

# Knowledge Is Invented: Addressing Invention and the Art of Saying in the Psychoanalytic Field

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In the Freudian-Lacanian field, there is an important distinction between knowledge and truth. The truth, of an unconscious nature, is something that inhabits us, directs us, but that escapes us. Knowledge, in turn, is something to be invented, from the hole of the Real, the Unconscious truth, and the subjective experience. The relationships between playing, creating, and fantasizing; the dimension of the uncanny, fiction, and imagination in subjectivity; the invention of knowledge of oneself, derived from the pains and flavors of being who one is, are creative dimensions that inhabit the subject, permeate the analytical act, and transversalize psychoanalysis. In the practice, we listen to and witness processes of analysis that awaken an invention/reinvention of oneself, in the process of remembering, repeating, and elaborating, but also in what the transference relationship summons. Knowledge of oneself, does not guarantee a life without mishaps, sadness, and illusions, but allows the invention and recognition of knowledge and a style. The concept of *Sinthome* (2007), coined by Jacques Lacan, comes in the wake of the processes of self-invention and is a knowing-doing with the symptom, with the paradoxes of joyful suffering, producing, as a result, an art of saying. Therefore, in this communication, I will articulate elements of theory, practice, and psychoanalytic experience that allow us to expand knowledge of the themes of invention and imagination articulated with the concept of *sinthome*, their relationships with subjectivity, and the direction of psychoanalytic treatment.

*Keywords:* psychoanalysis, invention, imagination, knowledge, *sinthome*

## Introduction

“[...] for all knowledge there must be invention [...]”

—Jacques Lacan, 2016, p. 147

Signifier: *invention* is crucial for human relationships and for all fields of knowledge. In this text, I am seeking to reflect on the processes of self-invention and invention in the psychoanalytic field. To this end, I am going to address texts by Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and contemporary psychoanalysts who deal with the dimension of invention in the psychoanalytic practice, articulating these reflections with clinical elements, which put psychoanalytic concepts to the test and inspire us to collect the traces of invention present in saying, but also in dreams, fantasies, and symptoms.

### **About the Invention of Psychoanalytic Knowledge**

When it comes to psychoanalysis, we could start by indicating that it was invented by Sigmund Freud. Certainly, there is a leap in relation to other knowledge that circulated at the end of the 19th century, since Freud gives the status of a system to the Unconscious, removing it from an exclusively adjectival position. But it was a woman, Bertha Pappenheim, called Ana O., the patient zero of psychoanalysis, the inaugural case, who at a certain point did not agree to submit to the hypnosis technique and asked Breuer to listen to her. From this perspective, she is who makes the crucial difference, placing emphasis on the discourse, and not on the phenomena of the body, the possibility of curing her symptoms.

The technique of free association, which arises from this act, seeks to suspend censorship, so that the subject can speak freely, without valuing or judging what happens to them. The aim is to disqualify the speech: -Speak, without giving qualities, values, meanings, to what you say. With this, paradoxically, the subject of the Unconscious is qualified (Elia, 2007) and the analysand's speech is given value, with the word as the main source of access to the unconscious.

Free association is closely related to floating listening, transference, the *a posteriori* moment, and the analysis of contingencies, and these are the foundations of the psychoanalytic method. One bets that to analyze singularity can produce shifts in the deadly aspect of the symptom and enjoyment, which underlies it. An analysis, in this sense, bets on a cure, even if this is a utopist and unattainable dimension. But it is possible to reinvent oneself with their symptoms, letting something fall, relaunching desire, losing some of the enjoyment, so that a less painful life is possible, less based on the deadly repetition of what goes beyond the principle of pleasure.

By focusing his listening on the subjects' words, the analyst establishes a subject supposed to know, which initially embodies himself in the analyst, but which gradually places himself in the analysand: a subject of supposed knowledge of himself, a subject supposed to fictionalize, remember, and elaborate parts of his history, of ancestral knowledge. "We fight for the truth [...]" as Lacan (1992, p. 197) teaches us, in his Seminar: *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, however knowing that it can only be half-said, as it is of the order of the impossible.

