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The environmental crisis and the field of political ecology: a Freudian psychoanalytic perspective

La crisis ambiental y el campo de la ecología política: una perspectiva desde el psicoanálisis freudiano

A crise ambiental e o campo da ecologia política: uma perspectiva a partir de Freud

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ABSTRACT: The relationship between environmental thinking and the Psychoanalysis thought by Freud still needs to be better thematized. It requires complex and interdisciplinary theoretical assumptions, not only from Environmental Sciences, but also from Humanities. This essay aims to point some reflections in this direction. It is understood that the environmental crisis, in its most emerging facet, climate change, should not be reduced to the perspective that the environment is in crisis, because what is really at stake is a way of being, a collective way of life, that is, the subjectivity of a civilization. In view of this, the environmental crisis unveils an unconscious process in the psychic economy, something that has been well appropriated by the capitalist way of life and that, by definition, has no proper, natural, immanent relationship with the world of nature.

Keywords: environmental crisis; climate change; environment and psychoanalysis; political ecology; pandemic.

RESUMEN: La relación entre el pensamiento ambiental y el pensamiento psicoanalítico de Freud aún debe ser mejor tematizada. Requiere supuestos teóricos complejos e interdisciplinarios, no sólo de las Ciencias Ambientales, sino también de las Humanidades. Este ensayo pretende apuntar algunas reflexiones en esta dirección. Se entiende que la crisis medioambiental, en su faceta más emergente, es decir, el cambio climático, no debe

reducirse a la perspectiva de que el medio ambiente está en crisis, porque lo que realmente está en juego es una forma de ser, una forma de vida colectiva, es decir, la subjetividad de una civilización. En vista de ello, la crisis medioambiental desvela un proceso inconsciente en la economía psíquica, algo que ha sido bien apropiado por el modo de vida capitalista y que, por definición, no tiene una relación propia, natural e immanente con el mundo de la naturaleza.

Palabras clave: crisis ambiental; cambios climáticos; medio ambiente y psicoanálisis; ecología política; pandemia.

RESUMO: A relação entre o pensamento ambiental e o pensamento psicanalítico de Freud ainda precisa ser mais bem localizada. Requer pressupostos teóricos complexos e interdisciplinares, não só das Ciências Ambientais, mas também das Humanidades. Este ensaio visa apontar algumas reflexões nessa direção. Entende-se que a crise ambiental, em sua face mais emergente, ou seja, as mudanças climáticas, não deve ser reduzida à perspectiva de que o meio ambiente está em crise, pois o que está realmente em jogo é um modo de ser, um modo de atuação coletiva vida, isto é, a subjetividade de uma civilização. Diante disso, a crise ambiental revela um processo inconsciente na economia psíquica, algo que vem sendo bem apropriado pelo modo de vida capitalista e que, por definição, não possui relação própria, natural e imanente com o mundo da natureza.

Palavras-chave: crise ambiental; mudanças climáticas; meio ambiente e psicanálise; ecologia política; pandemia.

1. Introduction

Environmental crisis, political ecology, and Freudian psychoanalysis: three fields, three concepts, three ways of looking at socio-environmental issues. We recognize that this is an approach that has been little explored in the context of the environmental perspective. It provokes too much resistance because it is a question that questions the choices we make in relation to the meaning of our activities, which are in themselves a political process.

From the beginning, it has a difficulty in its approach, since it proposes a simultaneous elaboration based on its domains, which we summarized below.

Since the 1970s, environmental concerns have been growing, now with more emphasis on "climate emergencies". Likewise, the world's scientific community has already pointed to the effects of increased pollution and contamination of water and

air, overexploitation of natural resources, destruction of the ozone layer, and global warming.

It is important to highlight that Leff (2011) understands that the environmental crisis, incorporated into the episteme of the world, ends up hiding the causes, the root of the problems, rendering the subjects powerless to visualize other paths, trapped in an economic and instrumental rationality that forged modernity.

In this sense, the important point brought by Farias (2021) is that the environmental crisis, beyond its objective dimension, that is, the spatial and material disputes for the access and use of natural resources, there is a subjective - metapsychological - dimension that refers to the different forms of social bonds, their senses, and meanings that it carries within itself as its truth.

