

Time, violence and transmission¹

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Abstract: The objective of this paper is to present, based on the reading of essays on psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud, an understanding of the psychic processes of the subject in a situation of violence. We believe that the drive is the condition for the establishment of the link between subject and culture. When a situation of violence presents itself to the subject, it breaks with this condition, annulling the subject's possibility of representing himself in a time and space. As a way to re-establish the subject in the drive circuit that places him in a relation with the other, the transmission of this experience of violence presents itself as a duty. This transmission, however, does not occur without the inscription of loss.

Keywords: transmission, violence, drive, time.

The starting point of this study is the idea that the process of transmitting an experience, by recording memory and testimony, is a way to re-establish the relationship between subject and culture when a situation of violence has hindered the subject's possibilities of representing himself in a given time and space. Transmission is an operator that suspends the rigidity of the times, connecting past, present and future, besides restoring a place to those who have been violently displaced from themselves.

We propose to reflect on the foundations of a psychoanalytic theory of transmission of experiences of violence guided by an investigation of essays by Sigmund Freud. As a result, this basis leads us to question the very relationship established between the terms "subject" and "culture." These are terms that cannot be considered of equal value – as identical terms – nor can they be represented in opposition to each other – as mutually exclusive terms – as if the subject could be separated from culture, becoming independent from the historical and social conditions in which he finds himself. Considering subject and culture as overlapping structures, different and indissoluble, reinforces the idea that subjective processes cannot be isolated from social events, nor can the latter be removed from the sphere of the individual acts of each subject.

Thus, we understand that time and space are more than a priori forms of sensitive knowledge of the world, nor are they cognitive structures that remain stable throughout life – as affirmed by the tradition of Kantian philosophy, which follows the proposals of Immanuel Kant (1781/2001) in the work *Critique of Pure Reason*, in its Transcendental Aesthetic. On the contrary, we believe that the dimensions of time and space are conditions for the subject to represent himself developed through social ties. And, in this sense, the concept of drive is essential to this bonding of

the subject with the other. Moreover, the violence to which we referred results from the attempted annihilation of a subject's spatiotemporal references, such as can happen in the obliteration of his memory and history, his imprisonment and incarceration in prisons, mental hospitals and detention centers, his forced dispossession through exile and migration processes. The transmission of these experiences happens as a necessary resistance of the subject, restoring him to a world where he can represent himself before others. In this context we shall see that, based on concepts of Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the subject organizes himself via unique representations of space and time that narrate his history and identify him in a place.

We seek to develop our idea through psychoanalytical texts also as a way to advance the applications of this theory, which is sometimes limited to merely considering the subject in his individuality, without addressing situations in which the subject is erased by violence emanating from those who should acknowledge him. Thus, avoiding the errors and dangers of viewing the subject as separated from the community, we contribute psychoanalytical concepts to support the understanding of the psychic processes that occur in subjects who have suffered some kind of violence.

Generally speaking, we regard transmission as an operation that inscribes a loss. This loss affects both the one who transmits the experience, be it a trauma or not, and the one that receives what is transmitted, who must take responsibility for what is done with it. Such responsibility implies appropriating what is received, marking it with something that is unique to the recipient. Thus, the one that transmits must relinquish his ownership of the experience. But the loss inscribed in the transmission affects both: the one that transmits, in bequeathing a production to the other, and the one that receives, who must be able to perform a twist on what has been transmitted.

It should be stressed that the transmission, by launching a past experience to a future time, leads to the

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effect of loss through a twist on what is being transmitted. That means that something is transformed in the act of transmitting, so that when a transmission has occurred, what has been transmitted is found in an altered state. As we shall see below, we believe that the operation of transmission follows the structure of the drive circuit, in that the drive connects the subject to the other in forwarding the loss of an object. Thus, the one who transmits must renounce the intimacy with his experience and the one who receives should be able to do so by socially recognizing that transmitted heritage.

Thus, this paper is organized into four stages, using as main points of reflection the relationship between the following signifiers: time, violence and transmission. In what way does the relationship between each one of these terms allow us to reflect, from a psychoanalytic viewpoint, on the processes of violence suffered by subjects and the transmission of this experience as a necessary effect for their re-establishment? To find out, our starting point was the development of the concept of culture in Freud. In “time and transmission,” based on the introduction of the drive concept, we see that the obstruction of its circuit leads to the flattening of space-time and the disruption of social ties. In “time and violence” we will see that an experience of violence may result from the subject settling in a certain position of the drive circuit, and, in “violence and transmission” we analyze transmission as an ethics of the duty of transmitting.

Culture and transmission

Knowing that a culture cannot exist without the transmission of legacies, we considered the establishment of culture, according to Freud, based on two moments, as developed in *Totem and Taboo* (1913/2003a). In this essay, Freud formulates an original myth in which he recognizes murder as the constitutive act of human condition. However, with this fiction, he reminds us that a violent act cannot be considered as such in itself, but only in the context in which it is inserted. In this sense, the violent dimension of an act occurs when it annihilates the possibilities of the subject representing himself in his spatiotemporal dimensions. The father’s murder by the brothers of the primal horde is not an act of violence, inasmuch as it is the foundation of social ties. It is an act that introduces the temporality of the subject and establishes the spatial limits of movement, thus breaking with the logic of pure repetition of the same which prevailed before.

