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CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOANALYTIC ACCOUNT OF GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY IN THE THEORY OF JEAN LAPLANCHE

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Summary

This article presents Jean Laplanche's concept of the "sexual" as a proposal of a psychoanalytic theory adequate to contemporary changes in the understanding of human sexuality, gender and the needs of a new kind of patient in psychotherapeutic clinics. The first part of the article consists of an analysis of the evolution of the understanding of sexuality in the classical Freudian theory and then by Freud's Anglo-Saxon continuators, currently representing the mainstream of psychoanalysis. The tension between the emancipatory potential of psychoanalysis and the tendency of psychoanalysts to construct exclusionary norms based on social conventions or outdated theories, which nowadays face widespread criticism, is shown. The second part is a brief introduction to Jean Laplanche's metapsychology and a presentation of how the psychoanalytic unconscious as framed by the general theory of seduction can provide a theoretical construct for better understanding of the origins of gender identification, the choice of the object of the drive, and other issues central to work not only with sexually or gender-diverse patients. Laplanche delineates the individual sexual unconscious as the proper area of psychoanalytic inquiry and therapeutic influence. In doing so, he transcends the opposition of the innate and the social, known as the dualism of sex and gender. The drive originating in the enigmatic message of the adult other precedes and conditions the sexual instinct, rendering any identity constructed based on this sphere of life doomed to partial failure.

Introduction

Feminist literature and queer theory have set new ethical standards for dealing with gender and sexual diversity, often shaped by the tools for thought provided by psychoanalysis, but outside of its mainstream information flow. These changes, which occurred over the past half-century with the social empowerment of lesbians and gays and the successive deconstruction of traditional gender identities, are often seen as oppositional to traditional psychoanalysis, a figure of oppression and stigmatization of non-normative sexuality in the eyes of many researchers [1]. Aversion to classical psychoanalysis is justified by a long his-

tory of pathologization of people with nonnormative sexual desires and gender identifications by psychoanalysts [2-4]. However, there is no shortage of voices from researchers who see psychoanalysis as a now slightly oldish but useful weapon against unjust norms that create categories based on the exclusion of anything that does not conform to the heteronormative worldview. Although fragments of a new language describing gender and sexuality have already become a permanent part of public discourse, in the world of psychoanalytic practice, the transformations seem to be slow, eliciting reactions ranging from enthusiasm [4, 5], through caution [6], to opposition to trends perceived as too radical [7, 8].

Also noticeable, following the changes in social consciousness, is the weakening of the safe position occupied by the psychoanalyst as an expert who has knowledge of his or her client. Those who come asking for help, among whom there is an increasing percentage of those who identify as gender diverse [9], although they know nothing about their unconscious, are aware of changes in the understanding of sexuality and of advances that result in the obsolescence of concepts on which traditional psychoanalytic interpretations may be based. The consequence is a noticeable lack of trust from gender and sexual minorities in the authority of psychological care, including psychoanalysis, and a growing interest in therapies that, through the label of “LGBTQ friendly,” guarantee unconditional recognition of chosen identity [10]. According to some, such a guarantee is incompatible with the goal of deconstructing self-knowledge inherent in the psychoanalytic technique [8]. I believe that the observed tendencies may be a stimulus to develop a technique of sensitive listening, open to transforming closed categories of the mind, rather than suspicious of deviation from those considered normal.

Psychoanalysis, confronted with the often-accurate accusations of being based on scientifically outdated and socially oppressive assumptions, needs to update its theory explaining the origins and mechanisms of psychosexuality. However, this theory must not gain favor with concessions to progressive political aspirations, at the expense of reliability and fidelity in bearing witness to the observations taking place in the psychoanalytic clinic. The psychoanalytic concept of enlarged sexuality formulated by Jean Laplanche may represent a breakthrough in the understanding of issues such as transgender and nonbinary identities or nonnormative sexual orientations. According to him, the psychoanalytic “unconscious” and “sexual” are inseparable from each other and constitute the proper area of study and influence of psychoanalysis, distinguishing it from other sciences and practices. Desexualization of psychoanalytic theory inevitably leads to a loss of interest in the exploration of the individual unconscious in favor of the pursuit of adaptation to the environment. This paper will present the fate of sexuality as an object of psychoanalytic research and propose a solution to selected problems by recognizing the changes in the foundations of psychoanalytic metapsychology proposed by Jean Laplanche.

