

PSYCHOANALYSIS, PRECARIOUSNESS AND IDENTITY IN CURRENT TIMES

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ABSTRACT. Based on Foucault's and Butler's theories about power, norm and subject, this article intended to problematize the subjects' attachment to identity in the current time and its consequences for the psychoanalytic clinics. We argued that, on the one hand, identity represents a subjection to norms and has an incarcerating and masking effect of desires, but on the other hand, it can be important as a protection against helplessness. We distinguished, with Butler, precariousness (a universal, shared condition) from precarity (a condition produced by the differential social allocation of the precarious condition) and hypothesized that the higher the degree of precariousness of a subject, the more important the identity attachment and recognition. We specifically addressed the theme of trans identities, because of its radicality regarding the precarious condition and the search for recognition. Finally, we used the concept of femininity at the end of Freud's work as a clinical listening device that allows the transformation of identity crystallizations towards the new, the singular and the multiple identifications.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis; precariousness; identity.

PSICANÁLISE, PRECARIEDADE E IDENTIDADE NA ATUALIDADE

RESUMO. Baseado nas teorias de Foucault e de Butler sobre poder, norma e sujeito, este artigo pretende problematizar o recurso dos sujeitos à identidade na atualidade e os seus desdobramentos para a clínica psicanalítica. Defenderemos que, por um lado, a identidade representa uma sujeição às normas e tem um efeito encarcerador e mascarador de desejos, mas, por outro, pode ser importante enquanto proteção contra o desamparo. Diferenciaremos, a partir de Butler, precariedade (condição universal, compartilhada) de precarização (condição produzida pela distribuição social diferencial da condição de precariedade) e apresentaremos a hipótese de que, quanto maior o grau de precarização de um sujeito, mais importantes o apego e o reconhecimento identitários. Abordaremos especificamente o tema das identidades trans, por sua radicalidade no que diz respeito à condição precária e à busca de reconhecimento. Por fim, recorreremos ao conceito de feminilidade do final da obra de Freud enquanto dispositivo de escuta clínica que permita a transformação de cristalizações identitárias no sentido do novo, do singular e das múltiplas identificações.

Palavras-chave: Psicanálise; precariedade; identidade.

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PSICOANÁLISIS, PRECARIEDAD E IDENTIDAD EN LA ACTUALIDAD

RESUMEN. Basado en las teorías de Foucault y Butler sobre el poder, la norma y el sujeto, este artículo pretende problematizar el apego de los sujetos a la identidad en la actualidad y sus consecuencias para la clínica psicoanalítica. Argumentaremos que, por un lado, la identidad representa una sujeción a las normas y tiene un efecto de encarcelamiento y enmascaramiento del deseo, pero por otro lado puede ser importante como protección contra el desamparo. Diferenciaremos, a partir de Butler, la precariedad (condición universal, compartida) de la precarización (condición producida por la distribución social diferencial de la condición de precariedad) y presentaremos la hipótesis de que cuanto mayor es el grado de precariedad de un sujeto, más importantes son el apego y el reconocimiento identitarios. Abordaremos específicamente el tema de las identidades trans debido a su radicalidad con respecto a la condición precaria y la búsqueda de reconocimiento. Finalmente, recurriremos al concepto de feminidad del trabajo final de Freud como dispositivo de escucha clínica que permite la transformación de cristalizaciones identitarias en el sentido del nuevo, del singular y de las identificaciones múltiples.

Palabras clave: Psicoanálisis; precariedad; identidad.

Introduction

Michel Foucault explains in many of his texts that psychoanalysis is a field of practices and knowledge crossed by dynamics of power and truth. This means that the statements that we, psychoanalysts, understand as true and from which we listen to our patients are norms and, therefore, represent forms of normality and deviation, and produce subjectivity. In other words, actions, interpretations, diagnosis, treatment direction, all of this has significant effects on how patients will think about themselves, imagine their possibilities of choice, of acting in the world, of relating with themselves and with others.

Put in another way, the psychoanalytic clinics is always immersed in a normative system. But this is not to say, however, that it necessarily reinforces the norms in force in a culture. On the contrary, as Judith Butler proposes, norms can always be re-signified, transformed, and transgression is only possible from within this system.

