Memory, language, and subjectivity: cure in analysis as a work of remembering, narrative production and elaboration of a subjective position

Memória, linguagem e subjetividade: a cura em análise como trabalho de rememoração, produção de narrativas e elaboração de uma posição subjetiva

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ABSTRACT
This article aims to analyze some of the ways in which, in Freudian-based psychoanalysis, the processes of subjectivation are irremediably related to an articulation between memory and language. To this end, we chose the idea of “healing” in psychoanalysis as a guiding thread for our analyses, as we believe we can find, in the symptom's healing process, the emergence of the articulation between memory, language, and subjectivity production processes in a very elucidative manner. To operationalize this work, we conducted systematic theoretical reviews and sought to weave relations between concepts coined at different moments of Freud's theoretical production, aiming to outline his conception of memory and how it relates to subjectivity and language. Our analytical journey shows that, although Freud did not explicitly formulate a theory on how language fundamentally operates in the constitution of subjectivity, all the elements for such a reading are present in his work. From Freud onwards, healing in analysis will be a process
of producing singular modalities of subjectivity. This is because the entire process of healing in psychoanalysis requires a subjective rectification of the individual in relation to their symptom, and this rectification is only possible insofar as there is a fundamental relationship between memory and language.

**Keywords:** Language, Memory, Psychoanalysis.

**RESUMO**
Objetivamos, neste artigo, analisar alguns dos modos pelos quais, na psicanálise de base freudiana, os processos de subjetivação estão irremediavelmente relacionados a uma articulação entre memória e linguagem. Para tanto, elegemos a ideia da “cura” em psicanálise como um fio condutor que guiará nossas análises, pois acreditamos poder encontrar, no processo de cura do sintoma, de forma bastante elucidativa, a emergência da articulação entre memória, linguagem e processos de produção de subjetividade. A fim de operacionalizar tal trabalho, realizamos revisões teóricas sistemáticas e procuramos tecer relações entre conceitos cunhados em momentos distintos da produção teórica realizada por Freud, buscando marcar os contornos de sua concepção de memória, e como esta se relaciona com a subjetividade e a linguagem. Nosso percurso analítico mostra que, embora Freud não tenha cunhado uma teoria propriamente dita a respeito de como a linguagem opera de forma basilar para a constituição da subjetividade, todos os elementos para tal leitura estão postos em sua obra. A cura em análise será, a partir de Freud, um processo de produção de modalidades singulares de subjetividade. Isto, pois, a efetuação de todo processo de cura em psicanálise demanda uma retificação subjetiva do sujeito frente a seu sintoma, e essa retificação apenas se faz possível na medida em que há uma relação na qual memória e linguagem estão implicadas de maneira fundamental.

**Palavras-chave:** Linguagem, Memória, Psicanálise.

**RESUMEN**
En este artículo, nuestro objetivo es analizar algunas de las formas en que, en el psicoanálisis basado en Freud, los procesos de subjetivación están irremediablemente relacionados con una articulación entre memoria y lenguaje. Para ello, elegimos la idea de "cura" en psicoanálisis como hilo conductor que guiará nuestro análisis, ya que creemos poder encontrar, en el proceso de cura del síntoma, de manera bastante elucidativa, la emergencia de la articulación entre memoria, lenguaje y procesos de producción de subjetividad. Con el fin de operacionalizar este trabajo, realizamos revisiones teóricas sistemáticas y buscamos tejer relaciones entre conceptos formulados en momentos distintos de la producción teórica realizada por Freud, tratando de marcar los contornos de su concepción de memoria y cómo esta se relaciona con la subjetividad y el lenguaje. Nuestro recorrido analítico muestra que, aunque Freud no formuló una teoría propiamente dicha sobre cómo el lenguaje opera de manera fundamental para la constitución de la subjetividad, todos los elementos para tal lectura están presentes en su obra. La cura en el análisis será, a partir de Freud, un proceso de producción de modalidades singulares de subjetividad. Esto se debe a que la efectividad de todo proceso de cura en psicoanálisis requiere una rectificación subjetiva del sujeto frente a su síntoma,
y esta rectificación solo es posible en la medida en que haya una relación en la que memoria y lenguaje estén implicados de manera fundamental.

