

## A METAPSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS ABOUT THE COMPULSION TOWARDS REPETITION AND ITS THERAPEUTIC POTENTIALITIES

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**ABSTRACT.** Phenomena associated with repetition compulsion appear in the psychoanalytic clinic revealing a pain the patient knows nothing about, but which imposes as a relentless fate. Sharing the opinion of some psychoanalysts about therapeutic potentialities inscribed in the compulsion repetition and aware of the difficulties involved in their theoretical justification, this article sought to explain the conceptual framework necessary to understand the process underlying such phenomena. Thus, starting from a conceptual research, we aimed to explain the metapsychological phenomena inscribed in repetition, providing a new understanding of important aspects of the Freudian work. Therefore, the article develops the idea that disruptive energies present in repetition compulsion when subjected to connection carried out by the 'Self', a secondary process par excellence, articulated to the notions of drive fusion and defusion, available in texts from the mature stage of Freud's reflections, allows to shed light on obscure processes underlying the phenomena in question.

**Keywords:** Repetition compulsion; binding; psychoanalytic clinic.

## UMA LEITURA METAPSICOLÓGICA SOBRE A COMPULSÃO À REPETIÇÃO E SUAS POTENCIALIDADES TERAPÊUTICAS

**RESUMO.** Fenômenos associados à compulsão à repetição apresentam-se na clínica psicanalítica como reveladores de uma dor da qual o paciente nada sabe dizer, mas que se impõe como um destino implacável. Partilhando da opinião de alguns psicanalistas sobre as potencialidades terapêuticas inscritas na compulsão à repetição e cientes das dificuldades que envolvem a sua justificação teórica, este artigo busca aclarar a trama conceitual da metapsicologia que pode vir a embasar tal compreensão. Desse modo, partindo de uma pesquisa conceitual, objetivamos explicitar os fenômenos metapsicológicos que estão inscritos na repetição, propiciando uma releitura de aspectos importantes da obra freudiana. Assim, o artigo desenvolve a ideia de que as energias disruptivas presentes na compulsão à repetição, ao serem submetidas ao trabalho de ligação realizado pelo 'Eu', um processo secundário por excelência, articulado às noções de fusão e des fusão pulsionais, presentes em textos da etapa madura das reflexões de Freud, permite lançar alguma luz sobre processos obscuros subjacentes aos fenômenos em tela.

**Palavras-chave:** Compulsão à repetição; ligação; clínica psicanalítica.

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## **LAS POTENCIALIDADES TERAPÉUTICAS INSCRITAS EN LA COMPULSIONA LA REPETICIÓN Y ALGUNAS JUSTIFICACIONES METAPSICOLÓGICAS.**

**RESUMEN.** Fenómenos asociados a la compulsión a la repetición se presentan en la clínica psicoanalítica como reveladores de un dolor del cual el paciente nada sabe decir, pero que se impone como un destino implacable. Compartiendo la opinión de algunos psicoanalistas en las potencialidades terapéuticas inscritas en la repetición y conscientes de las dificultades que envuelven su justificación teórica, este artículo busca explicitar la trama conceptual metapsicológica que puede venir a embasar su comprensión. Así, empezando desde una búsqueda conceptual, tenemos como objetivo demostrar a los fenómenos metapsicológicos que se encuentran inscritos en la repetición, proporcionando una reinterpretación de importantes aspectos de la obra de Freud. Por lo tanto, este artículo desarrolla la idea de energías disruptivas encontradas en la compulsión hacia la repetición cuando se las envían al trabajo de ligación realizado por el 'Yo', un procedimiento secundario por excelencia, enlazados a la comprensión de fusión y defusión pulsionales, que están presentes en textos de la etapa madura de las reflexiones de Freud, permitiendo tirar alguna luz sobre procesos oscuros subyacentes a los fenómenos en discusión.

**Palabras clave:** Compulsión a la repetición; conexión; clínica psicoanalítica.

### **Introduction**

The psychoanalytic clinic today presents a growing complaints of symptoms related to the unspeakable of the death drive, symptoms that bring compulsion and emptiness as marks. This listening takes us to the suffering of pathologies related to addiction, anorexia, panic disorder, among others. We hear patients complaining of tripping over the same stone and they can say nothing about it. Repetition appears, thus, revealing an unrestrained pain that seems to impose as an relentless fate, which seems to take the potential of analysis to the limit.

