


MYTH AND PSYCHOANALYSIS: ON THE GARDEN OF EDEN AND PRIMORDIAL HELPLESSNESS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the relationship between the biblical narrative of the Garden of Eden and Primordial Helplessness, as described by Freud from the mythical first experience of satisfaction, the inaugural moment of the psychic apparatus that situates human desire around a primeval loss. The myth of Eden, belonging to the Judeo-Christian tradition, symbolizes the human condition marked by separation from paradise and the incessant search for an irretrievable completeness. In turn, the first experience of satisfaction – as an initial experience that structures desire and inaugurates the activity of the psychic apparatus, mediated by the *Nebenmensch* – is crossed by the loss and, consequently, by the tireless attempt to recover an object never had. Similarly, while the myth of Eden narrates the loss of the original state of harmony – with the introduction of the interdict and the subsequent expulsion from paradise, encapsulating the idea of a desire impossible to be fully satisfied – the first experience of satisfaction points to the notion of *das Ding*, an object that has always been lost and which comes to represent the central void around which human desire is structured. Aiming to reflect on the centrality of interdict and helplessness as structuring axes of human existence, by articulating Freud's work and Lacan's teaching with the myth of Eden, this work proposes an interdisciplinary reading that evidences myth as that which comes, with an epic content, to narrate the foundations of human experience.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Myth, Helplessness, Experience of Satisfaction, Anguish.

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INTRODUCTION

This article aims to investigate, through theoretical-conceptual and mythological aspects, the crucial role that alterity plays in the origin of the Self, from the emergence of the psychic apparatus to the last Freudian elaborations on anguish. The origin of the Self and the other is explored from Freud's first formulations about the psychic apparatus, especially through the intervention of the next – *Nebenmensch*. The text discusses the genesis of the psychic apparatus and the principles that govern it, starting with the manuscript *Project for a Psychology*, from 1895. In this text, Freud describes the initial scene of the baby's life, when exposed to unknown stimuli from the external world and to the internal tensions of the body. Freud postulates the pleasure principle as the first law that governs the functioning of the psychic apparatus, linking pleasure to a state of inertia characterized by the reduction of excitations. The psychic apparatus, therefore, operates as a regulator of the interactions between the organism and the environment, perceiving the excess of stimuli as unpleasure and achieving pleasure by the discharge of these excitations.

Based on the schemes presented in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (FREUD, 1900[1899] | 2020), resuming what Freud had already proposed in the *Project for a Psychology* (FREUD, 1950[1895] | 2020), the first experience of satisfaction is highlighted, a mythical moment in which the intervention of others is indispensable. It is through the offers coming from the other that the baby experiences and registers the first sensation of relief from excitements, of satisfaction. Thanks to this intervention, the baby is inserted into what Freud called the complex of the neighbor. In this experience, a lack is established, because *das Ding* – the object that mythically provided satisfaction – remains forever lost. Paradoxically, it is *das Ding* that drives the psychic apparatus in search of the repetition of the experience of satisfaction, by establishing a lack that inaugurates the movement of desire.

It is also discussed how the condition of helplessness causes the alienation of the subject from the Other³ – as well as marks the place where desire may arise (PEREIRA,

³ In the Introduction, it is worth highlighting the distinction, in Psychoanalysis, between Other and Other, as Lacan emphasizes throughout his Teaching. The notion of the Other — "function of speech" (1954-1955|1995, p. 297), "place of the word" (1956-1957|1995, p. 79), "that which establishes and authorizes the play of signifiers" (1957-1958|1999, p. 323), "place of the code" (1968-1969|2008, p. 50) — is indicated by Lacan as the indispensable condition for the constitution of the Self and for the constitution of the subject. The other, the similar, a living being of the same species, is a reference for the Self because it is imaginary, I as an image of the other, but which in this dual relationship ends up creating "an obstacle to the advent of the subject — S — in the place of its signifying determination, A" (1966|1998, p. 919). In turn, the other, external alien, is also the

2008, p.137) –, based on an etymological investigation of the term *Hilflosigkeit* – helplessness. The analysis reveals the Judeo-Christian connotations of the term, allowing analogies between the myth of the Garden of Eden and that of the first experience of satisfaction. The article relates these narratives to the Freudian premise that submission to external authority stems from the primordial condition of helplessness, as well as to the intrinsic relationship between *das Ding* and the Law, as proposed by Lacan when he evidences, from Freud, that helplessness does not only cause the alienation of the subject from the Other, but it also serves as a prototype of anguish in its most original form. The unfolding of the constitution of the Self will also be approached from the notion of narcissism: a landmark of Freud's work that highlights the relationship between the Ideal Self and the Ideal of the Self, with anguish being analyzed from the reformulations of Freud's theory, where the Self is its headquarters.

THE ORIGIN OF THE SELF AND THE OTHER: GENESIS

Held by blue hands⁴,
I feel like a point
alone in a dry ocean.

Vinícius de Freitas

In the manuscript entitled *Project for a Psychology* (FREUD, 1950 [1895] | 2020), Freud describes a scene that occurs at the beginning of the baby's extrauterine life, a moment in which the newborn is exposed for the first time to external stimuli still unknown to him – such as light, cold, heat, noise – in addition to facing the internal tensions of his own organism. Freud resorts to this scene to exemplify the genesis of the activity of the psychic apparatus and, from it, postulate the pleasure principle as the first law that governs its functioning, pleasure being identified with a state of inertia, in which excitations are reduced. In the first pages of the *Project* (FREUD, 1950[1895] | 2020), taking the neuronal system as responsible for regulating the body's exchanges with the environment, the nervous system is described as responsible for balancing the excitations coming from both the external environment and the body itself, always aiming at homeostasis. Freud's

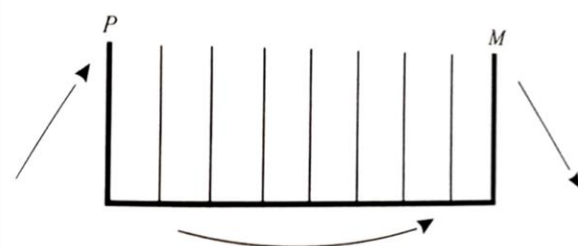
one who embodies the Other, radical alterity to the extent that the subject is determined by him, receiving from him his own message in an inverted way: "[...] it is in the Other that the unconscious is structured as a language" (1968-1969|2008, p. 220). For more information, see Luciana Marques, Sonia Alberti, and Priscila Mählmann (2022).

⁴ The blue hands are a reference by the poet to the blue gloves used by doctors at the time of delivery of babies (Unpublished). For more works by the same poet, see Vinícius Freitas (2023).

hypothesis about the "functioning of the psychic apparatus had as its axis the increase of energy: increased stimulation leading to excitement – which was experienced as unpleasure – and its discharge – aiming at the state of pleasure –, a tendency necessary for such functioning" (MARQUES, ALBERTI & MÄHLMANN, 2022, p. 534).

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (FREUD, 1900-1901[1899] | 2020), Freud revisits part of the idea previously developed in the *Project* (FREUD, 1950[1895] | 2020) and underlines that the psychic apparatus is structured in a similar way to a reflex apparatus, which serves as a model for all psychic functioning. In view of this assertion, Freud presents the Schema of the Psychic Apparatus. To the left extremity, Freud attributes the perception system [*P*] – responsible for capturing endogenous and exogenous stimuli – while the right extreme is able to eliminate the stimulus through the motor pathway [*M*]. The direction pointed out in the diagram, from left to right, demonstrates that "[...] psychic activity starts from stimuli (internal or external) and culminates in innervations" (FREUD, 1900-1901[1899] | 2020, p. 531. *Our translation*), which portrays the tendency of the organism to get rid of the increase in excitement that causes unpleasure, but not without having registered memory traces, "mnemic traces" (FREUD, 1900-1901[1899] | 2020, p. 566. *Our translation*) of these perceptions.

Figure 1. *Schema of the Psychic Apparatus (a)*



Source: (FREUD, 1900-1901[1899] | 2020, p.531)

Thus, the cry of the newborn, an example given by Freud (FREUD, 1950[1895] | 2020, p. 362), in its first emergence, concerns nothing more than a reflex movement. It is, as evidenced by Sonia Alberti (ALBERTI, 2009), a small organism that does not know its totality, that suffers from experiencing the first bitterness of life and that, "as a result of the pleasure principle, cries to discharge an extra amount of energy that causes it discomfort" (ALBERTI, 2009, p. 127). However, given the biological immaturity and lack of psychomotor development with which human beings are born, crying, raging or kicking will not be a guarantee for the relief of discomfort. The *infans* needs a foreign aid that promotes a

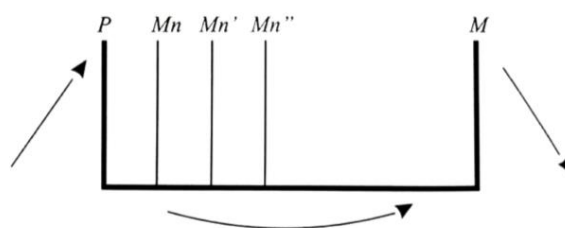
"specific action" (FREUD, 1950[1895] | 2020, p. 362. *Not des Lebens*. It is in reference to this moment that Freud postulates about the experience of satisfaction, introducing the fundamental role of alterity in the constitution of the subject's Self.

