

# The hero in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis: revolution and subversion<sup>1</sup>

André Oliveira Costa<sup>a\*</sup>  
Adriana Simões Marino<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Universidade de São Paulo, Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, Diversitas Núcleo de Estudos das Diversidades, Intolerâncias e Conflitos. São Paulo, SP, Brasil

<sup>b</sup> Universidade de São Paulo, Instituto de Psicologia, Pós-Graduação em Psicologia Escolar e do Desenvolvimento Humano, São Paulo, SP, Brasil

**Abstract:** Although the hero does not receive a properly conceptual statute, the term is recurrent in Freudian and Lacanian thoughts inside the theoretical-clinical elaborations of Psychoanalysis. This study unfolds the meanings of hero according to the transformations of analytical metapsychology. From this, it brings two dimensions of the hero regarding the destinies of the subject inside civilization and its discontents: revolution, which is launched to a transformation in social bonds, but promotes the maintenance of the Father's place; and subversion, which advances in an act that produces changes regarding the symbolic and imaginary coordinates that determines the subject.

**Keywords:** hero, revolution, subversion, psychoanalysis.

## Introduction

After the Copernican revolution removing man from the center of the universe and the Darwinian theory descending the human species from monkeys, psychoanalysis caused the unconscious to prevail over the lights of consciousness, in which man would no longer be the “Lord of his own house” (Freud, 1917/2010, p. 251). The discovery of psychoanalysis offered a different perspective regarding the research and treatment of human suffering, consolidating itself as a science and method of research on the psychic unconscious processes present in various human manifestations.

Since its appearance, psychoanalysis appears as a praxis that upsets the established order, signaling a trend of man not harmonizing with or fully indulging in civilization. Despite the controversial nature of the discovery of the unconscious psychic reality, this text intends to analyze this character based on the notions of revolution and subversion in the context of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, signaling a praxis that carries both perspectives under a political point of view.

Our arguments are centered on the figure of the hero in Freudian metapsychology, resumed and further developed by Lacan, to define two approaches – a revolutionary perspective and a subversive one – as possible directions of the subjects' destinies in the malaise of civilization. The former corresponds to, as noted by Lacan (1992), an attempt to introduce something new,

but which has as effect the tendency of return to the point of origin, consistent with the maintenance of the symbolic Father through fantasy and manifested through symptoms. In the words of Lacan (1992), when addressing the context of the students' revolution in 1968: “That is what you aspire to as revolutionaries, to a lord. You shall have it” (p. 239). The author indicated the repetitions that have occurred throughout history, of processes that tend to cause an absolute and authoritarian Another to re-emerge, as shown in the figure of Robespierre in the French Revolution and even in the communism of the Soviet Union.

The subversive perspective refers to the advance of the hero in his act towards the fall of his estrangements in the course of the traversal of his fundamental fantasy. This cannot be reduced to a transformation of the subject only, but traverses the social bond. As stated by Lacan (1997), in his seminar *The ethics of psychoanalysis*: “Something certainly should remain open in relation to the place we occupy in the evolution of erotica and of the treatment to be provided, no longer to so-and-so, but to civilization and its malaise” (p. 25). Psychoanalysis, despite not intending to be a worldview, did not fail to address socio-cultural and political phenomena, to achieve, in its horizon, “the subjectivity of its time” (Lacan, 1953/1998, p. 322). Despite being an ethics of singular experiences circumscribed to the clinical field, psychoanalysis presents itself as a praxis that promotes traversals which have implications for the position of the subject himself, potentially transforming the relationship of subjects with their peers and with the ideals of culture, in a dimension that results in developments within the collective context.

The conception of the hero is developed between the one who situates himself as common man in his

<sup>1</sup> Financial support of author André Oliveira Costa: Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (Fapesp: 2015/0489-4); and of author Adriana Simões Marino: Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (Capes).

\* Corresponding address: androlicos@gmail.com

individual neurotic myth, and the one who, through an act, demands a change in relation to the symbolic-imaginary coordinates that determine him, touching reality. The trajectory to be followed indicates destinations that accompany the transformations in metapsychology itself. We base ourselves on the hero while structuring oedipal figure, who seeks to be loved and to maintain his narcissism, in order to analyze him as does Lacan (1997), as a figure that can create alternatives to the binds of his destiny, taking the risks necessary for the narcissistic disturbances in his assumption of castration, directing it towards the cause of his desire.

## The hero while structuring oedipal figure

Tragedy and tragic characters have always been subjects addressed by Freud (1897/1996) to unveil the unconscious. Since the formulation of the Oedipus complex in his letters to Fliess, in which he referred to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, until the elaboration of his last text, *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud made comparisons between tragic heroes, neurotic behavior and the unconscious phenomena present in the history of civilization. As we know, the myth of Oedipus was taken as paradigmatic for analyzing human condition: a subject who is not aware of his own actions as they are determined by the unconscious. Interwoven with the repression of the ambivalent desires of love and hatred, the plot of this tragedy forges social bonds and, as a result, the tragic hero emerges as possible reference with which to analyze the modern subject, because the laws of the unconscious encounter the laws that govern social bonds.