To define the concept of culture, Freud creates an original myth drawing on the hypothesis by which the theory of evolution attempts to explain the conditions of the primal social state of humanity. The deduction is that primitive man lived in small hordes, in which sexual relations were forbidden due to the jealousy of the eldest male dominating the group. Each member was driven out to form his own horde, where he could assure the domination and prohibition of sexual intercourse.

To this, Freud (1913/2003a) adds:

One day, the brothers who had been driven out came back together, killed and devoured their father, thus making an end of the patriarchal horde. United, they had the courage to do and succeeded in doing what would have been impossible for them to do individually. (p. 1838)

The myth of the primitive horde harks back to a time when there was no overlap between individual and collective, between subject and other. For this distinction to happen, breaking with the continuum of pure repetition, a loss must be inscribed in this totalized collective, a loss which is introduced by the father’s murder.

This crime resulted from the feeling of hostility and revenge against the one who imposed on them a series of prohibitions, and stemmed from the envy and admiration of each one of the brothers of the horde, inasmuch as the father, besides being an oppressive force, was also a protective figure in the tribe. This act was followed by helplessness, vulnerability, and, especially, a void caused by the absence of horde’s father. Here we have the feeling of ambivalence – love and hate – as an element of the social condition which marks the inscription of the subject in the fraternal ties.

If before the father’s murder the presence of a tyrannical figure forced the totalized collectivity into oppression before his wishes and demands, that power nevertheless preserved order compared to the chaos of war of all against all that his absence could cause. Faced with the real possibility of self-destruction of the horde and the fear of returning to the previous state in the absence of the father, the members of the horde were forced to identify with each other and conceive notions such as justice and equality. Those paternal badges relate to the universal impossibility of reaching that place that could only be occupied by the father himself.

Thus we understand that the definition of culture, as presented by Freud in the myth of *Totem and Taboo*, is not established in a single moment. In addition to this first moment, of the father’s murder, a second moment is necessary to uphold the existence of the collectivity and thus establish the ties that form the social structure. According to Freud, the father’s murder was followed by a ritual of cannibalism – the totemic banquet – in which all members of the horde devour his body. This cannibalism marked symbolically “the repetition and the celebration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things: of social organization, of moral restrictions and of religion” (Freud, 1913 / 2003a, p 1838). Therefore, we understand that to Freud, the formation of culture is defined by the effects of a founding act. On the one hand, the creation of totems allowed all members of the group to be, from their individual positions, linked to each other. And the taboos therein formed, in turn, played the role of primitive laws, since they prohibited the repetition of this inaugurating act of culture.

The totems give rise to ideals, they harbor the same feelings of ambivalence that were directed toward the father. With them is created the ideal figure of the ego, with which all children identify, i.e., a trait of the father is assumed to support an ego. In the essay *On Narcissism: an introduction*, from 1914, Freud writes about idealization as a process of glorification and exaltation of an object that can be shared among many. He says: “The ego ideal uncovers an important overview for the understanding of group psychology. In addition to its individual aspect, this ideal has its social aspect; it also constitutes the common ideal of a family, a class or a nation” (Freud, 1914 / 2003b, p. 2033).

The ego ideal is the prolongation of the feeling of love that the subject has for the other as the one who represents what the subject previously was, what he would like to be, or what he wishes. The father’s death produces a void of a relationship of ambivalence that no longer exists. The ego ideal retrieves this relationship marked by the ambivalence of love and hate, between wanting to be the father, since he is an object of admiration, and wanting his death, since he is an object of envy and rivalry.

As a result, finding a trait of this figure in the other, as an ideal, means encountering a lost link in a different way. We can love and hate the ideal, just as the father was loved and hated. Psychoanalyst Ana Costa links the identifications to the ideal and to prohibition to the notion of the double. She recalls that identification breeds aggressiveness. The ambivalent feelings of identification lead to the need to simultaneously preserve and annul the other, as a mirror (identity) that sustains the *ego* and as an appropriation of the trait that organizes the unit (Costa, 1998, p. 69). On the other hand, the condition of exclusion cannot be fulfilled, inasmuch as, in the duplication of oneself into an ideal, states the author, “it is the ‘you’ that supports the ‘I’: if one disappears, the other fades away” (Costa, 2001, p. 95). Through the ideal, the subject loves what he once was and is no more, or what possesses the qualities he has never had.

Considering totem disconnected from taboo makes us represent models of social organizations taken to extremes. The transmission of culture is then reduced to the repetition of the same. Totem *without* taboo is the return to the father’s tyranny. It is the marginalization of all under the rule of the individuality of one. That brings to mind totalitarian systems, insofar as *at least one* is not governed by the same order of the collective. It is Colonel Kurtz in Joseph Conrad’s book *Heart of Darkness* (1902/2008). In the story, the character Marlow journeys deep into the African jungle in search of the missing Colonel Kurtz, who had abandoned his military post and assumed the role of God among an uncivilized tribe, controlling it through the moral of horror. Taboo *without* totem is the letter of the empty law, the law in itself. It is the absence of a subject’s trait, in reference to which it becomes applicable. It is the bureaucratic processes, which erase the uniqueness of the differences in the machinery of the generalizable. An example is the character of the short story *Bartleby, the*

Scrivener (1853/2003), by Herman Melville, who avoids being abducted by this system of pure repetition of the same. One day, Bartleby, a clerk in a Wall Street office, refuses to share in the imperative that the logic of bureaucracy imposes on him. He starts replying to his boss always in the same way: “I would prefer not to.”

