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SHOULD WE BURN THE NOTION OF SUBLIMATION?[1]

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ABSTRACT. This study delves into the notion of sublimation within Freud's works, seeking to extract the consequences of its definition for metapsychology and for the clinic. Aiming to achieve this objective we trace the evolution of such notion throughout Freud's work, as well as how the author uses it in his clinical cases. Thus, reinserting issues raised by Laplanche, we wonder what are the possible implications of the drive's dessexualization thesis, the idea of socially valued objects and its differentiation with repression. We conclude that the repetition of the use of the concept, when linked directly to artistic production, as it appears on recente publications, cannot be sustained once we take into account the implications of its definition and uses. Lastly, we propose to think about the notion of sublimation, always referring to a specific psychic dynamic, in order to highlight clinical elements that allow us to differentiate it from other possible destinations of the drive.

Keywords: Sublimation; art; psychoanalytic clinic.

DEVE-SE QUEIMAR A NOÇÃO DE SUBLIMAÇÃO?

RESUMO. O presente artigo trabalha a noção de sublimação dentro da obra de Freud, a fim de extrair as consequências que sua definição tem para a metapsicologia e para a clínica psicanalítica. De modo a alcançar esse objetivo, traçamos a evolução da noção ao longo da obra freudiana bem como os usos que o autor faz desta em seus casos clínicos. Reinserindo questões levantadas por Laplanche tenciona-se em que implicaria a ideia de objetos socialmente valorizados, bem como, a tese da dessexualização da pulsão e sua diferenciação com o recalque, em vias de indagar o estatuto metapsicológico da sublimação em Freud. Concluímos que a repetição do uso do conceito está ligado diretamente à produção artística e intelectual, tal como aparece em publicações recentes, não se sustenta ao levarmos em consideração as implicações metapsicológicas de sua definição e de seus usos. Por fim, propomos pensar a noção de sublimação sempre referida a uma dinâmica psíquica específica, de maneira a sobressair elementos clínicos que nos permitam diferenciá-la de outros destinos possíveis da pulsão.

Palavras-chave: Sublimação; arte; clínica psicanalítica.

[1] This title refers to the text by Laplanche (1988). Should we burn Melanie Klein? We also consulted the English and Spanish translations of Laplanche's text to maintain the reference to the title.

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HAY QUE QUEMAR LA NOCIÓN DE SUBLIMACIÓN?

RESUMEN. Este artículo trabaja la noción de sublimación dentro de la obra de Freud, buscando extraer las consecuencias que su definición tiene para la metapsicología y para la clínica psicoanalitica. Para lograr este objetivo, trazamos la evolución de la noción a lo largo de la obra de Freud, así como los usos que el autor hace de ella en sus casos clínicos. Así, reinsertando cuestiones planteadas por Laplanche se pretende que implique la idea de objetos socialmente valorados, así como la tesis de la desexualización de la pulsión y su diferenciación con la represión, en el proceso de indagación del estatus de sublimación en Freud. Concluimos que la repetición del uso del concepto directamente ligado a la producción artística no puede sostenerse si tenemos en cuenta las implicaciones de su definición y sus usos. Por fin, proponemos reflexionar sobre la noción de sublimación, siempre refiriéndonos a una dinámica psíquica específica, con el fin de resaltar elementos clínicos que nos permitan diferenciarla de otros posibles destinos de la pulsión.

Palabras clave: Sublimacion; arte; Clinica psicoanalitica.