In the text *Psychopathic characters on the stage*, which discusses the role of the catharsis derived from the experience of the viewer in dramatic plays and other artistic manifestations, Freud (1942/2016) presents the figure of the hero of Greek tragedies as a rebel that turns against god, "against the divine ordering of the universe, which determined his suffering" (p. 364). The hero would be the one who went through an experience that "is not possible without pain, suffering and serious fears that nearly nullify enjoyment" (p. 363) and who "boldly surrendered to repressed impulses, such as the need for freedom in the religious, political, social and sexual spheres" (p. 363). We understand that the hero appears, in this text, as the one who feels no fear or mercy and, as developed later by Lacan (1959-60/1997), as someone who risked his own life to go against the symbolic-imaginary coordinates that engender his life, in the mainstay of his assumption of castration:

There is, very often, in that which man imposes on himself as duties, only the fear of the risks to be taken if we did not impose them on ourselves. Things need to be called by their own names . . . what the analysis articulates is that, deep down, it

is more convenient to submit to interdiction than to incur castration. (Lacan, 1959-1960/1997, p. 367)

We found an important passage in the Freudian text (Freud, 1939/2014) that corroborates what was said by Lacan in the sense of the subject's subversion and especially of the incursions over a specific heroine: Antigone, daughter of the infamous Oedipus. But, before we consider this particular transformation, which does not conform to the subjection to interdiction that the author presents as being akin to the "incurance of castration" (Lacan, 1997, p. 367), let us return to the prelude to the elaborations about the hero still in Freud.

Of the three types of tragic conflicts (with gods, with people and with the self), it is in the latter that we see the unfolding of the psychic drama that guides the first investigations of psychoanalysis: "The conflict, which generates suffering, happens in the hero's own psyche among various drives, and must end not with the end of the hero, but of a given drive, i.e., with resignation" (Freud, 1942/2016, p. 366). This subject faces his own contradictions and confronts his desire with the demands of culture and human conventions.

All subjects whose constitution was based on castration are faced with the impossibility of the full drive satisfaction imposed by the inscription in culture. This condition of the tragic hero is constituent part of subjectivity. Still according to Freud (1942/2016): "it becomes easy for us to recognize ourselves in the hero; we are susceptible to the same conflict as he is, because, 'in certain circumstances, those who do not lose reason have no reason to lose'." (pp. 367-368). In Lacan (1997), we find a similar assertion when he says that "in each of us there is a trajectory mapped out for a hero, and it is precisely as common man that he fulfills it" (p. 383), signaling that a hero does not limit himself to great deeds, like those of Hollywood, but aspires to a transformation in which, according to Freud, the being is touched by that known as reason, the supposed centrality of conscience.

In *Creative writers and day-dreaming*, Freud (1908/2015a) presents a parallel between poetic creation and children's games while ways of building a world of fantasies against the constraints of reality. The hero, here, appears as the character protected by a special providence, who is able to recover from his wounds or save himself from a shipwreck. He is always protected from the dangers that mask the condition of helplessness inherent to man: "Nothing can happen to you", he indicates as being the indelible mark of a supposed invulnerability of the Ego from which one may recognize "without much effort, His Majesty the Ego, the hero of all daydreams and all novels" (Freud, 1908/2015a, p. 344). The same happens in *The neurotic's family romance*, in which the hero finds himself in fantasies and children's games as a figure that is protected against the threat of losing the privileges derived from his primordial family relationships (Freud, 1909/2015).

In this text, written under the influence of Otto Rank's (1909/2015) *The myth of the birth of the hero*, the hero emerges in fantasies and games as a form of protection against the threat of losing the privileges offered by his most essential relationships. Freud (1909/2015) says: "It is particularly younger children who try to detach from their predecessors the prerogative of these inventions" (p. 423). As primordial family bonds are replaced by new relationships, through family romance, "the fantasizing hero seizes legitimacy while relegating as illegitimate his brothers and sisters" (Freud, 1909/2015, p. 423).

If the hero represented an imaginary safeguard of the Ego, as a condition under which one could recover the investments lost in the relationship with parental figures, in the text "*Civilized*" *sexual morality and modern nervous illness* Freud (1908/2015b) brings forth this figure once more to analyze it from the relationship between subject and culture. In this first formalization of malaise, he reaffirms that the progress of civilization is built over a resignation that must be undertaken by all subjects, of a portion of their drive satisfaction and of their freedom, a suppression of narcissistic tendency to which men should resign for the sake of civilization. This conclusion leads to the subsequent development of the theory on malaise: "But I must insist on the point of view that neurosis, no matter its range or who it reaches, always manages to jeopardize the intentions of culture" (Freud, 1908/2015b, p. 387).

Morality is revealed as part of the civilizational demands which, however, condemn the subject to dissatisfaction. This condition is found in the cases where the fantasy in neuroses is the negative form of perversion – a construct that requires the constant maintenance of repression, although men "would be better, if it was possible that they were worse" (Freud, 1908/2015b, p. 373). In addition to the temporary escape through sublimation, Freud situates neurosis, criminals and the hero as ways of inhabiting the margins of civilization, in the impossibility of meeting the requirements of culture in terms of a harmonic resignation of drives:

The one who, because of his inflexible constitution, cannot follow this suppression of instincts, becomes a "criminal", an outlaw before society, unless his social position and extraordinary capabilities allow him to stand as a great man, a "hero". (Freud, 1908/2015b, p. 368)

Neurotic subjects are framed in the class of those who refuse to submit completely to the demands imposed by civilization. Depending on the social contingencies and provisions, this outsider can insert himself as either criminal or hero. Being at the margins of social bonds produces resistance, threatening the disruption of the established structures, while also being possibly recognized as a superior position, when resisting imposed coercion. Neurotic subjects, in the civilizing process,

under the pressure of cultural requirements, can perform only one apparent and temporary suppression of drives. The rest is impossible to sublimate or conceal.