**Palabras clave:** Lenguaje, Memoria, Psicoanálisis.

1 INTRODUCTION

If we delve into Freudian psychoanalysis, even for a short period, it is likely that we will soon encounter a series of concepts and theoretical productions marked by various configurations and reconfigurations that have occurred over decades of work. Indeed, Freud is an author, like said by Foucault (1992 [1969]), who establishes a discourse and founds a specific mode of knowledge — and, precisely for this reason, Freud is also an author whose transformations in his works fundamentally modify the psychoanalytic field.

In this kind of knowledge founded by Freud, subjectivity, memory, and language have always been central elements with which he was concerned. Our aim in this work is to follow some of the transformations within Freudian works and to indicate more explicitly how Freud promoted the articulation between language, memory, and subjectivity — to point out how the understanding of terms changes through the author’s works and how changes related to understanding terms also transform the relationships between them.

We believe that the “cure” in analysis is a process through which the relationship between these three terms becomes quite visible. For this reason, we will choose the idea of cure in the psychoanalysis founded by Freud as a guide, a thread from which we will seek to delineate how memory, language, and subjectivity production processes are intrinsically related within Freudian theory.

To achieve this, we will proceed as follows: we begin our journey with a discussion of Freud’s theory of memory, starting with the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (Freud, 1954 [1895]) and *Letter 52* (Freud, 1950 [1896]). It is possible that these works are not the best entry points into the topic of the relationship between
language and subjectivity in Freud, but this approach is necessary as it allows us to delineate what type of memory Freud conceptualizes and how language will articulate with it in the process of cure of the symptom in the neurosis clinic.

Our second section has two main parts: initially, we will discuss what Freud called, in his early works, the theory of trauma and abreaction. We have choose these theoretical constructions to indicate the role played by language in the treatment of hysteria and the healing of symptoms, pointing out that psychoanalytic practice, from its inception, articulated memory and language in the constitution of subjective processes. Subsequently, in our second part, we present a succinct discussion of The Interpretation of Dreams (Freud, 2019 [1900]), focusing more specifically on the dream mechanisms of “condensation” and “displacement”, in order to delineate how language was also implicated in the processes of constituting the subject’s own subjectivity, showing its scope beyond a clinic of hysteria.

Finally, we will focus primarily on the works Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through (Freud, 2010 [1914]) and Mourning and Melancholia (Freud, 2010 [1915]), so that we can outline the ways in which, in Freudian theory, cure in analysis encompasses more than a mere recollection of the traumatic experience and its articulation through language. The cure of the symptom will thus be thought of as a process that sets in motion the need for a memory work that aligns with a subjective rectification of the individual — such that the elaboration of a narrative about the psychic imprints involves the re-signification of the roles acted out by the individual in relation to their issues.

2 MEMORY AS MARK

Freud’s theorization on memory is quite extensive and dispersed throughout his work. The author’s earliest formulations on the nature of mnemonic functions can be found even in works prior to The Interpretation of Dreams (Freud, 2019 [1900]), often considered pre-psychoanalytic. In the Project for a Scientific Psychology, written in 1895,
Freud asserts that “any psychological theory deserving consideration must provide an explanation of memory” (Freud, 1954 [1895], p. 359).

In this work, Freud proposes the thesis that what differentiates the state of activity from the state of rest of the organism is a certain unspecified quantity “Q”\(^1\), and that the material particles on which psychic processes are based, whether in a state of rest or activity, are neurons.

Freud then asserts that we could initially divide these neurons into two groups: the first group would be completely permeable to “Q”—understood here as a quantity of energy. These neurons possess what the author calls “contact barriers”, but because they are permeable, these “contact barriers” offer no resistance to the passage of the excitatory stimulus, thus remaining completely unchanged after the stimulus has passed. This group of neurons is named by Freud (1954 [1895]) as the Φ system, and is related to the functions of perception.

The second group of neurons, named by Freud (1954 [1895]) as the Ψ system, would operate in the opposite manner to the first, as it would be impermeable to “Q”. Upon encountering the excitatory stimulus, the contact barriers of this group of neurons would present resistance to the passage of “Q”. This group of neurons, Freud asserts, “are the vehicles of memory and presumably, therefore, of psychical processes in general” (Freud, 1954 [1895], p. 360).

