

The Sexual Non-Instinctual Drive and the Centrality of Otherness: an Introduction to the Work of Jean Laplanche

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This seminar, an introduction to the work of Jean Laplanche (1924-2012), will explore his unique and integrative theory of the human psyche centered on a sexual non-instinctual drive and the criticality of otherness.

Laplanche's broad intellectual and philosophical background enabled him to study Freud in depth and with a scholarly and keen epistemological eye. Going back to the origins and sources of Freud's concepts, Laplanche coined the expression "putting Freud to work." Following this path, he created a new model for the human psyche, proposing a new approach to the Sexual as the center of motivation to psychic work. Some of his main "*Problematics*", and additional reflections on his original questions, may be formulated this way:

- What if the motivation for psychic work is not instinctual?
- What if Homo Sapiens had evolutionarily segregated genes to translate codes and produce meaning to their emotional experiences, and this conjectured acquisition is at the center of becoming human?
- What if this constitutional equipment supplies auto-conservative codes that do not need translation to be effective?
- What if exogenous stimuli, external messages, arouse this translation function to search for the meaning of emotional experiences and creates, through this process, different areas in the psyche?
- What if these exogenous stimuli were the unconscious sexual desires adults have towards children?
- What if the continuity of these efforts to produce meaning depended on the creation of pervasive endogenous stimuli but could be altered by new exogenous stimuli, in a new reading of *après-coup*?
- What if a "non-repressed" unconscious, an "enclaved unconscious", was created by the accumulation of these exogenous sexual messages coming from others? What would be its characteristics and properties?
- What if cultural myths or elements of the cultural symbolic matrix provide, mainly through language, auxiliary codes for the translation function to produce meaning?

Would this hypothesis result in a new approach to the relationship between the unconscious and culture?

Would all these structures and relations influence our thinking about psychopathology?

Might it constitute a new hypothesis for borderline and psychotic pathologies?

What kinds of influences would it have for the way we think about the impact of others in our psychic life? And in a psychoanalytical treatment?

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES: At the end of this course, candidates will be able to define and discuss key concepts developed by Laplanche, and their theoretical and clinical implications:

1) The concepts of “The Theory of Generalized Seduction”, including:

(a) “The Fundamental Anthropological Situation”; (b) “The structuring seduction”; (c) “The enigmatic message”; (d) “The translating function of the mind”; (e) “The source-object of the drive”; (f) “implantation and intromission and the creation of the cruel superego”; (g) “Laplanche topic to human soul”; (h) “The creation of the psychic spaces” (“The enclaved unconscious”; “The repressed unconscious”; “The pseudo-unconscious of the myth-symbolic”); (i) The principles of psychic functioning; the incomplete translation and après-coup; (j) “The originary position of masochism in the field of sexual drive”; (k) “Sexual life drive and Sexual death drive”; (l) “Laplanche’s theory of Gender, Sex and the Sexual”; (m) “Castration and Oedipus: Codes and Narrative Schemas or Primal Fantasies?”; (n) “Furthering Laplanche’s model for psychopathology: an interdisciplinary integration”.

2) Recognize the difference, in Laplanche’s model, between general seduction theory and specific seduction theory; instinct and drive; mental and psychic.

3) Discuss what is Sexual in the “Theory of the Generalized Seduction”.

This is a 1-credit, 4-session course (each session 3-hours and 10 minutes) that will take place over one weekend — Friday evening, Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, and Sunday morning.

Friday Evening:	Modules I and II
Saturday Morning:	Modules III and IV
Saturday Afternoon:	Module IV (continued) and V
Sunday Morning:	Module VI

It is recommended that students obtain a copy of Laplanche’s book *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis* (Basil Blackwell, 1989) which is the main reference book for the course.

