ideal. Consequently, the adapted version is the ideal aspired to, which he calls the Ego-ideal (*Ich-Ideal*).

The difference between the Ideal-ego and the Ego-ideal is not measurable, as the two are intertwined from a developmental standpoint. In other words, the Ideal-ego and the Ego-ideal cannot be viewed separately. “The Ego-ideal has imposed severe conditions upon the satisfaction of libido through objects; for it causes some of them to be rejected by means of its censor, as being incompatible” (Freud, 1914, p. 100).

The conditions of satisfaction or pleasure or the effects thereof are discussed further in the next section under the heading of the Pleasure Principle. It is in line with the developmental model through which the first definition of the pleasure principle is provided in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920).

1.4. The Pleasure Principle

The first step of this section is to define the pleasure principle, and then to place it in context of the developmental model proposed by Freud. This means that the pleasure principle will be connected with the Ideal-ego (*Ideal-ich*) and the Ego-ideal (*Ich-ideal*).

Freud provides a definition of the pleasure principle early on in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920): “that any given process originates in an unpleasant state of tension and thereupon determines for itself such a pass that ultimately coincides with the relaxation of that tension” (p. 4).⁵ The simplified version of the pleasure principle that will be dealt with in this chapter is a basic definition of the pleasure principle as the “avoidance of pain and the production of pleasure” (p. 4).

This simplified definition of the pleasure principle is an inversion of what has been discussed in *On Narcissism*, where Freud argues that through the presence of an object, a release of libidinal tension takes place, whereas in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* the excess libido precedes the object. Through the presence of a specific object is the release in tension possible. This provides a logical criticism as to what came first, the linear progression of the development of the ego or what will become an object of desire.

This is where and how the pleasure principle ties in with the developmental model proposed by Freud. He achieves this through connecting the Ego-ideal (*Ich-ideal*) and the conditions for the achievement of pleasure: “The Ego-ideal has imposed severe conditions upon the satisfaction of libido through objects; for it causes some of them to be rejected by means of its censor, as being incompatible” (Freud, 1914, p. 100). However the Ego-ideal is shaped through the sublimation of the Ideal-ego, which is shaped through the ideal created by the parents and instilled through the satisfaction of object-libido and sexual-libido whilst the two are intertwined and completely oriented by the initial need for selfpreservation.

Or, as described in more practical terms:

Being in love consists in a flowing-over of ego-libido on to the object. It has the power to remove repressions and reinstate perversions. It exalts the sexual object type (or attachment type), being in love occurs in virtue of the fulfillment of infantile conditions for loving, we may say that whatever fulfils that condition is idealized. (p. 100-1) In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud needs to ratify the notion of perception into the biological description Freud provided.

⁵ This definition of the pleasure principle is presented in Chapter 2 in light of Freud’s (1950) *Project for a Scientific Psychology*

The biological explanation already presumes an automatic stimulus and an automatic response. The perception and expectation of pain in a way negate the biological processes at work and prevents the biological formula to complete its course. In other words, the perception of pain acts as an inhibitor for behaviour. This necessitates a mediator between the perceptive and the biological explanations of behaviour, which takes routine into account, yet at the same time allows for deviations from the norm. The mediator therefore has the possibility to extend or limit the influences of biology and/or conscious perception. The mediator was later to be termed the Superego, which is also known as the Ego-ideal. This results in the decentred subject to which Lacan often refers.

This implies the functioning of the I as not wholly constituted through the conscious ego, but as continually mediated by an idealization. As a result, through this idealization, there is a decentering. Ijsseling (1968) summarizes:

„La découverte freudienne est celle d'un décentrement". Wat betekent dit? Uitgedrukt in de terminologie van Lacan zou men het volgende kunnen zeggen: De mens is een wezen dat spreekt. [...] Wanneer de mens spreekt vertelt hij een „verhaal" [*histoire*]. Dit verhaal kan natuurlijk vele en verschillende vormen aannemen. [...] Welke vorm het verhaal echter ook heeft, de mens is geenzins de bezitter van dit verhaal, maar hij wordt eerder door bezeten. De mens beschikt niet over het betoog dat hij houdt, maar er wordt over hem beschikt. [*„The Freudian discovery is one of decentering"*]. What does this mean? Expressed in Lacanian terminology, one could say the following: the person is the being that speaks. When the being speaks, it tells a story. This story can take many shapes and forms. [...] Whatever form the story takes, the person is not the owner of the story, but he is owned by it. The person does not control the story, but the story reigns over him] (p. 7056)

Consequently the story is our most basic description of the pleasure principle whereby the pleasure achieved is a result of the self corroborating with the ideals, as described in the Ego-ideal (*Ichideal*). But how this narration comes to reign is demonstrated in Lacan's mirror stage.

1.5. Lacan's Mirror Stage

Lacan's mirror stage is an important concept that illustrates far more than just the hypothesis of an 18 month old child gazing into a mirror. For Lacan, the mirror stage exemplifies a moment of selfidentification. In *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function*, in *Écrits* (1966/2006) Lacan writes:

We have only to understand the mirror stage *as an identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image – whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory of the ancient term *imago*. (p. 94, his emphasis)

The role of the mirror stage is two-fold. First, the mirror stage explains the development of the subject in terms of a linear biological explanation; and secondly, explains the asymmetry between the self and the reflection in the mirror. The biggest criticism aimed at Lacan is with reference to the first explanation of the mirror stage with regard to biological development. The focus is ontological with specific emphasis on the formulaic description of the mirror stage. Two examples are that of Billig (2006) and Dreyer (2005), as well as a response to their claims and conclusions of the mirror stage. The second explanation focuses on how the separation between the self and the reflection/representation in the mirror attains meaning.

Billig's (2006) main line of critique is: "[theorists] do not question whether there is evidence for such a stage or whether young children act in a way that Lacan claims" (p. 1). This is a challenge to the biological validity of the mirror stage, by examining the biological developmental facts as Lacan (mis)uses them: "what is of interest here, is not the theory as such but the evidential justification Lacan gives for his ideas" (p. 6). Billig accordingly challenges Lacan's usage of Köhler (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 93), Baldwin (p. 93) and Bühler (p. 98). For Billig, the issue resides in the ontological, biological justification of Lacan's conceptualization of the mirror stage. "Thus, Lacan's theorizing about the ideal image is grounded in claims about observable actions. He does not present further evidence to support his speculations about the mirror image providing the child with an idealized image" (p. 21). However this is a one-dimensional reading of the mirror stage.

At the same time, Billig does allow for the second explanation and justification of Lacan's mirror stage. Billig writes: "However, the self-recognition of the mirror stage involves misrecognition [*méconnaissance*], laying the basis for an abiding alienation" (p. 6). This is *essentially* the point that Lacan is aiming for through the mirror stage, whereby the I is alienated from the actual (*wirkliche*) self. The I is the commitment to the misrecognized version, as will be demonstrated through the simplified schema of the two mirrors (see Fig 1, p. 34). Therefore, the mirror stage is the initial substitution in which the actual [*wirkliche*] ego is replaced through the misrecognition of the image in the mirror. The image in the mirror is the contents ascribed to the mirror image based on the ideals shaped by the primary caregiver, as argued by Freud with the development of the *Ideal-ego* and *Ego-ideal*.

Dreyer's (2005) critique also focuses on the possibility of Lacan's description of the mirror stage:

The foregoing dialectic demonstrates that Lacan's mirror stage formulation is not supported by empirical evidence and applied logic. As a consequence the conceptualization of the Other as to its disposition and essentially alienating function thus appears fallacious. (p. 69)

Dreyer focuses on the argument pertaining to the technical set-up of the mirror stage. Dreyer over-emphasizes the ontological set-up in which the infant would look into the mirror and see a reflection. Dreyer questions the possibility that the infant will recognize him/herself. Lacan's argument states that the infant will misrecognize the self in the reflection, and assume that reflection. This is achieved as the reflection has no content, but is only form, an outline. Content is ascribed, injected, imprinted, or projected onto the reflection, which is how the reflection in the mirror achieves any meaning. Dreyer writes: "Furthermore, with clandestine presumptuousness, Lacan's mirror stage formulation implicitly assumes that six to eighteen month old infants necessarily grasp the idiosyncratic properties of mirrors" (p. 68). The underlying argument in Dreyer's argument is therefore twofold; first, that the recognition is impossible because the child needs to use and understand the mirror correctly; and secondly, that if the recognition were possible, the self would see that reflection in the mirror as the actual [*wirkliche*] self. For Lacan, Dreyer's second argument does not hold water, as there is no way one can perceive oneself in the mirror as one actually is without the projection of the ideals created by the primary caregiver and enforced through the pleasure derived from assuming the image. "The author [Dreyer] will demonstrate that Lacan's infant, standing on the legs of the Other, has never been able to walk because these alienating limbs have no veridical substance" (p. 65).

If Dreyer is arguing for Lacan's infant, shaped through the gaze of the Other (through Sartrean and Levinasian intersubjectivity), Dreyer would be correct in assuming the „alienating limbs“ not to have any substance, as the mirror image contains nothing but the properties ascribed. However, Dreyer is missing the initial relationship with the self prior to the relationship with the Other, and how the self is viewed in the mirror.

How the self is viewed in the mirror, first needs to be established. Moyaert (1983) writes on the relationship between the self and the mirror image:

Wanneer ik naar myself kijk, wil ik niet zozeer mezelf zien zoals ik ben maar wil zien hoe ik eruit zie als de ander me ziet; of anders gezegd: ik wil zien hoe de ander me ziet. En dit is een onbereikbaar ideaal. [When I look at myself, I don't necessarily want to see myself as I am, but

to see myself as the other sees me; or put differently: I want to see how the other sees me. And this is an unachievable ideal] (p. 400)

However, it is only because “these alienating limbs have no veridical substance”, that the idealization can take place. In other words, this is how the void is filled through the attribution of properties to the self, as the self cannot be seen as it actually is.

Van Haute (1995) writes on the relationship between the self and other, and connects intersubjectivity to attachment and narcissism: Het is waar dat dit Anlehnungs-model, zoals Freud het ons voorstelt, suggereert – maar alleen suggereert – dat de seksualiteit ontstaat uit een intersubjectief proces: het ontstaan van de seksualiteit vereist de aanwezigheid van de ander. Maar ook al is die ander van bij de aanvang aanwezig, zijn rol kon nauwelijks onbeduidender zijn. De ander blijft louter passief. [It is true that the attachment-model, as Freud describes, suggests – but only suggests – that sexuality develops through an intersubjective process: the development of sexuality requires the presence of the other. But even if the other is present, his role simply remains unremarkable.

The other remains passive.] (p. 729).

But van Haute (1986) also expounds on the relationship between the self and the other in the mirror stage, whereby there is an otherness to the mirror image. Therefore, when I see an other, I see as I would my own mirror image. This is why desire is for the (imaginary) other, and never the real other. He explains:

De menselijke begeerte is dus op dit niveau gelijk aan deze van de (imaginaire) ander. Zij *is* de begeerte van de ander. Dit leidt tot een absolute rivaliteit met betrekking tot het object van de begeerte: ik streef na wat de ander begeerte, *omdat* hy het begeert. Ik *ben* immers de ander. De ander is slecht een complement van mijn spiegelbeeld. [The human desire is thus equal to the (imaginary) other. That is the desire of the other. This leads to an absolute rivalry with regard to the object of desire: I strive towards what the other desires *because* he desires it. I *am* the other. The other is only complementary of my mirror-image] (p. 398, his emphasis)

Dreyer refers to “these limbs” as having “never been able to walk”. As van Haute shows, the relationship with the other is determined by the relationship with the self. This relationship with the self is based on narcissism as shaped through the Ideal-ego and the Egoideal. It seems that Dreyer is rushing into intersubjective theory without speculating on the nature of the interaction with the other, as well as the vantage point from where the other is viewed. The desire for the other sets off a

narcissistic love that precedes the object of love, as the other is seen in the same light as one looks at one's own mirror image. The same expectations and idealizations that one has for oneself, are also expected of the other. Or as van Haute (1986) describes it, "het narcisme gaan die eigenlijke objectliefde vooraf" [narcissism precedes the actual object-love] (p. 394). Therefore, one loves another who exemplifies this idealization that one has for oneself. Narcissism consequently plays a far more important role than the classical definition ascribes to narcissism.

Therefore, to respond to Dreyer in Lacan's own words (2008a): You are aware that the mirror function, which I thought it necessary to present as exemplary of the imaginary structure, is defined in the narcissistic relation. And the element of idealizing exaltation that is expressly sought out in the ideology of courtly love has certainly been demonstrated; it is fundamentally narcissistic in character. [...] It is only by chance that beyond the mirror may on occasion imply the mechanisms of narcissism [...] And the only organization in which it participates is that of the inaccessibility of the object. (p. 186)

The assumption that Dreyer is making, is that the reflection in the mirror is exactly proportionate to the infant/subject standing in front of the mirror. This initial (mis)recognition of the self precedes the relationship the self will have with the other. The emphasis of Lacan is therefore not the relationship the self has with the actual [*wirkliche*] other, but with the imaginary other. For Lacan, this relation with the actual is impossible, as is shown in Chapter 3 in terms of the L-schema (Fig 4, p. 86). This impossible relation results in misrecognition [*méconnaissance*] and an asymmetry between the actual [*wirkliche*] self and the perception of the self - the actual [*wirkliche*] other and the perception of the other.

Antoine Mooij (1979) states the same a bit differently:

Hierin slaagt het doordat het de noties van „zintuigelijke waarneembaarheid“ en „werklijkheid“ gaat loskoppelen. Dit mag de volwassene een simpele operatie toeschijnen, het impliceert dat de notie van wekelijkheid niet meer onlosmakelijk verbonden is met een zintuigelijke indruk en, omgekeert, dat een zintuigelijke indruk niet meer samenvalt met werkelijkheid. [This succeeds through detaching the notions of „sensory perception“ and „reality“. This allows the individual a basic procedure of attribution, this implies that the notion of reality is no longer inseparable from a sensory impression, and, inversely, that one sensory perception is no longer connected with reality] (p. 78-9)

The second explanation is really where the mettle of the mirror stage is tested, as the mirror stage is not an anthropological explication of whether and under what circumstances a child looks in the mirror at the age of 18 months, implying that a child that never looks at its own reflection at the age of 18 months would never go through the mirror stage. The mirror stage is merely the moment of separation between the self and the image of the self, and even more specifically the separation between the self and the representation of the self. In other words, the importance of the child seeing him/herself as an ideal body, as an object. Sam Weber (1991) writes, "The mirror stage hereby locates the constitution of the ego in a dimension of *fictionality* and of self-deception, which will have an alienating effect on the subsequent existence and development of the subject" (p. 12, his emphasis). The reflection in the mirror is void of any content except the content ascribed, which is why fictionality and self-deception is possible when looking at the reflection of the self.

The function of the mirror stage thus turns out, in my view, to be a particular case of the function of imagos, which is to establish a relationship between an organism, and its reality – or as they say, between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*.

(Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 96, his italics)

The relationship between the *Innenwelt* [inside] and the *Umwelt* [outside] is to automatically assume a direct correlation between the two whereby the reflection of the mirror as seen in the *Umwelt* is a projection of the essence of the *Innenwelt*. Lacan argues that they are wholly separate from each other, but the appearance of unity allows for the appearance of control. "The sight alone of the whole form of the human body gives the subject an imaginary mastery over his body, one which is premature in relation to a real mastery" (Lacan, 1988a, p. 79). The imaginary mastery is done through the attribution of qualities to the image. This is done regardless of the accuracy or "truth" in the depiction of the self, but also then conforming to those attributes. In other words, there is an imaginary mastery over the image which denotes both a control of the body movements, but also control over what is represented.

The essence of the image is to be invested by the libido. What we call libido investment is what makes an object become desirable, that is to say how it becomes confused with this more or less structured image which, in diverse ways, we carry with us. (p. 141)

Therefore, Lacan's mirror stage demonstrates this moment of "imaginary mastery". Lacan also illustrates the function of the mirror stage through the simplified schema of the two mirrors (Fig 1, p. 34).

Lacan (1988a) describes the Simplified Schema of the two mirrors as follow:

We may imagine that the real image formed thanks to the concave mirror is produced inside the subject, at a point which we call O. The subject sees this real image as a virtual image in the plane mirror, at O'', in so far as he finds himself placed in the virtual symmetrical position in relation to the plane mirror. (p. 165)

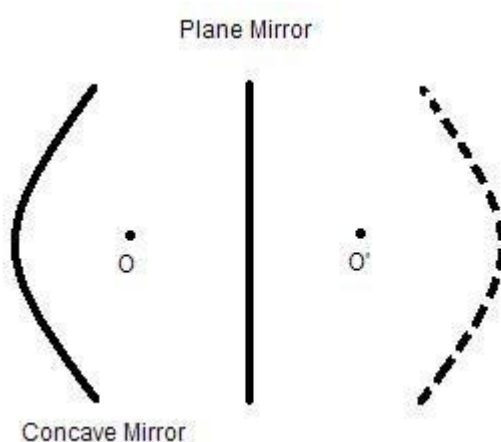


Fig 1: Simplified schema of the two mirrors (Lacan, 1988a, p. 165)

The correlation between the mirror stage and the Simplified Schema of the two mirrors is that both demonstrate the separation between the self and the image of the self. The divide is also termed by Lacan as the separation between the object and the ego, “because they are strictly correlative and because their appearance is truly contemporaneous that the problem of narcissism arises” (p. 165). Or in terms of the Freudian definition of narcissism: the love of the ideal and the self as corroborating with that ideal. This is demonstrated in the simplified schema of two mirrors, and equally so in the mirror stage. The reflection has no contents except the contents ascribed. The ideal that is aspired to is created through narcissism, whereby the true self is compared to the Ideal self. The Ideal self or the Ideal-ego is sublimated and transformed into the Ego-ideal. The Ego-ideal is a more acceptable and accommodating version that includes perversions, narcissism and improper ideation. The content that is ascribed to the image of the self (illustrated in the simplified schema of the two mirrors as O'') is done regardless of the accuracy or possibility of the self achieving the ideal.

Therefore Lacan's mirror stage illustrates the separation between the subject (O) and the image of the subject (O''). The simplistic depiction of $O = O''$ is proven false. The representation (O'') has the shape or form of O, but it is the content is ascribed. This is where Lacan takes his cue from Freud: the representation (O'') is already tainted with the ideals imposed through narcissism. If narcissism is the

love of the self as the ideal, the only way the self can be the ideal is through the corroboration between O and O". This correlation is often artificially created through the pleasure principle and phantasy⁶.

However, the mirror stage also illustrates another important facet, which has a longlasting effect. The next section will focus on the smaller, subtle manifestation of narcissism in terms of instincts, love and substitution. In other words, the section will focus on how narcissism manifests in smaller everyday behaviours.

1.6 Instincts, Love and Substitution

This section focuses on the manifestation of narcissism in smaller everyday behaviors, specifically in the objects of desire, as well as instincts. The argument that Freud presents, is to explain how through repression, narcissism manifests repeatedly in the objects of desire. The arguments are structured around Freud's texts *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (1915a).

The first manifestation in everyday behaviour is instinctual. The description of an instinct is not necessarily linked with an evolutionary explanation in which the instincts relate to a historical biological functioning which still secretly resides in behaviour today. The usage of instincts, in the Freudian sense, is a reference to habitual behaviour which continually reproduces the same behaviour. Therefore, the definition of an instinct used in this thesis is: to behave or act in a fashion consistent with how one has acted in the past.⁷

In *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (1915a), Freud writes on an instinct, which links instincts with a satisfaction, which this thesis argues is connected with narcissism:

The object [*Objekt*] of an instinct is the thing in regard to which or through which the instinct is able to achieve its aim. It is what is most variable about an instinct and is not originally connected with it, but becomes assigned to it only in consequence of being peculiarly fitted to make *satisfaction* possible. (p. 122, my emphasis)

⁶ Freud combined phallus and fantasy to coin the word „phantasy“.

⁷ This argument is also made by Horney (1939) when she writes: "An instinct, according to Freud, is caused by organic stimuli; its aim is to extinguish the disturbing stimulation and re-establish the equilibrium as it was before the stimulation interfered" (p. 122)

The emphasis is placed on satisfaction, which is possible through adhering to the description of narcissism. Therefore, Freud's definition of an instinct is: to behave in the same fashion as one has in the past, thereby increasing the possibility of satisfaction (the pleasure principle). An example of a habitual action/reaction is found in the description of love. Freud writes extensively on the differences and similarities between love and hate. However, for the purpose of explaining love as the satisfaction of an instinct, Freud refers back to the primary narcissism and the development of the Ideal-ego and the Ego-ideal. The argument is to show how the object of desire is attached to an instinct. This means that the object of desire contains a quality that is consistent with previous objects of desire. The replacement of one object of desire is therefore the substitution of a material object. The consistent property that provides the appeal always remains, as this property is attributed to narcissism and instincts. Freud developed the developmental and economical model to stipulate that the properties that one loves are related back towards an initial moment, i.e. the satisfaction of ego- and sexual instincts. "Het cruciale punt is hier dan ook het volgende: seksualiteit ontstaat niet wanneer een adequaat object gevonden wordt (b.v. de borst als object van de orale libido), maar wanneer het object verlore gaat" [The crucial point here is the following: sexuality does not develop when the adequate object is discovered (for example, the breasts as the object of oral libido), but when the object (of desire) is lost] (van Haute, 1995, p. 728). For Freud, it is consequently a return to the initial satisfaction. Therefore, what one loves is the love of a reference to a prior satisfaction. The presence of the object (with a similar quality) is then an attempt to return to the previous state of satisfaction. Freud (1915a) writes on love:

Love is derived from the capacity of the ego to satisfy some of its instinctual impulses autoerotically by obtaining organ-pleasure. It is originally narcissistic, then passes over on to objects, which have been incorporated into the extended ego, and expresses the motor efforts of the ego towards these objects as sources of pleasure. (p. 138)

In short, Freud's developmental model connects the development of love with a prior experience of satisfaction, which in the early developmental phases was both the satisfaction of the ego- and sexual-instincts. Love is exactly the infatuation with a person or object with the characteristics and features that can be related back to an earlier state or stage.⁸

⁸ "When the ego assumes the features of the object, it is forcing itself, so to speak, upon the Id as a love-object and is trying to make the Id's loss by saying: „Look, you love me too - I am so like the object"" (Freud, 1923, p. 30)

This process is also known as substitution⁹, whereby one object (or person) is replaced by another in a continual process. Substitution takes place in search of the qualities and properties that are idealized. Moyaert (1983) demonstrates the links between substitution and narcissism: “Die ideale voorstelling van het ik, die ik beoog en wil bereiken, is de *substituutvoorstelling* van de oorspronkelijke lege narcistische volkomenheid” [The ideal representation of the I, including the goals, is the substitutive representation of the original missing narcissistic perfection] (p. 403, his italics). The separation between the ideal and the actual self becomes difficult, as there is no definitive line to be drawn between the two. The perception then when looking into the mirror, as in Lacan’s mirror stage, is to show that it is not possible to see the actual self in the reflection, but to see the self in a favourable light in line with the idealized version, the sublimated Ego-ideal. “Of paradoxaal uitgedrukt: *het ik komt tot stand als substituut van zichzelf*” (p. 404) [Or expressed paradoxically: *the I comes to be through the substitution of the self*]. This is why it is ironic when a person is advised to be himself. Psychoanalysis therefore questions the narration around the idealized version of the self, rather than looking at the qualities of the actual self.

This section focused on instincts, love and substitution on a smaller, everyday scale. Consequently, narcissism manifests not only in the big gestures of love, but also in the smaller habits. Freud identifies the purpose and aim of these instincts and objects of desire that continually change and progress, yet they still retain traceable elements to prior circumstances. If the outcome is satisfaction, Freud therefore looks at the conditions of satisfaction, and links it to the pleasure principle.

1.7. Conclusion

The first chapter develops Freud’s argument leading to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). The leading question of this chapter is to explain how the I commits to the idealized version through satisfaction. The satisfaction experienced is the first definition of the pleasure principle this thesis explores; the pleasure principle as the “avoidance of pain and the production of pleasure” (Freud, 1920, p. 4).

⁹ Substitution is an important aspect of this thesis. There is continual return to the notion of substitution. For example in Chapter 3, substitution is explained in terms of Saussurian Linguistics (Chapter 2), and in Chapter 4, in terms of the death drive.

But for this definition of the pleasure principle to succeed, Freud locates and defends this definition in the developmental stages. By examining the development of the child, Freud shows how narcissism shapes and is shaped by the primary caregivers. As a result, this thesis has a very specific definition of narcissism: Narcissism is the love of the self as the ideal, which means that there is a specific way in which the self wants to be seen.

Lacan takes narcissism further and demonstrates through the mirror stage how there is a difference between the self and the representation of the self. But to reaffirm the definition of the pleasure principle prevalent in this chapter, the satisfaction experienced entrenches the idealized version. This in turn affects instincts, love and substitution (Section 1.6).

Section 1.6 demonstrates how narcissism manifests in smaller everyday behaviour. Therefore, instincts aren't a meta-concept which relates back to an evolutionary explanation for behaviour. These instincts, however, are unconscious. Freud focuses on behaviour and actions that are not the product of conscious thought, but show how unconscious processes reflect in everyday behaviour.

The first chapter therefore focuses on origins of Psychoanalysis, and sets the tone for the rest of the chapters. "If the *ego* is an imaginary function, it is not to be confused with the subject" (Lacan, 1988, p. 193). The separation between the actual [*wirkliche*] ego and the idealized version of the ego, leads to the question of the location of the conscious ego. This impacts on the extent and limits of the pursuit of pleasure. In other words, the conscious ego cannot be solely responsible for behaviour and actions.

The second chapter focuses on an alternative definition of the pleasure principle in light of Freud's (1950) *Project for a Scientific Psychology*. This definition is more often overlooked, as Freud's argument presents difficulties.

Chapter 2

2.1. Introduction

The second chapter attempts to define the pleasure and reality principle in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). This chapter focuses mostly on the working and structure of the unconscious and on how the contents of the unconscious can be made conscious. Chapter 1 defines pleasure in line with the developmental model of Freud as shaped through the Ideal-ego [*Ideal-ich*] whereas Chapter 2 defines pleasure in terms of a neurological model, as presented by Freud's (1950) *Project for a Scientific Psychology*.

The first section centres on the structure of the unconscious as described in Freud's (1950) „*Project*“. The definition of the pleasure principle that Freud provides in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) is: “an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure” (p. 3). Freud's (1950) *Project for a Scientific Psychology* provides important clues to conceptualize a framework to describe the pleasure principle in terms of Quantity (Q), facilitations [*Bahnung*] and contact-barriers. The pleasure principle is therefore explained in terms of neurons, which shape an economy of behaviour. The neuronal structure is then based on the discharge of Q through a network of facilitations governed or controlled by contact-barriers. Pleasure can be described as the efficacy of the distribution of Q, whereas unpleasure (synonymous with the reality principle) correlates with Q that exceeds the limits of the contact-barriers.

The second section focuses on the reality principle, which isn't an alternative to the pleasure principle, but occurs when the pleasure principle cannot be sustained. The reality principle is best explained in terms of the neurological model. The third section focuses on the unconscious, and how the contents of the unconscious can become known. Freud and Lacan both emphasize how there are discrepancies between the unconscious sensation and the conscious correlate. The fourth section focuses on repression as the prelude to a language theory. The fourth section highlights Linguistics to explain two important aspects: First, the discrepancies between the unconscious and the conscious correlate, and second, by introducing the Law of the letter. The fifth section introduces *das Ding*, which is the unnameable unconscious object of desire. Consequently, Linguistics explains why representing *das Ding* is problematic, as well as how *das Ding* is connected to the Law. The sixth section revisits the connection between Instincts, Love and Substitution in terms of the revised definition of the pleasure principle.

Therefore, the implications of the pleasure principle relate greatly to 1) Freud's structure of the unconscious and the changes in the structure of the unconscious; 2) How we can know of the unconscious (through repression and Freud's theory of language); 3) Lacan's explanation of *das Ding*; and 4) the connection between *das Ding* and the Law.¹⁰

2.2. Pleasure Principle

The definition of the pleasure principle and the reality principle in Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, to quote Freud (1920) at length, is:

We believe, that is to say, that the course of those events is invariably set in motion by an unpleasurable tension, and that it takes a direction such that its final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension, and that it takes a direction such that its final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension – that is, with an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure. (p. 3)

We have decided to relate pleasure and unpleasure to the quantity of excitation and pleasure that is present in the mind but is not in any way „bound“; and to relate them in such a manner that unpleasure corresponds to an *increase* in the quantity of excitation and pleasure to a *diminution*. (p. 4, his emphasis)

This can best be explained in reference to Freud's (1950) posthumously published work, *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (from here on in this chapter referred to as „*Project*“). The „*Project*“ is notoriously difficult and problematic. The neurological assumptions in Freud's „*Project*“ are either praised (Cilliers, 1989; Cilliers & Gouws, 2001) or dismissed (Carel, 2006). The major argument against the „*Project*“ is that it was never published by Freud. However, the role and the importance of the „*Project*“ are still defended, for example by Cilliers & Gouws (2001):

We agree with Strachey [in Freud, 1950, p. 290] that “the Project ... contains within itself the nucleus of a great part of Freud's later psychological theories” and that “the Project, or rather its invisible ghost, haunts the whole series of Freud's theoretical writings to the end” (p. 238n2).

¹⁰ A variation of this chapter was presented at the Philosophy Spring Colloquium, *Defining Freud's Pleasure and Reality Principle* (P.L. van der Merwe, 2008b)

Freud's „*Project*“ demonstrates how the lowering and diminution of tension results in pleasure, whereby the „*Project*“ links Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* to a neurological model, with tension referring to the overloading of the neural network. Freud's „*Project*“ distinguishes between two functions of the nervous system, or as Freud calls them, principles.

The first principle can be summarized as the discharge of $Q\tilde{n}$ [Quantity of the intercellular order of magnitude] preferred and retained. “A primitive neuronal system accordingly discharges any $Q\tilde{n}$ acquired via sensory neurons directly through motor neurons leading to muscular mechanisms” (Cilliers & Gouws, 2001, p. 239). “A primary nervous system makes use of this $Q\tilde{n}$ which it has thus acquired, by giving it off through a connecting path to a muscular mechanism, and in that way keeps itself free from stimulus” (Freud, 1950, p. 296). The isolated effect of the discharge of $Q\tilde{n}$ is done in accordance with a preferred path of discharge. Therefore, the first principle is the establishment of “preferred” neuronal paths through which the discharge occurs. The discharge then results in the transference to muscular mechanisms, resulting in the physical manifestation of the neuronal discharge, i.e. behaviour.

The second principle focuses on the potential of the neuron to store $Q\tilde{n}$, as well as the ability to prevent the discharge. “A neuron may be *cathected* [*besetzt*] – filled with a greater or lesser $Q\tilde{n}$ - or it may be empty” (Cilliers & Gouws, 2001, p. 239; Freud, 1950, p. 298). The forces that prevent the discharge are also the same forces that allow for the accumulation of $Q\tilde{n}$.