Introduction

The term sublimation is derived from the Latin term *sublimare*, which can be translated as raising to the top (França Neto, 2007). In the domain of alchemy, sublimation signifies a process of purification or transformation of metal into pure gold. In the realm of chemistry, sublimation denotes the direct transition of a substance from a solid state to a gaseous state, bypassing the liquid state (Lage, 2008). In the freudian definition of sublimation, we find some resonances derived from these uses: as in alchemy, it is a process of transformation, only this time it refers to the drive, from sexual to non-sexual, and as in chemistry, it is a direct passage from one state to another, not through the intermediary of repression. What Freud describes as an activity of sublimation is especially associated with artistic creation and scientific research (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1999). Despite the extent of Freud's work and the many appearances of the term, we do not have an essay by the author devoted exclusively to the notion of sublimation. The manuscript on the subject, if it existed, was burned or lost (Laplanche, 1999). In this sense, although we have a certain homogeneity in Freud's indications on the subject, they lack systematization, a metapsychology (Laplanche, 2016). This is what Freud himself demonstrates in a late text such as *Civilization and Its Discontents*, where he states that sublimation has a "[...] special quality which we will one day be able to characterize metapsychologically" (Freud, 1930, p. 24).

Therefore, several works in the literature strive to fill the theoretical gap of sublimation in Freud, seeking continuities in his references to this notion (such as França Neto, 2007; Lage, 2008), and others that explore the connections between the analytical process and sublimation (Castiel, 2006). In this article, we take Freud's notion of sublimation as a guiding thread and ask ourselves: "[...] is sublimation still useful, usable, utilized?" (Laplanche, 2016, p. 35). To answer this question, we have structured the work into four different sections.

In the first section, we attempted to revisit the notion of sublimation in different moments of Freud's work, to define what the author would understand by sublimation, as well as to understand the variations that the notion underwent throughout his work. In a second moment, we discussed the relationship between sublimation and clinical practice, returning to the references to sublimation in Freud's cases. In the third section, we addressed the problem of defining what the objects of sublimation should be. Finally, we

sought to understand the metapsychological specifics of sublimation, why it would differ from repression, and what the desexualization involved in the process implies.

Sublimation in Freud

Freud first used the term sublimation in his correspondence with Fliess in 1897. In the letter, Freud states that hysteria is related to the reproduction of scenes from the past and that these would emerge in the analysis in the form of fantasies that would operate as "[...] sublimations of facts, embellishments of them [...]" (Masson, 1986, p. 240). Therefore, they would have the defensive character of avoiding the emergence of scenes with sexual content. Although Freud only uses the term without specifying sublimation as a notion, we can glimpse the character of desexualization that would persist, albeit with different tones, throughout his work (Campos & Loffredo, 2019).

In the text 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' (Freud, 1905a), Freud brings up sublimation, this time, as a notion equally marked as a defense against the sexual. The desexualization of polymorphous perverse instinctual drives would be a fundamental part of cultural achievement, and sublimation would be linked to this process. In other words, sublimation deals with disruptive elements in order to, if not pacify them, at least provide them with forms of expression compatible with the culture. At this point, Freud does not distinguish sublimation from reactive formation, which is directly related to repression.

The process of sublimation only takes on clearer contours in 1908 with the publication of *'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness* (Freud, 1908). Following the same line of reasoning, Freud states that the civilizing process imposes certain restrictions on direct sexual satisfaction, making it necessary to exchange it for indirect satisfaction. Thus, "[...] this capacity to exchange the originally sexual goal for another, no longer sexual, but one that is psychically related, is called the capacity for sublimation" (Freud, 1908, p. 369). In other words, we have an exchange of the object and the goal of the drive, although in this text, the difference between repression and sublimation is unclear.