The implication of this impermeability, according to the author, is that “this second class may be left in a modified condition after each excitation, and thus afford a

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\(^1\) In the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (Freud, 1954 [1895]), the nature of “Q” is quite nonspecific. Freud refers to it only as a quantity, although we do not know specifically what is being quantified. However, we can rely on other later Freudian works or on the works of commentators on this author's work to try to make the idea a little easier to understand. In works such as *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud, 2010 [1920]), this idea of a quantity that the organism tries to get rid of, or lower to a certain level of homeostasis, is resumed, even if with other terminologies. If we think of works like this, “Q” would then be a form of energy, libidinal energy, if we prefer, something that would invest the neurons. The term used by Freud in 1895 to define this state of occupation of the neurons by “Q” was *besetzung*, translated to “cathexis” by Strachey, and to *investmento* in many Portuguese translations. *Besetzung* is the same term used in later works when, for example, Freud talks about the investment of libido in an object. Garcia-Roza (2011, p. 39), in *Freud and the Unconscious*, states that *besetzung* is a charge of affect or sum of excitation. Thus, to try to make the exercise of understanding the project slightly less complex, we can assume here, in advance — although it may seem an anachronism — “Q” as a quantitative of affective, libidinal energy, a charge of excitation.
possibility of representing memory” (Freud, 1954 [1895], p. 360). However, Freud’s idea is more radical than the simple assertion that the contact barriers of the Ψ system can be left in a modified condition after excitation. These alterations are permanent, such that the marks of the excitatory stimuli cannot be erased, and a return to the previous state is not possible.

Freud’s argument (1954 [1895]), which would allow for the explanation of memory from such a proposition, can be summarized as follows: these neurons that make up the Ψ system are permanently altered in the course of excitatory stimulation, or, in other words, their contact barriers are permanently altered to a condition different from the previous one. Thus, the contact barriers become more or less permeable to “Q”, facilitating or hindering its passage. The passage of “Q” through the Ψ system, by permanently altering the contact barriers of the neurons, would create privileged “routes” (Bahn) through which “Q” would pass, allowing the contact barriers to be considered according to their degree of facilitation (Bahnung) (Freud, 1954 [1895]). Freud points out that “it is therefore more correct to say that memory is represented by the differences in the facilitations between the Ψ-neurones” (Freud, 1954 [1895], p. 361).

This mode of thinking about memory is complemented in Letter 52 (Freud, 1950 [1896]), sent by Freud to Fliess in 1896. In it, we see Freud propose that memory would function through mnemonic traces (erinnerungsspuren): experiences would bring stimuli, and these, upon passing through the psychic apparatus, could leave marks in the unconscious system, thus representing memory; these marks, signs, mnemonic traces, would be subject to rearrangements and retranscriptions from time to time. Remembrance, in turn, would be an effect of the passage of something inscribed in the domain of the unconscious to the field of consciousness, presenting itself as a kind of translation of the mnemonic trace left in the psychic system.

What is essentially new in Freud’s theory, according to the author himself, is “the assertion that memory is not simple, but multiple, established in different kinds of signs” (Freud, 1950 [1896], p. 185).

This way of theorizing about memory presented by Freud has many relevant implications, but here, we want to focus on one of them more specifically: the idea that
memory would not be a more or less faithful copy of the perceptions that generated those traces. Due to the fact that the relationship of mnemonic traces (erinnerungsspuren) would be subject to rearrangement from time to time (von Zeit zu Zeit), taking into account the subject's interactions with the world and with others, this reorganization would not maintain any necessary relationship with material reality. Thus, the possibility of rearranging the traces would be the basis for the processes of post hoc signification and re-signification of experiences, being a necessary condition for any possibility of curing the neurotic symptoms that Freudian psychoanalytic practice would focus on.

