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TRAUMA AND THE NEGATIVE NARCISSISM IN BORDERLINE CASES*

TRAUMA Y EL NARCISISMO NEGATIVO EN LOS CASOS LÍMITE

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Abstract

This work emphasizes the deadly repetition as a psychic violence revealed by the issue of trauma. This theme is particularly important for the clinic of borderline cases. The Freudian idea that combines trauma and sexuality has existed since the beginnings of psychoanalysis. But are there different focuses along its work? How they can be related to borderline cases clinic? We are guided by the Freudian text called *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and by Andre Green's propositions on the subject, which concern: The Neutral, objectifying and deobjectifying functions and negative narcissism. From the moment Freud complexifies the notion of trauma so it evidences an excess of external stimuli and instinctual that cannot be part of the chain of psychic representation, Freud also reveals a particular mode of objectual-love: the pair sadism-masochism. But while this pair is still expression of Eros, Green's Neutral concept is the expression of what he calls negative narcissism. In both cases, the traumatic is a requirement of presentification.

Keywords: borderline, trauma, negative narcissism.

Resumen

Este trabajo hace énfasis en la repetición de cómo la violencia psíquica revela el trauma. Este tema es particularmente importante para la clínica de los casos límite. La idea freudiana de que combina el trauma y la sexualidad ha existido desde los comienzos del psicoanálisis. Pero ¿existen diferentes enfoques a lo largo de su trabajo? ¿Cómo pueden estar relacionados con la clínica de los casos límite? Nos guiamos por el texto freudiano llamado *Más allá del principio del placer* (1920) y por las proposiciones de Andre Green en el tema, que se refieren a la objetivación y deobjetivación, funciones neutrales y narcisismo negativo. Desde el momento en que Freud complejiza la noción de trauma por lo que evidencia un exceso de estímulos externos e instintivos que no pueden ser parte de la cadena de la representación psíquica, Freud también revela un modo particular de amor objetual: el par sadismo-masoquismo. Pero mientras este par sigue siendo expresión de Eros, el concepto Neutral de Green es la expresión de lo que él llama narcisismo negativo. En ambos casos, el trauma es un requisito.

Palabras clave. Límite, trauma, narcisismo negativo.

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Introduction

Setting the opening of a conference named *Conceptualizations and Limits* on August 25th, 1986; André Green (1990) stated that the breakthrough in Psychoanalysis was Freud. As Freud being a novelty in Psychoanalysis is a hardly original statement, we would complete: Freud beyond his understanding on the pleasure principle. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920/2006), Freud invites us to go one step further, in fact, one step beyond the understanding of psyche, questioning the sovereignty of the pleasure principle. According to Gay (1988), Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920/2006), *Group Psychology and analysis of the Ego* (1921/1996), and *The Ego and the Id* (1923/2007) show the structural system of the psychic apparatus that Freud supports for the rest of his life.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920/2006), Freud is interested in discuss over certain phenomena that do not fit in the pleasure principle dynamics. What is beyond would be more archaic, more instinctual and would act independently from the pleasure principle. Such principle is considered a metapsychological construct that briefly describes how the psychic apparatus works to reduce the tension accumulated by the excess of excitations.

Costa (2003) states that *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* has as main objective to reorder the former division of death and life drives, leading attention to the facet of psychic life that tends to the destruction of subject and object. «Now, besides sexuality, the destruction will participate decisively in the explanation of mental mechanisms» (Costa, 2003, p. 29). This text, along with *Thoughts for the times on war and death* (1915/1996), *Civilization and its discontents* ([1930(1929)]/1996), and *Why War?* (1932/1996) deals with the violence that structurally plagues us.

Similarly, Cardoso (2010) states that the repetition compulsion, tone of the work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, «arises to try to explain the problem of violence in human subjectivity (at the individual level and also in culture)» (Cardoso, 2010, p. 56). That violence would be a hallmark of pathologies which are beyond the neurosis: the ones described in psychoanalytic literature as the borderline cases.

To Pontalis (1991), *Beyond the pleasure principle* announces a repetition of the same, where enjoyment and pain operate together. The repetition highlights the dimension of *the act* (reaction rather than action), which expresses a violent, traumatic force. Green (1988a) states that the true meaning of this text goes beyond the question of enjoyment and pain. The actual point is to show that the model that governs the psychic activity is a negative hallucinatory accomplishment of desire. And in this sense «displeasure is not the substitute of pleasure, but the Neutral is» (Green, 1988a, p.24). The desire finds «its accomplishment in the reproduction of hallucinatory perceptions that have become signs of satisfaction» (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1970, p.159) which shows the rudimentary presence of the psyche (Celes, 2004). In its turn, the negative hallucinatory accomplishment of desire is expressed by the non-desire. Green (1988b) tells us that the Neutral challenges the *traditional line of thought* as it speaks of «an anorexia of living» and a psychic death.

It's possible to observe that *Beyond the pleasure principle* (1920/2006) stands as a support to many interpretations, because it brings a redefinition of what is even considered to be psychic, or yet, what psychic is about. These interpreters of Freud's work have in common the idea that in his so-called theoretical turn», Freud rediscovers the importance of repetition in the basic constitution of psychic functioning. Moreover, this repetition is related to the repetition compulsion and to the death drive, its basic and constitutional vicissitudes. The deadly repetition appears in Freud's thinking at the heart of a fundamental drive conflict which brings into play the most primitive forms of psychic activity, something beyond the relation between pleasure-displeasure.