This perspective leads the author to conclude that the environmental crisis is psychic as well as environmental and socio-political, in a devastation

not only physical, but psychic, unprecedented, tearing the social fabric in various places, under different contours.

The other field of this essay, political ecology, also developed in the 1960s and 1970s, as defined by Leff (2015), is characterized as the field of study of power relations and political conflicts over ecological distribution, the appropriation of nature, the relationship between humanity and nature, the subjugation of cultures to the logic of capitalist exploitation and the rationality of the world system, and the geopolitical power strategies of sustainable development and environmental rationality (Leff, 2015).

It is interesting to emphasize here that, like psychoanalysis, political ecology has the capacity to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge and its own role in society. Therefore, it is striking that Leff will continue to say that political ecology implies the resignification of concepts and the mobilization of discursive strategies within a new environmental epistemic territory (Leff, 2015).

With these brief notes from each of these fields as a starting point, the aim of this essay is to situate aspects of the environmental crisis according to Freudian psychoanalysis to outline a perspective for the field of political ecology.

Freud was chosen because of his reflections on social aspects; it is not the application of psychoanalysis to a new object of research, but the unfolding of what has always been there since the beginning of the construction of his theory.

This can be seen, for example, in "The Psychology of the Masses" (Freud, [1920-1923], 2011a), when he says that there is no separation between the collective and the individual, that is, there is no life that is not collectivized at some level, which means

that the subject is divided into affects that are his alone, but which also depend on the discourse of the other.

Mladen Dolar, a Slovenian psychoanalyst, argues in his article "Freud and the Political" (2007) that any reference to the non-existence of a political legacy in Freud should be rejected. He explains that if psychoanalysis arose from the treatment of the individual psyche, its symptoms, and vicissitudes, and if the object of politics is the construction of a collectivity, then from the very beginning that boundary has been crossed, where the individual, the ego and the subject are inconceivable without a theory of the social bond. "Politics is universal and is present in Freud's work to the point that it leaves almost no room for anything else. No page of Freud is free of political consequences," says Dolar (Dolar, 2007, p. 1).

Thus, although Freud was not concerned with environmental issues in the way we think of them today, the mark of collective and social ties is registered throughout his work as an undeniable political legacy for the subject. Therefore, if nothing is more political than the relationships forged in socio-environmental issues, Freudian thought is relevant and inspiring in revealing the unconscious side of the environmental crisis.

It is important to note that although psychoanalysis is based on the clinical function, it goes beyond this dimension by understanding the origin and causes of human suffering. And from the place where it transcends, it brings the possibility of revealing something that we have not sufficiently thematized, that is, the predatory relationship of an economic regime and the constitution of social relations as far as nature is concerned.

According to Ernani Chaves, one of the great Brazilian translators of Freud's work, "if before psychoanalysis seemed to enter where it was not called, now it needs and must enter to close a significant gap" (Chaves, 2019, p. 154). And that is what we are trying to do now, to open a space in the environmental sciences where we can approach human subjectivity in the Freudian perspective.

2. The coronavirus pandemic: an encounter with the traumatic

There was a stone in the middle of the road, there was a stone in the middle of the road, there was a stone in the middle of the road, there was a stone in the middle of the road. I will never forget this event in the life of my tired retina. I will never forget that there was a stone in the middle of the road, there was a stone in the middle of the road, there was a stone in the middle of the road, there was a stone in the middle of the road (Carlos Drummond de Andrade, 1967, p. x)

Freud used all the resources of language to materialize the power of his thought. There is an affectionate, beautiful, and lasting encounter between his theory and the "poiesis" of words. Something that is not meant to "beautify", but a function to say what is also in the order of the unspeakable. That is why Drummond's poetry is brought to express this moment that we lived and still are living in the history of humanity. We have witnessed in our daily lives and felt in our hearts that we are living in a dark time. In Lacanian terms, times of encounter with the real, that is, the unforeseen, the unexpected, that which has no law or order.

In Freudian terms, we can say that these were "traumatic times", that is, there was an excess of

tension caused by the spread of the Corona Virus, in which the subjects lacked the symbolic resources to respond to all of this.