The transmission of culture is therefore consolidated in the symbolic repetition of this real act, the murder of the father. It is not an act of violence, since it gave rise to the social ties and allowed the subjects, who were previously conditioned to the repetition of the same, to represent themselves distinctively in a given space and time. Thus, Freud shows us that the transmission of culture happens in two moments, providing the conditions for the establishment of the social ties of the subject and preventing him from falling into a condition of isolation.

However, we must consider that culture, as the foundation of social relations, is the effect of the establishment of a place of exception. It is an outside the rule which actually makes its own rule, i.e., a set can only be defined as such to the extent that something – that individual with absolute power, the father – has been excluded from it, thus delimitating its boundaries. This outside is the internal law of social organization. And the transmission is the principle that transforms the totalizing element into an ordering element, a process of re-inscribing an impossible which makes social relations possible.

Time and transmission

According to Freud (1913/2003a), an act can only be considered violent in relation to the context in which it is inserted. In this sense, the murder of the father by the brothers of the primal horde is a founding act and not an act of violence. It is an act founded on the death wish that led the members of the primitive horde to commit parricide, insofar as it establishes the spatiotemporal dimension which allows the organization of a phratry. But the death wish is a violence when taken by itself, since it breaks up the representations that determine a where and when for the subject.

That can be seen, for example, in the account of former South Africa president Nelson Mandela in his autobiography *Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom*, of his almost 20 years of incarceration on Robben Island, seven kilometers distant from Cape Town. Mandela writes:

After the first few months, life settled into a pattern. Prison life is about routine: each day like the one before, each week like the one before it, so that the months and years blend into each other. (Mandela, 1990, p. 477).

Thus, Mandela narrates how time becomes a weapon against the prisoner: “Losing the sense of time is an easy way to lose control and even one’s sanity” (Mandela, 1990, p. 478).

The flattening of time – besides space, achieved by the incarceration of bodies – was one of the main and subtlest violence strategies used against prisoners on Robben Island. There, says Mandela, time moved “glacially,” not because one fell into idleness, but because, purposefully, the simplest things could take months or years to get done: “a request for a new toothbrush might take six months to be fulfilled” (Mandela, 1990, p. 478). The challenge for all prisoners, therefore, is to survive the violence of the authorities who exploit weaknesses, demolish initiatives and negate individualities, “in order to stamp out that spark that makes each of us human and each of us who we are” (Mandela, 1990, p. 478).

All of this, Mandela tells us, cannot be done alone, without the presence of the other: “We supported each other and we gained strength from each other. Whatever we knew, whatever we learned, we shared and by sharing we multiplied whatever courage we had individually” (Mandela, 1990, p. 479).

Mandela was a politician who never lowered himself to a position of indifference. As we are reminded by Freud (1915/2003d), it is in the bond with otherness that the subject emerges. In this sense, any subjective stance stems from a stance, whose foundation is ambivalence. In the clash of feelings, of love versus hatred and of life wish versus death wish, we find the primordial condition for the formation of the subject. However, if psychoanalysis assumes that there is no representation of death in the unconscious, as Freud states in his essay *The Unconscious* (1915/2003c), this is due to the fact that certain experiences imposed on the subject will no longer allow him to consider death as the mere opposite of life.

This context imposes a different pair of opposites, beyond the antithesis “life versus death,” which requires the subject to take responsibility for a stance. It is the antithesis of “love/death versus indifference.” Death presents itself as that which relaunches life into a possible future. We shall see how this position is formed throughout the times of the drive circuit, enabling the subject to manifest himself in different places. The drive (expressed in the pair life drive and death drive) will be the element that provides the subject with the possibilities of representing himself in some time and some place.

Being politically indifferent is declining to express a preference, it is being in a “neither ... nor” relationship, neither for nor against. Indifference is, therefore, the opposite of wish and, as such, detaches itself from politics, from the field of exchanges and choices. And psychoanalysis is the wish theory that attests that the subject, in his unconscious condition, is anything but indifferent. The process of culture transmission is an effort to break with the position of indifference imposed on the subject by certain situations of violence.

In *Drives and their Fates*, Freud (1915/2003d) makes the subject represent himself via the temporality of the drive circuit. This essay starts to break with the logic of the pleasure principle. It outlines a first attempt

to situate the primordial place of the subject in relation to the other not through activity, i.e., through the unbridled pursuit of drive satisfaction, but through the masochistic position, that is, the primary position of objectalization. In this sense, determining the subject primarily in the condition of object means inscribing him in the passive place of a moment of being marked by the other.

Among the four fates of the drive (Freud, 1915 / 2003d), namely, (1) reversal into its opposite, (2) turning round upon the subject, (3) repression and (4) sublimation, we shall draw on the first to formulate the three times for the emergence of the subject in the drive circuit. The reversal of a drive into its opposite occurs in two movements: (a) the change from activity to passivity and (b) the reversal of its content. The former is found in the reversion of opposite pairs (sadism/masochism, gaze/be gazed at) and establishes the voices of the drive’s grammar. The second movement has a single case, the transformation of love into hate, and expands the ambivalence “love versus hatred” to three forms of opposition.

To understand the circuit of the positions of activity and passivity, let us take the example of drive pair gaze/be gazed at. Freud (1915 / 2003d) distinguishes three phases of the drive circuit, in the following order: (a) the gaze is an activity directed to a foreign object; (B) the object is divested and the gaze is directed to the very person; thus, there is a change from activity to passivity and the position is now of *being gazed at*; (C) as a result of this shift of position, the foreign object becomes the subject of the action, to whom the person *exhibits himself in order to be gazed at*. It is the reflexive position of the drive.