Following this path, we could think that the desire to know would lead us to gain more knowledge. But that is not what an analysis is about. Knowing in psychoanalysis is not of the order of knowledge or representation, as it is not certain that knowledge is known, unknown knowledge of the unconscious order that inhabits us and that manifests itself in dreams, in failed acts, in lapses, in jokes, and in symptoms.

### **Between Body, Speech and Subject**

While for Freud anatomy is destiny, for Lacan, discourse makes destiny (Soler, 2019, p. 317). The body we are born with is of the order of the impossible, of the subject's non-choice, of desire and, for the most part, of the sexual relationship of the parents, being, in this way, the result of the contingencies that provided it and make it reality; it is the discourse that makes the body something beyond the flesh.

Colette Soler (2019), in her book: *The Subject's In-Body*, seeks to highlight this body affected by language and the subject's relationship with their body, understanding that one is not a body, but one has one body and only one. This body, according to psychoanalysis, is not instinctive, precisely because it is inhabited by language. Therefore, it is a body crossed by relationships with others and with fragments of culture. The drive is the mechanism that indicates this crossing and that denaturalization of the body.

But this denaturalized dimension also places us on the symptomatic path that inhabits the body, the effect and fragmentary demarcation of culture in the body, of the partiality of drives. Thus, it invents itself with discourse, it becomes one, not because of its physical edge, but because of the signifier that marks it.

The libidinal organism does not have the same dimension, and each person creates their own territory with their libido. It must be said that, in general, its perimeter is also limited. It is in this perimeter that the objects that matter are housed for each person, whether they are objects of love, sex or work. (Soler, 2019, p. 70)

The territory of the body, marked by the signifier and cut out by the instinctual orifices, produces libido, psychic energy of a sexual nature par excellence, precisely for demarcating the denaturalization of the body. Even so, this libido, as well analyzed by psychoanalyst Collete Soler, has a very unique perimeter, constituted and invented one by one, in close articulation with historical and structural elements of the subject. This singularity demarcates objects of desire, paths, and also ways of suffering.

When we refer to the subject in psychoanalysis, it is the subject of the unconscious that we are talking about, immediately marked by the lack of being, by the crossing of language in the body. The word itself already denotes the death of the thing, something is said to represent what is not there. Lacan (1998) emphasizes in this sense that the tomb would be the first sign. It is from this encounter with death, with the sexual, and with the body, considered the Real dimension of the subjective experience, precisely because of the excess and the impossible they put on the scene, that we begin to speak, imagine, and produce.

Therefore, this subject for psychoanalysis is not synonymous with an individual, unified and without division. The unconscious arises from the rift, from the division between what happens and what is felt, between what is said and what is understood, between what is expected and what is accomplished, between the internal and external world, between experience and what remains. The subject, therefore, is intimately articulated to a collective dimension, since what is intrinsic, internal, own, and private necessarily passes through the relationship with the other (similar) and by the Other (abstraction of culture, treasure of signifiers).

### **Fiction as Truth**

In this way, it is worth highlighting the fiction of the self, which appears on the scene in life, but with special emphasis in the analysis processes; it does not refer to a lie, on the contrary, it is an invention of the truth. As Brazilian psychoanalyst Ana Costa rightly analyzes: “Fiction mainly concerns the need for circulation.” (1998, p. 119). One could add the need for circulation of the word, which, like a tessera, passes from hand to hand. However, what the analytical experience highlights is the function of the subject supposed to know in the transference relationship, or even in the inversion proposed by Lacan in his Seminar: *Les Non-Dupes Errent*: “subject supposed to know” (2016, p. 190), who highlights the dimension of testimony and interpretation coming from another, the representative of the Other, who gives the weight of truth to what is said and shared.

When Ana O. asks Breuer to listen to her, she demands recognition of what her body is suffering. Ana O., aged 21, began experiencing symptoms while caring for her father, who later died. She was a young woman extremely controlled by her parents, who was prevented from dancing and writing and that started developing a series of symptoms. Her illness begins with an intense cough, which unfolds into other physical symptoms, such as vision, hearing, and speech disturbances. She was unable to drink liquids, speak her mother tongue—German in this case—and began to speak English; besides, she had paralysis of her extremities, lapses in consciousness,

and hallucinations. She was diagnosed with conversion hysteria. At times, she seemed like a normal young woman, at other times, like a tantrum child.