On this point, Lustoza *et al.* (2014) had already said that the contemporary era became witness to the decline of the evaluative references that cemented the social world. If before the choices of subjects were determined by the codes of interpretation offered by tradition, authority, or religion, "today we observe a crumbling of the limits that gave cohesion to society". Thus, man finds himself without a reading grid that allows him to decipher the events of his world" (Lustoza *et al.*, 2014, p. 201).

It is also necessary to keep in mind that the problem of trauma which affects subjects and their forms of subjectivation is already present in all social segments, especially those characterized by exclusion (Birman, 2018).

In addition, we must consider the problem of traumatization, which affects subjects and their forms of subjectivation, and which is already permanent in all social sectors, especially those characterized by exclusion (Birman, 2018). However, when dealing with the complexity of socio-environmental issues, almost nothing is said about the symbolic precariousness of the subjects, given the impact of their traumatic condition in facing the environmental crisis.

For decades, the scientific community has been warning of the encounter with the real of ecology, in other words, the possibility of the collapse of life on planet Earth. Those excluded from social protection will undoubtedly suffer the consequences. But these warnings have not been enough in the face of the power of capitalism. So, we think that this "something" in the environmental crisis circumscribes a space of *strangeness* that questions

our own existence on the planet and does not drive us, does not effectively connect us to a change in basic assumptions.

There is something that is of the order of failure in the context of civilization. To use a metaphor, I see it as a bubbling cauldron in which components that are still mysterious to us are interacting.

In 2020, we add an unusual ingredient to this cauldron: a virus, a pandemic, as Professor Leff describes it: "Half a century after Earth Day, a historical moment that opened a reflection to question the normality of life marked by economic growth, humanity dawned infected by a new virus" (Leff, 2020, p.1).

The coronavirus has spread rapidly, confirming our finitude and the presence of imminent death. It has shown that it is not only a physical disease, since it causes fear, anxiety, impotence, and affects the human psyche. It forces us to be obsessive and careful with hygiene, with cleanliness, because it can be anywhere. In the case of severe neuroses, it can lead the subject to perform obsessive acts and rituals incessantly, for example.

According to Quinet (2021), the pandemic brought with it the perplexity and the impact of an unknown reality, in which it was necessary to renounce conviviality, the physical presence of others, and therefore also the way in which each one structured his life and regulated his *jouissance*. In this way, for many, loneliness and helplessness have become increasingly unbearable, and on the other hand, those who have lived in quarantine with their family or friends can feel the same way. Remember that Freud said as early as 1930 that the third greatest source of human suffering is relationships with others, and that this is more painful to us than any other (Freud, [1930], 2020b).

Therefore, in a situation of isolation, the subject may show ambivalent feelings of affection, love, revolt, aggressiveness, and intensified violence against women, the elderly, children, transgenders, and homosexuals, especially in "social segments where trauma has already imposed itself as a primary issue in their existence, at some time, in some context" (Birman, 2018, p. 46).

Quinet also explains that the pandemic brought the significant of mortality, transforming the Other into the incarnation of the main significant *per excellence*: death (Quinet, 2021). We saw in images and constant news broadcast how millions of people died around the world, causing almost incalculable suffering for all.

The consequences of all this have certainly not yet been assimilated, and perhaps we will never be able to assimilate them, but in any case, history, in its strange habit of repeating itself, shows us in these unexpected and unwanted moments, such as the pandemic, the stubborn resistance of nature to the (destructive) way of existing of humans, taking away the possibility of living comfortably in the world without taking responsibility for our actions. Yes, we live in strange, uncanny times, the "Freudian category of the frightening, which refers to the known, the old, and which concerns things known and familiar from times past" (Freud, [1919], 1980, p. 277).

It is not something new or alien, Freud tells us, but something familiar and long established in the mind that has only been distracted by the process of repression. Something of our human condition that should have remained hidden, is revealed, and therefore contains both the positive meaning of something known and recognized and the negative meaning of something unknown (Ianini & Tavares,

2019). In this sense, the pandemic revealed the unknown knowledge (we know and deny knowing) of so many ecological catastrophes, so many transformations, manipulations that have occurred in all spheres of life without the precise dimension of their causes and consequences.