In the current social and political context, of increasing conservatism and intensifying intolerance, reflecting on issues such as precariousness, identity, recognition, and their consequences in the clinics, seems a fundamental task. If it is not possible to leave a normative system, the bet here is that we can transform norms in the sense of accepting differences and in opposition to their incarcerating and excluding effects. In this sense, the clinics, which we understand as inseparable from politics, can be a space of resistance, as it positivizes the unique experiences of subjects considered deviant by society.

The article is divided into four parts. In the first, we address, from Foucault and Butler, the themes of norm, power, the production of subjectivity and the position of psychoanalysis in the normative system. In the second, we focus on the articulations between precariousness, precarity and identity, and the questions they pose to the clinics. Then, we address the theme of trans identities, due to their radicalism regarding the precarious condition and the search for recognition of the other. Finally, we focus on the clinics and on femininity as a device that allows a unique listening to patients, beyond their identities.

Before starting this journey, we affirm our commitment to interdisciplinary dialogue as a condition of psychoanalytic thinking today, without this meaning that psychoanalysis loses,

with dialogue, its theoretical specificity. In this text, we take into account the question raised by authors from the philosophical field, such as Foucault and Butler, whose thought is also affected by psychoanalysis and even appropriates and talks to its concepts.

Norm, power, subject

In Foucault's thought, subject, norm and power are elements that should always be understood in relation to each other. The subject is not the other of power, but one of its first effects. Power transforms individuals into subjects (Foucault, 1983). This means that the subject does not exist in itself, but is constituted by power, or even by the regime of truth produced by the power of their time, a regime that changes from one society to another.

Regime of truth is nothing more than the norm, as explained by Foucault (2010). In other words, norms work as real laws (although laws here do not refer to legal rules or the field of law), defining codes of normalization to which every subject is subjected and from which they understand their body, gestures, speeches and wishes.

Affirming that the subject is one of the first effects of power does not imply placing the subject, however, in a passive position, of silent submission to power. This postulate points, rather, to the historicity of subjectivity and to the impossibility of conceiving a previous subject outside the norm and power relations. Furthermore, as Foucault (2010) develops in his text, the subject is, at the same time and insofar as it is an effect of power, its intermediary. That is, power transits through the subject it constitutes.

It is worth remembering that the very concept of power in Foucault is positive and productive, and not negative and repressive, going beyond the legal conception of the law that prohibits and says 'no'. As Deleuze (2006) explains, power does not act either by ideology (deceiving), nor by violence (repressing), but, rather, producing reality and truth. In order to consider repressive power, it would be necessary to admit the existence in the subject of an ahistorical dimension, which would be repressed and reduced to silence. If we believe, on the contrary, that the subject is 'totally' historical, historically constructed, power is a productive network that crosses bodies, invests and transforms them.

For Foucault, power is, then, a set of forces that are everywhere, at different levels, including within the subject itself; hence the term *Microphysics of power* (Foucault, 2007), the title of one of his books.

Starting from Foucault's conceptions of power, norm and subject, Judith Butler (2017a) also argues, in *The psychic life of power*, that, in order to become subjects, we subordinate ourselves to power, which is equivalent to the internalization of norms. She shows the paradox present in the process of subjectivation, insofar as it designates both the subject's becoming and its subjection to power.

This way of understanding subjectivation points to the fact that we are constituted from subjection to the other and, therefore, we have a primary vulnerability towards it (vulnerability that will be explored in the next section). This puts us in a position always interpellated and interpellating the other, a interpellation crossed by the normative system.

Butler also argues that, as subjection to power is the subject's condition of continuous possibility, there is even a desire, an attachment to the norm, which would be a previous desire for social existence, even if this subjection implies the restriction of the subject's own desire. Thus, the subject often prefers to accept certain social categories, even if they function in the service of subjection, rather than having no social existence at all.

Bound to seek recognition of its own existence in categories, terms and names that are not of its own making, the subject seeks the sign of his own existence outside itself, in a discourse that is at once

dominant and indifferent. Social categories signify subordination and existence at once (Butler, 2017a, p. 29).

In this quote, when mentioning ‘categories, terms and names’, Butler already introduces the theme of identity, understood by her as the psychic form assumed by power, or the normative ideal inculcated in the subject. The subjectivation process involves the discursive production of identities. Returning to Foucault (1987) in *Discipline and punish*, Butler argues that identity is a kind of psychic captivity. Its incarceration effect is more important than the actual physical incarceration of prison, because it causes the drive to turn against itself, producing awareness, reflexivity and self-assessment.