In the Project for a Scientific Psychology (Freud, 1954 [1895]), Freud questions why repression would privilege sexuality, and then indicates how the mechanism of repression involves two events distinctly separated in time. In the first moment, there would be the sexual scene, but at that moment, it did not yet have a sexual order of meaning. In the second moment, however, there would be certain analogies that would allow this moment to be related to the first, even if superficially, and endowed with new meaning. “In this perspective”, as Laplanche and Pontalis affirm, “only the second scene gives the first its pathogenic value” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 2001 [1987], p. 35). Freud (1954 [1895]) also asserts that in trauma, there can be observed a repressed memory that only a posteriori (Nachträglich) becomes trauma.

The exposition we have conducted so far regarding the theory of mnemonic traces expressed in Project for a Scientific Psychology (Freud, 1954 [1895]) and in Letter 52 (Freud, 1950 [1896]) certainly does not allow us to precisely locate the place of language within the processes of subjectivation in Freudian psychoanalysis, but it allows us to apprehend a memory that is made as a mark capable of being rearranged and re-signified through a series of processes. This conceptualization of trauma and an idea of memory that possesses the character of a posteriori paves the way for us to delve into the theme of abreaction and cure through speech, in which language holds a prominent place.
3 A TALKING CURE: LANGUAGE AND SYMPTOM

In a text published in 1896, titled *The Aetiology of Hysteria*, Freud (2006 [1896]) theorizes about the role that sexual traumas would play in the constitution of hysterical symptoms. According to the author, such traumas would present themselves as the central core of hysterical neurosis, so that the origin of the symptom could be explained by referencing a trauma experienced by the individual in the early years of childhood (Freud, 2006 [1896]).

From the perspective developed by Freud in the aforementioned essay, hysterics — both women and men — would have experienced a certain situation of abuse by an influential adult at some point in their childhood. However, in the first instance, a trauma would not be established, despite mnemonic traces being left. This would occur because, at that moment, the child would not yet have the necessary resources to symbolize the situation experienced as an act of abusive nature. Only in a second instance, after sexual maturation, when the memory of the initial experience occurs, is it re-signified and its meaning apprehended in another dimension, under the form of abuse.

The remembering of the abusive experience would mobilize a *quantum* of affect that would provoke displeasure in the Ego. To avoid the displeasure connected to the recollection of the experience, the individual would repress the traumatic situation,

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2 Freud theorized for the first time in 1895, in the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (Freud, 1954 [1895]), that the organism would have a natural tendency to try to reduce the level of tension in the system to the minimum possible. The increase in tension, caused by the most diverse interactions with the world and others or arising from within, from one’s own desires, memories, thoughts, if increased, would cause displeasure to the subject. Thus, the organism would work to discharge this tension or even prevent it from increasing, in order to avoid displeasure. The aforementioned author calls this movement the “principle of inertia”. However, this level of energy that traverses the organism could not be reduced to a quantitative equal to zero, as this would represent a state in which the performance of any activities is not possible. In such cases, another principle would act, seeking to keep the tension level as low as possible, but still within the limits of performing life’s activities. In this case, what Freud (1954 [1895]) called the “principle of constancy” would be in operation. The organism would thus seek, through the implementation of two principles, a homeostasis of the system. Although, throughout his work, Freud gave specific contours to the theorization of this energetics—in which the increase in tension is related to displeasure and pleasure is related to the discharge of energy — this idea permeates his entire theory. It is no coincidence that the idea first defended at the end of the 19th century reconfigures and returns in the emblematic text of 1920 — *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud, 2010 [1920]) — forming the basis of the interplay between the “life instinct” and the “death instinct”.
which, despite being distant from the domains of consciousness, would continue to operate and could return to the body in the form of a hysterical symptom. Freud (2006 [1896]) thus lays the foundations of what was later called the “seduction theory” or “trauma theory”.

The repressed traumatic situation would, therefore, be at the core of the symptoms presented in hysterical neurosis. In this clinical model, which Freud was putting into motion at that specific moment of his intellectual journey, for a cure of the symptom to be possible, the analyst/doctor should work in such a way that makes the patient recall the primary scene of the trauma that had sickened them.

The procedure of recalling the primary scene of the trauma, related to the material aspects of the experience, would be intimately connected to what Freud and Breuer, in the work *Studies on Hysteria* (1992 [1893-1895]), called the “cathartic method”. In this form of treatment, quite distinct from the free association that marks psychoanalytic clinic in the following century, the doctor, through hypnosis, would give indications for the patient to return to the traumatic issue they had distanced from the domains of consciousness through repression. This return, a recollection that occurred under the state of hypnosis, an altered state of consciousness, would promote a discharge of the affect related to the repressed content.