What happened to Freudian sexuality?

In the course of the development of Freud’s theory, sexuality as a concept underwent significant transformations. A certain continuity of thought is maintained by the invariability

of the source of inspiration, which was the observation that the manifestations of sexual life begin well before sexual maturation of the body and that the function of experiencing sexual pleasure does not coincide with the reproductive function and cannot be reduced to genital intercourse [11, p. 98]. As early as in his pre psychoanalytic writings and letters, Freud expresses his belief that sexuality plays a key role in the etiology of psychoneuroses, although at the time it is a sexuality that has not yet been worked out theoretically. It represents hopes of finding the key to the mystery of hysteria [12, p. 177]. Beginning with *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* [13], Freud begins to systematically describe sexuality that escapes the laws of the innate instinct of self-preservation, that has no fixed object or means of satisfaction, but seeks to relieve tension at all costs, by all available means. The “analysis of children and so-called perverts” [13, p. 32] serves him as evidence against the romantic and conflict-free picture of sexuality. The sexual desire is then understood by Freud as “the psychical representative of an endosomatic, continuously flowing source of stimulation “ [13, p. 61], i.e., aroused erogenous spheres demanding relief, indifferent to cultural norms, and even the well-being of the individual. The theory locating the source of drive in the organs of the body follows the rejection of the seduction theory in 1897 [14], according to which it was the sexually abusive adult who was responsible for the premature arousal of sexuality in future hysterics, which Freud later found implausible due to the prevalence of neuroses, among other reasons. The need to generalize the theory of enlarged sexuality to all people as a result of clinical experience turned Freud’s search inward to the body. The original 1905 edition of *Three Essays* [13] is the culmination of Freud’s grasp of sexuality as a chaotic force, not amenable to normalization and lacking a relationship to total objects and sexual difference, as his further work would move toward systematization and the creation of a framework for desirable development. Laplanche believes that it was Freud’s turn to the endogenous, biological genesis of psychosexuality and his failure to clearly separate sexuality from the nonsexual sphere of life that had the inevitable result of attempting to create psychoanalytic psychology to explain every area of human functioning, which had to end with the obliteration of the original groundbreaking discovery and the reduction of the drive to a function subordinated to adaptive goals [15].

The *Three Essays* were edited by Freud four times (1910, 1915, 1920, 1924). The evolution of this text adequately illustrates the evolution of the whole psychoanalytic theory. As noted by van Haute and Westerink [16], along with the concept of narcissism, thinking about the sexual drive through the prism of its object and a developmental perspective, placing heterosexual object choice as the final achievement, were incorporated into the sexual theory. Subsequently, in place of the division into infantile and adult sexuality, i.e., before and after sexual maturation, pregenital organizations of the libido are created, based on speculative phylogeny¹. They are parallel to the development of object choice, and so the fate of the drive is again subordinated to the reproductive function. In the fol-

¹) Freud justified the existence of biologically determined, successively displaced stages of sexual development in the course of a human development with the belief that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. In other words, the events of the prehistory of the human species were, according to Freud, supposed to have a bearing on the sequence of adoption and abandonment of forms of sexuality in child development [17].