The next one – *Nebenmensch* – who comes to the baby's aid in an attempt to appease him – usually embodied by the person who performs the maternal function – offers a series of care, such as, for example, the breast. If the baby recognizes that this care is capable of relieving his tension, he will also have registered this experience as pleasurable:

[...] a scene that Freud names as the first experience of satisfaction – *Befriedigung* – due to what it supposes to the baby: the ability to want to always seek this satisfaction again. The experience promotes, in the small organism, the desire of the breast which, as experienced, brings it a appeasement regulated by the pleasure principle, a regulation that leads it to the search for the repetition of the experience (MARQUES, ALBERTI & MÄHLMANN, 2022, pp. 535-536).

Another essential and founding aspect implied in the *Nebenmensch's intervention* on the baby, and which arises from the experience of satisfaction, is the possibility of perception being connected, connecting to the memory of the excitatory need. In other words, the specific action promoted by the neighbor makes it possible "[...] the emergence of a certain perception (in the example, nutrition), whose mnemonic image is henceforth associated with the mnemonic trace of the excitation of need" (FREUD, 1900-1901[1899] | 2020, p. 557. *Our translation*).

Figure 2. *Schematic of the Psychic Apparatus (b)*



Source: (FREUD, 1900-1901[1899] | 2020, p.531)

The psychic apparatus is marked by traces of memory – *Mn; Mn'; Mn''* [...] –, through which the experience of satisfaction enables the association between the mnemonic trace of excess tension and the mnemonic image that enabled the discharge of this tension. Then, in a second moment, when some new demand removes the baby from this state of pleasure, with a new increase in tension, the memory of the experience of satisfaction will be invested and the baby will be able to hallucinate the mother's breast. Since then, the desire may arise as an inclination of the device to reestablish the first unloading operation that brought

pleasure: "[...] primitive state of the psychic apparatus [...], in which desire ends in a hallucination" (FREUD, 1900-1901[1899] | 2020, p. 558. *Our translation*).

However, it is clear that hallucinating the mother's breast will not satisfy the need. An organization is needed to inhibit the hallucination process. In Lacan's words:

This whole organism seems made not to satisfy the need, but to hallucinate it. It is therefore convenient that another apparatus, which opposes it, comes into play to exercise an instance of reality and presents itself, essentially, as a principle of correction, of a call to order (LACAN, 1959[2008, p.40).

In view of this, Freud begins to sketch the notion of the Self, identifying it as an organization that inhibits the process of hallucination, indicating that the "[...] inhibition by the Self provides a criterion for distinguishing between perception and memory" (FREUD, 1950[1895] | 2020, p. 371. *Our translation*), inserting in the attempt to reconstitute the experience of satisfaction – governed by the pleasure principle – the principle of reality as an operator. This whole operation can be carried out from what the *Nebenmensch* inaugurates in the baby, namely, the complex of the neighbor. Freud points out that the effects of the complex of the neighbor can be divided into two components (FREUD, 1950[1895] | 2020, p. 377. 1. The first does justice to the part that can be assimilated and understood through memory, which is subject to the function of judgment, both the judgment of attribution⁵ – which confers the character of good/bad; pleasure/displeasure; inside/outside – and the judgment of existence⁶ – which will distinguish between a mere perception and the indication of the object perceived in reality. The second component completely escapes the function of judgment, and mnemonic work lacks a goal (FREUD, 1950[1895] | 2020, pp. 376-377. *Our translation*). It is the perception of an object that does not find its representation in reality and that, therefore, remains unassimilable, being designated by Freud as *das Ding* (FREUD, 1950[1895] | 2020, p. 373).

The Thing⁷ – *das Ding* – an object that mythically offered full satisfaction, will remain forever lost: "It is here that this reality intervenes that has a relationship with the subject in

⁵ The attribution judgment refers to the subject's ability to link or attribute characteristics or properties to an object or idea, identifying its qualities.

⁶ The judgment of existence is related to the affirmation of the presence or reality of something, making it possible to distinguish between what is part of the internal world – imagined or thought – and what belongs to the external world.

⁷ Such a reference is found for the first time in a Letter from Freud addressed to Fliess – Letter 52. For more information, see Sigmund Freud (1950[1892]). Fragments of correspondence with Fliess – Manuscript A. In: FREUD, Sigmund: 1886-1899. *Complete works: Publications prepsychoanalytic and unpublished manuscripts in Freud's life*. Buenos Aires: Amorrortu, vol.1, 2020.

the most intimate way – the *Nebenmensch*. A totally surprising formula insofar as it energetically articulates the apart and the similarity, the separation and the identity" (LACAN, 1959|2008, pp. 66-67). Although lost, it is precisely the unassimilable remainder and the ungrasped point of the experience of satisfaction that drives the apparatus in the search for the Thing. *Das Ding* institutes a void around which psychic representations revolve with the hope of finding again what has been lost. For Lacan:

The *Ding* is the element that is originally isolated by the subject in his experience of the *Nebenmensch* as being, by its nature, strange, [...] and may even be hostile at a given moment, [...] it is around which the subject's entire path is oriented. It is undoubtedly a referral [...] to the world of his desires. It is by its nature that the object is lost as such. He will never be found again. Something is there waiting for something better, or waiting for something worse, but waiting. The Freudian world, that is, that of our experience, contains that it is this object, *das Ding*, as the absolute Other of the subject, which is to be rediscovered (LACAN, 1959|2008, pp. 67-68).

In summary, it is necessary to ratify the importance attributed to others in the passage of the organism from the primary process – governed by the principle of pleasure – to the secondary process – in which the principle of reality is put to the test⁸. If the neighbor – *Nebenmensch* – is taken as an object by perception, he will be, simultaneously, "[...] the first object of satisfaction and the first hostile object, as well as the only helping power. Then, the human being learns to discern about others" (FREUD, 1950[1895] | 2020, p. 376. *Our translation*). Because the entire experience of satisfaction is suspended to the other, it will be "[...] through this *Nebenmensch*, as a speaking subject, that everything that refers to the processes of thought can take shape in the subjectivity of the subject" (LACAN, 1959|2008, p. 53). It is through the similar that the subject apprehends his reality, it is supported by him that the "[...] man humanizes himself" (LACAN, 1953|2008, p. 42).

Thirty years after the *Project* (FREUD, 1950 [1895] | 2020), in the text *The Negation* (FREUD, 1925|2020), Freud will emphasize that for the emergence of the psychic apparatus a primordial affirmation is necessary, the *Bejahung*. Such a statement goes hand in hand with the function of the court, which "essentially has two decisions to make. It must attribute or detach a property to a thing, and must admit or contest the existence of a representation in reality" (FREUD, 1925|2020, p. 254. *Our translation*). The function of the

⁸ In 1915, in the text on *The Unconscious*, Freud describes the primary process as the functioning in which the pleasure principle predominates, characterized by the search for an immediate discharge of psychic energies. On the other hand, it describes the secondary process being regulated by the principle of reality, which, in turn, seeks to moderate the demands of the pleasure principle, introducing functions such as critical analysis, the examination of reality and the temporal ordering of representations.

judgment is divided, therefore, into a judgment of attribution – primary process – linked to the pleasure principle, and into a judgment of existence – secondary process – linked to the reality principle. In this regard, St. Augustine⁹ (354 – 430 AD) seems to have outlined some reflections: "[...] I evoke a physical pain, and I don't feel it, because nothing hurts me. However, if the image of pain were not present in my memory, I would not know what it was saying and [...] I would not distinguish it from pleasure" (AGOSTINHO, 1995, Book X, XV, p. 26). It is through the attribution judgment that the baby will be able to qualify his experiences as good or bad, which become mnemonic traits. Subsequently, the judgment of existence arises, granting validity to what has been judged as good or bad. For such validation to be expressive, this primordial statement is necessary, which will bring the judgment of attribution closer to the judgment of existence. In other words:

The attribution judgment allows the baby to confer precisely the character of good and bad to the experiences lived and that become memories [...]. However, these traits will be organized according to the logic of the reality principle, an arrangement different from that which until then was hegemonic in the rudimentary psyche of the baby, whose functioning was exclusively debited from the pleasure principle. To distinguish both logics, Freud proposes the primary process as a debit of the pleasure principle, while the reality principle imposes the secondary process, which processes the data contained therein according to the logic of which we are all aware: of negation, of non-contradiction, of chronology [...] (MARQUES, ALBERTI & MÄHLMANN, 2022, p.536).