Our approach to the hero and to neurotic subjects showed us that in both there is an attempt to reconcile two antagonistic principles. Neurotic subjects remove themselves from reality, because they do not fully endorse the drive resignation required by civilization. They "reconstruct" reality based on their own truths, transferring to fantasies the possibility of fulfilling their wishes. The subject becomes a true epic hero that does not need to be limited to conditions imposed by the duties of external reality, as he is able to create a whole new world for himself.

Both for the neurotic subject and the epic hero, the issue at hand is a substitution of the principle of reality by the principle of pleasure. From this perspective, in the text *On narcissism: an introduction*, Freud (1914/2010) resumes the topic relating it to this concept, through which the Ego is reinvested and narcissism tries to recover the primordial bonds of a time when the subject occupied a place of full investment by a parental Another. Through the concept of narcissism, the author reiterates the hero as a figure to be achieved through oedipal fantasies. The boy wants to be as strong as his father so he can marry his mother, while the girl finds fulfillment in her position as object of her father's love: "The child should realize the unfulfilled dreams of the parents, become a great man or a hero in his father's stead, marry a prince as late compensation for her mother" (Freud, 1914/2010, p. 25). In this dimension of the hero, the maintenance of a narcissism that is already shaken, an eagerness to regain the place of the Father through identification is sought for.

In these first developments of psychoanalytic theory, the hero was placed between the neurotic subject who dedicated himself to maintaining the majesty of the narcissistic Ego, under the civilizing commandments of the principle of reality, and the one who can break through this determination that, despite being alienating, constitutes his subjectivity, towards "a resignation" (Freud, 1942/2016, p. 366) that we consider important to be developed, as its object can mobilize our apprehension about the destinations of the subject faced with the repression of drives.

## The revolutionary hero

The first time Freud wrote about the relationship between subject and culture was in a letter to Fliess in May 1897, named "Draft N" (Freud, 1897/1996). In this letter, he discloses some of his most fundamental hypotheses for a psychoanalytic theory of culture. One of the most important refers to the "horror to incest" (Freud, 1897/1996, p. 307), indicating the theme of prohibitions as regulatory principle of civilization based on the repression of sexuality. The effort that the individual should undertake against the desire to be incestuous

shifted to the tendency to find substitutes to satisfaction, such as fantasies, sublimatory literary creations and the formation of symptoms.

The definition of “holy” (heilig) appears in this letter to indicate the sacrifice that the subject should make of part of his sexual freedom, that is, of giving in to perversions, for the benefit of his participation in something bigger within a community. In this way, he presents the hypotheses that will ground his theory about the relationship between subject and culture: “incest is antisocial” and “civilization consists in this progressive resignation” (Freud, 1897/1996, p. 307). The horror to incest permeates the figure of the saint as a condition that enables and determines the social bonds. But Freud ends his text by referring to the superman as a character who would evade this resignation of drives imposed by civilization from a position that, if not expressed in its sacred condition, emerged as the resistance of the subject who rebels against the impositions of society.

As from *Totem and taboo*, the hero is placed within the context of the origins of society. Initially, as mentioned above, the hero emphasized the belief in the achievement of oedipal wishes through psychic reality, envisaged through fantasy. In the author’s terms: “From the genetic point of view, the asocial nature of neurosis stems from its original tendency to escape from an unsatisfactory reality towards a pleasurable fantasy world” (Freud, 1913/2010, p. 79). We find, in the subject, a push towards the rupture of social bonds. Assuming the role of hero was no longer simply moving away from reality towards another possible world, Freud (1913/2010) continues: “Turning your back to reality is, at the same time, withdrawing from the human community” (p. 79). From the creation of the myth of the primitive horde<sup>2</sup>, the hero becomes, in the origins of civilization, the one who is severed from the social bonds. The guilt for the murder of the father will be placed upon him, serving as the object of expiation of a collective responsibility.

The hero occupies a place of sacrifice so that everyone can live in the community: “He has to suffer because he is the primeval father, the hero of that great tragedy of the early days, now tendentiously repeated, and tragic fault is that which he has to take upon himself, to rid the chorus of this guilt” (Freud, 1913/2010, p. 152). He also becomes a taboo figure, marked by ambivalent traits of veneration and horror, for being someone who would have fulfilled a collective desire. Taboo brings an antithetical meaning in itself, referring to what is holy and sacred and to what is unsettling, forbidden and unclean.

2 According to this Freudian fiction, there was a primitive horde dominated by a male who possessed all the females and casted out his children as they grew. One day, the children decided to assassinate him and then devoured his meat. After the banquet, the guilt and remorse came, because the father who was hated (for being the only one to satisfy the desire of possessing all the women) was also loved (for providing protection against all dangers). The myth of the primitive horde addressed the origins of social organization, of moral conscience (Superego) and of religion.

While taboo, the hero begins to detain a dangerous force that simultaneously attracts and repels. He was assigned the responsibility of fulfilling a collective desire – the murder of the father – and was banished for threatening the safe distance between what is desired and what is forbidden.

While exception, he occupies the margins of society and carries the ambivalence of social repression upon himself, showing that love and hate, life and death, coexist in the subject. It was not by chance that Freud declared, two days before World War I, that death and violence were foundational conditions of civilization. In the shadow of this historic event, Freud (1915/1996) wrote “Reflections on war and death”. This is the testimony of a man who, having witnessed the rebelling against the highest moral and ethical standards of those who should be their greatest guardians, imposes the study of the fate of civilization upon himself.