lowing years, the theoretical expansion of the Oedipus complex as a universal structure determining the development of the psyche obliterates the traces of autoerotic sexuality, which was not determined through its object. This opens the gateway for future psychoanalytic theories oriented towards object relations. The last theory of drives in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [11] at first glance has little in common with the enlarged sexuality of 1905. Eros containing sexual impulses in addition to love and tenderness, acting from birth as a force in the inner id having prehistoric roots, excludes the possibility of autoerotic satisfaction of the drive by partial objects since love can be directed only to the total object. Harmonious Eros, aiming at restoring unity by recreating the mythical developmental sequence, completely banishes conflict and indeterminacy from the sexual field. However, the early findings have not been completely buried; the theory does not tolerate loopholes. The destructive aspects of the sexual are rediscovered by Freud in the death drive, which Laplanche [15, p. 8] will call an ad-hoc addition to the theory, a theory whose trajectory of development has distanced it from its original source in experience, from the manifestation of the unconscious.

Anglo-Saxon reception of enlarged sexuality

Lou Andreas-Salomé [18, p. 123] wrote: “The word >sexuality< is like a red cloth that, from the very beginning until today, has provoked tumultuous resentment against Freud’s psychoanalysis, wanting to drive it into a corner, without caring at all about the reasons why it actually holds such a cloth.” This observation by a poet of psychoanalysis seems apt, not only being addressed to those who reject Freud’s thought, but also to many of his most influential comrades and continuators. Long before the formation of post-Freudian currents, Jung and Adler were excluded from the psychoanalytic community due to their reluctance to give sexuality a central heuristic role [19], and in the 1920s Otto Rank became a promoter of the idea of *hic-et-nunc* analysis, directed at emotions that arise in the psychoanalyst’s office. On the path to happiness, analysis of the past and infantile sexual needs became insufficient, instead it was necessary to incorporate “Ego reeducation” into therapy, in the likeness of a mother’s education of her child [20]. For Rank, the meaning behind the sexual drive was the desire to recreate the original childhood love for the mother. This view, despite the strong protest of the psychoanalytic establishment at the time, was to become firmly established in post-Freudian therapy in the future.

Greenberg and Mitchell, in their influential book, describe the history of the development of Anglo-Saxon psychoanalysis as a transformation of Freud’s structural-drive model, to an object-relations model [21]. This transformation can be read as a systematic elimination of enlarged Freudian sexuality from the field of interest and a regression in the understanding of sexuality to its genital manifestation as a biological instinct with a genetically determined goal and object. In the 1930s, a theoretical current called interpersonal or culturalist emerged in the United States, the foundations for which were laid by Harry Stack Sullivan, Erich Fromm, and Karen Horney, among others. All these authors came

out with the assumption that the Freudian model of psychic conflict between sexual drive and the Ego's aspirations and the demands of the social world was a distorted view of man. According to them, Freud generalized to all of humanity the problems characteristic of the bourgeois family of the Victorian era; moreover, using outdated biology to do so, hence the need to correct his model. These authors completely abandoned the use of the concept of the drive since, according to them, it was the social world that had a key role in structuring the psyche, not internal forces.