Freud and Breuer write about this case, although they differed on the causality of the symptoms, given that Breuer highlighted the retentive character of hysteria, while Freud focused on the sexual dimension of the scenes brought up by the analysand. Initially treated with the hypnosis method, the symptoms were displaced, however others appeared. Nevertheless, the possibility of talking is called by her “chimney cleaning, talking cure, healing through words”. Freud will call “transference” the fantasies and love she develops for Breuer. Berta, after her analysis, starts writing, even publishing a book of tales, and creates an institution to shelter abandoned pregnant women. This case reveals that the symptoms are reversible, that they are related to original scenes, where reactions and affections cannot be expressed, besides presenting the fictional dimension of subjectivity and the value of transference in this process.

In his book: *The Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*, Georges Didi-Huberman (2015) analyzes the image and written records of the Salpêtrière, in the transition from the 19th century to the 20th century. In that book, we have elements to think about the psychiatric practice developed at the time, but also imaginary dimensions, fragments of culture, beliefs, ways of manifesting malaise, power relations, perspectives of what is understood as true or false, as well as discursive logic that transversalizes this period.

Hysteria was the dominant symptom that mainly affected women. Until the advancement of the cathartic method and free association, the method of contact with subjective reality was through hypnosis, aiming primarily at better diagnosing and then treating the symptoms that questioned the knowledge of the time. Hysteria triggered a series of manifestations. Those (the vast majority, women) with this diagnosis, when hypnotized, were extremely sensitized by the suggestion made by the doctor: they presented symptoms in the body that disappeared, making the doctors emphasize the character of invention, of theatricality of the symptoms. What Didi-Huberman highlights is how much what was visible fascinated and attracted the attention of doctors willing to record in order to better diagnose. However, in a circular movement between showing and recording, in fact, the symptoms were not alleviated. “The cries of hysterics never ceased to be suspect; they were suspected of being only turns, in fact, but turns in the sense of tropes (a rhetoric), or pirouettes (clowning around)—in the sense, finally, of simulacra (lies).” (Didi-Huberman, 2015, p. 367).

The scenes produced by hysteria taken as fictional theater tended to be heard and seen as a farce. In this sense, there was a short circuit, which only maintained symptomatic repetition, without enabling the construction of knowledge of themselves, nor implying a testimony of the truth that inhabited them in their radically singular psychic reality. The traumatic scene, excessive due to its complexity, lacking due to its linguistic and energetic dimension—because it is instinctual—inhabits the subject and insists on repeating itself, aiming for elaboration, wanting the other/Other loved one to listen to it. However, the hypothesis of the unconscious highlights the truth that pulses within the subject in his fictional construction.

Already in 1897, Freud, in a letter to Fliess, his interlocutor par excellence, emphasizes the production of scenes in hysterical manifestations, which are linked to fantasies of memories, which will only be understood later. He warns, however, that all this material is true, as they would be ways of embellishing the facts and producing relief for something more devastating. I emphasize the subversive and paradoxical character of this Freudian reflection, inaugurating the conception of symptoms as an agglutination between pleasure and pain,

truth and fiction, which require someone that can listen to them, witness them, betting that something shifts and reinvents itself. “[...] the unconscious is knowledge with which the subject can decipher himself.” (Lacan, 2016, p. 12).

Lacan helps us reflect on this distinction between knowledge and truth, indicating that through analytical work, when reaching a meaning for its singularity, for its symptoms, there is something that is twisted. There is an original meaning that insists on a deadly path that transmutes. Still, it is worth highlighting that there is a temporality at stake in this reinvention of oneself, a trail of the unconscious, which requires many twists and turns, the frequent revisiting of traumatic scenes and inventive strategies.

Based on Lacan’s teaching, one articulates that subjective experience occurs through three dimensions of the space inhabited by the speaking being: the Real dimension, which involves what happens, the excessive, which goes beyond our capacity to understand; the Symbolic dimension, which involves the relationship with words, culture, and laws; and the Imaginary dimension, which involves fantasizing, images, and dreams.