Freud and Breuer (1992 [1893-1895]) affirm that such a cathartic reaction, in relation to the trauma, would only be effective if the reaction was adequate to the trauma itself: an abreaction. The aforementioned authors state that “by ‘reaction’ we mean here the whole series of voluntary and involuntary reflexes in which, as we know from experience, affects are discharged: from crying to revenge” (Breuer & Freud, 1992 [1893-1895], p. 34).

In specific situations, where this adequate reaction to the trauma (abreaction) occurs “on a sufficient scale, a great part of the affect disappears; our language attests to this fact of everyday observation through the expressions ‘sich austoben’ [‘to vent’], ‘sich ausweinen’ [‘to cry one's heart out’]” (Breuer & Freud, 1992 [1893-1895], p. 34). However, if the opposite path is taken and the unconscious affect is suppressed, it does
not vanish. On the contrary, when repressed, the affect will remain connected to the memory and will return to the body in the form of a symptom.

Freud and Breuer continue their argument and state that “the human being finds in language a substitute for action; with its help, the affect can be ‘abreacted’ almost in the same way” (Breuer & Freud, 1992 [1893-1895], p. 34). Thus, even in their early work with Breuer, Freud already delineated language as something akin to a substitute for action. It is no mere coincidence that the aforementioned authors propose that, in certain cases, “speaking itself is the appropriate reaction, as a complaint and as a declaration, in the case of a tormenting secret [confession!]” (Breuer & Freud, 1992 [1893-1895], p. 34).

However, we need to go further, as this reading still does not capture the dimension that language holds in Freudian theorization. It would be better to say that language can substitute certain actions because language is, in itself, an act that not only mobilizes affects by giving density of action to the recollected experience and verbalized desire but also structures the psyche itself.

In 1900, in the text *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud starts from dreams to expand his understanding of subjective processes. According to the author (Freud, 2019 [1900]), in the realm of dreams, where the demands of consciousness lose their primacy, the diurnal remnants, memories marked in us during childhood, and a wide range of elements existing in our psyche present themselves in a weave in which they condense and shift.

In dreams, Freud (2019 [1900]) argues, the dream productions present singular figures where various characters from the subject’s life embody the body of a single entity. This figure, impossible to exist in a waking state, simultaneously condenses, for absolutely unconscious reasons, elements associated, for example, with the father, the kindergarten teacher, the best friend, the first girlfriend, the last wife — and many other possible arrangements.

The analysis of Irma’s injection dream, still present in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud, 2019 [1900]), particularly elucidates the work of condensation (*Verdichtung*) existing in dream processes. The figure of Irma in Freud’s dream concentrated elements from numerous women: from his wife to his daughter, including a
provocative woman Freud wished to have as a patient and a child. In condensation, these images group together, without adhering to any conscious logic, following the functioning of the unconscious and desire.

Alongside the process of condensation, the work of displacement (Verschiebung) acts in the constitution of dreams. Freud (2019 [1900]) points out that displacement can manifest in two ways: in the first, a certain latent element is replaced by a more remote component, i.e., an allusion is made. In the second form, it is not about replacing elements, at least not only, but about a shift in emphasis: changing the emphasis from a particularly relevant psychic element to another of no importance, so that the dream seems to be decentered.

Lacan (1999 [1970]), on the other hand, offers a reading of Freud in which the mechanisms of condensation (Verdichtung) and displacement (Verschiebung) are thought of as linguistic elements, namely, metaphor and metonymy. According to Lacan (1999 [1970]), there is no metaphor without metonymy, and vice versa. Every metonymy, according to the author, is an effect of a metaphorical operation interrupted by repression, just as every metaphor is an effect of a metonymic operation.

It is not our intention here to dwell on Lacan’s work. We bring this author’s contribution to show that, to some extent, the constitutive processes of dreams, which are also present in clinical practice and the formation of modalities of subjectivity, can be considered as linguistic processes. Although Freud did not provide a theoretical conceptualization of such movement, language was already presented in his work as a structuring element of subjectivity.