The virus reiterated the profound relationship between him and ecology, because while we are suffocating under the torment of the coronavirus, the planet has "breathed" in times of relief: pollution has decreased, habitats have been regenerated by changes in the flow of movements around the world, by the suspension of industrial activities.

Since the virus seemed to affect only humans, nature seemed to reassemble itself, at least for a while, in an open process of restoration, generating beneficial effects for the environment. In a paradoxical way, the virus that attacks only humans contributes to the regenerative process of nature.

It is remarkably interesting to note that the potency of life is also created in the way the virus multiplies, because it has the genetic strategy to replicate itself and its support is our human structure. We are, in a metaphor, the womb that allows life and at the same time destroys us. There is an interesting allegory about this in the 1979 Ridley Scott film "*Alien: The Eighth Passenger*", which tells the story of the crew of a space tugboat who land on an unknown planet after responding to a distress call and discover strange creatures that reproduce using other beings as hosts.

The coronavirus reveals, beyond the physical consequences of the encounter with traumatic death, the dimension of a facet of our civilizational crisis that we have incessantly denied: our responsibility in the practices of inhabiting and living on planet

Earth, as well as in the constitution of our social bonds.

In other words, the virus still has much to teach us, if we are willing to learn.

From this perspective, we see how our environmental tragedies and the pandemic reinforce each other, removing the cloak that has covered the relationships between suffering, social systems, and the environment.

Vladimir Safatle, a Brazilian philosopher, says that "social suffering is the expression of a society not yet recognized, which continues to insist, like an undelivered letter, like an unfulfilled promise" (Safatle, 2016, p.10).

This is in line with the existence of more than 3.5 billion people who suffer from climate change and its disastrous consequences; who suffer from the intensified consumption of a minority, which is the form of enjoyment of the modern subject; who live in environments of great adversity (what are the great garbage dumps in Africa, originating from European consumption, where human life expectancy is about 30 years?) Undoubtedly, an economic system that perpetuates inequality causes unprecedented physical and psychological suffering.

Modern society and its sophisticated technology coexist with the existence of hidden crimes of human enslavement and environmental destruction, which are not only inextricably linked, but mutually motivated. Modern slaves are used to destroy the environment, and this destruction, linked to slavery, is like an engine that feeds the global market with the spoils of a crime (Bales, 2016).

It is possible, given the many examples we have today, to go on and on. But this brief reference already serves to demonstrate that there is an ongoing ecological catastrophe that brutally exposes

the constitution of a great mass of people excluded from the current social system, intertwining exclusion, violence, and environmental destruction in an unprecedented way, proving the advance of insanity in relations between subjects.

This situation is evident because the processes of environmental degradation are gradually increasing along with social inequalities and "there is no defined strategy to build sustainability" (Leff, 2019, p. 26).

3. The environmental crisis has a truth

In addition to the objective dimension mentioned above, which speaks of spatial and material disputes over access to and use of natural resources, there is a subjective dimension - metapsychological - which refers to the different forms of social relations, their senses, and meanings, which the environmental crisis brings with it as its truth. Let's try to understand it better.

The first, of course, is denial, that is, the admission of a certain repressed content that reaches the conscious, or rather the preconscious, but which is suppressed by the emergence of a denial (Freud, [1925], 2011b).

Seen in this way, the Freudian concept shows us that we are unwilling to accept the idea that the planet may indeed be collapsing, not only in ecological terms, but also from the perspective of how we take care of each other. We deny that our practices and interventions in natural spaces are not guided by the principle of preserving life, but rather by overcoming the unacceptable limit of exploitation, exercised in the perspective of the impossible.

Denial has become an intrinsic feature of modernity: the more consistent the facts and the clearer the risks, the greater the denial. "Denial is a sign of our time and allows us to promote social distance and to coexist, cheerfully, deafly, indifferently or paranoically, with the miserable other," as the psychoanalyst and professor at the University of São Paulo - USP, Miriam Debieux Rosa, says (Rosa, 2016, p. 48).

The other truth that the environmental crisis points out, precisely in the encounter with the thought of Žižek (2010; 2013), Leff (2011), Safatle (2016; 2019), is that "the state of crisis" is "a condition" of the possibility of the functioning of an economic system, especially capitalism. This means that the meaning of our "environmental crisis" is placed under the subject of ideologies and beliefs imprinted in language, revealing the way social relations are inscribed and governed by power relations that condition subjects in their discourses.