However, once again in convergence with Foucault’s theory, which understands that power does not unilaterally constitute the subject and that resistance can then occur in the field of power relations, Butler (2017a) believes in the possibility of subjection becoming a place of alteration and re-signification of norms. More than that, and as paradoxical as it may seem, it is from the position of subordination that subversive action can emerge.

Thus, if, on the one hand, power confers existence on the subject, on the other hand, it is exercised and reiterated in the subject’s actions, depending on this reiteration to persist, because the conditions of power are not static or structural. And when it is assumed by the subject (assuming does not mean mechanically reproducing), power runs the risk of taking another form and direction: it constitutes at the same time the subject and the condition of deconstitution of the subject.

There is, therefore, an ambivalence that constitutes the subject and cannot be eliminated: that of being simultaneously subjected to power and subject of power. The subject is not born without power, the subject is obliged to reiterate the norm in order to exist. However, power is also an instrument of becoming of that subject and, in the course of this reiteration, there may be dissimulations and inversions of power and norm. A norm can be transformed even in what opposes its initial purposes.

In other words, no matter how much the subject is forced to repeat the norms and depend on this repetition (so that their conditions of existence are not threatened), daring or risky repetitions can lead to a re-signification of norms. Butler (2017a) gives an example of the subversive use of the term *queer*: initially used in a pejorative way to insult homosexuals, queer was affirmed and re-signified by its theorists, starting to describe subversive, non-heterosexual sexual practices. It is, therefore, a progressive use of the term, but it demands and repeats the reactionary use, and only in this way does it manage to promote a ‘subversive reterritorialization’.

This example shows how it is not possible for the subject to simply get rid of the injurious identity or name. Due to the inevitable attachment to existence and because the term that causes injury is also what constitutes the subject socially, the subject is led to accept it. But it is also only by occupying this injurious term that the subject can resist and oppose it, reformulating power. It is about taking subjection itself as a mobilization against subjection.

When addressing the issue of historically constructed sexual and gender binarism, Butler (2013) also understands that the possibilities of subverting it should operate from within the normative system, in the field of power relations. Once again, there is no choice between repeating or not gender acts or performances, only choosing the way in which it is repeated. If the gender is kept in binary structure through the repetition of performances, then subversion consists of a disruptive, disturbing repetition, which destabilizes the naturalized categories. “If subversion is possible, it will be a subversion from within the terms

of the law, through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawns unexpected permutations of itself" (Butler, 2013, p. 139).

In subversion, binary should be both assumed and multiplied to the point where it no longer makes sense. Herculine Barbin, a hermaphrodite whose diary Foucault (1982) focused on, is one of the examples given by Butler (2013) of this subversion that at the same time appropriates binary terms and makes them proliferate, disorganizing the rules of the sex/gender/desire system. Sexual confusion and ambiguity, as well as the presence of heterosexuality and homosexuality in Herculine, challenge the descriptive capacity of the available sexual categories, operating as a place of denunciation and displacement of these categories.

In this way, after this journey through the theories of Foucault and Butler about the articulations between power, norm and subject, it is clear that both we, psychoanalysts, and our patients are immersed and crossed by power relations, participate and induce processes of subjectivation, where norms are repeated and reiterated. The clinics itself, therefore, takes place in the plot of power and truth dynamics.

It is common to hear psychoanalysts today defend that we should have a non-normative listening or that we should suspend the norms in the analytic setting to guarantee that we would welcome better, without 'normative judgments', patients, especially those who occupy marginalized positions in society. This use of the term 'non-normative' seems to correspond to the notion of floating attention, recommended by Freud (1996b) as an ideal way for the analyst to listen to the patient. Corresponding to the rule of free association proposed to the patients – that they freely speak whatever comes to their mind without omitting thoughts, even if they seem irrelevant, absurd or unpleasant –, the floating attention indicated to the analysts implies that they leave suspended personal opinions, prejudices, theoretical assumptions, and so on, so that their unconscious activity also functions as freely as possible.

Here it is important to refine the arguments and pay attention to the terms used. First of all, it is not possible to talk about psychoanalytic listening outside, below or beyond the norms, even if the analyst follows the rule of floating attention. All listening takes place in a normative field, in the sense that our ears, our body, our psyche, and even our unconscious, as Butler says (2017a), are marked by the norm, they do not exist outside of power.