In the text on Leonardo Da Vinci (Freud, 1910), the author links the atrophy of Leonardo's sexual life to his intense production as a scientist and researcher, taking Leonardo as a paradigmatic example of sublimation. The distinction between repression and sublimation becomes clearer in the theory of the origin of the drive to know. Freud proposes that the drive to know is a substitute for infantile sexual exploration, which, with the eruption of repression, would have three possible outcomes. The first would be neurotic inhibition, a form of impediment to thinking by suspending intellectual activity throughout development through religion. The second would be the sexualization of thought, which has the character of endless rumination, as observed in obsessive neuroses. The third type, with which Leonardo is associated, in which the "[...] libido escapes the fate of repression by sublimating itself in a desire to know from the beginning and joining the vigorous instinct of research, reinforcing it" (Freud, 1910, p. 140). Repression and sublimation are then distinguished, a movement that will continue in the text 'The Drives and Their Destinies' (Freud, 1915a) with the delimitation of sublimation as one of the possible destinies of the drive, in contrast to repression. Although they are textually indicated as different destinies of the drive, we must ask ourselves to what extent we can differentiate sublimation from the products of repression, especially if we consider the desexualization of the drive.

During the same period in which articles on metapsychology were being written, we have pertinent formulations on the subject of sublimation in the text 'Introduction to Narcissism' (Freud, 1914). Above all, differentiation between the processes of idealization and sublimation. It is worth noting that in this text, we are in an intermediate period between

the development of the first and second theories of drives, in which Freud no longer refers to the conflict between self-preservation drives and sexual drives, to introduce the notions of object-libido and ego-libido. Here, the process of sublimation is described as follows: “[...] the instinct sets out for another goal, distant from sexual satisfaction; the emphasis is on the withdrawal from what is sexual” (Freud, 1914, p. 40), while idealization refers to a “[...] sexual overestimation of the object” (Freud, 1914, p. 41). Sublimation refers to the drive, an inhibition of the goal that is always sexual satisfaction through the exchange of the object that becomes socially valued, while idealization refers to the object without a desexualization of libido. The latter can favor repression; sublimation is a possible destination for the drive to work that does not go through repression (Freud, 1914).

After the 1920s, with the new drive dualism, the conflict became between the sexual and death drives. Sublimation is described as a process that occurs through the intermediation of the ego, which would have the character of desexualization, the conversion of sexual object libido to narcissistic libido (Freud, 1923). The ego takes over the id’s libido, desexualizes it, and unifies it into a single love object, working in favor of Eros (Freud, 1923). However, this work of sublimation leads to drive defusion, releasing the aggressive components of the death drive that can subjugate the ego. This suggestion to consider a deadly dimension of sublimation was little explored after Freud, although we recently focused on these effects (Metzger & Silva Júnior, 2010; Lage, 2008; Carvalho, 2006).

The most recent development of the notion of sublimation can be found in the text ‘Civilization and Its Discontents’ (Freud, 1930). When pointing out the possible ways out found by the drive to overcome the suffering imposed by civilization, the author mentions sublimation as a way of shifting the goal of the drives, obtaining pleasure from intellectual and psychic work, citing as examples the artist's pleasure in creating and the scientist's pleasure in solving problems (Freud, 1930). However, he relates a problem to this “[...] finer and more elevated” (Freud, 1930, p. 24) type of drive satisfaction, which would be the lack of intensity compared to the gross satisfactions, since “[...] it does not shake us physically” (Freud, 1930, p. 24). He also denotes a dependence of the sublimation mechanism on a certain talent or special disposition. However, in an interesting footnote, the author speaks of the possibility of including work in this process of displacement of libidinal components, which only happens when the work is chosen freely and not out of necessity (Freud, 1930). We understand that this lack of intensity of satisfaction in sublimation is related to desexualization in the process. However, we have several forms of artistic creation that are directly related to corporeality, such as dance, theater, and performance. Furthermore, we wonder how this separation between gross and fine satisfaction would be if we take into account the entire dynamics of pleasure, including voyeurism/exhibitionism.

Thus, bringing together the different moments in which Freud defined the term, we can say that sublimation is a process in which the sexual drive deviates to a non-sexual goal and begins to target socially valued objects (Freud, 1905a, 1908, 1914) and is the destination of the drive that does not go through repression (Freud, 1910, 1915a). On the basis of this definition, we can refer to the anecdote of Jeannot's knife (Laplanche, 1980): if we change the components of a knife one by one, we change the blade, it is still Jeannot's knife, we change the handle and, finally, we change the sheath, are we still talking about Jeannot's knife? In other words, how does this drive continue to sublimate? When we talk about the desexualization of the drive, we separate it from its source, its goal (inhibited), and modify its object (socially valued). What is left of the drive?