The postulated secondary function requires the possibility of an accumulation of $Q\tilde{n}$. To account for this, Freud assumes resistances that oppose discharge; he presumes that these are located in the contacts between neurons, which therefore function simultaneously as contacts and as barriers: contactbarriers. (Cilliers & Gouws, 2001, p. 239; Freud, 1950, p. 296-8)

The emphasis is placed on the contact-barriers as intermediary that serves both principles. The first principle, also known as the principle of neuronal inertia, emphasizes “that neurons tend to divest themselves of Q [Quantity in general, or of the order of magnitude in the external world]” (Cilliers & Gouws, 2001, p. 2389). The second principle is focused on the possibility of divesting $Q\tilde{n}$, as well as the prevention of divesting $Q\tilde{n}$. This is made possible through the contact-barriers, also known as the point of contact between the neurons. On contact-barriers, Freud (1950) writes:

The theory of contact-barriers, if it adopts this solution, can express it in the following terms. There are two classes of neurons: [1] those which allow $Q\tilde{n}$ to pass through as though they had no contact-barriers and which, accordingly, after each passage of excitation are in the same state as before, and (2) those whose contact-barriers make themselves felt, so that they only allow $Q\tilde{n}$ to pass through with difficulty or partially. The latter class may, after each excitation, be in a different state from before and they thus afford a *possibility of representing memory*. (p. 299, his emphasis)

The abovementioned quote is dealt with in three parts, 1) permeable neurons, 2) impermeable neurons, and 3) memory. The two different types of neurons are distinguished by the difference in the permeability of the neuron. According to Freud, there are the ϕ system, which consists of permeable neurons, and the ψ system, which consists of impermeable neurons. But this alone does not account for the alterations that occur within the arrangement of the neural paths. The quantity of the discharge establishes the connection *between* the neurons, wherefore the *facilitation* [*Bahnung*] is made possible. "Facilitations serve the primary function, because through them the nervous system can avoid being filled up with $Q\tilde{n}$ " (Cilliers & Gouws, 2001, p. 240; Freud, 1950, p. 301).

The role of the „Project“ is explanative of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) regarding the description of the pleasure principle and the reality principle. To quote Freud (1950) at length:

Pleasure would be the sensation of discharge [...] Pleasure and unpleasure would be the sensations in ω of its own cathexis, of its own level; and here ω and ψ would, as it were, represent intercommunicating vessels. In this manner the quantitative process in ψ too would reach consciousness, once more as qualities. The aptitude for perceiving sensory qualities which lie, so to say, in the zone of indifference between pleasure and unpleasure disappears with the [presence of the] feeling of pleasure and unpleasure. This might be translated: the ω [system of perceptual neurons] show an optimum for receiving the *period* of neuronal motion at a particular [strength of] cathexis; when the cathexis is stronger they produce unpleasure, when it is weaker, pleasure – till, with a lack of cathexis, their capacity for reception vanishes. (p. 312)

The emphasis of the abovementioned quote is that pleasure and unpleasure are both unconscious processes at work. Stimuli are therefore perceived in terms of the quantity of cathexis. Stimuli are only experienced consciously depending on the strength of the cathexis. In other words, only when the cathexis is significant – in terms of the contact-barrier – are conscious experiences either pleasure or

unpleasure (pain). Anything that occurs between is not significant enough and remains unconscious. Once again this falls into the economic style of behaviour on a neuronal level. The divestment of Q leads to a chain of neuronal activity which is made possible through the contact-barriers that selectively allow the passing or obstruction of Qñ. Whenever the quantity is significant is it made conscious. However, it is not the quantity that we are aware of consciously, but the quality. "Consciousness gives us what are called *qualities* – sensations which are *different* in a great multiplicity of ways and whose *difference* is distinguished according to its relations with the external world" (Freud, 1950, p. 308, his emphasis). What would the difference between quantity and quality then be?

"During perception the Φ and the ψ systems are in operation together; but there is one psychical process which is no doubt performed exclusively in ψ – reproducing or remembering – and this speaking generally, is *without quality*" (Freud, 1950, p. 308, his emphasis). The impermeable neurons are therefore solely affected through quantity, considering that the facilitation is only affected once the Qñ exceeds the threshold of the contact-barriers, and subsequently, forces an adaptation in the structure of the neuronal pathways.

Therefore, the difference between quantity and quality are significant in the neuronal system affected. Pleasure and unpleasure are significant in terms of quantity and quality. However, the difference lies in the effects: the ψ [impermeable] neurons are affected by quantity, and the Φ [permeable] and the ω [perceptual] neurons are affected by both quantity and quality.

Of memory, Cilliers (1989) writes¹¹:

Memory does not lie in the facilitated pathways themselves, but in the relationship between them, and this relationship is one of differences. [...] The forming of memory traces in the ψ neurons by quantity from the perceptual system, and from the endogenous stimuli, and the methods of the ψ used to discharge this quantity, are all unconscious. Neither the primary nor the secondary processes are under the control of the conscious ego. (p. 112)

The significance for Derrida, Lacan, and Cilliers, is therefore not in the fixed possibility of the divestment of Q, or the establishment of the chain of neurons, which for practical and economical purposes are devised through the contact-barriers and the limits imposed by the contact-barriers. The

¹¹ In line with Freud's (1920) "The latter class may, after each excitation, be in a different state from before and they thus afford a *possibility of representing memory*" (p. 299, his emphasis)

significance lies with the changeability of the chain of neurons. "It is because breaching breaks open, that Freud, in the *Project*, accords a privilege to pain. In a certain sense, there is not breaching without a beginning of pain, and „pain leaves behind it particularly rich breaches“ (Derrida, 2004, p. 254). It is for this reason that *pain* has such an important descriptive function, as "Pain is thus characterized as an irruption of excessively large Q into ϕ and ψ : that is, of Qs which are of a still higher order than the ϕ stimuli" (Freud, 1950, p. 307). The link between the „*Project*“ and Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is reiterated when Freud (1920) writes: "The specific unpleasure of physical pain is probably the result of the protective shield having been broken through in a limited area" (p. 34).

On our theory that Q produces facilitation, pain no doubt leaves permanent facilitations behind in ψ – as though there had been a stroke of lightning – facilitations which possibly do away with the resistance of the contact-barriers entirely and establish a pathway of conduction there such as there are in ϕ . (Freud, 1950, p. 307)

The possibility of a fixed *facilitation* [*Bahnung*] is at stake, as cathexis cannot be done in a predictable, mechanical fashion that avoids any alterations in the *facilitations*. What is desired is the consistent flow of Q, void of any sudden influxes, which have a detrimental effect on the system. Pain, for example, is a sudden influx of Q that the contact-barriers are incapable of containing or controlling.

The pleasure and reality principle are therefore articulated in terms of Freud's „*Project*“. The primary process is equated with the pleasure principle and the secondary process with the reality principle. The establishment of *facilitation* [*Bahnung*] equated with the pleasure principle, is synonymous with the principle of inertia. The secondary process can be equated with pain, like lightning; can override the limits imposed by the contact-barriers, thereby resulting in alterations in the neural networks. This is essentially the platform that Freud uses to describe the pleasure principle as the avoidance of disruption, and the maintenance of constancy.

However strongly I rely on Cilliers' reading of Freud, there is one small error. Cilliers & Gouws (2001) writes: "The constancy principle – the tendency to keep $Q\tilde{n}$ as low as possible – therefore coincides with something like an unpleasure principle – the tendency to avoid unpleasure whenever possible" (p. 241). Cilliers and Gouws introduce the unpleasure principle, which is completely unnecessary as their description of the unpleasure principle is implied in the pleasure principle. If the pleasure principle and the unpleasure principle coincide with the volume of Q - pleasure correlated with the

diminution of Q and unpleasure with an increase of Q – the opposite of the pleasure principle (or as Cilliers and Gouws write) is an unpleasure principle. The tendency to avoid unpleasure is the pleasure principle. Therefore, the opposite of the pleasure principle has to be a measure built around the second principle, as well as incorporating the notion of pain. The opposite of the pleasure principle is therefore a principle set on the disruption of the neural network, through excess Qñ. This principle is more commonly known as the reality principle.

The next section focuses on the reality principle to illustrate and emphasize the difference between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. The difference is clear when the reality principle is described in terms of Freud's neuronal model presented in the „*Project*“.

2.3. Reality Principle

In the introduction of this thesis, preliminary definitions of the reality principle are examined. The descriptions emphasized and highlighted a selection, whereby the pleasure principle and the reality principle stand in opposition to each other. In other words, the conscious self would select a delay in the pleasure so as to maximize the effects of the pleasure. This definition of the reality principle is refuted, as the neuronal model illustrates how the reality principle is the delay in pleasure. The delay in pleasure is not a conscious selection, but occurs out of necessity. Freud's description of the reality principle is synonymous with the second principle, as described in Freud's „*Project*“. The facilitations [*Bahnung*] are disrupted and consequently transformed.

In Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the disturbance of the pleasure principle is “so that the final outcome cannot always be in harmony with the tendency towards pleasure” (p. 6). The effects of the reality principle are described by Freud (1920): The latter principle [the reality principle] does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but it nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure. (p. 7)

Therefore, the reality principle is not a substitute that alters the goal of pleasure, but defers pleasure. It is important to note that the reality principle does not function as an alternative to the pleasure principle, but occurs out of necessity. Just as the contact-barriers cannot cope with the increase of Qñ,

the first principle cannot be maintained in order to cope with the influx of Qñ, alterations need to be made.

The original facilitations [*Bahnung*] are already established in accordance with what Freud refers to as the sexual instincts. However, the original facilitations cannot be maintained, as the protective measures of the contact-barriers are not sufficient in controlling the Qñ. Freud argues that the overwriting of the neural network isn't always the outcome, but that there could never be a return to the previous condition.

The pleasure principle long persists, however, as the method of working employed by the sexual instincts, which are so hard to „educate“, and, starting from those instincts, or in the ego itself, it often succeeds in overcoming the reality principle, to the detriment of the organ as a whole. (Freud, 1920, p. 7)

Lacan's explanation of Freud's pleasure- and reality- principle in terms of the „*Project*“ follows in a very similar vein to what has been argued. For Lacan, the starting point is also Freud's „*Project*“. The trace of the neurological model cannot be avoided. For Lacan, both the pleasure- and reality- principle are codependent. “The reality principle is the dialectical correlative of the pleasure principle. One is not simply, as one at first imagines, the application of the consequence of the other; each one is really the correlative of the other” (Lacan, 2008a, p. 91).

Lacan takes the association further. The role of the reality principle, in terms of Freud's second principle, is equated to the disruptions in the facilitations [*Bahnung*]. This results in both the alterations of the facilitations, and consequently delays the pleasurable outcome [“Pleasure relating to a diminution” of Qñ (Freud, 1920, p. 4)].

The role of the reality principle is therefore a source of adaptation and change, and the question therefore arises about the qualities that emerge when the facilitations [*Bahnung*] are disrupted when the Qñ exceed the limits of the contact-barriers. The alterations are significant. The role of changes in the facilitations [*Bahnung*] is twofold. First, in the establishment of the properties that emerge. The changes allow for the creation of new elements within the system. Second, the threat of the reality principle changes the established order, or harmony, and acts as a deterrent, partly due to the unpredictable outcome, but mostly due to the unpleasant experience that occurs [“unpleasure corresponds to an *increase* in the quantity of excitation” (Freud, 1920, p. 4, his italics)].

Lacan (2008a) writes:

In order to [explain the normal functioning of the mind], [Freud] starts with an apparatus whose basis is wholly antithetical to a result involving adequation and equilibrium. He starts with a system which naturally tends toward deception and error [the pleasure principle]. The whole organism seems designed not to satisfy need, but to hallucinate such satisfaction. It is, therefore, appropriate that another apparatus [the reality principle] is opposed to it, an apparatus that operates as an agency of reality; it presents itself as a principle of correction, of a call to order. (p. 32)

The outcome of the reality principle and this has to be emphasized, is a traumatic experience, but isn't always described as negative. Moyaert (1995) describes the reality principle as a wake-up call. The outcome of this awakening "rukt het uit zijn verdoving en doorbreekt de „gevoelloosheid“ van het lustprincipe dat in de ban is van zijn voorstellingen" [jerks one out of one's stupor and breaches the „numbness“ of the pleasure principle under the spell of its representation] (p. 97). Therefore, even though the reality principle is a traumatic experience, it is necessary for the development of the subject. The subject is awoken through the reality principle. As Lacan states, a correction takes place through a call to order. However, it is stressed that the outcome of the intrusion of the reality principle into the pleasure principle is unpredictable, as there is no way of knowing what effects the reality principle have or will have. Moyaert (1995) links the development of the ego to the pleasure principle, as well as illustrating the tyranny of the pleasure principle: "Het ik komt tot stand door zich te verdedigen tegen de destructieve kracht van het lustprincipe" [The I comes to be by defending against the destructive force of the pleasure principle] (p. 97).

To describe the pleasure principle and the reality principle in terms of a mechanical metaphor (in terms of Φ , ψ , ω , and contactbarriers) allows one to critique in terms of the biological model that is the „Project“. "Immers, niet elke spanning wordt door het organisme (en door het ik) zomaar als onlustvol en niet elke ontspanning (ontlading) als lustvol ervaren" [For, not every tension is experienced by the organism (and through the I) as unpleasure and not every relaxation (discharge) as pleasure] (Moyaert, 1995, p. 98). This critique appears justified, but as Moyaert argues, misses the point that Freud is trying to make. The critique is false for two reasons: First, whereby "lust beschrijft vanuit het standpunt van een ik dat minstens goed wil zijn voor zichzelf en rekening houdt met zichzelf" [desire described from the position of the self wanting to be good for oneself and being accountable for itself] (p. 98). Second, with "lust laat samenvallen met wat het ik aangenaam vindt voor zichzelf" [attaching desire to that which the I finds pleasant for itself] (p. 98). The processes at work in what Freud calls the pleasure

principle and the reality principle operate unconsciously. In other words, the processes involved with the pleasure principle and the reality principle cannot be described in terms of the satisfaction experienced by the conscious self. Moyaert (1995) emphasizes the separation between the subject and the conscious subject:

Uiteraard ben ik het subject, maar toch is het subject dat geniet niet op mij betrokken. Het is geen reflexief subject. De gedrevenheid, de bezieling of de overgave waarmee iemand iets doet, laten de *buitenstaander* vermoeden dat er een subject is dat geniet, ofschoon men toch niet kan zeggen dat het subjet van het genot een „ik“ is. [Naturally I am the subject, but yet, the subject that enjoys is not based on me. It is not a reflexive subject. The drive, the overwhelming exuberance with which someone does something, leaves the *witness* suspecting that it is the subject that enjoys, although one cannot say that the subject that enjoys is „me“.] (p. 98, his emphasis)

It becomes clear that a distinction needs to be made between the two types of pleasure experienced, and that the unconscious and conscious desire is not the same. This is why Lacan distinguishes between *jouissance* and *plaisir*. *Jouissance* refers to unconscious pleasure and *plaisir* refers to conscious pleasure. *Jouissance* is bound by the unconscious structure that dictates pleasure, whereas *plaisir* remains contained within the limits of *jouissance*.

To relate the pleasure derived (including both *jouissance* and *plaisir*) to the pleasure- and the reality-principle, one has to focus on the pleasure principle as the attainment and maintenance of pleasure, or *jouissance*. The reality principle defers and delays *jouissance*, and impedes the experience of pleasure. The condition of pleasure is therefore an innate perception. The experience of pleasure is possible in terms of conditions set by the pleasure principle. This is when the pleasure principle is described as a Law that allows for the experience of pleasure. It becomes clear that the pleasure principle acts as a tyrant, setting the terms and conditions. The only force that opposes the tyranny of the pleasure principle is the reality principle. This is why Lacan (2008a) calls the reality principle a “call to order” (p. 32). However, Freud (1920) writes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: “Protection against stimuli is an almost more important function for the living organism than *reception of stimuli*” (p. 30), which is achieved through repression.

On the role of repression within the larger corpus of
Psychoanalysis, Freud (1915b) writes:

Psycho-analytic observation of the transference neurosis, moreover, leads us to conclude that repression is not a defensive mechanism which is present from the very beginning, and that it cannot arise until a sharp cleavage has occurred between conscious and unconscious mental activity – that *the essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious*. (p. 147, his emphasis)

Consequently, repression is introduced as a defence mechanism linking conscious and unconscious mental activity. The defence mechanism is structured around the painful experience introduced by the intrusion of the reality principle into the pleasure principle.

2.4. Repression

Repression introduces two important aspects, language (§ 2.5) and *das Ding* (§ 2.6). This section explains repression in terms of the pleasure principle as illustrated in Freud's (1950) „*Project*“. The notion of repression illustrates the link between the conscious and the unconscious, and acts as a defence mechanism.

The opening sentence of Freud's (1915b) *Repression* is: “One of the vicissitudes an instinctual impulse may undergo is to meet with resistances which seek to make it inoperative” (p. 146); and the opening sentence of *The Unconscious* (1915b): “We have learnt from psycho-analysis that the essence of the process of repression lies, not in putting an end to, in annihilating, the idea which represents an instinct, but in preventing it from becoming conscious” (p. 166).

By connecting the notion of repression with the intrusion of the reality principle into the pleasure principle, emphasizes that the reality principle and the pleasure principle precede repression. Repression only takes place once the reality principle impedes the pleasure principle. Therefore, repression is between the conscious and unconscious, and is consequently located in what Freud called the pre-conscious.

Repression, therefore, has a very specific function that lies between conscious and unconscious mental activity. “Repression in fact interferes only with the relation of the instinctual representative to *one* psychical system, namely, to that of the conscious” (Freud, 1915b, p. 149, his emphasis). In other words, repression acts on the level of the pre-conscious to prevent the effects of the intrusion of the reality principle from reaching consciousness. “Repression was nothing else than the avoidance of

unpleasure" (Freud, 1915b, p. 153). But at the same time Freud does acknowledge that a certain investment of energy is at work in preventing the source of unpleasure from becoming conscious. Repression has no effect on the unconscious structures, and consequently does not alter or correct the facilitations [*Bahnung*], but serves as a process.

The process of repression is not to be regarded as an event which takes place *once*, the results of which are permanent, as when some living thing has been killed and from that time onwards is dead; repression demands a persistent expenditure of force, and if this were to cease the success of the repression would be jeopardized, so that a fresh act of repression would be necessary. (p. 151, his emphasis)

The process of repression is therefore not free or void of consequences. The act of repression has its own consequences, not only in terms of the continual process of the repressed being kept repressed, but also in terms of an attempt to make what is repressed known. The *return of the repressed* (Freud, 1915b, p. 154) not only occurs with the failure of repression, but also has to do with the impossibility of the repressed remaining rooted within the preconscious, or even, the unconscious. The contents of the repressed trickle through and it is only then that we can begin to know what is repressed. If the process of repression acts as a filter, preventing unconscious unpleasure from becoming conscious, repression can therefore be equated with the role of contactbarriers. The difference between contactbarriers and repression is that, if the contact-barrier is confronted with Quantity that exceeds the limits of the contact-barrier, that contact-barrier is overrun and destroyed. Repression, however, is not an either/or process that either fully represses or fully fails to repress. "Let us make it clear that it is not even correct to suppose that repression withholds from the conscious *all* the derivatives of what was primally repressed" (p. 149, his emphasis).

These small fragments are the only clues to what is repressed, to what is in the unconscious, and to what extent we are affected by the unconscious. Freud focuses on the fragments that seep through into consciousness. To quote at length how Freud (1915b) proposes to examine the contents of the repressed, as well as the effects of the repressed becoming conscious:

In carrying out the technique of psycho-analysis, we continually require the patient to produce such derivatives of the repressed as, in consequence either of their remoteness or of their distortions, can pass the censorship of the conscious. Indeed, the associations which we require him to give without being influenced by any conscious purposive idea and without any criticism, and from which we reconstitute a conscious translation of the repressed representative – these associations are nothing else than remote and distorted derivatives of this kind. During this process we observe that the patient can go on spinning a thread of such

associations, till he is brought up against some thought, the relation of which to what is repressed becomes so obvious that he is compelled to repeat his attempt at repression. Neurotic symptoms, too, must have fulfilled this same condition, for they are derivatives of the repressed, which has, by their means, finally won the access to consciousness which was previously denied to it. (p. 149-150)

The significance of Freud's text on *Repression* (1915b) is twofold: first, the introduction of a language theory (§ 2.5), which is criticized, yet at the same time amended by Lacan; and second, through the introduction of *das Ding* (§ 2.6). Therefore, when Freud speaks of the *return of the repressed*, Freud is referring to the return of the repressed *das Ding* [the Thing], which always returns in the form of language.

2.5. Language theory

The development of language and Psychoanalysis is explored in three parts. Each part focuses on a linguistic aspect, the first as proposed by Freud, second by Ferdinand de Saussure and the third figure is Lacan's. The importance of language is the primary gauge for examining the fragments of the repressed as they surface to the conscious. Language therefore accounts for the difference between the unconscious sensation and the conscious correlate.

The first figure is Freud, who introduces two technical terms in *Repression* (1915b), namely *Wortvorstellungen* and *Sachvorstellungen* to emphasize the structural difference between the pre-conscious and the conscious. The pre-conscious is necessary as a bridge between the unconscious and the conscious, whereby the „cleavage“ between the two is tapered. The conscious inaccessibility into the unconscious is thereby mediated through the pre-conscious. However, for Freud, there is a difference between the pre-conscious and the conscious in the potential of the pre-conscious to become conscious, considering that the pre-conscious is not necessarily the same as that which ends up in the conscious.

The rift between the pre-conscious and the conscious necessitates the difference in the presentation and description of the contents in the pre-conscious and the conscious. In other words, the preconscious has its own language that is different from the conscious language. The role of language does not have the same purpose or function on the three levels of the unconscious, the pre-conscious, and the conscious. The difference between the three is best illustrated when Freud (1915c) writes in *The Unconscious*:

In the first phase, the psychical act is unconscious and belongs to the system *Ucs*. [Unconscious]; if, on testing, it is rejected by the censorship, it is not allowed to pass into the second phase; it is said to be „repressed“ and must remain unconscious. If, however, it passes this testing, it enters the second phase and henceforth belongs to the second system, which we call the system *Cs* [Conscious]. But the fact that it belongs to that system does not yet unequivocally determine its relation to consciousness. It is not yet conscious, but it is certainly *capable of becoming conscious* – that is, it can now, given certain conditions, become an object of consciousness without any special resistance. (p. 173, his emphasis)

The role of language then within the conscious/unconscious separation is significant, as language is the only means to describe the contents of both the conscious and unconscious. It is here where Psychoanalysis and Linguistics meet:

“Het onbewuste is het object van de psychoanalyse; de linguïstiek daarentegen heeft als object de voorbewuste wetmatigheden van de taal, d.w.z. die wetmatigheden waarvan het competente taalsubject impliciet weet heft. Dit heft tot gevolg dat de termen van de linguïstiek bij Lacan een andere extensie krijgen” [The unconscious is the object of psychoanalysis; linguistics, in contrast, only has the pre-conscious as authority of language, i.e. the authority of which the competent subject-of-language implicitly knows. This results in Lacan adding a different extension to linguistic terminology] (Moyaert, 1981, p. 36).

Lacan argues that Freud would have devised a similar language system if Freud had access to a linguistic theory such as Saussure's (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 503; Lacan 2008a, p. 53). Saussure distinguishes between the signifier and the signified, whereas Freud distinguishes between the *Wortvorstellungen* [word-representation] and the *Sachvorstellungen* [thing-representation]. Moyaert (1981) elaborates on Freud's distinction between the word-presentation and the thing-presentation: “De *Wortvorstellungen* behoren tot het voorbewuste taalsysteem waarvan het competente taalsubject impliciet weet heft. De *Sachvorstellungen* behoren tot het onbewuste” [The word-representation belongs to the pre-conscious language system of which the competent language-subject implicitly knows. The thingrepresentation belongs to the unconscious] (p. 37, his italics). Freud necessitates the difference between the *Wortvorstellungen* and the *Sachvorstellungen*, whereby it is impossible to verbalize the unconscious. The implementation of the difference between the *Wortvorstellungen* and *Sachvorstellungen* maintains the inaccessibility of the unconscious in terms of verbalizing and modelling. Moyaert (1981) describes the transformation of the unconscious to consciousness in two stages:

De bewustwording verloopt bij Freud, schematisch gezien, in twee stadia: eerst worden de onbewuste dingvoorstellingen geactiveerd en geïnvesteerd („besetzen“) en daarna worden die geïnvesteerde dingvoorstellingen nog eens geïnvesteerd („überbesetzen“) door woordvoorstellingen. [...] De woordvoorstellingen komen slechts in contact met de ongrijpbare onbewuste inhoud („unbewusste Gedanken“) nadat deze in dingvoorstellingen geïnvesteerd zijn. Het mechanisme van de verschuiving en de verdichting blijven gebonden aan een andere soort voorstellingen: de dingvoorstellingen. [The conscious-awakening proceeds in Freud, seen schematically, in two stages: first the unconscious thing-presentation is activated and invested („besetzen“) and thereafter the invested thing-presentation is once more invested („überbesetzen“) through word-presentation. [...] The wordpresentation only comes in contact with the incomprehensible unconscious content after these thing-presentations are invested. This mechanism of transference and repression remain bound to one other representation: the thing-presentation] (p. 39-40)

Freud presented a very basic distinction between the word- and the thing-presentation that he was never fully able to develop. Lacan was able to amend Freud's linguistic approach, but achieved this through Saussurean Linguistics.

The second relevant figure is the linguist Saussure (1974) who distinguished between the signifier and the signified. Saussure's approach is summarized by Cilliers & Gouws (2001) as follows: "In Saussure's conception, language is differentiated both at the level of the *signifier* (speech sounds or written words) and at the level of the *signified* (meaning)" (p. 244, his italics). Meaning is generated through the dialectical interaction between the signifier and the signified. Cilliers and Gouws (2001, p. 244) present two examples to illustrate how the signifier and the signified are complementary in the production of meaning:

a a a a a a

Each letter is an „a“, but each letter is at the same time different. Yet we can agree that each letter is the letter a. A is signified, however, each time the signifier is different. This can be taken further, when the letter „a“ is contrasted to the letter „g“ (ibid):

g g g g g g

There is a dialectical interaction, for Saussure, between the signified and the signifier. The difference therefore between Saussure and Freud, is that Freud's *Sachvorstellung* becomes the *Wortvorstellung*,

and that there isn't necessarily a direct or accurate correlation between the two; whereas for Saussure the dialectical connection between the signifier [*Wortvorstellung*] and the signified [*Sachvorstellung*] are connected. For Saussure (1960) meaning is made possible through the interaction between the two: "Language is a system of inter-dependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others" (p. 114; quoted in Malan, 1993, p. 29). Saussure uses the example of chess (1960, p. 88&110, quoted in Malan, 1993, p. 30-1). A chessboard is a closed system, with its own rules. However, the number of variations and possibilities open to any game of chess is what makes the game of chess possible. Chess is possible with different chess sets of different sizes and design, but this is only possible as long as you can differentiate between a rook and a knight, for example. For Saussure, the same is applicable to the difference between *Langue* [language] and *Parole* [spoken language]. *Langue* is the language system, but more specifically, the potential and possibility of language. *Parole* is the manifestation of this possibility. Lacan develops Freud's approach to Linguistics through Saussure. Consequently, Saussure is the linguistic link between Freud and Lacan.

The third language figure¹² is Lacan, whose linguistic approach is

based on the Saussurian model. Lacan's approach is summarized as $\frac{S}{s}$: "signifier over signified, „over“ corresponding to the bar separating the levels" (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 498). Saussure designates equal value to the signifier and the signified, whereas Lacan emphasizes the primacy of the signifier. The primacy of the signifier is implicated when Lacan designates the uppercase „S“ to the signifier and the lowercase „s“ to the signified. This is also implied when the big „S“ is placed „over“ the small s. Lacan (1966/2006) illustrates the difference between the signifier and the signified in the famous Lacanian example of the two toilet doors (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 499; Moyaert, 1995, p. 34):

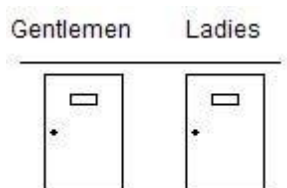


Fig 2: The example of the two toilet doors (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 499)

The example of the two toilet doors show how two doors, exactly the same, lead to rooms that serve the exact same purpose. Aside from the plaque on the wall, there would be no way to discern between the male stall and the female stall. The example of the two toilet doors are significant in two ways, first, as an example of the signifier and signified, and secondly, as an example of the Law of the symbol.

¹² Emphasized when Lacan (2008b) writes: "My teaching is in fact quite simply language, and absolutely nothing else" (p. 26)

The two doors are differentiated, not in terms of what is signified by the doors, but through the different names on the plaque at the door. For Saussure, through a dialectical process of interaction between the signifier and the signified - in this example, between the toilet door and the plaque on the door - is meaning created, which is the example of the two toilet doors as either for gentlemen or ladies. The Law of the letter as illustrated in the example of the two toilet doors, is demonstrated by the command of the plaque: "Een man die al dan niet door onoplettendheid of onder een te hevige druk van zijn behoeften het damestoilet binnenstapt, zal onvermijdelijk terecht worden gewezen, uitgelachen of voor een voyeur worden aangezien" [A man who, through inattention or tremendous pressure of his needs, enters the ladies toilet stall will unavoidably be reprimanded, laughed at, or seen as a voyeur] (Moyaert, 1995, p. 34).

The differences between the Saussurian model and Lacan's description of the signifier and the signified, is summarized by Moyaert (1981): Bij de Saussure worden betekenaar en betekende door een ellips samengehouden; de twee polen zijn onafscheidelijk met elkaar verbonden als de voor- en keerzijde van een blad papier. De ene is er niet zonder de andere. Hun wederzijdse implicatie binnen het taalteken wordt nog benadrukt door twee pijlen. Bij Lacan zijn zowel de ellips als de dubbele pijl verdwenen [Fig 3]. [In Saussure the signifier and the signified are connected through an ellipsis; the two poles are as inseparable from each as the front and the back of a piece of paper. The one does not exist without the other. The reciprocal implication within the language sign is emphasized through the two arrows.

In Lacan, the ellipsis as well as the arrows disappears] (p.

42)

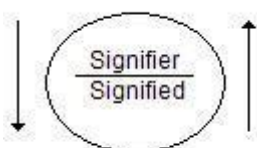


Fig 3: The Saussurian model of the signifier and the signified
(Moyaert, 1981, p. 42)

Moyaert (1981) highlights the crux of the critique against Saussure: "De betekenaar wordt gekenmerkt door de radicale afwezigheid van een eigenlijke betekenis. De fundamentele onbepaaldheid van het betekende is het gevolg van het feit dat er geen eigenlijke (en dus ook geen oneigenlijke) betekenis bestaat" [The signifier is distinguished by the radical absence of any actual meaning. The fundamental indefiniteness of the signified is the result of the fact that there isn't any tangible (and therefore also

no intangible) meaning] (p. 47).¹³ Lacan's approach to Linguistics maintains the connection between the signifier and the signified, but meaning is not generated by the dialectic connection between the two. Lacan's approach to Linguistics validates the Mirror stage. The *méconnaissance* [misrecognition] of the signifier for the signified is equally visible in the *méconnaissance* between the subject and the reflection in the mirror.

Lacan's return to Freud is at the same time a return to Freud's Linguistics. Lacan's *return* reintroduces the progression from *Sachvorstellung* to *Wortvorstellung*. For the *Sachvorstellung* to become *Wortvorstellung*, Lacan then argues that the *Sachvorstellung* needs to find a *Wortvorstellung* that is applicable. The problem that arises is the multitude of options available to the *Sachvorstellung*. Just as with the example of the two toilet doors, so too does the signified (*Sachvorstellung*) disappear. The original signified (*Sachvorstellung*) is destroyed in the process, and is therefore replaced by the signifier (*Wortvorstellung*).¹⁹ This is how one enters the realm of language, through a process of attribution and acquisition. Unconscious notions that surface are connected with words to describe the unconscious notions. However, language presents rules of its own, and the rules of language therefore dominate the rules of the representations of the sensations as they become conscious. The attribution of language to the sensations as they are experienced proves problematic, as the rules of the language become the rules of the *Sachvorstellung* when they become *Wort* (word).