This seems to be the case with the word "sustainability" and "being sustainable", which is so fashionable today that it is also aligned with the capitalist or reformist model, as a reinforcement of the "belief" that there is no need for structural changes, but only for behaviors, new machines, new production processes, protocols, norms... The important thing is not to stop at the end, "it is necessary to continue infinite growth to create jobs, etc. and so on".

What is at stake are beliefs that deny the existence of a crisis because they are sustained by the conviction that there is no imminent collapse, as if the disorder had appeared out of nowhere, without explanation or obvious reason.

Freud, in his work "Totem and Taboo," describes the belief system as a process of identification

and the establishment of rules that give the subject a sense of security and existential meaning. In this way, everyone possesses truths that he invents, intuitions, projects, dreams, hopes to be truths. But it will be in his work *The Future of an Illusion*, 1927, where he will say that, based on a belief, the relationship with reality is disregarded, questioning and doubt disappear, where only dogmatic and definitive answers are possible (Freud, [1927], 2020a).

The way in which the existence of the environmental crisis has been dealt with is directed in this sense, that is, the conformation of a belief, as Žižek states, leading the population to "frantic activities of recycling, buying organic food, whatever, to be sure that we are doing something and that this will somehow influence, just like a superstitious belief" (Žižek, 2010, p. 194).

Acting in an individualistic way, we change our consumption habits, we worry about the destination of domestic waste, with the consumption of organic food, plastics, etc., imbued with individual feelings of responsibility and altruism, but in any case, out of the debate on the predatory and unlimited extractions of capitalist production.

This is how we redeem ourselves and maintain guilt as the price to pay for the symbolic debt of insertion into culture (Freud, [1912], 2012).

However, the idea of acting in the transformation of the reality of the world is only about "confusing, in the realm of real or virtual consumers, fundamental distinctions such as masters and slaves, capitalists and proletarians" (Wajcman, 2007 *apud* Žižek, 2010, p. 155).

The environmental crisis also highlights the paranoid rhetoric in defense of development at the expense of the environment, i.e., we need more jobs, we need food, we need to fight hunger, creating

a permanent antagonism between environmental protection and people's quality of life.

Note that there is a narrative that does not seem to be an end, but the construction of a narrative in which the filters of tolerance become ever wider, generating false choices in the face of the intensity and magnitude of environmental impacts occurring in all regions of the world.

This reflects a denial of the degree of mortal risk to which all are exposed and confirms the idea that this is a much more existential than objective sense, more ethical and political than naturalistic and scientific. In other words, the environmental crisis should not be reduced to the perspective that the environment is in crisis, because what is really at stake is a way of being, a collective way of life, that is, the subjectivity of a civilization.

This is not an ecological catastrophe, but a critical moment in the civilizing process of the human species. Therefore, there is a responsibility to maintain this crisis, which returns to the subjects, while those who can respond to the meaning of their activities, that is, to the ethical and political dimension.

A dimension that has been very well appropriated by the capitalist way of life, which does not have an adequate, natural, and immanent relationship with the natural world.

From this perspective, the environmental crisis must be understood in terms of what it reveals about the lie of civilization, that is, that everything is fine, that there is nothing to worry about, that there is a state order that takes care of everyone, that economic development will spread to all the inhabitants of the planet, and that technology will serve to cure all the ills of the world's citizens (Farias, 2021).

In this regard, we recall that in 1937, in the text "Terminable and Interminable Analysis", Freud stated that it was necessary to call the witch, referring to the conversation between Faust and Mephistopheles, developed in the witch's kitchen, in which the character (Faust) says that he is upset by the fact that knowledge has not led him to happiness, and therefore he wants to be young again and enjoy life (Freud, [1937-1939], 2018).

In an interesting allegory that suggests the benefits of a "sustainable" life, the cure for Faust's illness, according to Mephistopheles, would be a healthy existence, living in harmony with nature and devoting himself to agricultural work. This is not what Faust wants, and the demon replies, "Let the witch come, friend!" (Goethe, [1800-1875], 2003).