Sublimation in Freud's clinical cases

We share Jean Laplanche's impression that sublimation is rarely mentioned in our clinical discussions and supervision (Laplanche, 2016). The reason given by the author to explain this would be the 'red cross reason ': If in a war, we agree that ambulances should not be attacked, the enemy is likely to use them as camouflage. In this sense, in an analysis, everything would be material for interpretation by the analyst, and there would be no separation between respectable sublimations that should not be touched. "This choice to analyze everything, without respect or reservation, would be the transposition of Montfort's famous phrase 'kill them all; God will recognize his own' – in a 'analyze everything, sublimation will recognize its own'" (Laplanche, 2016, p. 36, author's emphasis). However, we have chosen to emphasize the relationship between sublimation and clinical practice by returning to references to the notion of sublimation in Freud's clinical cases and more recent studies.

In the case of Dora (Freud, 1905b), four distinct passages refer to the notion of sublimation. In the first, Freud states that the nausea felt by Dora is due to a "[...] displacement of sensation" (Freud, 1905b, p. 201) and that, in this sense, the genital sublimation that would be common "[...] in a healthy girl under such circumstances" (Freud, 1905b, pp. 201-202) would be missing. Second, Freud points out that when someone becomes manifestly perverse, in fact, they have only remained that way. In these cases, there would be developmental inhibition that blocked the sublimation or repression of sexual drives (Freud, 1905b). In both references, sublimation was taken as an index of normal development, which, if inhibited, would produce symptoms or perversion. The next two allusions to sublimation refer to transference, which may occur in a sublimated or attenuated form or as "[...] simple reprints" (Freud, 1905b, p. 312), that is, a complete transposition of its content, except for the substitution of the figure of the doctor (Freud, 1905b). We note that the use of this notion in these excerpts is consistent with the first appearance of the term in correspondence with Fliess. Sublimation appears as an attenuation of lived scenes and is now transposed into analysis in the form of fantasies. In this sense, it is difficult to distinguish sublimation from the drive's displacement ability.

In both Little Hans (Freud, 1909a) and The Rat Man (Freud, 1909b), published in the same year, there is only one mention of sublimation. In the case of Hans, the term appears in a footnote when the patient, due to a "[...] strong wave of repression" (Freud, 1909a, p. 273), distances himself from his sexual components and develops an interest in music. In the case of the Rat Man, sublimation is cited as one of the destinies of the sexual components throughout development, with illness due to sexuality being a type of developmental disorder because some individuals "[...] are unable to achieve the suppression and sublimation of the sexual components without inhibitions and substitutive formations" (Freud, 1909b, p. 65). We note the persistence of the developmentalist tone present in the 'Three Essays,' in which sublimation is associated with a stage of suppression of infantile sexuality throughout development, which would occur concomitantly with repression, with the difference that no inhibitions or reactive formations would be generated. How can we think about the suppression of infantile sexuality without associating it with repression? To what extent are sublimatory destinations actually different from inhibitions or reactive formations?

In the analysis of Schreber's autobiography, the notion of sublimation appears timidly to refer to the sun in Schreber's delirium as a "[...] sublimated symbol of the father" (Freud, 1911, p. 48), blurring the boundaries between symbolization and sublimation. In another passage, the richness of Schreber's delusional construction and its relationship to religion

make Freud retrospectively perceive the richness of destroyed sublimations (Freud, 1911). Finally, Freud reiterates the connection between the rejection of sensual practices by open homosexuals and the "[...] intense participation in the general interests of humanity that arises through the sublimation of eroticism" (Freud, 1911, p. 53).

