

The death drive and the beyond oneself

The reading of Freud's text "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920) took on new contours after studying Lacan's seminar "Le Sinthome" (1975-1976) and enabled me to reflect on some of these issues. Resuming the discussion of the concept of the death drive in psychoanalytic practice by discussing a conservative and destructive drive that could not be ignored by Freud's attentive listening seems crucial and extremely relevant.

In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Freud says that we have been led to distinguish between two types of drives: those that seek to lead life to death, and sexual drives that always seek and achieve the renewal of life. In the end, Freud establishes a conflict between two drives: the life drive and the death drive. He also emphasizes that in order to preserve the hypothesis of the existence of the death drive, it will be necessary to link it to the life drives from birth.

In the first part of "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Freud is grappling with forms of repetition. He observes his grandson's repetitive play and considers it part of the work of symbolization that needs to be done in the absence/loss of the primary object. In the Fort/Da game (reel game), the child plays with the toy and then brings it back. The author notes that this is the elaboration of the process of separation/loss from the mother, as the child moves from a position of passivity to activity in the game. In addition to observing his grandson, Freud also finds repetition in clinical practice as a form of regression. This happens when this repetition is related to the conservative behavior of not letting go of a loss/separation. The author reminds us that often, patients who are ready to end their treatment experience a significant worsening of symptoms to avoid separating from the analyst. He even calls this repetition demonic.

The clinical phenomenon of compulsive repetition was what led Freud to recognize his encounter with what he called the death drive. And it was from the observation of compulsive repetition that he noted the regressive nature of the drives. These drives would remain established in the ego.

It is important to differentiate the encounter with the same, called in clinical practice by Freud as compulsive repetition, which is linked to the death drive, from that repetition that Lacan calls significant insistence. There is a point of connection between these two forms of repetition, which can sometimes bring them closer: the search for pleasure. This search for pleasure is introduced through the memory/record of an ideal mythical encounter with an unbarred Other/Primary Object of satisfaction. The death drive works in resistance to any form of loss of pleasure.

The significant insistence is related to the lacking encounter with the Other that produced the loss of pleasure. The repetition will occur from the insistence of the signifiers as an attempt to encounter the object, which will never happen. The significant insistence is therefore linked to the symbolic matrix. When we find the subject of desire in someone's speech, it means that castration was inscribed from the loss of pleasure. The signifier Name of the Father S1 was inscribed, and the subject became a being of repetition. We can say that, in this context, repetition works in persistence, creating diverse forms and linking new signifiers. Through these connections, the desire for the encounter with the old and idealized object of satisfaction that will never be found is maintained. Thus, the possibility of negotiation is established, and pleasure remains partial. The lack and desire are inserted, but the absolute pleasure will not be possible. We will access small daily pleasures that will be part of existence.

Differentiating the two forms of repetition in our clinical practice is quite relevant because mistaking the desiring subject who repeats significantly for someone who is taken in the repetition of the same can produce the patient's melancholization. An interpretation of this can make the patient believe that they are unable to produce movements in their life, after all, they only know how to repeat. In life, we can take many turns, without necessarily regressing. On the other hand, not recognizing the significant crystallization and the patient's difficulty in moving forward can leave out important signs of the severity of the case. It is important to recognize when there was a difficulty in the symbolic inscription to also evaluate the possible limits in treatment.

Lacan tells us, in the seminar *The Sinthome*, that the death drive is real, while it can only be thought of as impossible. He also affirms that fire is Real. The Real sets fire to everything. The Real is searching for the other side, on the side of absolute zero. I seek these words of Lacan to help sustain what I consider Freud said outright, and which some post-Freudian readings sought to soften: the death drive means destruction. Lacan approximates the death drive to the concept of the real and also brings us the real in its destructive dimension. He refers to the search for absolute zero in the Real, just as Freud also referred to the tendency to return to the inanimate in the death drive.

Reading the text *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* made me reflect that when Freud says that sexual drives are related to life drives, this means that life necessarily implies that the subject needs to invest outside of themselves and make connections with something different from themselves. Life is about relating from the difference inserted by the first Other, in living with others.

The encounter with the psychoanalyst aims to be a facilitator of the life drive so that it can resume its function. This connection, in which the analyst's desire is present, considers the existence of a subject. We work from the ethics of psychoanalysis for the existence of this subject. Subject of desire, subject of the unconscious, divided subject, the only one that concerns our practice. We provoke new signifiers, where the return of what has failed creates obstacles and continues to produce mindless repetition in the pursuit of absolute enjoyment. Lacan affirms that repetition demands the new. It turns towards the ludic, which makes the new dimension. The analyst's desire must enable the sustaining of the difference that creates an interval and prevents the deadly continuity of narcissistic pleasure.

Psychoanalysis does not work with certainties and, therefore, will possibly always go against evidence-based science. But has psychoanalysis ever sailed calm seas? Is it not part of its own constitution to go against the current? I understand that the border between science and art should not be lost. It is a dual affiliation that enriches its possibility of praxis and is also in this interface that it seeks its sustenance in discourse.

We are at a Congress to discuss the ethics of psychoanalysis today. I consider that the ethics of desire, the ethics of the subject of the unconscious, is the only ethics that can, regardless of the era, sustain psychoanalysis. In this way, the ethics of psychoanalysis can be confused with the very function of the psychoanalyst. This does not change the fact that there are new behaviors, new discourses, and new pathologies that are part of the new times and that will require the psychoanalyst to recognize these transformations to keep up with their work.

The initiative of the meeting of psychoanalysts to discuss the ethics of psychoanalysis, bringing together different nationalities in different languages, seems to me to be a source of inspiration for psychoanalysis to sustain its creative function. As I

made clear in this writing: the life drive implies going beyond oneself. And I am convinced that this meeting is a device that works from this perspective.