Any attempt at the unconscious can only be achieved through language, but even this proves problematic. This leads Lacan (2008a) to conclude that the *unconscious is structured like a language*:

We only grasp the unconscious finally when it is explicated in that part of it which is articulated by passing into words. It is for this reason that we have the right – all the more so as the development of Freud's discovery will demonstrate – to recognize that the unconscious itself has in the end no other structure than the structure of language. (p. 38)

¹³ Derrida (2004) writes: "Thus it has always been thought that the center, which is by definition unique, constituted that very thing within a structure which while governing the structure, escapes structurality. This is why classical thought concerning structure could say that the center is, paradoxically, *within* the structure and *outside* it. The center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality *has its center elsewhere*. The center is not the center" (p. 352, his italics) ¹⁹

Derrida (2004) writes, emphasizing the unpredictable outcome of *Sache* becoming *Wort*: "The movement of signification adds something, which results in the fact that there is always more, but this addition is a floating one because it comes to perform a vicarious function, to supplement a lack on the part of the signified" (p. 365-6).

Lacan's approach can therefore be summarized as providing the necessary linguistic model to Freud's rudimentary linguistic design by incorporating the Saussurian model. Lacan (1966/2006) continually reiterates the dominance of the signifier, "Man thus speaks, but it is because the symbol has made him man" (p. 277).

The next section will clarify the notion of the Law, and how the Law features in Psychoanalysis. The Law is relevant to both the Law of language and the Law of the pleasure principle. The one explains an external Law and the other an internal Law. Consequently, the next section will demonstrate through the Law, how an object of desire [the Thing] is created and maintained.

2.6 The Thing and the Law

In this section, the pleasure principle is reintroduced to describe Desire and the Law. The focus is on an alternative explanation of pleasure as derived in Freud's (1950) „*Project*“, whereby the pleasure principle is based on a *constancy principle*. Therefore, this section aims to ratify the notion that the pleasure principle aims for a constant object of desire [the Thing], which is created and maintained through the Law.

The first problem faced when discussing the Thing, or *das Ding*, or *la Chose*, is to define the Thing¹⁴ other than as the anonymous object-cause of desire. The connection then between the Thing and Linguistics is that the Thing can only be expressed in language. "The Thing only presents itself to the extent that it becomes word" (Lacan, 2008a, p. 66). However, as Moyaert (1995) demonstrates, qualities can only be ascribed if the signifier is empty. "Het verlangen is gebonden aan een *Object zonder kwaliteiten*. De objectpool noem Lacan *het Ding, la Chose*" [Desire is attached to an *object without qualities*. Lacan names the object-pole the Thing] (p. 107, his italics).

The definition of the Thing is accounted for in the linguistic turn in Psychoanalysis. Freud differentiated between *Sache* and *Wort*, which separated the unconscious notion and the notion once surfaced. In Saussurian terminology the unconscious notion becomes known as the signified, and the conscious correlate the signifier (conscious). However, Saussure connects the signified and the signifier, as the

¹⁴ Derrida (1994) writes on the Thing: "The Thing is still invisible, it is *nothing* visible at the moment one speaks of it and in order to ask oneself if it has reappeared. It is still nothing that can be seen when one speaks of it" (p. 5, his emphasis)

two combined generate meaning. For Freud and Lacan, the *Sache* (signified) and the *Wort* (signifier) remain separated, on different levels. “*Sache* and *Wort* are, therefore, closely linked: they form a couple. *Das Ding* is found somewhere else” (Lacan, 2008a, p. 54).

The definition of the Thing comprises three parts. The Thing is consequently defined in terms of the unconscious, substitution and the Law.

The first aspect of defining the Thing is to distinguish the Thing from representation. This would isolate the Thing from representation, and locates the Thing outside the field of representation. The Thing is always present, hovering beneath the surface in the unconscious.

Lacan (2008a) consequently defines the Thing in terms of stability and continuation.

Das Ding [the Thing] seeks whatever is repeated, whatever returns and guarantees that it will always return, to the same place – and it has driven us to the extreme position in which we find ourselves, a position where we can cast doubt on all places, and where nothing in that reality which we have learned to disrupt so admirably responds to that call for the security of a return. (p. 92)

The second aspect of defining the Thing incorporates substitution. Freud and Lacan emphasize that substitution is always the substitution of the same. This means that different words and different descriptions are applicable, but the Thing essentially remains at the core of the untranslatable unconscious. Consequently, one substitution isn’t radically different from the next as the common factor can be deemed as the Thing.¹⁵

Lacan (2008a) summarizes the second aspect of defining the Thing by linking the object of desire to the unconscious through substitution:

The object is by nature a refund object. That it was lost is a consequence of that – but after the fact. It is thus refund without our knowing, except through the refinding, that it was ever lost. We come once again upon a fundamental structure, which allows us to articulate the fact that the Thing in question is, by virtue of its structure, open to being represented by what I called earlier, in connection with boredom and with prayer, the Other thing. And that is the

¹⁵ The Thing can also be described in terms of phantasy (discussed in Chapter 4, which is formulated as (\$) as the barred subject’s orientation to the object or object-cause of desire, or how the subject situates the self in terms of the object or object-cause of desire.

second characteristic of the Thing as veiled; it is by nature, in the refinding of the object, represented by something else. (p. 146)

Lacan emphasizes the arbitrary nature of the signifier, as any word would have sufficed to illustrate *das Ding*. This means that it is impossible to lose the object of desire, as it is never „found“. All that is held onto is an approximation of what seems to be the „refound object of desire“. Without any access to the unconscious, the unconscious object of desire is always „veiled“ and therefore open to possibilities of representation.

The third aspect of defining the Thing is to explain the Thing in terms of the Law [*la Loi*]. Lacan (2008a) explains how the source of the Thing is connected with symbolic identification that takes place in the early developmental stages:

Let me add *das Ding* insofar as it is the very correlative of the law of speech in its most primitive point of origin, and in the sense that this *Ding* was there from the beginning, that it was the first thing that separated itself from everything the subject began to name and articulate, that the covetousness that is in question is not addressed to anything that I might desire but to a thing that is my neighbour's Thing. (p. 102)¹⁶

The question still remains as to how the Thing is identified. The solution, put more succinctly by Lacan (2008a), is that "I can only know of the Thing by means of the Law" (p. 102). In other words, the Thing can only be known through prohibition. Since the Thing remains protected from representation, but feigned through *Wortvorstellung*. The Thing can therefore only be known once the Thing is in conflict with the Law; in other words, when you are forbidden to indulge in the Thing. For example the indulgence of chocolate: you can only really know that you enjoy the indulgence of chocolate once you are forbidden to have chocolate, or when you don't have chocolate to indulge in. The Thing, or in this case, the indulgence of chocolate, is always there and was always there. However, the Thing only comes to be known as the indulgence of chocolate, once chocolate becomes prohibited and the absence of chocolate reveals chocolate as a representation of the object of desire. While chocolate is a very basic example, it does illustrate how prohibition reveals desire.

The Law can therefore be described in two ways: First through connecting the Law with the pleasure principle, and second by describing the Law as established through societal conventions and norms. This explains how desire that is illegal, unlawful or in conflict with the Law reveals the object of desire.

¹⁶ The latter part of this quote is dealt with in Chapter 3 with the explanation of Lacan's L-schema. This relates greatly to Lacan's explanation of *Man's desire is desire for the Other*.

The first explanation of the Law in terms of the pleasure principle is to explain the Law in terms of maintaining a constant and stable condition, i.e. the equal distribution of Qñ, which is at the same time the avoidance of any excess Q. The Law in terms of the pleasure principle can be described in light of an economical functioning that aims to avoid any upheaval or deferral. The Law is therefore the maintenance of homeostasis.

The link between the Law and the object of desire to the pleasure principle is achieved through Linguistics. Lacan's description of the pleasure principle recalls the definition of the Thing in terms of the unconscious, substitution and the Law. To quote Lacan (2008a) at length:

For according to the laws of the pleasure principle, the signifier projects into this beyond equalization, homeostasis, and the tendency to the uniform investment of the system of the self as such; it provokes its failure. The function of the pleasure principle is, in effect, to lead the subject from signifier to signifier, by generating as many signifiers as are required to maintain at as low a level as possible the tension that regulates the whole functioning of the psychic apparatus. (p. 147)

This relationship [between the pleasure principle and the play of the signifier] is founded on the fact that the pleasure principle basically involves the sphere of investment, *besetzung*, and its *bahnungen*. It is facilitated by the *Vorstellungen* and even more by what Freud calls the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanzen* – a term that appears very early, before the article on the *Unconscious* (1915c). Each time a state of need arises, the pleasure principle tends to provoke a reinvestment in its content – in inverted commas, that is, since at this metapsychological level clinical practice is not involved – a hallucinated reinvestment of what had previously been satisfying hallucinations. The diffuse energy of the pleasure principle tends towards this reinvestment of representation. The intervention of the reality principle can only therefore be a radical one; it is never a second stage. (p. 169-70)

The connection between the Law and language is once again affirmed in the abovementioned quote. The role of Freud's (1950) „*Project*“ cannot be undervalued due to the far reaching implications of language as the expression and presentation of desire.

The second explanation of the Law in terms of societal conventions and norms, however, shows a more practical explanation of how the Law and the Thing are connected. For Lacan (2008a), it is still a

matter of how the Law is sublimated, in other words, internalized and made part of the internal processes through the formation of the facilitations [*Bahnung*]. This is illustrated when he writes: Is the Law the Thing? Certainly not. Yet I can only know of the Thing by means of the Law. In effect, I would not have had the idea to covet it if the Law hadn't said: „Thou shalt not covet“. But the Thing finds a way by producing in me all kinds of covetousness thanks to the commandment, for without the Law the Thing is dead. (p. 102)

The Law therefore reveals the Thing, but the tension between the Thing and the Law maintains the desire for the Thing. Therefore, the Law not only serves to identify desire, but also to solicit desire. Lacan (1966/2006) opposes the classical notion that the absence of Law would result in a permissive society, where everything would be allowed:

To the concupiscence gleaming in old man Karamazov's eyes when he questioned his son – “God is dead, thus all is permitted” – modern man, the very one who dreams of the nihilistic suicide of Dostoevsky's hero or forces himself to blow up Nietzsche's inflatable superman, replies with all his ills and all his deeds: “God is dead, nothing is permitted anymore”. (p. 130)

The result of the absence of God would lead to everything being prohibited. It would be commonly assumed that the absence of God would result in everything being permitted, but as a result, nothing is allowed. Desire is therefore not only revealed, but solicited through the Law. The Law therefore functions as the source of desire as the Law acts as the injunction to enjoy.

Slavoj Žižek (2002) clarifies how the absence of the Law would universalize prohibition in Lacan's explanation using Dostoevsky's quote regarding the *absence of God* embedding prohibition:

How do we account for this paradox that the absence of Law universalizes Prohibition? There is only one possible explanation: *enjoyment itself, which we experience as „transgression“, is in its innermost status something imposed, ordered* – when we enjoy, we never do it „spontaneously“, we always follow a certain injunction. (p. 9, his emphasis)

Psychoanalysis understands the Law differently and applies a more classical description. Rudolf Bernet (1992) describes the relation between Kant and Lacan. His starting point is the similarities between Freud and Kant's description of the Law: “Wat hier verder ook van zij, Kant en Freud zijn het minstens hierover eens: voor de mens, dat ongelukkige en verdeelde subject, is geen heil te verwachten buiten de wet!” [What is also applicable here is that Kant and Freud at least agreed on this: for people, the unhappy and divided subject, there is no protection to be expected outside the Law!] (p. 33). Therefore,

Freud and Kant both highlight the protection that the Law provides and both demonstrate how the Law is a safe haven.

Lacan's description of the Law includes the effects of language. Lacan adds to the description of the Law by introducing Linguistics to Psychoanalysis. With this in mind, Bernet illustrates the significant difference between Kant and Lacan:

De wet van de begeerte bij Lacan daarentegen is de wet van de taal. Deze wet kan men rationeel noemen voorzover zij universeel is, maar zij is tegelijkertijd „arbitrair“, d.w.z. zonder enig fundament buiten de taal. De arbitrariteit van de wet van de begeerte is niet hetzelfde als wat Kant op het oog heft wanneer hij de morele wet een „factum van de rede“ noemt. [The law of desire, according to Lacan, is the law of language. This law can be rationally explained insofar as it is universal, but it is at the same time „arbitrary“, i.e. without any foundation outside of language. The arbitrariness of the law of desire is not the same as that which Kant has in mind when he speaks of the moral law as a „factum of reason“] (p. 44)

The main difference between Kant and Lacan's view of the Law can be summarized by viewing the relation between the subject and the Law; Bernet summarizes the difference based on access to the Law, "in ieder geval wil Lacan hiermee aantonen, dat de wet van de begeerte van dergelijke aard, is dat het subject begeert volgens deze wet en niet deze wet zelf begeert" [in any case Lacan wants to indicate with this that the Law of desire is of a similar nature, that the subject desires according to this Law and does not desire this Law itself] (p. 46). In Kant's explanation, the Law is desirable, as it is the Law that is a safe haven²³. For Lacan²⁴, it is not the Law that is desirable, but it is in accordance with the Law that desire occurs. In other words, according to Kant one can know what the Law is as the Law is universal²⁵, whereas for Lacan the Law functions and features without one's accord. For Kant the Law provides a solution, whereas for Lacan, the ethical is always blurred or veiled by the unconscious.

²³

"The *absolutely good* (the object of moral feeling), as subject's powers to be determined by the conception of a law that *obligates absolutely*" (Kant, 1987, p. 267, his emphasis) ²⁴

Lacan (2008a) writes : "The desire of the man of good will is to do good, to do the right thing, and he who comes to seek you out, does so in order to feel good, to be in agreement with himself, to identify with or be in conformity with some norm [...] In the irreducible margin as well as at the limit of his own good, the subject reveals himself to the never entirely resolved mystery of the nature of his desire" (p. 292) ²⁵

"for if laws are not originally given by reason, and compliance with them brought about by it as a pure practical power, they cannot be moral" (Kant, 1987, p.485). Freud argues the opposite, that there are no intrinsic laws (Van Haute, 2006)

The Oedipus complex is an illustration of the unknowing transgression of the Law, to quote Bernet (1992): "Lacan herinnert in dit verband ook aan het tragische lot van Oedipus, die – zonder dit te weten

– in zijn begeerte de wet van de begeerte overtreden had” [Lacan reminds in this context also of the tragic fate of Oedipus, who - without knowing it – in his desire breaks the Law of desire] (p. 48). Moyaert (2006) uses an example to illustrate the problem of Kant’s ethics: For example, if you had a friend in hospital, do you visit your friend because he is a dear friend, and because you want to see him, or is it as Kant argues, it is your duty that you go to see him.¹⁷

This section demonstrates how the pleasure principle features in establishing an internal Law. Linguistics introduces the description of the Thing in terms of the unconscious, substitution, and the Law. The next section provides a rewording of § 1.6, whereby instincts, love, and substitution are described in terms of the pleasure principle.

2.7. Instincts, Love and Substitution revisited

Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 provide two different approaches. Chapter 1 illustrates Freud’s developmental model as well as the incorporation of Lacan’s Mirror stage. § 1.6 provides a description of instincts, love, and substitution in light of the developmental model. § 2.7 illustrate instincts, love, and substitution in light of Freud’s (1950) „*Project*“ and the pleasure principle.

This section aims to introduce the words signifier and both the pleasure- and reality-principle to the description of the process of substitution. What is substituted is not one object for another object, but one signifier for another signifier. It never was about the object or the properties of the object as illustrated through *das Ding*, but for Lacan, it is purely about the signifier. The introduction of a language theory is the separation between the signifier and the signified, between the word and the object. For Lacan, the word has greater significance than the object. This is seen in Fig 2 (p. 63) in the example of the two toilet doors, where two doors of exactly the same proportions, shape, size, colour, etc, are differentiated by the words Gentlemen and Ladies. The words create a rule regarding who may or may not enter. It is only through the rule of the word that the meaning of the toilet door is carried. The same is applicable to the object of desire, which, according to Lacan, has more to do with the word (representing the object of the desire) than the actual object of desire. This is another explanation of the primacy of the signifier over the signified, in this case the primacy of the word (representing the object of desire) over the object of desire, as we only have the word available in analysis.

¹⁷ Moyaert (2006) presented in 14 March 2006

In terms of the pleasure principle and the reality principle, the object of desire can only be known in terms of the primacy of the signifier, and is only realized in two ways. To recap: firstly, through the modality of loss, and secondly, through contravening the Law.

Substitution is the replacement of one signifier for another signifier. Lacan focuses on the process whereby one signifier can replace another signifier, which is always an attempt to match the signified. Since the signified is veiled in the unconscious, Lacan (1993) summarizes the repetition of substitution of *das Ding* through the signifier:

But this reality principle is basically misrecognized. It expresses precisely this – the subject does not have to *find* the object of his desire, he is not led, channelled there, by the natural rails of a more or less pre-established instinctual and, moreover, more or less stumbling, adaptation, such as we see in the animal kingdom. He must on the contrary *refind* the object, whose emergence is fundamentally hallucinated. Of course, he never does refind it, and this is precisely what the reality principle consists of. The subject never refinds, Freud writes, anything but another object that answers more or less satisfactorily to the needs in question. He never finds anything but a distinct object since he must by definition refind something that he has on loan. This is the essential point that the introduction of the reality principle into the Freudian dialectic hinges on. (p. 85, his italics)

Psychoanalysis has identified the starting point for the process of substitution. The first confrontation with the Law is demonstrated through the Oedipus complex, best illustrated in Freud's (1924b) *The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex*. The condition for the dissolution of the Oedipus complex is emphasized through the prohibition of the Oedipus complex. In boys, Freud argues, "The child may have had only very vague notions as to what constitutes a satisfying erotic intercourse; but certainly the penis must play a part in it, for the sensations in his own organ were evidence of that" (p. 176). Freud's argument is that the boy establishes a phantasy¹⁸ built around the penis as the condition of enjoyment. Therefore, the dissolution of the Oedipus complex is a result of a choice between the phantasy and reality:

¹⁸ Phantasy is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, specifically 3.2. Lacan's L-schema ²⁸

Lacan (1966/2006) writes: For the phallus is a signifier, a signifier whose function, in the intrasubjective economy of analysis, may lift the veil from the function it served in the mysteries. For it is the signifier that is destined to designate meaning effects as a whole, insofar as the signifier conditions them by its presence as signifier" (p. 690)

If the satisfaction of love in the field of the Oedipus complex is to cost the child his penis, a conflict is bound to arise between his narcissistic interest in that part of his body and the libidinal cathexis of his parental objects. In this conflict the first of these forces normally triumphs: the child's ego turns away from the Oedipus complex. (p. 176) A Lacanian reading of this passage emphasizes how the phallus and the penis are confused with one another, how the penis is seen as the source of power and pleasure, which as Lacan points out is falsely construed.²⁸ There is a misrecognition of the penis (as signifier) for the phallus (as signified), whereby phantasy is structured around the penis. Freud argues that the narcissistic sentiments towards the possession of a penis override any sense of self. But the route that Freud takes to establish the penis as centre of phantasy originates in Freud's establishment of autoerotic zones. "With this, the loss of his own penis becomes imaginable, and the threat of castration takes its deferred effect" (p. 176). By means of Lacan's distinction between phallus and penis, one can argue that Freud mistook the presence of the penis for the phallus, whereby phantasy is structured around the subject's relation to the object or object-cause of desire, or in terms of the Oedipus complex, structured around the penis.

Freud (1924b) argues that, for girls, the Oedipus complex is structured around the lack of a penis. "The girl's Oedipus complex is much simpler than that of a small bearer of the penis; in my experience, it seldom goes beyond the taking of her mother's place and the adopting of a feminine attitude towards her father" (p. 178). Freud takes the female version of the Oedipus complex further to demonstrate how it manifests:

Her Oedipus complex culminates in a desire, which is long retained, to receive a baby from her father as a gift – to bear him a child. One has an impression that the Oedipus complex is then gradually given up because this wish is never fulfilled. The two wishes – to possess a penis and a child – remain strongly cathected in the unconscious and help to prepare the female creature for her later sexual role. (p. 179)

Feminists, such as Betty Friedan (1963), have expressed great resentment against Freud's description, and correctly so, if one argues that the penis and the phallus are equal. In other words, penis envy is the product of confusing the signifier for the signified.

When Freud's Oedipus complex is described in different terms, the Oedipus complex illustrates how the process of substitution originates, specifically pertaining to the establishment of a phantasy structured around a penis. This is done through the misrecognition of the attainment of power and desire through the presence of a penis. Through the impossible object-cause of desire, a chain of substitutions is set in motion. The Oedipus complex is therefore the illustration of the original

impossible-object-cause of desire, of which there subsequently remains a trace; in Freud's instance it is the penis. All subsequent substitutions are done in light of the object-cause of desire, formulated within Freud's Oedipus complex. The chain of substitution is set in motion through castration, as introduced through the Oedipus complex. On castration and the difference between Freud and Lacan, Paul Verhaeghe (2006) writes:

It is clear that Lacan defines the notion of castration in a completely different way than Freud. For Freud, the emphasis is on castration anxiety in which the Oedipal boy fears being castrated by the father in punishment for his incestuous desire for the mother. For Lacan, *symbolic* castration is the inevitable consequence of the fact that man becomes a subject and must therefore pass through the signifier in order to gain jouissance, with the simultaneous implication that jouissance is impossible. (p. 42-3, his italics)

In a modest reading of Freud, Lacan proposes the necessary alterations to the Oedipus complex, emphasizing the relations between the signifier and the signified. The Oedipus complex is retained, yet then, through the necessary vernacular, is reinstituted as an example of the origins of desire and the structuring of phantasy. Love is then accordingly redefined in terms of Linguistics and substitution. Lacan (1998) writes, "*I love you, but, because inexplicably I love in you something more than you – the objet petit a – I mutilate you*" (p. 268, his italics). For Lacan, it is therefore not about the signifier, but an attempt to get to the signified. Love is therefore not the love of the [physical] Other, but the love for what the Other potentially has, as defined through what the self lacks. Lacan (1998) concludes: The relation to the Other is precisely what which, for us, brings out what is represented by the lamella¹⁹ – not sexed polarity, the relation between masculine and feminine, *but the relation between the living subject and that which he loses* by having to pass, for his reproduction, through the sexual cycle. (p. 199, my emphasis)

Love introduces a relation to the Other, that will be explored in greater detail in § 3.2 when discussing the L-schema (Fig 4, p. 86).

2.8. Conclusion

¹⁹ Lacan (1998) defines the lamella thus: "The lamella is something extraflat, which moves like the amoeba. It is just a little more complicated."

The aim of the second chapter is to present an alternative theoretical development to the argument presented in the first chapter. The second chapter achieves a description of desire without referring to a fixed origin, but still maintains the ghost³⁰ of the origin.

The biggest question uniting both chapters is: how can we account for the desire for certain properties and the extreme lengths that are taken to uphold (suspend) the desire? The first chapter focuses on the development of the infant and the relationship with the primary caregiver in the development of ideals³¹ (which are desirable). It also focuses on Lacan's mirror stage and the implications of the mirror stage. The second chapter focuses on the internal processes in the unconscious, as Freud (1950) argues in the „*Project*“. The structure of the unconscious can therefore be equated with the structure of a language, where Freud differentiated between

But it goes everywhere. And as it is something – I will tell you shortly why – that it is related to what the sexed being loses in sexuality, it is, like the amoeba in relation to sexed beings, immortal – because it survives any division, any scissiparous intervention. And it can run around. [...] This lamella, this organ, whose characteristic is not to exist, but which is nevertheless an organ – I can give you more detail as to its zoological place – is the libido" (p. 197-8) ³⁰

Derrida (2006) writes on ghosts: "For there to be a ghost, there must be a return to the body, but to a body that is more abstract than ever. The spectrogenic process corresponds therefore to a paradoxical *incorporation*. Once ideas or thoughts (*Gedanken*) are detached from their substratum, one engenders some ghost by *giving them a body*. Not by returning to the living body from which ideas and thoughts have been torn loose, but by incarnating the latter in *another artifactual body, a prosthetic body*, a ghost of spirit, one might say a ghost of the ghost" (p. 157-8) ³¹

Lacan emphasizes how the ideals are overvaluated [*überschätzen*], but that the values that are overvaluated are not a fixed point in life. The overvaluation creates an extra value, and it is in this extra value that can't be explained or rationalized.

the *Sachvorstellung* [thing-presentation] and the *Wortvorstellung* [word-presentation]. For Freud, the differentiation was necessitated through the separation between the unconscious thought and the conscious thought. Cilliers (1989) summarizes: "There is not consciousness without both word- and thing-presentations being present. The thing-presentation comes from their only source, the system conscious. In this way Freud provides us with two preconditions for consciousness: language and the unconscious" (p. 127). The primacy of the unconscious is reaffirmed when Cilliers (1989) writes:

Consciousness is not the function of the ego, or the ω system [of perceptual neurons], or any structural, functional or topological component of the mental apparatus. It is the result of an interaction between the various components where the unconscious seems to have some priority. (p. 121)

The structure of the unconscious is therefore dominated by the pleasure principle (the first principle), which is explained in terms of a neuronal economy focusing on the efficient discharge of Q. The reality principle (the second principle) is the disturbance to the neuronal economy, which through excessive

Q, forces a pathway through the contact-barriers, in effect changing the facilitations [*Bahnung*]. This biological explanation of the pleasure principle entrenches an economical basis for the experience of pleasure in terms of efficiency. Once the amount of Q exceeds the limits of the contact-barriers is pain²⁰ experienced. For Freud, only extremes within the unconscious structure reaches consciousness, which is why pain is important as one can only be aware of the unconscious in so far as there are deviations from the efficient functioning of the unconscious.

The role of language then in consciousness is preceded by the unconscious notion, which, according to Freud, is the source of the *thing*-presentation [*Sachvorstellung*] and is consequently attached to a *word*-presentation [*Wortvorstellung*]. The lack of a direct correlation between the thing-presentation and the word-presentation proves problematic. Lacan takes the separation further, equating the *word* and *thing* to what Saussure called the signifier and the signified. However, for Saussure, through a dialectical relationship between the signified and the signifier, meaning is generated. For Lacan, this is insufficient, as there is a certain primacy of the signifier. Consequently the signified is attached to a property that already exists in language, in the symbolic order. In other words, language precedes being. The implication of this is, as described by Moyaert (1995):

Onze gevoelens (indrukken, lichamelijke gewaarwordingen) worden gestructureerd (gedifferentieerd) door de voorstellingen te binden. In de plaats van een confuus gevoel dat in het luchtledige hangt en met niets kan worden verbonden, komt een gevoel dat zich aan iets – een teken – vashecht. [Our feelings (impressions, physical sensations) are structured (differentiated) through the binding of it and the representation. In place of a feeling of confusion that is suspended in a vacuum and cannot be connected with anything, comes the feeling that attaches itself to something – a sign/symbol] (p. 115)

That a name is given to a child, often even before birth, demonstrates an example that Lacan gives for the precedence of language over being. Moyaert (1995) takes it further, to even suggest that the subject exists before birth, at the moment when a name is given: “Het leven begin niet by de geboorte: het kind krijgt een naam en het wordt in een ceremonieële doopplechtigheid toevertrouwd aan de wilsbeschikking van een goddelijke lotsbestemming” [Life does not begin at birth: the child receives a name and the name is given in a ceremonial christening, entrusting the child to the will of a godly destiny] (p. 29). This also illustrates that we have no control over language or the uses of language. Language creates meaning with or without our approval.

²⁰ See Chapter 2.2. To quote Derrida (2004) again: “Pain leaves behind particularly rich breaches” (p. 254).

However, there still remains an aspect that belongs to the unconscious that remains free from representation. To maintain the anonymity of this property, Lacan refers to this property as *das Ding*, also known as *la Chose*, or the Thing. The Thing remains protected from language, in both the Freudian *Sachvorstellung* and *Wortvorstellung* and the Saussurian signifier and signified. The question arises then of how we can come to know of the Thing [*das Ding*]? The solution that Freud provides, as presented in Repression (1915b) is through the examination of fragments as they surface from the unconscious, for example, as described in dreams.

The Thing as unrepresentable object or object-cause of desire is dependent on the Law. Lacan corrects Dostoevsky's "if God is dead, then everything is permitted" to "if God is dead, then everything is prohibited". The notion of God allowing desire is therefore God as source of desire. Note that God is an example of the *Nom-du-Père* [Name of the Father] through a play on words, which Lacan uses synonymously with *le Non-du-Père* [the No of the Father] (Lacan, 2008a, p. 79). "It is the *name of the father* that we must recognize the basis of the symbolic function which, since the dawn of historical time, has identified this person with the figure of the law" (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 278, his emphasis). The *Non-du-Père* as illustrated through the Oedipus complex shows the origins of the „No“, which sets the process of substitution in motion whereby acceptable substitutes are pursued. In other words, if there is no Law, then everything is prohibited. This may seem confusing, but for Lacan, the argument is that the Law creates desire.

The connection between Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 is that the first chapter highlights the development of the Superego in terms of the development of the *Ego-ideal* and the *Ideal-ego*, whereas Chapter 2 highlights the development of the Superego in terms of neurons and economy. The substitution process proceeds with the idealized qualities when acceptable substitutes materialize. Slavoj Žižek (2002) summarizes the connection between the Superego and the Law: Within the subject's psychic economy, the categorical imperative²¹ is experienced as an agency which bombards the subject with injunctions that are impossible to fulfil: it brooks no excuses ("you can because you must!") and observes with mocking, malevolent neutrality the subject's helpless struggle to live up to its "crazy" demands, secretly enjoying his failure. The imperative's categorical [Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative] demand goes against the subject's well-being – more precisely, it is totally indifferent to it: from the viewpoint of the "pleasure principle" and its inherent prolongation, the "reality principle",

²¹ "The super-ego – the conscience at work in the ego – may then become harsh, cruel, inexorable against the ego which is in its charge. Kant's

the imperative is “non-economical”, “unaccountable”, senseless. The Freudian name for such an “irrational” injunction which prevents the subject from acting appropriately to present circumstances and thus organizes his failure is, of course, *superego*. (p. 232)

Chapter 3 and 4 focus on illustrating how Freud’s (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is based on the descriptions found in the first two chapters. The next two chapters unite two important psychoanalytic themes, the Law and desire. The first two chapters illustrate how the Law and desire manifest and the next two chapters illustrate the effects and consequently how the Law and desire shape the course for what Freud deemed the death drive.

Categorical Imperative is thus the direct heir of the Oedipus complex”
(Freud, 1924a, p. 167)

Chapter 3

3.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the case study that shapes the central theme of Freud’s (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The case study presents a practical example for the application of the theory posited thus far in this thesis. The Fort/Da case study is based on a game that a child plays with a reel that demonstrates the application of the pleasure principle, the repetition compulsion, and intersubjectivity.

The first section focuses on Lacan's description of the L-schema (Fig 4, p. 86) that establishes Lacan's explanation of intersubjectivity. This serves to elucidate the relationship that the subject has with the Other, or in terms of the Fort/Da case study, the relationship between the child and the mother. Lacan's L-schema demonstrates the practical elements; as well as the potential risks of misreading (as demonstrated through Dreyer's (2005) reading).

The second section focuses on the repetition compulsion [*Wiederholungszwang*]. This section focuses on Freud and Lacan's description whereby the repetition compulsion accounts for the repeatability of behaviour. The repetition compulsion is explained in terms of the pleasure principle, whereby the repetition compulsion is described through the formation of facilitations [*Bahnung*]. The pleasure principle demonstrates that the repetitions are not reproductions but reiterations²².

The third section focuses on the Fort/Da case study; first with Freud's description, followed by Lacan and ending with Jacques Derrida's: Freud's description is the initial setup of the game; Lacan situates the game within a psychoanalytic context; and Derrida provides a powerful critique.

This chapter demonstrates the important example of the Fort/Da case study as the prelude to the death drive in Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Derrida demonstrates that it is difficult to separate theory from biography; in this case separating the Fort/Da case study from Psychoanalysis or separating Psychoanalysis from the Fort/Da case study.

3.2. Lacan's L-schema

This chapter starts with the L-schema, which elucidates Lacan's intersubjective position. The L-schema demonstrates the possibility of an intersubjective theory in Psychoanalysis, which would account for the relationship between the child and the mother, as discussed in the Fort/Da case study.

