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## Jouissance: A Lacanian Concept

Good morning (or good afternoon). Indeed, I cannot decide where or at what time you are now. Anyway, whether if you are nesting with a mug of coffee after breakfast on the West Coast or a cup of tea after brunch on the East Coast, thank you to everybody and to each one of you for being here, in this telematic event, an *equivalent* or *semblance* of a real meeting, aiming at the introduction of *Jouissance: A Lacanian Concept*.

Honestly, since the very beginning of my intervention, I must confess that I am not here with the intention of presenting my book.

Instead, I would like to *compose* another text different from the one which we now have in our hands thanks to the excellent and reliable translation into English we owe to Silvia Rosman and which is so finely presented and published by SUNY Press in Albany, New York. In fact, I am deeply honored and grateful for the occasion offered to me by the *EJP* of hearing the commentaries and readings of that book by its translator, and the eminent thinkers in Lacanian Psychoanalysis who are Ian Parker and Fernando Castrillón.

I will not present the book but I would rather speak about its history and the reasons by which I would prefer not to talk about the book itself.

So, I choose to address this zoom audience speaking about *the history* of *Jouissance: A Lacanian Concept* and about the ideas I *now* hold regarding a possible new volume on the same subject and with the same title.

The history (or the story, if you prefer) is as follows. In the '80s, immediately after Lacan's death, I felt the necessity of getting some light for myself, for my clinical practice and for my students on Lacan's teaching about this central concept in his writings and seminars. I could not find any useful guide to understand the constantly changing significations and meaning of *Jouissance*, a word easy to be translated into Spanish as *Goce*, and in Portuguese as *Gozo*, which appeared to me as impossible to translate into English. To make the long story short, after giving some seminars in Latin America and in the USA, I published in Mexico in 1990 the first edition of the volume we are now talking about. I decided, not unintentionally, to give a title to the book with just a four letter word: *Goce* (that in Spanish stands either as a noun or as a verb in the imperative tense). In 1992, Gérard Pommier, director of Point hors Ligne in Paris asked me to make a full translation into French of the book he could read in Spanish. The publishers decided to add a *subtitle* to clear up the main idea for psychoanalytic readers, so: *Jouissance. Un concept lacanien*, the new title was born. In the year 2000, with a warm recommendation written by Slavoj Žižek, I signed a contract for its translation and printing in English by Verso. I paid for the translation as stipulated in the contract but, upon reading the version, I found the translator's work shamelessly ugly and unpublishable. I had to renounce the fulfilment of my desire of making the book accessible to the English and American publics.

Fortunately my good friend, Jean-Michel Rabaté, asked me to write a chapter in English on "Desire and Jouissance in the Teachings of Lacan". The book, published in 2002, *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan*, edited by Jean-Michel, allowed me to reach the American and English readers, with the essentials and the most polemical aspects of *Jouissance*. Which, for instance, is approvingly quoted by many respected

analysts, among the more close to our days, by Darian Leader, in his just published book (in September 2020) *La jouissance, vraiment?*, after a Seminar he delivered in English in London, and, strangely enough, not yet retranslated from French into its original English version. A Seminar with the title *Jouissance, really?* is being announced for the next month.

The reception of my essay in its French and Spanish versions was wide and encouraging. The book had several reprints in both languages. ...

15 years after the 1990 edition I received the invitation of Editorial Escuta de São Paulo for a translation into Portuguese . And, as Point Hors Ligne came to an end of its editorial work, I also received a request from the most important publisher of psychoanalytic essays in France, Erès, from Toulouse, to reprint the book published in French in 1992. At that point in time I felt that I could write a better book in some important aspects...mainly in the way the subject of *sexual jouissance* was dealt with and also the necessity of adding a detailed critical reference to the major contributions derived from Michel Foucault's teaching. The bibliography also had to be updated, specifically after the publication in 2001 of Lacan's *Autres écrits*, and the new versions of his seminars by Seuil in Paris, etc. So, I revised and rewrote the whole text. The corrected and amplified version was published in Buenos Aires, with the new title making explicit reference to the Lacanian origins and originality of the notion of *Jouissance* as a concept and emphasizing that this new one was *another* book with a different title and cover, not just a reprint of the former one. This corrected and expanded version was the basis for the publication of *Jouissance* in São Paulo, México and Toulouse, in the years 2005 and 2006.

In those years the book was used by clinicians and essayists as a text of reference, not without criticisms that for me underscored a certain success and, at the same time, was the source as always happens to me with the new editions of an elder book of a certain progressive personal malaise because, as time went by, and as other new, good books were being published on *Jouissance* , mainly in French, my ideas on the subject asked for and required a more precise wording of each one of its paragraphs.

I continued to regret the absence of an English translation between 2006 and 2018 when I received, to my surprise and a certain amazement, an e-mail from Silvia Rosman offering to produce a full translation of *Jouissance. A Lacanian Concept* into English and to promote its publication through the prestigious SUNY Press, the State University of New York Press. With a very long delay and after so many a Summer, my decades long wish could be realized. Silvia sent me the translation of the first chapter as a proof of her skills . I enjoyed reading it (with real enjoyment, not *jouissance*), I approved her accomplishments and we signed a contract which ended with the printing and its being offered to the public of the present volume in the last, ominous, year 2020. This is the history of the book that gathers us today in this zoom session sponsored and organized by the *EJP*.