Here, a brief consideration is valid: we understand that sexuality in psychoanalysis refers to polymorphous perverse infantile sexuality as described in the 'Three Essays' (Freud, 1905a). Excerpts such as these give us the impression that the desexualization of the drives present in the process of sublimation refers exclusively to genitality, as in Leonardo's impoverished sexual life, a paradigm of sublimation. If we accept this hypothesis, we would always find an inversely proportional relationship between genital sexual activity and sublimation, which does not seem to be the case, since even Leonardo did not have an impoverished sexual life as Freud wanted (Laplanche, 1980).

In the case of the Wolf Man (Freud 1918), we find the greatest number of references to this notion within Freud's clinical cases. The sublimation of the Wolf Man occurs through "[...] religion, which tames sexual tendencies by giving them a sublimation" (Freud, 1918, p. 101) and through enthusiasm for military matters, which would be "[...] a new and better sublimation of his sadism" (Freud, 1918, p. 101). Having a defense bias against anxiety, "[...] he had first protected himself by religious sublimation and from which he would soon have to protect himself, even more effectively, by military sublimation" (Freud, 1918, p. 63). It is interesting to note that religion, which appears to be associated with the inhibition of thought in the text about Leonardo (Freud, 1910), is now understood as sublimation in the case of the Wolf Man.

This contradiction can be interpreted in two ways. The first is Freud's difficulty in distinguishing between sublimation and repression. Recall that in other texts by the author (Freud, 1927), religion is equated with obsessive neurosis, that is, the result of repression. A second way of interpreting this, to which we will return later, is that the object of sublimation itself varies within each psychic dynamic; that is, religion can be a sublimation path in one case but a consequence of repression in another. Again, we wonder what the practical differences between these cases are.

Returning to the references to sublimation in Freud's clinical cases, we see that sublimation is taken, as it were, as an index of normality. If there is a neurosis, if there is a symptom, in retrospect, there was no sublimation of the drive that would produce a destiny without conflict and reactive formations. We also note that Freud sometimes refers to sublimation as a desexualization in the genital sphere, as in Leonardo's sexual life, and sometimes as a combination of the aggressive components of the drive, in the sublimation of sadism through enthusiasm for military matters, as in the Wolf Man. Perhaps this is why we rarely mention sublimation in our clinical discussion. However, the modesty about using the term disappears when we place historical figures and artists on our couches, such as the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo (Becker, 2016), the French artist Orlan (Falbo & Freire, 2009), and the writer David Foster Wallace (Carvalho, 2010). Can the notion of sublimation be reserved for applied psychoanalysis? It is no coincidence that the main reference is Freud's Leonardo (1910). However, we believe that this separation between sublimation and clinical practice is more due to the idea of desexualization present in this notion. We can say that what interests us in clinical practice is sexual, in the sense that we will never reduce the delay in a session to a simple discussion of train times (Laplanche, 1987).

About socially valued objects

> Artists do not sublimate. To believe that they neither satisfy nor repress their desires but transform them into socially desirable achievements, their works, is a psychoanalytic illusion; nowadays, legitimate works of art are, without exception, socially undesirable (Adorno, 1951, p. 186).(Adorno, 1951, p. 186).

In addition to the turbulent relationship between sublimation and clinical practice, another important point of tension associated with the notion of sublimation relates to the exchange of the object of the drive. We understand that the object is the most variable component of the drive (Freud, 1915a); that is, the objects through which the drive achieves its satisfaction do not have any instinctual markers. However, what would these 'socially valued' objects be, through which the drive will achieve satisfaction in sublimation? How can we delimit these socially valued objects, given that psychoanalysis does not include a theory of values? (Laplanche, 1980)

The idea that socially valued objects presuppose a certain social norm that psychoanalysis itself rejects. There seems to be a consensus that artists and researchers sublimate (Freud, 1930), that is, artistic and scientific productions are socially valued by psychoanalysts, but the same consensus disappears when we consider everyday elements as objects. "Why always the painter and the researcher, and not the turner, the golfer or the gardener? And what about those who are fascinated by surfing the Internet?" (Laplanche, 2016, p. 36).

