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Between the Body and the Word: the Effects of Language on a Suffering Body

Bruno Soares Rocha^{1*}, Pedro Gabriel Bezerra da Fonsêca², Mariana de Azevedo Nascimento³

¹Graduado em Psicologia pela UFPE. Pós-graduando em Psicanálise pela Unyleya. Psicanalista co-fundador do Espaço Letra Freudiana; ²Mestre em Psicologia pela UFPE. Psicanalista Membro do Traço Freudiano Veredas Lacanianas Escola de Psicanálise; ³Graduanda de Psicologia na Faculdade Pernambucana de Saúde – FPS

ABSTRACT

Objective: This work has the purpose of analyzing some theoretical reasons which led Dr. Sigmund Freud to distance himself from the Neurology field, consequently creating his own new investigation method called Psychoanalysis, which opened an entirely new field of comprehension and intervention of the treatment of the discontent in its psychic cause. By distance from the Neurological field we can understand the creation of Psychoanalysis, and a conceptual shift where the body is no longer a cause, but an object: in this case, a discursive object. **Results:** The main consequence of this turnout was the vouching of the effects of language in the sick individual's body, specifically in reference of the many forms of pain and discontent. **Conclusion:** The Psychoanalysis, thus founded in the word and in the language, has become fundamental to the health sciences for the understanding of all forms of illness, which can be better understood through the patient's words and their due listening.

Keywords: pain, psychoanalysis, Freud, language, body.

*Correspondence to Author:

Bruno Soares Rocha

Graduado em Psicologia pela UFPE. Pós-graduando em Psicanálise pela Unyleya. Psicanalista co-fundador do Espaço Letra Freudiana

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INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the last century, the Freudian hypothesis emerged from an elementary discovery, which was the existence of a linguistics dimension to our symptoms. To Sigmund Freud, there is an intricate semiological framework that sorts the corporal and psychic processes, decidedly making all our sufferings find its roots in our history and in our condition's nature. With that, he definitely overcomes the stigmas which were postulated by the religious views and the prejudice of unscientific positions of the time (1). However, the technological advances of science would build walls against the psychoanalytic theoretical-technical instruments, due to the binding of clinical experiences with mythological descriptions, such as the concepts of narcissism and the Oedipus Complex, for example. We emphasize that this new field's production clearly opposes to the classic psychology's postulates (the Experimental Psychology from his contemporary Wilhelm Wundt), that proposed the psychic as a natural system, which would, as such, be subjected to universal laws for its understanding: to Freud, the psychic is not a waterfall, a star or gravity, is not a natural instance thus subjected to unsolicited laws, but a subversion from the natural, produced by a intricate web of discourse which precedes even the production of the human body, seeing that the series of family expectations (translated into narratives) interfere with the individual's birth and life. In this sense, in a body produced by the word, it's possible to think that all our sufferings would be marked by a phantom perspective, that is, by the persistence of mnemonic fragments that regulate the body's pleasure and displeasure systems, and especially the perception of pain and discontent. Therefore, this article resumes the importance of those facts exposing the way the then neurologist, Dr. Sigmund Freud, not finding in the cellular data the raw cause of suffering present in its patients discourse, moved away from a strict physicalism to learn what went between the body and the word. By

this way, he uncovered not only the tributes that pain pays to speech, but developed an enlightened and enlightening way of his overcoming: a "talking cure" (2), as referenced by one of his patients.

BETWEEN THE CEREBRAL AND THE MENTAL

In 1975, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) wrote a memorable text titled "The effectiveness of symbols" (3), where the author presents, on one side, the healing process that comes from the mystic shamanistic palaver and, on the other side, the theoretical way Psychoanalysis treats the patient's suffering from the operation of the word's effects over the person's complexion. With this, Lévi-Strauss highlights the proximity between the logic found in a distant, primitive past, whose reality was structured through the myth, and the scientific modernity of the ending of the first millenium, with the complaint's listening and the treatment given to the word. The anthropological sciences, thereby, meets again the myth to highlight the way that the language takes wholeness of the individual in its social, organic and psychic dimensions.

In the 19th century, the Psychoanalysis would firm itself from the uncovering of the linguist object, inaugurating a third way of investigation and intervention of the psychic discontent, which was not formed by injury or section of the mental apparatus, neither by external factors, causing changes in the individual's neurochemical regulation system. It was the biggest demarcation of a suffering mechanics experienced in a higher or lower psychopathological degree by a person, associated directly with the body's language function.

Freud begins his trajectory summoned by his interest in the mental illness phenomenon, whose organical aetiology was nonexistent. Through the hypnosis method, he notices the existence of ideas on which desire projects its realization, but are, however, unbearable to the consciousness due to the damage to the individual's self-image. With this, they become

the targets of a selfish repression mechanism (4). However, the repressed content, moving through the symbolic structure present in the meanings given by the mind, kept affecting the behaviour despite the individual's will. The failed acts (misconceptions) produced daily in life as lapses of memory, speech and writing became study objects, as well as evidence of a desire contrary to the scheduled intentions, which showed itself in these brief arising breaks. Freud wrote a book where he compiled thousands of acts of this nature, interpreting them, called "The psychopathology of everyday life (1901)".