Such a radical opposition of the drive to human relations, understood as synonyms of interior and exterior, is characteristic of most English-speaking authors after Freud. In parallel, in the mainstream of American psychoanalysis under the label of Ego psychology, Heinz Hartmann in collaboration with Ernst Kris and Rudolph Loewenstein, building on the dualism of the life and death drives from Freud's late works, developed a theory focused on the ego having a direct relation to external reality. The emphasis shifted from the study of psychic reality, the fantasy world, to expanding psychoanalysis and building within it a general human psychology through observation, quantification, and empirical verification [22], with an emphasis on the concept of health, defined by adaptation to the environment [23]. Heinz Hartmann, although upholding the vitality of Freud's drive model of psychology, considered the libido and the instinct for aggression as sources of psychic energy, which, neutralized (desexualized), in a healthy person are supposed to be subordinate to the Ego in the service of adaptation [24]. Meanwhile, in the UK, Melanie Klein and the so-called "independent group" formed a school of object relations, penetrating more and more strongly also into the thinking of the late representatives of Ego psychology. Klein's work can be seen as a link between Freud's psychoanalysis and relational psychoanalysis. The emphasis on the infant-mother diad and the development of the concepts of projective identification and internal objects were the inspiration for psychoanalytic theories looking at the man from the side of his relations with and fantasies about other people, which is readily contrasted by their representatives with the Freudian man motivated by biological, innate and evolutionarily determined drives, for which the object is arbitrarily interchangeable and secondary to the goal of relieving tension. This antisocial, biological interpretation of Freud is standardly used as a rhetorical figure to argue for a complete departure from his concept of drives. As Robert Royston [25] writes, Klein's work led British psychoanalysts to shift their interest from the phallus, the Oedipus complex and sexuality, to the period of infancy. The relationship of the infant with the maternal breast became a metaphor for the sexual relationship, the goal of which is to reproduce the lost breast. The questions of the genesis of sex/gender and the nature of desire were completely delegated by Klein to innate constitutional dispositions in psychic life manifested as unconscious knowledge of one's genitals [26].

In the British school, the pioneer of the current of thought that extremely contrasted object relations with the drive was Ronald Fairbairn, who considered the "hedonistic theory of libido" [27, p.52] a generalization of psychopathological phenomena [28]. The emphasis on stimulating adaptive love for total objects in patients through the corrective emotional experience of the relationship with the analyst came at the expense of analyzing uncon-

scious drive aspects, relegating the latter to the realm of disorders, and creating a normative, culturally conformist theory. Fairbairn was one of the most important inspirations of John Bowlby, the creator of the concept of evolutionary, behavioral attachment systems.

What is eye-catching from a psychoanalytic point of view is the consistency with which such diverse currents developed after Freud excluded or pathologized the role of sexuality in the psychological sphere. Given the resistance with which the father of psychoanalysis had to face the discovery of enlarged sexuality and the blow dealt to human narcissism, demonstrating that “the Ego is not master in its own house.” [29, p. 188], perhaps this is not so surprising. What is it about sexuality that makes one want to lose it from the analytical field at all costs, to minimize its influence on thought and behavior? Why, after Freud, did a considerable number of his intellectual heirs deprive not only children but also adults, of sexuality? Along with the need to open man to the influence of the environment, in the face of discrediting the concept of the primacy of the motivational force of archaic instincts over the shaping environment, analytical curiosity about the inner world, listening to bizarre fantasies, seems to give place to observations in which sexuality has no place. It is symptomatic that, according to the study, with the change in the dominant language of the theory, sexuality has not ceased to be the subject of free association of analysts, despite the fact that it is interpreted as an artifact, a defense against intimacy, or reduced to other psychological factors [30]. Turning our eyes away from the unconscious and sexuality in favor of normalized object relations, because of the impasse of acceptable theorization of polymorphous, unconscious sexuality, undermines the foundations of psychoanalysis, making it a relational psychology. The tools that today may be necessary to understand contemporary manifestations of sex, gender, and sexuality are being lost. Psychoanalysts derived from the above-described schools, who have addressed sexuality in all its diversity, tend to equate abnormal desires and identifications with traumatic mechanisms, symptoms of disorders of healthy development [31-33].

Revisiting enlarged sexuality in the general theory of seduction

Jean Laplanche’s general theory of seduction should interest the reader in the context of the problems under discussion for several reasons. As a representative of the French psychoanalytic tradition and a former disciple of Lacan, Laplanche draws profusely on Lacanian decentering of the subject in favor of the primacy of the other² in psychic life, although he gives it a different form and often distances himself from the former master’s influence, accusing him of excessive tendencies toward metaphysical speculation and linguistic idealism [34, p. 44]. Being a cofounder of the APF (Association Psychanalytique de France), recognized in contrast to Lacan’s school by the IPA (International Psychoanalytical Association), Laplanche is in discussion with representatives of the Anglo-Saxon