On the borders of this clinic, Marucco (2007) argues that analysis can pave the way for the creation of representations about the unspeakable of death drives associated with the compulsion to repetition. From the suggestions of this author and sharing the analyses of other contemporary psychoanalysts, such as Green (1986) and Paim Filho (2010), we visualize a reflection on the possibilities of opening to the new in the repetitive phenomena that lead us to think about the issue of the therapeutic potential present in these processes, a reflection that, from the start, is faced with an apparently paradoxical question: how could a phenomenon such as the repetition compulsion, usually understood as demonic, offer the possibility of some therapeutic use? An apparent paradox, because, as Paim Filho (2010) clarifies, the death drive should not be taken only as the villain of psychopathological processes, since, by driving, via repetition, there is the possibility of being heard and later symbolized.

Thus, bearing in mind that, in Freud's work, there is mention of the compulsion to repetition as "[...] an evil fate in which people seem possessed by some 'demonic' power"

(Freud, 2017a, p. 09, emphasis in the original), or as a “[...] perpetual recurrence of the same thing” (Freud, 2017a, p. 05), we understand that in many moments the repetition associated with the death drive can assume a chaotic character that is refractory to traditional forms of intervention. But, at the same time, the author warns that psychoanalysis is of the opinion that fate is, for the most part, arranged by the own subject and determined by primitive childhood influences, as he points out that it would be a matter of analytical technique whether or not bringing to light what is hidden and being repeated (Freud, 2017b).

Following this reasoning, Freud introduces traumatic dreams in 1920. The author realizes that, in this type of dream, horror situations already lived would be repeated, which, apparently, would have no explanation, since the dream was being understood as a hallucinatory wish fulfillment. In his investigations, which included, in addition to dreams, children games and the dynamics of transference in neurotics, the author came to the conclusion that repetition would be closely related to the excess of trauma, which seemed to be re-updated in an attempt to connect free energies and order chaos. Thus, Freud raises the hypothesis that repetition seemed to fulfill the objective of putting an end to excess, and it is possible to glimpse already in the ideas of the founder of psychoanalysis some potentiality inscribed in the compulsion to repetition, a potentiality that is not only considered, but defended by some authors, such as those mentioned above.

In this way, sharing the belief in the therapeutic potential inscribed in the compulsion repetition, but at the same time aware of the difficulties involving its justification or theoretical foundation, the purpose of this study was to explain the conceptual framework necessary to understand the processes underlying clinical phenomena called repetition compulsion. In other words, the intention is to explain some elements that could help in the delimitation of metapsychological bases of this modality of clinical phenomena and that seems to find resonance in some hypotheses formulated by the founder of psychoanalysis. This is because, while it is correct to say that intense amounts of disconnected excitation would be found at the base of repetitive processes, never symbolized before, it seems that their clinical use presupposes some type of connection or symbolization that needs to be theoretically clarified. It is, therefore, a discussion about the metapsychological foundations of a psychoanalytic clinic that conceives the therapeutic potential of compulsion to repetition.

The discussion is organized into four sections: In the first section, by way of contextualization, we present some clarifications on the phenomenon of repetition in Freudian psychoanalysis and its importance in the psychoanalytic clinic. The second section is dedicated to explaining the new conceptual status acquired by the compulsion to repetition, with the advent of the death drive, characterized by its negativity. The third section enters the main discussion by introducing some concepts that would justify the questioning of the prevailing view about the demonic character of the repetition compulsion. The consideration of concepts such as primary and secondary processes allows to explain the role of the Ego in the work of binding (*Bindung*) of unbound excitations, which would characterize repetitive compulsive processes. Finally, the fourth section aims to deepen the analysis of the processes of ego connection, through its articulation with the notions of fusion and defusion of drive excitations, introduced by Freud in the mature stage of his reflections. We try to show that the work of binding of the Ego, articulated to the notion of drive fusion, can shed light on obscure processes underlying the compulsive repetitive phenomena. It is expected to contribute to the advance towards

the understanding of some metapsychological foundations that would legitimize a clinical modality of repetition compulsion.