Therefore, the analytical path deals with the subject in his relationship with culture, with the social bond, but also with the contingencies of living, of what happens in a given time and space, of what was not the subject’s choice, but also of everything that is fantasized, which remains on the plane of the ideal and of a paradox between pleasure and displeasure. The symptoms show this aspect in an enigmatic manner, that which one suffers from, which insists, which even realizes that this is not what the subject wants to be, overtakes him, as if it dominates him.

Freud introduces in his second topic the analysis of Beyond the pleasure principle. He realizes that the traumatic has a fictional dimension, which is not based exclusively on material reality, but in a sense that unfolds from the facts, articulated with traces of memory and fantasies. In this way, he reorganizes these places in the psychic apparatus, highlighting that there is an unconscious dimension that inhabits Self itself and not just It. The dreams of war fighters challenged the principle of pleasure and dreams as wish fulfillment, putting the subject back at the front. What uncanny desire is this to return to this deadly place? What drives this heroic character in soldiers and, let’s say, this ideal of the hero that lives deep within each of us?

This horror is the very trauma, as disorder, absence of form, original experience referred to the idea of a fragmented body, because the indomitable continuous drive flow has no anchoring in a field of objectivity or in a representational field. (França, 1997, p. 43)

Paradoxes between life and death drives. While the pleasure principle, associated with the life drive, seeks to reduce displeasure to the lowest possible level, appeasing the forms, producing compositions, the death drive, based on what goes beyond the principle of pleasure, manifests itself through the compulsion to repeat, in what aims to appease, but which, because we always encounter something different from what was expected, destroys the form, produces breakage and fall, two sides of the same band, Moebian logic, in which one twists and follows the other and vice versa.

Helplessness, primordial anguish, which tends to make subjects seek analysis, calls for somewhere, listening, reading, looking, so that something can move. In this sense, an analysis, by tracing the significant remains, makes it possible to make their senses resonate, to unfreeze the scene of horror, which tends to insist. Resources are expanded, one’s position in relation to the other and the Other is analyzed, their identifications, fears, fantasies, to be able to say things better, to be able to invent a fiction of oneself.

### The Invention of Knowledge

In this plot among the experience records: Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary desire is woven, repeated, displaced, producing a very unique aesthetic dimension. As the Brazilian psychoanalyst Maria Inês França clearly tells us, in the attempt to appease the forms, in the search for closure of the incompleteness of being (in total love, in being able to handle everything, for example), there is, paradoxically, a confrontation with the destruction of being, with the meaningless (França, 1997). The Real insists on its dimension as impossible, as a hole that always remains open, or as an indestructible core, no matter how many words and images are woven around it. “Real [...] is always a piece, a lump. It is, certainly, a lump around which thought wanders, but its stigma, that of the Real as such, consists of not being linked to anything [...]” (Lacan, 2007, p. 118).

Psychoanalytic knowledge, aware of the Real, the impossible, the hole, the core, consider itself not whole. In this sense, it is close to art, in its method of making, which starts from the enigmas of living towards the construction of a language. A method, when contemplating the radical singularity of encounters, weaves itself developing, articulating the three instances of subjective experience. From the meaningless presented by the body of hysterics, there is invention of knowledge that questions the very completeness idealized in scientific discourse. The analyst’s discourse, in turn, is not protocol, it is an ethical position that focuses on the subject, willing to listen word by word, to the transference relationship and to place it under analysis. Thus, artisanal knowledge is constructed, which deals with the remains, willing to invent mosaics, unique weaves, which border the impossible.

I present a clinical fragment that touches on the invention of knowledge of itself:

There are days when I feel anguish, an affliction that I don’t know what it’s about... I always go to a cousin’s birthday party, who lives in another city. It was last weekend, but this year I decided not to go. This is that cousin who told my uncle that my father had abused her... My hypothesis for my father’s suicide is that he would be gay, shy, oppressed by the moral standards of his time... But what my cousin says, I don’t remember seeing anything...

—This questions you, it opens up an enigma regarding what you assumed about your father...

On the way out, just before the analyst opens the door, the analysand says: Now I know what the anguish was about...

Knowledge is invented in the face of the Real, the impossible, death, the body, and the sexual that insist on interrogating us. Evidently, this is a return to the traumatic scene of the father’s suicide and the mysteries that surround it; it is not in one session that everything is explained—it is little by little, it is in what returns through free association, in the slow time of understanding.