This does not mean, however, that we, analysts and patients, cannot even though occupy different positions in the transference field, make risky repetitions of the norm – this is our bet. Is it not precisely a 'subjective reterritorialization', expression of Butler, that an analysis aims to lead the patient? The fact that the clinics is immersed in a normative system makes it a place of subversion, of resistance to subjection, since the condition for the possibility of transforming the norm is to be inside it and repeat it in unexpected ways.

With regard to the theories supporting our practice, new devices, concepts, theoretical frameworks, that is, new norms can be created and face the hegemonic modes of subjectivation that divide subjects into intelligible and unintelligible and produce so much suffering and violence. But for this, it is necessary that we understand the categories and psychoanalytic constructs as norms, and not as immutable, ahistorical laws.

The existence of a French website that provides a list of *psy safes*³ (Santos & Polverel, 2016) and the search for these professionals, no matter how complex and raising questions

³ <https://psysafeinclusifs.wixsite.com/psysafe> brings together psychotherapists and psychiatrists, who describe themselves as 'situated', assuming 'a politically non-neutral framework': they take into account the oppressive social reality –against women, queer and trans subjects, sex workers, etc. –and undertake not to repeat prejudiced or pathologizing attitudes and speeches in the clinics, guaranteeing a 'safer' welcome for these patients.

the phenomenon may be, may reveal precisely the attempt of analysts to distinguish themselves from (and of patients avoiding meeting) analysts who think about psychoanalysis in terms of laws, not norms.

We know, for example, that some French psychoanalysts took a stand at the end of the 90s against the Civil Pact of Solidarity (which allows the union of two people of the same sex), using in their argument concepts from psychoanalysis considered to guarantee the 'symbolic order' (such as those of sexual difference and paternal function). This event shows how the immersion of psychoanalysis in a 'microphysics of power' can reinforce certain norms and, in this way, limit the perspectives and possibilities of choice, experience, desire and affection of individuals. In the clinics, the same can happen and that is what we stand against here.

Identity, recognition, precariousness

Continuing the reflection, we now enter into a current theme that raises many questions, given its complexity: identity. In fact, the concept of identity does not belong to psychoanalysis' terminology and Freud's use of the term usually means equality or equivalence between elements in the field of psychic reality, without actually designating a specific process, mechanism or phenomenon (Cunha, 2000). Even so, its study is justified by the repercussions and impasses that the search and struggle for recognition of identities pose to the clinics.

As we saw in the previous section, Butler (2017a) understands that identity has an incarcerating effect, functioning as a psychic captivity, because it bears the mark of norms, or even, the mark of subjection to norms.

If discourse produces identity by supplying and enforcing a regulatory principle which thoroughly invades, totalizes and renders coherent the individual, then it seems that every 'identity', insofar as it is totalizing, acts as precisely such a 'soul that imprisons the body' (Butler, 2017a, p. 92, author's emphasis).

The psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious, in turn, is understood by the author as that which can resist the norm and exceed the imprisoning effects of the requirement to inhabit a coherent identity. The simple fact that there is a kind of psychic residue, of repressed contents, that is, rejected by the norm, would already point to the limits of normalization.

In other words, the unconscious would represent, for Butler, a resistance to identity at the heart of psychic life. This does not mean, once again, that the unconscious is out of power relations or free from normalizing discourse. The author even reminds that there are unconscious attachments to subjection. "This will not be an unconscious outside of power, but rather something like the unconscious of power itself, in its traumatic and productive iterability" (Butler, 2017a, p. 112). In this passage, we see the author's bet on the unconscious as a register where an unexpected, subversive, disturbing repetition of the norm can occur.

In *Deshacer el género* (Butler, 2004), the philosopher uses the concept of drive in psychoanalysis to defend precisely that norms do not exert a definitive control over the subject and that drive is a power for improvisations and displacements within the normative field.

The anti-identity stance and the counterpart of valuing identity instabilities are important marks of queer theorists in general. On the one hand, there is the criticism that identities – and they mainly speak of gender identities – are disciplining and do not favor the

mobility of desire. On the other hand, it is admitted that, although the break with identity can favor the path of singular subjective routes, the non-recognition of identity can bring a lot of suffering to certain individuals.