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THE ORIGINS OF THE NEW THEORY:

Laplanche was already a Professor of Philosophy at the Sorbonne when he became interested in Psychoanalysis and began his training, a background that enabled him to study Freud in depth. His efforts resulted in his indispensable dictionary, "The Language of Psycho-Analysis" (co-authored with J-B. Pontalis), and his translation of the Complete Works of Freud from German to French. After formally changing his field from Philosophy to Psychoanalysis, he began a systematic study of Freud's concepts, published in the collection *Problematics*. In 1989, he published the "New Foundations to Psychoanalysis", which was the basis for his new "Theory of the Generalized Seduction"

Learning objectives: At the end of this module, candidates will be able to describe the main roots of Laplanche's thinking, Laplanche's positions on Freud's "detour" to biology, the abandonment of the "traumatic theory," and be able to distinguish between the specific seduction theory and the "Theory of the Generalized Seduction".

References:

1. Laplanche, J. *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*. Basil Blackwell. 1989.
2. Laplanche, J. The Three Essays and the Theory of Seduction. In. ____ *Freud and the Sexual*. NY, The unconscious in translation. 2011.

Recommended

1. Laplanche, J. *The Temptation of Biology*. NY, The Unconscious in translation. 2015.

II. THE FUNDAMENTAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL SITUATION

The idea of a Fundamental Anthropological Situation refers to the configuration of the milieu in which the human infant is immersed, where the essentials of being human are developed. In this module, the properties and dynamics of the interaction of the elements involved will be presented and explored.

Learning objectives: At the end of this module, candidates will be able to define and discuss the "Fundamental Anthropological Situation", with its richness of elements and dynamics; conceptualize the "sexual enigmatic message", "the translating activity", and construction of meaning; and describe and discuss the hypothesis of a translating activity conjecturally based in evolutionary genetics. Candidates will also be able to define Laplanche's distinction between mental and psychic activities and discuss the relationship between these two levels of functioning.

References:

1. Laplanche, J. *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*. Basil Blackwell. 1989.
2. Laplanche, J. Sexuality and Attachment in Metapsychology. In. ____ *Freud and the Sexual*. NY, The unconscious in translation. 2011
3. Laplanche, J. Starting from the Fundamental Anthropological Situation. In. ____ *Freud and the Sexual*. NY, The unconscious in translation. 2011
4. Wilson, EO, The driving force of human evolution. In. _____. *The meaning of human existence*. London. WW Norton & Company. 2014.

Recommended:

1. Laplanche, J. Three Meanings of the Term 'Unconscious'. In Calich JC and Hinz H (org.) *The Unconscious: Further Reflections* (IPA: Psychoanalytic Ideas and Applications). London, Karnac. 2007. Also In: Laplanche J. Three Meanings of the Term 'Unconscious' In. ____ *Freud and the Sexual*. NY, The unconscious in translation. 2011. Chap. X.

III. THE SEXUAL ENIGMATIC MESSAGE

In the "Theory of General Seduction", the sexual enigmatic message is, with the translation activity, the origin and source of psychic activity and the force that creates the inner spaces of, following Freud, the "human soul". A non-instinctual source to the drive will be presented. Variances in the structure of the messages will be discussed, as well as the way they are ingrained in the body of the infant. With the differentiation of "implanted messages" and "intromitted messages", a hypothesis regarding the genesis of the cruel superego will be offered and also the concept of trauma in this framework.

Learning objectives: At the end of this module, candidates will be able to define and discuss the nature and dynamic of the "sexual enigmatic message", the variance in its structure, its relation with "the translating activity", and the creation of psychic inner spaces, according to Laplanche's latest topic. Candidates will also be able to conceptualize Laplanche's "source-object of the drive", its implications, and to distinguish "implantation" from "intromission", outlining a hypothesis to the genesis of a cruel superego in Laplanche's terms.

References:

1. Laplanche, J. *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*. Basil Blackwell. 1989.
2. Laplanche, J. Three Meanings of the Term 'Unconscious'. In Calich JC and Hinz H (org.) *The Unconscious: Further Reflections* (IPA: Psychoanalytic Ideas and Applications). London, Karnac. 2007. Also In: Laplanche J. Three Meanings of the Term 'Unconscious' In. ____ *Freud and the Sexual*. NY, The unconscious in translation. 2011. Chap. X.