For Freud, it was necessary to recognize the barbarism of the greatest achievements of civilization and of its very foundation. The repression of the original murder manifested itself through the symptomatic return to violence. Freud (1914/1996), in “Remembering, repeating and working”, warned us that repetition is caused by the absence of a development, hence why the repression and return of the one who is repressed are the verse of the same reverse. It is in this sense that Lacan (1992) evoked the idea of revolution from the perspective of psychoanalysis, as an attempt at the inscription of difference, of something new, but which returns as repetition.

Moreover, the atrocities of the conflicts arose in Freud the need to reflect about our attitude towards death. If with the progress of civilization death was progressively removed from public and psychic life, our unconscious carried the repressed remains of history, acting like the primitive peoples who did not believe in their own death. Given this, he was able to conclude: “Maybe that is where the secret of heroism lies” (Freud, 1915/2010, p. 225). The principles that sustain the hero do not consider the possibility that something like death interrupts life. To our unconscious, we are immortal heroes.

According to this text, the hero acts on an impulse that reaffirms his narcissistic indestructibility. But facing dangers, as if nothing could happen, “only serves to keep the scruples which could halt the heroic reaction that corresponds to the unconscious at bay” (Freud, 1915/2010, p. 179). In this important passage, we find again what may be referred to as the two directions – revolutionary and subversive – of the approach to the hero in psychoanalysis. The former is based on the maintenance of narcissism, on the neurotic-hero and his fantasy, at the center of a transformation that is consistent with revolution and that leads to repetition. The latter lies in another direction, towards a different transformation, because it is not some sort of action in which the hero would be narcissistically shielded, but an emphasis given to the unconscious. A heroic action of the unconscious itself that cannot be

reduced to the maintenance of narcissistic indestructibility emerges before an impulse driven by the tendency to destruction. When noticing that there is another dimension to the hero, we find an alternative to address a way out that does not result in a subjection to prohibition in a sort of return to violence, to the totemic father.

In *Group psychology and the analysis of the ego*, the hero reappears in the search for the understanding of the elements that maintain cohesion within a group. When discussing the group's mode of operation, he highlights that it is in the leader that the figure of the hero can be brought back for the analysis of these social organizations. In this text, Freud (1921/2011) develops a new conjecture about the hero as epic poet in which, driven by the nostalgia for the time when there was an almighty father, as in the myth of the horde, he was the first to detach himself from the group to which he belonged so he could, in the impulse of his desire, recount the murder, taking the blame for the patricide. The hero assumes the role of the "group's ideal" (Freud, 1921/2011, p. 91), but this leader-hero is inserted in this fiction of the origins no longer as the child-hero, of *Totem and taboo*, who would expunge the collective guilt. The hero now has a new narrative:

During this time, the nostalgic deprivation may have led an individual to detach himself from the group and assume the role of the father. The one who did this was the first epic poet, the advance occurred in his fantasy. The poet "transmuted" reality in the sense of his longing. He invented the heroic myth. The hero was the one who had killed the father by himself, who still appeared as a totemic monster in the myth. As the father had been the first ideal of the boy, now the poet created the first ideal of the Ego in the hero who would replace the father. (Freud, 1921/2011, p. 102)

This hero is the one who transmuted an individual feat through his fantasy. In this retelling of the totemic myth, the hero narrated to the brothers' community the fantasy in which he had performed the great deed of the murder by himself, rebuilding a society under the principles of equality and justice:

Therefore, the myth is the step with which the individual emerges from the group's psychology. The first myth was certainly psychological, the myth of the hero. . . . The poet who took this step, and with it freed himself from the group in imagination, knows . . . how to find a way back to it in reality. Because he goes and tells the group about the deeds of its hero, invented by him. Deep down, this hero is none other than himself. In this way he descends to reality and ascends his listeners to imagination. But the listeners understand the poet, they are able to identify themselves with the hero

from the same nostalgic relation with the primeval father. (Freud, 1921/2011, p. 103)

He is no longer a subject that seeks to rebuild a phantasmatic reality just for himself, but someone who invents the heroic deed supported by the interface of neurotic fantasy for a collective myth. In this sense, the subject who is trapped in his neurotic fantasy is situated in the social bonds as a hero restricted by his own neurosis, when clinging to a desire to detach himself from the group and shutting himself away in his fantasy:

Abandoned to himself, the neurotic subject is forced to replace the large group formations, from which he is banished, by his symptom formations. He creates to himself his own fantasy world, his religion, his delusional system, and thus repeats the institutions of mankind in a deformation which clearly highlights the powerful contribution of direct sexual drives. (Freud, 1921/2011, p. 111)

We can thus resume the discussion on the Freudian statement about a resignation which refers to a decision point within tragic conflict. It is a time of decision in which the subject finds himself at a crossroads where he will have to face his destiny. In the end, will he be the hero reflected by the Ego, pushed to maintain his imaginary narcissism, or the hero as subject of the unconscious that should arise from where it was, in accordance with the Lacanian reformulation<sup>3</sup>?

Freud's criticism of psychological groups and of the engenderment of a state infantilized by its members is not fortuitous. The leader (or great idea) longed by the masses "continues to be the dreaded primordial father, the group still wants to be dominated with unrestricted force, it has an extreme longing for authority, . . . for submission" (Freud, 1921/2011, p. 91). It is from this perspective that we can say that, in Freud, this dimension of the hero redounds to a revolution in which there is an insistence for recovering the position of the already dead all-powerful totemic father. What is revealed through the fantasy of this neurotic hero is the longing for the Father.

