

OBJECT PETITA AS A METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGM OF RESEARCH IN PSYCHOANALYSIS¹

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ABSTRACT. Highlighting the importance of singularity in opposition to a certain totalitarian and omnipotent conception of the universal, the article proposes an approach to the lacanian concept of object little *a* as articulator of a proper psychoanalytic research methodology. Following the several teachings of method pronounced by Lacan (1962-63/2005) in *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X* – precious moment for object little *a* assumption – we intend to delineate how this concept (that in its core emphasizes the character of non-representability) can be the mediator of other objects, in order to provide a *modus operandi* for the continuous task of finding provisional and singularized representations for the lack set by the irrepresentable of castration, offering methodological possibilities for theoretical and clinical research, in order to situate the cause of desire function of this object as central to knowledge.

Keywords: Methodology; object; psychoanalysis.

OBJETO A COMO PARADIGMA METODOLÓGICO DE PESQUISA EM PSICANÁLISE

RESUMO. Destacando a importância da singularidade em oposição a certa concepção totalitária e onipotente do universal, o artigo propõe uma tomada do conceito lacaniano de objeto *a* como articulador de uma metodologia de pesquisa propriamente psicanalítica. Seguindo os diversos ensinamentos de método pronunciados por Lacan (1962-63/2005) em *O Seminário, livro 10: a angústia* – momento precioso para assunção do objeto *a* – pretendemos traçar como esse conceito (que em seu cerne destaca o caráter de irrepresentabilidade) pode ser o mediador de outros objetos, de modo a fornecer um *modus operandi* para a tarefa contínua de encontrar representações provisórias e singularizadas para a falta colocada pelo irrepresentável da castração, oferecendo possibilidades metodológicas para a pesquisa teórica e clínica, de modo a localizar a função de causa de desejo desse objeto como central no conhecimento. Tal perspectiva está de acordo com a tese lacaniana de que o real, mais do que passível de conhecimento, se apresenta no registro da mostração.

Palavras-chave: Metodologia, objeto, psicanálise.

OBJETO A COMO PARADIGMA METODOLÓGICO DE INVESTIGACIÓN EN PSICOANÁLISIS

RESUMEN. Destacando la importancia de la singularidad en oposición a cierta concepción totalitaria y omnipotente de lo universal, en este artículo se propone una toma del concepto de Lacan de objeto *a* como articulador de metodología de investigación propriamente psicoanalítica. Siguiendo los diversos enseñamientos del método pronunciados por Lacan (1962-63/2005) en *El Seminario, libro 10: la angustia* – momento precioso a la asunción del objeto *a* – se pretende establecer como ese concepto (que en su cerner destaca el carácter de irrepresentabilidad) puede ser el mediador de otros objetos, de modo a proveer un *modus operandi* para la tarea continua de encontrar representaciones provisionarias y singularizadas a la falta puesta por el irrepresentable de la castración, ofreciendo posibilidades metodológicas para la investigación teórica y clínica, de modo a localizar la función de causa de deseo de ese objeto como central en el conocimiento.

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Palabras-clave: Metodología; objeto; psicoanálisis.

Universal and singular object

The current state of the issue concerning the methodology of research in psychoanalysis goes back to the origins of theory and praxis proposed by Sigmund Freud. Involved with the scientificity of his new field, Freud attempted to consider the biologicist content inherited from his masters at the time of his formation with the new theses of psychoanalytic theory. It is worth noting his research work on the drive (Freud, 1915/2013), a primordial concept for this theory, which precisely condenses the boundary between the psychic and somatic, the edge between the psychic energies that comes from the unconscious and what is made present in the body. We also emphasize the systematic Freudian questioning to the artistic production (we will return to the theme later) and the confirmation of inapprehension of the artistic gift, "not analyzable" (Freud, 1928/2015, p. 286). This epistemic bond imprinted on the psychoanalytic concepts has since aggravated the methodological quarrel of psychoanalysis. How to approach and demonstrate objects that resist apprehension such as those discussed by psychoanalysis? How to follow the precepts of singularity of the psychoanalytic praxis and at the same time propose theoretical theses that are to some extent universal?

In a constant exercise of returning to the Freudian text, Lacan, when conceiving the object *a*, gathers in Freud the effort to formalize different ways of representing what resists to symbolization. In engendering this concept, for example, it was essential the decoupling between representation and reality, which is much more anchored in traits beyond consciousness (Freud, 1895/1995), the unfathomable of the navel of the dream, which adds nothing to the knowledge of its content, preserving the unknown (Freud, 1900-01/2014b), the unknowable marks of pulsional (Freud, 1915/2013), the compulsion to repetition that goes back to the unrepresentable zero point of death drive (Freud, 1920/2010), among other ways of presenting irrepresentability beyond and below theme aning.