The direction of treatment allows us to include singularities, enigmas, investigations, dynamics, but it also presupposes and implies that there will always be remains. The crossing of fantasy, which runs through an analysis, allows for a series of self-inventions, of discoveries of unknown knowledge, which insists on manifesting itself, but also on fantasizing.

Fantasy cannot be reduced to imaginary or imagination, despite using remembered or invented scenes. It is an image that has a significant determination, that is, an imaginary scene built on a sentence that, as such, has the structure of language. Because it is unconscious, fantasy is structured as a language of drive. (Quinet, 2002, p. 170)

Brazilian psychoanalyst Antônio Quinet indicates that the journey through fantasy involves a journey between different registers of experience. Faced with the excess that the Real puts on the scene, fantasy emerges as a response, an articulation between images and signifiers that indicate the subject’s position in relation to desire. It creates an illusion of completeness of the subject with the object that causes desire, and at the same time the assumption of completeness of the Other. Paradoxically, it becomes a defense, protection of the subject, but

also an alibi of desire, in the subject's relationship with the Other, thus becoming a kind of utopia of desire (Quinet, 2002).

A utopia is an interrogation of the present and a nod to the future built from the plots of the past. The love of transference articulated with symptomatic repetitions allows this utopia of desire to reveal itself, to invent itself, in an appearance of discovery. Transference, therefore, is not a means, but something that supports the word as a means of seeking "knowledge that exists in language" (Lacan, 2016, p. 59). In this sense, knowledge in psychoanalysis is a consequence of there being another that acts as a tessera, which witnesses and interprets the invention/reinvention of a fiction of the self, a fiction that inhabits and surpasses the subject.

It is as if the truth was always there, but only gradually could one get closer to it. However, it is by focusing on the symptom, the fantasy, and the enjoyment, which sustain it, that it becomes possible to invent knowledge of the unconscious truth, a fiction of oneself, a knowledge that is nevertheless inconsistent.

It is necessary to focus on what insists on repetition, which never ceases to be written, which is perceived as necessary, beating that with each appearance it can sublimate something of the malaise that inhabits the subject. What are the contingencies of these scenes that insist? What is contradicted, but also what is reinforced?

In the face of the excess of the first sexual encounter, something is invented. The traumatic, in this sense, as Freud highlights, in his 2nd topic, addresses this fictional dimension that is activated in the face of this encounter with the impossible, according to Freud; or with the Real, in Lacan's terms.

[...] knowledge where we learn it for the first time, [is] manageable. [...] But we all know why we all invented a business to fill the hole of the Real! Where there is no sexual relationship, this creates a *troumatisme*—a word play that combines traumatism with *trou*: hole: it is invented! We invent what we can, of course! (Lacan, 2016, p. 143)

In the face of the traumatic, we search for meaning, but this meaning never stabilizes, a meaningless meaning, which always fails, but paradoxically, impels us to continue inventing, to go in search of the truth. An analysis, according to Lacan (2016), has the effect of an odor of truth through the word, where it is unconscious knowledge that works, as an open set. "The symptom is precisely that which never ceases to be written about the Real. As the response of the unconscious to the Real, it is a writing that delimits the Real to a piece." (Leyack, 2023, p. 51).

Trauma fixations insist on repeating themselves, however this repetition is always flawed, as it is not linked to a memory, producing a compulsion to repeat, a connection without words. The concept of enjoyment, in the Lacanian field, comes to conceptualize this relationship of surrender of the subject to the Other, dominating him as something of the order of necessity. As Lacan rightly addresses, in his Seminar, entitled: The superego makes enjoyment prevail, it forces the subject to enjoy, which is why it is indicated as the enjoyment of the Other. From the treasure of language, from the abstraction of the social that inhabits each of us, an order is impelled, whose paradoxical repetition makes us encounter, each time, with horror.

I now present a clinical fragment that is truly exemplary of this (re)encounter, of this discovery of enjoyment in the order of the repetition of the Real, *tich é*

Ariel clearly remembers the scene of abuse she suffered around the age of 3. A neighbor, around 12 years older, proposes a sexual game, which puts her in front of a false choice, in which she sees herself as the object of the other/Other and at the same time abandoned by the other/Other. In adult life, sexual activity tends to involve situations in which one feels violated and left. She repeats this memory constantly until the day when by talking about her father, her romantic relationships and her meeting with her mother, she mentions that she always fell in love with her female neighbors.

