

ARTICLE

The return of Freud's group psychology. A popular Chilean revolt approach

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Abstract

This article develops from the revolt, or social outbreak that took place in October 2019 in Chile. With protests in all parts of continental Chile, these mobilisations have become the largest and longest mass mobilisations in the country's history, bringing together a significant number of anti-neoliberal demands, which ended up overturning the legitimacy of the development model established by General Pinochet's dictatorship (1973–1990) and deepened during all post-dictatorial governments (1990–2021). In this paper, the Freudian conceptions of masses are questioned, fundamentally embodied in *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego*, as well as in a subsidiary way in *Totem and Taboo* and *On Narcissism*. It is observed that the mobilisations in Chile lacked a leader, which challenges Freud's conclusions. In this way, it is posulated, making use of Rozitchner's work, that the mass is a contingent historical subject, whose conformation logics are open and influenced by its circumstances. Making use of Laclau's reception of nominalism, a reading of the October masses is offered as articulated by a signifier ('dignity') that serves as a symbolic support for the libidinal bond of its members.

KEYWORDS

Chile, group psychology, October 18th, psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud

1 | INTRODUCTION

This century arrives to redefine the basic constitution of what is known and what is to be known, as pending challenges; it appears that, as a society, it is necessary to laboriously co-construct a present to try to define, trace, or find the coordinates that our future will contain. Therefore, it is not risky to say that it becomes necessary to enter the bowels of power. Studying power, implies approaching to the processes that try to eradicate those dominant repressive logics and that try, hand in hand with the prevailing neoliberal capitalism in Chile, to impose, again and again, different forms of power in order not to lose the thread of systematic domination. Hence the inevitable return to *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* by Sigmund Freud (1921), since this text provides us with a wide range of contributions to the reading or analysis of the past, present, and future of Chile; in addition to giving us clues to the challenges and dilemmas that persist.

In the words of Freud himself, it is necessary to remember that the study of the masses is not a research method that can be carried out with any type of groups or conglomerates of people. Freud (1913) clarified this when he pointed out:

It would be necessary to start from the verification that a multitude of human beings is not a mass until the aforementioned ties are established in it, but it should be admitted that in any multitude the tendency towards the formation of a psychological mass is manifested with ease. (p. 95)

On 18 October 2019, a social change was triggered in Chile. Also called the 30-Chilean Pesos Revolution, because the start of the demonstration refers to the rise of public transportation prices in the capital, the centre of the demonstration was concentrated in the subway stations, 118 of which were completely or partially destroyed by fires and damage. From these events, community organisations, spontaneous conglomerations of protesters, take over the national territory on a daily basis, including massive calls, such as the one on 25 October 2019, in Santiago which called for 2 and a half million people to March on the main avenue of the capital. This type of March was repeated frequently until the start of the sanitary confinements due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020.

From conception, the bet of 18 October in Chile went against the history guidelines longed for by the right wing and the political elite. The events began to make a difference in what, since the civic-military dictatorship of Pinochet (1973–1990), was introduced as a set of political-economic and ideological measures that led to an increase in social inequalities, the submission of the principles of democracy to the laws of the market, as well as protection of private property over social rights. The Chilean neoliberal project consisted, at a general level, of restructuring the economy and society in order to establish a permanent counterrevolutionary order, as well as a political and social life without risks for the status quo.

The movements of the popular masses, such as that of October 2019, through the restructuring of the identification of the peers, such as an organised phratry before the idea of capital – as leader – that embodies the father of the horde in an unlimited enjoyment, represents a co-constructed story by the representing peers of one side of the country, bringing with it surprise, doubt, uncertainty. This positioning gave rise to the radical turn of history against the certainties, objectives, and illusory plans of capitalism, that the masses with a movement of identification against the otherness situated in the power of neoliberal capital managed to eradicate through the displacement of some certainties of the century.

Regarding this idea of power, for the analysis framework of this article, we will focus on the State of Chile, which is, from our perspective, the historical and articulating matrix of the definitions or ramifications of the term. We propose that the Chilean historical experience after the social outbreak of October 2019 responds to an ideal place to study the relationship of the mass with power and the State. For this analysis, we resort to tools and authors from other times to re-think about the logics, codes, and dilemmas that are repeated and return over and over again, and investigate the different approaches and social antagonisms of our time with notions that prevail indecipherable.