These questions keep their currentness in the theoretical *corpus* of psychoanalysis, while the questions about efficacy and demonstrability addressed to it force us to formalize the methodology that we use demarcating the specificity of its place between contemporary discourses, the results achieved in research practice and the effects of analytical practice in clinics and institutions.

In this article, we want to emphasize the distinction between the original concepts of object *a*, as well as the epistemological questions concerning Lacan (1962-63/2005) at this moment, circumscribing the context of his elaboration in *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X*. We will focus our efforts on extracting the various methodological teachings from it, high lighting how the object *petit a* can help us in the task of the methodological formalization of our field.

In dealing with the probable scientificity attributable to psychoanalysis, França Neto (2015) emphasizes in Lacan two modalities of the universal, an essential characteristic of a field of knowledge: the *whole*, a set from which belong, the *for all* and the One from the closed set; and the *not all*, in susceptible to apprehension, only occurring in use or experimentation. From these two figures, the author proposes a universality of psychoanalysis that, contrary to the defense of a general and ideal one *for all*, sustains one *for all* that makes hole in the "whole fied" universality, an exception that supports certain indeterminacy to any previous predicate. In the words of the author, "a universality that appears as an inconsistency point, an infinite location, that will be guaranteed as a universal as long as being able to present itself and at the same time remain in exclusion to any determination that classifies it as part of a "unified Whole"(França Neto, 2015, p. 207).

Thus, this conception of universal proposed by França Neto (2009) would insist on the refusal to appear in its completeness, being subject to impossible representations and predictions. The author precisely locates the object *petit a* of Jacques Lacan in this position, where as this object is universal because it does not refer to any particularity or allow itself to be limited by any class. Based on the discussion of the philosopher Alain Badiou, França Neto (2009) distinguishes particular and singular, relegating the first to the field of identities, where as the singular would be characterized by the subtraction of the identity predicates without being in every way predicted or thought *a priori*.

We emphasize the object petit a then as both universal, as pointed out by the author, since it cannot be apprehended, named or restored, but also as singular, since at each use or experimentation it will be presented in a singular way.

Elaboration of the concept

Although the object petit a is taken as the original concept of Jacques Lacan, certainly receives influence from previous psychoanalytical literature, he makes totally new use of what he reads in other authors, modulating his conceptions to validate his work around desire and lack. As Lacan (1968-69/2008b) states, “this object a, in a certain sense, I invented it... this does not mean that it was not addressed before my own discourse, but it was only addressed frankly insufficient” (p. 45).

Privileging the relationships between the Lacanian conception of object and the imaginary, symbolic and real orders, Lucero (2015) analyzes Lacan’s conceptual changes imposed both by his reading of authors such as Karl Abraham, Melanie Klein and Donald Winnicott, and by the internal development of his own theorization, when looking over, for instance, the problems of narcissism, the stage of the mirror, the lack of object, the fantasy and *Das Ding*.

In emphasizing the importance of the imago in the psychological constitution and its relationship with the formation of the object petit a in the first texts of Lacan, especially those of the 30s and also the first seminar of 1953-1954, the author emphasizes that although the symbolic regulates the imaginary, interfering even in fantasizing, object relations at that moment are primarily of the imaginary type, since the imago of the body and identifications are essential in the relationship of the self – prone to take place –with the other.

In this way, Lucero (2015) shows that the imaginary order, far from being an out dated category, carries important elements for the Lacanian theory that will culminate in our central interest, the object a. After all, as the author affirms, “object relation, in the sense in which it was addressed in psychoanalysis, will depend on the entry into the game by the imaginary, but Lacan will include the symbolic world of significations and the real of the body to there in” (Lucero, 2015, pp. 79-81).

Already in the symbolic field, the author retrieves the essential references of the psychoanalytic literature mentioned above. The conception of partial object delineated by Karl Abraham in stages of the libido allows a displacement of the materiality of the apprehension of the object and the subject/object relationships in the Lacanian theory. On the other hand, Klein’s theorizations and, above all, his clinical narrative, allow Lacan to observe that the significant reference to concrete objects – the Dick case, as the maximal expression – enables a treatment of certain psychopathological conditions and, consequently, this same symbolic order, will allow to *infans* the construction of fantasies. (Lucero, 2015).

As for the reading made by Lacan of the transitional object of Winnicott, a more detailed analysis is necessary since, according to Vorcaro and Lucero (2015), this Winnicottian notion directly influences the elaboration of the concept of object a. As demonstrated by the authors, for the English psychoanalyst, a facilitator environment provided by a caregiver who provides the breast-fed baby the capacity for primary creativity – that is, that the child can create what is around him – is in the genesis of healthy development offering conditions for the baby to go from the primacy of the principle of pleasure to the acceptance of the principle of reality (Vorcaro & Lucero, 2015).