Female neighbor, what an uncanny repetition...

The analysand listens to herself, echoing the signifier. From then on, in the following sessions, it seemed that something could fall out of this experience and it was possible to bring other words and other scenes.

The concept of enjoyment indicates that part of the experience is satisfaction, something seeks to be fulfilled in this displeasure, a kind of rotten enjoyment. There is a position of the subject in relation to enjoyment that needs to be highlighted by the analyst, when in the analysand's own speech he is already arriving at his own interpretation. As Argentine psychoanalyst Patr cia Leyack tells us: "Fixation, the reason for adherence to enjoyment, is what makes the analytical task a path with successive turns" (Leyack, 2023, p. 47).

Witnessing, collecting, but also being able to cut out part of what returns in these successive turns, allows the subject to be rescued from what is repeated as if it were the work of destiny, in which the subject remains on the sidelines. While passive to this force that dominates him, he carries a message despite desire. Analytical reading and intervention opens up space so that one can read something about the language of the unconscious, so that one can listen and reflect on "[...] these living marks of the enjoyment of the Other, which are also heard in the superego and are shown in the impulses [...]" (Leyack, 2023, p. 54), constituting an art of saying well.

While the Real of the sexual, of the body and of death continues not to write itself, the analysis goes against the flow, seeking for some trace to be written. In this sense, we start from the symptom, in search of the *sinthome*, in the specificity of each subject, in the singular traits and temporality. It makes the not whole Other appear, the castration of the Other, in a bet on the direction of treatment, enabling the subject of desire to rewrite itself.

The direction of treatment, according to Ana Costa, "is not guided by the elimination of the symptom, but by the possibility of accompanying the subject in the construction of goals to support it" (Costa, 2015, p. 18). At the end of an analysis, it is expected that the subject will be aware of his symptom, of what he identifies in the process as symptomatic, which makes him suffer, but which involves enjoyment, surrender, mastery. It is not about identifying with the symptom, but about identifying the symptom in a more complex and intimate manner.

Freud, in his first letters to Fliess (2015), already indicated the similarities between fantasies, symptoms, and delusions, when playing and poetizing. The concept of sublimation, which here we can relate to invention, poetizing, creating, indicates one of the possible destinations of the drive, which articulates the unconscious with the social bond. Playing would be the first subjective exercise in contouring the Real and emptying enjoyment. Sublimation, as a result, indicates knowledge of how to deal with the symptom, which does not plug the hole, creates an edge, does not find completeness. Sublimation is: "[...] any activity that depletes enjoyment, puts desire into play and forms a bond with others" (Leyack, 2023, p. 165).

Between the symptom and the *sinthome* we would have a process of sublimation, knowledge of how to do with the symptom, a loss of enjoyment. In its instinctual movement, sublimation borders, and at the same time, it manages to underline desire. Between the symptom and the *sinthome* it is invention, which appears as a finding. An experience that has apparently always been there, naturalized, but in the process of analysis, is revisited, woven, and fictionalized, indicating that the true has a fictional structure.

From this loss of enjoyment, one also mourns, one is saddened by something that falls, no matter how deadly it was. The fabric of fiction and self-invention are witnessed in transference. A process shaped by temporality, encounters, cuts, and losses, directed by the love and ethics of the subject.

As Brazilian musician and composer Vin cius de Moraes reveals in the song: "Samba da Ben ção" (Samba of the Blessing), to invent something, it takes a lot of sadness, and one hopes that one day he won't be sad anymore, because "life is the art of meeting, even though there is so much mismatch in life."



It's better to be happy than sad  
 Happiness is the best thing that exists  
 It is like a light in the heart

But to make a beautiful samba song  
 It takes a lot of sadness  
 It takes a lot of sadness  
 If not the samba song can't be made

...  
 Because samba is the sadness that sways  
 And sadness is always hopeful  
 Sadness is always hopeful  
 Of one day not being sad any more

...  
 Life is the art of meeting  
 Even though there is so much mismatch in life  
 [...] (Vinícius de Moraes, *Samba da benção*)

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