In this case, the active purpose of the drive is prior to its passive purpose. The gaze, such as the production of pain by the sadist, is an activity prior to being gazed at and suffering pain. However, according to Freud, solely in case of the gazing drive, there is a preliminary stage, prior to the first:

The gazing drive is autoerotic at the beginning of its activity, that is, although it has an object, it finds that object in the subject’s own body. Only later is it led (by a process of comparison) to exchange this object for one that is analogous to someone else’s body (stage *a*). (Freud, 1915/2003d, p. 2046)

Thus, the drive establishes a where whose origin is the space of the body and a time given by the circuit which turns towards the other. It can be inferred from this gazing drive structure that in the drive circuit, the other is prior to the appearance of the subject. The subject’s body is first taken to be an object of gazing. In other words, prior to being active, prior to gazing, there is a preliminary stage. This other person, who gazes at the subject as an object, is the condition that allows him to actively position himself in relation to the other’s gaze. But for the subject to emerge in the drive circuit, he must experience the loss of this primordial passive position.

The times of the drive circuit are therefore structured according to the rule of language that distinguishes the active, passive and reflexive voices. And so the subject situates himself in the positions according to the drive times, such as “to eat,” “to be eaten” and “to make oneself be eaten” in the case of the oral drive, or “to gaze,” “to be gazed at” and “to make oneself be gazed at” in the case of the gazing drive. The subject does not appear in the first two moments, but only in the full movement of the drive circuit, when he returns to the reflexive voice position. The moment of subjectivity, therefore, emerges beyond the active-passive polarity, in the possibility of the subject swaying between one position and another, according to his wish, without settling into any one of them. As a result, the drive represents a time in the movement of places.

The drive circuit allows us to reflect on the subject’s positions. Pleasure can stem from the passive position of object (be devoured and be beaten), from the active position (devour and beat) or from the reflexive position in relation to the other (make oneself be eaten or make oneself be beaten). Activity, passivity and reflexivity designate the subject’s wish positions. But the passage from indifference to ambivalence implies taking a stance in face of the losses produced by an objectalized position.

The subject disappears when he settles into a specific position of the drive circuit. The transmission of an experience of violence affords rhythm to temporality and firmness to space for a subject whose conditions of representing himself in a when and where have been broken. The game of transmission, therefore, impels the subject into the reflexive drive time, which allows him to reposition himself in different times and places. Transmitting means putting oneself into circulation and not allowing oneself to be reduced to the positions of sufferer and perpetrator, of object or executioner.

Time and violence

In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud (1913 / 2003a) started developing the first principles of a psychoanalytic theory of transmission, to the extent that he investigated for the first time, and in greater depth, the relationship between subject and culture. It is a relationship based on a loss of drive satisfaction, the effects of which are felt on both sides of the equation. By the subject, with the inscription of social rules and norms, and by society, with the reception of ambivalent facets of the drive (life and death), which is used for its construction. The relationship between the signifiers “time” and “violence” shows us how, in extreme situations, the subject is placed in a position of destroying himself and the social ties. It took the emergence of the war for Freud to inscribe the radicalism of this experience in the formation of the subject. In the analysis of the essay *A Child Is Being Beaten* (1919/2003F), we shall see that when the subject is reduced to a certain position of the drive circuit, he not only annuls the conditions of spatiotemporal representation, but also suffers the violence of fulfilling the death wish.

The theme of death was never far from Freudian propositions, but it gained prominence as of World War I (1914-1918). It should be noted that three of Freud’s children were sent to fight in World War I: Martin and Ernst fought at the front, while Oliver worked as an engineer. Thus, the theme of death is gradually considered until becoming established in 1920, with the formulation of the death drive as one of the main concepts of psychoanalysis.

In *Thoughts for the Times on War and death* (1915/2003e), Freud retrieves issues on death giving the testimony of a time of disillusionment at the possibility of the disruption of social ties. For centuries wars had served as an opportunity to display the power and development of each people. However, affirms Freud, “the war in which we refused to believe broke out, and brought disillusionment” (Freud, 1915/2003e, p. 2103). World War I had so far been the bloodiest, most destructive and cruelest of them all. Here is his desolate outburst:

It tramples in blind fury on all that comes in its way as though there were to be no future and no peace among men after it is over. It severs all common bonds between the opposing peoples, and threatens to leave a legacy of embitterment that will make any renewal of those bonds impossible for a long time. (Freud, 1915/2003e, p. 2103)

Illusions are creations of fantasy, form of fiction of the encounter with the other. They save us unpleasant feelings, allow us to enjoy satisfactions. But the acknowledgment of the ability of “civilized” men to behave naturally with brutality, cruelty and barbarism, as well as the moral degradation of peoples and states – which should be the custodians of civilization – produced a period of disillusionment. In this perspective, the disenchantment of this war time suggests that this primordial condition of the subject to build ties with the other could somehow be broken.

In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud (1913/2003a) showed us that an act is only violent in the context in which it is inserted, from which it receives a moral meaning as either good or evil. It was the crime against the father of the primal horde that enabled the establishment of social ties. However, in order to be suspended and not be repeated in reality, this crime must be internalized by the brothers of the horde and become a wish – the death wish. Thus, death can only be psychically inscribed as wish, and, as such, it suffers from actions of cultural prohibition that prevent its fulfillment. When it is fulfilled, it annihilates its object, and therefore, paradoxically, its own condition also.