It is symptomatic what Faust's wish expresses: if on the one hand he knows the right recipe for a good life, on the other hand he does not want it, thus entering the realm of the enigmatic, for "if he knows what is best, why does he not want it?"

The metapsychological dimension of the environmental crisis suggests a clue in this analogy: it is known to be serious, but there is a refusal to know or face the consequences. Thus, there is no doubt about the existence of a real malaise.

4. Environmental malaise

The approach taken by the father of Psychoanalysis makes us perceive that the environmental crisis manifests itself, not only in the physical aspects, but also in the meanderings that involve the establishment and dynamics of social ties.

It is in the collective, Freud taught, where we can see that life in society is nothing more than

broad units that obey the same laws that characterize the individual.

The fate of culture, for more than a century since the birth of psychoanalysis, describes the "environmental malaise": the dissatisfaction of society and its deadly movement of exacerbated consumption, connivance with violence, destruction, and degradation of the environment, as Brazil recently experienced in 2020, when the great fires occurred in the Pantanal and the Amazon.

Vladimir Safatle (2020) provides an accurate analysis of the practice of slash-and-burn as the legacy of colonial Brazil resurfaces with force. "Fire," says the philosopher, "not only burns the great landscapes and ecosystems vital to our survival, but also burns the social experiences that have developed and are developing in these spaces" (Safatle, 2020, p.2).

All this in the absence of protection from the institutions that should protect us all, and with the increasing medicalization of the issue, which is subject to the effects of tragedies and environmental crimes, among other examples.

Let us take the case of the breach of the Brumadinho dam, owned by Vale, a Brazilian multinational mining company and one of the largest organization operators in the country. Vale is one of the largest mining companies in the world, as well as the largest producer of iron ore, pellets, and nickel.

On January 25, 2019, Vale played a starring role in Brazil's biggest industrial accident in terms of loss of life - almost three hundred deaths - and the second biggest industrial disaster of the century. It was one of the largest mining environmental disasters in the country, after the Mariana dam collapse in 2015.

We understand that, besides the immense magnitude of the biological and physical impacts that affect local communities, their psychic suffering also needs to be included in the studies that involve socio-environmental issues, especially when there is an imposition of development by political forces.

There is a psychic suffering generated by the loss of the fundamental references of organization and of life itself, of the circuits of affections broken by the destruction of community living. These losses may constitute, psychologically, irreversible suffering.

As an example, we have the records of the overload of the local health system, which began to distribute 80% more anxiolytics and 60% more antidepressants (FIOCRUZ, 2019), in addition, the number of suicide attempts or successful suicides also reached alarming numbers. To combat the effects of a nefarious project, what is offered as a solution are medicines, to stifle the voice of those who are the real victims.

The metapsychological dimension of the environmental crisis gives us a clue because it is known that it is serious, but there is a refusal of this knowledge or of confronting the consequences.

In a way, this point expresses the pre-World War II concern that Freud, also in *The Malaise of Culture*, addressed as the existence of a principle of destruction-the death instinct-that, starting with the extermination of a race, aims at the annihilation of the human species.

The malaise translated by Freud is therefore more current than ever, manifesting a broader problem, which in the 21st century includes the environmental crisis.

His conclusion was that it is not something outside the process of civilization but is part of it.

The more culture advances the more its regressive side is revealed, whether by ignorance, violence, obscenity, indifference, etc.

If progress, in its conception, is the elimination of the barbaric origin, on the other hand, it repeats the experience of division (our drive side) that we all possess, since our origin.

Such a situation will also make him deal with one of the fundamental problems of the modern world: the difficulty of union, of bonds and ties of belonging in the relationship of individuals with other individuals. Although man strives for unity, it is not an original fact, but a dream, an ideal.

This is the case of the hunger industry in the world, as we learn from Caparrós (2016), when he states that the equality of eating every day is modest [...] in a world where nothing is more legitimized than being a victim, hunger produces victims without an apparent executioner. And what is a victim without an executioner? - asks the journalist. An act without an agent, an event provoked by no one.

The rupture of the social pact is evident where there is no "one" responsible, because it is "everyone", says Žižek (2011). It is precisely here that the absence of responsibility is pointed out in these two ways, that is, from the point of view of both those who can participate in the social benefits and those who are on the edge of the precariousness of human life.