According to the exposed, it will be shown in this paper the problem of repetition as a psychic violence revealed by the issue of trauma. This issue, by its instance, is related to the presence of an excess of external and also internal drive stimuli, which cannot take part in the chain of representations, neither in the apparatus of psychic bearing, and then reappears in the form of a repetition compulsion. This issue gains importance when we draw attention for what in today's psychoanalytic clinic has been named as *casos-limite* or borderline cases. There

is a consensus among the statement of Garcia (2005) that «the contingencies of subjectification present nowadays have a *traumatic effect* on the subjective constitution» (Garcia, 2005, p.143, emphasis added).

As one redeems the various meanings of trauma in Freud's work, it is clear that the idea of trauma is constitutive of psychic birth. In the same way, thinking about the relationship between current subjectivity and trauma is thinking about the quality of trauma experienced by the subjects nowadays: factors, external and internal to the subject, that «hinder the possibility of assimilation and psychic elaboration (and) precipitates, on the other hand, a disinterested reaction» (García, 2005, p. 145). The Freudian idea that combines trauma and sexuality has existed since the beginnings of psychoanalysis. But what are the differences in this idea throughout Freud's work? How to relate his work to the clinic of borderline cases? André Green's propositions regarding the effects of *traumatic conditions* over the *psychic constitution* in our days will also be considered.

This work is guided by the Freudian text called *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920/2006), one of the texts that consolidate the «theoretical turn» of 1920 and where the explanation of the new theory of drives lies. In this new turn, the ideas of psychic violence and trauma, now seen through the excess of drive and through the limits of representation, return in the theory and allow an opening to the understanding of other clinical configurations besides the neurosis. Cardoso (2010) believes that this return brings a more radical dimension, where the phenomenon of repetition compulsion appears linked to *the need for punishment by the strand of masochism*. But this radicalism is also related to the concepts of deobjectifying function and negative narcissism proposed by Green (1988b).

We start with the assumption that there are, in Freud's work, complex attempts to understand the psychic organizations and those enable us to dialogue with and to think of the clinic of borderline cases of our times. We understand that Freud's work has built the scope that is enabling psychoanalysts to support and include this clinic in their practice. Moreover, we consider greatly relevant the contribution of André Green, in referral to his understanding and reinterpretation of Freud's legacy on the theme.

On the clinic of borderline cases: contextualization

There are numerous publications that discuss the existence of a subject threatened in its narcissistic integrity and about the traumatic experience. The compulsive processes, which are often expressed as addictions, appear as the subject seeks manners to protect himself against short-termism. What is ephemeral stands out and brings with it the promise of satisfying desires always insatiable by definition. It is a mode of operation focused on the purchase and acquisition rather than in productivity. The subject ingests compulsively and excessively —products, images and information— but do not know how to digest them (Bauman, 2001; Birman, 2006; Baudrillard, 2008; Debord, 2009).

Garcia (2005) says that the discomfort of today differs from that presented by Freud in 1930. While the Freudian was marked by guilt, conflict, and by the importance of repression; our times present subjects submerged into the sense of emptiness and indifference, or dominated by feelings of failure and by the requirement of autonomy. The discussion of the author reaches the category of Freudian trauma and also the concepts of deobjectifying function and negative narcissism from André Green.

Especially sensitive to trauma, the subject of our times makes a drive disinvestment in the form of a negative narcissism as a defensive reaction to the current conditions of subjectivity ie, a defensive reaction against the excess of stimulation and the urgent demands. Each subject must deal with a complexity for which he does not own equally complex apparatus of psychic symbolization. This inadequacy has a direct impact on the ability for action and representation.

Figueiredo (2003) asserts that modernity has led us to think about trauma and dissociation as figures able to directly affect the subjectivity processes in contemporary world. The senses, always transient, and the repeated attempts of classification and organization have made necessary (evident) the ambiguity and the traumatic experience. The subject, moved temporarily to a condition of chaos, experiences himself on a state of non-defensive exposition at the presence of an object that places him in a passive, infantile position.

Therefore, in addition to repression, the splitting also became way to highlight the unbearable in human experience. The unbearable, understood in this work as the experience of the dissolution or, if we go a step further, as an experience of death which, in its life presentation, indicates a temporary lack of limits and boundaries. If the idea of repression refers to the idea of castration anxiety and to the evidence of a lack, the splitting refers to an experience of a drive excess by means of presence and *absence*. Presence and absence of the primary object and also *presence* of an excess of drive and *absence* of a psychic apparatus capable to order the excess in trails.

And the clinic, as a privileged instrument to observe the psychic illnesses, has presented the challenge of dealing with nuclei far regressed on subjects apparently neurotic. What current literature call borderline cases have required psychoanalysts to revisit the traumatic events, going further on the understanding and deepening on the main premises of the drive theories; to make a clinic that is engaged to the understanding of the psychic birth and what would be able to (re)found this psychic.