² Laplanche writes “other” in lower case to distinguish the concept from the Lacanian concept of the great Other. In the general theory of seduction, other means “the concrete other: the adult facing the child.” [36, p. 215].

psychoanalytic tradition. A key strand that differentiates him from most classical theorists of object-relations psychoanalysis and ego psychology is his consistent differentiation of the terms instinct and drive. The clear separation of the drive from the instinctual zone fulfills two roles. First, it makes it possible to conceptualize it separately from biology, and second, it makes it possible to clearly define the field of interest of psychoanalysis, which prevents the intellectual abuses of extrapolating theories to explain all human functioning on the basis of psychoanalytic experience.

Laplanche stresses that, in understanding drive, however, the opposition of biology and psyche is a misleading view since the drive has a neurobiological basis as much as any other human psychic activity [35]. It is far better to use the dualism of what is innate and what is acquired. Then we can understand instinctual functions as guided by an innate, genetically programmed, object-oriented mechanism for ensuring survival, i.e. maintaining homeostasis or sustaining the continuity of the species, found in all animals. Relational currents have shifted interest from unconscious sexuality to attachment and adaptation-enabling relationships with objects, precisely because of the desire to extend the psychoanalytic study to the sphere which is also addressed by empirical psychology. Drive, on the other hand, is, in contrast to instinct, completely acquired and operates on the laws of infinite accumulation of tension, building excitement without regard to the well-being of the organism. The momentousness of restoring this distinction to psychoanalytic language (which does not mean restoring these terms to the same meanings Freud gave them) has been emphasized by calling it a “paradigm shift” [37].

The effort to preserve the concept of drive in psychoanalysis is not merely an aesthetic endeavor but stems from the need to maintain the key functions it serves in the theory. Among these, Laplanche [34, p. 141] mentions the causal role of a drive. The drive (Trieb) is the force that drives (getrieben) us to act, even though it is outside our Ego. In other words, something that is not me pushes me in some direction. By giving the unconscious the status of a real cause, Laplanche decisively dissociates himself from the hermeneutic reading of psychoanalysis as the art of interpretation of meaning (represented, among others, by R. Schafer [38], J. Habermas [39], P. Ricoeur [40]). The unconscious is not a hidden, decipherable meaning but representations excluded from the process of symbolization, which is related to the second function, making it possible, through the concept of drive, to describe the dynamic impact of mental representations. Because, more than meaning, they resemble something like a psychic thing, Laplanche speaks of “having” the unconscious. Consequently, psychoanalytic therapy discovers the singular causes behind a particular symptom, without adjudicating universal correlations or universal laws [41]. The properties of the drive also make it possible, crucially for psychoanalytic practice, to describe mechanisms of the unconscious, such as displacement, reversal to the opposite, or separation of affect from representation.

To introduce Laplanche's concept of sexual drive, a brief introduction to his psychoanalytic anthropology is necessary³. Laplanche argues that every human being is a self-theorizing and temporalizing subject, a "primary hermeneut," seeking to understand himself and the adult world around him [42, p. 92]. However, the child's relationship with the adult is asymmetric, because the adult has conscious and unconscious knowledge that the child lacks, which is transmitted to him in the messages. He calls this a "fundamental anthropological situation" that is meant to explain the effectiveness of psychoanalysis while replacing the Oedipus complex, or these days the not-at-all-obvious mother-child relationship, from which other theories start, thus freeing psychoanalysis from familialism [35, pp. 103-104].

The human child is equipped with life-sustaining patterns that can be described as instincts designed to maintain the body's homeostasis, although they are, compared to those observed in other animals, particularly fussy and insufficient for independent survival. For this reason, the child is completely dependent on an adult other, who must understand the cry signaling a disturbance in the body's equilibrium and take care of it. We are talking here not only about providing food or taking care of hygiene, but also about teaching the child to navigate the world in general. This interaction occurs at the vital level, developing adaptive attachment. The attachment relationship is supported by communication, that is, messages exchanged between the child and the adult. These messages consist of signifiers of a nature not restricted to verbal language, which distinguishes Laplanche's theory from Lacan's symbolic register.