As Vorcaro and Lucero (2015) remind us, the dialectical opposition between reality principle and pleasure principle, in Winnicott, is replaced by consistent actors, so that the mother takes the function of reality in the relationship with the child, which Lacan denounces as a personalization of the principle of reality in Winnicottian theory. At this point, the concept of transitional object is inserted, designating “this intermediate state between the inability of a baby and his increasing ability to recognize and accept reality, that is, they describe the baby’s journey from the purely subjective to the objectivity” (Vorcaro & Lucero, 2015, p. 24).

Lacan then identifies in the transitional object the incidence of the symbolic in the relationship between mother and baby, since from this object this relationship suffers the interference of language. In naming the transitional objects of imaginary objects, Lacan often goes for the recognition of their

importance, where as from the image that the child forms of his body, he questions about the real existence or the fantasistic construction of these objects.

In the object petit *a* of Lacan, the articulation of this imaginary questioning with the symbolic of language and the real of the body allows a better clarification of the object in psychoanalysis (Vorcaro & Lucero, 2015). Thus, “for receiving this transitional object from more distant hands of the child, we must really recognize here [Winnicott], since it was from him that we initially formulated the object *a*” (Lacan, 1967-68, quoted by Vorcaro & Lucero, 2015, p. 28).

Back to the constructions of the thesis of Lucero (2015), in the symbolic register is the lack of object that characterizes the object relationships for Lacan, so that the material and organic reality of the object is increasingly abandoned, advocating the symbolic apprehension of reality through the signifiers available in the language system that precedes the subject, since the agent of the relationship will only have importance according to its significant place. Lucero (2015) alludes, in the texts of Lacan, to the lost object (already conceived by Freud, 1895/1995) and its consequent attempts to reencounter through the three modalities of lack – deprivation, frustration and castration³ – as objects of desire or object *a*, as already written by Lacan (1957-58/1999) in *Formations of the Unconscious: Book 5: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*.

In the core of this seminar, Lucero (2015) verifies the insertion of the three modes of lack of object in the three times of Oedipus, without mention being made of the concrete objects, whether the mother or the objects of satisfaction of the need, since what is at stake now is the relationship with the mother's desire, articulated by the significant *phallus*, signifier of the desire that locates the lack of the castrated mother. Perceived by the child as impossible to be supplied, the lack opens the way for a whole range of possible objects.

First located in the place of the object of lack or castration, written as $-\phi$, the object petit *a* will be positioned by Lacan (1958-59/2016) in the center of the formula of the fantasy with the function of displacing “the place of the object in the desire in its relationship to the other” (Lucero, 2015, p. 104). In this formula, $\$ \diamond a$ – which, for Lacan, is the notation of what would allegedly be found in the field of object relation – the desire at stake clarifies that, although the subject depends on the signifier, there is none that fully represents him: “the subject is not equivalent to the signifiers of the Other, does not even find answers to his desire, so that he must link himself to any object that provides some satisfaction” (Lucero, 2015, p. 109).

The formula for fantasy announces since then, the bonding of the significant field with the real of the body, which will bring the consistency and originality of the concept of object *a*. Looking at the following Lacanian seminars, Lucero (2015) observes the insertion of *das Ding* as a first approach to the real order, being this notion then “predecessor of the object *a*, plus the real dimension of the body, previously invisible under the mirror image and signified by the phallus” (p. 218). No longer that body taken through the unified body image of the stage of the mirror, but a body fragmented and impossible to be apprehended by the signifier. As Lucero (2015) argues, this body is not referred to in a biological dimension, but implies a significant cut that affects it. This real body appears in the context of *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X*, the focus of our interests in this article.

The real object petit *a*

Lacan (1962-63/2005), reviewing the final thesis of Freud (1926/2014a), the anguish of castration, on anguish as a sign of a loss of object tied to its first mode of appearance, observes that despite the propagated formula of anguish as without object, “it is not without object” (p.101). As Safouan (2006) points out, from his conceptualization of real, symbolic and imaginary, Lacan considers castration differently from Freud:

According to him, if castration has nothing of insurmountable, if the interruption of the psychoanalytic dialectic has nothing of unavoidable, that is, it is not the anguish of castration that constitutes in itself the ultimate impasse of the neurotic.... It is not, therefore, affirms Lacan, in the face of the castration that the neurotic recedes: he is already marked by it. It is to make of what is inscribed of his lack as

³For a more detailed approach to the topic see, for example: Vorcaro, Moreira, Guimarães and Souza (2015).

castration, and not of his gift, the complement of the lack of the Other; is to make his castration something positive, which is the guarantee of the function of the Other in what it has of irreducible to any transparency. (Safouan, 2006, p.180).