Related to issues of trauma and repetition, we have found that are prior and below the constitution of the psychic conflict. We are dealing with restated ways of understanding the origins of mental life. Desire and trauma, by the paths of rebuilt memory and repetition in the act, both present the archaic in psychoanalysis and date back to the origin of the psyche. (Carvalho, 2011; Celes, 2004; Chabert, 2008; Figueiredo 2003; Figueiredo, 2009; Green, 2001; Green, 2008).

The clinic of borderline cases indicates the problems of mental constitutions of both internal and external borders. If the internal borders require an understanding of the psychic apparatus beyond the division unconscious/conscious (first topic), the external borders require a focus on the constitution of the psychic apparatus (second topic).

The need, in borderline cases, of an increased focus on formation of the psychic apparatus rather than on the issues of desire, points to the very process of formation of thought. The thought inquires itself through someone who asks the question and enables its own constitution. Unlike the desire that, in principle, cannot be accomplished, the formation of mental apparatus

through the presence of the other must be achieved. One can say that questioning and specially answering becomes the subject, as it provides him with contours and territoriality. This is something that is engendered in a constant attempt to completion: to think, as to desire, is constantly becoming.

Beyond the pleasure principle: On «beyond»

In a letter to Ferenczi dated March 19, 1919, Freud claims to have finished an article with an enigmatic title: Beyond the pleasure principle. As stated by Figueiredo (1999, p.52): «perfectly enigmatic and carrying metaphysical resonances, not to say esoteric ones-» beyond «... how far and mysterious are we launched to ?». And completes in the same paragraph: «It's like he was not the author of this title that sounds uneasily strange to him». Something in that title is not recognized as his own words». The enigma that lies on the title confirms that the psychic origin is formed into a duality of forces that integrate and separate in relations of opposition, complementarity, and also of difference. What seems to be beyond the pleasure principle is learnt through the experience itself, rather than in words, and bothers the author as something strange.

Monzani (1989) poses a question: «Is there a text more confused, more disorienting, more embarrassing, and fuller of pitfalls and contradictions than *Beyond the Pleasure Principle?*» (p.144). In his turn, Gay (1988) stated that this is a difficult text: «the prose is clear as ever, although the high concentration of new ideas in such few lines offers disturbing obstacles to an easy comprehension by the reader» (p. 166).

In fact, it is not an easy reading text. To begin with, many are the inquiries to the status of that *step beyond*. Among the questioners, Caropreso and Simanke (2006) refer readers to the work of Freud called *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1905 [1895]) in order to demonstrate that the metapsychology found in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920/2007) was already nuanced in the manuscript from 1895. The authors believe that Freud went a step further by returning to the origins of his own metapsychology, resuming some notions that were left in the background while passing from the ideas contained in the *Project...* (1905 [1895]) to the conception develop-

ped in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900 [1901]). Freud replaces the pain from the neurotic trauma for the issue of repressed desire generating significant changes.

According to the authors, «the theory of sexuality, of which the concept of drive is the most significant metapsychological expression, and the theory of narcissism, that makes undelayable the elaboration of the concept of Ego and precipitates the review of the first topic drive duality» (Caropreso & Simanke, 2006, p. 16) return to the forefront of metapsychological reflection in the aftermath of the most important developments of the period between 1900 and 1920. All this process will culminate in 1920, in which context reappears the notion of repetition compulsion

Thus, one cannot say that the ideas contained in Freud's text of 1920 are entirely new. Considering the Freudian style, we can say that old ideas were receiving new interpretative statutes, reconfigurations. Freud, in a given moment of his text, says that «we have to admit that there is a strong tendency in the psyche towards the pleasure principle, but there are some other forces or circumstances that oppose to this trend» (Freud, 1920/2006, p.137).

In Freud, the reduction of tension is sometimes seen as a tendency to keep the amount of stimulation constant or as low as possible, and some other times it is described as a tendency to rid the psychic apparatus of any tension. According to Monzani (1989) there is a paradox in this theoretical construct, because at times it seems to be at the service of life, a guardian of life, and at times it seems to be in the service of death, of decathexis, of the outflow of the internal tensions and excitations.

Freud (1920/2006) believes that the principle of pleasure –pleasure and displeasure– operates in accordance with the principle of reality, the last is considered to be a modification of the first. And so that the psychic functioning operates satisfactorily, it is necessary to separate the drives whose goals are intolerable for the formation of the Ego integration through the process of repression. The repressed impulses, in turn, will continue in their pursuit of satisfaction through substitute pathways and will be usually experienced as unpleasant. For Freud, all neurotic displeasure is a pleasure that cannot be felt as such. So far, there is nothing to be considered *beyond*.

There are several examples mentioned by Freud in attempts to demonstrate the existence of other forces beyond those which account to the pleasure principle: the dreams that lead people back to a traumatic situation of which one cannot say that they are memories of realizations of repressed desires; the famous game *fort-da*, where his grandson tirelessly repeated the act of disappearing and reappearing with a wooden spool rolled with a string, action interpreted by Freud as an attempt of the child to turn the passive experience of the painful disappearance of a parent in an empowerment active of this original experience, enabling the reassurance of the psychic experience of disappearance and return; the transference relationship, which allows repetitive expression of the repressed infantile material as if it were a present experience; and the simultaneous support, during the management of transference, of the resistances from the egoic organization which try to prevent the unpleasant release of repressed content.