Lacan (1992), referring to the revolutionary students of 1968, said: "That is what you aspire to as revolutionaries, to a lord. You shall have it" (p. 239). The author referred to a conception of revolution as a 360° spin, being aware of the repetitions that have occurred throughout history, of the resurgence of an absolute and authoritarian Another, like Robespierre in the French Revolution and even the Soviet Communism. The paternal dismissal, according to the individual myth and even in the form of a mythic fantasy, tends to cause this Father to resurface.

The constitutive alienation of the subject has the power to lead others to participate in "the soul of many

3 According to Lacan (1965-1966/1998): "there where it was, thus, as subject, I must arise from" (p. 878).

groups, of their race, class, community of faith, nationality, etc.” (Freud, 1921/2011, p. 92), but is also subject to a separation that is equally constitutive and can also “rise above it, over a hint of independence and originality” (Freud, 1921/2011, p. 92). A “hint” of freedom, derived from a separation which is also constitutive of the subject, may be noted. Thus, according to Roudinesco (2003), subjective freedom and the exercise of desire always imply in “a conflict between one and many, between authority and the challenge of authority, between the universal and difference” (p. 85).

For Lacan (1992), “the revolutionary aspiration has only one chance of always leading to the discourse of the master. This is what experience has shown. That is what you aspire to as revolutionaries, to a master. (pp. 196-197). This means that, without modifying the symbolic-imaginary neurotic coordinates, that is, the articulation of master signifiers (S1) and of the fantasy that constitute the subject and that condition his desire, the tendency is for the Father to be suppressed and thus re-emerge in the form of symptom.”

In his final work *Moses and monotheism*, Freud (1939/2014) reassesses his meta-psychology to present a conception of the hero as the subject who carries the paternal insignia, at the same time he must kill him to engender new dispositions of the social bonds: “a hero is the one who bravely stood up against the father and finally subdued him victoriously” (p. 38). Again under the influence of Rank, his biographical study of Moses leads back to the Egyptian origin of the leader of the Jewish people, as well as to the roots of the Jewish religion in the monotheism of Pharaoh Ikhnaton.

Moses became the political leader of the Jewish people, the creator of a new race and a new monotheistic religion through certain revolutions: the *exodus* from Egypt; the period of *exile* in Babylon; his *murder* in the violent uprising of the Jews who resisted against their leader and legislator; the *return* of the Jewish people to Canaan. These revolutions’ project of introducing something new rebuilt social bonds from the past: “It was, as it turns out, a heroic attempt to challenge destiny, to obtain a compensation, in two ways, for the losses that Ikhnaton’s catastrophe had brought” (Freud, 1939/2014, p. 58).

Moses’ revolution was based on the recreations that he performed alongside the Egyptian people: new religion, new laws and new culture. For Freud (1939/2014), it is “the return of the one single god-father, who dominates without restrictions” (p. 123). This hero, however, failed to escape the revolutionary repetition of the paternal position’s reconstruction. Moses assumes the role of the child who takes responsibility for the crime against the Father when rebelling against the Egyptian tradition and establishing a new monotheist social organization. His murder, however, was the repetition of parricide, the starting point for the establishment of a new religion, Christianity. In this sense, monotheistic religion shows itself as a repetition of totemic society.

However, regardless of what we have here being a fantasy or the return of a forgotten reality, we can, in any case, find at this point the origin of the idea of hero, of the hero who, after all, always rebels against the father and kills him in some way, and also the real substantiation of the hero’s “tragic guilt” in drama, otherwise difficult to demonstrate. (Freud, 1939/2014, p. 127)

The resumption of this myth in the narrative of Moses brings the figure of the hero as a “scar of repression” (Freud, 1939/2014, p. 172), filling in the gaps of the fading memories of civilization. In this way, social institutions, as they repress their origins, unconsciously replicate and transmit the ambivalence of the incestuous desire in the form of tradition. In every repetition of a traumatic act, the hero appears ambivalently in social bonds, as the manifestation of a *historical truth* in the return of the repressed. The father of the horde becomes the head of the household once more, the totemic animal gives way to God, and “between the totemic animal and the god, the hero emerges” (Freud, 1939/2014, p. 178). A subject who, from a position of marginality or exception, assumes responsibility for the disorder of social bonds, atoning for the murder, while also representing the possibility of new forms of bonds, becoming salvation itself.

While Freud concludes his discussion about the hero indicating a rebellion against the Father and the feeling of guilt which the neurotic subject insistently tries to retrieve from him, Lacan proposes a subversion marked by desire. To perform this transition, we will develop the theme of the hero still in Freud based on his contributions to the theme of illusion.

## The non-foolish hero

Freud (1915/1996), in “Reflections on war and death”, presented two attitudes in relation to affliction or psychological misery, namely, “disappointment” and “change of attitude” (p. 290) when facing death in the context of war. About the first, he affirmed it to be not a sentimentality, but derived from psychic economy in relation to human suffering itself. Unlike previous wars in which an ethics that would lead back to peace and civility was expected, the Great War brought an end to the prospect of renewal of social bonds. That is what he called “disappointment”: a reaction to an excess of expectation toward men in civilization. The suffering engendered by disillusion presents itself due to the “destruction of an illusion” (Freud, 1915/1996, p. 290) caused by the excess of it.

However, this disappointment would be unjustified as there would be a “hypocrite” dimension inherent to a life of drives derived from psychic ambivalence (Freud, 1915/1996, p. 293). Thus, it would be better if our demands for civilization were “a lot more modest”, so that the truth associated with death was a duty of “tolerating life” (Freud, 1915/1996, p. 297). After stating this in his

discussions about the destinies of drive before the fate of our death and in the context of the subject's destinations before castration, he emphasizes: "Illusion will lose all its value, if it makes this more difficult for us," which thus means that "if you want to tolerate life, prepare yourself for death" (Freud, 1915/1996, p. 309).