The award-winning play *The Gospel According to Jesus Queen of Heaven*, by Jo Clifford, which portrays Jesus in the present day as a transgender woman, can be understood as a form of sublimation, which did not prevent it from being the target of several attacks by politicians and religious figures, and even being censored. At the same time, the play received support from visibility campaigns and theater companies, which demonstrates how the objects and values targeted by sublimation do not always share a conformist consensus and vary within different social groups (Laplanche, 2016).

Still, on the subject of sublimation, we must not forget that, in addition to values that refer to specific social groups - an object that is socially valued in one group may be devalued in another - they are also inserted into singular drive circuits. In other words, the status of an object is closely related to the psychic dynamics of a subject. It makes no sense, therefore, to ask whether artistic creation, for example, always has a sublimation character unless this creation does so in a specific case, as in the case of the Wolf Man, where religion, which may generally have the character of an inhibition of thought, assumes the function of sublimation (Freud, 1918). Therefore, we understand that the objects of sublimation must be referenced in each case, and it is not possible to give art or any other object the a priori status of sublimation.

Nevertheless, the question remains: What are the clinical differences to be pointed out in the relationship between subject and object in the cases of sublimation and repression? To stay with the contradiction noted earlier, what makes Wolf Man's relationship to religion a sublimation and not the result of repression? How does it differ from the relationship between religious people, often described by Freud as a neurotic relationship, the result of repression, when, in this case, it is precisely domination, childish sadism?

Desexualization

What are the metapsychological specificities of sublimation? How can we distinguish this from inhibition or reactive formation? We have attempted to show that the objects of

sublimation cannot be defined a priori; therefore, we cannot simply evoke them to distinguish sublimation from other concepts, as if it were a special destiny of the drive that leads to artistic and intellectual creation. Thus, if we reject the definition of sublimation that involves the exemplification of objects, we are left with two other elements that Freud lists as specific: the first refers to sublimation as a destiny of the drive that does not undergo repression (Freud, 1915a), such as the transformation of matter from a solid state to a gaseous state that does not undergo a liquid state, and the second refers to the desexualization of the drive (Freud, 1905a, 1908, 1914). What would a desexualized object relationship look like? How can we imagine a desexualized relationship that is not repressed? Even if we accept this hypothesis, would this desexualization occur without consequences?

As noted in the section on clinical cases, Freud sometimes seems to link the desexualization present in sublimation to distancing from genital sexuality (Freud, 1910, 1911). In addition to this interpretation erecting a kind of 'asexual artist' as the privileged figure of sublimation–which could have comical results, such as psychoanalysts researching the sexual lives of artists–we ask ourselves whether "[...] when Freud says that in sublimation the sexual goal becomes non-sexual, would he not be reducing his concept of what is sexual?" (Castiel, 2006, p. 93). Here, we insist on understanding sexuality in a broader sense because the relationship between a mother and her newborn shows us that no matter how distant a relationship is from genitality, this does not imply the absence of infantile sexuality; on the contrary, this relationship is permeated by sexuality. Still going against this approach between desexualization and genitality, Kameniak (2009) tells us how Freud would have proposed the concept of sublimation through the memories of Richard Sterba, a psychoanalyst who attended the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society.

> Freud opened the discussion by telling us how he developed the concept of sublimation. He read in Heine's Harzreise the story of a young man who, out of the sadistic malice of youth, cut off the tails of all the dogs he could catch, much to the protest of the people of the Harz Mountains. The same young man later became the famous surgeon Johann Friedrich Dienffenbach (1795-1847). Freud then made the following comment: 'Here we have someone who has done the same thing all his life, first out of sadistic malice, then to do good to humanity. I thought it would be correct to call this change of meaning in a given action sublimation' (Sterba, 1982 apud Kameniak, 2009, p. 505, emphasis added).