However, it does not seem so simple to explain the existence of forces that act beyond the pleasure principle. Note that *the activity* is the main topic, but at each new step taken by Freud in an attempt to show his thesis, the more he steps back and says that the phenomenon described may also be related to the pleasure principle. He was once more in the exercise of his arduous task of describing an idea that is not in the field of description, but in the field of apprehension, characteristic of all metapsychology.

Freud (1920/2006) notes that *the repetitive action of the drives, coercion* (compulsion) that forces a repetition, an «eternal return of the same,» is found in the life of *neurotic* and *non-neurotic* subjects. There would be in the psychic life a *compulsion to repetition*, and it does not always seem to be subordinated to the pleasure principle. The difference is in the way a person experiences the repeated experience: if in an active or in a passive mode.

The «eternal return of the same» is not surprising when it follows an *active* attitude. But the repetitive experience in the *passive* mode obeys the repetition compulsion without being related to the pleasure principle and it happens in what Freud called destination neurosis. Until that theoretical moment, the repetition compulsion was present in Freud's work through the obsessive neurosis, which repetitions are associated to the interdictions to

the repressed desires. From 1920, and particularly in 1924 with the development of the Idea of masochism, the repetition compulsion binds to a need for punishment.

In an attempt to take a step further in his work, He refers to *excitations from outside which, when excessive, are able to break through the protective shield responsible for cushion excitations and then penetrate into the deeper layers of psyche. In these circumstances, the pleasure principle is put out of action and the excess of excitement is experienced as traumatic.*

As described, «the shield makes that the energies of the outside world can only get forward to the next layer, located just below –and who remained alive– in a small fraction of its intensity» (Freud, 1920/2006, p.151). Since, in humans, the sensory organs are responsible for protecting the body against excessive amounts of external stimuli, it can be stated that *the excess of external information may be able to distort or even block the sensory, perceptual and motor functions of the subjects. What would be beyond?*

The return to the idea of trauma and one step beyond

Laplanche and Pontalis (1970) claim about the existence of different moments in the understanding of the trauma concept in the course of Freud's work. In a letter to Josef Breuer of 06.29.1892 and published in *Sketches for the 'Preliminary Communication'* (1893a[(1940-41 [1892]])/1996], Freud says that the element always present in a hysterical attack is the return of a traumatic memory and provides a definition of psychic trauma, «turns to psychic trauma impression that the entire nervous system has difficulty in abolishing through associative thinking or motor reaction» (Freud, [1893 (1940-41 [1892]]) / 1996, p.196).

In the article entitled «*On the psychical mechanism of hysterical phenomena*» (1893b/1996), Freud declares publicly that «*there is a total analogy between traumatic paralysis and common hysteria, non-traumatic*» (p.40, emphasis added) and that both are determined by remarkable affective experiences (a violent affect). He says then, that every hysteria can be seen as traumatic hysteria and that any trauma implies an underlying psychic trauma.

If a traumatic affection does not bind to any representation, remains a psychic trauma.

Freud presents the etiological influences of neurosis in his article entitled *Heredity and the etiology of neuroses* (1896a/1996), in which he establishes a close relationship between the onset of a neurosis and sexual trauma, because he recognizes the existence of sexual influences in all cases of neurosis. In hysterical and obsessive neurosis, the unconscious memory related to sexual life has two important characteristics: it is «*an early experience of sexual relations with real excitement of genitals, resulting from a sexual abuse committed by another person, and this event occurs in the period of childhood*» (Freud, 1896a/1996, p. 151, emphasis added).

Freud speaks of «a brutal assault committed by an adult» and speaks of «seduction» as forms of abuse. At this point, Freud believed that trauma occurs at first, but due to the precocity of the event, it is preserved as psychic trace and reappears at puberty. «What happens is the action of a posthumous sexual trauma» (Freud, 1896a/1996, p.152). The pathogenic factor is not the trauma itself, but its memory.

In his study of *The Etiology of hysteria* (1896b/1996), Freud abandons his belief in the veracity of the situations experienced by children in their earliest childhood and later remembered by the adult in analysis. As explained in his letter 69 to Fliess (1897), it was impossible that all parents had committed actual sexual abuse of their children. Freud takes then a new path, the path of fantasy. It is the child who fantasies the scenes of seduction. This inversion changes considerably the meaning of trauma, as it allows thinking of trauma and psychic directions, paving the way for the concept of psychic reality.

Only in 1920, on *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud complexifies and retakes the idea of trauma that comes from an external event and from the drives that are yet in a free state, typical of the primary process. The dreams of those who have traumatic neurosis are not in the service of fulfillment of desires: «It is then assumed that such dreams might lend themselves to another task *that must precede* the start of the sovereignty of the pleasure principle» (Freud, 1920/2006, p. 156, emphasis added). If in the development of his first trauma theory Freud binds trauma, desire and fantasy,

now he develops a second theory in which he is able to reinclude the dimension of pain in traumatic events.