The first messages conveyed by the adult are his own presence or lack thereof, facial expressions, bodily caresses, or hygienic procedures. According to the concept of the primary hermeneut, the child, in constructing an understanding of the social world and creating a theory of him or herself, subjects to interpretation everything behind which there may be some intention of the other. Laplanche himself, however, does not use the term interpretation but translation, thus emphasizing its object, i.e. an imposing message behind which is someone's demand addressed to the recipient, rather than impersonal phenomena subject to any arbitrary interpretation. As the child acquires biocultural tools of understanding – codes of translation, at the level of somatic, affective, and intellectual reactions, knowledge of languages, meanings of gestures, myths, and customs – his possibilities of successfully assimilating messages increase. Self-theorization is a process with no clear beginning and end, having its greatest intensity in early childhood, but continuing throughout the subject's life.

If the description of the formation of the mental apparatus could be finished with this process, psychoanalysis would not be needed. However, the complete success of translation is necessarily doomed to failure, the reason for which is not only the lack of tools needed to integrate all the messages. In addition to these, the adult possesses an infantile, perverse sexuality, originally described in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* [13].

³⁾ A more comprehensive introduction to Laplanche's theory and therapeutic technique in Polish can be found in *Psychoterapia* in an article published in by Grzybowski and Grabowski [43].

Unconscious fantasies interact with broadcast messages, containing a certain noise in the message beyond the content the adult would intentionally want to convey, which Laplanche names “enigmatic signifiers”. Sexual content inscribed in the child breaks out of the translation process because it is enigmatic to its sender as well, making it impossible to subject it to coherent integration with the rest of the messages. These signifiers devoid of context, memory of the source of their origin, reference to other signifiers, take the form of a mental thing, signifying nothing but itself. This event, or rather a sequence of incongruously differentiated events, is called primary repression, the moment constituting the unconscious acting under primary processes, from now on like a magnet attracting further enigmatic messages of a sexual nature. The repressed, i.e. unconscious mental contents, are the direct cause of compulsive phantasms structuring drive sexuality. They are the source-object of the drive, because at their genesis lies a fantasy implanted by the other, who is at the same time its object [15]. Drive sexuality is called child sexuality because it is a sexuality that operates in a person from infancy to adolescence when the development of the body leads to the emergence of hormonally conditioned instinctual sexuality. However, the occurrence of the natural sexual instinct in man can only be spoken of theoretically. In its pure form, it is impossible to observe, because, emerging, it finds its place in the psyche already occupied by an implanted drive [44].

Laplanche, with the help of the concept of message and signifier, establishes the individual unconscious as the only proper object of study for psychoanalysis, as opposed to the actual relations between people. This object, although having its genesis in the other, is individual in everyone, which also distinguishes it from Jung’s concept of the collective unconscious or the Lacanian unconscious understood as the discourse of the Other, by definition external to the individual, who is determined by its structural properties. Thus, the goal of the analysis is not the reconstruction of objective facts; pursuing it would not only be impossible to achieve but would also be dangerous, leading to going astray, as M. Opoczyńska writes about Freud’s struggle with truth [45, p. 71]. The implanted message becomes part of the subject’s psychic reality, the only reality that can be indirectly accessed through the technique of free association analysis. Enigmatic remnants, constituting an unworked internal foreign body, can be subjected to further attempts at elaboration and previously made translations to retranslation.