### **From repetition to the compulsion to repetition in the Freudian clinic: a metapsychological approach**

Throughout his first texts on hysteria and the clinical cases presented, such as Emmy von N., the term repetition appears in Freud's work (2017c) allied to the reappearance of symptoms. To the author, it seemed obvious that patients repeated situations and symptoms that, in themselves, could not be explained, but that disappeared when associated with forgotten stories, those whose access could not be through speech or memory in a waking state, but only through hypnosis.

It is in the text *A interpretação dos sonhos* that Freud (2017d) explains his first topic of the psychic apparatus, which is formed by the Unconscious and Preconscious/Conscious instances. From this model, it is understood that desires not morally accepted are barred in their access to consciousness and taken to the unconscious through repression, so that the excess that would be found in the formation of symptoms in hysteria and now also in the formation of dreams would inhabit the Unconscious. Thus, the Unconscious is considered the source from which repetitive phenomena would flow, which would manifest themselves, for example, in the form of symptoms, dreams, faulty acts, etc. Furthermore, knowledge about the Unconscious would have allowed Freud to also understand transference as a phenomenon of the order of repetition, that is, the manifestation in the here and now of the clinical situation of the repressed desire, thus making it possible to metapsychologically base the analytic practice.

At that moment, as a repetitive phenomenon, transference appears as a great ally of clinical work. Based on the concept of psychism known as the first topic of the psychic apparatus, the psychoanalytic treatment would consist of bringing to light the repressed material that would constitute an excess of unconscious contents, responsible for the repetitive manifestation of formations such as symptoms, dreams, transference performances, etc. (Freud, 2017d).

Freud (2017e) pays special attention to repetition in the clinical sense of revealing unconscious desire, and considers its relationship with resistance, which would aim to bar the return of this material, thus concluding that what is barred by resistance and not can be remembered would be repeated. In other words, a considerably important part of unconscious contents would be manifested no longer by the word, but by acting in the relationship with the analyst, through transference. According to Freud (2017e), experiences related to the unconscious amount of repressed instincts were repeated in the transference and the analyst would become an object of erotic investment by the patient, which could be handled during treatment. According to the author, the greater the resistance, the more the performance would replace remembering, and the resistances would determine the sequence of the material that would be repeated. Therefore, repeating would re-update a part of real life, and the management of transference would aim to transform the compulsion of what is repeated into a remembrance. With the resistance at its height, the analyst with the patient would have the chance to discover the repressed institutional impulses that would feed it.

Thus, during this period of Freud's theoretical-clinical elaborations, the phenomenon already designated as a compulsion to repetition appears as an ally in the analysis

process and the therapeutic potential presented seems to be that of putting into action what cannot be done, because of repression, to appear in the conscious mind linked to the word. Insofar as the objective of the Freudian clinic consisted of unraveling the unconscious material that was repeated as symptoms and performances in the transference, that is, desiderative contents that would at some point have already acquired some degree of symbolization, but having their free symbolic expression captured by repression, Freud would be working, as Marucco (2007) indicates, within a model that could be called the clinic of representations, in which the repetitions of repressed contents are considered under the domain of the pleasure principle.

### **The new statute of repetition compulsion after the advent of the death drive**

If, throughout the validity of the first topic, repetition could be seen as predominantly at the service of the pleasure principle, as the updating in the transference of repressed unconscious contents, from 1920 onwards Freud is faced with repetitions that seem not to obey this principle, since they would not bring up anything pleasant, revealing itself as a demonic fate that drags the subject. This new way of understanding repetition would have been observed in different phenomena: in traumatic neurosis, in which unpleasant situations were repeated in dreams; in the unpleasant repetition identified in children's play, in the transference of neurotics; among others. Understanding that in these cases it would be a matter of contents whose processes would escape regulation by the pleasure principle, the author arrives at the idea of the death drive and thus also at the formulation of a new topic of the psychic apparatus, as we will see below. At that moment, precisely the alliance or potentiality previously seen as associated with the compulsion to repetition in the treatment would be put into question, since now this becomes linked to the death drive, whose contents seem, at least at first sight, to be neither found nor have found no form of representational or symbolic expression.