2 | FROM IDENTIFICATION/LEADER TO IDENTIFICATION/IDEA IN MASS PSYCHOLOGY

The importance of the Freudian text *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* implies immersing ourselves in a fundamental determination to think about culture in terms of the advent of otherness and identification. To understand this, it is necessary to be framed in the context from which the author draws this importance. Although it is with the text *Totem and Taboo* that Freud (1913) forged the original cultural conjectures regarding an understanding that we could call of sociological property, it is with *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* that, substantially supported by the introductory text of narcissism (Freud, 1914), will deepen Freud's reflection on the cultural reaches of otherness and identification and raise both concepts in the genesis of both the psychic and the social.

At first, in 1913, the identification is established in the place of the phratry before and after the crime against the Hordic tyrant; while, in a second moment corresponding to 1921, the identification is in the line of love about three figures representing otherness: 'as a model, as an object, as an auxiliary/enemy' (Freud, 1921, p. 67). The importance of identification and alterity allows us to address the question of whether what happens in the psychic conformation of the subject can be influenced by the social, thus transcending the biological paradigms and individual psychologisms that imply the determination of the individual with respect to themselves. That is, it is a hypothesis that gives us the possibility of thinking about whether societies are producers of subjectivity by virtue of the ties that are created in it.

This social determination of the subjective Freud (1914) in *On Narcissism* is worked through the proposal of a double existence of the subject: 'it is in itself his/her own end and insofar as he/she is a member of a chain to which it is subjected' (p. 143); as the inevitable conformation of certain ideals of identification. It is in this line of application of identification with the ego ideal that Freud (1921) used two institutions and their leaders as an example: the Church and the army as prototypical and permanent institutional forms.

While in *Totem and Taboo* the identification with the referred alterity emerges after the murder of the father of the horde, as a pacifying code between pairs, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, cohesion depends on loving identification with the leader figure, which implies the existence of someone who is situated in that place of reference leader of the mythical Father, and of a libidinal structure that allows the identification of the object. That is, in both Freudian texts, the central mechanism of group cohesion is based on the idealisation of one in the place of mythical father, that is, of referenced leader. Enriquez (1983), following Freud, defined this father as someone 'who bears death or a loving father, in any case there cannot be a group without a father, a group without an obligation to infinite payment of the debt of the right to existence and the right to meaning' (p. 89).

Any organisation after the time of the horde, including the army and the Church, which takes the place of the fundamental prohibitions against incest and murder, is the need for the sublimation of sexual tendencies among the participants by virtue of a loving bond. Incest in *Totem and Taboo*, like the satisfaction of the sexual drive in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, is counterproductive with collective cohesion. The idealisation of the figure of the leader as the representative father of the totemic reference, places the loved object in the place of the ideal of the self that pushes the group cohesion sustained on the illusion of a sublimated love. Therefore, the identification process is central, since it pushes Freud to establish that the Oedipus complex is both at the centre of subjective structuring and social cohesion. This supposes castration as a structural mechanism of the human institution.

In short, in *Group Psychology*, alterity and identification allow us to extract three fundamental theses: (1) establish the distinction between the self and the ideal of the self as the exercise of placing the love object in the place of the ideal; (2) that the group or the mass carries out the activity of holding the same object (mythical father or leader) in the place of the ideal; and (3) that these mechanisms can be sustained in different institutions. Therefore, an individual can participate in different groups, acting in each one of them by identification; in other words, the individual may hold affiliation with different parents or leaders. In turn, the identification and the ideal of the ego are articulated as a possibility of limiting the drive satisfaction of a narcissistic type. Considering this, the overcoming of a certain initial narcissism comes from the libidinal bond with the objects.