Freud (1920/2006) is interested in distinguishing a physical trauma from a psychic trauma. In the former case, there is a real object (the body) and a narcissistic cathexis that directs the excess of sexual libido released at the time of the shock, in the second case, the fright derived from the shock releases an excess of sexual libido (unbound infantile experiences) which, in the absence of the object, remains free and without the possibility of runoff. More than the accident itself, traumatic is the excess of free unlinked energy.

The repetition compulsion indicates, thereby, the work of the psychic apparatus to process [*bewältigen*] or bind [*binden*], in the level of the primary process, impulses derived from an excess of excitations from outside or from the drives, which operate with free and mobile energy. The drives are «the representatives of all actions of the forces that arise within the body and are transmitted to the psychic apparatus» (Freud, 1920/2006, p.158). But a drive cannot be observed directly. It is the *repetition compulsion as an act* that allows the revelation of the drive.

We can observe that both the excess of external impulses that invade the psychic apparatus and the impulses from the internal drives can cause traumatic disruption if not properly processed or, in Freudian terms, bound. The manifestation of the repetition compulsion also displays thus «a highly instinctual nature» (Freud, 1920/2006, p.159). And the trauma may be triggered by factors both external and internal to the organism.

Another conception of trauma appears in the Freudian text called *Inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety* (1926 [1925]). In this text Freud associates the issue of trauma to the child's mental *helplessness*, triggered by the separation from the mother: «For the child, as a result of lack of understanding the facts, the situation of missing his mother is not a dangerous situation, but a traumatic situation» (Freud, 1926 [1925]/1996, p. 165). Note that the trauma is not triggered by the separation from the mother per se, but as a result of the incomprehension, by the child, of this separation.

By stating that the separation from an object must be painful, Freud questions if the separation of an

object produces anxiety, grief or just pain. For Freud, the pain experienced in the mental sphere is a real reaction to the loss of the object, while anxiety is a reaction to the danger which that loss entails. The transition from physical pain to mental pain corresponds to a change from narcissistic cathexis to object cathexis. «An object representation that is highly cathected by the drive need plays the same role as a body part cathected by an increased stimulus. The continuous nature of the process cathectic and the inability to stop it produce the same mental state of helplessness» (Freud, 1926 [1925], p.166).

The narcissistic cathexis is thus physical and requires a libidinal investment in the body itself. In turn, the object-cathexis is mental and involves libidinal investment in an object representation. And both processes can be traumatic. However, if we think that this is a text from 1926, when there was already the idea of the Ego libidinally invested as an object, we can think that this transition pointed out by Freud not only brought a change from narcissistic cathexis to object cathexis, as it brought the possibility of thinking about a narcissistic object cathexis and a cathexis of the narcissistic object.

In the first case, it is assumed that the part of the body that is cathected by increased stimulus can be anyone that is invested libidinally. And in the second case, it is assumed that the representation of object cathected by drive need is the Ego itself, the egoic body. We can think that the experience of body fragmentation is as traumatic as the experience of an imprisonment in one's own psychic body. Here we can see nuanced some of the descriptions found when studying the borderline cases. We can also think that the two possibilities show experiences of helplessness and experiences of analysis.

Returning to Freud's work of 1920, it was mentioned a transition from physical trauma to psychic trauma, and, considering the notion of psychic trauma, it can either be originated from an excess of excitations from outside, by breaking the protection shield, or from within, both producing a state of «mental helplessness». In this cases, the task of the psychic apparatus to process [*bewältigen*] or bind [*binden*] the excitement would have priority, not in opposition to the pleasure principle, but operating independently of him

and, in part, without taking it into account (Freud, 1920/2006, p.158).

Thereby, we can think that beyond the pleasure principle *are the unlinked drive forces*, that have a *traumatic effect*, and whose quality is the helplessness, and that are below the *Bindung*.

The drive, the traumatic and the repetition compulsion

Freud wonders on the nature of the relation between the drives and the compulsion to repeat. Until then, we had in mind that the drive is a force that leads to the change and the new; but Freud radicalizes and tells us that all the organic drives aim at restoring a previous state. The organic drives are conservative and compel to repetition, seeking a steady return of the same. The repetition speaks, thus, about the drive work itself. He then adds that «organic evolution is due to the action of disturbing and deviant external forces» (Freud, 1920/2006, p. 161).

The same route would be constantly repeated if there was not the action of external forces. Life is aroused from inanimate matter, but requires external elements to its birth and continuity. It is by this thinking that Freud comes to the expression: «*The inanimate existed before the living*» (Freud, 1920/2006, p.161, emphasis added). But Freud has difficulty showing how the life drive (Eros) may be conservative, considering that is always seeking to go beyond itself. Similarly, he found the difficulty to prove, in the case of sexual drive, «the existence of a character typical of the repetition compulsion [*Wiederholungszwang*]» (Freud, 1920/2006, p.176).

There is a drive type that works towards the return to the inanimate state and is called by Freud of Ego-Drives, which drive toward death. Similarly, there are the life drives (Eros) or sexual drives, which works to preserve the «correct way to die», they shall provide for the maintenance of life and they long for a state never before achieved. These drives work to postpone death, as they lengthen the chains that sustain life. The life drive (Eros) could not only unite split off parts, as the only possibility to make it whole again is throwing itself on a work of blending differences together by making

germinate something new, not yet known. The death drive instead works on keeping the peace at the expense of the destruction of any alterity.