In this example, as in the Wolf Man, the thesis of desexualization seems to refer to an expanded sexuality, a destiny of sadism as if removed from its goal: cutting off dogs' tails becomes cutting up people during surgery. Soares and Coelho (2014) state that we can interpret this example of the surgeon as both eroticization and desexualization, that is, they situate desexualization concerning the two drive dualisms, which seems to be another way to understand the problem. If the sexual aspect of the first dualism seems to have to do with a more demonic aspect of the drive, the polymorphous perverse infantile sexuality conflicts with self-preservation; in the second dualism, sexual life drives conflict with the death drive; that is, the non-sexual field becomes the death drive. Would this desexualized relationship be governed by self-preservation or aggressiveness/destructiveness? It is in this sense that Soares and Coelho (2014) seem to interpret the example of the surgeon, desexualization in the first theory of drives (renunciation of sadism sublimated in medicine), and eroticization in the second dualism "(connection of the sadistic drive, making it express itself in the talent for medicine)" (Soares & Coelho, 2014, p. 597). This apparent change in the status of desexualization when situated in the face of drive dualisms can be resolved if we understand that "[...] the first theory of drives remains virtually present in the second" (Laplanche, 2016, p. 40). In the conflict between the life drive and the death drive, self-preservation persists in the sexual drive; man does not fight for the survival of the species but for the love of his Ego.

The death drive would be more on the side of the unchained sexual drive, the old Freudian sexual drive (Laplanche, 1980). Freud refuses to propose a specific energy for the death drive, a destrudo, it is one and the same libido with different modes of circulation, on the one hand, sexuality in stasis, linked to representations, life drive, and, on the other hand, free sexuality, disconnected, and death drive (Laplanche, 1980).

In this line of interpretation, we see no sense in speaking of sublimation as a desexualization of the drive, but rather as "[...] the victory of love in stasis, invested in stable objects, over the instability and tendency to absolute discharge that characterizes the libido at the level of unconscious fantasies" (Laplanche, 1980, p. 116). And also as "[...] the transfer or transposition of the sexual energy of death into the sexual energy of life, like the domestication or binding of a drive in its anarchic and destructive origins" (Laplanche, 2016, p. 40). This shift in focus, speaking of the binding of free energy rather than the desexualization of the drive, seems to be consistent with Freud's use of the notion of sublimation in his clinical cases. Thinking of this transposition as leading to energy loss may explain why the intensity of satisfaction is dampened in sublimation (Freud, 1930). It also preserves something of free sexuality that resists attachment.

However, this understanding implies a very specific understanding of Laplanche's Freudian theory of drives, which makes us wonder to what extent we are not simply multiplying verbal solutions to maintain the concept of sublimation. Our aim is not to use the Freudian definition of sublimation to arrive at another author's definition, but to work on the concept of sublimation in Freud. This leads us to the point that is always raised to distinguish sublimation from symptoms or reactive formation, which refers to sublimation as a destiny of the drive that does not go through repression (Freud, 1910, 1915a).

At the same time that repression has a constitutive facet of topical separation, it also requires constant expenditure of energy to maintain the repressed drive representative (Freud, 1915b). Before this topical separation between the conscious and unconscious takes place, defenses against the drives are effected by transforming them into their opposite and turning them against the person (Freud, 1915b). It should be noted that sublimation, although distinct from repression, emerges as a possible destiny associated with it[5]. The drive representation is repressed because, although its direct realization produces pleasure, this would be incompatible with other demands, and the substitutive formations would be the result of the return of the repressed, examples of which are found in the symptoms and reactive formations present in transference neuroses (Freud, 1915b).