In these reflections of 1930, Freud went further and dealt with the subject's relationship with others, showing that there is a failure where it is necessary for him to be before his will, where the field is that of freedom and not that of natural causality.

From this point of view, the appropriation of nature, by bringing benefits and by being accom-

panied by destruction and suffering, bears the mark of the primitive, against nature.

Likewise, it is legitimate to affirm that the environmental crisis expresses a malaise, while the tacit and intuitive recognition of the situation reveals that the environmental problem returns in its own solution, in an unreflective or non-thematic way, that is, without awareness of the situation. It becomes the nomination or diagnosis of the experience that, as "homologous to the psychoanalytic symptom", has produced real suffering, especially for the most socially and environmentally vulnerable, without a voice and without singularity.

It is not the outside world that is at issue here, nor the way in which the subjects suffer from the intemperance of nature, but rather the way in which they position themselves in relation to it, the subject's experience of perceiving its own crisis or state of crisis.

Freud considered that the human being discarded his instinct of self-preservation for the sake of satisfaction and, in doing so, sacrificed his well-being, self-destructing himself. In this sense, the simple fact of treating the environmental problem in the expression of its phenomena is to hide the truth of the symptom, it is a way of keeping the crisis in full operation, hiding its libidinal supplement, the invisible supplement, that is, everything that does not want to be seen.

5. *Final Thoughts*

The topic I have addressed in this essay may have many consequences, but I would like to conclude with one aspect of Freud's work that says too

much about how we are involved in creating the problems caused by the environmental crisis.

I argue with the thought of the philosopher Vladimir Safatle, within the context of Freudian helplessness and social transformation (Safatle, 2016).

From this point of view, our perspectives will never be pessimistic, on the contrary, they confirm that we have a way out: since the severe environmental crisis scenario is not of the order of nature's determinism, we can undo (or rebuild) what has already been done. What Freud did was a call to the responsibility of the subject before the civilizing process:

[...] so far, our research into happiness have not taught us much that was not already known; such knowledge does not have a paralyzing effect; on the contrary, it points our activity in the direction in which we must go. If we cannot eliminate all suffering, we can eliminate part of it and alleviate another part: a millennium of experience has convinced us of this (Freud, [1930], 2020b, p. 43).

In sum, assuming responsibility in the understanding that the development of civilization has brought - and continues to bring - undeniable advances for human welfare, requires assuming the fragility in the tessituras of the social fabric, exposed in the form of environmental degradation, in the exacerbation of poverty, social segregation and suffering.

The environmental crisis, in this broad interaction with the coronavirus pandemic, reveals that there is much to learn about its meaning and sense, as well as about the relationship with its origins.

If, on the one hand, civilization has become more complex with the advance of science, on the other hand, it confirms the existence of a psychic

economy whose currency is libido and whose foundation is the drive (Ianini & Tavares, 2020). In the end, this is what has normalized our relationship with nature.

This is a moment that demands its recovery from the point of view of reason, that is, to include the responsibility of the subjects in its origin and maintenance, reiterating this encounter with psychoanalysis, since it is a device for the treatment of subjective crises.

Psychoanalysis is there to question the responsibility of the crisis that one is going through, it is there as a device that serves to recover the value of its truth and that allows to understand it with the sense of a constant choice that refers to the most fundamental of each one. It does not renounce the real, the encounter with pain, and even less the contingencies of what causes suffering, but for this it is necessary to pay the price of nonconformity, of well-being, of tranquility or encouragement.

In the face of this, tragic for many, it is undeniable that the Freudian gaze places the subject before a paradox that reveals his orphanhood and the possibility of recreating himself, as Vladimir Safatle (2016) puts it. The author reminds us that the helplessness that accompanies the subject is also its emancipation, something to be affirmed rather than fought. "We can do very different things with helplessness, such as turning it into fear, into social anxiety, or producing from it a gesture with a strong liberating potential" Safatle (2016, p.18).

This is without a doubt one of Freud's great legacies, which allows us to suggest, in the end, which given the stage we have reached, there is no way to claim ignorance or indifference, because if man is part of the problem, he is also part of the solution. A great responsibility, perhaps a privilege.

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