²² Derrida (1988) wrote: "Through the possibility of repeating every mark as the same it makes way for an idealization that seems to deliver the full presence of ideal objects (not present in the mode of sense perception and beyond all immediate deictics), but this repeatability itself ensures that the full presence of a singularity thus repeated comports in itself the reference to something else, thus rendering the full presence that it nevertheless announces. This is why iteration is not simply repetition" (p.129)

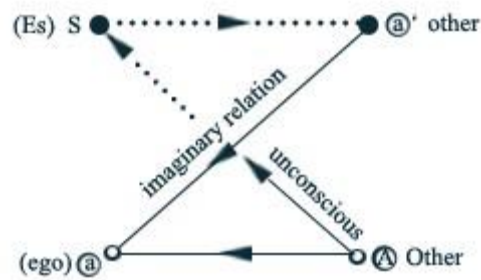


Fig 4: Lacan's L-schema (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 54)

Lacan (1966/2006, p. 54) introduced the L-schema in the *Seminar on "The Purloined Letter"* and it has a very specific place within Lacanian Psychoanalysis. The L-schema ties together the primary narcissistic stage in the first chapter with the unconscious of the second chapter. The L-schema also demonstrates the language theory as described in terms of Freud's differentiation between *Sachvorstellung* [thing-presentation] and *Wortvorstellung* [wordpresentation]. This can even be translated into Saussure's schema of signifier over signified, whereby *Sachvorstellung* correlates with the signified and *Wortvorstellung* correlates with the signifier. However, in Freud's description there always remains a *distance* between the signifier and the signified, as opposed to Saussure who connects the signifier and the signified in a dialectical association.²³

The departure for the description of the L-schema is the formation of the ego in terms of the imaginary and symbolic. In this instance the imaginary correlates with the signified and the symbolic with the signifier. The symbolic pertains to language as both description and symbolic Law, whereas the imaginary pertains to a fiction encompassing the attributes described.

The four corners of the L-schema are independently described by Lacan (1966/2006) as: "S, his ineffable and stupid existence; *a* his objects; *a*", his ego, that is, his form as reflected in his objects; an *A*, the locus from which the question of his existence may arise from" (p. 550, his italics).

But for Lacan, the ego (the conscious) is aware of the self: the way the self is viewed is significantly different from the actual self. This can be described as the separation between the signifier and the signified. This is equally applicable to the ego and the subject (S): "S is the letter S, but it's also the subject, that is to say not the subject in its totality" (Lacan, 1988b, p. 243). The starting point is always the subject (S). However, because it is the decentred subject, or the fragmented subject, the L-schema

²³ See Chapter 2.5

shows how the ego is not located within the actual body, but within the imaginary (a"). In other words, Lacan emphasizes the difference between the ego and the Subject, as seen in the L-schema, whereby the ego is located separately from the Subject. This is illustrated through the separation between the signifier and the signified, whereby the signifier cannot fully express the signified. The L-schema presents a more complicated interaction than the Simplified schema of the two mirrors (Fig 1, p. 34). Lacan (1988b) elaborates: What analysis teaches us, on the other hand, is that the ego is an absolutely fundamental form for the constitution of objects. In particular, it perceives what we call, for structural reasons, its fellow being, in the form of the *specular* other. This form of the other has a very close relation to the ego, which can be superimposed on it, and we write it as a". (p.244, my emphasis)

For Lacan, the specific usage of a", is to maintain the French *autre* [other], as seen in the mirror image, to maintain the distinctness of the image from the actual self as the Subject. But because a" is only form, and consists simply of the content ascribed, a" remains within the imaginary, i.e. the specular. This explains why the subject doesn't have direct access to the other (a"), as it remains a fictitious description. Because language separates the actual object and what the object is known as, the description falls with the imaginary. Lacan (1988b) explains:

The imaginary gains its false reality, which nonetheless is a verified reality, starting off from the order defined by the wall of language. The ego such as we understand it, the other, the fellow being, all these imaginary things are objects. (p. 244)

The wall of language is established through the separation between the signifier and the signified. There is no direct access to describe the signified, because of the separation. This is exactly why there remains a barrier, a wall that cannot be crossed or breached; as a result the signifier is all that remains accessible. The signifier is consequently treated as an object. "But they are indeed objects, because they are named as such within an organised system, that of the wall of language" (Lacan, 1988b, p. 244). Through the signifier is the object known, even if the object is imaginary, illusion, or fiction. The signified lies beyond the wall of language, which is something entirely different when put in words (the signifier). This is exactly why the presence of the object cannot be the source of meaning, as the object becomes lost behind the wall of language. The subject I am speaking to is never the true subject, but the signifier, the word that is a close approximation. Lacan (1988b) illustrates:

They are on the other side of the wall of language, there where in principle I never reach them. Fundamentally, it is them I'm aiming at every time I utter true speech, but I always attain a", a"", through reflection. I always aim at true subjects, and I have to be content with shadows. The subject is separated from the Others, the true ones, by the wall of language. (p. 244)

The only means of gauging the Other is through language, speech, words. But because the true Other is behind the wall of language, there is no way of really speaking of the Other other than as a signifier, an object. On speech, Lacan (1988b) writes:

If speech is founded in the existence of the Other, the true one, language is so made as to return us to the objectified other, to the other whom we can make what we want of, including thinking that he is an object, that is to say that he doesn't know what he's saying. When we use language, our relation with the other always plays on this ambiguity. In other words, language is as much there to find us in the Other as to drastically prevent us from understanding him. And that is indeed what is at stake in the analytic experience. (p. 244)

The L-schema is built around the chain of signifiers which never penetrates the signified. The outcome is the incorporation of the Other within the L-schema whereby the Other cannot be seen as wholly other, but in terms of the ideal-ego; in terms of the imaginary other or the image of the self (a"). For this reason, there can never be an actual Other (signified), because the Other cannot be penetrated. The Other is only viewed in terms of the self and the ideals for the self (the same ideals even created by the primary caregivers, linking with Chapter 1: primary narcissism and the ideal-ego).

The process of the L-schema is neatly packaged to explain, not only the relation between the ego and the Other, but also the psychoanalytic notion of transference²⁴. Transference occurs within speech: "The pig's grunt only becomes speech when someone raises the question as to what it is that they want to make you believe. Speech is precisely only speech in as much as someone believes in it" (Lacan, 1988a, p. 240). This consequently affects the therapeutic situation. Lacan, in *Écrits* (1966/2006) examines the position of the psychoanalyst within the L-schema (the psychoanalyst in the role of the Other), whereby the emphasis lies with speech, but Lacan concedes the difficulty:

But true speech, questioning true discourse as to what it signifies, will find that one signification always refers to another signification in true discourse, no thing being able to be shown other than by a sign, and will thus make true discourse seem to be doomed to error. (p. 352)

²⁴ Lacan (1998) writes on transference: "The transference is the means by which the communication of the unconscious is interrupted, by which the unconscious closes up again" (p. 130) and "In analytic practice, there are many ways of conceiving the transference. They are not necessarily mutually exclusive. They may be defined at different levels" (p. 130) and "*the transference is the enactment of the reality of the unconscious*" (p. 149, his italics)

Speech is therefore problematic for two reasons: first, the ambiguity of the signifier; and second, through the application of the L-schema. The L-schema demonstrates how one signification refers to another signification in terms not only of one signifier to another signifier, but also in terms of the relation between the ego (a), the other (a"), the Subject and the (big) Other.

If the analyst is thus subjected to the ideal condition that the mirages of his narcissism must have become transparent to him, it is in order that he be permeable to the other's authentic speech; we must now try to understand how he can recognize the latter through the other's discourse. (p. 353)

It is then a question of how the Other can feature authentically within the L-schema, how the speech of the Other can be discerned from the speech of the self, or even how the Other can be differentiated from the Subject. The possibility then of speech and interaction cannot be founded on the actual interaction, or on the symbolic discourse, as the imaginary has to be accounted for. The imaginary takes the form of an idealization, the attribution of an inapplicable quality, even a lie. Speech is both unreliable and ambiguous due to the lack of unity between the signifier and the signified; and results in alienation. Alienation - in terms of the L-schema - is seen in the relationship between the subject and the image of the self, or the subject and the Other. Or, in Lacan's own words:

This is how true discourse, by isolating the givens [*données*] of promises in the giving of one's word [*parole donnée*], makes the latter appear to be lying speech – since it pledges the future which, as they say, belongs to no one – and ambiguous too in that it constantly outstrips the being it concerns in the alienation in which its becoming is constituted. (p. 352)

A further clarification of the L-schema is given when Lacan (1988b) draws the correlation between the L-schema and Freud's statement, *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*. The correlation is emphasized through the similarities between the description of the subject in the L-schema and in Freud's statement. Both are equally applicable to the therapeutic situation.

There are two meanings to be given to Freud's phrase – *Wo*

Es war, soll Ich werden. This *Es*, take it as the letter S. It is there, it is always there. It is the subject. He knows himself or he doesn't know himself. That isn't even the most important thing – he speaks or he doesn't speak. At the end of the analysis, it is him who must be called on to speak, and to enter into relation with the real Others. Where the S was, there the *Ich* should be. (p. 246)

Lacan (1966/2006) demonstrates how loaded Freud's *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden* is.

Wo (Where) *Es* (the subject devoid of any *das* or other objectifying article) *war* (was [*était*] - it is a locus of being that is at stake, and that in this locus) *soll* (must – it is a duty in the moral

sense that is announced here, as is confirmed by the single sentence that follows it, bringing the Chapter to a close) *Ich* (I, there must I – just as in French one announced “ce suis-je”, “this am I”, before saying, “c’est moi”, “it is me”), *werden* (become [*devenir*] – not occur (*survenir*), or even happen (*advenir*), but be born (*venir au jour*) of this very locus insofar as it is a locus of being). (p. 417)

Further investigation will be devoted to Lacan’s L-schema, not only in terms of the relation to the self, as demonstrated in Freud’s *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*, but explained through the relation between the Other and the Subject (S). Two readings of the L-schema are examined in greater detail, that of Boothby (1991) and Dreyer (2005).

Richard Boothby wrote two significant books, *Death and Desire* (1991) and *Freud as Philosopher* (2001) with specific reference to the L-schema. The feature of the L-schema within the larger corpus of Lacanian theory, according to Boothby (1991), focuses not only on the alienation of the subject, but also on the development of the ego:

I qualify the expression “being of the subject” as provisional because what is expressed by the Schema L has the structure of a question. That is to say, the schema is intended to represent not a static being but a process, a coming-into-being. It is readable in terms of the commentary Lacan gives on Freud’s formula, *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*. (p. 115)

The biggest area of contestation to Lacan’s L-schema, and the only aspect that really proves problematic in many readings of the L-schema, is the role of the Other and how the Other features within the L-schema.

The initial position of the schema, designating the formation of the ego in imaginary identification with an other – “the other which isn’t an other at all, since it is essentially coupled with the ego, in a relation that is always reflexive, interchangeable – the ego is always an *alter-ego*.” (1991, p.

115-6, quoting Lacan, 1988b, p. 321, his emphasis)

But this still only accounts for the other (a”) within the L-schema.

The biggest feature of the [big] Other, is that the Other speaks. The Other can interrupt, and the Other can interact within the L-schema. However, it is emphasized that there are limitations to the Other within the L-schema. Speech is the only means available for the Other to interject. The limitations of the interjection of the Other is negated or minimized through the identification of the subject as

other (a"). The subject (S) does not fully relate to the specular image of the other (a"). As Boothby (1991) writes:

The contribution of the symbolic function can now be plotted by opening this axis against itself. What is required is a differentiation of the desire of the subject from the ego *with which it is originally confused*. This differentiation is effected in concert with a differentiation in the other, according to which the specular other of imaginary identification is distinguished from the Other who speaks, the Other with a capital "O". (p. 116, my emphasis)

Boothby is opening the L-schema to a different reading as well by emphasizing the underlying complexity of the L-schema. The tension holding the corners apart are also keeping the corners bound. The symbolic function is not enough to separate the subject from the Other. Merely calling the one the Subject and the Other is not enough to separate the two. The significant difference between the Subject and the Other, as argued by Boothby, is through the imaginary, which are both the imaginary *difference* and the imaginary *potential*. On the relationship between the other and the Other, Lacan (1993) writes:

The distinction between the Other with a big O, that is, the Other in so far as it's not known, and the other with a small o, that is, the other who is me, the source of all knowledge, is fundamental. (p. 40)

Only now does the possibility of a difference between the Subject and the Other become apparent. The limitations that the Subject has in terms of achieving or living up to the ideals imposed by the primary caregivers (as argued in Chapter 1), are twofold: First, through the impossibility of maintaining the ideals or even of always living up to the ideals. Secondly, which is more applicable, is the language component: that one can never fully realize what the ideals are. In the process of becoming word, the word never fully encompasses what the terms and conditions of the ideals are which means that there remains a hidden kernel within the ideals that aren't verbalized, yet internalized. Therefore the ideals are impossible, as they can never be fully realized within the Subject. However, because the Other is impenetrable, it can only be the Other who can comply with the ideals, which means that the Other is the unrealized self. The Other is the uncastrated image of the self.

In Dreyer's (2005) critique on Lacan, Dreyer's argument is well constructed and seems to be a very good reading of Lacan's L-schema. However, there are two major areas of concern, illustrated when Dreyer writes:

Lacan thus enunciates two definite processes involved in the fabrication of a fundamental „lack of being“ – firstly the lack of being engendered by the subject's alienation in the Other (mirror stage), and secondly a lack resulting from the fact that the subject depends on the signifier, and that

the signifier is first of all in the field of the Other. (p. 27) The relationship between the self and the Other in Dreyer's reading of Lacan, hinges on: "Lacan asserts that this schema signifies that the condition of the subject (neurosis or psychosis) is dependent on what is being unfolded in the Other" (p. 28), which is demonstrated in the L-schema. The outcome is perhaps an overemphasis on the Other within the L-schema, as if the Other has the final say. For Dreyer, the return link to the Subject (S), is described as "It is the gaze of others (approving, guilt-inducing) which trigger unconscious ego effects and prompt the articulation of the latter's selfjustification, anger, grandiosity, or any other such Imaginary "effect" that rigidly resists knowledge of its desire" (p. 29). Through the use of the word gaze, the interaction with the Other presupposes the presence of the Other, which is the same as supposing the mirror stage requires the presence of a mirror. Dreyer argues that it is necessary for the Other to be present, or even for the Other to gaze at the self, and in turn elicit a reaction which is self-justification, anger, grandiosity, etc. The necessity of the „gaze of the Other“ is inappropriately introduced within the L-schema in terms of an intersubjective theory (exemplified through J.P. Sartre³⁷ or E. Levinas³⁸). This leads to the description of "the signifier is first of all in the field of the Other", whereby Dreyer argues for the Other as an autonomous, metaphysical being, acting in accordance with the reality principle (the second principle, a disruption to the homeostasis). The problem, however, is that there are measures in place to limit the effect of the reality principle. The intrusion of the Other into the L-schema is mediated through defence mechanisms, aimed at the preservation and maintenance of the pleasure principle. This is why the Other cannot be an autonomous entity, manifesting materially through "a gaze" and consequently mediating the behaviour of the Subject. The lack of direct access - not only to the Other, but also that the Other has to the Subject - isn't as apparent as Dreyer argues.

For Lacan, the link between the Subject and the Other is therefore unconsciously mediated by the pleasure principle, which we can only describe through signifiers. To place the signifier into the realm of the Other is rather dubious as the Other is also dependent on the same rules of language. If the Other had the power that Dreyer ascribes to the role of the Other within the L-schema, the outcome is a continual change of evaluation of the Subject, with continual transformation of the Subject, of the ego. But because of the pleasure principle and the reality principle, the neuronal economy dictates that there is an active avoidance of continual change (the intrusion of the reality principle) - as Freud describes in *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1950) - that is a traumatic experience, even a painful one, and consequently lessens the effects of the Other as described by Dreyer.

Jean-Paul Sartre (2003) *Being and Nothingness* 38

Emmanuel Levinas (1978) *Existence and Existents* and Levinas (1991)

Totality and Infinity

Therefore, the two main areas of concern is the role of the Other within Dreyer's description of the L-schema, and secondly, through the description of the Other (in the mirror stage) or as Dreyer put it "engendered by the subject's alienation in the Other (mirror stage)". Even if Dreyer referred to the [small] other: the alienation of the self is not done in accordance with the other, but through an inevitable *méconnaissance* [misrecognition] of the self. For one, through the misrecognition of the self in the mirror in terms of the ideals, but also articulated through the separation between signified and signifier. The signifier of the self cannot fully describe what is signified. Dreyer would be correct to refer to the [big] Other within the mirror stage. An initial Other has to be accounted for in the mirror stage, in terms of origins - played by the primary caregiver – that is crucial in the development of the initial ideals. However, the return to the initial criticism against Dreyer's reliance on a continual call to order through the Other, whereby the Other facilitates adaptation and alteration, is exactly what the pleasure principle is set to avoid. The emphasis is quite clear when Lacan (1988b) writes:

But that's not the point. The point is for the subject to get to know what he's saying, get to know who's speaking from there, S, and to this end, to become aware of the essentially imaginary character of what is said in that place when the absolute transcendent Other is invoked, this Other to be found in language each time speech endeavours to be uttered. (p.268)

A distinction has to be made between the two types of Other: the one being the person who stands in front of me and the Other who is the figure in the unconscious relation as seen in the L-schema. Dreyer's account of the L-schema is therefore an emphasis on the Other as the person in front of me, and is based on an intersubjective theory whereby the gaze of the Other, the presence of the Other, acts as a deterrent. However, for Lacan, the Other in front of me can only be known through language and has the qualities that are ascribed to the Other, in other words, imaginary features. The second description of the Other, as Lacan emphasized, is the Other that resides in the symbolic domain. This Other is also known as the unconscious Other and it is problematic to speak of this unconscious Other, because once we name this Other, the Other ceases to be unconscious. For Dreyer, it is through the physical Other that the law is enforced; however, it is not the physical Other that Lacan sees as the enforcer of the Law, but the unconscious Other, the symbolic Other: "The father, the Name-of-the-father sustains the structure of desire with the structure of the law" (Lacan, 1998, p. 34).³⁹

The difference between Lacan and Dreyer is emphasized by their different views regarding ethics. For Lacan, ethics or morality proves extremely difficult, and while ethics is not the topic of this thesis, it still needs to be clarified. For Lacan, the problems facing any contemporary ethics are threefold⁴⁰: First, the loss of the notion that human nature (or even consciousness) as a trustworthy guide for right and wrong. Second, that the loss of the idea that the experience of the microcosms and the macrocosms are not each other's echo. In other words, the perspective of human beings as the main and final narrative is no longer confirmed. Third, that the incest taboo⁴¹ (the most basic taboo) is incompatible

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Lacan (1966/2006) writes: "But Freud reveals to us that it is thanks to the Name-of-the-Father that man does not remain bound [*attaché*] to the sexual service of his mother, that aggression toward the Father is at the very heart of the Law, and that the Law is at the service of the desire that Law institutes through the prohibition of incest. For the unconscious demonstrates that desire is tied to prohibition and that the Oedipal crisis is determinant in sexual maturation itself" (p. 723) ⁴⁰

These three arguments were presented by Paul Moyaert (2006), 14 March 2006 regarding the topic of Lacan and ethics. ⁴¹

Taking his cue from Claude Lévi-Strauss" (1969) *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Derrida (2004) writes: "The incest prohibition is universal; in this sense one could call it natural. But it is also a prohibition, a system of norms and interdicts; in this sense one could call it cultural" (p. 357). Jacques Lacan (2008) writes: "If one reads LéviStrauss's text closely, one can see that it is the most enigmatic and the most stubborn point separating nature from culture. And I want to make you stop there. What we find in the incest law is located as such at the level of the unconscious in relation to *das Ding*, the Thing. The desire for the mother cannot be satisfied because it is the end, the terminal point, the abolition of the whole world of demand, which is the one that at its deepest level structures man's unconscious. It is to the extent that the function of the pleasure principle is to make man always search for what he has to find again, but which he never will attain, that one reaches the essence, namely, that sphere or relationship which is known as the law of the prohibition of incest. This metaphysical analysis is not worthy of our interest, however, if it cannot be confirmed at the level of the effective discourse which manages to put itself at the disposition of man's knowledge with the moral Law as natural Law; added is the argument that there is no ultimate explanation for why there is an incest taboo. For Dreyer, the ethical is located within the intersubjective relation.

In Dreyer's (2005) conclusion, he writes:

Future research can attempt to conceptualize the interrelation of sexuality and the desire for reciprocated subjectifications. [...] Future research can also examine the psychosexual stages of development in terms of the desire for reciprocated subjectification to establish possible stable (universal) patterns of dichotomous subject objectification formation. (p. 132)

The summary of Dreyer's future research is unfortunately also the loss of the distinction between the signifier and the signified, illustrated through the "reciprocated subjectifications". The impasse that Dreyer reaches is how to account for the Otherness of the Other, but his solution is undermined when his solution is rooted in the establishment of "possible stable (universal) patterns of dichotomous subject objectification formation" (p. 132). Dreyer's solution can be summarized as the establishment of a mode of language that would embody the positivist dream of universal, stable, empirical descriptions and observations that would result in the recognition and description of the Other as

Other. Dreyer's research can then be summarized as the phantasy (§0a) of the barred subject's relation towards equality, „reciprocal subjectifications“. This is also achieved through the separation (dichotomy) between the subject and the objectification of the subject. Dreyer's obtuse wording doesn't help clarify his argument. Dreyer's phantasy is the avoidance of xenophobia, racism, homophobia, etc, through „subjective objectification formation“ (language), or put in his own words: “he will religiously, without repose, continue to try and dominate and destroy his own mirror image. He will not turn the other cheek” (p. 136).⁴²

that preconscious or unconscious discourse or, in other words, the effective law” (p. 83, his italics) ⁴²

Alain Badiou (2007) provides a different, yet applicable explanation of *Wo Es war soll Ich werden*, in terms of the Cartesian cogito, [*Cogito ergo sum* “*ubi cogito, ibi sum*”], which presupposes a transparency, which is clear in Badiou's rewording of the Cartesian cogito as “that *there* where it is thought that thinking it must be, it is” (p. 431, his emphasis). The

Dreyer's argument concludes in a very similar vein to the argument of Jürgen Habermas' Communicative action, illustrated in a dialogue with Borradori (2003). “They do not encounter each other like members of a society who might *become alienated* from each other only through systematically distorted communication” (p. 35). Systemically distorted communication results in violence:

The spiral of violence begins as a spiral of distorted communication that leads through the spiral of uncontrolled reciprocal mistrust, to the breakdown of communication. If violence thus begins with a distortion in communication, after it has erupted it is possible to know what has gone wrong and what needs to be repaired. (p. 35)

Habermas consequently reintroduces an ideal-speech situation, but Dreyer's argument differs, as Habermas emphasizes the situation and the conditions of communication as a cure, whereas Dreyer focuses on language itself. Ironically, it is Dreyer who writes: “In many cases what people believe to be their salvation, surreptitiously acts as their self-condemnation and delimitation” (p. 132).

The perpetuation of certain ideas, thoughts and behaviour, regardless of their destructive nature, as is exemplified in Freud's discussion of the repetition compulsion. This will be the topic of the next section. Specific attention will be given to Freud's description, as well as the alterations proposed by Lacan. The biggest question pertaining to the repetition compulsion is: who is the Master of the repetition? Is it a consciously-willed repetition, or do the repetitions occur in spite of the conscious ego?

Lacanian version is as follows: “I am not, there where I am the plaything of my thought; I think of what I am, there where I do not think I am thinking” (p. 431). For Badiou, this is exactly why science fails; or why Verdi Dreyer’s (scientific) reading fails. “This identity [the subject of science], however, can only be grasped by attempting to think the subject *in its place*” (p. 431, his emphasis).

3.3. Freud’s Repetition Compulsion

The repetition compulsion is an important aspect of Freud’s (1920)

Beyond the Pleasure Principle, and is the important link between the L-schema and Freud’s case study of Fort/Da. The repetition compulsion explains why behaviour is repeated; or as Lacan (1998) put it: “Let us not forget that when Freud presents it to us, he says – *what cannot be remembered is repeated in behaviour*” (p. 129, his italics).

Freud (1920) describes and defines the repetition compulsion in terms of the unconscious:

In order to make it easier to understand this „compulsion to repeat“, which emerges during the psycho-analytic treatment of neurotics, we must above all get rid of the mistaken notion that what we are dealing with in our struggle against resistances is resistance on the part of the *unconscious*. (p. 19-20, his emphasis)

Freud initially focuses the discussion of the compulsion to repeat in the therapeutic situation, which is noticeable “in the sphere of the transference, of the patient’s relation with the physician” (p. 19). On the one hand, the repetition demonstrates the relationship between the patient and the physician that is reminiscent of the Oedipus complex. The relationship between the patient and the therapist imitates the relationship the patient had with a primary caregiver, or a paternal/maternal figure. According to Freud, this relationship is then the repetition of the primary relationship. On the other hand, the subtle yet significant difference between remembering and reproduction is important, “the ratio between what is remembered and what is reproduced varies from case to case” (p. 19). This distinction will be emphasized by Lacan later in this section, but for Freud, the emphasis lies with remembering the past, as opposed to re-enacting or transferring the past based on the repetition of the infantile relationship with the parents onto the “physician”. The “physician’s” role is therefore, “to force as much as possible into the channel of memory and to allow as little as possible to emerge as repetition” (p. 19). In other words, the physician’s role is to *limit* the continuation and repetition of previous behaviours or interactions in the therapeutic situation. Freud links the repetition with the

unconscious and links the unconscious with the ego, “it is certain that much of the ego is itself unconscious” (p. 20). The argument that Freud is developing is to explain the hindrance of therapy due to the repetition of previous behaviour on an unconscious level. It is unconscious by means of the unknowing repetition of the behaviour by the patient, and consequently acts as a resistance to the therapy. Freud elaborates on the link between repetition and the unconscious: “we can say that the patient’s resistance arises from his ego, and we then at once perceive that the compulsion to repeat must be ascribed to the unconscious repressed” (p. 20). Repetition is therefore *the link between the conscious and the unconscious*, or in Freud’s words, “the coherent ego and the repressed” (p. 20).

Freud returns to the distinctive feature of the pleasure principle as the source of repetition and the reality principle as the intrusion into the pleasure principle, i.e. the disruption of the repetition: “There is no doubt that resistance of the conscious and unconscious ego operates under the sway of the pleasure principle: it seeks to avoid unpleasure which would be produced by the liberation of the repressed” (p. 21). Freud’s penultimate explanation for the failure of the therapeutic situation is described as the avoidance of unpleasures accompanying the release of the repressed. The initial hypothesis is therefore to explain the avoidance of the repressed in terms of an avoidance of unpleasure. The pleasure principle emphasizes an economy of behaviour with the premium on the maintenance of an efficient flow of (neuronal) Quantity. The disruption of the efficient flow results in a traumatic experience. Therefore, repetition is an innate property of the pleasure principle.²⁵ Repetition is part of the pleasure principle, not only in terms of its repetitive function, but also as a defence mechanism against the reality principle: the adaptation or transformation of the facilitations through which (neuronal) Quantity runs. The efficiency of the pleasure principle can be attributed to the repeatability of the pleasure principle. The description of the pleasure principle outside of a neuronalquantative-economical framework retains the applicability of the pleasure principle. The neuronal distinction is maintained to assist with explaining the relation between the pleasure principle and the reality principle in a context from which Freud originally derived the pleasure principle.

The relation between pleasure and unpleasure is described by Freud (1920) in terms of the repressed:

²⁵ Lacan (2008a) writes: “With Freud, it is not a question of creative imprinting but of the pleasure engendered by the functioning of the facilitations. Now the core of the pleasure principle is situated at the level of subjectivity. Facilitation is not a mechanical effect; it is invoked as the pleasure of a facility, and it will be taken up again as the pleasure of a repetition or, more precisely, as repetition compulsion” (p. 275)

But we come now to a new and remarkable fact, namely that the compulsion to repeat also recalls from the past experiences which include no possibility of pleasure, and which can never, even long ago, have brought satisfaction even to instinctual impulses which have since been repressed. (p. 21)

The compulsion to repeat is therefore not only the repetition of behaviour proven pleasurable or beneficial, but includes even the facets repressed. In other words, the repetition compulsion is not the repetition and maintenance of beneficial behaviour or outcomes, but contains traces of the repressed trauma within the unconscious: "Loss of love and failure leave behind them a permanent injury to self-regard in the form of a narcissistic scar" (p. 21-2). This spills over into the therapeutic situation: "Patients repeat all of these unwanted situations and painful emotions in the transference and revive them with the greatest ingenuity" (p. 22). The repetition compulsion cannot be reproduction, rote memory, or mimesis. There isn't clear access to the contents of memories or dreams, as those are reproductions or recreations of the original trauma. Consequently, Freud's focus on the repetition of the traumatic event is not in the verbal repetition, but in the unconscious recurrence of the trauma. To requote Lacan (1998), "*what cannot be remembered is repeated in behaviour*" (p. 129, his italics).

Freud (1920) elaborates by generalizing the outcome of any situation based on previous circumstances: "Thus we have come across people all of whose human relationships have the same outcome" (p. 23). The full extent of the repetition cannot be explained or identified purely in the descriptive process, which is why Freud differentiates between active and passive repetition - active through a conscious and wilful activation of the events. But Freud is more interested in passive experiences: "We are much more impressed by cases where the subject appears to have a *passive* experience, over which he has no influence, but in which he meets with a repetition of the same fatality" (p. 23-4, his emphasis), only because "it can be noted in rare instances" (p. 24). In terms of the pleasure principle as the continuation of a flow of Quantity, the new facilitations are maintained through the incorporation of the alterations of the facilitations. The pleasure principle dictates the continuation of the behaviour, not for the purpose of beneficial outcomes, but for the maintenance of stability. Adaption and adjustment are features of the reality principle. But for Freud, the compulsion to repeat is distinct from the pleasure principle, illustrated when Freud writes, "we shall find courage to assume that there really does exist in the mind *a compulsion to repeat which overrides the pleasure principle*" (p. 24, my emphasis).

But if a compulsion to repeat *does* operate in the mind, we should be glad to know something about it, to learn what function it corresponds to, under what conditions it can emerge and what its relation is to the pleasure principle. (p. 25, his emphasis)

Lacan (1998) critiques the notion that the repetition compulsion is revealed through transference, or even that transference can be described as a form of repetition: "I am not saying that it is not on the basis of his experience of the transference that Freud approached repetition in the transference" (p. 33). For Lacan, the link between transference and repetition is made and maintained through the therapeutic situation, but proves this link problematic: "these displacements of interests have always been more in the direction of uncovering structures, which are badly described in analysis" (p. 32). Lacan consequently emphasizes the unreliability of the spoken word. "What I am saying is that the concept of repetition has nothing to do with the concept of the transference".

(p. 33)

Lacan has a different reading of Freud's repetition compulsion, and consequently proposes alterations. The first undertaking in describing the repetition compulsion is Lacan's criticism of the English translation of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), the same translation that was used in this reading.

You will see, for example, that the translation of *instinct* for *Trieb*, and *instinctual* for *triebhaft* has so many drawbacks for the translator [...] thus basing the whole edition on a complete misunderstanding since *Trieb* and *instinct* have nothing in common. (p. 49)

This shows a problematic tendency in describing the repetition compulsion: Is the repetition compulsion part of drive, which is connected with the unconscious, or with instinct, which is connected with the conscious? The same is applicable to the notion of pleasure, when Lacan differentiates between *jouissance* and *plaisir*:

Jouissance belongs to the unconscious and *plaisir* to the conscious.