In this way, Lacan replaces the lack of object identified to castration, by an object in its opacity, opaque object, unusual. Exactly the object *a*, which takes place since *The seminar, book 6*; anguish is the only clinical incidence of the object *a*, this is not its cause, but “the index of something that happens between the subject and the object”. (p. 56), *desire and its interpretation* (Lacan, 1958-59/2016). Although, as stressed by Soler (2012) from Lacan.

In devising this concept, Lacan demarcates the object petit *a* as object cause of desire and not simply object of desire. Within this differentiation lies the refusal to the theories of objectality defended by the post-Freudians and criticized by Lacan, since it follows in Freud the lack underlying the supposedly desired object. The object petit *a* as the cause of desire follows the de-rationalization of the function of cause undertaken by Lacan (1964/2008a), discrediting a determination between cause and effect, when observing in Freud's path, a real uprising in the hiatus, in the gap that separates cause and effect. This real for Lacan (1964/2008a) is not determined, which introduces once more the irrepresentability of desire and an object that would figure it. Thus, the author presents the constituent hiatus of the differentiation between the object of desire and the causal object, affirming that “there is only cause for what fails” (Lacan, 1964/2008a, p. 29).

Lacan (1962-63/2005) constructs step by step the path of the object *a*, no longer via a libidinal development, but through a circular constitution, in an order according to the offer and the demand of the Other, even if there is retroaction, since undergoing castration reinvests each of these levels or objects *a*, whether oral, anal, scopic and invocatory. Previous to objects *a* in the form of objects taken as partial, we observe, as Soler (2012) reminds us of the pre-subjective object *a*, prior to the cession, it is impossible to be located, where as the ceded object “is the object that represents the subject, which represents the \$, in his being in some form of jouissance.” (p. 150).

As for the decomposition of the object petit *a* in the objects of the body, cessible and interchangeable, we reserve the right to comment only briefly that for a relationship of the subject with these objects it is necessary an extraction of the object through the connection of the desire with the function of the cut, which is not the case in autism, for instance⁴.

Retrieving then the elaborations of the object petit *a* made by Lacan (1962-63/2005), Soler (2012) lists its modalities of appearance, then: *a* – pre-subjective or unsubjectivable; *as* – subjectivable that represent the subject and finally; *a(A)* – the *a* moved to the field of the Other, the *a* that when being historicized founds the barred Other, being therefore “a finished object, elective, it is not just any object, it carries the indexes of a history, that is, an identifiable and nameable object” (p. 161).

Knowledge, desire and object *a*

After this brief reconstitution of the notion of object in the first seminars of Lacan and the location of the object petit *a* in its connection with the body and its real character, let us therefore return to the objective announced at the beginning of this text, which is to highlight the object petit *a* as a guide-methodological paradigm to the researcher-analyst. The objections of Lacan⁵ to the theory of knowledge that guides the scientific method may help us in this task.

For Lacan (1958-59/2016), the effort to delimit and affirm the object from Greek philosophy entails a position of principle that is supposed to be elided, after obtaining the results of objectification. In order to achieve a certain reality to obtain, as a fruit, the objectivity of the notion of object, the development of knowledge in the philosophical tradition implied the choice by the so-called “disinterested research”

⁴ For a better development of the issue of the object *a*, its assignment, the relationships of objects and psychopathologies such as autism, see: Lucero and Vorcaro (2015).

⁵ It is worth pointing out that the Lacanian notion of knowledge is differentiated from the idea of knowledge. From the revival/recovery between sexual curiosity and any order of knowledge, pointed out by Freud (1908/2015), for Lacan (1968-69/2008b) knowledge implies the junction between the lack of jouissance of the subject and what is ordered in the non-all field of the Other as a place where this is known, a junction whose pivot is the object *a*.

(idem, p. 392). The sacrifice of the exclusion of the desire was thus operated. However, when the object of investigation is desire, as is the case of psychoanalysis, the interest of the subject is precisely what cannot be excluded, since there is no pre-formed agreement between desire and the field of the world: desire operates in the senseless not recognized by the subject himself⁶.

By presenting the *Text reading Seminar 2006-2007: Seminar The anguish* of Colete Soler (2012), Quinet (2012) chooses the object petit *a* as a reading key of the path of Lacan and the analysis of Soler, since according to the author is this concept that articulates the whole thought of anguish. For Quinet (2012), "object petit *a* conditions desire and is prior to all objects in the world. It is it what gives the interest to these objects. And it is also logically prior to the subject. The object relations are, therefore, consequences of object *a*" (p.12).

What Lacan brings as original to the theme of knowledge is to place desire as the central motor of what occurs around knowledge. The articulation of the desire promoted by the object *a*, as demarcates Soler (2012), confers interests to the objects, including those of the field of knowledge, since

the object of intentionality is in front of desire, in front of the interest, at the end of the vector of the interest, and the object petit *a* is behind it, in place of what causes that vector. Then he gives us a very expressive way of distinguishing what he calls a common object from what he calls object petit *a* (Soler, 2012, pp. 61-62).