The first definitions of the death drive in Freud are found more on the biological than on the psychological level, so much so that in *Mais além do princípio do prazer* Freud (2017a) begins to address this theme based on biological theories that would justify conceiving a tendency to return to the inorganic state prior to the emergence of life. Previously, within the scope of the first conception of drives, the author recognized in the drive in general, and in particular, in the sexual drive, a progressive character that impelled change, the union between living particles and the complexification of life; now, in addition to the driving forces of life, the author recognizes an extreme conservative force that would seek to bring back archaic states of living substance, performing disconnections. We understand, therefore, that in his speculations, Freud arrives at the hypothesis of the death drive.

Correlating to the postulation of the death drive hypothesis, the author proposes in the text of *O eu e o id*, from 1923 the second topic of the psychic apparatus, in which he recognizes that the repressed that formed the Unconscious System would not entirely cover the territory now recognized as Id, but that there would be an unconscious dimension that would go beyond the conceptual designations that constitute the metapsychology in force until that period. Considering the new drive dualism, this unconscious dimension is recognized not only as the initial reservoir of libido but as the seat of life and death drives. Therefore, in particular, the compulsion to repetition acquires a new status, starting to be understood as driven by tendencies specific to the death drive.

To the extent that it would be beyond the regulation by the pleasure principle, the forces associated with the death drive would operate in a mute way, intensifying regressive processes and reducing the possibility of linking through the word. Perhaps that is why, because they are so intense and disorganized, the repetitive compulsions associated with these excitations without any symbolic connection would seem so unbeatable and beyond any possibility of control by the psychic apparatus, so that, properly speaking, the subject would not experience them, but would act repetitively in uncontrollable compulsions.

Thus, the new statute of the compulsion to repetition from 1920 onwards, linked to the mute character of the death drive, would refer to a more archaic repetition than the repetition of the repressed, which would highlight the limits of the therapeutic action of psychoanalysis, putting impasses to a clinic still guided by interpretation, that is, a clinic still centered on the predominance of representations somehow associated with the word.

### **The primary process, the secondary process and the role of the Ego in the binding (*Bindung*) work of unbound excitations**

To try to advance the discussion, we will resume at the beginning of this section some ideas presented by Freud in the 1895 *Projeto de uma psicologia* that can help to understand the process of instinctual connection and its breakdown, fundamental questions to the metapsychology of the phenomena underlying the repetition compulsion.

Freud (2003) conceives the neuropsychic apparatus as a system of neurons that has to deal with amounts of excitation (indicated by the letter Q) that reach it from outside (perceptions) or from inside the body (endogenous excitations), while that the neurons are sometimes charged, sometimes empty of Q. A certain automatism is observed between the neurons that makes them always seek the elimination of Q, in order to keep themselves free from excitation. The principle that regulates the functioning of the neuropsychic apparatus was initially named by Freud as the principle of inertia, valid for the fictitious behavior of simple organisms, such as unicellular organisms that would only receive external stimuli and eliminate them, keeping themselves free from Q. In complex organisms, however, since these also receive excitations from within the body itself, the tendency to inertia would not take place, but would be changed to a tendency to constancy. That is, these organisms would have to tolerate a certain storage of Q, at a constant level, in order to pay for the performance of more complex specific actions to satisfy specific bodily needs, such as hunger and sexuality, for example.

Given its characteristics, the excitation corresponding to bodily needs would be continuously present and, in the case of a newborn, these would only cease when, through external help (the other), an experience of satisfaction would put an end, at least temporarily, to the source of internal stimulus. An essential component of this experience of satisfaction would consist in the perception of an object, whose mnemonic image would henceforth be associated with the mnemonic traces of the tension corresponding to the excitation produced by the need. Thus, due to the mnemonic link established in the experience of satisfaction, there would be an association between the representations corresponding to the tension resulting from endogenous excitations, the perception of the auxiliary object and the satisfaction of the need.

Based on this association, which in 'Project' is seen by the author as a facilitated neuronal path, when the state of bodily neediness reappears, the corresponding tension would immediately and automatically follow the facilitated paths towards the image of the

auxiliary object, aiming at satisfaction. This psychic process, which consists of taking the shortest path to solve the state of need, is called by Freud as hallucinatory wish fulfillment, once the path that led directly to the excitation produced by the need for a complete investment of perception would culminate in hallucination, since that the fulfillment of the wish would be carried out independently of the actual presence of the object. In this way, through the experience of satisfaction, the device would have the tendency to fulfill desires without considering the reality of the object, that is, the tendency to get rid of the displeasure associated with the tension of need at all costs.