However, in order to have a first introjection of something that is perceived as good, it is necessary that there be some denial of what is evil. Therefore, the *Bejahung*, which gives the condition of existence, is an operation that takes place while there is also a negation, the *Verneinung*. For Freud, "[...] The affirmation [*Bejahung*] – as a substitute for union – belongs to Eros, and negation [*Verneinung*] – successor to expulsion – belongs to the drive of destruction" (FREUD, 1925|2020, p. 256. *Our translation*). Lacan, on the occasion of the *Address to Catholics* (LACAN, 1950|2005), points out that Eros, this tendency to union – which takes place on a biological, organic level – has a close relationship with the Freudian Thing:

⁹ Saint Augustine, Aurelius Augustinus, was a Christian philosopher and theologian. He was born in 354 in North Africa and died in 430 in Hippo, also in Africa (now Algeria). Augustine is known for his extensive literary work, consisting of philosophical, theological, and autobiographical writings. Among his best-known works are *Confessions* – divided into 13 books – and *The City of God*, in addition to having contributed to Christian theology with the defense of the doctrine of the Trinity and its concept of "original sin". St. Augustine was canonized by the Catholic Church and is revered as a saint, with his feast day celebrated on August 28. In his 1963 intervention, *Introduction to the Names-of-the-Father*, Lacan declares himself to be an assiduous reader of Augustine's work: "[...] some know that I have been reading St. Augustine since I was pubescent" (LACAN, 1963|2005, p. 64).

This Thing [...] is already there before the subject takes the word and with it becomes the bearer of any truth, or claims any recognition. The Thing is therefore that which, in any living thing that comes to inhabit a discourse and that pronounces itself in speech, marks the place where it suffers from the manifestation of language in the world. This is how being emerges everywhere where the Eros of life finds the limit of its unitive tendency (LACAN, 1950|2005, p.45).

The act of judging represents a continuation of the process through which the Self incorporates or rejects elements of itself, which leads to the understanding that "the opposition between subjective and objective is not given from the beginning" (FREUD, 1925|2020, p. 255. *Our translation*), or, with Lacan, "[...] nothing exists except to the extent that it does not exist [...]; it really seems, when listening to Freud today, that it is the hiancy of an emptiness that constitutes the first step of his entire dialectical movement" (LACAN, 1958|1998, p. 394). Therefore, the first aim of the reality test would not be to find the object corresponding to the representation, but to rediscover this object that, lost since always, will give news of its "ex-sistence" (LACAN, 1958|1998, p. 394) by the traces that its absence presentifies.

HELPLESSNESS AND ORIGINAL SIN

Who showed you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree which I commanded you not to eat?

Genesis 3:11

In addition to introducing the little human to the apprehension of reality, the importance of the status of the similar is highlighted by a condition inherent to the human being that, were it not for the protection of the other, the baby would be doomed to death. Freud names this condition *Hilflosigkeit* (FREUD, 1926[1925] | 2018):

The German term *Hilflosigkeit* is made up of three words: *Hilfe*, which means help; *los*, which can be defined as without; *keit*, which forms the subjective. It would be better translated as "insocorribility". Being helpless attests to the condition of non-helpability of the human subject (CECCARELLI, 2005, p. 49).

The prefix *Hilf*, from the term *Hilflosigkeit*¹⁰, had its origin in the German language from the translation of Judeo-Christian scriptures from Latin into German, carried out by the

¹⁰ For more information on the etymology of *Hilflosigkeit*, see Alexandrine Schniewind (2015).

Protestant reformer Martin Luther, in the sixteenth century¹¹. The prefix can be found for the first time in the second chapter of the book of Genesis, verse 18 – *Und Gott der HERR sprach: Es ist nicht gut, daß der Mensch aleein sei; ich will ihm eine Gehilfin machen, die um ihn sei*¹² – as an adjective roughly translating as "helper", attributed to Eve in her relationship with Adam. The word *Trost* – consolation – a synonym for *Hilf*, "[...] will be widely used by theologians to speak of divine consolation – Gottes Trost" (SCHNIEWIND, 2015, p. 356. *Our translation*). Freud identifies in the primary relationship with alterity the paradigm of the original situation of helplessness – the *Hilflosigkeit* – characterized as a "radical appeal situated below any guided waiting" (SCHNEIDER, 1998, p. 73). This experience represents the scenario in which the subject finds himself: deprived of help, consolation and support. Faced with such a situation, the dependence that emerges from the relationship with the other makes the process of subjective structuring necessarily dependent on alienation from the Other (LACAN, 1964|2008).¹³ In 1926, in *Inhibition, symptom and anguish* (FREUD, 1926 [1925] | 2018), Freud understands the primordial helplessness of birth as a prototype that refers to anguish in its most original form and that, throughout the life of the human, presents itself with different facets, being anguish in the face of: the loss of the object, castration, the superego (FREUD, 1926[1925] | 2018, p. 134) and death¹⁴ (FREUD, 1923|2018, p. 58). It is interesting to observe that the term that condenses this first state that man finds himself in – *of hilflos* – is soaked, from its origin, with a religious connotation. It is no coincidence that Freud coined that the root of religious necessity – that is, the search for an omnipotent, good and just God – is an attempt to sublimate – to restore, to renew – the parental complex (FREUD, 1910|2020, p. 115).

The term *Hilflosigkeit*, added to its suffix, appears significantly in the German language only in the eighteenth century, an era marked by the Enlightenment ideals that announced the decline of the church-state. This reflection resonates with Nietzsche's famous statement, "God is dead. God remains dead. And we killed him" (NIETZSCHE,

¹¹ Luther carried out the translation of the New Testament alone between 1521 and 1522. He enlisted the help of fellow professors at the University of Wittenberg for the translation of the Old Testament, which was completed in 1534.

¹² In Portuguese, in the translation by João Ferreira de Almeida, we read: "The Lord God said: it is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper to correspond to him" (T.T. BIBLE, Genesis 2:18).

¹³ For more information on alienation from the Other, see Jacques Lacan's lessons of May 27, 1964 and June 3, 1964.

¹⁴ Although Freud does not explicitly discuss anguish in the face of death as an isolated category in this text, it can be inferred as an extension of the forms of anguish described, especially with regard to separation and the perception of absolute helplessness in the face of unavoidable conditions of life (p.155). In addition, the category had already been introduced previously in the text *The Self and the It* (1923|2018).

2001, p.153), which underlines not only the loss of the divine figure as support, but also the collapse of the certainties that once organized human existence. For both Nietzsche and Freud, the abandonment of the belief in a protective God exposes the subject to the helplessness inherent in the human condition, which Freud identifies as *Hilflosigkeit*: a prototype of anguish in the face of the inevitable conditions of life. This is what Lacan emphasizes in his reading of Freud's text on *The Discontent in Civilization* (FREUD, 1930 [1929] | 2017) when, regarding the death of God, he observes that "[...] if God is dead to us, it is because he has always been dead, and that is precisely what Freud tells us. He was never the father except in the mythology of the son [...]" (LACAN, 1959-1960|2008, p. 213); therefore, "[...] there is an atheist message in Christianity itself" (LACAN, 1959-1960|2008, p. 213). Still on the path of the etymology of words, Hubner (HUBNER, 2016) clarifies that the root of the word Adam, originally from Hebrew – *ādām* (אָדָם) –, carries the meanings of "humanity", "human being" and "man", being a reference to humanity in general. Genesis, the book of origins, is the first of the five books of the Judeo-Christian canon. Although there is much discussion surrounding the authorship(s) of the Pentateuch¹⁵, Christian tradition usually attributes its writing to Moses. The supposed context for the narrative would be after the exodus of the Israelite people from Egypt, after 400 years of slavery, when they were preparing to conquer Canaan, the so-called promised land. The book of Genesis can be read as a story bequeathed to the Israelites with the intention of transmitting about their genealogy, purpose and destiny, and its first part is reserved to disseminate, mythologically, the origin of humanity and the Hebrew clan, through the characters Adam and Eve¹⁶. Such reference to the myth of Adam and Eve – so popular in Judeo-Christian culture – depending on the interpretative approach, presents points of approximation with the mythological experience coined by Freud, of the first experience of satisfaction.

In the Judeo-creationist fable, Adam appears as the first created being, inhabiting the Garden of Eden – from the Hebrew *Edhen*, whose meaning is close to "delight", "enchantment", "satisfaction". By being alone, in paradise, Adam is introduced to Eve. His peer instigates him to taste the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, at which moment Adam – humanity – is expelled from paradise, realizing his nakedness and

¹⁵ It corresponds to the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The pentateuch makes up the Torah – Hebrew Bible – and the first part of the Christian Bible, located at the beginning in the Old Testament.