Demarcated by Lacan (1962-63/2005) in this seminary until then, the function cause of desire is demonstrated by the formation and definition of the concept of object petit *a*, "the object of objects" (p. 236). To the objectivity of the theory of knowledge present in a certain logical formalism, Lacan (1962-63/2005) opposes his conception of objectality, which as we have previously shown uses the so-called object relations to promote a torsion there, which he names a "*pathos* of the cut" (p. 237). Something close to that presented by Teixeira (2011) in the insufficiency or impertinence of the protocol procedure of the scientist in the face of the contingent implied in the real, where the inventiveness of the analyst takes a greater accent. In this situation, the function of cause of the desire condensed in the object petit *a* is perhaps more operative for presenting different ways out to the lacking encounter of the subject with the Other, since, as Lacanian psychoanalysis teaches us, in the false ideas of objectivity or oblativity, demand and desire are easily mixed up. Therefore, in the object petit *a* as a "carnal piece torn from ourselves.... an object lost at the different levels of the body experience in which its cut is produced, it is it which constitutes the support, the authentic substrate, of any and all function of cause" (Lacan, 1962-63/2005, p. 237).

Thus, articulating desire, cause and knowledge, Lacan (1962-63/2005) launches the thesis from which we start in this writing:

The cause therefore always arises in correlation with the fact that something is put into question in knowledge. Now it is precisely the desire that moves the function of knowledge. Every time it is invoked, and in its more traditional record, the cause is the shadow or the counter part of that which is a blind spot in the function of knowledge. (Lacan, 1962-63/2005, p. 239, authors' italics).

What, then, is the need to subscribe this inscription of desire in the field of knowledge under the rubric of a method? It is Lacan himself (1962-63/2005) who fore sees the study of the way he proceeded in his teaching, to place the object petit *a* as a methodological premise, since he believes that "this method is not distinguished from the object discussed". This method stems from a need" (p. 267). The function of cause of the object petit *a* makes it possible to put it into use or experimentation,

⁶A specific example of this un-awareness that presides the knowledge is provided by Lacan (1967-68) in recalling Pavlov, who associated the noise of the trumpet with the presentation of a piece of meat to a dog, triggering on it gastric secretion. After several repetitions, that is, with the conditioning, secretion is obtained by mere noise emission of the trumpet. The experiment shows the possibility of influencing the biological organization of the dog, totally extracted from its nature, being able to dismiss any hypothesis about what would be canine thought. However, by the relationship between the signifier *trumpet* and the signifier *secretion* Pavlov demonstrates that the organism is mislead, it neglects the subject of this operation between signifiers, the subject who blows the trumpet, that is, himself, who receives his own message in inverted form : his objective is obtained at the price of an unawareness of what constitutes the structure of the experiment: the act of the subject Pavlov.

so that in the example of the jars that the author brings later, when a singular jar stands in the other's place, anything can happen there, including its emptiness remain the same, or change.

Lacan (1962-63 / 2005) says that the next step in this journey is not simple to define, what we endorse, since each time, in a teaching, a research, a transmission, this will be operationalized in a singular way. What is offered here is the tool – the *a* – that allows the use of objects and their records in subjectivities, which leads Lacan (1962-63 / 2005) to affirm that “the *a* in question, here, functions in a real *function of mediation*” (p. 300, authors' italics), the function cause of the desire concerned in knowledge allows the object petit a to be the object that mediates the other objects.

Joining with the warnings that the transmission of Lacan works in the molds of his conception of logical time, in a way that later elaborations sometimes throw light to the previous articulations little given to the understanding or at least to the function of its enunciation in a given moment, we perceive in the initial lessons of this seminar, attempts to articulate the thesis that *a* can be the mediating element of a psychoanalytic research methodology.

When questioning what is at stake in a teaching and highlighting the impossibility of apprehension of knowledge, Lacan (1962-63/2005) attempts to describe through three methods the approach of the theme addressed at that time, whether it is anguish or affection.

The first path is the catalog, which seeks to exhaust the theme and explain the reasons for the construction of such a category. From the reference to St. Thomas Aquinas, Lacan retrieves the division of affection between the concupiscible and the irascible, the irrational inhabiting reason, which has primacy over unreason. The route of the catalog would have the drawback of pushing for a classification – in the theory of affections – and, to lengthen in that direction, according to Lacan, would necessarily achieve obvious impasses.

Thus, “the so-called method of cataloging, after all, cannot leave being marked by a profound aporia, which leads to impasses or a very special infertility” (Lacan, 1962-63/2005, p. 29). The example brought by Lacan here is an article by David Rappaport who, in attempting to construct a psychoanalytic theory of affection, eventually catalogs different appearances of the term, so that they end up being irreducible to one another.