The essential thing is to situate this process of identification, of love for the other, as a dam to narcissism and, therefore, a primary factor in the construction of culture. The application of this model in the cases of the Church and the army invites us to think that the place of the leader could be replaced by a symbolic abstraction. Let us take the case of religion, where the chief is constituted by discourses and practices that suppose his existence through a mechanism that is impossible to demonstrate. For example, the mythical origin of Canon Law as founded directly by the Reference; that is, the idea that Canon Law is a power that falls on the figure of the Pope as the leader of the Catholic Church, and that it is provided by the institution founded directly by Christ. That sends us to the problem of ideology. Whereas if an idea can replace the leader, it is because it has characteristics that make it a referenced parent; that is, an other place, a third place, from where moral values and the normative codes of society can be built. Then, the replacement idea of the leader as otherness implies a certain libidinal commitment in the identification with it.

The loving bond marked by power enables cohesion among peers and with the leader idea, a bond from which participation in the mass is sustained. In other words, it is on the basis of the libidinal link that an interdiction is granted to drive fulfilment in its narcissistic sense, which sustains identification with the other, with the leader and social cohesion.

3 | THE POLITIZED MASS AND THE LEADER: A POSSIBLE PRESCIDENT?

In Freudian reading, the unifying factor of the social mass is precisely the identification with the leader, placed in the place of the ideal of the ego; that is, 'a primary mass of this kind is a multitude of individuals who have placed an object, one and the same, in the place of their ideal ego, as a result of which they have identified with each other in their ego' (Freud, 1921, pp. 109–110). In this context, it may be said that the Chilean revolt could mark the point at which the collective drops the central reference of the leader to re-establish a new social pact among peers, at the level of the heterogeneous phratry. To this dismissal movement of the representation of power embodied by the figure of the leader, another central reference shift would be added. This second displacement refers to the Market and Capital as a constitutive element of an articulating centrality (symbolic abstraction placed in the place of the ideal) of capitalist society. With this thought, we support the conjecture that the Chilean popular revolt would shake the identification that similar people have with the Market as the supposed organiser of the equality and freedoms that the flow of Capital claims to sustain as the basis of the social bond. With this, there would be an interruption of the effectiveness of the political representations of the neoliberal narrative inscribed in the Constitution of the Republic of Chile of 1980. That is, the social movement of October 2019 in Chile considers the rupture of a social structure that has been imposed in times of dictatorship, which takes the discourse of the capital of the liberal states radicalising its content in a modern liberal capitalism or neoliberalism.

It is argued that this exercise, typical of an interpellation of the Chilean capitalist model, tends to dismiss the leader, under his double face of state institutionality and abstract flow of capital. This movement would constitute a collective outside the Freudian model of mass psychology – a tributary of the myth of the horde and the totem (Freud, 1913). Thus, contingent fissures are opened to constitute new ways of instinctual, affective, aesthetic, and representational bonding within the popular revolt.

In the reading keys that allow us to think about the constitution of the mass and its leader, comes the theoretical corpus of Ernesto Laclau (2005), who appeals to the idea of the emergence of signifiers, both from the leader figure and the collective itself. In the latter, the collective, the signifiers pay tribute to the discursive constitution of the contingent identity of the People. The signifiers 'Chile woke up' and 'Until Dignity becomes customary' have operated as nodal points of the popular narrative or discourse. For instance, the empty signifier 'Chile woke up' testifies to an articulation of previously segmented and atomised demands, producing equivalency chains between heterogeneous demands (sectoral, union, generational, partisan, anti-systemic, regionalist, ethnic, gender, environmental, etc.) without there is a leader who embodies or ranks them. Thus, the popular discourse itself operates as a counter-hegemonic

unifier that allows the construction of 'People' that symbolically produces within the heterogeneity of its demands, imaginations and identities.

In turn, following León Rozitchner (1998), we contend that, in the experiences shared in the city – in the melee of the revolt as a living phenomenon – it becomes possible to embody ways of libidinal/social bonding, which make the previous status quo fall, based on submission and identification with the leader in his double face: 'it is not only about fighting against the bourgeoisie that confronts us, but also, undoing the traps that the bourgeoisie included in us' (Rozitchner, 1972, p. 26). Following Rozitchner, we would say that said break or fracture of the neoliberal order would play into producing a subjective dismissal of the Capital Big Other and of the neoliberal governance of the State ('in us'). Some of this dismissal movement has been confirmed since October 2019 in Chile. This movement, typical of the collective body of the revolt, has desecrated the symbols of power: Constitution of Pinochet's Republic (1980), statues of heroes bearing patriarchal and colonial symbols, re-nominations of public squares in the city (Plaza Baquedano is nominated Plaza de la Dignidad).