Therefore, according to Freud, the death wish is fulfilled unconsciously, sometimes through altruistic and social impulses. The neurotic that fears the death of his beloved object defends himself by forming obsessive symptoms because he is close to fulfilling his wish to annihilate it. In this sense, altruistic feelings are a tradeoff for actual selfish attitudes.

The violence of the crime against the father broke with the primal indifference towards the other. And the passage from indifference to ambivalence resulted in the production of a subject that cannot reduce himself to a single position of the drive circuit, but should be able to circulate among all of them. When settling in a position, he puts his unconscious wish into action, and thus makes it impossible to support social ties. The idea of primary masochism not only broke with the notion of individualism, by indicating the prior existence of the other as a condition for the emergence of the subject, but it especially marks the social inscription of the subject in the position of the object.

In the 1919 essay *A Child Is Being Beaten*, Freud (2003f) seeks to build the genesis of the phantasm framework through the positions of sadism and masochism. The organization of the subject will be structured by the identification between “being loved” and “being beaten,” by the erogenous pleasure with death. In this essay, Freud retrieves the voices of the drive circuit (active, passive and reflexive), making them correspond to the temporality of the establishment of the phantasm, that structure that situates the subject’s social ties. Following the formation of the terms of the constitution of the phantasm allows us to understand the subject’s place in relation to culture and what is transmitted of it. Stagnating into any one of these positions tends to the immobilization of social ties, the withering of the subject and, consequently, the production of violence.

In *A Child Is Being Beaten*, Freud (1919/2003F) starts out from the analysis of an unconscious fantasy whose outcome includes an impersonal statement: someone beats a child. It is interesting to note that Freud uses as his title the statement of the fantasy expressed by his patients: “*a child is being beaten*” (p 2469). This is the statement of the first stage of the sadomasochistic fantasy. The child being beaten in this first scene is never the actual subject, but usually a brother or sister. And the author of the aggression, in turn, is an adult. The following conclusion is therefore reached by whoever is watching the scene: my father is beating a child I hate.

This scene is not of a masochistic nature, says Freud, since the subject is outside it. Nor could it be called properly sadistic, as it is the father who does the action. However, the presence of this other child is viewed by the subject of the fantasy as a rival, inasmuch as it threatens his amorous relationship with his father. And from that point of view, the scene is defined as a sadistic, because “the idea of the father beating this hateful child is therefore pleasant” (Freud, 1919/2003F, p. 2470). The sadistic enjoyment emerges from the position of the subject as a spectator of the scene. And in the equivalence between being beaten and being loved, the associated feeling is that “my father does not love this child, *he loves only me*” (Freud, 1919 / 2003e, p. 2470, *italics in original*).

In this first stage we already have a ternary relationship, typical of the Oedipal relationship, in which the characters are the author of the fantasy, another child and

the father. The second stage of this fantasy suffers the same twist of the drive’s grammar. It is the passage from the active voice to the passive voice, from the position of sadism to that of masochism. The person doing the beating remains the same, but the one suffering the aggression is now the very subject of the fantasy. He abandons the position of spectator to enter the scene. And so the subject assumes the following statement: “*I am being beaten by my father*” (Freud, 1919/2003F, p. 2469). This step is formed by two characters. To the extent that it he beaten, the child transforms what was hate into love: if the father hits him, it is because he loves him. The resulting feeling is guilt, one of the forms of masochism, along with women’s and children’s positions. The boy also feels this female enjoyment of being beaten by his father.

Freud asserts that this second stage is the only one of an unconscious nature. His patients could not remember it and so it could only be identified through constructions in analysis sessions. It is a stage marked by ambivalence, for, according to Lacan, “there we find this *either ... or ...*, which is critical in the dual relationship” (1956-57/1995, p. 119). Passivity associated with the erotic function leads to masochism as a fundamental position. This time marks the enjoyment that emerges in the position of object of desire of the other. It is the expression of the subject’s condition of alienation.

The third stage ends the twist of the beating fantasy and resembles the first. The subject of the fantasy is reduced to the third position, that of observer. For Lacan, it is the ultimate form of fantasy, where something is kept, memorized, which remains in the subject:

The father figure is surpassed, transposed, evoking the general form of a character in the position of beating, omnipotent and despotic, while the actual subject is presented in the form of the multiple children, who no longer have a definite gender, but compose a kind of neutral series. (Lacan, 1957-58 / 1999, p. 247)

Once again, the subject is in the spectator position; he just “is gazing.” But now, unlike the first stage, a strong sexual desire is aroused. The subject, who is off the scene, enjoys the violence of the death wish. The sadistic position of the first stage returns, enclosing an impersonal structure: someone beats a child.

The indeterminacy of the subject of the sentence is expressed by the pronoun “someone” and reveals the desubjectivation of this statement for all structures. The subject remains in the “state of spectator, or simply with an eye on things, i.e., of what always characterizes at the limit, at the point of the final reduction, every kind of object” (Lacan, 1956-57/1995, p. 120). What is produced is something that goes in the opposite direction of the inflation of the ego.