First, we can ask ourselves what the difference is between substitute formations and sublimations. Why should the sublimation of sadism for military interests, or the transformation of sadism into a talent for medicine, be read as sublimation, an escape from repression, and not as a substitute formation, the result of the return of the repressed? Returning to the quote "[...] he had first protected himself by religious sublimation, and from which he would later protect himself, even more effectively, by military sublimation" (Freud, 1918, p. 63), what seems to be at stake would be a certain degree of success in the defense against anxiety. Sublimation works as if it were producing less suffering and conflict. Indeed, we have profoundly soothing sublimations, as the Parisian sculptor Louise Josephine Bourgeois testifies: "Anxieties disappear forever. They will never come back. I know it. It

[5] The fact that it is different from repression, while at the same time emerging concomitantly with it, favors Freud's understanding of sublimation as dependent on a certain talent or special dispositions (Freud, 1930). This can be interpreted from an essentialist perspective, but also as a constitutive aspect of sublimation. However, we know of the possibility of a late sublimation, which could even be produced in the clinic (Laplanche, 1980). In the only article found, Lowenfeld (1941) discusses the analysis of an artist and raises interesting hypotheses regarding the relationship between trauma and sublimation.

works" (Bourgeois apud Rivera, 2005, p. 62). We suspect, however, that it can also have a lethal effect on the subject, as Lage (2008) demonstrates when analyzing the effects of therapeutic workshops in the context of mental health: "[...] the activity itself seems to be responsible for the intensification of anxiety, and may favor the triggering of a crisis" (p. 14). Furthermore, we can remember the tragic fate of several artists who committed self-extermination – such as Sylvia Plath, David Foster Wallace, Virginia Woolf, and Alexander McQueen – or even the anxiety that graduate students face when writing their theses and dissertations, to have some indication of how sublimation could also increase this anxiety. Thus, although Freud points out that sublimation is a mechanism that is different from repression and is not to be confused with its derivatives, we have some difficulty in conceiving how we can differentiate it in our clinical practice.

Final considerations

"I make sculptures to get rid of them" (Giacometti apud Laplanche, 2016, p. 48).

We argue that sublimation cannot be defined by its objects, as if in a tautological scheme: artistic creation is equivalent to sublimation, and sublimation is the mechanism responsible for artistic creation, or by a criterion of social valorization outside of psychoanalysis, which would imply a normative field. Metapsychological criteria are also lacking; the thesis of desexualization seems anti-Freudian to us, and differentiation from the products of repression is not verifiable in the clinic. We return to the question: "Is [...] sublimation still useful, usable, utilized?" (Laplanche, 1999, p. 35). If sublimation does not seem useful, the notion is certainly present and used in the works of applied psychoanalysis that deal with some artists (Falbo & Freire, 2009; Carvalho, 2010; Becker, 2016). However, its presence is less pronounced in publications referring to clinical cases. We had difficulty finding articles that dealt with clinical cases and sublimation in our research . It is worth asking whether the reference to the notion has not become a vague, obligatory reverence without a clear metapsychological concept and therefore unusable.

Furthermore, following Freud's example, it is curious that psychoanalysts try to link artistic creation to the sublimation of drives, especially if we consider the desexualization present in the sublimation process. According to this line of reasoning, sublimation can be considered, along with monotony, as an over-adaptation of the subject to culture and a repetition of bureaucratic forms of symbolization imposed by cultural ideals. On the other hand, artistic creation maintains a relationship with excess, to the unprecedented, which breaks with the sublimating possibilities offered by culture (Adorno, 1951). Sexual cannot be completely domesticated and desexualized; there is always a remnant that resists sublimation, which does not submit to it, and perhaps it is this remnant that sets artistic creation in motion. Therefore, if we consider creation as that which resists the movement of desexualization, and contrasts it with sublimation, we will have fertile ground to think precisely about the destiny of the drive that escapes repression, without being confused with its derivatives, and that allows for profoundly renewed symbolizations.

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