In addition to the tendency to fulfill desires, Freud also considers that there are situations in which there is a failure in the psychic apparatus, breaking with the tendency to constancy, moments called experiences of pain, characterized by the impact caused by huge amounts of exogenous Q on neurons. In these cases, given the tendency towards constancy, which would regulate the functioning of the neuropsychic apparatus, immediate reactions would be triggered in order to get rid of the invading Q. As in the case of satisfying experiences that generate an attraction to the remembrance image of the auxiliary object (object of desire), painful experiences would leave as a functioning tendency: a repulsion to keep the recollective image of the hostile object invested, the object that caused the pain. The author calls this last trend of functioning repression in *Projeto de uma psicologia*.

According to these hypotheses, in the resurgence of the desire state through the facilitated paths left by the experience of satisfaction, the tension is conducted towards the investment of the image of the object of desire and in the case of the painful experience, there would be an increase in the level of excitement, felt now not as pain but as unpleasure; likewise, due to the well-facilitated paths between the image of the hostile object and the innervation pathways for the discharge of excitation, when its image is reactivated, the tension at play tends to proceed promptly and automatically along the discharge pathways, eliminating the quantities of excitation of the representation of the object that provoked the pain.

From the text of *Projeto de uma psicologia*, to this type of compulsive functioning, Freud calls primary processes. In later works, the primary process will be seen as characteristic of unconscious functioning, seeming to be guided by the principle of inertia, which is thought to be characteristic of simple organisms. In this type of functioning, the excitation would proceed without any interference, through the easiest route, in a free and automatic way, independent of the object or the external world.

In the case of complex organisms, however, such as human beings, the necessities of life impose the transformation of this primitive activity into a more adequate secondary activity, which would take into account the demands of reality. Freud (2003) calls this new form of psychic functioning secondary processes. This change in the mental functioning regime would be made possible by the inhibitory actions carried out by the Ego, so the secondary processes imply delays in the elimination of excitations that, through a mediation by the Self, aims to control the level of investment in a recollective image, such as that of the object of desire, for example, as long as there are no signs of real help from the object.

Before proceeding, it is convenient to present some clarifications about the Ego and the *Bindung* process, clarifications necessary for the discussion presented in the following section. The Ego is, in the text of *Projeto de uma psicologia* conceived by Freud as a neuropsychic organization constantly invested and therefore understood as capable of effecting inhibitions on the free circulation of Q through neurons. That is, because it is

constantly filled with excitations in a quiescent or connected state, as explained below, the Ego would be able to interfere with quantitative routes that would freely follow the best facilitated paths, delaying or even preventing the free flow of excitations. As defined by Freud (2003, p. 200; emphasis in the original):

This organization is called the 'ego' and can easily be presented by considering that the reception of endogenous Q<sub>n</sub>'s is regularly repeated in certain neurons (in the nucleus), and that the resulting facilitation effect results in a neuron group, whose occupation is constant and corresponds, therefore, to the 'storage carrier' required by the secondary function.

Based on this understanding of the Ego and its performances, it would therefore have the function of inhibiting the occurrence of primary processes, such as the repetitive processes that follow automatism, thus introducing a new functioning regime in the psychism. That is why the author considers: "So, if there is an ego, it has to inhibit primary psychic processes" (Freud (2003 p. 201).

This capacity of the Ego would be made possible by the state in which the constant energy invested in it would be found. Freud called this energetic state bound energy, which would be distinguished from the free state; and this process carried out under the coordination of the Ego would be called binding [*Bindung*]. This means that the transformation of primary processes into secondary processes, the modification of a functioning characterized by automatism to one regulated by the consideration of reality, presupposes the ability of the Ego to connect freely flowing energy and transform it into bound energy.

Although the clarifications present in the texts are not enough to make clear the metapsychological process by which the Ego would be able to transform free energy into bound energy, that is, although the binding process itself [*Bindung*] effected by the Ego remains obscure, these considerations based on in texts from the beginnings of psychoanalysis seem to help to understand that the excitations at play in the compulsive repetitive phenomena associated with the death drive, proposed in 1920, would obey a functioning analogous to those described as primary processes, which would have the characteristic of working with excitations in large volume and freely moving towards the discharge.