However, of the three positions stated in the structure that organizes the phantasm through signifiers that situate positions of relationship, the subject – as in the drive

circuit – appears only in the third moment, since there he is not settled into any position, but may have pleasure anywhere in the relationship that he establishes with each other. The fact that he has already moved around the other positions enables him to transform the pleasure into knowledge. Thus, one who makes himself be beaten knows as much about active enjoyment as about passive enjoyment. The pleasure of the sadist is enhanced by the knowledge he has about the pleasure of the masochist. The one who gazes also enjoys through the one that is gazed at.

When the subject settles in any of these positions, the phantasm (i.e., his relationship with the other) seeks its fulfillment through the very logic of his sentence. Thus, establishing a relationship between the voices (active, passive and reflexive) of the drive circuit and the structure of the phantasm framework, the following correspondence is achieved: (1) sadism/active voice = my father beats my rival (I hate him), (2) masochism passive voice = I am being beaten by my father (he loves me), (3) sadomasochism/reflexive voice = someone beats a child.

In the subject's identification with one of the statements, he will address culture with hatred and aggression or as the person who must sacrifice himself for the love of the other. Violence, in both cases, presents itself as the annulment of the subject. Like the person who destroys the social ties through hatred of difference or like the person who fades away in a sacrificial position in face of the need for love. Therefore, the transmission of culture is obliterated when one of these situations of violence reduces the plurality of the subject's times to a single position.

The confinement of the subject to a given drive time produces a condition of violence in his relationship with culture. In the article *Society and Individual* (1993), psychoanalyst Contardo Calligaris addresses the unease caused by a terrorist attack that put at risk the disappearance of important cultural heritage sites in Florence, Italy. For the author, these attacks were forms of destruction of the symbolic heritage of a culture, the equivalent to what Lacan attributes, for man, as his second death, i.e., the symbolic death that follows the actual death of the body.

According to Calligaris, the opposition between individual and society is a symptom of our culture, for it follows the principle of individualism, that is, the individual as the supreme value. Individualism, in this sense, is the disruption of social ties, the stagnation of the subject in a given position of the drive circuit. This leads to a death wish which is fulfilled as violence to the other, of a culture founded on hatred. This validates all expressions of rivalry, of aggression, of destruction of difference, branding otherness as that which should be obliterated.

What we find in these situations is a strong attempt to break with the cultural and popular values that are transmitted. In a way, it is as if the symbolic structure that was built up over the decades needed to be destroyed, seeking in the outbreak of violence the only form of manifestation. That is the hatred we encounter in terrorist attacks, in graffiti defacing buildings and historical monuments, or in the

erasure of the memories of people who helped to build our present time.

On the other hand, in this settlement on the drive circuit, the subject is also compelled to express himself in a sacrificial way. The violence of the sacrifice imposes on the drive contours, limits and constraints for a relationship – between subject and culture – which has not been inscribed by a loss. Thus, to the extent that the drive is not completed in a circuit, it is the body that becomes the object of sacrifice. These are situations in which the body is offered to the power of the other, a violence in which the body's objectalization determines the subject as a property of others.

Violence and transmission

Terrorist attacks that have destroyed important cultural heritage sites, such as those perpetrated by the Islamic State in millenary cities and museums in northern Iraq. The kidnapping, torture and disappearance of political opponents, as happened during Latin-American dictatorships. The obliteration, by society, of the memory of people who helped to build the culture of our time. What these different episodes have in common is the violence that breaks with the spatiotemporal dimensions in which subjects are represented in social ties. The subject fades away in those situations, since they flatten temporal succession and reduce to zero the spatial dimensions by which he is able to represent himself. We believe that one way of reconstructing the social ties of the subject who has undergone such an experience is through his transmissions.

Loss is an operator that produces a twist in the relationship between subject and culture, causing the experiences transmitted from one term to the other to occur in an altered way. This twist, in turn, marks the transmission that happens not as the preservation of the past throughout time, but as a re-inscription that projects to the future the possibilities of creating something new.

In this perspective, Freud's essay *A Child Is Being Beaten* (1919/2003F) introduced us to the temporality of the drive in the construction of the subject's social ties in the phantasm framework. The main idea is that the subject appears at the moment of desubjectivation, that is, when the ego decentralizes itself from its imaginary position and transforms the loss of a pleasure into knowledge about it. At this moment of impersonality, in which the ego moves away from the objectalized position and restores himself as a subject of wish, transmission becomes possible.

The reversals undergone by psychoanalytic theory through Freudian insight were mainly based on listening to certain clinical phenomena, among which repetition is prominent. We cannot say that repetition is a new phenomenon for Freud. And Lacan (1985), by recognizing it in his 1964 seminar as one of the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis, acutely identified in it the characteristic trait of the operation of the unconscious. The temporality of repetition as that which insists on returning concerns

the constitutive position of the subject and is part of his relationship with culture.

Repetition is fundamental, for example, in the essay *Totem and Taboo* (Freud 1913/2003a). The sons who murdered the father need to repeat the memory of this crime symbolically so that it is never again performed as an act. Such repetition occurs through social rituals which recall the totemic banquet. Therein lies the paradox of repetition. The celebration of the primordial crime is the pursuit of a satisfaction. However, to the extent that it is repeated, that pleasure is no longer the same. Repetition, in this sense, is the effect of a twist in the subject's position, inscribing an impossible in the reencounter of the first experience of satisfaction.

It was the study of the repeated symptoms of soldiers returning from the battlefield that led Freud to classify war neuroses as a new structure within traumatic neuroses. The intensities of these experiences could well be a distinguishing factor in relation to the neuroses of civil life. The former would be the effect of the actual "death risk," from external sources, while the latter would be caused by "amorous frustrations," due to mishaps of the libido. Freud, however, starts wondering whether there is a traumatic element at the base of all defensive reaction, inasmuch as all symptomatic formations showed a tendency to repeat circumstances that caused displeasure.