Thus, it is no mere coincidence that psychoanalysis has been conceptualized as a “talking cure”. The reason for this is not only that analysis is based on free association and occurs through speech but because the entire analytical process is thought of as a process that mobilizes a certain memory, always linked to a quantum of affect, and sets in motion processes that only articulate through language.
4 LANGUAGE TO INFINITY: ELABORATION OF A SUBJECTIVE POSITION

During the decades Freud spent on his theoretical production, he published a series of short texts on psychoanalytic technique. Among them, perhaps the most widely read and interesting is an essay published in 1914, titled Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through (Freud, 2010 [1914]). In this work, which in its very title systematizes the movement of an analysis, we can see how language appears as a fundamental element in the elaboration of distinct subjective positions by the subject, thus being indelibly implicated in the process of elaboration that is articulated with the “work of remembering”.

In this text, considering the processes related to psychoanalytic clinic, Freud (2010 [1914]) presents, among other things, the idea of repetition — which years later will gain the dense status of a concept. The phenomenon of repetition, so to speak, is postulated by Freud as an action that occurs when the subject could not produce a translation of the experience that marked them. As we saw earlier, experiences leave marks on the psyche, and remembering is a translation, a transcription, of the memory trace (Erinnerungsspuren) from the domains of the unconscious to consciousness.

However, there are cases where remembering brings with it a quantum of affect that provokes displeasure, and to protect itself from this displeasure, the Ego would block the translation of the traces, pushing the recollection of the unpleasant experience out of consciousness. However, these traces might end up returning, presenting themselves on the body without passing through the domain of language. The return to the body would not only occur in the form of a symptom, such as hysterical blindness, nervous spasms, or paraplegia; it would also manifest in the form of actions repeatedly carried out indefinitely. Freud (2010 [1914]) will name this process, where a certain psychic record goes from the unconscious directly to the field of action, as “acting out”.

What is interesting for us is to note that Freud (2010 [1914]) conceptualizes repetition as a singular form of recollection. It is true that it is a mode of remembering in action and that the subject is not conscious of doing it, but it is still a modality of memory. Thus, Freud (2010 [1914]) provides us with clues to begin questioning the role that a
certain pure and simple recollection would have in analytic therapy. In other words: if repetition itself is a form of remembering, then recollection alone cannot imply the cure of the symptom. Thus, something more needs to enter the equation.

As a movement that could resolve this repetition short-circuit, Freud (2010 [1914]) presents us with the “work of remembering” (Erinnerungsarbeit). This work refers to an action through which the subject would invest affectively, libidinally, in order to attempt to break down the resistances preventing remembrance, thus producing an elaboration of the experience that left a mark on the psyche.

In the way Freud (2010 [1914]) conducts his theorization, the work of remembering (Erinnerungsarbeit) is not thought of as something that happens spontaneously. On the contrary, it is inscribed in the condition of a contranatural movement — since the primary principle of the organism is to avoid increasing tension in the psychic system and, consequently, displeasure. For the work of remembering to be effective, the individual must invest libidinally. Thus, the elaboration of the memory trace (Erinnerungsspuren), another part of the tripod that systematizes the movement of analysis in Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through (Freud, 2010 [1914]), shows its fundamental importance in what we can understand as a cure in analysis. It involves producing rearrangements and translations of memory traces, producing narratives.

Freud’s essay on mourning in Mourning and Melancholia (Freud, 2010 [1915]) offers valuable theoretical contributions for the thinking we aim to undertake here. This work allows us to think about how the elaboration of loss involves a form of “cure” that entails more than just a kind of funeral ritual regarding the lost object of love, as through this ritual the previous object is buried and, in its place, a new one is introduced.

This movement would not be characteristic of mourning or melancholia, as Freud (2010 [1915]) theorizes them. The reason for this lies in the fact that the relation of libidinal investment in objects of desire is not constituted as a counter for exchanges, where objects can be swapped. In the situation where the object of love no longer exists, the reality test demands that all libido renounce the bond connecting it to the object. It is against this demand that a comprehensible revolt occurs, as at the level of psychic instances, the object still exists. It is only through a mourning work — in which the
subject elaborates the modalities of the object’s presence and their subjective position in relation to it—that they can finally become “free” (Freud, 2010 [1915]).