Due to his training in Neurology, Freud initially tried to build a scientific psychology (5) that could explain the imprecision in dealing with reality - blatant difference from what happened with irrational animals. In those species, the normal situation did not anticipate error, being precise in its action in the environment. The human beings became ill wrapped in a conflictual cloud of self-doubt, of doubts about reality and other people. The complaints, in the clinic, would present this aspect of the daily life in a much more intense and mobilizing level. What would happen in the nervous system of an individual that would make him not recognize himself?

The first and most important piece of data established a fundamental difference. While animals were born with a set script, the human species would come out of the womb in a premature state of helplessness, unable to provide relief to the body's tensions (6) and on top of that learn even the basic actions which were typical of its species and would guarantee its survival (walking, eating, digesting), thus being dependant of an Other and its guiding words.

The endosomatic instances should produce stimuli, causing a discomfort that would move the achievement of the discharging object, generating, then, the experience of satisfaction. However, that is not the case of the human baby. He doesn't have the means to do so, needing the presence of another person to close the circuit.

But the circumstance would be much more delicate, since the body's premature condition does not offer the baby's condition to even perceive himself, thus distinguishing himself in the environment. In this sense, the other would be a fundamental premise to the child's development of a self-identification and this must happen through language, where the senses and the word's significance occupy main position (7).

Without the word's mediation, the baby wouldn't speak neither participate in the human condition, placing itself in time and space under a name and the organization of a discourse narrative. The new being can only place its separation from the environment and become an individual being by resorting to terms that, henceforth, should distinctly mark sensations, needs and desire. These symbolic marks, however, are not his own. They're words taken from another place, outside its experimentation field and with a already proposed meaning.

The child has to resort to the 'no', especially to not become an eternal object in the parent's imagination, whose expectations are laid upon the child. This way, starting from the premature position, a language game acts upon the the unborn's body, foreseeing a way of being, as well as a desiring structure transmitted through filiation. The parents, making hermeneutics, namely symbolizing their child's body by translation of its body signs, anticipate the existence of impossible things. For this, a certain type and length of crying would mean hunger, or pain, or warmth; a smile would indicate joy, satisfaction, grace. In the same way, a sound emitted by the mother, father or grandparents. In this sense, perception and memory can't be something objective, but the world to be perceived becomes the world of meanings given by others.

During the process of aging development the meanings mirrored by words acquire the statute of law and the child goes to the position of not knowing so much of itself as his parents. The formulating one starts getting rejected, and the

orders guide the child about the dangers but also the desires. This situation is easily perceived when the sexual interest of knowing its origin awakes in the child (Freud, 1905). With the set of words and meanings the child managed to acquire, it already exercises its conjecture and starts asking questions. However, its parents were also ordered by a system that precedes them and predicts a certain form, and that is what the language is about. It isn't right that the child acquires information before its due time. The carers reject the curiosity and force the child, under threat, to forget about the subject. That is the repression design and the function of language. The symbolic structure determines an order, an organization not only to the world of things, but especially to the affections, emotions, feelings, desires. To the behaviour (8).

By realizing the function of language over the body, Freud, the neurologist, starts moving away from the scientific psychology and getting closer to the investigation of the language's effects (9). Because of that, his patient's discourse will be the main means of study and intervention.

THE BIRTH OF THE PSYCHOANALYTIC METHOD

Well-versed both in the classical literature and in his own time, Freud restrained himself to observe the way mythology took care of building the good shape which the animalistic nature should humanize itself. Thereby, corporeal events would be inscribed in the description of what would be human. The discharge of tensions generated by the excitement of internal stimuli wouldn't be able to find a object of his own but through language. In this sense, the instinct found in irrational beings would be equivalent to the drive found in the talking animal, the origin of desire. However, the objects offered to the driving satisfaction would vary with the polysemy of the significant. The first impressions, memories of satisfaction, needed to be put to rest and replaced as the development progressed, which was unusual in the animal kingdom. The breast would not be eternal, neither would be the baby's position as

the object of everyone's admiration and attention. The orders would happen gradually, from feeding time to the denial of the breast, and would extend to the imposition of a new behaviour. However, the displacement of the driving objects as the infant developed would not erase the originating satisfaction experiences. The baby's narcissistic desires, as well as his fears would take place in the adult, but in a repressed way. Everytime the infant would resist giving up the driving object, the castrating action of the parents would appear presenting the law. The intensity of the fear of accessing the desired object would impose this restriction to the consciousness.