Where does the compulsion to repeat belong? With the conscious instinct, which is committed to the repetition of the same, which is to act in the way in which one is used to? Or with the drive, which is located in the unconscious, i.e. the pleasure principle? Therefore, there are two types of reading of the repetition compulsion and the therapeutic situation: the classical Freudian and the Lacanian. Freud places the repetition compulsion in opposition to the pleasure principle, demonstrating repetition as part of a conscious process. Lacan (1998) critiques this conscious recollection: "The subject in himself, the recalling of his biography, all this goes only to a certain limit, which is known as the real" (p. 49). In linguistic terms, the Real is connected to the signified which remains distinct from the signifier. The Real features as that which cannot be expressed. In terms of the therapeutic situation, it is therefore impossible to say everything, which makes the account of the "patient" unreliable. Lacan described

the therapeutic situation as “the uncovering of structures, which are badly described in analysis” (p. 32).

Therefore, Lacan’s reading demonstrates that the repetition compulsion is poorly uncovered in therapy. The content of what is described in analysis is according to Lacan (1998) a reproduction. “*Wiederholen* is not *Reproduzieren*” (p. 50, his italics), Repetition is not Reproduction. The critique is based on the notion of the Real²⁶, which is further emphasized by the demonstration of the impossibility of reaching the Real. Therefore, what therapeutic situations do is grasp at the signifier. Any therapeutic situation is focused on the signifier and any act of purging the signifier always remains as a symbolic act. “But what Freud showed was that nothing can be grasped, destroyed, or burnt, except in a symbolic way, as one says, *in effigie, in absentia*” (p. 50, his emphasis). But it revolves around an act, an act which is done “in honour of something” (p. 50), and is a return to the separation and distinction of the signifier and the signified.

“A true act always has an element of structure, by the fact of concerning a real that is not self-evidently caught up in it” (p. 50). Repetition is therefore explained in terms of an act, which fronts as a signifier, but is always closed off from the signified, i.e. the Real, the unnameable. The importance of the name is an emphasis on the inaccessibility of the unconscious, which is exactly why it is not clear what is behind the act of repetition [*wiederholen*].

What, then, is the function of traumatic repetition if nothing – quite the reverse – seems to justify it from the point of view of the pleasure principle? To master the painful event, someone may say – but who masters, where is the master here, to be mastered? Why speak so hastily when we do not know precisely where to situate the agency that would undertake this operation of mastery? (p. 51)

The classical Freudian explanation of repetition is often focused on the active participation in a traumatic event or experience. The repetition is then the repetition of the events in order to gain *mastery* of the situation. However, as Lacan shows, such an understanding is problematic, for one, to

²⁶ Lacan (1998): “Where do we meet this real? For what we have in the discovery of psycho-analysis is an encounter, an essential encounter – an appointment to which we are always called with a real that eludes us” (p. 53) and “The real is beyond the *automaton*, the return, the coming-back, the insistence of the signs, by which we see ourselves governed by the pleasure principle” (p. 53-4). Therefore, real is the unknown quantity, illustrated when Lacan (1998) writes: “The real supports the phantasy, the phantasy protects the real” (p. 41).

presume to know how the unconscious works, secondly, to know where the repetition is located in the unconscious, and thirdly, to know how the subsequent repetitions affect the conscious self.

Lacan (1998) writes:

In these first stages of the experience in which remembering is gradually substituted for itself and approaches even nearer to a sort of focus, or centre, in which every event seems to be under an obligation to yield itself – precisely at this moment, we see manifest itself what I will also call the *resistance of the subject*, which becomes at that moment repetition in act. (p. 51, his emphasis)

The description of repetition remains enigmatic and problematic. Lacan introduces the notion of repetition as a defence mechanism, a feature that conceals more than it reveals. The problem arises when trying to understand the compulsion to repeat in terms of a functional explanation or description. The description always supersedes the actual repetition, which is also why Lacan maintains a distance between the act of repetition and the description of repetition. This is where the problem of locating “mastery” is revealed: is the mastery done in the description of the repetitious act, or is the repetitious act itself the master in the determination of behaviour?

There is consequently a greater link between the repetition compulsion and the L-schema. The repetition between the four corners of the L-schema, and the perpetuation of the L-schema, consequently reveals how the repetition compulsion is maintained. The L-schema is therefore an important demonstration, not only of an intersubjective theory, but it also demonstrates and elucidates Lacan’s understanding of Freud’s repetition compulsion. It is impossible to isolate the effects or the influence of the repetition compulsion, as there is a continual reintroduction and redistribution of the repetition. This affects the discourse of the repetition, which is why it is difficult to identify the “master”. “Repetition is fundamentally the insistence of speech” (Lacan, 1993, p. 242); this is paradoxical and maintains the separation between the act of repetition and the description of repetition. The description of repetition depends on the recollection of the repetition, which is done through memory, and consequently verbalized.

Lacan (1993) elaborates:

The notion of repetition is so perplexing for us that one tries to reduce it to a repetition of needs. If on the contrary we read Freud we see that the compulsion to repeat was based, as it always had been from the beginning of his entire theory of memory, to the question raised

for him by the insistence of speech which returns in the subject until it has said its final word, speech that must return, despite the resistance of the ego which is a defence, that is, the adherence to the imaginary misconstrual of identification with the other. Repetition is fundamentally the insistence of speech. (p. 242)

Consequently, a practical example is needed to demonstrate connection between the L-schema and the repetition compulsion. The example that Freud provides is that of Fort/Da. But the Fort/Da case study presents plenty of problems of its own. Freud and Lacan emphasize different aspects, but as will be shown, the Fort/Da case study presents the unifying theme of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Attention will be given to Freud, Lacan and Derrida's reading.

3.4.1. Freud's Case Study of the Fort/Da

The Fort/Da case study mentioned in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) is significant and demonstrative of the repetition compulsion, as well as the linguistic turn in Freud. The case study is of an 18 month old boy who had a healthy attachment to the mother. The boy created a game with a toy connected to a string that would be thrown out of the cot, and the child would say "Fort" (go away). Whenever the string was pulled, the toy would appear and the child would joyfully exclaim "Da" (there).

The repetition compulsion is demonstrated through the repeatability of the game. If the repetition compulsion is the symbolic substitution of signifier with signifier, Freud postulates that this game will continue indefinitely. The game will not always remain within the Fort/Da demonstration, but will evolve and take on a new form, of new signifiers, of new words. The game was not played with a specific toy, but could be played with any toy, any object. In other words, the importance is not with *what* the game is played, but *that* the game is played. The symbolic reference of the game is, as summarized by Freud (1920): "This, then, was the complete game – disappearance and return" (p. 14), the disappearance and return of *das Ding* [the Thing], the substitute object of desire.

The difference between Freud and Lacan is the emphasis on the appearance and reappearance of the mother. It is more pertinent to Lacan connecting words with sentiments. The verbal expression of either "Fort" or "Da" is connected with appearance and disappearance. The activation of the symbolic is demonstrated in the entire situation summed up in Fort/Da.

For Freud, the Fort/Da is important for two reasons. First, that the game the child plays is an attempt to become active in the unpleasant experience, “he was overpowered by the experience; but by repeating it, unpleasurable though it was, as a game, he took on an *active part*” (p. 15). With the disappearance of the mother the child is passive, as the disappearance is done without any volition of the child. But through the recreation and re-enactment of the game the child can *become* active. The child forces the reappearance of the object – “though there was no doubt that the greater pleasure was attached to the second act” (p. 14) - in the joyous exclamation of “Da”, which accompanies the reappearance of the object. Second, through what Freud calls the “power instinct”. This is the impulse to obtain mastery of the situation. “These efforts might be put down to an instinct for mastery that was acting independently of whether the memory was in itself pleasurable or not” (p. 15). But as Lacan (1998) criticized this point in *The Four Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis*, the notion of mastery is problematic as to the source of the master. Is the master the conscious subject who chooses, or is it the repetition that compulsively re-invests in a signifier?

“How then does his repetition of this *distressing experience as a game* fit in with the pleasure principle?” (p. 15, my italics). Freud encounters an interesting turn of events: the return of the object, toy, or mother results in a pleasurable outcome, but the disappearance is *necessary* for the return. The disappearance is then staged in order to have the pleasurable outcome. But as Freud notes, the first part does not always play out with the second part, the return. The importance of the first part, - the disappearance - has to be accounted for. “It is clear that in their play children repeat everything that has made a great impression on them in real life” (p. 16).

Freud (1920) concludes in Chapter 2:

The consideration of these cases and situations, which have a yield of pleasure as their final outcome, should be undertaken by some system of aesthetics with an economic approach to its subject matter. They are of no use for *our* purposes, since they presuppose the existence and dominance of the pleasure principle they give no evidence of the operation of tendencies *beyond* the pleasure, that is, of tendencies more primitive than it and independent of it. (p. 17, his italics)

Freud gets caught up in the validation of the game as a feature of the pleasure principle. The game has another function not mentioned in Freud’s text, that of internalization. The internalizing of the traumatic experience and the consequent return of the traumatic experience takes the shape of a game. This still does not explain the *beyond* of the pleasure principle, that which falls outside the scope

of the pleasure principle. The notion of pleasure, especially in Freud's description in the second chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), is rather misleading. As Lacan differentiates between *jouissance* and *plaisir*, Freud refers to the pleasurable component of the game through the return. This can only be accounted for in terms of *plaisir*, which according to Lacan denotes a *conscious* pleasure. *Jouissance* is applicable to the pleasure principle as the notion of *jouissance* denotes an *unconscious* pleasure, relating to efficient discharge (cathexis).

To return to Freud's explanation of the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1950) would be to look at the effect of a traumatic experience (the reality principle) in the transformation of facilitations. What the „*Project*“ mainly accounts for is the trace to the initial traumatic experience. The importance of the Fort/Da case study demonstrates how a traumatic experience is internalized, that regardless of the outcome, regardless of the re-enactment, regardless of the “mastering”, the traumatic experience affects consequent behaviour. There is no symbolic purging of the traumatic event, as the traumatic event affects and alters the core of the pleasure principle. The “illusory” mastery is merely a conscious pleasure, *plaisir*, which is made possible within the context of unconscious pleasure, *jouissance*. What the Fort/Da case study validates is the manifestation of a traumatic experience. The internalizing of the event creates a lasting impression, which can only be accounted for in terms of the alterations in the facilitations [*Bahnung*]. The creation of an internal Law is at stake. The possibility of a *beyond* is not dealt with in the example, which is the limitation of the Fort/Da case study.

Lacan's reading of the Fort/Da case study is the focus of the next section, and draws more attention to Freud's (1950) *Project for a Scientific Psychology*. Lacan presents a different reading of Fort/Da that is more fitting to the general theme of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920).

3.4.2. Lacan's reading of the Fort/Da case study

Lacan's reading of the Fort/Da case study is problematic as Lacan never focuses specifically on the case study in any of the sections in the Seminars, but incorporates the Fort and the Da as an example throughout his work. The three aspects pertinent to Lacan's reading of the Fort/Da case study are: the linguistic aspects, the reel (toy) as the *objet petit a*, and the Fort/Da as demonstrative of the substitution that takes place, not only in terms of linguistic synonyms, but also the object of desire.

Lacan re-introduces the distinction between the signifier and the signified as the first approach specifies the linguistic aspects. The signifiers are in this case the vocal Fort and Da as an expression:

“Everything begins when several signifiers can present themselves to the subject at the same time, in a *Gleichzeitigkeit*” (2008a, p. 79, his emphasis). The usage of Fort and Da are not connected, as any other word would have sufficed. The words emerge through a play of differences as found in Saussure’s description of the arbitrary nature of the signifier. “It is on the basis of this synchrony that something comes to be organized, something that the mere play of *Fort* and *Da* could not produce by itself” (Lacan, 2008a, p. 80). The value of *Fort* and *Da* are only realized in terms of the case study, in terms of what is significant, signified. The meaning of Fort/Da for Lacan is demonstrated with the disappearance and appearance of the mother. The physical manifestation of the game is of secondary importance, i.e. it is not *that* the game is played, but *why* the game is played, and *what* makes the game possible to begin with.

When Freud grasps the repetition involved in the game played by his grandson, in the reiterated *fort-da*, he may indeed point out that the child makes up for the effect of his mother’s disappearance by making himself the agent of it – but, this phenomenon is of secondary importance. (Lacan, 1998, p. 62)

In other words, the traumatic event is repeated. The shape that the repetition takes is “of secondary importance”, wherefore it is not the contents of the game, but what is signified through the game.

In terms of the pleasure principle and Freud’s (1950) *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, the Fort/Da case study reveals how a traumatic experience is assimilated and surfaces in subsequent behaviour. In terms of neurology, the facilitations are adapted and adjusted to accommodate the influx of Qñ that the contact-barriers cannot control. The facilitations will always have a trace relating to the traumatic event, as the trauma is responsible for the alterations in the facilitations. The practical neurological explanation shows how the new facilitations are created in terms of the traumatic experience. The trauma cannot be detached from the new facilitations as trauma is placed at the centre of memory and the creation of memory. To quote Cilliers (1989) again:

Memory does not lie in the facilitated pathways themselves, but in the relationship between them, and this relationship is one of differences. [...] The forming of memory traces in the ψ [impermeable] neurons by quantity from the perceptual system, and from the endogenous stimuli, and the methods of the ψ used to discharge this quantity, are all unconscious. (Cilliers, 1989, p. 112)

The changes that occur are twofold, first in the facilitations themselves, and second in the way the facilitations are connected. To reiterate, it is not the facilitations themselves that make memory possible, but the arrangement of the facilitations. The trauma leaves traces behind in the facilitations

and through these (traumatic, painful) breaches within the facilitations, are impermeable neurons changed in structure. But because these facilitations are unconscious, it is for Freud and Lacan a question of how these embedded traces operate and are revealed. The Fort/Da case study shows how a traumatic event is reproduced in a game whereby the traumatic event is continually (unconsciously) reproduced. Therefore, when Lacan says that Fort and Da are “of secondary importance”, it can be best explained in terms of the Freudian separation between *Sache* and *Wort*. What is at stake is the *Sache*, or in Saussurian terminology, the signified, whereby the *Sache* (the signified) comes to be known through the *Wort*, the signifier.

The understanding of the reel as synonymous with the mother proves problematic for Lacan, as the distance between the signifier and the signified has to be maintained. Lacan writes: “This reel is not the mother reduced to a little ball by some magical game worthy of the Jivaros – it is a small part of the subject that detaches itself from him while still remaining his, still retained” (1998, p. 62). Jivaros refers to an American Indian tribe of eastern Ecuador and northern Peru renowned for their custom of preserving hair and skin from the severed heads of their enemies. This is significant to Lacan because the trophy *is* the actual object, in contrast to the reel that is a representation. Lacan (1998) elaborates:

If it is true that the signifier is the first mark of the subject, how can we fail to recognize here – from the very fact that this game is accompanied by one of the first oppositions to appear – that it is in the object to which the opposition is applied in act, the reel, that we must designate the subject. To this object we will later give the name it bears in the Lacanian algebra – the *petit a*. (p. 62)

The reel plays two roles, first as the signifier and second as the *objet petit a*. The significance of the *objet a* is the link between the symbolic and the imaginary. Van Haute (2000) describes the *objet petit a*: “Het object a is het oorzaak-object van het verlangen waartoe het subject zich in het fantasma verhoudt” [The object is the cause-object of the desire to which the subject relates himself in the phantasy] (p. 127). In other words, the *objet a* is the link between the Freudian *Sache* and *Wort*: an artificial connection that maintains the possibility of a link. The emphasis is on the separation between the unconscious sensation (*Sache*) and the conscious correlate (*Wort*), or more specific, between an emotional sensation and the correlation within an expression. The *objet a* accounts for both the signifier as the *closest approximation* in language to the unconscious sensation. The *objet a* is a component of phantasy correlating to the attributes of subjective desire that is constituted as desirable. For example, it is not the actual object that is the object of desire, but the qualities ascribed

to it that make it the object of desire. It is an unnameable quality, considering that the source of the criteria deeming an object desirable is from within the impenetrable unconscious.

The *objet a* explains why Lacan hesitates to link the reel with the Mother, even though this is unavoidable. Lacan links the reel with the Mother not in terms of a physical replacement, but in terms of transference.

The activity as a whole symbolizes repetition, but not at all that of some need that might demand the return of the mother, and which would be expressed quite simply in a cry. It is the repetition of the mother's departure as cause of a *Spaltung* [divide] in the subject – overcome by the alternating game, *fort-da*, which is *here* or *there*, and whose aim, in its alternation, is simply that of being the *fort* of a *da*, and the *da* of a *fort*. (1998, p. 62-3, his italics)

The emphasis of the Fort/Da case study, specifically for Lacan, is therefore not the substitution that takes place, nor the mastery of the situation, *but* the repetition that occurs, and how the traumatic event manifests in behaviour. The “overcoming” of the game over the situation results in the initial situation being “forgotten”, but repeated in the form of a game. The notion of the subject as master of a painful event is absurd, as Lacan shows that the repetition of the game is not done in accordance with a conscious decision to repeat.

To say that is simply a question for the subject of instituting himself in a function of mastery is idiotic. In the two phonemes are embodied the very mechanisms of alienation – which are expressed, paradoxical as it may seem, at the level of the *fort*. (1998, p.239)

Through the Fort - the absence or disappearance - a gap⁴⁵ is opened, but the potential for this opening was always there. Is it consequently only a matter of filling this void⁴⁶ through substitution, which can take the place of a word or an object?⁴⁷

The chain linking signifier with signifier, which through a play of signifiers creates synonymous objects of desire passing from one link to the next. This never penetrates the core of the object of desire as the object desired always remains a semblance, the *objet petit a*.

The possibility of recognizing the object of desire is achieved through closing the gap between the object and the qualities that make the object desirable [*objet petit a*]. But this gap first needs to be opened up so that the object can become the object of desire, thereby possess the characteristics/qualities that make it desirable.

“Although we know that after such a loss the acute state of mourning will subside, we also know we shall remain inconsolable and will never find a substitute. No matter what may fill the gap, even if it be filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else. And actually this is how it should be. It is the only way of perpetuating that love which we do not want to relinquish” (Freud [in a letter to Binswanger], quoted in John Bowlby, 1985, p. 23) ⁴⁶

Badiou (2007) writes on the „void“: “It is a question of names here – „nothing“ or „void“ – because being, designated by these names, is neither local nor global. The name I have chosen, the void, indicates precisely that nothing is presented, no term, and also that the designation of that nothing occurs „emptily“, it does not locate it structurally” (p. 56). ⁴⁷

Badiou (2007) calls the naming of the „void“ a nominal process, which validates the argument presented here. “Naturally, because the void is indiscernible as a term (because it is not one), its inaugural appearance is a pure act of nomination. This name cannot be specific; it cannot place the void under anything that would subsume it – this would be to reestablish the one. The name cannot indicate that the void is this or that. The act of nomination, being a-specific, consumes itself, indicating nothing other than the unrepresentable as such” (p. 59).

Lacan (1998) elaborates:

The subject is an apparatus. This apparatus is something lacunary, and it is in the lacuna that the subject establishes the function of a certain object, *qua* lost object. It is the status of the *objet a* in so far as it is present in the drive. (1998, p. 185, his italics)

The lacuna, or gap, is opened through disappearance, as demonstrated in the Fort/Da case study. The disappearance initiates the search for a supplement, a replacement. The disappearance is exactly the prelude that sets the process of substitution in action. This creates a link of synonyms which connect different objects (with similar qualities) with each other through what Lacan call the *objet petit a*. The *object petit a* is the perceived connection with *das Ding*. But because the object of desire isn't *das Ding*, there is always an endless repetition. As the criteria changes, so does *das Ding*.

The function of the exercise with this object refers to an alienation, and not to some supposed mastery, which is difficult to imagine being increased in an endless repetition, whereas the endless repetition that is in question reveals the radical vacillation of the subject. (p. 239)

Therefore, this accounts for why, at different stages, one desires different characteristics. The object of desire is still accounted for within the pleasure principle, linking drive with desire. “It is the status of the *objet a* in so far as it is present in the drive” (1998, p. 185, his italics). The unconscious drive is solely focused on the attainment of the object of desire. Lacan demonstrates that this is impossible as the qualities and the object are not synonymous. It is the gap between the object and the qualities that are bridged through the *object petit a*. However, the possibility of the desirability of an object is regardless of the actual [*wirkliche*] qualities and characteristics.

The possibility of bridging the gap is a result of the pleasure principle: as a result of the conditions set by the facilitations [*Bahnung*]. The emphasis on facilitations is the emphasis on an internal Law, as Lacan demonstrates that prohibition allows for desire, as described in Chapter 2. The pleasure principle is the maintenance of continuity which dictates the continual pursuit for the object of desire to reinstate the comfort and harmony, as explained in Chapter 1. The death drive is the pursuit of the object or object-cause of desire, whereby the conditions for attainment are stipulated through the pleasure principle, the Law, in an undeferred state. The death drive is discussed in Chapter 4.

To reiterate the three reasons of the significance of the Fort/Da case study: First, the verbal communication in the Fort and Da by connecting the event with the approximate signifier with the absence and reappearance of the mother. Second, making an effigy of the situation by naming it Fort or Da, whereby the Fort and Da capture the event in a symbolic gesture and replace the origins of the game. Third, the process of substitution that takes place in the process of naming, not only in how the name of the situation replaces the situation, but also how the imaginary links are made between the signifier and the signified through the *objet petit a*.

3.4.3. Derrida's reading of the Fort/Da case study

Jacques Derrida's account of Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* focuses specifically on the Fort/Da case study as described in *Psychoanalysis and the Question of the text* (1978). Derrida presents a chapter entitled "Coming into One's Own"⁴⁸. Derrida's reading is discussed, as Derrida provides a critique illustrating how Freud's own repetition compulsion impacts on the development of a theoretical position today known as Psychoanalysis.

The significance of Derrida's reading of the Fort/Da case study to this thesis is found in what Geoffrey H. Hartman writes in the Preface: "How do we classify that book [*Beyond the Pleasure*

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Derrida also discusses Freud's description of the Fort/Da case study in *The Post Card* (1987) in greater depth in Chapter 2, *Freud's Legacy*, pp. 292-337

Principle] after reading Derrida? Is it Psychoanalysis, philosophy, literature, or autobiography?" (p. xii).

This section is centred on this question by Hartmann, as Derrida provides a different reading of Fort/Da achieved by Derrida through blurring the distinction between Fort/Da as an example, Fort/Da as biography, and Fort/Da as a theory.

The first aspect that Derrida brings into question is the objectivescientific distance that Freud initially tries to maintain in the case study.

Here, for the first time in this book, is a passage that appears to be autobiographical and even domestic. This face is veiled, but all the more significant. Freud says that he was a witness – an *interested* witness – to the experiment. It took place in his family, though he does not mention this [in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920)] (1987, p. 115-6, his italics)

Derrida exposes the many layers of the case study, rather than expound on the information given. The smaller clues throughout the text fascinate Derrida. The Fort/Da case study becomes autobiographical; rather than a theoretical explanation of, for example, the repetition compulsion, desire, absence/presence, etc. Derrida demonstrates how Freud is part of the Fort/Da case study, not only as an author, but also as a participant, an “actor”, and an instigator. The description of the scene is scrutinized not in the big details, but in the small gestures, for example:

Everything is fine, wonderful child, *but*. Here’s the “*but*”: this wonderful child had one disturbing habit. It’s hard to see right off how Freud, at the end of the amazing description of it that he offers, can calmly conclude: “I eventually realized that it was a game”.

(p. 123, his italics, quoting Freud, 1920, p. 13)

Derrida focuses on a single word, in this example, the word *but*. The word *but* follows the affirmation of the child’s behaviour *but* suggests disappointment. It is the manner in which the child plays with the reel: “Why doesn’t he play train or car? Would that be more normal?” (1978, p. 129).

Derrida suggests that the Fort/Da case study is then brought to life through the misapplication of a toy. Freud reassures himself of this misapplication, as well as the reader, his daughter, and the mother of the child when he writes: “I eventually realized that it was a game” (Freud, 1920, p. 13)

It wasn’t just the game being played, but the accompanying sounds that fascinated Freud. “The concurrence linking father and daughter in the interpretation of „0-0-0-0“ as „fort“ is unusual in several ways” (Derrida, 1978, p. 127; Freud, 1920, p. 13-4). The sound made by the child is in turn given a veil by both Sigmund Freud (the grandfather and father) and Sophie Freud (the mother and daughter). The “o-o-o-o” is interpreted as “fort” by the grandfather, father, mother, and daughter. For Derrida, this too is part of the game becoming theory, best exemplified when Freud (1920, p. 14) wrote: “This then was the complete game”.

Derrida (1978) critiques the Fort/Da as a theoretical example: And this is what I shall call the argument of the wooden reel: a legendary argument that is neither story nor history nor myth nor fiction. Nor is it the systematic elaboration of a theoretical proof. It is fragmentary, without conclusion, selective: rather an argument in the sense of an outline. (Derrida, 1978, p. 115)

According to Derrida the Fort/Da game remains incomplete for two reasons. First, “the scene is that of an endlessly repeated supplementation, as if it could never become complete” (1978, p. 128). The game never plays out in isolation, and is influenced – by the viewer and at the same time influences the viewer - by the interpreter, the mother, the daughter, the father, the grandfather. Second, “there is something like an incomplete axiom in the structure of the writing scene, owing to the position of the spectator as an interested observer” (p. 128). The description of the scene, as set out by the author, is always an incomplete description. To fully describe the scene, the author has to speak on behalf of all the participants. Specifically in the Fort/Da case study, Derrida negates the description of Freud as impartial observer. His direct involvement within the case study already supposes Freud as a participant. The role of the grandfather, father, already supposes a narration. As Derrida (1978) concludes: “Even if completeness were possible, it would never appear to such an observer, nor could he declare it to be complete” (p.128).

This is the focus of Derrida’s critique on the Fort/Da case study, whereby Derrida (1978) shows how Psychoanalysis is built on the unconscious workings of Freud the grandfather and the father. If there lingers in the astounding event of this co-operation the unanalyzed remnant of an unconscious, if this remnant shapes and constitutes with its otherness the auto-biography of this testamentary writing, then I wager that it will be handed down blindly by the entire movement of the return to Freud. (p. 120)

The Fort/Da case study has become a hallmark of Freudian Psychoanalysis with its insemination. “If we were to simplify the question, it would become, for example, how can an auto-biographical writing, in the abyss of an uninterminated self-analysis, give its birth to a world institution?” (1978, p. 121). The separation between Freud as person and Freud as theoretical perspective is problematized. Derrida shows how Freud as person’s own repetition compulsion plays in on the development of a theoretical Freudian position. Derrida blurs this distinction by showing how biographical information within the footnotes and main text provide important clues, for example: “When this child was five and three-quarters, his mother died” (Derrida, 1978, p. 140; Freud, 1920, p. 16n7). With the death of the daughter/mother/Sophie, Derrida shows how the Fort/Da is applicable to a biographical situation; the

object, the reel, is applicable to Sophie, who is at the same time the mother of the boy and the daughter of Freud. Derrida questions who is really playing the Fort/Da game: "Not deceiving, in any case, about a daughter (mother) who should stay where she is, daughter, mother – a wife, perhaps, but undividedly so, or divided between the two Freuds, in their sole possession" (1978, p. 139). Derrida emphasizes how Freud describes the absence of the daughter as a lost object for the son, but the daughter could just as easily have been the lost object for Freud.

Derrida effectively shows that Freud is an active participant within the Fort/Da case study. Derrida demonstrates how Freud's theory is marred by Freud's biography and in turn shapes an entire discipline, namely Psychoanalysis. Freud's own participation is that of more than an observer, as Derrida shows how the Fort/Da case study is also a description of Freud dealing with the death of Sophie. This falling-off would suggest a dead woman is easier to keep for oneself: one's jealousy is relaxed and idealization interiorizes the object out of the rival's grasp. Thus Sophie, daughter and mother, is dead, preserved from *and* surrendered to each „sole possession“. (1978, p. 140, his emphasis)

Derrida's reading of the Fort/Da is a critique of the Fort/Da and the way that it is presented. Any notion of objectivity is destroyed, as any description by Freud cannot be impartial. Derrida's critique focuses on how a personal tragic loss has become internalized into a psychoanalytic practice; how the loss of a daughter, mother, wife presented through a biographical event has transformed the notion of death within Psychoanalysis. The Fort (the absence) precedes but anticipates the Da (the presence) the return. Derrida consequently shows how problematic it is to discuss the topic of death without referring to an already perceived "presence". The anticipation of the "disappearance" is continually anticipated through the return. Therefore the same applies to life, which cannot be discussed independently from death, and vice versa.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter is the cornerstone of this thesis, as this chapter ties three important theoretical notions together: the L-schema, the repetition compulsion and the Fort/Da case study. This chapter examines the Fort/Da case study in a broader perspective that incorporates biography and a greater theoretical perspective than merely describing a child playing with a toy. Three perspectives of the Fort/Da case study are examined: of Freud, Lacan, and Derrida.

Freud's description of the Fort/Da focuses on the substitutive process at work where traumatic experience returns in the form of a game. The repetition of the game validates the hypothesis that a traumatic event is embedded in the unconscious (as described in Chapter 2, the influx of Q alters the facilitations, and leaves an impression). The repetition of the traumatic experience is what Freud called the repetition compulsion. Freud originally presented the Fort/Da as demonstrative of the relationship between the child and the mother, but also concedes how it illustrates the repetition compulsion. The actions within the game represent the repetition of a traumatic experience, namely the absence of the mother. The child incorporates the features of the mother leaving, and repeats the gesture in a game. Freud emphasizes how a traumatic event is repeated in everyday behaviour and gestures. Freud incorporates language in the Fort-Da, as the disappearance of the mother is accompanied with a Fort (go away!) and the return is accompanied with a Da! (there!). It was Lacan who took the linguistic component further.

Lacan refines the linguistic component which was always present in the Fort/Da. Lacan builds on Freud's distinction between *Sache* and *Wort*, which is the distinction between the unconscious sensation and the conscious description. Even Lacan's L-schema denotes an Otherness in the words used to describe the self. Meaning is always cycled between the L-schema's four corners, and results in a repetition. The four corners of the L-schema are connected through a symbolic and an imaginary link: the symbolic pertains to the words used and the imaginary pertains to the descriptions attributed. For example, a sentence consists of words (the symbolic), but it is the imaginary that gives the sentence multiple meaning. The L-schema illustrates how a *méconnaissance* [misrecognition] of the self occurs. This means that when the self looks in the mirror, the self isn't seen as it actually is, but always in terms of an idealized description. *Méconnaissance* [misrecognition] occurs in the gap between the *Sache* and *Wort*, signified and signifier; in other words, between the actual self and description of the self.

Lacan also uses the L-schema to demonstrate how desire is explained in terms of the Other. The first chapter presents the primary caregiver as the source of desire, but the third chapter explains how the Other is the source of desire. Or as van Haute (1989) describes desire and the Other:

Het subject heft aan de Ander niets te bieden ... dan zijn tekort: ik kan de begeerte van de Ander niet voltooien. Wat ik ook geef of krijg, het is nooit wat ik zoek. Het tekort van de Ander keert terug in het tekort van het subject. De circulariteit van de relatie tussen het subject en de Ander krijgt zo een meer concreet karakter. [The subject has nothing to offer the Other ...

than his lack: I can never complete the desire of the Other. What I give or receive is never what I seek. The lack of the Other returns as the lack of the subject. The circular relation between the subject and the Other accordingly creates a more concrete character] (p. 144)

But the problem still remains how one can know what the object of desire is. Lacan emphasizes that desire is insatiable, and that there can never be saturation. Moyaert (1995) explain how the flux of desire takes place:

Het feit dat men nooit genoeg heft, dat het nooit precies dat is wat men verlangde, dat men steeds meer wil en dus ook altijd naar iets anders verlangt, is een andere vorm van opaciteit dan de onmogelijkheid om aan de objectpool precies aan te duiden wat het verlangen veroorzaakt. [The fact that one never has enough, that it is never exactly what one desires, that one still wants more and therefore always longs for something else, is another form of opacity (of desire) than the impossibility of indicating precisely through the object-pole what causes desire.] (p. 21)

A second explanation for the unattainability of the object of desire is through the gap between the signifier and the signified. This gap maintains the distance between the true object of desire and the representation of the object of desire. All that we can grasp is the representation, which is fleeting. Because the signified is never penetrated, signifiers and representations are always grasped at. Substitution is the replacement of one representation for a closer representation of the object of desire. The process of substitution continues until an approximation of infatuation is found. A closer approximation does not necessarily mean that this is the final representation. "Het „object“ van verlangen kan altijd *omslaan in het indifferent* en terugvallen in het banale" [The „object“ of desire can always be *overturned into the indifferent* and relapse into the banal] (Moyaert, 1995, p. 22, his emphasis). It is therefore neither the presence of the object, nor the name of the object of desire that facilitates desire, but the pursuit of a closer approximation to the phantasized object of desire.