That is why Butler states, in an interview with psychoanalyst Patrícia Porchat (2010), that identity recognition is a double-edged sword, as it can kill desire on certain occasions, but it can facilitate it on others. In *Deshacer el género* (2004), she also recognizes that the search for identity can be part of an exercise in transforming the subject. At this point, she is referring specifically to trans identities. She then says that, although queer theory most often opposes the identity claims, the desire to become a man or a woman should not be dismissed as a mere desire to conform to established identity categories.

Still in this text, Butler (2004) warns that we need to take into account that a habitable life requires varying degrees of stability, that is, a life for which there are no categories of recognition is not a habitable life, a life considered to be livable, respected, legitimated. We can defend, then, based on the philosopher's thinking, that the organization of identity can function as a defense against vulnerability and that the non-recognition of identity can bring to light the precarious character of certain lives.

In *Vida precaria* (Precarious Life) and in *Frames of war* (Butler (2006, 2015), Butler delves into the themes of precariousness and the differential hierarchy of subject recognition. By precariousness, she names the fact that all life depends, for its maintenance, on external conditions (social, economic, political) that make a life livable. "Precariousness implies living socially, that is, the fact that one's life is always in some sense in the hands of the other" (Butler, 2015 p. 31).

The concept of precariousness in Butler is close to that of helplessness in Freud: the original and constituent state of the subject, which places them, from birth, in relationship with the other and in dependence on them. In *Project for a scientific psychology*, Freud (1996a) addresses the subject from the inability of the newborn to perform, without help from the other, the specific action that puts an end to the tension caused by internal excitations. From this text is the famous phrase that helplessness is the prime source of all moral motives. At the end of his work, Freud (1996c, 1996d, 1996e) reaffirms helplessness as a constitutive condition of subjective experience, a feared condition that provokes horror and from which the subject seeks to protect itself.

Precariousness in Butler is, therefore, the shared helpless condition of human life also pointed out by Freud, referring to dependence on the other and to the fact that each body is potentially threatened by other bodies, also precarious. And the problem denounced by Butler is precisely that this precariousness is not recognized as shared and, therefore, is maximized in some and minimized in others.

Instead of a reciprocal recognition of precariousness, what happens is that not every subject counts as a subject, not every life is qualified as life and is subjected to lament and grief. The consequence is that certain subjects, such as blacks, immigrants, the LGBTQIA+ population, have their precariousness maximized and their conditions of survival threatened, are deprived of rights and more exposed to violence and death. They suffer, therefore, the precarity of life, a precarity that results from a differential distribution of the precarious condition.

And what determines which lives have their precariousness recognized and which do not? Once again, it is about a production of power mechanisms, it is about norms, developed historically, that attribute recognition in a differentiated way. Norms therefore distinguish between those who are human, with whose precariousness it is possible to identify, and

those who are less human, or even less than human, whose precariousness cannot even be seen and with whom no identification is possible.

Thus, the complexity involved in the search for an identity and recognition of that identity is evident in the contemporary world, especially when we are talking about precarious lives. As we have seen, Butler proposes that the ideal recognition would be the precarious condition common to all, which would allow multiple identifications among individuals, identifications based precisely on this vulnerability.

In *Precarious life* (Butler, 2006), she argues that identification, unlike identity, is always based on difference and brings with it the impossibility of overcoming difference. There is an internal difference to identification, which is also the condition for it to happen. Otherwise, identification crumbles and is lost in identity.

However, if the reciprocal recognition of precariousness and the identifications that would be related to it do not occur, the identity categories, despite the imprisoning and masking effect of desires and differences, seem to offer security and protection to subjects in a situation of great helplessness. In addition, Butler (2006) recalls that, in his last interviews, Foucault stated that identity politics is produced by requirements of the liberal State, in front of which it is necessary to have a singular and injured identity in order to claim rights. These are the delicate tensions and impasses we face today, in culture and in our clinics.

Trans Identities

If every anti-normative, transgressive experience is marked by a crisis and configures a situation in which the pain of helplessness is vehemently felt, with trans people this seems to be lived in an even more radical way. By breaking with the binary norm of sex and gender that provides for a necessary 'coherence' between sex, gender identity and desire, they undergo a complex process of restructuring the body and self-image, as well as reorganizing identity.