The second method listed, the analogous, when discerning different levels, seeks to “reveal analogous positions, at supposedly independent levels, to do something other than to highlight no more a classification, but a sort of type” (Lacan, 1962-63/2005, p. 29). For the author, the analogous method would necessarily lead us to anthropology, which, in its conception at that moment, bears the greatest number of assumptions from the most risky, especially in its strand of jungianism.

For Lacan (1962-63/2005), the analytic experience takes us, however, to the function of the key, being that “what opens and to open, it works. The key is the way in which the signifying function functions or not as such” (p. 31). According to the author, the dimension of the key is presented as (co) natural to any teaching, including there, the analytic.

We note in the formulation “function of the key”, elements that approach us to the function of cause of the desire of the object petit a – better developed in the following lessons – since it is by an opening, by something that engages as the emergence of a real implied that the object petit a can operate. From this key, Lacan (1962-63/2005) puts into use the formulations we underlined earlier, emphasizing “the fact that I announce it [*the key function*] distinguishes it and dares to introduce it as what we can trust, nothing here being marked by presumption” (p. 30).

We also extract another modulation of our central proposition about object a. From the retrieve of the resumption of Fechner by Freud (1900-01/2014b), which demarcates the dream scene as different from life in waking state and locates the unconscious as *eineanderer Schauplatz*, Lacan (1962-63/2005) will propose this *other scene* as a psychoanalytic reason. Unfolding the Freudian conceptions, the author then proposes three times in the structure of this reason.

The first time is based on the fact that the world exists. This world differs from the place where the things of the world come to say. According to Lacan (1962-63/2005), the things of the world are put on the scene from the laws of the signifier, which he attests to being radically different from the laws of the world.

The second time is designated as the stage on which we make the staging of this world, while Lacan (1962-63/2005) can affirm, “the stage is the dimension of history, which always has the character

of acting" (p. 43). This *statement* raises the question of how much the world is a signatory of what the stage returns. The answer of Lacan (1962-63/2005) seems interesting to us

Everything we have called world throughout history leaves superimposed residues, which accumulate without worrying at all about the contradictions. What culture conveys to us as the world is a stacking, a deposit of wrecks of a succession of worlds that, despite being incompatible, do not fail to get along with each other very well inside of us all... What we believe we are dealing with as a world, are not they simply the accumulated remains of what came from the stage, when it was, if that is the way I can express myself, on tour? (pp. 43-44).

After retrieving Hamlet and the scene developed by him within a theatrical presentation, Lacan (1962-63/2005) names the third time as a scene within the scene, which contemplates what the author delicately has been building to the status of the object as object of desire. This object in its articulation with anguish provides a beaconing "between the return to a safe cosmic vision and the maintenance of a historical patheticism to which we also do not cling so much, although it has its function, there is a bias, a passage route" (Lacan, 1962-63/2005, p. 48).

As already pointed out by Machado et al. (Unpublished), this staging in three times dialogues directly with its resumption by Lacan weeks later, when placing the object *petit a* as a passage. Even if it is out of the scene, *a* "only asks to take on the stage, in order to introduce its speech to the one who continues to be kept on the scene" (Lacan, 1962-63/2005, p. 155), so that the scene within the scene is a resource, a key, to something of the dimension of the real,

this device evidences the object *a*, a wreck resulting from the rip of the scene that with the historical time accumulates forming stacks of superposed layers, layers that insist on remaining on the littoral of the stage.... The object *petit a* moves the scenic structuration, introducing the emergence of the real that puts in another series what history had traced as destiny (Machado et al., unpublished).

Again, the entanglement of the object *petit a* in the formulations of method proposed by Lacan allows, from the hole located in the signifying function, in what implies impossibility of representation, ascending, or putting on the stage, fragments of real that were outside the until then prevalent discourse. We claim, then, from what we propose through the previous path of Lacan and its culmination in *The Seminar, book 10: anguish*, that the object *petit a* is an original methodological tool introduced in the field of psychoanalysis. The very trail of formation of this concept produces indices of modalizations, however provisional and singular, of how desire catches the field of knowledge, resituating it from psychoanalytic propositions.

The analyst-researcher must then be *a*-ware, aiming not at *a*, given that "it is not the object of desire that we seek to reveal in the analysis but its cause" (Lacan, 1962-3/2005). Warned of the dimension of condensed *jouissance* and the function of cause of desire that this object bears and what this implies, that is, namely, the knowledge and the truth of the subject's *jouissance*, but also its portion of *semblance* and delusion. As Lucero (2015) concludes, the object *petit a* in its significant articulation is what allows the advent of the subject. Because it is through it that the subject arises, this object serves as a reference for the methodology of research in psychoanalysis, since with our studies we envisage, if not the advent of the subject, at least the insurgency of singular representations of it from the function of cause of the desire implied in that *a*.