¹⁶ For more information, see the first three chapters of Genesis.

helplessness. It should be noted that in the reading of Genesis there are different ways in which God's name is used. *YHWH*, the unpronounceable name, is associated, for example, with *Yehovah* and *El Shaddai*. The first – *Yehovah*¹⁷ – has the connotation of "I am that I am"; "He who brings into existence all that exists", located in the first two chapters of Genesis, which narrate creation, before the entrance of man. The second – *El Shaddai*¹⁸ –, whose meaning is suggested as "one who nourishes", has in the root of the word a reference to "breast", and is coined in the biblical text from the creation of Adam. The narrative presents the Garden of Eden – Garden of Satisfaction – with only one command: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the Garden you shall eat freely, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat; for in the day you eat of it you will surely die' (GENESIS 2:16-17). The act of eating the fruit inaugurates what Christianity understands as "original sin"¹⁹ which, linked to the first prohibition, points to the fact that, inherent to the constitution of the human, there is something that is excluded *a priori*. Hence the Christian conception that everyone is a sinner:

[...] sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death, so death was bequeathed to all human beings, because all sinned. Because before the Law was promulgated²⁰, sin was already in the world; however, sin is not taken into account when the Law does not exist (Romans, 5: 12-13).

Subsequently, the entire biblical narrative will bring between the lines the promise of the reunion with paradise, where man believed himself to be One with his creator, but not without being referred to the mark of original sin. Therefore, keeping the due peculiarities, the creation myth presents several approximations with the myth of the first experience of satisfaction. With Moses, we know that the introjection of the judgment of good and evil – judgment of attribution – configures original sin, an inherent condition of man and that throws him out of the Garden of Satisfaction. The founding myth of the people of Israel carries the message of the impossibility of all satisfaction, through which the experience of paradise can only take place as a hallucinated paradise. In Lacan's words: "[...] the satisfaction of the principle of pleasure, always latent, underlying every exercise of the creation of the world, always tends [...] to be realized in a more or less hallucinated form"

¹⁷ For more information, see Samoel dos Santos Shiguemoto and Reinaldo Siqueira (2011).

¹⁸ For more information, see Adenilton Aguiar (2013).

¹⁹ Conception introduced into the Christian tradition by St. Augustine. For more information, see Isidro Pereira Lamelas (2012).

²⁰ Mosaic Law whose synthesis we know as "The Ten Commandments".

(LACAN, 1956-1957|1995, p.15). Since Freud we have heard that a rudimentary "I" inhibits, through the principle of reality, the process of hallucination that seeks the reconstitution of the object of satisfaction – an object forever lost – with the "I" being the cause²¹ of original sin. Still in the *Project* (FREUD, 1950[1895] | 2020), Freud points out that the "[...] fundamental helplessness of the human being is the primordial source of all moral motives" (FREUD, 1950[1895] | 2020, p. 363. *Our translation*), later clarifying, in *The Discontent in Civilization* (1930 [1929] | 2010), that it is as a result of helplessness and fear of the loss of love that man submits to an external authority. In Freud's words:

[...] One feels guilty—"a sinner," say the devotees—when one has done something that is recognized as "evil." Often evil is not at all a harmful or dangerous thing for the ego, but, on the contrary, something that he desires and gives him pleasure. There, then, the influence of others is shown; it determines what will be considered good or bad. Since feeling itself would not have led the human being down the same path, he must have a reason for submitting to this external influence. We can see it in helplessness and dependence on others, and the best assignment for it would be fear of the loss of love. If he loses the love of the other, on which he is dependent, he is also no longer protected against various dangers [...] (FREUD, 1930 [1929] | 2010, pp. 59-60).

Returning to the Hebrew narrative about the people of Israel, we observe that humanity – the children of Adam – knowingly helpless by the expulsion from Eden, is given a set of laws described in the book of Deuteronomy. The central theme of this book consists of a pact of *Yahweh* – one of the names of God – with the Israelites, transmitted through the figure of Moses, to guarantee security to the people as long as the laws were complied with:

Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his commandment, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, always... that ye may prolong the days in the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers, and to their seed, the land flowing with milk and honey ... But the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, and turn from the way that I command you today, [...] Be careful therefore to observe all the statutes and judgments that I am giving you today (Deuteronomy 11:1-32).

The alliance²² between *Yahweh* and Israel, synthesized through the well-known Ten

²¹ Analogy to the phrase "[...] I only know that the cause of original sin was Me." For more information, see Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*. In: DOSTOEVSKY, F. *Two fantastic narratives: The docile and The dream of a ridiculous man*. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2011.

²² We will return to this point when we approach the relationship between the Master and the Slave, as developed by Lacan, from Hegel: a conception linked to the paranoid structure of the Self, from which the relationship of alienation present in this dialectic serves as a model to understand the psychogenesis of the Self.

Commandments, receives the influence of the Assyrian Treaty present in the Treaties of Vassalage²³. The main characteristic of the vassalage relationship, which involves the lords and their servants, is the vassal's fidelity to his suzerain. In the Mosaic Covenant – Law of Moses²⁴ – *Yahweh* is the suzerain who promises protection to the people of Israel who, in turn, as vassals, are subject to the laws described in the Treaty (PINTO, 2022). From the mythical expulsion from paradise, the entire narrative of the Hebrew people in the Old Testament will have as its central axis the Laws spoken at Sinai²⁵ and recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. It will be in reference to this Law that the apostle Paul, centuries later, will allude to sin in his Epistle to the Romans: "What shall we say then? That the Law is sin? Not at all! But I would not have known sin if the Law had not existed, nor would I have known covetousness if the Law had not said, "Do not covet." Without the Law, sin is dead" (Romans 7:7-8). In the seminar on the *Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (LACAN, 1959-1960|2008), Lacan makes an approximation between *das Ding* – the Freudian Thing – and the function of the Law and, for this, he resorts to the Letter of the Apostle²⁶, paraphrasing him:

Is the law the thing? Not at all. But I have not known the Thing except through the Law. For I would have no idea of lust if the Law did not say, Thou shalt not covet. It was the Thing, therefore, which, taking advantage of the occasion given to it by the commandment, excited in me all lusts; because without the Law the Thing was dead [...] Because the Thing, taking advantage of the occasion of the commandment, seduced me, and made me wish for death through it (LACAN, 1959-1960|2008, p. 103).

Although Lacan's articulation takes place in the approximation between *das Ding* and the function of the Law, in which the Mosaic Law is the paradigm for such an analogy, we cannot fail to point out that in the Jewish text there was a Law prior to this. A first Law, a first interdiction, the one that mythologically forbade Adam's access to the tree of the

²³ The relationship of suzerainty and vassalage refers to a pact of a political and military character that structured hierarchies in the ancient world. The suzerain, usually a monarch or ruler of greater power, granted protection, lands, or privileges to a vassal in exchange for his loyalty, tribute, and services. This relationship was marked by an asymmetrical reciprocity, where the vassal depended on the suzerain for its maintenance and security, while the suzerain depended on the vassal to consolidate and expand his influence. In the context of the Assyrian empire, this dynamic was fundamental to ensure control over territories and subjected populations, consolidating a political-social order based on subordination and mandatory loyalty to the central power. For more information, see Barbosa dos Santos (2013).

²⁴ The Law of Moses is a reference to a set of laws that was synthesized and transmitted from the Ten Commandments fundamental to the exercise of the civilizing practice of the Hebrew people. In its unfolding, it became the foundation of Judeo-Christian belief.

²⁵ Mount Sinai, also called Mount Horeb, is recognized as the place where Moses received the tablets of God's Law and where God appeared to Moses in the form of a burning bush, summoning him to lead the Hebrew people to freedom from slavery in Egypt.

²⁶ Lacan replaces the word sin with the Thing. The paraphrased passage is found in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 7, verse 7.

knowledge of good and evil. Disobedience to this first Law is what throws man out of paradise and is the mark of original sin. Here, the metaphor of the fruit of the tree of knowledge is placed in parallel with the dialectic *Bejahung* [affirmation] – *Verneinung* [negation], coined by Freud (FREUD, 1925|2020). There is, at the foundation of the psychic apparatus, a primitive affirmation, which Freud designates as an intolerable representation, but which leaves an inscription, a symbolic record that refers to the first experience of satisfaction as a first libidinal inscription, a first mark on the psyche. Together with this first affirmation, there is also a first negation, this primitive Thing, *das Ding*, which is absolutely resistant to representation, but which is in the relation of the subject to the Other, and which, in order for there to be a first experience of satisfaction, is left out, because it is impossible to represent. The prohibition to all children of Adam, as well as to all beings of language, is given at the origin, insofar as the statement "Thou shalt not eat of the fruit" implies the impossibility of a full or complete satisfaction, indicated by Freud with *das Ding*, when he describes the first experience of satisfaction as a hallucinated experience, given the impossibility of the encounter with the object, which is forever lost – although it has never been had – since it is excluded, outside of any representation.