Since his first psychoanalytic writings, the pleasure principle was stipulated as the main rule of the psychic system. Its logic is as follows: increased tension generates displeasure, while its decrease results in the sensation of pleasure. In this sense, stability is a desired state in this process. However, Freud recognizes that this principle is not hegemonic. The very psychic apparatus, through the reality and repression principle, can impose resignations or replacements to satisfy certain hedonistic impulses.

Listening to certain symptoms in clinical practice contributed to stress the idea of the repetition compulsion as a distinct logic of psychic functioning, contrary to the pleasure principle. What is sometimes called fate can be an illustration of this process: a person who is always abandoned; a man who forms the same kinds of romantic relationships; or even, exemplifies Freud, a woman who has been three times married and three times a widow.

If we take into account observations like these, based on the behavior, transfer and life stories of men and women, we will not only find the courage to assume that there actually exists in the mind repetition compulsion that overrides the pleasure principle, but will also be inclined to relate to this compulsion the dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses and the impulse that leads children to play. (Freud, 1920 / 2003g, p. 2517)

The real death risk imposed by the situation of war re-enhanced, in Freud's writing, helplessness as the primordial condition of the subject, a subject that had been

addressed at the beginning of his work. It is what Freud calls fright, a state defined as that of being abruptly invaded in the presence of an unexpected danger, for which one is not prepared. This haunting condition of the subject helps us to understand why certain children's games and certain stories, which narrate intense horror scenes with scary characters, provoke so much fascination among children and adults.

It was in this perspective that Freud gave attention to the game that his grandson repeatedly played. This child had the habit of grabbing and throwing away from him, into a corner, under the bed, any object he was able to get. At the same time as he threw the objects, he would utter with pleasure and satisfaction a long sound, *o-o-o-o*, representing, according to Freud, the word *fort*, which means far.

One day, Freud observed this child playing with a reel tied to a piece of string. His game now consisted of flinging the reel beneath his bed, making it disappear. The sound *o-o-o-o* was likewise uttered. But instead of going to fetch it, the child pulled the string from under of bed, demonstrating great satisfaction at the reappearance of the object by uttering the sound *da*, "here." This is the well-known game of *fort-da*, introduced in the essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920/2003g). That observation motivates reflections that go beyond the understanding of children's games, in that it questions the condition of transmitting an experience of violence. As Freud states, that game is "the great cultural achievement of the child" (p. 2513). Freud's interest in that children's game comes from wondering why a child would repeat a scene that is unpleasant for him. What we shall see is that the only reason why the action that leads the child to play with the reel does not become an act of violence is that the child is able to transmit this experience of neglect through play, twisting his place in relation to the other.

Freud's interpretation of this game is not complicated. The child was acting out, through the objects, the disappearance of his mother, felt as unpleasant. "When the child moves on from the passivity of the experience to the activity of a game, he transfers the unpleasant experience to one of his playmates, and thus takes revenge on a substitute" (Freud, 1920/2003g, p. 2513). The experience of separation that the child was suffering passively was repeated actively in the game. Added to this is a somewhat destructive impulse to throw the objects away, removing them from sight.

In the seminar "The Anguish" (Lacan, 1962-1963 / 2005), the interpretation of the *fort-da* game is taken up by Lacan in a very different way. For Lacan, this game is a response to the void left over from the disappearance of the mother. The *fort-da* game inscribes a temporality and a space between the subject and the other that allows him to participate in the drive circuit ordered by language. The reel is an object that is detached from the child's body, but is still tied to it by a string. We are at a moment in which the drive object connects the child and mother in a common body, starting to present itself in its symbolic dimension.

In the seminar “The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,” Lacan (1964/1985) reveals his departure from Freud’s interpretation: “To say that for the subject it is simply a matter of establishing a function of domination is nonsense” (p 226). Viewing the children’s game as the child’s obstruction to the mother’s disappearance, becoming an agent of the scene, is secondary. The basic difference in relation to the first interpretation is that the reel is no longer seen as representing the mother, but that which stands out from her, as an object of satisfaction that was lost. Lacan states: “He exercises himself with the help of a small reel, that is, with object *a*” (1964/1985, p 226). Object *a* is this drive object, which, for being the first to mark the experience of satisfaction, remains forever lost in encounters with subsequent objects. In this sense, the reel is the symbolic element that establishes the temporal dimension of the subject, marked by an alternation of presence and absence, of activity and passivity.

The game of *fort-da* reveals the construction of time in the severing operation in which the subject emerges as the effect of the loss of the drive object. As a result, the insistence on repetition pursues a temporality capable of inscribing the identity of past time, but which fails on encountering the difference of the present launched into the future. The game played by Freud’s grandson is a first attempt at transmission intended to establish time and space in his relationship with the other.

The separation of the child from the mother, like the murder of the father of the primal horde in *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 1913 / 2003a), is not an act of violence, inasmuch as it constructs the subject’s temporal and spatial representations. However, as with the totemic myth, repetition will challenge the pleasure principle. The symbolic repetition of the real act produces the transmission of that experience, preventing it from turning into a violent act.