Although the formulations around the object *petit a* are not exhausted in the seminar 10 – including resumptions in the following seminar, to better formulate the condition of object and invocatory object and later, as surplus-enjoyment object and still later, as the articulator between the real, symbolic and imaginary⁷ – we could note that in this seminar, perhaps in an exception to the others, Lacan wells on to demonstrate his teaching procedures in an even more didactic way, always articulating the anguish, the object *petit a* and his method.

We also note that the object *petit a* of Lacan condenses different interests and powers of thought of his intellectual project. In addition to a review of the statute of the object that is imposed as unavoidable

⁷Dunker (2016) well points out this and other appearances of this object throughout the Lacanian teaching, which were not addressed here given the thematic delimitation of this article.

to psychoanalysis, we believe that its formalization provides the philosophical and aesthetic field with tools to accept within its theoretical scopes the beaconing and support of this point of negativity and indefiniteness with its spellings, topologies and provisional images.

Preliminary considerations to any conclusion

For now, we would like, starting from what Wajcman (2012) presents in his text *The art, the psychoanalysis, the century*, to open the discussion about representation via the image of the irrepresentability, a theme approachable through object a. The introduction posed by Vilela and Iannini (2012) provides us with fuel for entry into this theme, let us see

Wajcman points out that in forging the concept of object a, Lacan responds in some ways to the impasses inherent in postwar philosophy, which concerned how to bring in the unimaginable in thought, the irrepresentable in representation, and the absence in the presence. Object petit a is the answer. Synthesizing what guided his reflection Wajcman was able to emphasize that object petit a is the object of twentieth-century art, and the Lacanism, which could be called the twentieth-century psychoanalysis, walks along side the art of the twentieth century. A beautiful example of how art can be applied to psychoanalysis. (p. 14).

Following this path, Wajcman (2012) questions himself about, after defining the 20th century as the century of the object, what would be the object of this century. After naming ruin as the best characterization of this time of objects, locating it in the massacre of the masses and examining its pre-existence to the 20th century, what ruin, in the form of a mass massacre, presents as novelty in this century is the *shoah*⁸ and the attempt of complete annihilation of traces and wrecks of the occurrence of that event and its prominent character.

In naming *shoah*, therefore, Wajcman (2012) already coincides that name with a specific object – inclination of the works of art, singularizing one by one the objects – the movie of Claude Lanzmann of 1985 with the same name, *Shoah*. For the author of the text, this film carries the mark of not closing in a precise time, so as to engender in the same place, the present, past and future. More over, the work in fact is composed so as to be without images, without words, without traces and consequently, without ruins. What Wajcman (2012) considers as the task of this movie, given that there is nothing to represent – is “to look straight” - to look straight to what no one alive has ever seen and that is unrepresentable” (p. 62). In addition, as Wajcman well reminds us of the tribute to Merleau-Ponty by Lacan (1961/2003), in which the psychoanalyst resumes the propositions of the philosopher to highlight the relations between the visible, the truth and the decoy of perception, the work of art highlights the point where “what the artist gives us access to is the place of what cannot be seen – and still remain to be named” (p. 192).

Given this context, *Shoah* is not a movie about *shoah*, or that figures it, a pure representation of this event. As Wajcman (2012) points out, besides being unrepresentable, this event was intended to be immemorial, since the attempt to annul any record or trace takes a status of act, attempting to forclude it from the historical memory, “out of time, out of the world, out of any possible memory, even out of the minds. *Out of the scene. Without any trace*” (p. 64, authors’ italics).

What Claude Lanzmann accomplishes in *Shoah* when filming in the same locations of the *shoah* event even with its ruins almost totally extinct, interviewing a few survivors and also “employees” of the Third Reich questioning them incisively, demanding as much details as possible is, to border this event without representation, in order to give it a minimum circumscription in the historical memory, relying on the side-effect of touching the body of its spectators, who could not escape unscathed by the share of real that concerns them.

The role of the art becomes clear right there, “to be the place where what could neither be said nor seen comes to show itself” (Wajcman, 2012, p. 74). Different from the nefarious desire that what happened did not have an image, the project of showing what could not be seen or said gives form and

⁸ As Feldman (2016) points out, the term *shoah* in Hebrew preserves the meaning of catastrophe and disaster as opposed to the attribution of religious sense offered by the term holocaust.

image “to what was deliberately conceived against the image, an attack against the human figure” (op. cit., p. 75).

At the end of his text, Wajcman (2012) examines the possibilities of showing what has no image and that was not seen, in order to establish relationships of similitude between the psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic object of Dali and the small object petit *a* of Lacan as the guiding-direction of his thought in that text. Returning to the question posed in the preface of that book about the entry of the absence into the presence of the unimaginable in the thought and the unrepresentable in the representation, Wajcman (2012) opens the way by stating that:

Object petit *a* is the answer. *A* is the name reduced to the letter, to the initial, of the unrepresentable in the representation, of the unthinkable in the thought, of the absence in the presence, etc... *a*, a small letter with which Lacan inscribed, in psychoanalysis, that the unrepresentable, that the unthinkable, occurred in this century. So that the 20th century happened. (p. 79).