THE SELF IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS: ON NARCISSISM

Yet, Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay; you are the potter. We are all the work of your hands.

Isaiah, 64:8

Freud will publish his *Introduction to Narcissism* (Freud, 1914|2020) 19 years after his first sketches (Freud, 1950[1895] | 2020) on psychoanalysis. By putting into perspective the reasons why Freud dedicated himself to the Self, Lacan will point out, in *The Seminar, book 1: Freud's technical writings* (LACAN, 1953-1954|2009), the disagreements with Carl Gustav Jung. He reminds his audience that the *Introduction to Narcissism* (FREUD, 1914|2020) is an elaboration that succeeded a work by Jung, published in 1912, entitled *Metamorphoses and Symbols of the libido* (JUNG, 1912[1911] | 2011)²⁷. The divergences between Freud and Jung began when Jung, the first president of the IPA – *International Psychoanalytical Association* – tried to reduce resistance to psychoanalysis, proposing a

²⁷ This text has been revised and is currently under the title *Symbols of Transformation*, within the Complete Works of Carl Gustav Jung.

loosening of the bond between the subject and the sexual drive, eliminating all elements of family complexes. Through Freud's hypothesis about self-preservation drives, Jung found a loophole to defend that not all drives were sexual, and this premise led him to present, in his 1912 text, a unified conception of psychic energy, mischaracterizing and distancing himself from what Freud had postulated about the theory of libido. It is important to remember that Freud, throughout his work, coined two drive dualisms, although worked on in three distinct moments. As Marco Antonio Coutinho Jorge points out, in the first moment, Freud addressed the dualism between the drives of the Self – or self-preservation – and the sexual drives, stating that: "the drives of self-preservation perform the functions of preservation of the individual, such as food, while the sexual drives perform the functions of maintenance of the species" (COUTINHO JORGE, 2022, p. 65). In a second moment, with the text on narcissism, Freud clarifies the nature of the libido, which can be directed to the Self – as the libido of the narcissistic Self – or to the object – as the libido of the object. In a third moment, he dealt with the second drive dualism, where Freud brings together: "sexual drives and self-preservation drives under the general rubric of life drives" (COUTINHO JORGE, 2022, p. 66), opposing the death drive: "[...] our conception was dualistic from the beginning and continues to be even more striking today, when we stop calling euoic drives and sexual drives opposites, to give them the name of life drives and death drives" (FREUD, 1920|2020, pp. 51-52. *Our translation*). In other words, the *Introduction to Narcissism* (FREUD, 1914|2020) highlights the direction of the libido, which oscillates between investment in the Self and in the objects of the external world as a seesaw movement. This movement is precipitated by libido, the drive force that constitutes sexual energy.

However, this text should not be understood as an introduction to narcissism, as Elia warns, "[...] but as the introduction **of** narcissism in a psychoanalysis that had already been quite vertebrate until then" (ELIA, 1995, p. 112. *Emphasis added*), since Freud introduces narcissism into the theory of drives, characterizing the Self as a drive object, an effect of the eroticization of the image of one's own body, constituting, at the same time, the Self and the narcissistic libido. In the act of libido investing the Self, it becomes both the privileged object of libido and the subject's bodily configuration, from which "[...] Freudian narcissism reveals itself as a structural datum" (ROCHA & ROSA, 2019, p. 96). When asking the question about the relationship between narcissism and autoeroticism, which Freud describes as the initial stage of libido, he conceptualizes that the unity of the Self is not established from the

beginning. The Self is the instance responsible for giving consistency to the sensations that the baby feels in an isolated and dispersed way. For narcissism to be constituted, it is then necessary that a new psychic action be added to autoeroticism. Freud shows that the "I" is constituted to the extent that the parents attribute to the child all the imaginary perfections and project onto him all the dreams and ideals that they have renounced. In other words, the parents' reborn narcissism is projected onto the newborn, creating a bodily unity. This new psychic action is the Self, which becomes an object favored by libidinal investment, characterizing what Freud calls narcissistic libido:

Things should be better for the child than they were for his parents, he should not be subject to the needs that we recognize as dominant in life [...]. At the most delicate point of the narcissistic system, the immortality of the Self, so harshly harassed by reality, security, is obtained by taking refuge in the child (FREUD, 1914|2020, p.37. *Our translation*).

The Ideal Self, this first sketch of the image of the Self, comes from the narcissistic projections of the parents, a source from which the baby is offered an image corresponding to this narcissism that they once lost. However, precisely because it is an image of perfection, an idea of the Self to be reconquered will be inaugurated, an Ideal of the Self:

The constitution of the Self consists in a distancing from primary narcissism and generates an intense effort to reconquer it. Such distancing occurs through the displacement of the libido to an Ideal of the Self imposed from outside, and satisfaction, through the fulfillment of this Ideal (FREUD, 1914|2020, p.48. *Our translation*).

Freud uses the notions of Ideal Self and Ideal Self, both related to primary and secondary narcissisms, respectively. Primary narcissism, as the Ideal Self, is an image that tends to be overvalued, reflecting the re-actualization of the parents' narcissism invested in the baby, a privileged state that Freud calls "His majesty, the baby" (FREUD, 1914|2020, p. 88. *Our translation*). The constitution of secondary narcissism derives from a necessary distancing from primary narcissism, which entails an intense effort to reconquer it, starting from the idea of the Ideal, the idea of the Ideal image that Freud names as the Ideal of the Self. It should be noted that, years later, in the *31st Conference of the New Introductory Lectures to Psychoanalysis: The Decomposition of the Psychic Personality* (FREUD, 1933|2017), Freud will underline the close relationship that the Ideal of the Self has with the Superego: "It [the Superego] is also a vehicle of the Ideal of the Self, by which the Self is measured, which he seeks to equalize, and whose demand for an ever greater perfection

he strives to satisfy" (FREUD, 1933|2017, p. 60. *Our translation*). Thus, the Ideal of the Self, driven by the demands of the Superself, serves as a guide, a model that the Self will pursue in order to regain this lost narcissism of yesteryear. In *The Self and the That* (FREUD, 1923|2018), Freud highlights the importance of the body in the emergence of the identity of the Self, emphasizing that it is from it that internal and external perceptions arise. He points out that the Self is "[...] above all, a body-essence; not only a surface-essence, but itself, the projection of a surface" (FREUD, 1923|2018, p. 27. *Our translation*). This projection creates a totality that distinguishes the body from the environment, which was previously characterized by isolated sensations without unity. In line with this view, Lacan reiterates that "[...] the human Self is constituted on the foundation of the imaginary relationship" (LACAN, 1953-1954|2009, p. 137), since the subject acquires a unified bodily identity through the relationship with the other. In other words, the constitution of the Self and the assumption of a unified body are conferred on the subject through the relationship with his fellow man.

Motivated to explore the connection between the Self and the imaginary register, Lacan also observes that Freud's interest was in apprehending the differences regarding neurosis and psychosis in their relations with this register (LACAN, 1953-1954|2009). From the beginning of the *Introduction to Narcissism* (FREUD, 1914|2020), Freud was already able to observe that the distinction between neurosis and psychosis was mainly located on the imaginary plane, because while in neurosis the subject abandons his erotic relationship with the people and things of childhood, but keeps them in fantasy – replacing the objects of reality with imaginary objects based on his memories –, in psychosis, the subject breaks with the outside world, without phantasistic substitution. While for Jung the domains of the imaginary and the symbolic were confused, Freud made an effort to distinguish them, pointing out, already in the first articulations of his text, that the Self can only be constituted from the symbolic. For Lacan, "[...] all the imaginary reference of the human being is centered on the image of the similar" (LACAN, 1954-1955|1995, p. 155). Such a statement throws us back into the creationist myth, when we examine the first chapter of Genesis, we come across the narrative of the creation of man: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness'" (GENESIS, 1:26). It is interesting to note that this idea – of a creation in the image and likeness – was already present in the Mesopotamian cultures

of the time (OLIVEIRA, 2013). In ancient Egypt – where the descendants of Israel²⁸ were enslaved for 400 years – the pharaoh was seen as a deity. According to the Eastern thought of that period, the pharaoh was present and represented through the statues erected in the different provinces of his kingdom. The statues – in the image and likeness of the pharaoh – served both to remind the people who their ruler was and to demarcate the boundaries of the lands ruled by the king of Egypt. The statues indicated to the village the prototype of their lordship, however, when this idea is reborn in Jewish thought, we see that it is man himself who, made of clay (GENESIS, 2:7), is formed in the image and likeness of God. This reference interests us to the extent that Lacan, in *The Seminar, book 7: the ethics of psychoanalysis* (LACAN, 1959-1960|2008), announces:

– *God made man in his image.* [...] This statement is from the same gush, from the same body, from the sacred book where the prohibition of forging the God of images is articulated. If this prohibition has any meaning, it is because the images are misleading. But why? So let's go to the simplest – if they are beautiful images – and God knows that religious images always respond, by definition, to the reigning canons of beauty – we don't see that they are always hollow. But then so does man, as an image. It is interesting because of the hollow left empty by the image – that is why one sees in the image, beyond the capture of the image, the emptiness of God being discovered. This is, perhaps, the fullness of man, but it is also there that God leaves him in the void (LACAN, 1959-1960|2008, p. 235).