There would be a compromise between these two forces. The work of Eros acts in pursuit of a move beyond, consequently producing the death of the same/old. But at the same time it works in the service of order maintenance, a process that needs to be repeated: life itself. Life drives (Eros) throw themselves to death to reach their self-preservation. The death drive destroys anything in the order of preservation of life, seeking to exclude any stimulus that is external to its inertia.

With this argument, we have attained the new Freudian reorganization of life and death drives. Freud groups the Ego drive and the sex drive as life drives (Eros). The Ego leaves from the condition of a purely repressing instance and is now also considered to be the true and original reservoir of libido. To reach the object, it would have to leave this reservoir. «Therefore, the Ego became part of our list of sexual objects, and we soon realized it was the most important of these objects. We then proceeded to call narcissistic the entire libido which is housed in the Ego» (Freud, 1920/2006, p. 173). The ego starts to be considered both a reservoir of libido and an object of libido. And the guiding principle from that libido is the objectual love.

The opposition life and death reaches the dimensions of the object and of love. He highlights a particular mode of objectual love, the pair sadism-masochism, as an expression of the death drive. This is a possessive love that must be *overcome and destroyed*. Perhaps this is the ultimate expression of the erotic drive in its narcissistic and negative bias. This is because the object is no longer an object of love, but an object of possession, disqualified and dehumanized.

Sadism is capable of trying to destroy the alterity or any stimulation from the outside world. Masochism, in turn, could try to make the Ego destroy itself, as it would be understood as the return of the hate toward itself in order to merge with the other. In both cases there is an attempt to destroy alterity. It is worth supporting this argumentation about sadism and masochism in metapsychological dimension, so that we can understand this reasoning as an attempt to comprehend

not only the clinical phenomena that show the power of love and hate in such perverse mode, but also the functioning of life and death drives.

From this pulsional duality (1920) and also from the Freudian ideas about the defusion of the drives in severe neuroses (1923), Green (1988a) brings the idea that Freud lacked to develop a relationship between narcissism and death drive, which he proposed to call negative narcissism. Green proposes the idea that the essential goal of life drives (Eros) is to guarantee an *objectifying function*. In contrast, the essential goal of the death drives is to ensure a *deobjectifying function* through unbinding.

Green also proposes the hypothesis that the essential goal of life drives (Eros) is to ensure an *objectifying function*, whose main effect is to perform symbolization. The idea of such a function is to extend the objectalizing processes to the various modes of mental activity, so that «in the limit, it is the investment itself that is objectified» (Green, 1988b, p.65). Likewise, the goal of the death drive is to perform a *deobjectifying function* through what he calls the disconnection (unbound). «This qualification allows us to understand that is not only the relationship with the object that is attacked, but all of its substitutes - the self, for example, and the investment itself, to the extent that it suffered an objectalizing process (Green, 1988b, p. 65).

Green (1988b) makes an association between the deobjectifying function and what he calls negative narcissism (directly related to what we saw as the Neutral category ie, an aspiration to reach zero excitation). In such cases, what overlap is a sense of psychic death (negative hallucination of the Ego) and sometimes a threat of loss of inner and outer reality, which has a direct impact on mental functioning. This last becomes depleted and unable to make connections (symbolizations). With the damaged psychic functioning, we can see that Eros or love loses its strength to aggressive and violent forces that are present in the relationship with the primary object and in the autoeroticism.

For the author, the deobjectifying function cannot be confused with mourning. The first is a procedure more radical, since opposed to the grief work «that is at the center of the transformation processes characteristic of the objectifying function». Therefore, grief

and masochism are still expressions of Eros. The neutral expression of the deobjectifying function is labor of the destruction drive.

Masochism and the neutral: the work of Eros and of destruction drive

The study of masochism in Freud (1924) gains importance on the understanding of borderline cases because of the description from the pathological form of moral masochism it provides. In this specific mode of illness, the subject is caught up by a *repetitive need for punishment* and prevented to succeed in his own life. We can think in what Figueiredo (2003) calls «sabotage of pleasure» or «deauthorizing of the perceptual process».

Freud (1924) states that the danger of masochism derives from a double origin: a «source lies in the death drive, that portion of it which escaped from being directed outwards in the form of destruction drive, but on the other hand, (...) It also represents [*Bedeutung*] an erotic component» (Freud, 1924, p. 115). He shows that even in cases of self-destruction a specific mode of libidinal satisfaction is present.

Green (1993/2010) claims that Freud opened the concept of masochism in «form of the triptych», which means «its origin in the sexuality (in its relationship to pain, but with the possibility of inversion that ensures the supremacy of pain as a condition of enjoyment), reversal of phallic sexual value, ‘subversion of the moral order» (Green, 1993/2010, p. 107). Masochism as a form of perversion can maintain the subject in an unfortunate state, because the more he is injured, the more he can be strengthened, to the point of becoming invulnerable.