In the case of compulsion to repetition, therefore, the task of the higher psychic systems, or rather, of the Ego, would be to link these free instinctual excitations, aiming to impose a new functioning regime, that is, to transform primary into secondary processes. Thus, as Freud (2017a) conceives, only after binding previously free excitation would the dominance of the pleasure principle be possible and, therefore, given the new status attributed by the author to compulsion to repetition, the work of binding [*Bindung*] implicit in the compulsion to repetition would be prior to the regulation of psychic functioning by the pleasure principle and independent of it.

It could perhaps be objected here that primary processes discussed in *Projeto de uma psicologia* (Freud, 2003) and later in *A interpretação dos sonhos* (Freud, 2017d) would still, strictly speaking, be considered as governed by the tendency towards constancy or the pleasure principle, while the phenomena related to the compulsion to repetition would be precisely beyond the pleasure principle, which would not give legitimacy to the working hypothesis that guides our discussion. Such an objection seems fair, so we will try in the next section to provide some additional arguments that may help to advance a little in our understanding of the binding process.

## **Fusion and defusion of drive excitations: metapsychological justifications and clinical possibilities in the face of compulsion to repetition**

When resuming in 1923 the hypothesis of the two new classes of drive, Freud (2017f) considers that each of them would correspond to specific physiological processes. Thus, from this point of view, the work of binding [*Bindung*] and assimilation proper to the life drives would be related to what he calls anabolism, while unbinding and disassimilation attributed to the death drive would correspond to catabolic processes. Freud recognizes, however, that the anabolic and catabolic tendencies would be present in each living particle, which means that both classes of drive would be present in an amalgamated way, fused with each other, which would ultimately culminate in the recognition of an ambivalence present in everything we are and do.

Analogously to difficulties in clarifying the work of binding performed by the Ego, when binding freely flowing excitations and thus transforming primary processes into secondary ones, Freud (2017f) also does not offer sufficient clarification on the process of drive fusion that he supposes to occur between life and death drives. Despite the remaining obscurities, our effort is to try to show how the considerations presented above about the work of binding performed by the Ego, when articulated to hypotheses about the processes of drive fusion, can help to climb some steps in clarifying the issue at hand in this article.

Before dealing with fusion processes, it should be noted that, correlatively with the supposition of drive fusion processes, Freud recognizes the possibility of the inverse process occurring, namely, processes of defusion of drives hitherto fused. His words can be read below:

The erotic and death drives would be in mixtures, regular fusions; but 'defusions' would also be liable to occur. Life would consist of the manifestations of conflict or interaction between the two classes of drives. Death would mean for the individual the victory of destructive drives, but reproduction would represent for them the victory of Eros (Freud, 2017f, p. 312, emphasis added).

Correlating to the hypothesis of drive fusion, it is necessary, therefore, to suppose that processes of defusion of drives can occur. In other words, life and death drives that had hitherto been fused would find themselves unbound and acting according to their own tendencies. The author tells us about epileptic seizures, obsessional neurosis and ambivalence as examples of fusion processes that would not have been completed. In these cases, despite the binding tendency of fusions and bindings promoted by Eros to guarantee life, one could think of the self-destructiveness of the death drive as defused as a parallel tendency, acting alone, but in the opposite direction to life.

Although considering the difficulties involved in these hypotheses, from this moment of his reflections, Freud ((2017f) defends them as indispensable to understand the continuity of life. According to the quote above, if the predominance of destructive drives leads to death, the eroticism involved in human reproduction needs to be understood as a victory of Eros, that is, by the predominance of fusion processes over drive defusion processes; because, according to him, it is through fusions that the libido arising from the life drives can use its strength to neutralize the disruptive and freely moving energy of the death drive. Thus, when bound or fused with erotic excitations, the aggressiveness and self-destructiveness of death drives could, in the name of vital interests, be used and redirected to a new destination; through a muscular action gradually coordinated by the Ego, for example, they could be destined for the external world. The death drive, which is

recognized as silent, would thus gain a path and cry proper to the life drives, being able to be heard.