Whether in the work of memory, which produces an escape from the repetition circuit, or in the work of mourning, which allows libido to connect to other objects of desire, the elaboration of experience must be accompanied by a subjective rectification of the subject in relation to their experience. It is only to the extent that language comes into play and the subject transforms their position within the narrative created that experiences can be truly re-signified and something akin to a cure of the symptom becomes possible.

In Beyond the Pleasure Principle (2010 [1920]), Freud presents a case that may provide particularly interesting contributions to the development of the thesis defended in this work. In the aforementioned work, the author proposes the analysis of a game that his grandson played while still very young, during the phase when he began to experience the first frustrations related to his mother. It is not the analysis of a clinical case, and the therapeutic cure is not at stake, but through this narrative, Freud touches indelibly on the records of suffering and anxiety, which, with subjective rectifications, narrative elaborations, and analytic cure, maintain a close relationship.

Freud (2010 [1920]) recounts that, when left alone by his mother, his grandson began to play with a spool, which he would throw away, still attached to a string. While performing this movement, he would shout “fort”, pronouncing the “o” very slowly. Subsequently, when the spool was distant and particularly hidden behind an object or under a piece of furniture, he would pull it through the string and exclaim “da”.

In Freud’s (2010 [1920]) reading, this seemingly meaningless game takes on particularly relevant significations. This is because, in German, “fort” can mean “out” as an interjection, and as an adjective, it can denote something that is “absent” or “removed.” In contrast, the word “da” can be literally translated as “here”.

Thus, for Freud (2010 [1920]), the game that his grandson was engaged in showed the child using the resources he had, in this case a game with a linguistic boundary, to cope with the anxiety caused by the obstruction of access to the desired object at that moment. Therefore, not only in the clinic but throughout the constitution of singular
modalities of subjectivity, language appears as a fundamental element in dealing with the anxiety that traverses the subject, from early childhood to death.

From what has been discussed, thinking about the constitution of modalities of subjectivity in Freud involves considering an articulation in which language and memory are continuously implicated. From the cure of the symptom, as a guiding thread of analysis in part of this work, to the infinite possibilities for the constitution of singular modalities of existence, which emerge as ways to deal with the record of pain and anxiety, it is always a matter of elaborating memory traces and the subject’s position in relation to the narrative they have constructed of themselves and others.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Following this exploration, we have grasped the idea that the significance of memory in Freudian theory always has an a posteriori character. This is not only because mnemonic traces are constitutively shaped by unconscious desires as they are imprinted upon the psychic apparatus, thus not reflecting or operating merely as a seal on wax with lived experience.

This a posteriori nature that cuts across the significance of memory is also due to the fact that all recollection is a process requiring affective investment from the individual. Thus, recollection involves an exercise in rearrangement, through which a translation of traces is performed and a singular production of narratives is set in motion.

This potential for rearranging traces and signs is what allows psychoanalytic practice to establish itself as such, as this property underpins the entire possibility of meaning and re-signification of traumatic experiences, on which the idea of cure is based. We can assert that the concept of cure would not have the theoretical density it possesses if the events of a given material reality were marked, as they happened, in an irrevocable manner on the subject.

Thus, every experience of cure in Freudian-based psychoanalytic theory is a production of subjectivity that articulates memory — through elaboration and work of
memory — and language — as a structuring element of the entire psyche — as the foundations for a work of production and re-signification.

The idea of cure that Freud discussed marks a uniqueness of psychoanalytic discourse, especially when compared to medical-psychiatric discourse. While medical cure is understood as a return to the condition prior to illness, psychoanalytic cure leads to a place completely different from that initially occupied by the subject in relation to their symptom. This movement presupposes the elaboration of singular modalities of subjectivity, wherein the individual is capable of creating a narrative through which a sense about oneself and others can be produced.

Our analyses also suggest that this movement, which articulates memory, language, and the production of subjectivity, cannot be reduced to clinical experience alone. Its character must be extended to the entire scope of existence, such that language is foundational to the subject and accompanies their ways of dealing with the records of anxiety and suffering. In other words, the Freudian individual’s subjectivity always emerges at the intersection of memory and language.

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