In the text quoted above, called *The economic problem of masochism* (1924), Freud introduces a new idea on masochism. He had already written about masochism in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), *Drives and its vicissitudes* (1915) and *A Child Is Being Beaten* (1919). The difference is that, if masochism was first understood as a derivative of previous sadism, now it stands as the idea that there is a primary or erotogenic masochism.

With the understanding of the phenomenon of masochism in the metapsychology sphere, Freud (1924) states that «when the pain and displeasure no longer have the usual function of alarms and (...) beco-

me desired goals, the pleasure principle [*Lustprinzip*] is *totally out of combat* ie, the guardian of our psychic life is paralyzed» (Freud, 1924, p. 105, emphasis added). And it's about the idea of *totally* that Freud manages to do a reassessment on the pleasure derived from or associated with pain, a *violence* that the subject repeatedly imputes against himself, but whose psychic organization («cause») is unconscious to him.

He says that the excitations derived from the pain and the displeasure must also be added to the excitement of the sexual drives. This is a physiological excitatory infantile mechanism, archaic. It is on this physiological basis that sadism would be formed and differentiates from original and erogenous masochism. Being the death drive more originary, it would be up to the libido the role of expelling the destructive drive of the organism, preventing the subject from entering in a state of «inorganic stability» (death).

Separated, Eros and destruction drives remain archaic characteristics of a time in which they were merged. Separated, sadism and original masochism find different paths. The sadism is projected out and may return to its former condition as a secondary masochism, and original masochism would remain inside the organism. It would be the portion of death drive that remained in the body, amalgamated to the sexual excitement that binds pain and pleasure.

The moral masochism, derived from feminine masochism, and therefore from a need to be punished because of an unlawful act committed, is characterized by the destruction drive force acting *violently* against the «own Self [Selbst]» (Freud, 1924, p.111). Driven by a need for punishment, the suffering itself is what matters. The moral masochism has its importance because it is directly related to what we took, from the ideas of Green (1986), as the archaic assumption: its relationship to the superego, which holds the function of moral conscience.

According to Freud (1924), the Ego sees in the Superego a model to follow because it is representative of both the Id and the outside world. The superego brings the story of moral values internalized by the subject in his early childhood from parental figures. The introjected prohibitions return by a desire for punishment and suffering. Both would function like a limit to

everything that is still present in the subject and overtake the dictates of morality.

It is possible here to think of all the maneuvers performed by borderline cases to boycott their own capacity for achievement, including attacking their own desire and sense of reality. But Green (1988b) makes a difference between the Freudian moral masochistic and the moral narcissistic of nowadays. If the masochist lives haunted by guilt, the narcissist lives steeped in shame. If the guilt speaks on a subject persecuted for wanting what he cannot, even unconsciously, shame is a way in which the subject deals with his own limits, with his own excess or his own lack.

From the moral narcissism, it is possible to think about the category proposed by Green (1988b) and called Neutral. In moral masochism, the target of desire is pain and suffering. In moral narcissism, the search is for not wanting as a way to get rid of the evil powers of Destiny and the punishment of the superego. The neutral would aim for the a-sexuality, understood as a defensive position against a psychic bisexuality, supportive of gender difference.

In this sense, can we also think that, beyond the pleasure principle, what rules the psychic activity is the principle of Neutral instead? And that the Neutral is constituted of a non-sexuality? «The Neutral is the area of impartiality in the intellect invoked by Freud when he postulated the existence of the death drive» (Green, 1988b, p.21), the metaphor of returning to an inanimate state. «The Ego petrification aims the anesthesia and the inertia found in psychic death» (Green, 1988b, p.24). The inertia in psychic death is a relief from all desire, against every source of decentering and anguish. Undoubtedly, it is also about the death of him-self.

The neutral is related to the concept of negative narcissism: «it is the dark double of the unitary Eros from positive narcissism» (Green, 1988a, p. 41) which seeks a regressive return to the zero point. For the author, the negative narcissism is different from masochism. The difference is that masochism is a painful condition that aims the pain and its maintenance as the only possible form of existence. «Inversely, the negative narcissism addresses the absence, the anesthesia, the blank, whether this blank invests affection (indiffe-

rence), representation (the negative hallucination) or thought (white psychosis)» (Green, 1988a, p. 41).

It is about an ascesis in an attempt to create a space for self-sufficiency and the extinction of any excitement, any desire, and therefore any decentering, anguish and trauma. «Caught between the double and the half, only the Zero seems safe. But so that the Zero can be, it is necessary to name it, to write it, and then the ineliminable One reappears, below it» (Green, 1988a, p.237). Just as the desire of completion is never fully satisfied, the aim of not desiring is not successful either.

One comment of the Brazilian publisher preceding a Freud's text called *The Ego and the Id* (1923) presents the idea of a neutral gender in Psychoanalysis and allows us to think that, with the existence of the neutral category, the subject will have to deal with issues beyond his own desire, or with issues unfamiliar to him, that cross him through. The editor says, about the neutral gender in psychoanalysis, that «*the das Es is characterized as an entity, a psychic authority, which is both a repository as it is a psychic source from which manifest all Triebe, Dränge and we Zwänge that plague us*» (Hanns, 2007, p.20, emphasis added).