Illusion here is not the one that suppresses death, as developed by him in "*The future of an illusion*," over a psychic economy in which science, religion or justice are devoted to the "benevolent action of Divine Providence", the "establishment of a universal moral order" that would supposedly ensure the "compliance with the demand for justice" and the "extension of earthly existence" (Freud, 1927/1998, p. 214). When addressing the Freudian references of 1915 and 1927, we understand that illusion involves a value that assigns positivity to death and to the negative experience of castration. This is an operation over illusion – of the beliefs of completeness, of the demands for happiness and wellbeing – towards the possibility of a subversive act marked by desire.

According to the definition proposed by Freud (1921/2011), every illusion is "sustained by the unfulfilled desire" (p. 29). This is how a management of illusion can be transforming and it is in this sense that we understand that Freud suggested the possibility of a sort of illusion characterized by a fundamental incompleteness. As noted by Lacan (1960/1998), the "mainspring" of subversion is the castration complex (p. 835).

In his seminar *Encore*, Lacan (1998) focused specifically on this topic to point out the difference between the Copernican revolution and Newtonian subversion. In relation to the former, we have the well-known revolution over heliocentrism. What the author noted, however, is that nothing has changed structurally. After all, all that happened was that the Earth was removed from the center of the universe and the Sun was placed in its stead, that is, "there is nothing that subverts what the signifier *center* retains on its own" (Lacan, 1998, p. 58). In the context of these revolutions, Freud (1917/2010) would have made the unconscious prevail over the lights of consciousness. With this revolution, we also have a change in relation to the center, from consciousness to the unconscious. The double dimension found in this author in relation to the figure of the hero, one revolutionary and the other subversive, may not be fortuitous.

In his text *The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire*, Lacan (1960/1998) anticipated his criticism of the term revolution, stressing: "heliocentrism is not thought, for exalting the center, to be less misleading than seeing the Earth there" (p. 811) and even of psychoanalysis for "representing the advent of a new seism" (p. 811). The notion of consciousness in psychoanalysis is "such an outdated trait" (p. 813) that it is insufficient to deduce the unconscious from the simple denial of consciousness. This is why Lacan brings forth the subject, whose concept lies within the theories of language, marked by a division, as effect of the signifier.

It is possible to assume, from what we have developed about castration at the core of the value given to a certain amount of illusion, that Freud was suggesting an illusion characterized by incompleteness. Psychoanalysis does not advocate the end of every illusion, but questions precisely its excess as that which engenders disappointment. It is about doing something different about the impossibility of harmonizing public and private demands within the pact of civilization and overcoming the heroic impotence before castration. We would, in this case, have a foolish form of illusion, not entirely illusory, as referred to by Lacan (1960/1998) in relation to the promotion of ignorance in the context of a knowledge about the place of unconscious truth. Hence the focus on a subversive policy marked by desire.

Our hypothesis is that, perhaps as a consequence of this finding, Lacan (1997) preferred to address the hero from the female perspective, to highlight the figure of Antigone and engender an equally subversive clinical outlook and public debate.

## The heroine's subversion

When addressing the subversive dimension of the hero through the figure of Antigone, we will develop an initial discussion on the notion of "not-all", as suggested by Lacan (1997), and that is in line with what we have proposed in the sense of a non-foolish hero, that is, one who stands in a position in relation to castration that is not completely dedicated to illusions of completeness and that results in revolutions. The relationships contained in Lacan's sexuation formulas (1998) make it possible to grasp what we have discussed in relation to an illusion characterized by incompleteness at the Freudian core of castration<sup>4</sup>. These formulas were developed to contemplate a theory of sexuality that incorporated male and female stances in their different positions, forms of enjoyment and fantasy. As for what interests us in this text, the not-all presents itself according to a logic that is consistent with the idea that women would be "not all" inscribed in the phallic function (of the phallic desire derived from castration).

Following our hypothesis of a not-all sort of illusion, a subversive character of the hero may be seized, as possibility "for each and every one of us", as it "is precisely as common man that he consummates it" (Lacan, 1997, p. 383). And it will be through an act that Antigone brings forth the "desire's target point" (p. 321). Antigone, as highlighted by Lacan in Sophocles, is the one who

4 The "rock" of castration was a term employed by Freud (1937/1996) in "Analysis terminable and interminable" to address two deadlocks in the trajectory of cure in psychoanalysis within the context of the anatomical difference between the sexes – namely, the repression of passivity in the male position (men's deadlock in supporting castration anxiety) and the repression of activity in the female position (women's deadlock in letting go of their phallic envy, *penisneid*). In this study, the rock of castration is found in its broader meaning, comprising castration in relation to the unconscious and its socio-cultural implications.

advanced over the limit of her *Until* (her destiny), which is referred to as an insult, as a “foolish nonsense seeing as, for Antigone, life is only affordable, can only be experienced and reflected from this limit in which she has already lost her life . . . but from there she can see it, experience it in the form of what is lost” (Lacan, 1997, p. 339). Thus, the heroine’s subversive act consists in not giving up her unconscious, but at the expense of disturbances in her narcissism and in the ideals that constitute her capture in the symbolic-imaginary coordinates of her life.