After a span of 30 years from the first edition of *Goce*, 15 years after its partial update , in 2006, we arrive now to the successful publishing of this first edition in English. Meanwhile I continued to teach about *jouissance* constantly changing my views, abjuring all kind of mechanical repetitions, participating in many discussions of its thesis, with different eminent scholars on Lacan's teaching and with regular students at diverse Lacanian institutions. Those exchanges drove me to refine concepts and expressions regarding what, *now*, I dare to name as *jouissology*, *jouissance* being the cornerstone of what Lacan himself, in 1970, called *the Lacanian field* (as diverse from the *Freudian field*). I was also impelled to present a succinct definition of *jouissance* and I had to improvise one: *the different ways through which the body is affected by language*. Of course, as usually happens with definitions like this one, a dozen words require lengthy pages of patient explanations to avoid misconceptions and to refine acceptance of each one of the signifiers and the syntagms in which they are used, e.g., the distinctions among different kinds of *jouissance* and divergent ways of understanding or misunderstanding them. —*Subjective jouissance, jouissance of meaning, sexual jouissance, feminine jouissance, jouissance of the Other, Other jouissance, phallic jouissance, mystic jouissance, jouissance of being, etc.*—

This is why I choose not to speak about the book which is now the object of our Seminar but of its history, its past, and the criticisms I would like to address to my own work after these 30 years in which it has become for certain authors and authorities a “classic”. That what is written, written is (*scripta manent*), ... therefore accessible to anyone who wants to access its letters and its littorals: (*litoRal, littoral*, in Lacanian discourse, indicates the border that joins and separates knowledge from jouissance).

In other words, I would prefer, in a Bártlebian turn of the sentence, *not to* speak about what has *already* been published. I rather prefer to talk about what could *still* be said about its future, underscoring, as a point of departure, some objections related to changes in my own way of thinking and dealing with this capital concept of *jouissance*.

The book, as you can see, is divided into two main sections of equal length, the first one devoted to the *theory* and the second one to the *clinic* of jouissance. Well, I believe that the first part can be already sustained as a history and as a conception of jouissance but ignores the emergence of radical advances in neuroscience, the birth of a certain physiology of jouissance, that was clearly foreseen by Freud himself at the ending of his life: The great possibility, now a fact, not a phantasy of the future discovery and industrial production of substances changing and affecting the distribution of libido in the body independently of the will or the desire of the subject. I think that we need to discuss the relation between psychoanalysis and neuroscience which is far from being settled. Now we have learnt a lot about neurotransmitters and we accept that these advances in neuroscientific knowledge will continue with unpredictable effects about the ways through which “the body is affected through language”. To be clear: I reject the idea of a possible reduction of psychoanalysis to neuroscientific knowledge and even I object to any kind of a suspect marriage or a match-made alliance in terms of “neuropsychology”. But, by the same token, I reject the isolationist idea of a reciprocal ignorance between psychoanalytic and neuroscientific approaches to the knowledge of mind. The brain has to be accepted as the interface organ, dumb in itself, connecting the body and the *world, the world* built as a *human world*, i.e., the world ruled by language and its signifiers.

The second part is devoted to the *clinic* of jouissance and also in this respect I must painfully acknowledge myself as wanting. In the first and the second edition of the book I adhered to the Lacanian -;attention!- *Lacanian* not Lacan’s doxa of a distinction of three and only three *clinical structures*: neurosis, perversion and psychosis, which, according to the historical truth, is neither Freudian nor Lacanian. This tripod was easy to learn and easy to teach, with each one of its three legs linked respectively to a specific mechanism: repression, disavowal and foreclosure. This classification of permanent “clinical structures” is subservient to the discourse of medicine and of “*psychopathology*”, a word that was seldom used by Freud and Lacan to characterize human beings. What we find in our clinic, in all the subjects we hear in the analytic encounter, is that they show “*subjective positions*”, always fluctuating according to its rapport with the subjective position of the other in the dialogue, which is the essence of what we call transference. As Ian Parker states in his recently published book *Psychoanalysis, Clinic and Context* (2019), he as much as myself, is reluctant and “agnostic” about the idea of frontiers with customs and definite lines between rigid “clinical structures”. Therefore, the three chapters about jouissance in neurosis, perversion and psychosis have to be reconsidered after the rejection of the aforementioned “tripod”. In every case the ethical analytic task consists in leading the analysand to speak, to decipher and to put in words the jouissance stuck in its symptoms.

Mine, as you can hear and see, is not a commercial billboard to promote the book as is now published, but an incentive to *read* it, to amend its flaws and to think again about this essential psychoanalytic concept, *jouissance*, that continues to be “the only ontic to which we can confess (*avouer*)”. ;Listen!: “the only *ontic*”, not *ontology*, to which we can confess or avow”. *Ontic*, according to Heidegger (1929) is the opposite of *ontology*. It refers to the actual experience of the living and speaking being, the *parlêtre*. It is not a discourse *about* ‘being’ but a reference to what remains in the real, not susceptible to pass into the symbolic or in the imaginary registers. And “the only true ontic” for us is that of jouissance; therefore, our mission consists in opening the diaphragm of speech allowing jouissance to be verbalized.

**Bio:**

**Nestor Braunstein** is an M.D., Psychiatrist, psychoanalyst. He was a postgraduate professor until 2013 (México, UNAM). Author of 25 books and hundreds of articles in different languages. His most known book: *Jouissance. A Lacanian Concept* (Buffalo, SUNY Press, 2020) original in Spanish (1990 and 2006).