Note that the neutral gender *Es* brings up the question of the constitution of the Ego. It speaks of a psychic instance that is the subject itself and at the same time, it is contained in it. That flows from him and crosses him, but simultaneously it is strange to him. It evokes the drive impulses that bring the issues at times of repetition, at times of destruction, but also issues of the synthesis and the satisfaction of necessities. We can think that, besides the drive-object relationship (sexuality), we may also find the relationship between the neutral and the object (a-sexuality), understood as non-sexuality.

Retaking the idea of Green mentioned above, the Neutral, and not the displeasure, replaced the pleasure. Therefore, how can we think about the relationship between the Ego and the object? How can we think about borderline cases, the ones that present a narcissistic fragility as a symptom?

In the context of the first topic (conscious, pre-conscious, unconscious), whose model is based on the interpretation of dreams there is not the object exactly, because there is no external world. The world is internal, closed on itself, and it is a world of representations (thing representation and word representation) and char-

ges, investments and divestments. It is a world where representations are invested or divested by the libido.

The «quasi-object» is the object of drive and it searches for pulsional satisfaction, its own depletion. It responds to a model called hallucinatory realization of desire. This model assumes a «prevalent enrollment, sufficiently attested by traces of an experience of satisfaction that serves a reference, 'if necessary', through the use of representation (hallucinatory realization) of such experience of satisfaction as a goal to achieve to recover calmness» (Green, 1993/2010, p.196). It opposes conservation and sexuality, as it answers the hunger (self-preservation) and sexuality too (pleasure of sucking).

Under the second topic (Id, Ego, superego), Freud expands the notion of the psychic apparatus and includes the external world, the world of objects. Freud considers that the libido must seek actual objects that can satisfy it by making paths to the drive. The Ego, as the first internal object, is constituted *in the experience itself*, in relation to the external object. The Ego is born and tries to control the pulsional movement. From this we can deduce that the birth of the Ego, its narcissistic defenses, «represent, among other things, the forced attempt of the ego to 'internalize', circumscribe the area of its traumatic history» (Cardoso, 2010, p 55), which was to sustain the experience of alterity. In borderline cases, the support of this experience is experienced «through violent 'anxiety', agonizing over the threat of abandonment that comes paradoxically combine with despair at risk of being invaded, engulfed by the other» (Cardoso, 2010, p. 55).

We are entitled to think that the subject finds himself *trapped in his own traumatic experience of self constitution*, a persistent action to stay alive. We may think that this is a defense mechanism against the idea of an Ego that, in order to be strengthened and desiring should also be punished. He survives in the negative, in an a-sexuality, not to be negatived. But we also think that it is not about defense purely, but it is also an attempt of subscription of what has been experienced and that cannot be remembered as a screen memory (Freud, 1899), reappearing as trauma.

The screen memory has peculiarities that make it distinct of a memory. The first peculiarity is that it is provided with resistance. It means that what remains

as a memory image does not match the relevant experience in the subject's life. The strengths of memory and resistance to the memory, in such opposition, create a resistance to one another and form a third conciliator of the existence of both. There are records of an image that does not correspond to the elements of experience. This image is displaced and seemingly trivial. Experience keeps its force of expression displaced from its essential elements (Carvalho & Viana, 2009).

Another peculiarity is that the subject appears as an object among other objects of memory, denoting that he is also an observer of the scene. If he is observant, one can deduce that it is a constructed scene, whose law is to express an unconscious content on an infantile image which, because of its innocence, its obviousness, can manifest. Freud says: «It's like if a childhood mnemonic trace is translated in a plastic and visual form at a later time - the time of awakening of the scene. However, the original impression is not reproduced and has never penetrated the consciousness of the subject» (Freud, 1899, p. 303).

The subject is an observer of the scene, but he is also captured by it. He has forgotten how he constituted this scene. He has forgotten that we all are scene observers, prisoners of modernity, rendered into objects even to ourselves. He remains, then, slave of an infantile fantasy, the slave of a past time that does not pass. This is exactly what Freud points out in *Creative writers and day-dreaming* (Freud, 1908 [1907]), as something that the adult is ashamed of. It is no longer a children's play and it has become a childish fantasy that imprisoned him (Carvalho & Viana, 2009).

The memory of trauma cannot be mediated by remembrance, as it is not registered in a chain of representation and symbolization. According to Maldonado and Cardoso (2009), what is destroyed on borderline subjects is not the content of experience, but *the links* that allow the construction of a story from that experience. This results on fragmentation of the integrity of the Ego. In this case, «the memories are not screen memories related to repression, but memories concerning the cleavage as a mechanism that promotes fragmentation and division of the Ego into incommunicable parts» (Maldonado & Cardoso, 2009).

For all the above, we can say that the trauma is condition of constitution of the subject: It can be either

through an excess of external stimuli –and also internal, drive stimuli– that cannot be part of the chain of psychic representation (Freud, 1920); or by means of «subversion of the time that sexuality introduces in the subjectification process» (Celes, 1999, p. 02). In both cases, «the traumatic presents itself as a requirement of presentification» (Maldonado & Cardoso, 2009, p. 53). Either to make a past pass or to (re)construct a past capable of future.

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