

Helplessness and the Other Scene

Marta Pedó¹

The recognition of my place in the world is retroactive and does not happen without anguish. In this sense, it is necessary to depathologize it, because it is a necessary malaise for an analysis.

In this brief talk, I bring some questions around challenges for psychoanalytic clinics in "dystopian times". Dystopian times as almost synonymous with hopelessness and uncertainty.

Is it enough to say that today we are confronted with post-traumatic distress as effects of the pandemic? Approaching helplessness, different from an apprehensive anticipation, we find this anguish loaded with the weight of the depressive tone, the despondency of the "it has already happened", already lost.

As prototype of the traumatic, founding of the register of danger, from which it is necessary to defend oneself - helplessness in the human being is relative to lack, to his condition of prematurity, of dependence on the other; however, and it is important to emphasize, for a neurotic it is always relative to excess.

In what dimension, or in what conditions, do we deal with excess today?

Can we still sustain the idea of One Universe? Not long ago, other dimensions of the universe have been inferred. Although not completely proven, because they are not observable, they already tell us about the expansion of the universe, or multiverse.

Lacan² says that if there is One, it is One that is missing, it is One + a. One that points to the lack. One of lack, real, traumatic, as we recognized in the pandemic of COVID, which put us through loss and challenge.

But it was also a period when we dreamed more.

¹ 2023 – Marta Pedó is a member of Associação Psicanalítica de Porto Alegre – Porto Alegre, Brazil

² Lacan, J. *A lógica do fantasma, seminário 1966-1967*. Publicação não comercial do CEF: Recife, 2008

Dreams present us this other scene, of the unconscious, in which the non-linear time, the multiple realities, the infinite and concomitant possibilities come close to what is announced, in fantasy, as the surreal of the multiverse, in which the doubles, others of each one, are also made visible.

Chuang Tsé, after a walk in the sun, falls asleep and dreams; in the dream, he sees himself as a butterfly that wanders through the same places, in the same scenes that he had seen before, during his walk. When he wakes up, he wonders: Was it Chuang Tsé who dreamed of being a butterfly? Or, on the contrary, am I a butterfly who dreams of being Chuang Tsé?

In Irma's injection dream, to quote the classic, Freud also transits through his doubles - the characters who appear representing something of him or the patient. The proliferation is noisy, brings together "a hall of people," and the climax is an image of horror - the open throat in its wounds. But around the end, everything disappears, fades away, and all that remains are the letters of a chemical formula - the formula - of the solution that Irma had not accepted.

In the analysis, Freud recognizes that it was a matter of trying to repair his own narcissistic wound, to restore the imaginary unity and to discard the blatant failure.

The feeling of failure was undone with this new formula - the writing of the letters, which are from another register - the symbolic.

The symbolic dissolves identities and unveils the paradoxes - also of conflicts. This is what we work with - with the openings that the symbolic awakens.

Freud recognized some dreams in which the theory of desire is shaken, and to dream becomes an alarm of a danger for the dreamer, who must, yes, awaken. In dreams of anguish, the alarm provokes the apprehension of the subject, who jumps out of the unconscious dimension and makes vigil before an unknown satisfaction.

The nightmare, other than the distress dream, on the other hand, has no preparation; rather, it repeats the meaninglessness of disaster, of trauma experienced without defense.

"I had a horrible nightmare, I dreamed I was stuck in the TV screen, and I wasn't going to get out of there anymore... I woke up crying and screamed, I called Mother."

Mother comes to the rescue and reassures us by saying that we are all a little tired of being alone on the screen.

And she says: How about "*getting off the screen*"?

In the excess of the screens

In the indistinction between the scene on the screen and the everyday scene, we find the effects of anguish, helplessness, loss of the referential of the self. As if we could perceive points where the spaces of the subject are mixed, and the projected images leak - a swarm, "tumult of selves", mixed with unrecognized images, *Unheimlich*.

Borrowing an expression from Schreber, strangers, like *men made in haste*, in this disconcerting coincidence, of the different positions of the subject wide open - projection that would have been better avoided.

To encounter the double as an *ex-timate*, the intimate stranger, has a traumatizing effect.

In trauma, emptiness and excess come together and constitute the paradox of the infinitely reproduced image (like the mirror that reflects the mirror, indefinitely).

What is "solid"? On what to stand when the world empties into many different scenes?

The expression "fourth wall" comes from the theater - it is an artifice that seeks to protect the actors from the affectation of the public, of those who watch. In a kind of "public solitude", this wall allows the actors to immerse themselves in the narrative, it creates a barrier, separating the "universes".

Every day, we live with different fictional dimensions, scenes that we easily distinguish as reality or illusion. We pass through these spaces without realizing how much they affect us, even enjoying the emotions aroused by the projections. Precisely because we know they are in another dimension, framed in a screen. The frame, the screen, the fourth wall, are a barrier and allow the illusion of a good image.

In the absence of it, in the absence of the lack of it, any image fits; but which one? Any image? All of them?

Dystopian times, of proliferation of images, in the quest to avoid loss. Paradoxically, avoiding any lack returns as depressive anguish, an encounter between emptiness and excess, because nothing else makes a mark - the newly consumed *gadget* is soon discarded and replaced, lost in advance.

On the other hand, from science, we are also confronted with other symbolic possibilities, which challenge us, not only in the clinical frame, as was the use of screens as offices, but also by the emptying of the place of enunciation.

The formulas of science, in this language emptied of the subject, demonstrate even more that the subject is the effect of an emptiness, (of this effect of lack that we produce).

Bibliografy:

- BETTS, Jaime. **Desamparo e vulnerabilidades no laço social** – A função do psicanalista. Revista da Associação Psicanalítica de Porto Alegre, n. 45-46, p.09-19, jul. 2013/jun. 2014). Disponível em:
https://appoa.org.br/uploads/arquivos/revistas/revista_45_46.pdf
- Britannica.com. <https://www.britannica.com/science/learned-helplessness>
- COSTA, Veridiana Alves de Sousa Ferreira & Queiroz, Edilene Freire. **Transtorno de pânico: uma manifestação clínica do desamparo**. Disponível em:
<https://www.scielo.br/j/pcp/a/gfkj7QS3RGGtPbJq76dfRgd/?lang=pt>
- FREUD, Sigmund. (1900-1901). A interpretação dos sonhos. In: **Obras Completas**, RJ: Imago, vols. IV e V.
- FREUD, Sigmund. (1919). O Estranho. In: **Obras Completas**, RJ: Imago, vol. XVII.
- KNOBLOCH, Felicia. **O tempo do traumático**. SP: EDUC, 1998.
- LACAN, Jacques. (1962-3) **O Seminário**, livro 10: A angústia. 2005
- LACAN, Jacques. (1966-7). **A lógica do fantasma, seminário 1966-1967**. Publicação não comercial do CEF: Recife, 2008
- SALES, Camila Ferreira. (2016). **A experiência da angústia na clínica psicanalítica e na arte da performance**. Dissertação de Mestrado, Programa de Pós-graduação em Psicologia, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Minas Gerais.
- STEVENSON, John. **The Fourth Wall and the Third Space**. New York, Centre for Playback Theatre, 1995. Disponível em:

http://playbacktheatre.org/playbacktheatre/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/Stevenson_Fourth.pdf