This outward direction of the death drive is generally seen as a destructive tendency, in the sense of going against life, especially when it results in destructiveness directed at another person, as in the example of sadism itself (Freud, 2017f). However, it can also be seen as a constructive tendency, for example, when muscle strength is destined to transform nature and build cultural assets that favor advances in the civilizing process. It is worth noting that actions aimed at the outside with the purpose of construction are due to an externalized and socially accepted aggressiveness, since part of the energy of the death drive remains inside the organism, and this rest fused by the life drive becomes useful for the maintenance and evolution of vital and cultural processes.

Important in the article, it can be said, according to Freudian hypotheses, that it is through the fusion mechanism that the destructive energy of the death drives would be joined with the energy of the life drives and, then, through muscular action aimed at the external world. In turn, muscular action presupposes a relatively organized Ego; since the beginning of psychoanalysis the egoic instance is considered responsible for controlling motility guided to vital ends (Freud, 2003, 2017d, 2017f). In the text of *Mal estar na civilização*, for example, Freud (1996) discusses the dominion of man over nature, and offers as an example the exploration of the land and constructive actions that would require a certain amount of aggressiveness for its accomplishment. Regarding the transposition of part of self-destructiveness to the outside, Freud is explicit in considering that it would occur through the action of Eros, through the libidinal connection, since this “[...] has the task of making this destructive drive innocuous, and fulfills it by diverting it in large part – and then with the help of a particular organic system, the musculature – outside, towards objects in the external world” (2017f, p. 191).

The purpose for which the death instinct strives is towards the return to the inanimate. However, when being merged and receiving another fate, could we not speak of a kind of sublimation of this drive? This is because such processes seem to be able, above all, to be seen as constructive in cases where the deadly energy linked by Eros can gain psychic elaboration and be directed towards activities more suited to the ends and valued by the culture, sublimated, in short.

Thus, it seems possible to think of an open way to conjecture about the potentiality inscribed in the phenomenon of compulsion to repetition. Understanding the death drive as unbound, energy capable of short-circuiting the psychic dynamics, we envision that this would also keep the potential to bring about the new, which can be made possible by therapeutic transformations in the egoic-libidinal capacity. Accordingly, from binding this drive, there would be the possibility of a new fate for aggressiveness, a constructive and creative fate.

The consideration of what was said above about primary processes seems to help to understand a little better the type of transformation in the economic regime of the psychism made possible by fusional processes. While defusion seems to be related to primary processes, disconnections (*Entbindungen*) and the instinctual chaos that characterizes compulsions and the death drive, by neutralizing disconnections through the binding of freely mobile excitations, fusional processes create conditions for the emergence and development of secondary process. Therefore, the connection process driven by the need to put an end to excess, to chaos, can be understood as a work funded by life drives invested in the Ego, a secondary activity that can be understood as a condition for the development of the psychism. In other words, closely related to *Bindung*,

the fusion of drives needs to be understood as a typically secondary process, conditioned to the ego-inhibitory capacity acquired throughout childhood development (Freud, 2017e) and, it seems, likely to be taken into account in a clinic that considers the therapeutic potential of compulsion to repetition.

To conclude these considerations, it is worth trying to articulate the conceptual considerations presented with some therapeutic possibilities suggested by some authors mentioned in the introduction of this article. André Green (1986), for example, proposes that the main goal of life drives is to guarantee the objectalizing function, that is, to make connections with the object and, at the same time, the transformation of structures into objects even when it is no longer present, so that the investment becomes objectalized. In this sense, this author also states that the processes of symbolization can proliferate and enrich the psychism even when in voids caused by the disconnection of death drives.

For Paim Filho (2010), the death drive must be understood as a non-linked, non-connected drive force, which is at the origins of the psychic subject, not presenting quality, not being subordinated to the ordering function of the psychic apparatus. In the conceptual language considered above, it could be said that it would be a mental functioning dominated by primary processes, keeping a close relationship with the tendency to inertia. Nevertheless, this author also considers that compulsive repetitions associated with it can be understood as the potentiality of a becoming determined by the ability to link life drives. For this reason, it seems plausible to consider the life drive as a protagonist force in the face of repetitive compulsive tendencies, insofar as it would be the libido's vital force available for fusion/binding that would decide the fate of compulsive repetitions.