In this same seminar, Lacan makes a reference to the apologist of the vase, discussed by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, in *The Origin of the Work of Art – Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (HEIDEGGER, 2014) –, originally published in 1950. Heidegger argues that the work of art is an object that is created from the fusion of form and matter, capable of transcending its utilitarian function. We can affirm that the vessel, insofar as it is a creation of man, announces "[...] the human presence everywhere we find it" (LEVE, 2021, p. 726). Lacan could have used other references extracted from the Heideggerian text – such as the axe or the shoe (HEIDEGGER, 2014, p. 20) – but the choice of the vase seems to have been deliberate, since "[...] this vessel, which has always been there and which has been used to make us conceive parabolically, analogically, metaphorically the mysteries of creation, can still be useful to us" (LACAN, 1959-1960|2008, p. 146). Lacan's indication implicitly suggests that it has its source in another

²⁸ At different times in Judeo-Christian literature we observe that the God of the Hebrews is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In Jewish tradition, Jacob has his name changed to Israel after his encounter with God. Israel has 12 children and from Joseph, one of his youngest sons, all the other brothers were taken to Egypt when there was a great drought that affected the Mesopotamian villages. Egypt, which at first was a refuge for the Israelites, began to enslave them. The descendants of Israel multiplied and, after 400 years under Egyptian slavery, were freed through the figure of Moses.

passage of biblical scripture, namely, the parable of the potter and the vessel:

The Lord gave Jeremiah another message: *Go down to the potter's house, and I will speak to him there.* I went to the potter's house and found him working on the wheel. But the clay pot he was making didn't turn out as he wished, so he kneaded the clay and started again. Then the Lord gave me this message: *O Israel, can I not do to you as the potter did to the clay? As the clay is in the hands of the potter, you are in my hands* (JEREMIAH, 18: 1-6).

This parable, in the context in which it was written, had the function of warning the Kingdom of Judah about the consequences of disobedience to the Mosaic Covenant, more specifically the commandment not to build images of other gods. In the chapter that follows the parable, the prophet Jeremiah is instructed to buy a vase from the potter's house and to break it before the authorities of Jerusalem and thus convey the divine message: "[...] behold, I will bring evil upon this place [...], because they have built the altars of Baal [...]. In this way I will break this people, and this city, as a potter's vessel is broken, which can no longer be rebuilt" (JEREMIAH, 9: 1-11). The analogy made by the prophet Jeremiah²⁹ between the people of Israel and the vessel appears in many other quotations throughout the canonical texts³⁰. Such a reference was not strange to the children of Adam, since, in their mythical origin, they were forged from clay in the image and likeness of their Creator. That said, agreeing with Lacan that the image of the similar is the center of all imaginary reference of the human being, we propose an approximation between the Self – "the projection of a surface" (FREUD, 1923|2018, p. 27), the result of a narcissistic investment – and the image of the vase: made of clay – as seen in Genesis –, at the mercy of the deliberate handling of the potter – prophesied by Jeremiah –, announcing the presence of its creator – according to Heidegger – and, finally, full, insofar as it is empty in its essence – according to Lacan (LACAN, 1959-1960|2008, p. 147).

At the end of his lecture of January 27, 1960 (LACAN, 1959-1960|2008), Lacan draws the attention of his listeners to the fact that the idea of creation shares the same nature as thought – which, since Freud, has been characterized as one of the functions of the Self, resulting from the function of judgment, as mentioned earlier in this article – adding

²⁹ Prophet of the Old Testament who worked approximately between the years 627 and 587 B.C. His prophecies, directed primarily to the Kingdom of Judah, announced the fall of Solomon's Temple and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian Empire, having previously witnessed the exile and dispersion of the Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrian Empire. The authorship of the book of Lamentations – which poetically portrays the destruction of Jerusalem – is also attributed to the prophet Jeremiah.

³⁰ The vessels of Solomon's time – 1 Kings, 7:23-45; The vessels rescued from the Babylonian exile – Ezra, 1:7-11; The broken vessel, symbol of those who rebel against God – Romans, 9:22-23; The vessel that holds the treasure of the knowledge of God – 2 Corinthians, 4:7.

that one cannot think "[...] in other terms than in creationist terms [...]. But it is not because you are, like everyone else, whether you know it or not, trapped in the notion of creation, that the Creator is, for you, in a very clear position" (LACAN, 1959-1960|2008, p. 154). In other words, the Self, created in the image and likeness, does not know its Creator. Relying on the assertion that "[...] every myth is related to the inexplicable of the real [...]" (LACAN, 1960-1961|1992, p. 59), we refer to the creation myth re-edited in the Gospel of John, when the Creator is conferred the character of the Word: "[...] in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (JOHN 1:1-2). In this regard, Didier-Weill observes that this Verb of the beginning (DIDIER-WEILL, 1997) – the *Logos*³¹, as it was translated in the Septuagint³² – is a signifier capable of inscribing a trace from nothing. The verb [with a lowercase letter] only came much later. Thus, we have that the image of the Self occurs to the extent that it is made to the image of the verb – The *Nebenmensch*, which introduces the *infans* into language – but not without being referred to the Verb – unary trait, core of the Ideal of the Self (LACAN, 1964|2008, p. 242) –, since "[...] it was really the Word who was in the beginning, and we live in his creation" (LACAN, 1953|1998, p. 273).

For Lacan, "In the beginning was the verb means In the beginning is the unary trait [...] singularity of the trace, this is what we introduce into the real" (LACAN, 1962-1963|2005, p. 31): unary trait, signifier that preexists the subject, which anchors the primary identification and acts as a support for the specular identification. It presents itself as the mark of the signified primacy, which functions as an Ideal and unites the body of the *infans* in an illusory unity, perceived by him as a totality anchored in the image of the other. In other words, the libidinal commitment that promotes the constitution of the Self from a bodily unity does not arise from the baby, but from the Other who affirms: "You are!" (LACAN, 1953-1954|2009, p. 11 and DE CÉSARIS, 2016, p. 73). It is not by chance that Lacan postulated the typification of the imaginary as incorporated into the primordial commandments, since, analogous to the laws of speech, they come to guarantee the limit, even if the initial "thou shalt not make a carved image of me" emerges, consequently, as a

³¹ A Greek word whose origin dates back to ancient Greece, being used in pre-Socratic philosophy to refer to the rational principle that governs the universe.

³² Translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek that used *Logos* as a translation of the Old Testament term *dabar*, meaning "word" or "speech." In the Christian tradition, *Logos* was used in the Gospel of John to refer to Jesus Christ as the incarnation of the divine word.

prohibition, establishing a "thou shalt not make any image" (LACAN, 1959-1960|2008, p. 210):

[...] The fact is that the second commandment, the one which formally excludes not only all worship, but all image, all representation of what is in heaven, on earth, in the abyss, seems to me to show that what is in question stands in a totally particular relation to human affection as a whole. In short, the elimination of the function of the imaginary is offered to my eyes, and I think to yours as well, as a principle of the relationship with the symbolic, in the sense that we understand here, that is, with speech. It finds its primordial condition there (LACAN, 1959-1960|2008, p. 101).

Because it is determined by language and speech, the subject begins where the first signifier appears, that is, in the place of the Other (LACAN, 1964|2008), and it is not possible to conceive the imaginary without the symbolic, and it is not possible for the Self to be constituted except in the relationship with the Other.

ON THE ANGUISH IN FREUD

*In fact, there is no help in me.
Has not all effective help forsaken me?*

Job, 6:13

As Coutinho Jorge rightly observes, the theme of anguish is addressed by Freud "[...] from the beginning to the end of his work [...], since Freud understands it as one of the central axes of the clinic of neuroses" (COUTINHO JORGE, 2022, p. 247). As Betty Fuks reminds us, Freud developed two theories about anguish (FUKS, 2001) which, in short, concern anguish as a result of libido transformed from repression and anguish as a reaction to danger. Although they seem divergent, these different ways of perceiving the affect of anguish establish "a game of mutual interaction" (FUKS, 2001, p. 1). The theoretical bases that underlie what concerns anguish can be found from the manuscripts addressed to Fliess. *Manuscript A*, written back in 1892, presents the embryo of Freud's thought on the causes of anxiety neurosis (FREUD, 1950[1892] | 2020). In this manuscript, Freud asks himself whether "the anguish in the anxiety neuroses comes from the inhibition of the sexual function or is it related to the etiology?" (FREUD, 1950[1892] | 2020, p. 216. *Our translation*). The text continues to present some theses, with emphasis on the idea that "anxiety neurosis is in part a consequence of sexual inhibition" (FREUD, 1950[1892] | 2020, p. 217. *Our translation*). Finally, after emphasizing some important points to be observed, four etiological factors related to anxiety neurosis are listed: 1. exhaustion due to abnormal

forms of satisfaction; 2. the inhibition of sexual function; 3. affects concomitant with these practices and 4. sexual traumas that occurred before the time in which we have an understanding of the sexual.