We have an act, as developed by Lacan (1967-1968) in his seminar *The psychoanalytic act*, that retroactively amends the symbolic-imaginary coordinates of the subject, that brings forth a policy that takes into account the lack/desire for and indicates the creation of new possibilities to modify what was regarded as given in the life of a subject. The political bet of psychoanalysis focuses on the transition from neurotic impotence to an impossibility of praising the symptom and desire as a way of half-telling the truth about the reality that causes it. That is because the subject is an effect of the lack of a signifier that can effectively say what he “is”, from a symbolic perspective, at the same time he finds his cause in the lack of an object that fully satisfies him (object *a*) in reality. The politics of psychoanalysis are based on an operation of separation from the ideals of the *Another*, of master signifiers (S1) that cause the subject to become fixed on the meaning produced by the signifier chain (S1-S2) and on his relationship with fantasy, situated as an attempt to compensate the lack of the object (*a*) that is a cause of desire.

This is why subjective privation in the context of the traversal of a subject’s fantasy in an analysis leads to a disturbance of his symbolic-imaginary coordinates. This is how Antigone suspends the passage of time, when the “relationship with the being suspends all related to transformation, to the cycle of generations and corruptions, to history itself” (Lacan, 1997, p. 344) and its excessive symbolic-imaginary determinations. The hero becomes the only one who “can get away with being betrayed”, as he is the one whose only asset is at the service of “paying the price for his access to desire” (Lacan, 1997, p. 385); therefore, he pays for it with his being, or better yet, with his “un-being” (p. 385). When bringing back the Oedipal

myth, Lacan stresses that he only becomes a hero when situated “between two deaths”. In his words: “Entering this zone is, for him, an act of resignation to goods and power . . . If he pulls himself out of the world through his own blinding, that is because only the one who escapes appearances may reach the truth.” (Lacan, 1997, p. 371).

In psychoanalysis, we may say that our freedom is also not-all, because we do not seek a way out through autonomous individuation, along the lines of liberal individualization. It is not devoid of the similar (imaginary) other nor of the (symbolic) *Another*, but it traverses them, implying a singular output for each subject without being mistaken for individualism. The hero, thus, is not the one who acts for himself in an individualist manner, and Freud (1913/2011) himself noted that the conception of the hero as someone who did something great on his lonesome is a myth. The hero’s act has implications for the collective, because, as noted by Lacan (1997), through his act, “the hero frees his own opponent” (p. 384). In other words, the heroine’s act allows the imaginary disputes directed to the other and to the narcissistic self to fall short. As they lose their fragile meaning, a traversal of the determinations assigned to the symbolic *Another* by subjective destitution is allowed, giving rise to the the cause of desire (object *a*) where It was.

It is in this direction that the psychoanalytic act can be thought of as effective within the polis. Psychoanalysis does not separate individual and society – its effects materialize in social relations. The analyst’s desire is the one that, through an act, became connected with castration and the cause of its desire, heading in the direction of a subversive transformation. Thus, the analyst-hero recognizes himself in his unconscious function, in that which emerges as strange from the formations of our unconscious. This is what is possible for the subject in psychoanalysis: realizing an act without any Hollywoodian pretensions, while connected to an all illusion (and, consequently, to a powerless “disillusion”), and disturbing the tendency to revolutionary repetition, continuously and symptomatically triggering the *Father*, but allowing him to fulfil his symbolic duties within the social pact, in the form of a foolish not-all illusion, to subvert the subject towards the direction of the cause of his desire.

## O herói na psicanálise de Freud e Lacan: revolução e subversão

**Resumo:** Embora o herói não receba um estatuto propriamente conceitual, o termo é recorrente no pensamento de Freud e Lacan no cerne da elaboração teórico-clínica da psicanálise. Este texto trabalha os desdobramentos das significações do herói de acordo com as transformações da metapsicologia analítica. A partir disso, traz duas dimensões do herói no âmbito dos destinos do sujeito no mal-estar na civilização: a revolução, que se lança a uma transformação nos laços sociais, mas promove a manutenção do lugar do Pai, e a subversão, que avança em um ato que produz mudanças em relação às coordenadas simbólico-imaginárias que determinam o sujeito.

**Palavras-chave:** herói, revolução, subversão, psicanálise.



## Le héros dans la psychanalyse de Freud et Lacan: révolution et subversion

**Résumé :** Bien que le héros ne reçoive pas un statut proprement conceptuel, ce terme est récurrent dans les pensées de Freud et Lacan dans les développements théorico-cliniques de la psychanalyse. Cet article traite des significations du héros selon les transformations de la métapsychologie. De là, il apporte deux dimensions du héros à propos des destins du sujet dans le malaise de la civilisation: la révolution, qui se lance vers une transformation des liens sociaux, mais qui favorise la manutention de la place du Père ; et la subversion, qui avance dans un acte qui produit des changements par rapport aux coordonnées symboliques-imaginaires qui déterminent le sujet.

**Mots-clés :** héros, révolution, subversion, psychanalyse.

## El héroe en la psicoanálisis de Freud y Lacan: revolución y subversión

**Resumen:** Aunque el héroe no reciba un estatuto propiamente conceptual, este término es recurrente en el pensamiento de Freud y Lacan en el centro de la elaboración teórico-clínica del psicoanálisis. Este texto trabaja los desdoblamientos de las significaciones del héroe de acuerdo con las transformaciones de la metapsicología analítica. A partir de eso, trae dos dimensiones del héroe en el ámbito de los destinos del sujeto en el malestar de la civilización: la revolución, que se lanza a una transformación en los lazos sociales, pero promueve el mantenimiento del lugar del Padre; y la subversión, que avanza en un acto que produce cambios con relación a las coordenadas simbólico-imaginarias que determinan al sujeto.