The compulsion to repetition when in the treatment allows, as Paim Filho (2010) considers, that destructive tendencies gain an outcry and can be heard, establishing in the therapeutic work an effort to create favorable conditions for the birth and/or consolidation of secondary processes, made possible by drive fusion and libidinal binding, *Bindugen*. In this way, one could conjecture about the possibility of envisaging the therapeutic space as a field for the encounter with the other, with the external world, which from the initial stages of the formation of the psychism is the one that provides objects of investment, of libidinal connection, potentiating a kind of restart and resumption of processes of drive fusion and libidinal connection, creative processes that are at the same time dependent on Eros and favoring vital processes, life drives.

An important contribution from Freud (2017f) comes to our aid in these conjectures, when the author mentions that it is necessary to consider the therapist acting as an instrument that enables the Ego to achieve a progressive conquest of the Id. In other words, in the words of the author: "In fact, it [the Ego] behaves like the doctor during an analytic treatment: it offers itself, with the attention it gives to the real world, as a libidinal object for the Id, and aims to bind the libido of the Id to itself" (Freud, 2017f, p. 61, our clarifications in brackets). More: the author points out that the strength of the drives is one of the most decisive for the success of the analysis, being necessary to tame them and make them accessible to the influences of the Ego (Freud, 2017g).

It seems that even in the face of clinical phenomena traditionally seen as refractory to clinical work or at least difficult to manage, such as the compulsion to repetition, the affective temperature that characterizes a positive transference relationship can play a key role in favoring a progressive transformation in the psychic economy and dynamics towards the development of capacities for the advent of connections, opening new possibilities of meaning and existence. It is in this sense that Marucco (2007) considers that it is through the force of the life drive that the encounter between analyst and patient

can transform what is repeated into something different. He writes: "I think that analysis is an unprecedented possibility of bonding, of changing course in the face of the repetition of fate. For the analyst, it implies an instinctual bet with imprecise results" (p. 05). More resolute about the vital role played by analysis is Zygouris (1999, p. 52), who concludes: "[...] the only thing that 'heals', that revives the human being badly treated by themselves or by those around them, is presence". In any case, regardless of the degree of optimism of each author about the potentialities inherent to the therapeutic process, the warning of Freud (2017f) regarding the consideration of the clash between life and death as conceived by psychoanalysis seems plausible: considering only disorders and chaos would be to devalue the role played by life drives.

## Final considerations

The compulsion to repetition seems to place a limit on psychoanalytic analysis based on the interpretive method, as it until 1920 seems to focus on the idea of representation. The compulsion to repetition also updates marks that are not represented, that is, inscribed in the psychism, but which escape its domain. Associated with the demonic of the death drive and the potential for disconnections, it is located in a more archaic way than repetitions of the repressed, and proliferates in the symptoms of contemporary clinic, which makes it urgent to think of ways that favor analysis in this field.

In view of our objective of clarifying elements that could provide a metapsychological basis for the notion of clinical potentiality regarding the repetition compulsion, we drew a parallel between the process of drive fusion coined by Freud from 1924 onwards, with the *Bindung* process already described in his early texts, such as the *Projeto de uma psicologia*. Thus, insofar as the task of making connections and ordering the instinctual chaos (*Bindung*) is attributed to the life drive, when in fusion with the death drives, we can envision the repetition compulsion as a potential field for the instinctual encounter, for creation and resignification.

The compulsion to repetition, understood as a phenomenon that brings out the death drives, when circumscribed in the therapeutic setting and wrapped in the affective climate of an analytic session, can, in our view, place itself as a potentiality as the disruptive energy of death drives, when they gain clamor, can be merged with life drives, which brings us to the analytical potential of favoring fusion processes and the search for new meanings for existence, as well as favoring the passage from primary to secondary processes and the development of psychism.

Considering that Freud (2017f) also presents analysis as a field for strengthening the Ego to deal with drives, the results of our reflections on analytic practice require the study of contemporary authors who are dedicated to improve analytical techniques and open the possibility of an active and interested analysis in life that can favor the presence as a thermometer for the drive encounter and the development of an Ego capable of making connections/creations.

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