In this moment of breaking with the norm, the recognition of the other and the alliances (social, affective, family) are configured as determinant aspects for minimizing the helplessness of these subjects. The use of trans identity also seems to work, alongside support and psychosocial ties, as a support for the experience of helplessness, and perhaps it is also understood by the subjects themselves as a condition for their recognition and acceptance in social spaces.

As stated by Berenice Bento (2017), being trans offers an identity position that gives a provisional meaning to the subjects' lives. The author, like Butler, privileges identifications, which function as temporary fixation points, related to the contingency of experience. And she wonders if there is, in fact, a trans identity:

The subject is 'subjected' to position itself in a certain discursive formation, but subjectively, lives this 'subjection' in the clandestinity of its solitude. Recognizing the conflict between body and subjectivity, finding a name for this sensation, the differentiation from gays/transvestites/lesbians, are not evidences that authorize us to affirm the existence of a 'transsexual identity' (Bento, 2017, p. 212-213, author's emphasis).

In this quote, appears the sociologist's concern with the construction of identifications and identity positions of trans subjects. From listening to activists of trans groups in Spain, she realized that, in the process of building their identity, they understand that they must approach 'gender idealizations' (socially constructed expectations for male and female gender) – it seems to be this what she calls 'subjection' above.

This idea exemplifies the paradox pointed out by Butler (2017a) in the processes of subjectivation: at the same time that there is the becoming of the subject, there is also its subjection to power and norms. In the case of trans subjects, the approximation of models and hegemonic traits of men and women, although it may overshadow their own conflicts and desires, is seen as a guarantee of social existence in this moment of 'rebirth', of restructuring the image of the self. That is, it gives them safety in the process of insertion in the world of the other gender and it is also a way to reduce the pain and frustration of those who do not fit in and are excluded from social intelligibility.

Being of a gender necessarily involves social recognition of this belonging (Bento, 2012). Hence the importance for many trans people of passing⁴, of changing the name and sex on documents, of hormonal treatments and sex reassignment surgery, which would enable the gain of more "[...] gender capital" (Bento, 2017, p. 216).

Bento (2017) also observes the limits that can be placed by trans subjects in their sexual experiences, so that the new identity is confirmed and recognized by the other. Some trans women, for example, told the sociologist that they do not let their penises be seen or touched by their partners so as not to be 'pointed out' as gay, which would delegitimize their trans identity.

The psychoanalyst Jacqueline Rose (2016) also addresses the complexity of issues that identity and recognition pose to trans people, pointing out the radicality of the trans experience with regard to the precarious condition and the need for recognition of the other, shared by all us: "Indeed, no human being can survive without being recognized. We all need to be seen to survive. A trans person simply makes this fact evident, exposing the violence implicit in this banal truth, that we depend on others" (Rose, 2016, p. 114).

The author explains how, to have identity security, trans subjects are involved in building a 'plausible' story about themselves, often needing to lie about their past, and end up unable to represent the complexities, ambiguities and contradictions of their experiences. In this way, she says, sexuality is unable to be what it is most of the time: a conflicting reality. She gives the example of a trans man who says he has learned in counseling sessions that, to be considered real, he must want to be recognized as a man at all times, without feeling ambivalent about it.

These negotiations and concessions are made, we can suppose, because not conforming to what the norms stipulate as being the true, original expressions of each gender can lead to the non-recognition of the subjects and, therefore, to precarity of these lives. Greater or lesser precarity, depending on the alliances they have and the social insertions they have. The more socially vulnerable a subject is, the less they seem to be able to 'risk' in their bodily and sexual performances and transits.

The lower the degree of social precariousness, the greater the possibilities for experimentation and approximation of parodic sexualities (Butler, 2013), *queer* sexualities (Bento, 2004) or *queer* multitudes (Preciado, 2011): experiences of transits and shuffling borders, of reappropriating femininity and masculinity in the search for unique paths, marked by difference.

This is what Paul B. Preciado (2018), a queer author marked by the thought of Foucault and Butler, does, for example, when he decides to self-apply testosterone for 236 days, without medical supervision or prescription, in order to carry out a political experiment,

⁴ The transition from one gender to another is often considered satisfactory by the trans subject when they are socially recognized as a man or a woman. However, the affirmation of the trans condition and the impasses of the ideal of passing have also been greatly problematized by the trans movement.

not to turn himself into a man. On the one hand, he asserts more than once that his self-intervention is not aimed at transsexualizing the body, but at dissolving sexual identity in a multiplicity of desires, practices, becomings, and at producing a new sexual and affective platform, which is neither masculine nor female. On the other hand, he recognizes that his position as a 'gender hacker' is a 'political luxury', as he has white skin, does not need to go out to find work and does not depend on state bureaucracies. In other words, by having a lower degree of precariousness than other transgender people, Preciado can afford to have the queer experiences and practices he describes in his book.