The Fort/Da case study, in the classical Freudian description, focuses on the mother, symbolized through the reel. The child reenacts the departure/arrival or the absence/presence of the mother through a game. The explanation that the attempt of gaining mastery of the situation, a preliminary remark made by Freud, is proven inconclusive, as Lacan demonstrates how the master is not the subject who desires. "Het subject van het verlangen is *onbewust* omdat het niet op zichzelf gericht en betrokken is" [The subject of desire is *unconscious* because it is not focused on nor involved with itself] (Moyaert, 1995, p. 20, his emphasis). For Lacan, the master is therefore located in the pleasure

principle that compulsively repeats the re-investment of the (arbitrary) signifier that never penetrates the signified, the *Sache*. “Het verlangen is immers het effect van *een principieel onvolledige* orde van betekenaars” [The longing is consequently the effect of *one fundamental incomplete* order of signifiers] (van Haute, 1989, p. 138, his emphasis).

A third description of the Fort/Da case study is that of Jacques Derrida, who fine-combed the Fort/Da case study to highlight its inconsistencies. Ironically, these findings only validate the workings of the unconscious. Derrida applies the psychoanalytic approach to a psychoanalytic example and demonstrates how the Fort/Da case study demonstrates more than just a boy playing with a toy and mimicking the presence/absence of the object of desire on an unconscious level. Derrida illustrates how Freud’s own compulsion to repeat plays out in the Fort/Da case study.

The case study of the Fort/Da is significant beyond Derrida’s critique of the biographical content of the case study and how Freud’s own compulsion to repeat plays in on his discussion of Fort/Da. The critique only gives credence to the psychoanalytic approach whereby the reel demonstrates and acts as the *objet petit a* in terms of the absence that allows for the presence of another [an Other]. “De begeerte word gestructureerd door de betekenaars van de Ander waarin de Vraag gearticuleerd werd. Deze betekenaars bepalen de betekenis van het fanstasme en beslissen over de concrete lichamelijke interpretatie van het tekort” [Desire is structured through the signifiers of the Other whereby the Question is articulated. These signifiers determine the meaning of the phantasy and rules over the concrete corporal interpretation of the lack] (van Haute, 1989, p. 146).

The difference between Lacan and Derrida is most notably how Lacan incorporates the Fort/Da case study within a larger corpus of work, including Linguistics and repetition. Lacan adds a linguistic component, which builds on Freud’s distinction between *Sache* and *Wort*. This is also a distinction between the unconscious sensation and the conscious description. Even Lacan’s L-schema denotes an Otherness in the words used to describe the self. The distance between the *Sache* and *Wort*, signified and signifier, is the gap where *méconnaissance* [misrecognition] occurs. Lacan thereby focuses on the attempts to bridge the gap between the *Sache* and the *Wort*, the signified and the signifier. Because this gap can never be closed, there is a continual process of substitution of signifiers/*Wort* in search of the signified/*Sache*. The appearance of corroboration between the signifier and the signified, the *Wort* and the *Sache* is what Lacan calls the *objet petit a*.

The next chapter will focus on the conditions whereby the pleasure principle reaches cessation. The goal of the pleasure principle is the death drive. The primacy of the pleasure principle demonstrates how desire and substitution are incorporated and explain what the death drive is. Through the death drive is the *beyond* of the pleasure principle revealed. The Fort/Da demonstrates, as Derrida shows, how the disappearance already anticipates and precedes the reappearance. This is exactly why it is problematic to discuss the notion of death in terms of a disappearance, or even in terms of absence. If death cannot be explained in terms of absence, Chapter 4 provides an alternative by defining death in terms of entropy, desire, the pleasure principle, the reality principle and phantasy.

Chapter 4

4.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the final two chapters of Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* which probably are the two most controversial in Freud's oeuvre marked by the introduction of the death drive. This chapter focuses on the death drive, Freud's explanation, Lacan's rewording, and the relevant criticisms.

The first section focuses on Freud's description as presented in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). Freud's description of the death drive - especially pertaining to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) - is especially problematic as the arguments Freud presents are often illogical and nonsensical. This makes salvaging the death drive all the more difficult. Freud attempts a few different methods, but continually returns to the model presented in *The Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1950) (in this chapter hereafter referred to as „*Project*“, which denotes a neuronal economy, applicable to a libidinal economy.

The second section focuses on the critiques of the death drive, as presented by Havi Carel and Richard Boothby. Carel disagrees vehemently with the description of the death drive in terms of a neuronal or libidinal economy, whereby Carel has to find an alternative solution to the death drive, but this is also problematic in its own right. Freud's death drive is consequently reworded by Carel to accommodate the notion of aggression. Boothby argues for a Lacanian reading of the death drive, but with his own twist in the reading of the pleasure principle.

Carel and Boothby provide well argued claims, but closer inspection reveals the hindrance in their respective approaches. Based on their criticisms, adjustments are made so that the death drive can be redescribed with their criticisms in mind.

The third section focuses on Lacan's understanding of the death drive, as described through a culmination of all the topics mentioned in previous chapters. Lacan's description is presented in three subsections, focusing on Lacan's incorporation of (1) aggression and defining the death drive in terms of (2) desire and (3) castration.

Lacan's description of the death drive is twofold: firstly, the mechanical explanation of the pleasure principle, and secondly, how desire features within the pleasure principle. Lacan's description of the death drive encompasses libido, desire, economy, Linguistics, and the Oedipus complex. This proves why Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is not only an important text in Freud's oeuvre, but also in Lacan's.

4.2. Freud's description of the Death Drive

Freud's description of the death drive is presented in the final two chapters of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). The description presented here will focus solely on that text. Although Freud's argument proves problematic, there is a very basic argument provided in which Freud formulates the connection between life and death.

Freud's approach emphasizes the primacy of the death drive in contrast to the traditional argument that stresses the primacy of the life drive. To take a single passage of Chapter 5, Freud (1920) writes:

For a long time, perhaps, living substance was thus being constantly created afresh and easily dying, till decisive external influences altered in such a way as to oblige the still surviving substance to diverge ever more widely from its original course of life and to make ever more complicated *détours* before reaching its aim of death. (p. 46, his emphasis)

The „*détours*“ Freud is speaking of, is the delays that occur, preventing the attainment of the goals, just as the reality principle intrudes into the pleasure principle, or in terms of Quantity that exceeds the contact-barriers, adjustments are consequently made. Death can then be articulated in terms of neuronal Quantity whereby the complete minimalization of Quantity leads to zero. If death is the zero flow in Quantity, Freud hypothesizes that the death drive would be the minimalized flow of Quantity, void of any excesses or delays. Freud continues: “These circuitous paths to death, faithfully kept to by its conservative instincts, would thus present us to-day with the picture of the phenomena of life” (p. 46). In other words, according to Freud, *life is that which happens en route to death*. Life is the deferral of death, the inevitable delay that prolongs death through the intrusion of external effects. The death drive is therefore synonymous in function with the pleasure principle, as the death drive is the progression towards death, whereas the continual intervention acts as the prolongation, the delay. Freud recognizes the inherent paradox and contradiction, especially when he writes: “Hence arises the paradoxical situation that the living organism struggles most energetically against events (dangers, in fact) which might help it to attain its life's aim rapidly – by a kind of shortcircuit” (p. 47).

Freud first has to account for the paradox identified. For example, physical threats are feared, but the threat would only speed up the process of death, which would make the threat sought-after. Freud writes: "What we are left with is the fact that the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion" (p. 47).²⁷ The correct conditions of death are important, and this is a notion that Lacan makes explicit in his reading of the death drive; there are preferred conditions in which death is sought after. This understanding of death does not denote destruction or absence, but finitude as the limit or threshold where life ceases. In other words, the pleasure principle has reached its final conclusion when deferral or delay is no longer possible. A modest description is needed of the death drive that can account for the paradoxes Freud faced. However, this is not a radically new reading of Freud's death drive, but can also be inferred in Karen Horney's (1939) *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* description of the death drive. By combining instincts with "its aim to extinguish the disturbing stimulation and re-establish the equilibrium as it was before the stimulation interfered" (p. 122) and the repetition compulsion that Horney describes as "seems to be the expression of a tendency, inherent in organic life, to restore an earlier form of existence and to return to it" (p. 122). Horney concludes that the death drive is a logical product of instincts and the repetition compulsion:

From these considerations [instincts and the repetition compulsion] Freud jumps to a daring conclusion: since there is an instinctual tendency to regress, to re-establish former stages, and since the inorganic existed prior to the organic, prior to the development of life, there must be an innate tendency toward re-establishing the inorganic state; since the condition of non-living existed earlier than the condition of living, there must be an instinctual drive toward death. "The goal of life is death". (p. 122-3)

However, Horney proceeds to counteract the death drive with the life drive, which she equates with the sexual drive. Horney's understanding of the death drive is therefore a drive set out on the destruction of the self, but is counteracted by the life drive, which is the sexual drive. "What we are able to observe are fusions, an alliance of the death instinct with the sexual instinct. It is this alliance which prevents the death instinct from destroying us, or at least postpones this destruction" (p. 123).

²⁷ Joan Copjec (2002) expands on the paradox Freud confronts: "The paradoxical Freudian claim that the death drive is a speculative concept designed to help explain why life aims at death, in fact, tells only half the story; the other half is revealed by a second paradox: the death drive achieves its satisfaction by *not* achieving its aim. Moreover, the *inhibition* that prevents the drive from achieving its aim is not understood within Freudian theory to be due to an extrinsic or exterior *obstacle*, but rather as part of the very *activity* of the drive itself. The full paradox of the death drive, then, is: while the *aim* (*Ziel*) of the drive is death, the *proper and positive activity* of the drive is to inhibit the attainment of its aim" (p. 30).

However, Horney is still presupposing a drive towards the destruction of the self. The two readings presented in Section 4.3. provide two different lines of argument with regard to aggression: whether aggression is the product of an internal, already presupposed drive; or whether aggression is the product of tension between the death and life instincts. The same can be asked of self-destruction: whether a drive towards self-destruction is an innate possibility already present, or whether self-destruction is the product of tension between the death and life instincts.

4.3. Two readings of Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

There is ample resistance to Freud's death drive, which needs to be dealt with before Lacan's description can be evaluated. Two readings of Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* presented are those of Richard Boothby (1987, 1991) and Havi Carel (2006). Both point out the tremendous body of criticism against Freud's death drive and both point out the shortcomings in Freud's own articulation of the death drive. Both present alternative readings of the death drive that would, in their view, validate the death drive. However, both of them differ significantly from the conclusion made in this chapter, as this thesis contends that the death drive should be described in terms of desire, drive, entropy, and the pleasure principle.

4.3.1. Critiques on the Death Drive

The critiques on the death drive are added not necessarily to show the shortcomings of Freud's argument as presented by Boothby and Carel. The criticisms are important to show the areas of contention in the description of the death drive and will be dealt with in the next section.

The notion of the death drive is dismissed by many and consequently Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is also rejected. Boothby introduces the main criticism of Freud's death drive. Boothby (1987) quotes Jean Laplanche: "Beyond the Pleasure Principle, which in 1920 [...] introduces the death drive, remains the most fascinating and baffling text in the entire Freudian corpus" (1976, p. 106; Boothby, 1987, p. 22; also Boothby, 1991, p. 1). The rejection ranges from critiques on the logical presentation of Freud's death drive, as well as on the scientific description and validity of the death drive. Boothby quotes Ernest Becker: "Freud's tortuous formulations on the death instinct can now securely be relegated to the dust bin of history" (Becker, 1973, p. 99; quoted in Boothby, 1991, p. 7).

For Boothby, the redeeming element of Freud's death drive lies with Lacan's (which is also a sentiment replicated in this thesis) reading of the death drive. Boothby however, continually returns to the argument that *Freud lacked the vocabulary to fully articulate the death drive*. Boothby consequently focuses on Lacan's reading of the death drive that redeems the notion and the possibility of the death drive.

Carel (2006) provides a more in-depth critique²⁸ of the Freudian death drive and death instinct. Carel presents her critique on three fronts. Her first critique repeats the sentiments that Freud lacked the necessary vocabulary to express the death drive [*Todestrieb*]. Carel writes, "His [Freud's] struggle did not end with a single unproblematic formulation, but the process itself manifests the difficulties in defining, describing and representing the death drive" (p. 3).

Carel's second critique focuses on the problems that arise in maintaining the duality of the life drive (Eros) and the death drive (Thanatos). "From 1920 onwards Freud repeatedly attempts to put forth a dualistic and dialectical model of the drives, but his model collapses time and time again" (p. 3). Carel focuses on the problems of describing the death drive and the life drive as separate but mutually influential forces opposing each other. "The view Freud wanted to support is one in which Eros [life drive] and Thanatos [death drive] are equal but opposed forces. This view is appealing because of its symmetry and dialectic dynamics. But Freud's own examples refute this picture" (p. 41). Carel proposes a specific approach to the distinction between the death drive and the life drive. To quote Carel (2006) at length:

The complex relationship between Thanatos [death drive] and Eros [life drive] manifests the problems of the two-drive model. On the one hand the death drive is opposed to Eros, but on the other hand, the sexual drive always contains a sadistic component that is a portion of the death drive. In certain respects the death drive is more fundamental than Eros (Freud sees it as prior to the pleasure principle) but it needs Eros in order to be expressed. The two drives are presented as opposed, but sometimes each other's aims, as in the case of externalised aggression which protects the organism. On the other hand, the death drive exists only with Eros and never appears in pure form. (p. 41)

Carel proposes an alternative to blur the distinction between the death drive and the life drive, "I believe that strictly speaking no such separation exists" (p. 3).

²⁸ Carel's points of critique will be responded to in Chapter 4.3.2.

The third critique focuses on the neurological assumptions underlying the description of the death drive, as presented in Freud's „*Project*“. “The death drive rests on a neurophysiologic model that has long been rendered obsolete” (p. 3). This leads Carel to re-describe the death drive, neither in terms of a neurological model nor economical-behavioural, but in terms of a metaphysical context. This creates different problems for Carel's proposed „new reading“ of the death drive. Carel defends her project as well as her proposed alterations. “As a result of the considerations presented earlier, the Nirvana principle and the constancy principle are removed from this reconstruction” (p. 53). And, “There is no justification for retaining the pleasure principle or the Nirvana principle” (p. 53).

Carel's dismissal of the neurophysiological model is based on three arguments. First, “the pleasure principle rested on a mistaken picture of neuronal action” (Carel, 2006, p. 39). But as shown in Chapter 2, not everyone is in opposition to Freud's neurophysiological model. Second, “the nervous system does not function as a reflex arch” (p. 39). Freud's argument hinges on the Newtonian laws of physics whereby energy can only be transferred, which Carel dismisses, whereby the nervous system produces its own energy rather than acts as a passive receptacle. Third, “the organism and the mental system are no longer considered closed systems. So the main arguments for the economic view collapse, as does the entropic argument for the death drive” (p. 40). The call for the neurophysiological model as an open system allows for interaction with different elements and different energies aside from the facilitations (*Bahnung*), opening up the possibility of interaction or exchange, instead of isolating the facilitations.

Carel provides strong arguments that warrant the dismissal of the biological explanation of the pleasure principle. But this results in an „all or nothing“ situation where you either completely dismiss or completely accept the claims of Freud's (1950) „*Project*“. The abandonment of the pleasure principle, is reckless and careless, as this thesis argues for the maintenance of the pleasure principle, as defined in Chapter 2. The biological validity aside, the pleasure principle provides an important framework to explain the establishment of an internal Law. The functioning of the pleasure principle therefore can only be defended on another level other than a biological-physiological one²⁹.

If the pleasure principle is to be maintained as a valid argument and reference point in this thesis, the “all or nothing” situation has to be avoided. The defence of the pleasure principle relies on the acumen of the pleasure principle, rather than on an observational-mechanical explanation. Therefore, the first

²⁹ The same argument was levelled against Lacan's mirror stage by Dreyer (2005) in Chapter 3.

response is to describe the pleasure aside from a neurophysiological perspective. The pleasure principle has never been deemed a closed system. This would be a response to the second and third point of Carel's criticism against Freud's description of the pleasure principle. The emphasis lies with the facilitations [*Bahnung*], which emphasize the relations between the neurons, rather than the energy itself. Expressed in linguistic terms, it is not the words themselves that carry meaning, but rather the way the words are combined to generate meaning. The same goes for the neuronal model that Freud proposed, to emphasize the relations between the neurons rather than the neuronal contents as such. Carel assumes the neurophysiological model of Freud is a closed system; however, the intrusion of the reality principle is exactly what prevents the system from being closed off. The alterations do not occur in a predictable fashion, which is a condition of an open system³⁰.

Can the pleasure principle only be described in terms of neurophysiological functioning? Cilliers (2000) *Complexity and Postmodernism* defends the contents of Freud's (1950) „*Project*“ on two fronts: First, by incorporating Freud's conception of memory: “Memory refers here to the physical condition of the brain: which pathways are breached („facilitated“) and which are not” (p. 45-6). Second, Cilliers emphasizes Freud's description regarding the role of the neuron: “No neuron is significant by itself. Memory does not reside *in* any neuron, but in the relationship between neurons” (p. 46, his italics). By combining Freud's theory on memory and the neuron, Cilliers demonstrates the theoretical possibilities that Freud's „*Project*“ allows. By delocalizing meaning, memory isn't located within the neuron, but between the neurons, i.e. the structure and connections between the neurons. The same is applicable to language, where meaning isn't generated in the words themselves, but in the way words are connected to other words. Cilliers uses the neuronal model to illustrate a language theory, validated when he writes: “Taking Derrida's reading of both Freud and Saussure⁵³ as a cue, we can develop a description of the dynamics of networks of interacting neurons, using the theoretical equipment developed in the post-structural approach to language” (p. 46). Cilliers is therefore not arguing for the validity of Freud's claims, but for the application of the descriptive model that Freud provides.

So it is rather short-sighted of Carel to completely dismiss the notions presented in Freud's (1950) „*Project*“. Therefore Carel's description of the death drive, void of any acknowledgement of the

³⁰ For more information on open and closed systems, see Cilliers (2000) *Complexity and Postmodernism* 53
See Chapter 3

pleasure principle, already contains limitations, especially when it comes to the far-reaching effects of the pleasure principle.

4.3.2. Rewording Freud's Death Drive

This subsection will focus on the attempts to overcome the description Freud presented. Both Boothby and Carel criticize Freud's presentation of the death drive, but propose solutions. Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is an unreliable source in deciphering what Freud truly meant with the death drive. If the primary problem lies in Freud's description, then the solution should lie in a rewording of the death drive.

Boothby (1987) summarizes the validations of the death drive in three categories. The first category is the focus on recurring dreams. Freud focuses on the repetition of dreams, especially those he observed in victims of war neurosis. Freud also noticed how their dreams are significant in terms of wish fulfilment. Freud in so doing wanted to account for the recurrence of traumatic events in dreams, which counts as evidence for the internalization of a traumatic event. In the second category, Freud examines the games that children play in which a painful event is symbolically reenacted, such as described in the Fort/Da case study. In the third category, Freud incorporates masochism. Masochism disproves "the notion that mental life is governed simply by the pursuit of pleasure" (p. 27). Freud views masochism as the faculty that can endure pain since masochism can go against the pleasure principle. How the death drive accounts for the abovementioned evidence is problematic on its own, as Freud failed to successfully describe and discuss the death drive in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920).

Freud attempted to define the death drive with three points in mind, summarized by Boothby (1987). Freud's first attempt focuses on bridging the gap between the mind and the body, i.e. the conscious and the unconscious. Boothby explains, "differentiating between erotic and death-seeking instincts moved Freud a step closer to conceptualizing the biological basis of human mental life and helped satisfy his life-long desire to clarify the implications of the psychic with the somatic" (p. 27-8). Consequently the death drive [in conjunction with the life drive] would be the umbrella concept to unite both "psychic" and "somatic".

The second attempt is to unite both life and death instincts through a tension. "The new theory re-expressed Freud's deeply-held dualist sensibility as it installed conflict in the very heart of the psyche,

indeed, in the nature of organic material itself" (p. 28). The conflict is what holds the death and the life instincts together. The dualism of the life and death instincts is a tremendous source of conflict, as is seen in Carel's (2006) argument for treating the life instinct and death instinct as separate. Boothby adds: "the opposition between the life and death instincts allowed Freud to reassert a fundamental dualism in the aftermath of his studies on narcissism³¹. The theory of narcissism had closed the gap between ego libido and object libido" (p. 28). The closing of the gap between the ego libido and the object libido is also the closing of the gap between the "psychic" and the "somatic". The second attempt emphasizes the desire for a unifying theory.

On the third attempt, the notion of self-destruction is introduced to contrast both conscious and unconscious self-destruction. Boothby (1987) writes:

The notion of an internal force of self-destruction promised to shed light on some of the key problems of Psychoanalysis, without the assumption of some basic force acting in opposition to the pleasure principle, posed apparently insoluble difficulties for the theory. (p. 28)

The difficulty identified, is to account for an innate possibility of self-destruction, also described in terms of aggression. The key notion that Boothby emphasizes is *the emergence of aggression or aggressivity as a product of the tension between the life and death instincts*. The focus hereby is on an innate property of the pleasure principle which allows for the possibility of aggression, which in Freud's later work is turned into self-punishment. Freud (1920) criticizes Jung's *monistic* description in Jung's libido theory: "the fact that he has called his one instinctual force „libido“ is bound to create confusion" (p. 64). The *monistic* description of libido, according to Freud, undermines the tension between the death drive and the life drive, i.e. the dualism at work within the pleasure principle (the same pleasure principle that Carel (2006) proposes to discard).

Freud's three attempts are unsuccessful as he still fails to present a unifying theory for the death drive, rather than three inklings of validation. Consequently, Boothby focuses on the relation between the death drive and the pleasure principle.

Freud (1920) writes on the relations between the death drive and the pleasure principle:

Another striking fact is that the life instincts have so much more contact with our internal perception – emerging as breakers of the peace and constantly producing tensions whose

³¹ See Chapter 1 for Freud's definition and description of Narcissism, and the discussion on object libido and ego libido

release is felt as pleasure – while the death instincts seem to do their work unobtrusively. The pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death instincts. (p. 77)

This passage can be interpreted in a few ways, which is why there are such different readings of Freud's description of the associations between the death drive and the pleasure principle, as well as the associations between the death drive and the life drive. Any description of the death drive therefore needs to account for those associations. Boothby turns to Lacan's description and explanation, which will be dealt with in greater detail later on in section 4.4.1.

Carel (2006) proposes a reading of the death drive that approaches the association between the death drive and the life drive differently. An important distinction needs to be made in Carel's approach, especially when Carel indiscriminately speaks of the Nirvana principle. Freud's (1920) description of the Nirvana principle is very specific in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*:

The dominating tendency of mental life, and perhaps of nervous life in general, is the effort to reduce, to keep constant or to remove internal tension due to stimuli (the „Nirvana principle“, to borrow a term from Barbara Low (1920, p. 73)) – a tendency which finds expression in the pleasure principle; and our recognition of that fact is one of our strongest reasons for believing in the existence of death instincts. (p. 67)

The Nirvana principle, according to Freud, is therefore the preference of the maintenance of the established facilitations (*Bahnung*), which can also be described in terms of a preference for the avoidance of the reality principle. The effects of the reality principle are described by Freud (1920):

The latter principle [the reality principle] does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but it nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure. (p. 7)

Therefore, the reality principle acts as the deferral and the delay in the pursuit of pleasure, whereas in terms of the death drive and the life drive, the Nirvana principle is the preference for stability. In terms of neuronal economy, the Nirvana principle is very similar to the pleasure principle, but as Freud (1920) explains, the Nirvana principle “finds expression in the pleasure principle” (p. 67). *The pleasure principle and the Nirvana principle are therefore not synonymous.*

But Boothby (1991) has a different take on the pleasure principle, especially pertaining to the death drive. Boothby argues that when the facilitations are altered, there is an increase at work, contra the pleasure principle as the diminution of psychic tension. Boothby is making a logical argument that focuses and is centred on the notion of tension, *Spannung*. To avoid any misunderstanding or

misquotation in Boothby's (1991) argument, to quote at length: If, as Freud suggested, the death drive evidences its essential character in repetition of the trauma, then we are led to suppose that the essential activity of the death drive involves the infusion of fresh quantities of energy into the psychic apparatus, resulting in an unpleasurable increase in psychic tension" (p. 77)

Boothby's mistake is in confusing tension with facilitations. The emphasis of Freud's pleasure principle, as highlighted in Freud's (1950) „*Project*“, is not on the neurons themselves, but on the structure, the facilitations. This is illustrated in Cilliers' (1989, 2000, 2001) reading of Freud whereby the emphasis lies with the relationship between the neurons rather than the neurons themselves. This is best illustrated when Cilliers (2000) writes, "Because of the „distributed“ nature of these relationships, a specific weight has no ideation content, but only gains significance in large patterns of interaction" (p. 46). Boothby's conclusion of "resulting in unpleasurable increase in psychic tension" is therefore false, as the emphasis lies with the facilitations, rather than the tension. In terms of Freud's (1950) „*Project*“, the increase of neuronal Quantity (Q) can be described as forcing its way through the contact-barriers that regulate the flow of Q. When the flow of Q exceeds the limits of the contact-barriers, the facilitations are overrun and transformed to accommodate the influx. Boothby's argument focuses on the increase of Q, but what Boothby isn't taking into account, is that the increase in Q is the increase in tension on the contact-barrier and consequently breaks through the contactbarrier and alters the facilitations. The Nirvana principle would then be the preference for the avoidance of any alterations in the facilitations, as these alterations are deemed traumatic, evidenced when Freud (1920) writes:

The higher the system's own quiescent cathexis, the greater seems to be its binding force; conversely, therefore, the lower its cathexis, the less capacity will it have for taking up inflowing energy and the *more violent must be the consequence of such a breach* in the protective shield against stimuli. (p. 34, my emphasis)

Carel's (2006) argument proposes the abandonment of the Nirvana principle, but still retains select aspects. "An alternative picture is created by discarding the Nirvana principle (but preserving the insight that self-destructive behaviours are distinctively annihilative), while retaining the central role of aggression and erotic attachment, without placing them in a dualistic framework" (p. 52). The shortcoming in Freud's approach, as identified by Carel, specifically pertaining to the description of the death drive, is Freud's failure to describe the role of aggression. Carel's new reading is summarized as follows:

Behaviours such as depression, melancholia, negative therapeutic action, self-harm and suicide have something in common over and above their aggressive nature. They are

annihilative and self-destructive. This tendency requires distinct grouping, which I call Nirvana tendencies. So in this specific sense I retain an element of the Nirvana principle as having an annihilative aim. The Nirvana principle descriptively unifies these self-destructive behaviours by providing this self-annihilating aim. I believe that this provides the death drive with a significant descriptive function that is otherwise lacking. (p. 54)

By collapsing a dualistic view, combining the life drive [Eros] and the death drive [Thanatos], Carel proposes to show how *aggression* is applicable to both the life drive and the death drive. Carel's emphasis lies with Freud's own inability to successfully deal with aggressivity as the major reason for Carel's reformulation of Freud.

"Aggression, it seems, was always a problem for Freud" (p. 55).

Carel's argument is summarized as follows: "aggression itself is conceived of as a nested grouping of various types of aggression, not a single force. Dropping the demand for singularity enables a reading that accommodates all aggressive tendencies and grounds them on an instinctual basis" (p. 61). Carel's view of aggression is therefore to explain aggression as an already conceived possibility and potentiality. Carel's critique on a dualist position is to allow for a pluralistic explanation of drives, whereby the possibility of an aggressive drive materializes. This appeases Carel's need for observational evidence, as well as to overcome Freud's lack of proving that aggression is an instinctual, evolutionary depiction.

According to Carel (2006, p. 57), there are three arguments for the incompatibility of aggression and the death drive. First, the failure to describe aggression in terms of a somatic source as compared to a sexual drive. Second, the multiplicity of aggression: Aggression cannot be accounted for as a fixed aim as aggression is applicable in an array of situations. Third, Freud's inability to account for an aggressive drive is solved by connecting aggression to the death drive. Carel's problem of the death drive is in the description of the death drive as formulated in Freud's neuronal economy, i.e. the pleasure principle, which forces Carel to account for aggression as an innate potential. Consequently, the death drive is seen as a drive separate from the Nirvana principle.

Boothby (1991), in order to explain Lacan's understanding of the death drive, has to counter Carel's argument by explaining aggression in terms of the pleasure principle, in terms of the death drive. Boothby defends against the type of reading Carel proposes (a pluralistic reading of many drives, whereby the death drive features independently from the Nirvana principle):

The thrust of Freud's idea was to conceive of a force of *selfdestructiveness*, a primordial aggressivity *toward oneself*, from which aggressivity toward others is ultimately derived. To fail to see that it is one's own death that is at stake in the death drive is to miss the point entirely.³² (p. 11, his emphasis)

Boothby and Carel provide important criticisms and alterations, which shape the framework for the death drive. The shortcomings of Freud's description of the death drive are the potential shortcomings of Lacan. Consequently, for Lacan to succeed, he needs to account for the criticism. Freud's theory presents plenty of pitfalls and traps as illustrated in Boothby and Carel's rewording of the death drive.

Boothby (1991) turns to Jacques Lacan's reading of Freud and how Lacan's reading could avoid the problems highlighted, including those identified by Carel. "Lacan does more than reemphasize Freud's notion of the death drive, he re-installs it at the very centre of psychoanalytic theory" (p. 10).

4.4. Lacan's reading of Freud's Death Drive

Lacan's reading of Freud's death drive heralds the uniting feature of Freudian Psychoanalysis. The pivotal turn in Freud's approach to Psychoanalysis was with the introduction of the death drive. However, Freud's explanation provides plenty of questions and shortcomings.

Is Lacan's reading exactly Freudian? The answer is no, but this is due to Lacan's introduction of Linguistics, *jouissance*, and desire (elements unmentioned in Freud). This also shapes the perspective for Lacan to deal with the death drive. Boothby (1996) summarizes the differences between Freud and Lacan:

Lacan's assessment of the death drive stands opposed to Freud's formulation in a crucial respect. For where Freud based the unbinding effect of the death drive on a biological force operative in the very substance of organic matter, Lacan returns the entire question to a fundamentally psychological conflict. (p. 342)

The solution to Lacan's description of the death drive lies with aggression, which is precisely the argument levelled against Freud, as seen for example in Carel (2006).

³² "Such was the typical error of ego psychologists, as Jean Laplanche has pointed out" (Boothby, 1991, p. 11)

The death drive is discussed in relation to three topics: (1) aggression, (2) desire and (3) castration. *Aggression* is the major shortcoming in Freud's description, and if Lacan can successfully explain and incorporate aggression, the classical Freudian notion of the death drive might be salvaged. *Desire* explains how Lacan understands the death drive, as well as shapes the context wherein the death drive reveals itself. The important link between the death drive and desire is alienation, as illustrated by Ragland (1995): "[Lacan] equated the death drive with being alienated behind the mask of the symbolic order itself" (p. 86), but reformulates the death drive in terms of desire: "One begins to see how desire is hooked to the death drive" (p. 106). Boothby (1996) explains the hook between desire and the death drive: "it is with respect to alienation that the nature of the death drive in Lacan must be determined" (p. 344).