In the essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920/2003g), Freud subverts one of the fundamental axioms of psychoanalysis, according to which all dreams are fulfillments of wishes, even those of anguish and punishment. In this sense, he wonders how the dreams of people who have suffered traumatic violence could at the same time be in accordance with the hedonistic function of the psychic system and recall childhood situations that caused displeasure. Freud replies that they obey the repetition compulsion, life’s tendency to retrieve an abandoned earlier time. There exists, therefore, an impulse to return to a lost past.

That ultimate goal, states Freud, “must be an *old* state of things, an initial state from which the living entity, at one time or another, strayed away and to which it strives to return through the winding paths along which its development leads” (1920/2003g, p. 2526, italics in the original). From that moment on, Freud confirms a change he had long been contemplating. By stating that there is a drive characterized by the tendency to return to its previous state, he inscribes death as a goal of life.

It is a drive that aims to return to a primeval condition, inasmuch as it is marked by the effects of a violence

that reduces and annihilates the space and memory through which the subject can represent himself. According to Lacan (1964/1985), this death drive is the side of repetition that insists on heading to the traumatic – to the “encounter with the real” – i.e., with a lack that restores the operation of the conditionings of subjectivity. Based on this new theory of trauma, Freud (1920/2003g) was able to explain the satisfaction of masochism and how it – and not sadism – occupies the primary position through which the subject will constitute himself. From the opposition between ego drives and sexual drives, Freud restores the dualism, now between death drive and life drive.

Until 1920, with the essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (2003g), a sadistic component was identified with sexuality, while masochism was understood as the return of sadism to the ego itself. This scheme is that of the grammar of the drive, presented in 1915, as we have seen in the difference between the active voice (“I beat”), the passive voice (“I am beaten”) and the reflexive voice (“I make myself be beaten”). But considering masochism as primordial means assuming that the subject arises in a position of loss of the drive object. And sadism reveals the activity of the subject in going toward that object, now reduced to passivity.

At the beginning of the drive circuit, part of the death drive is directed to the outside world. It is diverted by the sexual function to protect the ego from its own destruction and to perceive in the external objects another possible way of satisfaction. It is the active condition of sadism. But there is another part of the death drive that is not transferred out of the ego, but settles in it, taking it as its sexual object. It is a residue of the death drive that silently resists being connected to any representation. This residue of the death drive that remains in the subject disconnected from sexuality preserves the condition of masochism of the subject in the present time.

That part of the death drive connected to the sexual drive that was projected outwards returns to the ego at a second moment. We then have what is characterized as secondary masochism, identified in the passivity of the second time of the drive circuit. Primary masochism, through the silent death drive, relates to a body condition that is never abandoned, that of being an object. But one must be able to move between this position and the position of subject not to settle into any discourse that may annul the conditions of representation of oneself. Neither as object, requiring an act of hatred against the other, nor as sacrificial subject, being the property of the other, an object of the other’s satisfaction. The destruction of social ties is an inevitable consequence in both cases.

Under these conditions, the subject is dispossessed of his word, forced to become silent and hold his tongue, removed from his when and where. These are situations of violence in which he finds himself deprived of his conditions to represent himself, cast away from the social ties that give his existence. In face of them, we cannot depart from an ethic of the “duty to transmit,” an ethic of the transmission of experience directed towards recalling it symbolically so it is not repeated through real acts of violence.

Tempo, violência e transmissão

Resumo: O objetivo deste artigo é apresentar, a partir da leitura de textos da teoria psicanalítica de Sigmund Freud, uma compreensão sobre os processos psíquicos do sujeito em uma situação de violência. Pensamos que a pulsão é a condição para o estabelecimento do laço entre sujeito e cultura. Quando uma situação de violência se apresenta ao sujeito, ela rompe com essa condição, anulando a possibilidade de ele se representar em um tempo e um espaço. Como forma de reestabelecer o sujeito nesse circuito pulsional que o coloca em relação com o outro, a transmissão dessa experiência de violência se apresenta como um dever. Essa transmissão, porém, não se faz sem a inscrição de perdas.

Palavras-chave: transmissão, violência, pulsão, tempo.

Temps, violence et transmission

Résumé: L'objectif de cet article est de présenter, à partir des textes de la théorie psychanalytique de Sigmund Freud, une compréhension des processus psychiques du sujet dans une situation de violence. Nous pensons que la pulsion est la condition pour établir le lien entre le sujet et la culture. Quand une situation de violence se présente au sujet, cette condition est rompue, niant sa possibilité de se représenter dans le temps et l'espace. Afin de rétablir le sujet dans ce circuit pulsionnel qui le met en relation avec l'autre, la transmission de l'expérience de la violence se présente comme un devoir. Cette transmission, cependant, ne s'inscrit pas sans pertes.

Mots-clés: transmission, violence, pulsion, temps.

Tiempo, violencia y transmisión

Resumen: Este artículo tiene el objetivo de presentar la comprensión de los procesos mentales del sujeto en una situación de violencia, a partir de la lectura de textos de la teoría psicoanalítica de Sigmund Freud. Creemos que la pulsión es la condición para establecer el vínculo entre el sujeto y la cultura. Cuando se presenta una situación de violencia al sujeto, se rompe con esta condición, negando la posibilidad de que él puede representarse en un tiempo y espacio. Con el fin de restablecerle en este circuito pulsional que le pone en relación con los demás, la transmisión de la experiencia de la violencia se presenta como un deber. Sin embargo, no se la inscribe sin pérdidas.

Palabras clave: transmisión, violencia, pulsión, tiempo.

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