In Brazil, cartoonist Laerte is also a good example of how the lowest precarity of life guarantees more possibilities to escape the binary norm of sex and gender. First, we can assume that recognition as a cartoonist is of great importance in minimizing insecurities and fears regarding the acceptance of the new image and the loss of alliances. Furthermore, in the documentary *Laerte-se* (Brum & Silva, 2017), it is clear the importance of her family's support in her process of transits and transformations. Perhaps for these reasons, Laerte can accept and live with more tranquility with the ambiguities of her body and does not seek, as she says in the documentary, a female identity or any identity, using 'feminine' clothes and accessories, for example, but showing without constraint the naked 'masculine' body.

Resuming, then, our hypothesis that attachment to identity is linked to the search for protection against precarity that marks certain lives, it seems important to look further, and with the care that the question requires, the insufficiency of this same identity in the face of complex and diverse processes of subjectivation followed by individuals.

Understanding that every identity is the result of the subject's precarious fixation to a discourse, Bento (2017) suggests that it is not possible to think of a 'transsexual group identity', as if everyone shared the same experiences and sufferings. Instead, she defends a 'community of emotions': another possibility for creating bonds of solidarity from the sharing of insults, suffering, prejudice, violence. This community of emotions would, in our view, be another way of referring to identification traits based on the precarious condition of the subjects mentioned by Butler.

Rose (2016) understands that the transition process rarely seems to generate, in trans women or men, an unshakable confidence in their identity, but a questioning about sexuality, a questioning that marks every subject and for which there are no definitive answers:

The standards of sexual difference are merciless, but does not make those who accept the norm know more about what goes on beneath the surface than those who question it. For psychoanalysis, it is axiomatic that, no matter how certain you are about being a man or a woman, the unconscious has the best answer (Rose, 2016, p. 128-129).

If we bet then that identity, as a mark of subjection to norms, does not account alone for the processes of subjectivation and that it is in the unconscious that we must seek the 'best answer' (on the conflicts and desires of each subject), the psychoanalytic clinic is configured as a powerful space for resistance to norms and for the emergence of plural and flexible identifications. It is worth remembering that Butler (2004, 2017a) uses the concepts of unconscious and drive to defend that there is in every subject something that exceeds the incarcerating effects of identity and that can then produce the new, the unprecedented, the singular.

Femininity

We are defending here that the psychoanalytic clinics provides the emergence of the new and the singular, as we said above, that favors multiple identifications and does not follow the identity logic, which makes room for new forms of subjectivation. The analysis must allow the subject to review their norms of existence and invent others, closer to their desire.

It is worth remembering that we understand the clinics as inseparable from politics, going against common sense and some psychoanalysts who maintain – as Jô Gondar (2004) accurately criticizes – a split between desiring economics and political economics (while the clinics would deal with individual sufferings, collective sufferings would demand political action). On the contrary, according to the author, it is about “[...] always of the same economics, in which desire is political and every revolt is desiring” (p. 125).

Gondar (2004) points out two vectors that make the clinics a political practice, the second being a consequence of the first: its commitment to the desire and the fact of aiming at a transformation. The issue at stake in an analysis is how desire can be produced in the face of subjection practices that close the field of possible. And the targeted transformation concerns the creation of possible others, of new ways of living. This does not mean, however, that the clinics “[...] is always revolutionary, but that it is necessarily committed” (p. 128).

For a committed clinical practice to happen, and remembering that it takes place in a ‘microphysics of power’, it is necessary to use listening devices that do not reinforce the modes of subjectivation that are hegemonic in our culture, which engender the precarity of certain subjects. Our proposal here is that the concept of femininity, as enunciated by Freud (1996f) in *Análise terminável e interminável* (Analysis terminable and interminable), allows us to read another starting point for understanding and listening to subjectivities (Birman, 2001, 2006, 2011).