Thus, Freud detected the prevalence of the forbidden and the way how the individual searched for the lost object in new situations. This was characteristic of the clinical practice, when the patient seeked to revive childhood situations through the loved one. This was not so different from when conflicts in interpersonal relationships would repeat traits from the patient's history. The words heard at a discussion would set the scene where, many times, the child was reprimanded for its acts. The reissue of certain situations in the present would hold the power to generate a new crisis in the individual's life, without the person knowing it could happen to himself, showing up at the clinic complaining about not recognizing himself or even his own desires.

The organic lesion was out of question, as well as, in most of the cases, the surroundings of the patient's life wouldn't hold a significant qualitative difference that could supposedly alter his physiological system. Something in the individual's life was signaling to be known. The psychoanalytic method is born, therefor, as an investigation of the matters in an individual's life that he couldn't answer himself.

The chosen subject states the promptness of the treatment. Psyche would name the design made by Plato in the dialogue "Phaedrus", on which the mind was compared to a coachman which should make obey, by the strength of the same

guide, two winged animals: one that tended to air and other that tended to return to the ground. The analysis goes back to Homer's *Odyssey*, when Penelope makes a deal with her father, who insisted on decreeing her absent husband dead. To gain more time for her husband's return, Penelope claims next to Icarus her right to sew funeral robes for a symbolic burial of Ulysses, and, only after decreeing him dead, opening herself to a new marriage. As strategy, the smart Penelope would sew the robes during the day, only to deconstruct them at night, thus making the work endless and gaining more time. The verb used by Homer is "analyze", which in Greek *Koiné* means not to verify, but to undo. Psychoanalysis, is, therefore, the undoing of the ties that bind us to our contradictions and personal sufferings; it's the act of undoing with the word that which the individual has sewn in the form of pain.

The psychoanalysis begins its foray looking for a traumatic event that could cause the behaviour disorder (10). However, by hearing the discourse of his patients, an intricate web begins to appear where the individual realizes how the present events are similar to past experiences, fears once felt, abandoned desires that were not weakened by time. Even ordering life, the rules presented by the social and family discourse were not strong enough to entirely refrain the fanciful execution of forbidden acts (11).

This perspective opens a new field to the understanding of the thing that hurts, and, in a certain way, partially explains the personal differences between people in regards to the tolerance of suffering (since such responses are as diverse as the people who experience them). Thereby, based on the Freudian studies, we can affirm that pain and discontent when facing aggressive agents or daily hardships are not explained by what these things carry as painful themselves, but are better explained by the suffering individual's past history. We can also affirm that everything that hurts is a revival of a once painful past and, as Freud says himself, there are no pathological new things, and every

encounter with life is, deep down, a new encounter with the past, therefore, the more pain we feel today, the more we're overlapped with the past.

If, on one side, the individual takes his parent's words about him as an ideal, a self-image, on the other side old pleasures are still kept in the unconscious. And the access to this desires from once before would bring to the surface guilt and the fear of punishment. However, as he would recreate such contents through the speech, the patient would demystify impressions and recover from his symptom, realizing the way he projected his reality.

CONCLUSION

The individual will find in language the satisfaction to his needs. This feat will not go free of charge. The language is the thing which invades nature and denaturates it, transforming animality into humanity. If on one side animals are trapped to the instinct script, on the other side humans are trapped to the word. It allows the creation of worlds, but not without the cost of emptying objects.

Therefore, it is not without logic the complaint of patients ridden with distress, sadness or desire, unrecognizable. When the failure of his actions gives space to an unknown, an other which threatens to shatter his self-image. This unknown was called Unconscious by Freud. It is not the factor of a trauma where a key situation triggers a chemical imbalance. Neither is set from a lesion, but is a product of the meeting of body and language. The weight of its effects wasn't studied only by the Psychoanalysis, but, from the elaboration of concepts which are his own and its investigation methods, other research fronts were started, attesting, beyond clinical results, the evidences pointed by the Freudian science. Making, thus, indispensable, in the contemporary world, to research the role of language in the formation and determination of the symptom.

Finally, we take once again the words of the anthropologist Lévi-Strauss. The author will find

in the psychoanalytic method resonance, due to the way he treats the ill in his sessions, soliciting that the patient brings the constellation of names and meanings that follow his pain, to locate him in his own words:

In this hypothesis or any other, the shamanistic cure and the psychoanalytic cure would become rigorously similar; it would be a matter of inducing an organic transformation in both cases, which would essentially constitute a structural reorganization, that conducted the patient to intensely live a myth, at times received and at times produced, which structure would be, in the unconscious psychic level, analogous to that which would want to determine the formation on a body level. The symbolic efficiency would consist precisely in this inductor propriety that they would possess about each other, formally homologous structures that can build themselves, with different matters, on different levels of the individual: organic processes, unconscious psychism, reflected thought.

Here is the psychoanalysis, then, Sigmund Freud's brilliant contribution to all the forthcoming centuries. How can we define it? Perhaps as a radical bet on the word, on the singularity and not on the determinism. While there are possible words, no story will be given as finished and no pain as endless.

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