Two years later, in Manuscript *E: how is anguish generated?* (FREUD, 1950[1894] | 2020. *Our translation*), Freud describes anguish as "[...] the sensation resulting from the accumulation of a diverse endogenous stimulus, the breath stimulus, which, as it is not subjected to other psychic processing, is then capable of being applied to any accumulated physical tension in general" (FREUD, 1950[1894] | 2020, p. 234. *Our translation*). From this quote, Fuks observes that "[...] clinical experience revealed to Freud the affect of anguish at the most elementary level, outside of any symbolic operation" (FUKS, 2001, p. 1). In this same manuscript (FREUD, 1950[1894] | 2020), we can locate a passage that seems to condense Freud's reflections in the period of correspondence with Fliess. Aiming to answer the question of how anguish is generated, Freud observes: "[...] it was clear to me that the anguish of my neurotic patients is very much related to sexuality" (FREUD, 1950[1894] | 2020, p. 229. *Our translation*). Freud also proposes that the cause of anguish would be found in sexual abstinence. How would this happen? Sexual abstinence would cause an accumulation of tension that, deprived of being discharged, would generate anguish:

Every time an intense physical sexual arousal is generated in abundance, but cannot be transformed into affection due to inadequate psychic processing [whether due to insufficient development of psychic sexuality, defensive suppression, decline of the same, or a habitual alienation between physical and psychic sexuality], this sexual arousal is converted into anguish (FREUD, 1959[1894] | 2020, p.234. *Our translation*).

In that first moment of his theorizing, the appearance of anguish went hand in hand with the logic of the functioning of the psychic apparatus described by Freud since the *Project for a Psychology* (FREUD, 1950[1895] | 2020) and resumed in his inaugural text on *The Interpretation of Dreams* (FREUD, 1900-1901[1899] | 2020): "[...] the reflex process continues to be the model of every psychic operation" (FREUD, 1900-1901[1899] | 2020, p. 531. *Our translation*), insofar as its tendency is to get rid of the increase in excitement that generates unpleasure. Therefore, anguish would arise when the sexual energy was prevented from following its flow. In other words, the initial theory of distress was based primarily on the economic perspective: it involves a significant amount of sexual energy [libido] that would be relieved through discharge. Anguish is thus interpreted as a "[...] intense affect of displeasure strictly linked to sexuality" (COUTINHO JORGE, 2022, p. 247).

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (FREUD, 1900[1899] | 2020), Freud elucidates how this operation that prevents the flow of sexual energy takes place. When investigating his hypothesis that the dream is the fulfillment of a wish, Freud is faced with the following paradox: "[...] How is it possible that unpleasant and distressing dreams are the fulfillment of wishes?" (FREUD, 1900[1899] | 2020, p. 154. *Our translation*). To justify that, even in the face of censorship, desire is revealed in the content of the dream, Freud considers the possibility that within each individual two distinct psychic instances operate (FREUD, 1900[1899] | 2020): one emerges as the expression of desires through dreams, while the other assumes the function of exercising a kind of surveillance over these dream desires, leading them to be transformed into its manifestation. Therefore, from the first system, nothing can emerge to consciousness without passing through the inspection of the second instance, which does not allow anything to go beyond its limits without exercising its right to introduce modifications according to its assessment of what is suitable for the incorporation of the content into consciousness.

Returning to the question of how "[...] Can dreams of painful content resolve themselves as wish fulfillments [?]" (FREUD, 1900[1899] | 2020, p. 164. *Freud* justifies that this becomes possible to the extent that, although these dreams convey an unpleasant content for the second system, they nevertheless satisfy a desire of the first:

[...] this feeling of discomfort which is repeated in the dream does not exclude the existence of a wish [...] moreover, we are permitted to associate the unpleasant character of all these dreams with the fact of the dream-distortion, and to infer that they are thus distorted and the wish-fulfillment is masked in them to the point of becoming unrecognizable by a repugnance, to a repressive purpose against the theme of the dream or against the desire inspired by it. The dream deformation actually appears as an act of censorship. However, we find reason in all studies of unpleasant dreams if we modify the formula intended to express the essence of the dream in the following way: The dream is the [disguised] fulfillment of a [repressed] desire (FREUD, 1900 [1899]|2008, p. 177. *Our translation*).

By following the path trodden by Freud, we find that the dream comes from a work of elaboration in which censorship seeks to prevent the discomfort that the emergence of desire would provoke if it came to the surface. Thus, anguish appears, at that moment in the work, as a manifestation inhibited by the preconscious, insofar as it refers to an unconscious desire (FREUD, 1900[1899] | 2020). Therefore, anguish would refer to what "[...] once was a desire" (FREUD, 1900-1901[1899] | 2020, p. 657). The first theory of anguish, Mezan points out, agreed with the hypothesis of the pleasure principle and followed the principles of psychic regulation – in which the increase in tension generates

unpleasure and the discharge, pleasure – since anguish consisted of "[...] in the automatic transformation of the drive energy accumulated by the blockage to its exteriorization" (MEZAN, 2013, pp.305-306). In the text on *The Repression* (FREUD, 1915|2020), the theme of anguish also follows the path traced in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (FREUD, 1900-1901[1899] | 2020). In this text, Freud points out that the essence of repression consists in refusing something from consciousness and keeping it away from it, and its emergence is imposed when the "[...] discomfort [for the psychic apparatus] acquires a greater power than the pleasure of satisfaction" (FREUD, 1915|2020, p. 142. *Our translation*). The operation of repression is what will ensure that the psychic representative remains in the unconscious while a portion of the affect will be able to move from it to other representatives. What about anguish in this context? Anguish, as Freud will point out, is itself "an affect that can certainly only be registered by the I" (FREUD, 1926 [1925] | 2018, p.133. *Our translation*). In other words, anguish, as an affect, will reproduce the same sensation that would generate the instinctual quota of the psychic representative who was repressed – an idea that anchored the thesis that anguish resulted from repression.

The first theory of anguish, whose synthesis is found in the *25th Conference on Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (FREUD, 1916-1917|2017), given in 1916, seeks to clarify the essence of the affect of anguish which, according to Freud, is not only captured in dynamic terms – of motor innervations, discharges or sensations of pleasure and displeasure – but at its core is the repetition of a specific meaningful experience. In this way, the affect of anguish suggests the repetition of the experience of the act of birth, the experience of which arouses unpleasant sensations, impulses of discharge and bodily sensations. Since then, the act of birth has become a prototype of a "mortal danger" (FREUD, 1916-1917|2017, p. 361) that is repeated in the state of anguish. It will be in *The Self and the It* (FREUD, 1923|2018), that Freud will affirm that the true seat of anguish is the Self, which is subjected to the servitude of three masters: the external world, the It and the Superego (FREUD, 1923|2018, p. 57). From a superficial layer to the It, the function of the Self evolves to become an organizer of mental processes and a guardian of its conformity to reality, thanks to its essential connection with perception and, consequently, with the outside world. The Self, which in part functions as the seat of consciousness and thought, is responsible for regulating drives, rather than simply submitting to them. For this, it is supported by the Superego and by the orientations coming from the external environment. On the other hand, the It remains as a sphere unknown to him, a source of

desires and imperatives that surprise and unsettle him; the Superego, guardian of paternal authority and social norms, constantly presses him under the weight of morality (MEZAN, 2013, p. 304). In summary, in relation to the Self, "[...] o This requires him to access and invent ways to satisfy his desires; the Superego, which behaves as a moral entity [...]; external reality, that discovers its enigma, under penalty of being destroyed by it" (MEZAN, 2013, p. 305). Often, the result of these demands is the emergence of anguish in the Self:

The Self is the true seat of anguish. Threatened by dangers originating from three directions, he develops the reflex of flight, withdrawing the investment from the threatening perception or the equally feared processes of the It, and discharging it as anguish (FREUD, 1923|2018, p.57. *Our translation*).