The unconscious as sexual

The isolation of the drive as a field of interest of psychoanalysis took its final form in Laplanche’s theory in the concept of the “sexual” (“le sexual”) [46], a term intended to clearly distinguish psychoanalytic enlarged sexuality from genital sexuality and from sexual difference, which in Polish terminology consists of biological sex and sociocultural sex. These terms cause a lot of problems, carrying connotations of a simplistic difference between body and mind, that is, to a corporeal, immutable, and independent of the environment sex contrasted with mental social identity. In the scientific literature, one will usually encounter the claim that biological sex, more or less, depending on one’s

views, determines experienced sociocultural sex, that is, the sense of belonging or lack thereof to one of two social groups [47]. Queer theories have influenced a shift in this view, especially among social scientists, giving primacy to gender, which is supposed to completely determine perceptions of one's own body. Laplanche goes beyond both of these assumptions. In thinking about the genesis of gender identity in humans, he proposes to incorporate the concept of enigmatic message and reference to anatomy, but not just to objectively apprehended features that are the result of genetic conditioning, determining, for example, the ability to procreate, but also to anatomy being the object of subjective perception and symbolization, in our cultural circle traditionally on the basis of binary opposition. Laplanche agrees with one of the most important representatives of queer theory, Judith Butler, that one cannot speak of sex as a corporeal certainty upon which gender is secondarily superimposed [48]. Gender (along with the meanings ascribed to it) in subjective experience has a more primary status, revealing itself earlier than experiencing any effects of the sexed bodily organs. It has its origin outside, in the adult transmitting messages about gender, identifying the child with it from the first moments of their life. However, this does not mean that gender produced and sustained by cultural myths about gender has exclusivity in organizing the individual experience of gender, as some social constructionists perceive this process. As part of a general theory of seduction, Laplanche describes messages from immediate caregivers attributing gender as enigmatic, contaminated by unconscious sexual desires related to gender [46]. Thus, in addition to the social determinism mediated by the immediate environment, we are also dealing with the individual determinism of the unconscious, much more insidious, and beyond any control. Messages that await translation, along with their inevitable partial failure, are the first cause of the child's gender formation. What is incorporated into the ego in the translation process will in part constitute gender identity. This is where Laplanche's theory situates the role of the body. One of the codes based on which translation is carried out is the anatomical gender difference, or more precisely, its perception. On the basis of its external, perceptible features, the child builds the much-needed understanding of gender, motivated by the mystery of parental desire. However, the consequence of the failure of a complete translation of messages that identify the child as gendered, the failure caused by the unintelligible noise unconsciously included in the messages by the adult, is repression. The enigmatic leftover, repressed residue from the process of message translation is precisely the sexual. In other words, everything from the enigmatic message that cannot be symbolized, which is repressed, forms the sexual, responsible for the unconscious part of the gender identity. It is exactly what the future manifestations of in the child will be condemned by the adult⁴.

In the translational model, Laplanche brings the drive, the sexual, the unconscious, and the repressed closer to synonymity, identifying it with the polymorphous sexuality that was Freud's inaugural discovery. The sexual takes over the functions that in the late Freud

⁴) Accusations proclaiming the obsolescence of such thinking in the context of a liberal culture that is permissive towards sexuality are accurately answered by Phil Mollon [49].

were attributed to the drives of life and death, respectively, that is, the life-giving functions of binding⁵ (to the exclusion of self-preservation instincts, restored to their proper place), as well as the demonic, uncontrollable functions of unbinding, which in their purest form are manifested in cruel perversion [51].

The translational theory of the unconscious fulfills the requirements that were posed to psychoanalysis in the first part of this article, starting with the need for a noncontradictory hypothesis about the genesis of the unconscious, governed by the laws observed in the psychoanalytic situation. At the same time, it breaks with the nineteenth-century epistemology of sexual difference, referring to the essence of masculinity and femininity in psychic life, although not as radically as extreme constructionists, who exclude the body from the process of the genesis of gender identity and sexuality, proposing total voluntarism or social determinism, might expect. The innate factors in Laplanche's theory are outside the realm of psychoanalytic explanation. Without questioning the existence of genetic determinants of sex characteristics, we know that they do not directly manifest themselves in psychic reality as femininity or masculinity. Giving one's gender traits a role in one's individual identity is originally caused by the need to decipher the messages of the adult other addressing the child, who had already been given this role much earlier. To satisfy this, the child constructs naive sexual theories, like Little Hans' theory of castration, explaining the difference between boys and girls. Biology does not disappear from the scene, but its presence in mental life is filtered through its semblance. The sexual instinct stimulated by the action of hormones, however, in man manifests itself only at the age of puberty, when its place is already occupied by the drive for good.