In line with what Wajcman sets, there is the path we propose in this article, namely, assuming the cause of desire of the object petit *a* as central to play the role of articulator of a psychoanalytic methodology that gives rise to the constituent lack of the subject of the unconscious, to the scarcity of representations of a time that, in spite of that, offers incessantly signifiers and images. The object petit *a* asserts the centrality of this negativity in the midst of the multiplicity of goods, services, enjoyments and objects, given the absolute impediment to materialize an object that guarantees a locality even if provisional, as in ordinary objects.

In the case of the works of art, putting the object petit *a* into use and functioning is necessary through the task of finding provisional representations for the unrepresentable, images for the ineffable in the field of appearances, or as Safatle (2006) argues “the aesthetic formalization can provide us with protocols for a thought of what is presented as resistance to the conceptual apprehension and to the phantasmatic repetition” (p. 269).

On the purpose of *shoah*, Feldman (2016) warns of the expansion of the discussion. The discovery of photographs by Jews forced to work in the concentration camps, their exhibition, the consequent problematization of what this marks in the *Holocaust Studies* by Didi-Huberman and the criticisms addressed to him by Élisabeth Pagnoux, Claude Lanzmann and Gérard Wajcman, open the perspectives of representation of *shoah*. What Didi-Huberman emphasizes in his writings, as presented by Feldman (2016), is a questioning of the “unspeakable character of the unthinkable testimony of the Shoah and unimaginable of Auschwitz” (p. 137), in order to show the precariousness, the incompleteness and the lacunar configuration of these photographs.

The criticisms sent by the trio to Didi-Huberman accuse him of fetishizing the images, which deceive and lead to illusion. Didi-Huberman, however, would protest as to an absolutization of the real and totalization of the images, in order to sacralize them and to interdict them, by Lanzmann, Pagnoux and Wajcman. (Feldman, 2016). What the author distinguishes from what Didi-Huberman asserts is that he

does not deny the “unimaginable” and “unrepresentable” of the order of the *traumatic experience*, as an aporia of the testimony (between its necessity and chronic impossibility) and negative foundation of language, embodied in the truth of the body of the survivor. What he seems to deny is the “unimaginable” and the “unrepresentable” as a norm, dogma, and imperative (Feldman, 2016, p. 138, author’s emphasis).

From this vast polemic between representing everything, representing nothing and representing ‘after all’, we intend to preserve Wajcman’s intention (2012) to operate images, representations and inscriptions from the object *a*, providing modes of appearance always incomplete, missing and possible only in the context of their modalization.

It is not, however, a matter of positivizing a negativity, an irreducible lack. We do not want a simple application of the concept for the entire range of researches. This is more about following the teachings that the function of this object has in clinical and psychoanalytic theory, in order to transpose them to the quarrel of knowledge and research. It is not the objective – what would be tragicomic – to find the *a* corresponding to the researched theme, so that the *a* replaces the common sense of the crux of the

matter, of the core of the elaborated questions. It is on the trail of the function of cause of the desire engaged in this object that we can follow the gorges of what is intended as research in psychoanalysis and how we can formalize, write or even topologize this venture.

At this point we return to the Lacanian thesis and the considerations of Safouan (2006) and Soler (2012) on the notation of this object in a letter. It is precisely because of its immateriality, its impossible identity and its unrepresentability that the letter –psychoanalytic notion since Lacan puts it in the scope of our field – is the possible writing for this object of unrepresentable presence, “only the algebraic notation of a letter ‘a’ allows the pure location of identity” (Soler, 2012, p. 56). The *a*, allows Lacan (1962-63/2005) to address the constitutive lack of subjectivity, since as a piece of the body, it can anchor this lack as a “lack-of-signifier point” (p. 150). Where a signifier is missing, only one letter can write, the letter *a*, a letter open par excellence, allows to demarcate and border this littoral of unrepresentability (Lacan, 2003b).

We also believe that the minimal circumscription of the cause of desire of each researcher provides clues to the operability of the object petit *a* as a tool of methodological articulation, since it is from the cession of something of one’s own body engaging the field of knowledge that the cause can detach the knowledge inside the lack of knowledge inherent in research activity in psychoanalysis.

In view of the immensity of developments that this thesis presents, we will not exhaust it here, although we intend to address it in future works. After all, the knowledge as Lacan (1962-63/2005) conceives it through the path of desire, is docked on the idea that “to understand is always to advance stumbling to the side of misunderstanding” (p. 90).

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