IV. The action of the Translating Activity

One of the most controversial and essential items of Laplanche's work concerns the nature and how the action of a translative activity takes place in the creation of individual meanings. In this module it will be possible to deepen this discussion and to understand its vicissitudes and obstacles.

Learning Objectives: At the end of this module participants will be able to discuss and define the concepts of "metabolization", the relationship between sexual enigmatic message and "significant tension" (concept derived from semiotics), limits of translation, as well as understanding the application of concepts. "saturation" and "unsaturation" to the Laplanche model.

References:

1. Calich, JC. The Translating Activity in Jean Laplanche's Theory of Generalized Seduction. Presented to the Porto Alegre Psychoanalytic Society. March, 2019.

V. Laplanche's principles of psychic functioning and his latest topic.

After the "originary translation", with the separation of translated messages from those untranslated, and the creation of the unconscious, successively, other internal spaces are formed. Each of these spaces will be discussed, with its characteristics, properties, dynamics, and relation to other spaces, and also the participation of language, cultural myths and symbols. Likewise, the subtleties of the necessary production of incomplete meaning, the loss of translation, a "Sexual Death drive" and the definition and effects of the après-coup in Laplanche's theory will be presented.

Learning objectives: At the end of this module, candidates will be able to recognize and describe the spaces of the "human soul" (enclaved unconscious, repressed unconscious, preconscious, and pseudo-unconscious of the myth-symbolic) as well as the Laplanchean principles of psychic functioning, including the role of language and of cultural myths and symbols. In addition, Candidates will be able to define and discuss the concepts of après-coup and "Sexual Death Drive" in the "Theory of Generalized Seduction".

References:

1. Laplanche, J. Three Meanings of the Term 'Unconscious'. In Calich JC and Hinz H (org.) *The Unconscious: Further Reflections* (IPA: Psychoanalytic Ideas and Applications). London, Karnac. 2007. Also In: Laplanche J. Three Meanings of the Term 'Unconscious' In. ____ *Freud and the Sexual*. NY, The unconscious in translation. 2011. Chap. X.
2. Laplanche, J. The So-Called 'Death Drive': A Sexual Drive. *Brit. J. Psychother.*, 2004. 20:455-471. Also In. _____. *Between Seduction and Inspiration: Man*. NY, The unconscious in translation. 2015.
3. Laplanche, J. Drive and Instinct: distinctions, oppositions, supports and intertwining. In. ____ *Freud and the Sexual*. NY, The unconscious in translation. 2011
4. Laplanche, J. Notes on après-coup. In. ____ *Between Seduction and Inspiration: Man*. NY, The unconscious in translation. 2015.

Recommended:

1. Laplanche, J. *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*. Basil Blackwell. 1989.

VI. Further development of Laplanche's theories

This module will take up some of the complementary ideas that are derived from the Theory of General Seduction. They are part of Laplanche's last publications and encompass polemical themes: masochism, a "Sexual death drive", the definition of gender before sexual influences, and the

inexistence of primal fantasies with the proposition that castration and Oedipus are narrative schemas from the pseudo-unconscious of the myth-symbolic.

Learning objectives: At the end of this module, candidates will be able to recognize and discuss some of the polemical themes derived from the “Theory of the General Seduction” mentioned above, as well as discuss Laplanche’s model for psychopathology.

References:

1. Laplanche, J. Masochism and the Theory of Generalized Seduction. In. ____ Essays on otherness. (Warwick Studies in European Philosophy). London. Routledge. 1999.
2. Laplanche, J. Castration and Oedipus as Codes and Narrative Schemas. In. ____ Freud and the Sexual. NY, The unconscious in translation. 2011.
3. Laplanche, J. Gender, Sex and the Sexual. A Sexual Drive. In. ____ Freud and the Sexual. NY, The unconscious in translation. 2011. ALSO
4. Laplanche, J. Incest and Infantile Sexuality. In. ____ Freud and the Sexual. NY, The unconscious in translation. 2011.