Laplanche regards as Freud's mistake the elevation of one of an infinite number of possible, childish sexual theories to the status of a scientific theory, with great fervor later backed by speculations about evolution or about structural properties of the language. Rather than being the original source of anxiety, the castration myth is, according to Laplanche, one of the tools used to soothe anxiety by binding the enigma of the gender assigning message. By relativizing psychoanalytic sexual theories, he denies clinicians the justification for imposing them on their patients as the only proper code for translation. Any individual myths and ideologies discovered in people during a psychoanalytic session cannot be confirmed or rejected by psychoanalysis, but, as Laplanche writes, one cannot "...refute ethnology by demonstrating the phantasmagoric and contingent nature of some American Indian myth..." [52]. Thus, he restores to psychoanalytic therapy the function of analysis, that is, deconstruction, and dissection, which is both faithfulness to its Freudian foundations and a response to the pertinent objections to institutionalized psychoanalysis taking on the role of the apparatus of power-knowledge creating norms and deviants. Normality and abnormality, according to Laplanche, are not and cannot be the subject of adjudication for the psychoanalyst whose action must be driven by the

⁵⁾ Binding, according to the *Language of Psychoanalysis*, is a "Term used by Freud in a very general way and on comparatively distinct levels (as much on the biological level as on that of the psychical apparatus), to denote an operation tending to restrict the free flow of excitations, to link ideas to one another and to constitute and maintain relatively stable forms" [50].

desire to discover individual manifestations of the unconscious and a consistent refusal to assume that one has any ready knowledge of it. The unconscious as a collection of signifiers devoid of reference to other signifiers contains no decipherable meaning. The meaning is always the result of a synthesis performed spontaneously by the analyzed person.

Summary

Psychoanalysis, along with the sexual unconscious, brings to the human sciences a model of the psyche that is capable of explaining the fluidity and provisionality of all gender and sexual identities, based on attempts to capture into the realm of the Ego something that is radically alien in its nature. The proliferation of categories taking place in recent years, intended to do justice to any subjective experience of one's gender and sexual orientation, is from this point of view an impossible endeavor. The result of the search for one's true identity based on the sexual sphere can only be more or less disappointing. The objective approach from the perspective of naturalistic sciences is unable to take into account the individual history of becoming a subject, but at most provides another mytho-symbolic key to the enigma. However, this does not mean that the emancipatory enterprise is meaningless. It is the richness and variety of keys at our disposal that bring us the possibility of more nuanced translations that allow for more ambivalence.

Socially divisible categories of identity, however, tend to become a tool of political control or to succumb to medicalization, something that movements for social justice have tried to counter, for example, by opposing research into the origins of phenomena such as transgenderism (justifying this opposition with a history of searching for the causes of homosexuality in order to be able to prevent it). But questions of why (addressed to the individual, not the diagnostic category) seem to be indispensable to the analytical process. Questions like why, on par with how, are not intended to serve questioning from a position of authority, but should set rigid narratives in motion, teaching the extraordinary complexity of a world that escapes labels. On the other hand, at the level of theoretical research, the development of metapsychology provides clinicians with tools to prevent the guidance of unacknowledged assumptions and norms. The sexual unconscious coming from the other allows one to think about these issues, going beyond the contradictory patterns of a self-conscious subject recognizing his gender as a kind of soul or choosing sexual orientation according to preference.

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