Castration is the final link in explaining Freud's death drive. This doesn't explain the death drive *per se*, but explains an important aspect of desire. Castration is defined as the threat of confiscation, and consequently highlights the effects of any threat to the removal of the object of desire. Castration therefore illustrates one of the conditions for the conclusion of the pleasure principle.

4.4.1. Aggression within Lacanian Psychoanalysis

If Lacanian Psychoanalysis is to be taken seriously, a comprehensive explanation of aggression needs to be provided. Aggression is explained by Carel (2006) as destruction, which includes selfdestruction as well as destruction of the Other. But aggression not only explains destruction, but will also elucidate how a death drive can function free from this destructive notion – as explained by Carel - that haunts and plagues contemporary Psychoanalysis.

The biggest flaw in Freud's description remains in interpreting Freud's understanding of aggression, i.e. whether aggression is an innate, instinctual trait or a contextual, situational response. Freud denies that aggression is an instinctual trait, whereas Lacan consolidates and reintroduces aggression as an emergent property as a result of the conflict between the actual self [*wirkliche* Ich] and ideal self [*idealic*]. Meyer, Moore and Viljoen (2003) once again miss the plot when they quote Boothby: "Lacan's notion of aggressivity restores the central point of Freud's views: aggressivity is a function of a primordial destructiveness toward oneself" (p. 228; quoting Boothby, 1991, p. 40). How Meyer, Moore and Viljoen interpret Lacan and aggression isn't very clear until you read the activity box, where they ask: "Do you share Lacan's pessimistic view that human beings are *inherently* aggressive?" (p. 229, my emphasis). Meyer, Moore and Viljoen use Boothby to substantiate their claim. However,

Boothby's (1991) description is very apt and applicable, but in no way refers to aggression as an innate property, especially when he writes: "The keynote of the essay is that narcissism is intrinsically *generative* of aggressivity" (p. 38, my emphasis), which leads to the conclusion: "Properly understood, Lacan's notion of aggressivity restores the central point of Freud's view: aggressivity is a function of a primordial destructiveness *towards oneself*" (p. 40, his emphasis). Boothby continues: "It is because aggressivity represents a will to rebellion against the imago that aggressivity is specifically linked in fantasy to violations of bodily integrity" (p. 39). Boothby is reacting to some commentators who have argued that aggressivity is the product of the defence of the imago, whereas Boothby argues: "It is because aggressivity in Psychoanalysis is provoked not by a threat to the unity of the ego but by the alienating structure of the ego itself that a maximum aggressiveness would be produced by the individual's confrontation with an exact replica of himself" (p. 39). Meyer, Moore and Viljoen (2003) use a passage of Boothby (1991) to explain the fascination with violence, but still fail to show the origins of aggression, or describe anything other than "humans being are inherently aggressive" (Meyer, Moore and Viljoen, 2003, p. 229). This thesis contends that aggression is an emergent property, and not an innate drive, nor instinct. Aggression as an emergent property places emphasis on the context and situation, whereby, according to Lacan, aggression is the product of an imaginary conflict (between the ego and the ideal-ego), rather than a naturalistic-behaviouristic reaction propelled by an innate aggressive drive/instinct.

In Lacan's (1966/2006) *Écrits*, in the article Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis (p.82), the important links are made to explain aggression in terms of the narcissism of the ego. Lacan's definition of the ego is:

In short, by "ego" I designate [1] the nucleus given to consciousness – though it is opaque to reflection – that is marked by all the ambiguities which, from self-indulgence to bad faith, structure the human subject's lived experience of the passions; [2] the "I" that, while exposing its facticity to existential criticism, opposes its irreducible inertia of pretenses and misrecognition to the concrete problematic of the subject's realization. (p. 88-9)

However, aggression cannot be explained solely in terms of the ego,

i.e. a conscious, cognitive explanation of aggression. This is most notably the explanation for Carel's stipulation for an aggression drive, as Boothby (1996) introduces alienation as a source of aggression which stems from narcissism. This results in *méconnaissance*, misrecognition of the self. Narcissistic *méconnaissance* is where the self is seen as the ideal. Narcissism is circumscribed in the mirror stage, as presented in the first chapter, where the emphasis lies with the recognition of the self as the image in the mirror, which inevitably results in misrecognition [*méconnaissance*]. Lacan (1966/2006) summarizes:

Indeed, this form crystallizes in the subject's inner conflictual tension, which leads to the awakening of his desire for the object of the other's desire: here the primordial confluence precipitates into aggressive competition, from which develops the triad of other people, ego, and object. (p. 92)

This quotation is best described in terms of the L-schema (Fig 4, p. 86), discussed in Chapter 3, which shows the connection and relation between the self, the perceived self, and the Other. But this is only possible in the sphere of language, which allows for the possibility of description and distinction. A subtle point to Lacan is that the distinction between the self, the perceived self and the Other can easily be confused for one another, whereby *méconnaissance* is enhanced. Lacan therefore explains aggression in terms of the alienation/*méconnaissance* between the self, the perceptual self, and the Other. The relation between the self and the perceptual accounts for the narcissistic mode of identification and recognition experienced when the self looks, for example, in the mirror. There remains a distance between the actual [*wirkliche*, O] self and the reflected [*ideal*, O"] self, which creates a distance whereby the self can be seen as an other: "thus the two moments, when the subject negates himself and when he accuses the other, become indistinguishable" (p. 93). This is then how Lacan proceeds to explain aggression, whereby aggression is a product of conflict between the self and the image of the self, O and O"³³; the ideals of the self are projected, even transferred onto the other: "it is by identifying with the other that he experiences a whole range of bearing and display reactions" (p. 92).

This relation is taken a step further: "The satisfaction of human desire is possible only when mediated by the other's desire and labour" (p. 98). Lacan's (1998) alternative definition of "*the unconscious is the discourse of the Other*" (p. 131) emphasizes that any description given of the self is always done in accordance with words, which are the closest approximation. It is never one's own description. To quote Lacan (1998) at length:

Now, what is a signifier? I have been drumming it into you long enough not to have to articulate it once again here. A signifier is that which represents a subject. For whom? – not for another subject, but for another signifier. In order to illustrate this axiom, suppose that in the desert you find a stone covered with hieroglyphics. You do not doubt for a moment that, behind them, there was a subject who wrote them. But it is an error to believe that each signifier is addressed to you – this is proved by the fact that you cannot understand any of it. On the other hand you define them as signifiers, by the fact that you are sure that each of

³³ See the Simplified Schema of the Two Mirrors, Fig 1, p. 37

these signifiers is related to each of the others. And it is this that is at issue with the relation between the subject and the field of the Other. The subject is born in so far as the signifier emerges in the field of the Other. But, by this fact, this subject – which, was previously nothing if not a subject coming into being – solidifies into a signifier. (p. 198-9)

The relation between the self and Other, as seen in the L-schema, pertains to both the symbolic relation and the imaginary. Boothby (1991) emphasizes the imaginary, which he defines thus: “the „imaginary“ designates that basic and enduring dimension of experience that is oriented by images, perceived or fantasized, the psychologically formative power of which is lastingly established in the primordial identification of the mirror phase” (p. 18). Whereas the symbolic consists “of signifying elements whose meaning is determined by their relation to the other elements of the system [...] in which meaning is free to circulate among associated elements or signifiers without necessarily referring to a particular object or signified” (p. 18). The L-schema incorporates both spectra of the imaginary and the symbolic in terms of the relation between the subject and the Other, which nonetheless remains a very specific relation in Lacanian Psychoanalysis. “The Other is the locus in which is situated the chain of the signifier that governs whatever may be made present of the subject – it is the field of that living being in which the subject has to appear” (Lacan, 1998, p. 203). The subject cannot be detached from the Other, and as argued in the third chapter in response to Dreyer, it is not an actual Other, but the Other described in terms of the imaginary and symbolic relations to the subject. The physical Other that confronts the subject is merely a signifier:

The signifier, producing itself in the field of the Other, makes manifest the subject of its signification. But it functions as a signifier only to reduce the subject in question to being no more than a signifier, to petrify the subject in the same movement in which it calls the subject to function, to speak, as subject. (p. 207)

Lacan’s (1966/2006) reaction to Carel’s attempt to locate aggression as a biological drive is:

Let us note here that to attempt a behaviourist reduction of the analytic process – to which a concern with rigour, quite unjustified in my view, might impel some of us, to which favourite fantasies bear witness in consciousness and which have enabled us to conceptualize the *imago*, which plays a formative role in identification. (p. 86)

Lacan’s critique on a behaviourist-reductionist-evolutionary approach towards locating aggression as a biological drive is how they miss an important aspect of the subject; what constitutes the subject, and how the subject is conceptualized through the *imago*. The image is where the ego is located: “what demonstrates the phenomenon of recognition, implying subjectivity, are the signs of triumphant jubilation and the playful self-discovery that characterize the child’s encounter with his

mirror image" (p. 91). Aggression, however, is located within that interaction with the imago in the mirror, more specifically, the interaction between the actual [*wirkliche*] self and the ideal self: "thus the aggressiveness that is manifested in the retaliations of slaps and blows cannot be regarded solely as a playful manifestation of the exercise of strength of their employment in getting to know the body" (p. 91). The same is said of any notion of *desire to destroy the self*, which is not a product of any innate instincts or drives, but is the aggression towards the mirror image.

The Oedipus complex proves invaluable and will be explained in terms of four aspects: (1) the connection between the Oedipus complex and the Superego, as mediated through *guilt*, (2) the formation of the Law through the *Non du Père/Nom du Père* [the No of the Father/Name of the Father], (3) secondary identification, and (4) Desire.

The first explanation for the importance of the Oedipus complex is the introduction of an important concept for Lacan (1966/2006), which is *guilt*:

Here, obviously, lies the import that Freud's work, *Totem and Taboo*, still has, despite the mythical circularity that vitiates it, insofar as from a mythological event – the killing of the father – it derives the subjective dimension that gives this event its meaning: guilt. (p. 95)

The introduction of guilt is a very important facet of the superego. Guilt is connected to the superego in two parts, first in terms of the achievement of the ideals imposed from the ego-ideal (or the lack of achievement); and second, whereby guilt is the result of the desire for the destruction of the father. As argued in the second chapter, the Law is connected with *jouissance* - unconscious pleasure - as stipulated by the pleasure principle, from which an internal Law is derived. Therefore the relation between guilt and the superego is: *the more you obey the superego, the more you are guilty*. In other words, the superego is synonymous with the idealego as described in terms of the mirror stage. The superego is the impossible ideals that the primary caregiver imprints on the child. The more you obey the ideals (the superego) the more you are guilty of not succeeding in the ideals, and the more you are entrenched in obeying the superego.³⁴

³⁴ Slavoj Žižek (2005) words the same differently: "According to Lacan, this „feeling of guilt" is not a self-deception to be dispelled in the course of the psychoanalytic cure – we really are guilty: superego draws the energy of the pressure it exerts upon the subject from the fact that the subject was not faithful to his desire, that he gave it up. Our sacrificing to the superego, our paying tribute to it, only corroborates our guilt. For that reason our debt to the superego is unredeemable: the more we pay it off, the more we owe. Superego is like the extortioner slowly bleeding us to death – the more he gets, the stronger his hold on us" (p.68, his italics).

The second explanation focuses on the Oedipus complex and the role of the father. In classical Freudian Psychoanalysis, the Father took the role of the author of the Law, as the Father in the Oedipus complex is the first intrusive force that prevents an everlasting satisfaction of the auto-erotic zones. This explains why the Father figure is seen as the figure/author of Law in Freudian Psychoanalysis. The Father is the figure that prohibits the object or object-cause of desire, achieved through the word of the Father as this includes the imaginary as well as the symbolic.

Lacan (1966/2006) shows in *Écrits, The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis* the passing from symbolic to the imaginary, in terms of the Oedipus complex³⁵ and how the primordial Law ensues. Lacan defines the primordial Law thus: “The primordial Law is therefore the Law which, in regulating marriage ties, superimposes the reign of culture over the reign of nature, the latter being subject to the law of mating” (p. 277). It is through the transgression of the Law that crime is committed. “Neither crime nor criminals are objects that can be conceptualized apart from their sociological context” (p. 126). But as Lacan shows, the symbolic is an all-encompassing domain that cannot be selectively or partially used. Identification and the Law of the word are illustrated when Lacan writes: “Man thus speaks, but it is because the symbol has made him man” (p. 276). But Lacan pinpoints the location of the Law within language, within the symbolic order, as the Law is expressed in language through a commandment, through a verbal injunction.

This law, then, reveals itself clearly enough as identical to a language order. For without names for kinship relations, no power can institute the order of preferences and taboos that knot and braid the thread of lineage through the generations. (p. 277)

The Father is seen as the author of the injunction, which is why the symbolic father, i.e. *the name of the father*, has such an important role within the Oedipus complex. “It is in the *name of the father* that we must recognize the basis of the symbolic function which, since the dawn of historical time, has identified his person with the figure of the law” (p. 278). However, the father as author of the Law is only an identification of the father as origin of the Law - the father as the figure of the Law - illustrated when Lacan uses *Le Nom-du-Père* [the Name-of-the-Father] synonymously with *Le Non-duPère* [the No-of-the-Father]. The Oedipus complex is the start of the injunction. “The very normalization of this

³⁵ Lacan (2008a) writes: “One shouldn’t forget that in a sense Oedipus did not suffer from the Oedipus complex, and he punished himself for a sin he did not commit. He simply killed a man whom he didn’t know was his father [...] [Oedipus] doesn’t know that in achieving happiness, both conjugal happiness and that of his job as king, of being the guide to the happiness of the state, he is sleeping with his mother. One might therefore ask what the treatment he inflicts on himself means. Which treatment? He gives up the very thing that captivated him. In fact, he has been duped, tricked by reason of the fact that he achieved happiness” (p. 374)

maturation is henceforth dependent in man on cultural intervention, as is exemplified by the fact that sexual object choice is dependent upon the Oedipus complex" (p. 98).

The third aspect demonstrates how The Oedipus complex is shaped through *secondary identification*. *Secondary identification* is also connected to the mirror stage. The mirror image contains more than just the idealized version of the self. "In its normal form, its function is that of sublimation³⁶, which precisely designates an identificatory reshaping of the subject and [...] a *secondary identification* by introjections of the imago of the parent of the same sex" (p. 95). *Secondary identification* is the prelude to the Oedipus complex⁶⁰ whereby the child will relate to either the mother or the father. Or as Boothby (1991) states:

In the negotiation of the Oedipus complex, the child faces the question of being versus having the phallus. On the level of the imaginary identification constitutive of the mirror phase, the child is unable to symbolize to itself its own desire except in and through the desire of the other. (p. 155)

Lacan (1966/2006) reveals how secondary identification is accordingly connected to castration: "Freud thus unveiled the imaginary function of the phallus as the pivotal point in the symbolic process that completes, *in both sexes*, the calling into question of one's sex by the castration complex" (p. 555, his italics). The importance is therefore in the sublimation of a gender identity as idealized through the development of an ideal, but also how the *secondary effects* have lasting effects as to how the *desire of the other* takes shape.

The fourth and probably most important aspect of the Oedipus complex is the link to desire through language. It is based on this explanation of desire that the death drive will be described in the next section.

³⁶ On sublimation, Lacan (2008a) writes: "in the definition of sublimation as satisfaction without repression, whether implicitly or explicitly, there is a passage from not-knowing to knowing, a recognition of the fact that desire is nothing more than the metonymy of the discourse of demand" (p. 360) ⁶⁰

"At a very early age the little boy develops an object-cathexis for his mother, which originally related to the mother's breast and is the prototype of an object-choice on the anaclitic model; the boy deals with his father by identifying himself with him. For a time these two relationships proceed side by side, until the boy's sexual wishes in regard to his mother become more intense and his father is perceived as an obstacle to them; from this the Oedipus complex originates" (Freud, 1923, p. 32)

Lacan (1966/2006) writes:

These are occultation games which Freud, in a flash of genius, presented to us so that we might see in them that the moment at which desire is humanized is also that at which the child is born into language. (p. 262)

Desire is therefore articulated in language, which proves problematic; the signifier is the death of the signified. This is best illustrated when Lacan writes: "Thus the symbol first manifests itself as the killing of the thing, and this death results in the endless perpetuation of the subject's desire" (p. 262).

The endless perpetuation can be explained in Saussurean terminology to emphasize the difference between the signifier and the signified, as seen in the Fort/Da case study. The distance between the perceived sensation and the correlate within the domain of the symbolic is an important transition. Lacan opens the gap between the signified and the signifier whereby the signifier does not necessarily correspond with the signified, but is a close approximation. Regardless of the proximity of the signifier to the signified, the signifier destroys the signified, and replaces the signified in both form and content. To quote Lacan (1966/2006) at length:

For his action destroys the object that it causes to appear and disappear by *bringing about* its absence and presence in advance. His action thus negativizes the force field of desire in order to become its own object to itself. And this object, being immediately embodied in the symbolic pair of two elementary exclamations, announces the subject's diachronic integration of the dichotomy of phonemes, whose synchronic structure the existing language offers up for him to assimilate; the child thus begins to become engaged in the system of concrete discourse of those around him by reproducing more or less approximately in his *Fort!* and *Da!* the term he receives from them. *Fort! Da!* It is already when quite alone that the desire of the human child becomes the desire of another, of an alter ego who dominates him and whose object of desire is henceforth his own affliction. (p. 262, his emphasis)

Desire can therefore be articulated in two ways, first through prohibition, as seen in the Oedipus complex through the „No“ of the Father [*Le Non-du-Père*].³⁷ Second, the evocative proponents of language: "For the function of language in speech is not to inform, but to evoke" (p. 247).

³⁷ "The super-ego retains the character of the father, while the more powerful the Oedipus complex was and the more rapidly it succumbed to repression (under the influence of authority, religious teaching, school and reading), the stricter will be the domination of the super-ego over the ego later on – in the form of conscience or perhaps of an unconscious sense of guilt" (Freud, 1923, p. 35) ⁶²

Lacan (2008b) explains: "When man's desire has to be extracted from the field of the Other, and has to be my desire, well, something very funny happens. Now that it is his turn to desire, he notices, well, that he is

This second aspect even precedes the first aspect, as is articulated in Lacan's (1998) *Four Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis*. "Man's desire is the desire of the Other"⁶² (p. 235), which Lacan describes in greater detail:

If it is merely at the level of the desire of the Other that man can recognize his desire, as desire of the Other, is there not something here that must appear to him to be an obstacle to his fading, which is a point at which his desire can never be recognized? This obstacle is never lifted, nor ever to be lifted, for analytic experience shows us that it is in seeing a whole chain come into play at the level of the desire of the

Other that the subject's desire is constituted. (p. 235)

A second explanation for *man's desire is the desire of the Other* is that desire is located within the coordinates of the Other, that is expressed in language. It is within language that the self is identified (in terms of the ideal *imago*) as well as the Other, which ties into the theme of appearance and disappearance as seen in the Fort/Da case study.

Lacan's description of the death drive lies with Lacan's description of desire through the Oedipus complex. This involves explaining (1) the relation between the subject and desire, (2) the maintenance of desire, (3) the Law of desire, as well as (4) the Law revealing desire (through prohibition).

4.4.2. Lacan's Death Drive through Desire

The death drive is the focus of this chapter, and has already proved a contentious affair. There are two prevalent readings of the death drive.

First through equating the death drive with the diminution of tension; death is equated to a reduction [of either Quantity or tension], to zero or a bare minimum. The state of minimal flow of Quantity, or even minimum tension, is the point at which the reality principle cannot intervene, where any deferral is impossible. In terms of economy, this state would be the ideal condition whereby deferral or alteration is impossible. The one state would be the classical notion of death and the other would be the second reading: which is the first reading plus desire. "In order to talk about desire, one notion in

castrated. That is what the castration complex is. It means that something necessarily happens in significance, and it is that sort of loss which means that, when man enters the field of his own desire insofar as it is sexual desire, he can do so only through the medium of a symbol that represents the loss of an organ insofar as it takes on, in the circumstances, a signifying function, the function of the lost object" (p. 40-1).

particular came to the fore, the libido” (Lacan, 1988b, p. 221). Libido has a very specific and significant role in Psychoanalysis, and is discussed in chapter 1 with specific emphasis on Freud’s usage of the notion of libido in context of auto-erotism.

Lacan’s argument is set out in Lacan’s (1988b) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II*, which was originally presented in 1955, an early description of the death drive. “The organism already conceived by Freud as a machine, has a tendency to return to its state of equilibrium – this is what the pleasure principle states” (p. 79). To recapitulate the description of the pleasure principle: the focus on the diminution of tension is explained in terms of the facilitations [*Bahnung*] through which Q [Quantity in general] and Qñ [Quantity of the intercellular order of magnitude] flow is regulated by contact-barriers which impose limitations, effectively managing the flow of both Q and Qñ. However, for Lacan, to speak of the minimum has two different explanations:

The minimum tension can mean one of two things, all biologists will agree, according to whether it is a matter of the minimum given a certain definition of the equilibrium of the system, or the minimum purely and simply, that is to say, with respect to the living being, death. (p. 80)

This is applicable to the outcome of the pleasure principle regardless of the different readings of minimum tension. Lacan emphasizes that the two different meanings of minimum tension are both equally valid and applicable to the description of the pleasure principle. The same argument goes for the first law of thermodynamics, which Lacan summarizes as “the first law of the conservation of energy – if there’s something at the end, just as much had to be there at the beginning” (p. 81). But the kicker is the second principle, which is more pertinent to the pleasure principle, as Lacan elaborates:

The second principle stipulates that the manifestation of this energy has undegraded modes and others which aren’t. To put it another way, you can’t swim against the current. When you do a job, a part of it is expended, as heat for instance – there’s a loss. That’s called entropy. (p. 81)

Thermodynamics therefore show an inherent loss at work within the structure; however the first law stipulates a return to equilibrium is a return to the same. But it is important to emphasize that equilibrium does not equal stability, since stability is equal to death. The Freudian notion of the death drive is therefore not a far-fetched notion whereby the subject consciously aims towards the destruction and annihilation of the self³⁸, but that the death drive is an innate property described in

³⁸ Lacan (2008a) dismisses this understanding of death: “How can man, that is to say a living being, have access to knowledge of the death instinct,

terms of entropy. Entropy is a technical physics term denoting a measure for the amount of disorder in a system or the unavailability of energy for doing work. The introduction of thermodynamics shows how Carel's critique on Freud's description of the pleasure principle is reckless and irresponsible. Carel failed to see the functional as well as theoretical significance of the pleasure principle as an interdisciplinary theoretical framework.

Lacan presents an alternative explanation of the death drive that accommodates the notion of desire. In other words, Lacan explains how desire is located within the realm of entropy. Lacan (1988b) writes:

People seek their pleasure. So, why is this expressed theoretically by a principle which states the following – what is sought is, in the end, the cessation of pleasure. But you can see that the direction the theory takes at this point goes exactly in the opposite direction to that of subjective intuition – in the pleasure principle, the pleasure, by definition, is bent on its end. The pleasure principle – the principle of pleasure [*le principe de plaisir*] – is that pleasure should cease. (p. 84, his italics)

The difficulty continually encountered in Freud's description of both the death drive and the pleasure principle is the terminological ambiguity, which many struggle to grasp. The condition for the cessation of pleasure is the death drive, which is *why Lacan explains desire in terms of the death drive, and the death drive in terms of desire*. But as already argued, the immediate cessation is not possible as described in the domain of the reality principle. In terms of Freud's (1950) „Project“, the reality principle, also known as the second principle, is explained in terms of the influx of Q that exceeds the limitations of the contact-

to his own relationship to death? The answer is, by virtue of the signifier in its most radical form. It is in the signifier and insofar as the subject articulates a signifying chain that he comes up against the fact that he may disappear from the chain of what he is. In truth, it's as dumb as can be" (p. 362) barriers, thereby altering the structure of the facilitations [*Bahnung*]. In terms of the death drive and pleasure, Lacan writes: The reality principle consists in making the game last, that is to say, in ensuring that pleasure is renewed, so that the fight doesn't end for a lack of combatants. The reality principle consists in husbanding our pleasures, these pleasures whose aim is precisely to end in cessation. (p. 84) In thermodynamic terms, the reality principle can therefore be equated with the first law, which stipulates that the conservation of energy is a priority, as well as the maintenance of equilibrium. However, this equilibrium is not synonymous with stability, but synonymous with the maintenance and sustainability, which can consequently be equated with a life drive.

Only through the abovementioned can we make sense when Freud (1920) writes:

Another striking fact is that the life instincts have so much more contact without internal perception – emerging as breakers of the peace and constantly producing tensions whose release is felt as pleasure – while the death instincts seem to do their work unobtrusively. The pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death instincts. (p. 77)

Life instincts and the reality principle therefore work in tandem, whilst the pleasure principle and the death instincts work together. In other words, the life drive [Eros] and the reality principle work in unison, whilst the death drive [Thanatos] and the pleasure principle work in unison. Their functioning overlaps towards similar outcomes. The pleasure principle serves the death drive in creating the *possibility* of a death drive, whereby the pleasure principle aims for a minimum of tension. A mistake is often made in viewing the death drive as synonymous with the pleasure principle, as Carel (2006) does when dismissing the Nirvana principle, but maintains select facets of the Nirvana principle.

What Lacan (1988b) adds is how pleasure and desire fit within the framework of the death drive. This is the inclusion of another dimension to the death drive, rather than viewing the death drive solely in terms of the diminution of tension. Lacan then turns towards the description of desire. “Desire, a function central to all human experience, is the desire for nothing nameable” (p. 223). In other words, what is desired cannot be expressed in terms of words, i.e. desire is originally not located within the symbolic realm. To once again reiterate Lacan’s adaption of Saussure’s Linguistics, the separation between the signifier and the signified; the signified initially does not have a correlate word, which needs to be found in the symbolic order. It is this absence of a signifier that Lacan calls the lack, which is thereby assigned with a “signifier”, a close or as close as possible approximation, but this signifier is never an exact correlate.

In Freud’s (1914) *On Narcissism: an Introduction*, the qualities that gain privilege stem from the primary caregivers through the creation of an ideal. But because this is a lack, any signifier can take the place of this “desire for nothing nameable”. Or in Lacan’s (1988b) own words:

This lack is beyond anything which can represent it. It is only ever represented as a reflection on a veil. The libido, but now no longer used theoretically as a quantitative quantity, is the name of what animates the deep-seated conflict at the heart of human action. (p. 223)

Desire is the Archimedean point around which the subject finds its co-ordinates within the symbolic order, whereby one specific signifier stands out. But this signifier is not the signified, also known as *das Ding* [the Thing]. Lacan introduces desire as the Archimedean middle point around which the

pleasure principle functions and through which the reality principle intervenes, defers, and delays. Desire is described in terms of the conscious and unconscious, as described in Chapter 2, with regards to *plaisir* and *jouissance*. *Plaisir* relates to conscious pleasure and *jouissance* relates to unconscious pleasure. Because *jouissance* is unconscious, *jouissance* is consequently described as a drive, a driving force. Proceeding in terms of libidinal economy, *jouissance* dictates a drive towards the attainment of the conditions in which pleasure would cease. This is best exemplified when Lacan (1988b) writes: “The pleasure principle – the principle of pleasure – is that pleasure should cease” (p. 84). This is when pleasure is in an undeferred state. This is illustrated in linguistic terms as impossible, as the signifier can never encompass or encapsulate the signified; the symbolic illustration of *das Ding* is never sufficient. Put in context of Freud’s (1914) *On Narcissism: an Introduction*, the death drive is a return to the harmony that was the satisfaction as a product of the stimulation of the auto-erotic zones, as explained in Chapter 1.

But this reading of the death drive does have a critique against it. Tim Dean’s (2000) *Beyond Sexuality* criticizes a reading of the pleasure principle proposed here, demonstrated when he writes on *jouissance*:

Jouissance and the subject (of speech, of discourse, of desire, of the unconscious) are basically incompatible. Furthermore, *jouissance* remains so far beyond the pleasure principle that it works against the subject’s well-being, as the Sadian⁶⁴ text, for instance – which is about *jouissance* as opposed to pleasure – illustrates. (p. 125, his italics)

To respond to Dean, is to respond to two aspects he highlights. First, that a death instinct is part of an unconscious desire; and second, to respond to the distance Dean maintains between the Self and the Other. The first response is to describe death in terms of the death drive, which when explained in terms of libidinal economy, or even thermodynamics, is an inevitable outcome. Death is not a beckoning desire which is pursued unconsciously. The incompatibility between *jouissance* and the subject is correct, as the unconscious pleasure functions regardless of the well-being of the subject; this is argued in Chapter 2 with regard to the internal Law as a feature of the unconscious. However, the death drive is such an important feature that it does affect the conscious subject. However, as previously argued, there is no way of knowing how the unconscious

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Tim Dean is referring to Lacan’s (1966/2006) article found in *Écrits*, *Kant with Sade* (p. 645). Which is also a critique on Kant’s Categorical Imperative, see page 67

affects the conscious³⁹. This is due to the misrecognition [*méconnaissance*] of the signifier for the [unconscious] signified. The second aspect is explained in terms of the L-schema, as demonstrated in Chapter 3. Dean's usage of the notion of the Other pertains to a metaphysics of presence, as argued in Chapter 3 with regard to Dreyer's reading, whereby the presence of an Other is seen as the Other to whom Lacan is referring. But as seen in the L-schema, the Other is not a person, but denotes a more abstract concept. Dean is not necessarily guilty of the metaphysics of presence claim, but it is a matter of how this Other is assimilated within the L-schema to the extent that this Other is part of the self. Even in terms of a more simplistic formulation of the simplified schema of the two mirrors (Fig 1, p. 34), the distance between the self (o) and the mirror image of the self (o'') *is where aggression and guilt lies*. The discrepancies between the true [*wirkliche*] self and the idealized version of the self is the imaginary identification. The concepts and notions ascribed are imaginary, but the Other grants access to the symbolic. Dean writes: "Since the acceptance of one's own death is completely unthinkable in the unconscious, *jouissance* is therefore impossible *for the subject*. But not for the Other" (p. 125, his emphasis). This is problematic. Dean is referring to the subject, the Lacanian decentred subject, who continually mediates between itself and the mirror-image, as argued in Chapter 1. The link is between the self and the idealized version of the self, or in Freudian terms, the self and the *ideal-ich* [ideal-ego] later coined the Superego. The desire of the Superego, or even the desire of the *ideal-ich* is the desire of the Other, even the desire for the Other.

It is through the Other that desire is realized, since this desire can only be expressed through language. "Desire always becomes manifest at the joining of speech, where it makes its appearance, its sudden emergence, its surge forwards. Desire emerges just as it becomes embodied in speech, it emerges with symbolism" (Lacan, 1988b, p. 234). Language is not my own, which is why it is through the Other's language that my desire is realized. "The form in which language expresses itself in and of itself defines subjectivity" (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 246). The possibility of subjectivity is firmly located within language. "I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it as an object" (p. 247).

The link between language and desire is therefore twofold, first in exceeding the limits of identification, whereby an object can be over valued. Second, that language can evoke desire. "For the function of language in speech is not to inform, but to evoke" (p. 247).

³⁹ Cillers (1998): "Models of language and the brain work with systems of relationships and are not understood in representation terms (Freud, Lacan, Derrida)" (p. 30)

However, there still remains a problem with linking language and death in forming a description of the death drive. Van Haute's (1989) description of death elucidates this problem. Van Haute's description of death is in line with Heidegger's (1962) notion of *Sein Zum Tode* as found in *Being and Time*:

De dood, schrijft Lacan, is de limiet van de historische functie van het dood. De dood beëindigt immers ons historisch bestaan. In navolging van Heidegger begrijpt Lacan de dood als de uiteindelijke toekomst van het subject die vanaf zijn geboorte op til is. De dood is niet in de eerste plaats een biologisch *factum*, maar een intrinsieke en onbepaalde mogelijkheid van het subject. Deze mogelijkheid is altijd aanwezig. Zij is onbepaald omdat we niets „weten“ oor de dood. [Death, writes Lacan, is the limit of the historical function of death. Death ends our historical existence. Following Heidegger, Lacan understands death as the final outcome of the subject from his birth onwards. Death is not in the first place a biological *fact*, but one intrinsic and undeterminable possibility of the subject. This possibility is always present. It is undeterminable because we do not “know” anything about death] (p. 80)

Discussing death in terms of the pleasure principle or even the death drive has an ambiguous tenet since the notion of death is understood in terms of quantity [the pleasure principle as a neuronal/libidinal economy].