**Palabras clave:** héroe, revolución, subversión, psicoanálisis.

## References

- Freud, S. (1996). Rascunho N. In *Edição standard brasileira das obras psicológicas completas de Sigmund Freud: publicações pré-psicanalíticas e esboços inéditos* (J. Salomão, trad., Vol. 1, pp. 304-307). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Imago. (Trabalho original publicado em 1897)
- Freud, S. (1996). Recordar, repetir e elaborar: novas recomendações sobre a técnica da psicanálise II. In *Edição standard brasileira das obras psicológicas completas de Sigmund Freud: O caso Schreber, Artigos sobre técnica e outros trabalhos* (J. Salomão, trad., Vol. 12, pp. 163-171). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Imago. (Trabalho original publicado em 1914)
- Freud, S. (1996). Reflexões para os tempos de guerra e morte. In *Edição standard brasileira das obras psicológicas completas de Sigmund Freud: A história do movimento psicanalítico, Artigos sobre metapsicologia e outros trabalhos* (J. Salomão, trad., Vol. 14, pp. 284-316). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Imago. (Trabalho original publicado em 1915)
- Freud, S. (1996). Análise terminável e interminável. In *Edição standard brasileira das obras psicológicas completas de Sigmund Freud: Moisés e o monoteísmo, Esboço de psicanálise e outros trabalhos* (J. Salomão, trad., Vol. 23, pp. 225-274). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Imago. (Trabalho original publicado em 1937)
- Freud, S. (1998). O futuro de uma ilusão. In *Edição standard brasileira das obras psicológicas completas de Sigmund Freud: O futuro de uma ilusão, O mal-estar na civilização e outros trabalhos* (J. Salomão, trad., Vol. 21, pp. 15-65). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Imago. (Trabalho original publicado em 1927)
- Freud, S. (2010). Introdução ao narcisismo. In *Obras completas: Introdução ao narcisismo, ensaios de metapsicologia e outros textos* (P. C. de Souza, trad., Vol. 12, pp. 13-50). São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras. (Trabalho original publicado em 1914)
- Freud, S. (2010). Considerações atuais sobre a guerra e a morte. In *Obras completas: Introdução ao narcisismo, ensaios de metapsicologia e outros textos* (P. C. de Souza, trad., Vol. 12, pp. 209-246). São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras. (Trabalho original publicado em 1915)
- Freud, S. (2010). Uma dificuldade da psicanálise. In *Obras completas: "O homem dos lobos" e outros textos* (P. C. de Souza, trad., Vol. 14, pp. 240-251). São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras. (Trabalho original publicado em 1917)
- Freud, S. (2011). Totem e tabu. In *Obras completas: Totem e tabu, Contribuição à história do movimento psicanalítico e outros textos* (P. C. de Souza, trad., Vol. 11, pp. 13-244). São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras. (Trabalho original publicado em 1913)
- Freud, S. (2011). Psicologia das massas e análise do eu. In *Obras completas: Psicologia das massas e Análise do eu e outros textos* (P. C. de Souza, trad., Vol. 15, pp. 13-113). São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras. (Trabalho original publicado em 1921)
- Freud, S. (2014). *O homem Moisés e a religião monoteísta* (R. Zwick, trad.). Porto Alegre, RS: L&PM. (Trabalho original publicado em 1939)
- Freud, S. (2015a). O escritor e a fantasia. In *Obras completas: O delírio e os sonhos na Gradiva e outros textos* (P. C.

- de Souza, trad., Vol. 8, pp. 325-338). São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras. (Trabalho original publicado em 1908)
- Freud, S. (2015b). A moral sexual “cultural” e o nervosismo moderno. In *Obras completas: O delírio e os sonhos na Gradiva e outros textos* (P. C. de Souza, trad., Vol. 8, pp. 359-390). São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras. (Trabalho original publicado em 1908)
- Freud, S. (2015). O romance familiar dos neuróticos. In *Obras completas: O delírio e os sonhos na Gradiva e outros textos* (P. C. de Souza, trad., Vol. 8, pp. 419-424). São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras. (Trabalho original publicado em 1909)
- Freud, S. (2016). Personagens psicopáticos no teatro. In *Obras completas: Três ensaios sobre a teoria da sexualidade e outros textos* (P. C. de Souza, trad., Vol. 6, pp. 361-370). São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras. (Trabalho original publicado em 1942)
- Lacan, J. (1967-1968). *O Seminário, livro 15: o ato psicanalítico*. Inédito.
- Lacan, J. (1992). *O seminário, livro 17: o avesso da psicanálise, 1969-1970*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Zahar.
- Lacan, J. (1997). *O seminário, livro 7: a ética da psicanálise, 1959-1960*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Zahar.
- Lacan, J. (1998). Função e campo da fala e da linguagem em psicanálise. In *Escritos* (pp. 238-324). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Zahar. (Trabalho original publicado em 1953)
- Lacan, J. (1998). Subversão do sujeito e dialética do desejo no inconsciente freudiano. In *Escritos* (pp. 807-842). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Zahar. (Trabalho original publicado em 1960)
- Lacan, J. (1998). A ciência e a verdade. In *Escritos* (pp. 869-892). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Zahar. (Trabalho original publicado em 1965-1966)
- Lacan, J. (1998). *O seminário: livro 20: mais, ainda, 1972-1973*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Zahar.
- Rank, O. (2015). *O mito do nascimento do herói: uma interpretação psicológica dos mitos*. São Paulo, SP: Cienbook. (Trabalho original publicado em 1909)
- Roudinesco, E. (2003). *A família em desordem*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Zahar.

Received: 04/22/2018

Approved: 09/14/2018