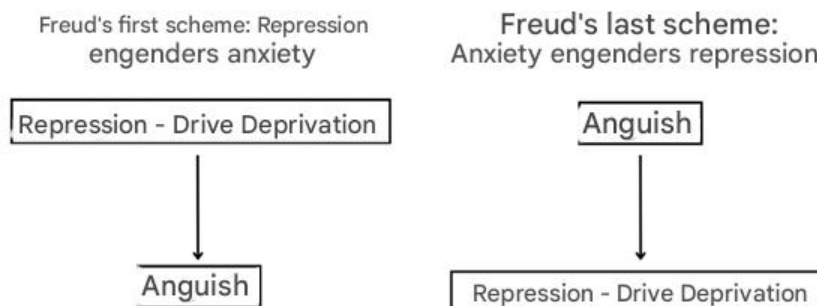
Or again, as highlighted in his *31st Conference of the New Introductory Conferences to Psychoanalysis: The Decomposition of the Psychic Personality* (FREUD, 1933 [1932] | 2017):

These three tyrants are the outer world, the Superself, and the It. If we follow the efforts of the ego to prove them right at the same time—or rather, to obey them at the same time—we cannot regret having personified this ego, having postulated it as a particular being. He feels pressured from three sides, threatened by three types of danger, in the face of which, in case of trouble, he reacts with anguish [...] realistic anguish before the external world, anguish of the moral conscience before the Superego, neurotic anguish before the intensity of the passions within the It (FREUD, 1933 [1932] | 2017, pp. 72-73. *Our translation*).

Soler, in the introduction to his seminar *Declensions of Anguish* (SOLER, 2000-2001|2012), presents a brief historicization³³ of anguish in Freud's work. The author observes, as mentioned earlier, that at first "[...] the affect of anguish was an effect, a result of repression, that is, the result of a drive deprivation that repression implies" (SOLER, 2000-2001|2012, p. 16). However, from the essay *Inhibition, symptom and anguish*, dated 1926, Freud inverts his initial thesis, as Soler reminds us: "[...] Anguish is not an effect, anguish is a cause. Anguish does not result from repression, it is the cause of repression, it is the precise textual inversion of the relationship between anguish and repression" (SOLER, 2000-2001|2012, p. 16). The following scheme is presented by Soler to systematize the updating of Freudian doctrine:

³³ See also the prologue, written by James Strachey, of *Inhibition, Symptom and Distress* (1926[1925] | 2018).

Figure 3. *The two times of the theory of anguish in Freud*



Source: (SOLER, 2000-2001|2012, p.16)

It is important to emphasize that the reformulation of the understanding of anguish is an effect of what Freud had previously constructed, on which we can highlight the introduction of the concept of the death drive – in *Beyond the pleasure principle* (FREUD, 1920|2020) – and the formulation of the second topic of the psychic apparatus – formalized in *The Self and the It* (FREUD, 1923|2018). Soler points out that this conceptual turn, which locates repression as an effect of anguish, is what leads Freud to return to the notion of trauma, stating that at the origin of neurosis there is a traumatic event (SOLER, 2000-2001|2012, p. 18). For Freud, the traumatic factor is a state "in which the efforts of the pleasure principle fail" (FREUD, 1933 [1932] | 1917, p. 87. *Our translation*). Thus, trauma is characterized as a lack of preparation of the psychic apparatus that, in the face of an intense amount of energy, culminates in the rupture of the protective shield against external stimuli in the psychic apparatus. In economic terms, it refers to an influx of excitations that is excessive in relation to the subject's tolerance and the ability to psychically dominate and elaborate these excitations (MAIA, 2000). We understand trauma, succinctly, "[...] that for which the subject does not have a symbolic representation" (COUTINHO JORGE, 2007, p. 38), which reveals itself as inassimilable and which "introduces something real – not sense – into the subject's imagination" (COUTINHO JORGE, 2007, p. 38). Therefore,

[...] the state of anguish is the reproduction of an experience that has met the conditions for an increase in the stimulus, such as the one mentioned, and for the discharge by specific pathways, thus resulting in the specific character of the unpleasure of anguish. In the case of human beings, birth provides us with an archetypal experience of this type, and that is why we tend to see in the state of anguish a reproduction of the trauma of birth (FREUD, 1926[1925] | 2018, p. 126. *Our translation*).

Based on *Inhibition, symptom and anguish* (FREUD, 1926[1925] | 2018), anguish is defined as an affective state and is related to the idea of psychic helplessness, and can be called automatic anguish – as a direct consequence of the traumatic factor –, or sign anguish – a sign that indicates the threat of repetition of such a factor (FREUD, 1933[1932] | 2017, p. 88). The notion of a distress sign refers to a reaction to a danger signal, that is, the imminence of the loss of an intensely invested object:

Through this last observation, namely that the Self would be alerted to castration through regularly repeated object losses, we have reached a new understanding of anguish. Until now, we have considered anguish as a sign-affect of danger, but it seems that it often refers to both the danger of castration and the reaction to a loss, a separation (FREUD, 1926[1925] | 2018, p. 123. *Our translation*).

Being able to present itself with different facets throughout the subject's life, anguish has as its prototype the experience of helplessness. Thus, when faced with a situation of danger, "the Self, which has experienced the trauma passively" (FREUD, 1926 [1925] | 2018, p. 156), actively repeats a sign when in the imminence of the reactualization of helplessness – when faced with the loss of the object, castration, the Superego and death: "these are the situations in which anguish identifies the danger that the loss of the object brings" (SANTOS & COSTA-MOURA, 2013, p. 930). Therefore, the signal emitted "[...] has the function of revealing the possibility that a situation of helplessness may occur, whose enigma, in non-dark times, the subject covers with fantasy" (FUKS, 2001, p. 6). For Freud, as we can see in the annex *Complement on anguish*:

Anguish has an unmistakable connection with expectation; it is anguish about something. It carries with it a character of indeterminacy and objectlessness; and even correct language changes its name when it encounters an object, replacing it with the term "fear" – *Furcht* (FREUD, 1926 [1925] | 2018, p. 154. *Our translation*).

In the conference *Anguish and Instinctual Life* (FREUD, 1933[1932] | 2017), Freud once again questions what are the determinant situations of anguish for the subject, observing – as he had done in 1926 – that each period of life has its appropriate determinant:

The danger of psychic helplessness is appropriate to the stage in which the ego is immature; the danger of the loss of the object [of love] to early childhood; the danger of castration to the phallic phase; and, finally, the anguish before the Superego, which acquires a specific position in the period of latency [...] all these situations of danger and determinants of danger can subsist side by side and cause the ego to react to them with anguish in an appropriate later period (FREUD, 1933[1932] | 2017, pp. 81-82. *Our translation*)

The return of the original traumatic situation at different moments in life "points to the importance of the fact that all subjects have a limit beyond which their apparatus fails in its function of dominating the amounts of excitation that need to be eliminated" (MAIA, 2000, p. 65). Thus, throughout his existence, the subject is on the verge of facing "the feared, the subject of anguish" (FREUD, 1933[1932] | 2017, p. 87. *Our translation*) and, thus, to re-actualize the experience of helplessness. In summary, we can highlight with Freud that the traumatic factor is a state in which the efforts of the pleasure principle fail, that is, from the series – neurotic anguish, realistic anguish, dangerous situation – the subject of anguish is the feared one, that which in each case cannot be transmitted according to the norms of the pleasure principle (FREUD, 1933[1932] | 2017).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice:
"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
Gospel of Mark, 15:33-36

By way of conclusion, we take as our last approximation to the Judeo-Christian tradition the cry echoed by Jesus at the moment of his crucifixion: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (MARK 15:33-36). Faced with the urgency of his own death, Jesus – also the son of Adam³⁴ – recites the Psalm of his ancestor, David, when he, under strong persecution from King Saul, declaims: "My God! Oh my god! Why did you unburden me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my **cries of anguish**? [...] for distress is near, and there is no one to help me" (PSALM 22:1 and 11. *Emphasis added*). The cry of Jesus on the cross reverberates that of a primordial and universal moment: the inaugural cry of the newborn child. In both scenes, the scream emerges as a response to a radical rupture. At birth, the newborn experiences primordial helplessness, marked by separation from the mother's body and confrontation with stimuli from the external world. This cry reflects the suffering of an organism that lacks support and external intervention to relieve the tension that causes it discomfort. Similarly, the cry of Jesus expresses the utmost helplessness in the face of imminent death. As already seen, Freud identifies at birth the

³⁴ The Gospel of Luke, in chapter 3, verses 23 to 38, proposes a genealogy for Jesus that goes back to the mythical character, Adam, presented as "son of God". Thus, this genealogical line connects the figure of Jesus to the origin of humanity.

prototype of anguish as a state of helplessness. The cry of Jesus, then, synthesizes this human journey: from the reflex cry of the newborn to the cry of man in the face of finitude. Both cries reveal the structure of the subject as marked by absence, lack and the impossibility of a full reunion with the lost object – be it *das Ding*, the forbidden fruit or God himself. In this way, Jesus' last cry not only announces anguish in the face of death, but rescues the echo of the first human cry, circumscribing the universal condition of helplessness that crosses every being of language.

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