The imaginary consists of the attributes ascribed to death, whereby any understanding of death will infer the attributes ascribed to death. As we cannot know what death really is - aside from a biological or mechanical state of equilibrium, also known as stability - death remains elusive.

Dean (2000) is evoking a specific meaning of death experienced through the Other. This is problematic considering that death doesn't have a fixed meaning, expressed when Van Haute (1989) writes: “De (eigen) dood kan niet anders dan aan de betekenisproductie ontsnappen. Hij is het betekenloze bij uitstek” [(One's) Death can do nothing but escape the production of meaning. It is meaningless par excellence] (p. 87). But this is not only applicable to one's own death, but to death in general; the word death can act as a signifier. To evoke Saussurian Linguistics again, death as signifier does not encapsulate death as signified. “Deze heterogeniteit van de dood (deze heterogene dood) is als zodanig niet articuleerbaar in de taal, omdat iedere talige articulatie onvermijdelijk betekenissen creëert” [This heterogeneity of death (this heterogeneous death) as such is not articulable in language, because every spoken articulation inevitably creates meaning] (p. 88).

This is why it is problematic when Dean (2000) concludes: "Therefore the death drive cannot be conceptualized at the level of unconscious desire; it is not part of the Other's discourse (the unconscious is the discourse of the Other), but an effect of the Other's *jouissance*" (p. 125). A clue to what Dean means with *jouissance* is "*Jouissance* may be understood as „self-destructive“ insofar as it overwhelms the ego or coherent self" (p. 164), which is not necessarily true, because there always remains indeterminacy to *jouissance*, as *jouissance* is equated with unconscious pleasure. Dean's argument is therefore in locating death in the Other whereby the Other's "self-destruction" is equated with the Other's death.

This is a literal interpretation of *desire is the desire for the Other*, whereby Tim Dean is referring to a physical person. Even seeing a person die is not enough to grasp death, because the gesture remains within the imaginary and calling the event death evokes the symbolic. Dean is referring to death as desirable. But this is perhaps not quite what Lacan had in mind with his formulation of fantasies [*desire is the desire of the Other*]: ($\$ \diamond a$). " $\$$ staat voor het (gespleten) subject. „a“ is het object-oorzaak van de begeerte. Het ruitje duidt de wijze aan waarop het gespleten subject zich in het fantasme tot het object verhoudt" [$\$$ stands for the (divided) subject. „a“ is the object-cause of desire. The diamond indicates the way in which the divided subject relates itself in the phantasy to the object-cause] (Van Haute, 1989, p. 143). The formulation of Fantasms, or Phantasy is ($\$ \diamond a$)⁴⁰, which is the relation between the (barred) subject and the relation with the object-cause of desire. The *objet a* is equivalent to the signifier, which stands for nothing nameable, but known through the symbolic, through language, "de begeerte is, zoals het subject, altijd een (in de taal) *voorgestelde* begeerte" [desire is, according to the subject, always (in language) a *proposed* desire (p. 144). The \diamond is divided further into two parts: \sim denoting the alienation and \wedge the splitting of the subject. Van Haute describes how this phantasy affects the relation with the Other:

Het subject heft aan de Ander niets te bieden ... dan zijn tekort: ik kan de begeerte van de Ander niet voltooien. Wat ik ook geef of krijg, het is nooit wat ik zoek. Het tekort van de Ander keert terug in het tekort van het subject. [The subject has nothing to offer the Other ... except his lack: I can never complete the desire of the Other. Whatever I give or receive is never what I seek. The lack of the Other returns as the lack of the subject] (p. 144)

⁴⁰ "Fantasy is defined by the most general form it receives in an algebra. I have constructed for this purpose - namely, the formula ($\$ \diamond a$), in which the lozenge \diamond is to be read as „desire for“ (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 774)

The first example that illustrates how an object can mediate desire between the subject and the Other is found in the Oedipus complex. Lacan (1966/2006) illustrates the effects of “having phallus”, which means that when the Other is in possession of the object of desire, the Other becomes desirable. Lacan writes:

The demand for love can only suffer from a desire whose signifier is foreign to it. If the mother’s desire is the phallus, the child wants to be the phallus in order to satisfy her desire. Thus the division immanent in desire already makes itself felt by virtue of being experienced in the Other’s desire, in that this division already stands in the way of the subject being satisfied with presenting to the Other the real [organ] he may *have* that corresponds to the phallus; for what he has is no better than what he does not have, from the point of view of his demand for love, which would like him to be the phallus. (p. 693, his emphasis)

The reformulation of Freud’s Oedipus complex - in terms of signifier and signified - illustrates how the lack is identified in the Other. The relation between the subject and the Other described through the ideal-ego [*ideal-ich*] is the recognition of the ideals of the self within the Other. In other words, the recognition of the ideal-ego in the Other is compared to the self’s inability to achieve those ideals. Consequently, what the self lacks is found in the Other. In terms of the signifier and the signified, it is important to find a signifier for the signified, i.e. an object; because this object never is *the* object, only the resemblance. Lacan continues by emphasizing that it is not the “phallus” itself, but the qualities ascribed to the “phallus” that makes the phallus desirable. The emphasis is located not on the object, but on the qualities of the object. It never is about the “truth” or accuracy of the description, as “truth” is always given up at the expense of the phantasy. Lacan elaborates:

Paradoxical as this formulation may seem, I am saying that it is in order to be the phallus – that is, the signifier of the Other’s desire – that a woman rejects an essential part of femininity, namely, all its attributes, in the masquerade. It is for what she is not that she expects to be desired as well as loved. *But she finds the signifier of her own desire in the body of the person to whom her demand for love is addressed.*

(p. 694, my italics)

This description is equally applicable to the ideal-ego [*ideal-ich*], whereby the Other is an object of desire. What the self lacks, the Other fulfils. This is the connection between the self and the Other, as illustrated through the L-schema (Fig 4, p. 86), where there is a criss-crossing between the symbolic and the imaginary. The ideal-ego is fully embodied in the imaginary and still needs to be connected and grounded in a symbol or an object. Once again, the symbol can be easily confused for the qualities and attributes ascribed. Lacan reminds us through Saussurean Linguistics that the link between the

object and the qualities are arbitrary, as any other object would have sufficed. Yet the appearance of the object conforming to the qualities is what makes the object desirable.

This explains Dean's (2000) argument in light of a reciprocal relation in terms of death. However, where Dean's argument falters is in his treatment of death as „a“ in the phantasy (\$ ϕ a). But this only works if „a“ = death, whereby „a“ can be anything. What complicates Dean's argument is when Lacan (1998b) writes: “The subject is separated from the Others, the true ones, by the wall of language” (p. 244). The role of language is thereby to confuse the matter, “language is as much there to found us in the Other as to drastically prevent us from understanding him” (p. 244). Dean's argument is consequently difficult to follow and difficult to implement in terms of Lacanian Psychoanalysis, especially the notion of death, the death drive, and the desire for death.

But the relation between the desire and the pleasure principle has been argued. However, what still remains, is an explanation as to the effects of castration. In other words, what happens when the object of desire is threatened or purged? This is examined in the next subsection.

4.4.3. Castration

Castration was the word introduced by Freud in the Oedipus complex to illustrate the threat of the removal of what Freud deemed the most important manifestation of *das Ding*, the penis.

The preservation of the object of desire⁶⁷ is always in doubt. A process of substitution takes place whereby one signifier is replaced with another. This is done when the object loses appeal or when a closer approximation is realized. This is how the object (signifier) of desire is replaced, and in so doing (the signified) *maintained*⁶⁸. This may seem paradoxical, but the idealization remains as the signifier changes, but the signified doesn't. All that changed was the signifier, which is arbitrarily connected to the signified.

The source of desire is through the Other. Therefore, castration is explained in terms of the Other's desire [*jouissance*]. Lacan (1966/2006) argues in *The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire* that “Castration means that *jouissance* has to be refused in order to be attained on the inverse scale of the Law of desire” (p. 827).⁶⁹ Prohibition is essentially what maintains the object of desire, but also reveals the object of desire (as argued in Chapter 2). The prohibition of desire delays the

attainment of the object or object-cause of desire by artificially maintaining a distance between the subject and object of desire.⁷⁰ The threat of

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Ellie Ragland-Sullivan (1982) defines desire as: “a structural inadequacy in the human subject which drives individuals to strive forever, to seek new ways to compensate for the elemental loss of a psychic illusion of unity” (p. 8) ⁶⁸

Ellie Ragland-Sullivan (1982) writes: “People, language itself, material goods, meaning and belief systems, all play substitutive roles in displacing the lost object(s) along a signifying chain of Desire” (p. 8) ⁶⁹

Lacan (2008b) writes on castration: “The reason why castration exists is, perhaps quite simply that desire – when it really is a question of our desire – cannot have been, cannot be, something we have, cannot be an organ we can handle. It cannot be both being and having. So, the organ serves, perhaps, a purpose that functions at the level of desire. It is the lost object because it stands in for the subject *qua* desire” (p. 42, his italics) ⁷⁰

Ellie Ragland-Sullivan (1982) writes: “The Oedipal crisis occurs, not because a child wants to possess its mother sexually, but when the child the removal of the object of desire (castration) is what embeds the Law.

This disruption can be described in terms of the reality principle, described as the interruption or deferral of the pleasure principle. But as the pleasure principle is the primary process, the reality principle is the secondary process. The continual substitution of the object or object-cause of desire is unwanted, as the pleasure principle is a call to efficiency. Any disruption to this efficiency is known as the reality principle. The question then is, what maintains the object of desire to which the subject commits, refusing to substitute the object of desire for another. The pleasure principle advocates efficiency, but is not enough to maintain the object of desire, which is why the Law and prohibition play such a vital role.

According to Lacan, the object of desire is maintained through prohibition, as prohibition not only reveals the object of desire, but also maintains the object of desire. This is relevant to the notion of death and the death drive. This is best articulated by Lacan (2008a), whereby *das Ding* acts as object or object-cause of desire:

But when the commandment [prohibition] appeared, the Thing [*das Ding*] flared up, returned once again, I met my death. And for me, the commandment that was supposed to lead to life turned out to lead to death, for the Thing found a way and thanks for the commandment seduced me; through it I came to desire death. (p. 102, his italics)

Stability is found once the object of desire is achieved, keeping in mind that *the condition of death is homeostasis*. Therefore, the death drive is the drive towards the state where the self cannot be removed from the object or object-cause of desire.

comprehends the sexual rules of society. The crisis is resolved when the rules are accepted and acceded to" (p. 7) For However, castration⁷¹ takes on two forms, the *removal* of the object of desire as well as the *threat* of the removal of the object or object-cause of desire as described through "the lack that constitutes castration anxiety" (Lacan, 1998, p. 73). Lacan clearly links the return of the object or object-cause of desire with the desire for death, which, as argued in this paper, utilizes the definition of death as homeostasis, i.e. stability. This is when the object of desire can no longer be separated from the subject or even threatened. This is how the death drive is explained, by emphasizing the conditions when the object of desire can no longer be threatened or removed.

Lacan does not introduce death as a result of a sequence of events, but instils death at the very beginning. It is from the possibility of death that the process of substitution and superimposition begins. Lacan (1998) elaborates in the *Four Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis*:

The first object he proposes for this parental desire whose object is unknown is his own loss – *can he lose me?* The phantasy of one's death, of one's disappearance, is the first object that the subject has to bring into play in this dialectic, and he does indeed bring it into play – as we know from innumerable cases, such as in anorexia nervosa. We also know that the phantasy of one's death is usually manipulated by their child in his love relations with his parents. One lack is superimposed upon the other. The dialectic of the objects of desire, in so far as it creates the link between the desire of the subject and the desire of the Other – I have been telling you for a long time now that it is one and the same – this dialectic now passes through the fact that the desire is not replied to directly. It is a lack engendered from the previous time that serves to reply to the lack raised by the following time. (p. 214-5)

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Castration in terms of the imaginary and the symbolic is described by Lacan (2008a): "The important thing is to recognize that the depriving agent is an imaginary function, he who is given in the relationship that is half rooted in naturalness of the mirror stage, but such as he appears to us there where things are articulated at the level of the symbolic" (p. 283)

Castration is consequently a term incorporated within the context of the larger corpus of work. Castration means more than just a physical circumcision, but a symbolic removal or threat of removal. Castration consequently reintroduces the mirror stage. The Mirror stage⁷² is an important contribution to Psychoanalysis, not only in terms of the origin of the dialectic relation between the self and the Other, but also in terms of the institution of desire. Desire is institutionalized through the prohibition of the desire, which is exactly what the Oedipus complex describes; the origin of the substitutive

process of signifier with signifier. The original object of desire is shaped through Freud's narcissism that is described as the satisfaction of auto-erotic zones – originally achieved by feeding and nurturing the infant. Lacan's argument demonstrates that castration isn't necessarily connected with the origins of the object of desire, but connected to revealing the object of desire [by threatening to remove the object, or through the modality of loss] and in maintaining the object of desire [through establishing a distance whereby the prohibition of the object prolongs the desirability].⁷³

4.5. Conclusion

Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* introduces the notion of the death drive. This notion has proven problematic for Psychoanalysis, as many have refuted Psychoanalysis based on the

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Ellie Ragland-Sullivan (1982) writes on the Mirror stage: "At around 18 months two major changes occur. The child begins to use language somewhat coherently, and also becomes aware that the father's presence – or any other third person – is a prohibiting force to the infant's merger with the (m)Other" (p. 8) ⁷³

Lacan (1966/2006): "What analytic experience attests to is that castration is what regulates desire, in both normal and abnormal cases. Providing it oscillates by alternating between $\$$ and a in fantasy, castration makes of fantasy a chain that is both supple and inextensible by which the fixation of object cathexis, which can hardly go beyond certain natural limits, takes on the transcendental functioning of ensuring the *jouissance* of the Other that passes this chain on to me in the Law." (p. 826, my italics)

description thereof. Consequently there has been an attempt to redescribe the death drive in more acceptable terms.

Boothby and Carel's descriptions were evaluated and proven problematic. Carel discarded or abandoned many of the Freudian terms, and Boothby misunderstood Freud's description of the pleasure principle. Lacan was the only one to present an argument in line with the classical Freudian notions, as well as to propose alterations in line with the Freudian description. The misapprehension evident in defining the death drive has often been to describe the death drive in terms of a conscious desire for death. Death can only be described as desirable through phantasy ($\$a$), whereby death is the *object petit a*, the semblance of desire. Death is then viewed as the relation between the barred subject and the description of death, but as a result, death is described in terms of the conscious.

This chapter aimed to describe the death drive in terms of the pleasure principle as well as desire. Consequently, the death drive functions and features on an unconscious level. The object of desire

can only be known through language, because this object of desire is located within the unconscious. However, because there is no direct correlation between the unconscious content and the conscious correlate, there always remains a discrepancy between the signifier and the signified. This is why the death drive is very difficult to pinpoint. The first step in a misreading of Lacan, is in underestimating the complexity innately involved, especially when discussing the links between the various aspects, for example the death drive [Thanatos], the pleasure principle, the reality principle and the life drive [Eros].

The classical description is often to explain Eros and Thanatos as two independent and opposing forces pushing and pulling on a central point. Lacan's explanation proves that Thanatos and Eros are more closely linked in their functioning, as a helix, operating side by side. Instead of merely describing the pleasure principle in terms of a mechanical functioning, Lacan infuses the notion of Desire to redefine the death drive so as to explain the condition for the cessation of pleasure. This condition is explained as the point at which deferral is no longer possible. The two different variations of death are explained as either a zero flow of libido, or an undeferrable flow of libido. Therefore, the death drive is the attainment of the state of stability in terms of both descriptions of death. The outcome of the pleasure principle is the cessation of pleasure, which is why Freud describes the pleasure principle as serving the death instincts. To quote Lacan (2008a) at length:

What is the death instinct? What is this law beyond all law, that can only be posited as a final structure, as a vanishing point of any reality that might be attained? In the coupling of pleasure principle and reality principle, the reality principle might seem to be a prolongation or an application of the pleasure principle. But, on the other hand, this dependent and limited position seems to cause something to emerge, something which controls in the broadest of senses the whole of our relationship to the world. It is this unveiling, this rediscovery, that *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is about. And in this process, this progress, we see before our eyes the problematic character of that which Freud posits under the term reality. (p. 23-4, his italics)

The argument presented is to emphasize the structuring of phantasy in terms of the co-ordinates within the symbolic order⁴¹, which is how the object or object-cause of desire is realized or materialized. Lacan's formulation of phantasy (\$ \mathfrak{a}) accentuates the relation between the barred

⁴¹ Ellie Ragland-Sullivan (1982) summarizes the symbolic order as: "In other words, the Lacanian Symbolic interprets, symbolizes, articulates, and universalizes both the experiential and the concrete, which it has in paradoxically circular fashion already shaped" (p. 7)

subject with the *objet a*, also known as the representation of the object of desire. However, a distance is maintained between the barred subject and the *objet a* by means of prohibition.

To accomplish symbolic identification, the self has to be located within the symbolic order with all the accompanying laws of the symbols.⁴² The search for a substitute of the object-cause of desire is found in the symbolic order. To quote Lacan (1966/2006) at length:

Symbols in fact envelop the life of man with a network so total that they join together those who are going to engender him “by bone and flesh” before he comes into the world; so total that they bring to his birth, along with the gifts of the stars, if not with the gifts of the fairies, the shape of his destiny; so total that they provide the words that will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the acts that will follow him right to the very place where he is not yet and beyond his very death; and so total that through them his end finds its meaning in the last judgment, where the Word absolves his being or condemns it – unless he reaches the subjective realization of being-toward-death. (p. 279)

The outcome of Freud’s (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is not to describe the death drive in terms of a conscious desire for selfdestruction or self-annihilation, but in terms of the relation between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. If the pleasure principle is focused on that attainment of stability, the reality principle is the deferral thereof. Consequently, death is the point where deferral is no longer possible. In other words, the death drive aims for the conditions where the subject and the object of desire cannot be separated.

Néstor Braunstein (2003) comes to the same conclusion, and in so doing, ties many elements together:

Jouissance is indeed the satisfaction of drive – the death drive. Such is the basis of the opposition between desire and *jouissance*. Desire points towards a lost and absent object; it is lack in being, and the craving for fulfilment in the encounter with the lost object. Its concrete expression is the phantasy. *Jouissance*, on the other hand, does not point to anything, beyond the pleasure principle, different from any (mythical) encounter. The subject finds himself split

⁴² Lacan (1966/2006) writes “The effect of language is to introduce the cause into the subject. Through this effect, he is not the cause of himself; he bears within himself the worm of the cause that splits him. For his cause is the signifier, without which there would be no subject in the real. But this subject is what the signifier represents, and the latter cannot represent anything except to another signifier: to which the subject who listens is thus reduced” (p. 835).

by the polarity *jouissance*/desire. This is why desire, phantasy, and pleasure are barriers on the way to *jouissance*⁷⁶. (p. 106-7, my italics)

Braunstein's view connects *jouissance* as unconscious pleasure with the death drive. Lacan's reformulation consequently shapes an alternative context in which the death drive can be defined.

Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* consequently ties many different elements together and deals with far more than just the pleasure principle. All the elements discussed throughout this thesis head towards a single point, which is the death drive. Lacan succeeds in tying many of the elements and in developing a different perspective that prevents a static reading of Freud or Psychoanalysis.

Lacan (2008a) knew very well the problem of *jouissance*, as shown when he wrote: "The problem involved is that of *jouissance*, because *jouissance* presents itself as buried at the centre of a field and has the characteristics of inaccessibility, obscurity and opacity; moreover, the field is surrounded by a barrier which makes access to it difficult for the subject to the point of inaccessibility, because *jouissance* appears not purely and simply as the satisfaction of a need but as the satisfaction of a drive. (p.258, his emphasis)

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

"Lacan and Freud: Beyond the pleasure principle" set out to explore Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, so as to rediscover important themes and concepts which influence a contemporary understanding of Psychoanalysis. The title indicates that this thesis focused on both Freud and Lacan's reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

This thesis comprised of four chapters, each explaining an important aspect of Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Many of the themes and concepts are repeated to illustrate how the one concept influences the next. Each chapter will be quickly revised, as well as how the chapters are connected.

Chapter 1 focuses on the developmental model as presented in the papers preceding *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). Freud's primary narcissism highlights the development of the *Ideal-ego* and the *Ego-ideal*. Connected to the developmental approach is Lacan's Mirror stage that also explains a very significant moment in the child's development that is the separation between the self, the image of the self, and the idealized version of the self. In other words, the Mirror stage demonstrates how Freud's primary narcissism manifests. This is the criterion used to explain instincts, which has traditionally been explained in terms of Darwin or evolution. The definition of Instincts used in this thesis is: to behave or act in a fashion that is consistent with how one has acted in the past. In revising the definition of instincts, logic and rationality are removed. Instincts are then explained case-by-case rather than universalizing behaviour. Primary narcissism, the Mirror stage and Instincts shape the context for a preliminary definition of pleasure.

Chapter 2 provides an alternative explanation to the pleasure principle and the definition provided in the first chapter. This definition focuses on Freud's (1950) *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, a posthumously published manuscript, and defines the pleasure principle in terms of neurons, contact-barriers and facilitations [*Bahnung*]. The neurological model has also been applied to illustrate how meaning is generated in a sentence. Meaning is not generated in a single word or a single neuron, but in the facilitations, the way the neurons or the words are connected. Linguistics is an important part of this thesis, and specific attention is paid to Freud's language theory as well as the adaptations made by Lacan in incorporating Saussurian terminology. The importance of Linguistics is to explain how we can begin to know what is in the unconscious, as we only have access to fragments as they surface to the conscious. Consequently, Freud's pleasure principle explains four important Freudian concepts: 1) the unconscious, 2) repression, 3) *das Ding* as object of desire, and 4) the Law in Psychoanalysis.

Chapter 3 focuses on three aspects. Lacan's L-schema, the repetition compulsion [*Wiederholungszwang*] and the Fort/Da case study. The L-schema is introduced as a pre-text to the Fort/Da case study. The Fort/Da case study is a practical example that shapes the focal point of this thesis as Fort/Da demonstrates how a trauma is internalized, and consequently repeated through the

repetition compulsion. Fort/Da is therefore significant to the application of the pleasure principle, the repetition compulsion, and intersubjectivity (as illustrated through Lacan's L-schema).

Chapter 4 focuses on death and the death drive. Freud (1920) introduces the death drive in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, but Freud's description is problematic. For this reason is Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* dismissed by many. This thesis focuses on two readings of Freud's death drive as described and critiqued by Boothby (1987) and Carel (2006). The biggest shortcoming in Freud's description remains his description of aggression. The biggest dispute has been whether aggression is an innate, instinctual trait as opposed to a contextual, situational response. Freud denies that aggression is an instinctual trait, whereas Lacan consolidates and reintroduces aggression as an emergent property as a result of the conflict between the actual self [*wirkliche Ich*] and ideal self [*ideal-ich*].

Lacan's explanation of the death drive is an incorporation of all the topics and aspects mentioned in the previous chapters. Lacan incorporates desire to explain the death drive. Desire determines the conditions under which the achievement of desire will be satisfied. The pleasure principle is defined in terms of consistency and stability, whereas the reality principle is described as the disruption of this consistency. In terms of the pleasure principle and the reality principle, the death drive strives for the conditions whereby the object of desire can no longer be purged or removed. The death drive would then be the state where the reality principle cannot intervene and consequently results in the attainment of the object of desire. Or put in Freud's (1920) own words: "What we are left with is the fact that the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion" (p. 47). But this position is only tenable within a language theory, which is exactly what Lacan provides and is discussed in Chapter 2. The language theory complicates the identification of the object or object-cause of desire, as the object of desire will and can only be known as a word. The separation between the signifier and the signified is the separation between the object and what the object is known as. But because the signifier does not fully encapsulate the object, the representation of the object of desire is never complete. Through substitution will there always be a continual pursuit of the object of desire. Hence, the problem of representation is that any attempt at representation is incomplete. Baudrillard's assessment that Freud's death drive is a pulsion is then quite accurate. Freud's death drive as pulsion can be defended on two fronts.

First, the death drive is the pulsion to the completion of the signifier-signified, whereby substitution is no longer possible. It is around this definition of the death drive that phantasy has meaning. Lacan's

formulation of phantasy is ($\$ \diamond a$)⁷⁷: the relation between the (barred) subject ($\$$) in proportion to the object-cause of desire (a), accentuating the relation between the barred subject with the *objet a*, also known as the representation of the object or object-cause of desire.

Second, the death drive is the pulsion to the return to a previous completeness that was experienced in the early developmental stages by means of the satisfaction of the auto-erotic zones as described in Chapter 1. However, the death drive is the pursuit of stability and equilibrium, whereby the relation between the subject and the object or object-cause of desire cannot be removed, delayed, withheld, or withdrawn. It is in this context that the Oedipus complex⁷⁸ and the castration complex⁷⁹ are explained. The Oedipus complex is the first important confrontation with the Law that sets the process of substitution in motion. The Oedipus complex is the first confrontation with the father who is seen as the author of the injunction. “The very normalization of this maturation is henceforth dependent in man on cultural intervention, as is exemplified by the fact that sexual object choice is dependent upon the Oedipus complex” (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 98). The Oedipus complex can consequently be seen as an artificial divider creating and maintaining distance between the barred subject and the *objet a*. The father as author of the Law is only an identification of the father as origin of the Law or the father as the figure of the Law. This is illustrated when Lacan uses *Le Nom-du-Père* [the Name-of-the-Father] synonymously with *Le Non-du-Père* [the No-of-the-Father]. Therefore, it is not only the reality principle, but also prohibition that prevents the immediate attainment of the object or object-cause of desire. On prohibition, Freud (1919) writes in *Totem and Taboo*,

“Obsessive prohibitions possess an extraordinary capacity for

⁷⁷

“Fantasy is defined by the most general form it receives in an algebra. I have constructed for this purpose – namely, the formula ($\$ \diamond a$), in which the lozenge \diamond is to be read as „desire for” (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 774) ⁷⁸

The Oedipus complex is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 ⁷⁹

Freud (1970) writes: “what is termed the *castration complex*, the reaction to that intimidation in the field of sex or to that restraint of early infantile sexual activity which is ascribed to the father” (p. 218, his italics) displacement; they make use of almost any form of connection to extend from one object to another and then in turn make this new object “impossible” (p. 55). The substitution of object of desire does not destroy the previous object of desire, but is maintained in the unconscious. Freud (1919) writes:

The persistence of taboo teaches, however, one thing, namely, that the original pleasure to do the forbidden still continues among taboo races. They therefore assume an *ambivalent attitude* toward their taboo prohibitions; in their unconscious they would like nothing better than to transgress them, but they are also afraid to do it; they are afraid just because they would like to transgress, and the fear is stronger than the pleasure. (p. 60-1, his emphasis)

The death drive is consequently marred by obstacles preventing the attainment of the object or object-cause of desire. The death drive is an impossible task, as the conditions for completion are unobtainable for three reasons. First, the problem of representation illustrated through the gap between the signifier and the signified; second, the problem of continual deferral and delay as demonstrated through the reality principle; third, prohibition whereby the object or object-cause of desire is forbidden yet retained in the unconscious. Therefore, phantasy ($\$ \diamond a$) is always influenced by the unconscious that directs and influences subsequent objects of desire. Therefore the death drive is argued as the pulsion towards the fruition of phantasy in an undeferred state.

This description of the death drive opposes the description provided by Carel (2006). Carel's approach can be summarized in three parts. First, the abandonment of the dualistic view whereby life (*Eros*) and death (*Thanatos*) are disconnected and seen as separate. Second, Carel abandons the Nirvana principle; and third, Carel wants to rid Freud of erroneous scientific assumptions. The predominant problem in Carel is that her adjustments results in the loss of meaning. By simplifying the connection between the pleasure principle and the reality principle, Eros and Thanatos, death drive and a life drive, Havi Carel leaves out important aspects of Freud.

For Carel, to disconnect the dualism of life and death in Freud is rather risky. Connecting life and death is part of an important theoretical distinction. In the dualism of life and death, Freud demonstrates another example of the way the pleasure principle and the reality principle are connected. Freud (1920) writes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*:

For a long time, perhaps, living substance was thus being constantly created afresh and easily dying, till decisive external influences altered in such a way as to oblige the still surviving substance to diverge ever more widely from its original course of life and to make ever more complicated *détours* before reaching its aim of death. (p. 46, his emphasis)

This quotation is discussed at greater length in section 4.2, but this quote shows how life and death are connected. The aim of life is death [*"the aim of all life is death"* (p. 46, his emphasis)] but the deferral of death results in life. Therefore, the way Freud describes life and death results in a dualism.⁴³

⁴³ But for technical clarity, this thesis contends that homeostasis or stability is death, to be precise, death is when deferral is no longer possible. In terms of the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, this means that death is the state where there is no flux of energy, where no alterations or adjustments are possible.

Baudrillard (2000) criticizes the duality of life and death. Even though Baudrillard is extremely critical of Psychoanalysis, he maintains Freud's distinction in the dualism of life and death. Baudrillard writes on the history of the separation between life and death:

Our whole culture is just one huge effort to dissociate life and death, to ward off the ambivalence of death in the interests of life as value, and time as the general equivalent. The elimination of death is our phantasm, and ramifies in every direction: for religion, the afterlife and immortality; for science, truth; and for economics, productivity and accumulation. (p. 147)

The predominant reading of life and death is that life has been given a theoretical preference over death. Baudrillard goes as far as to laud Freud for his contribution in connecting life and death, as opposed to viewing the two as separate entities. Baudrillard still remains critical of Freud as he describes Freud's death drive as pulsion in terms of a dialectic.

With Freud we pass from philosophical death and the drama of consciousness to death as a pulsion process inscribed in the unconscious order; from a metaphysics of anguish to a metaphysics of the pulsion. It's just as if death, *liberated from the subject*, at last gained its status as an *objective* finality: the pulsional energy of death or the principle of psychical functioning. (p. 148, his emphasis)

But Baudrillard's main concern still remains with the way that death is described, the way that death is dealt with. With Freud's description, death is driven by pulsion, which Baudrillard inevitably links with his biggest critique on Freud: the predominance of the unconscious in Freudian thought.

Death, by becoming a pulsion, does not cease to be a finality (it is even the only end from this standpoint: the proposition of the death drive signifies an extraordinary simplification of finalities, since even Eros is subordinated to it), but this finality sinks, and is inscribed in the unconscious. (p. 148)

Death and the death drive are now inscribed in a theoretical framework. The problem that arises is in maintaining this theoretical framework without stepping into a metaphysical trap whereby death accrues meaning independently. Death only gains meaning when placed in contrast to life, whilst life only has meaning in contrast to death. The question arises as to how death should be dealt with whilst maintaining meaning and value. Baudrillard acknowledges the value within Freud's description of the death drive, but still remains cautious as to the application.

This thesis is not a free interpretation of Freud or Lacan, but a rigorous reading of the primary texts. What makes this thesis different and new in many regards is the incorporation of Freud's (1950) *A Project for a Scientific Psychology*, a posthumously published manuscript, which provides a different frame to describe and define the pleasure- and the reality principle. This in turn affects the reading of

Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the repetition compulsion, Fort/Da, desire, and the death drive.

This thesis consequently demonstrates how Freud's (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* changes or adapts our understanding of Psychoanalysis, Linguistics, and Anthropology.