Although this concept was enunciated by Freud in an indirect and negative way, as a kind of biological limit of the human condition, we can interpret it as another way in which the Freudian discourse refers to the original subject’s condition of helplessness, fragility and imperfection, to which we alluded to earlier in this text and that comes close to what Butler calls precariousness or precarious condition, which marks all lives from birth.

The importance of resuming the Freudian concept of helplessness for reflection on the contemporary is placed in the psychoanalytic field today. Vladimir Safatle (2019) understands helplessness as a central, productive political affection, with transformative potential in terms of new ways of being affected and building bonds. The author argues that, for the subject to emerge, it is first necessary to forsake and to move beyond what promises support and individualizes, to devoid of predicates that identify the subject:

A political body produced by helplessness is a body in continuous dispossession and de-identification of its determinations. A body without a common self and uniqueness, crossed by antagonisms and marked by contingencies that disorganize normativities, pushing forms towards unpredictable situations (Safatle, 2019, p. 21).

It is important to clarify that, when we use femininity to refer to the subject’s original helpless condition, impossible to overcome, we are not talking about female sexuality. On the contrary, the concept of femininity interests us precisely because we understand it as another psychic register, different from the feminine and masculine conceived by the phallus paradigm.

In our reading, therefore, femininity, rather than being derived from masculinity, is at the origin of the psychism and eroticism in all of us. The phallic order is always posterior to femininity and it is, more specifically, a repudiation thereof, a horror produced by the register of helplessness, in which it is not possible to protect oneself with the phallus. In order to avoid recognizing and coming into contact with this fundamental vulnerability, the subject then creates phallic and narcissistic emblems. From this perspective, attachment to an identity, as discussed throughout this article, could be understood as an example of phallic construction, a kind of shield or mask that the subject uses in search of completeness, to defend themselves from their precarious condition.

In *Relatar a si mesmo* (Giving an account of oneself), Butler (2017b) argues that transference as an ethical practice should not require the patient to make a coherent account of themselves and their history, because this could only be done according to recognizable impersonal norms for the narration of a life. The coherent account also follows, in our view, a phallic logic. The analysis must favor interruptions in narrative coherence and enactments of what cannot be narrated from this logic.

In this same sense, the assumption of femininity by the subject under analysis implies detaching from references and identity crystallizations and, under the helplessness, facing the drives that permeate it, from which they cannot escape. Positivation of femininity implies, therefore, in the valorization of the drive independently of the norms, in the renunciation of universal models of subjectivation. In this way, there is an opening to new possibilities of subjectivation and identifications, which cannot be known in advance.

Final considerations

From the overview of issues brought in this article, the complexity of the discussion on the themes of precariousness, identity and recognition becomes clear. Inspired by Foucault's and Butler's thoughts on power and norm, we argue that, in clinical practice, we are constituted by power relations and we mediate them, (re)producing discourses and subjectivities. However, the condition for the transformation of certain norms and the production of new ones is precisely to act from within, appropriating what already exists and parodying, giving it a new meaning.

We also defend that the attachment to an identity, understood as a mark of internalized norms, can act as a protection against helplessness. We also exposed the hypothesis, based on the difference between precariousness (universal, shared condition) and precarity (socially produced variable), that the greater the degree of precariousness of a subject, the more important is the attachment and recognition of identity, and taking a more singular path is configured as a 'luxury' or a risk.

Identity, however, due to its less flexible and plural character than identifications, often leads to crystallizations that hide desire, ambiguities and conflicts. Our proposal, then, from the approximation of the concept of precariousness to that of femininity, was that of a clinical listening device that allows the transformation of these identity crystallizations and bets on the unconscious and on the drive as allies in the production of the new. It is not, of course, simply about getting rid of an identity, because that would not be possible, but about using subjection to norms in favor of subversion, that is, including the possibility of new movements, experiences and identifications of the subject.

Being able to remain in a helpless position and bear the pain it causes is a great challenge, and perhaps also a risk, even more so when it comes to subjects who have their

vulnerability maximized due to the differential distribution of precarious condition in our society. However, we also know, as Butler argues, that the daring and risky repetitions of norms are the ones that can actually lead to their re-signification and transformation. Thus, our bet is that the assumption of femininity by the subject under analysis, even if it is an experience of risk, will enable them to trace an absolutely unique path and to build new norms of existence and new ways of relating in the world.

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