4 | FREUD AND GROUP PSYCHOLOGY

As mentioned, Freud inaugurated a new perspective in the study of the social by postulating his thesis on the unconscious, as a category of analysis, applicable in all fields of cultural production. The psychoanalytic approach – without attempting to cover the totality of the social – cuts out in this vast field a specific and proper object: the drive, unconscious, desiring and narcissistic aspects, in the transference relationships that constitute subjectivity.

In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud (1921) tries to account for the phenomenon by which the individual incorporated into the mass exacerbates his affective manifestations and reduces intellectual manifestations, through the imitation of his peers, emotional contagion, and the desires of belonging linked to the affection of sympathy. Freud proposed a psychoanalytic interpretation of such processes: projection of the Ideal of the ego of each subject in the mass leader and concomitant identifications among the different members of the same. In the masses the subject regresses; that echoes the experience of original helplessness, inhibits his intellectual faculties, exacerbates the affective ones, and becomes more sensitive to the phenomena of suggestion, imitation, and contagion of feelings. In these contexts, it is common to silence internal criticism in favour of doing the same as others. Without forgetting that of appealing to the herd instinct, as proposed by Freud, regression is a characteristic of the most archaic masses in the sense of their similarity to savage or infantile states, while in the masses of a more sophisticated organisation, the tendency to regression would be of an attenuated character. Indeed, the biopolitical logics referring to the Foucauldian biopower problem, as well as the Frankfurtian cultural critique of capitalism, coincide in denouncing these affective technologies of operating power as mass suggestion or collective hypnosis. 'We can say – if the expression is admitted – that the hypnotic bond is a mass formation of two. Hypnosis is not a good object of comparison for mass formation because it is, rather, identical to it' (Freud, 1921, p. 108).

In the same way, each participant of the mass must give up a certain amount of self-love in favour of the boss. This lowering of narcissism and sharing of the same Ideal of the Ego, allows the group to coalesce. Such a procedure also succeeds in inhibiting aggressiveness among the mass associates, but it will remain latent. It is confirmed that panic and hatred quickly emerge if the mass loses its leader (fall from its ideal): the effects of disengagement flood the field. As mentioned earlier, Freud studied these phenomena in two prototypical and artificial masses: the army and the Church, where, for the temporal continuity of these, he insisted on exercising a repetitive coercion that represses the institutional dissolution. Like castration in family complexes, the acceptance of repressive norms is not voluntary; rather, it operates without considering the will of the subject. That is to say, it is common that in the Church and in the army, both in entry and exit, they do not depend on their participants, a clear example that leaving these institutions is usually marked by failures in the institutional culture that even lead to criminal consequences.

Despite the clarity with which Freud (1921) presented these matters, the formation of the masses does not fail to raise questions; a crucial one being: Is it only under the influence of these phenomena that human groupings can

be constituted? This is precisely the theoretical question addressed to the Chilean popular revolt, insofar as it is the possibility of analysing it in its formation and functioning mechanics.

5 | THE POPULAR REVOLT AS A BEYOND OF GROUP PSYCHOLOGY

For the effects of the mass 'popular revolt', the problem of the leader acquires another figurability and dynamics. In regards to this problem, related to leadership, it is known that the systems of political negotiation between the instituted power (government, board of directors, etc.) and a group in demand or insurrection, within the framework of representative democracies, has historically been plotted for the strategic questions: Who do we negotiate with? Who is your leader? These are anachronistic questions for the popular revolt due to the fact that within the revolt framework, the form of assembly and the horizontal dissemination of voices has acquired preponderance, for which there is precisely a radical questioning of the patriarchal practices typical of the policy of agreements between leaders. This misrepresents the entire hermeneutic of negotiations with which power operated in Chile throughout the political transition in the last 3 decades. This hermeneutical change, or turn in the keys to reading mass political phenomena, leads to the assignment of political dignity to collectivism as a subject. That is to say, there would not be a thinking leader and an ignorant mass, alienated and regressive to the base, but the symbolic production of a mass as transindividual thought. Let us say that even Freud (1921) managed to glimpse something of this field of experience:

In exceptional states, the phenomenon of enthusiasm occurs in a community, which has made possible the greatest achievements of the masses ... the soul of the masses is also capable of brilliant spiritual creations, as evidenced, first of all, by language itself, and also traditional songs, folklore, etc. On the other hand, it is not known how much the individual thinker or literary creator owes to the mass within which they live; perhaps they do nothing but consummate a mental work carried out simultaneously by others. (p. 79)

Even so, in Freud's (1921) work, the devaluing character of the mass – in particular of the mass not organised by a leader and function – is evident:

Such a mass is: extremely excitable, impulsive, passionate, fickle, inconsistent, irresolute and at the same time inclined to extreme actions, accessible only to the grossest passions and the simplest feelings, extraordinarily suggestible, stunned in its reflections, violent in its judgments, receptive only to the most elementary and incomplete reasonings and arguments, easy to lead and to intimidate. (pp. 81-82)

The proposal to conceive the popular revolt as a transindividual political subject, without a leader, with the capacity for agency, symbolic production and acts according to ends, is clearly at odds with the Freudian image of a herd of wild animals. The popular deployment of the untimely is inevitably linked to a bodily movement of political radicalisation, and not of irrational destructiveness, destined to arouse an individual-collective transit that allows the traces that patriarchal, colonial, and capitalist terror leaves on the bodies to be broken down and exorcised. In this sense, León Rozitchner (1998), following Freud's group psychology, maintained the postulate according to which all individual psychology is, from always and mainly, social psychology, to immediately affirm that 'there is no individual cure, without collective cure' (p. 84); and this, because it tries to recover the individual from a different perspective from that founded on capitalist individualism. The Rozitchnerian thesis maintains that the work of the drive is part of the social structure of the human subject, at the same time that the masses – described by Freud (1921) – reveal a historical form that has its parallel with the specific forms of exploitation (objective-subjective) of the capitalist era. By understanding

the drive as a form of productive work, Rozitchner invites us to read the unconscious and libidinal cathexis of the masses as the most advanced form of capitalist exploitation, as well as the space of their potential resistance.

It is important to point out that Freud uses the examples of the Church and the army to illustrate the transversal logic of the supposedly irrational libidinal attachment to the leader that keeps both the street masses and organised social institutions linked. There, where Freud (1913) shows the universal operations (see *Totem and Taboo*) of the unconscious working in the masses, Rozitchner (1998) affirmed that we must read these masses in a historical way; that is, as instances of social norms whose roots are historical, ergo, contingent. From this perspective, a theoretical treatment of the masses as a potential political subject emerges and, in turn, a substantive criticism of Freud's model of the masses is envisioned. Against Freud, Rozitchner (1972) suggested that it is not the murder of the father as such that determines the transition from nature to culture; rather the recognition, among the brothers and sisters (mass), of their own collective power as historical subject.

An interesting part of Rozitchner's interpretation of the Freudian horde myth is found in his historical reading of property relations. The question is how the historical form of the subject's relationship with nature, and with the means of production, transforms the perception of what would be proper to one. The relationship of the individual subject with his productive activity also defines the character of that individual's relationship with the community. In this sense, Rozitchner does not interpret the primitive horde as a myth or inherited racial memory, but as a historical subject that is, itself, the product of a certain way of establishing relations of production. This raises an analogy between the horde and the despotic mode of production, in which a centralised authority expropriates the labour of ancestral communities.

Consequently, the spontaneous mass becomes revolutionary when it discovers the historical and materialistic origin of the repressed unconscious; not simply in the repressive apparatuses of social reproduction, but in what Rozitchner (1972) called 'that common something that links them together: the mass that integrates us in the organization of work' (p. 636). The subjective transformation of the mass – and its potential autonomy from capital – arises from the work of the drive and its collective organisation. We can see it in the Chilean revolt, which occurred precisely 'after giving up the pursuit of satisfaction of the unsatisfied desire for the individual paths that culture chose as the only possible path, but that leads to failure and frustration' (Rozitchner, 1972, p. 440). Behold, the revolt collectively thinks and shouts: 'It was not depression, it was capitalism'.

6 | THE MASS AND THE INSTAURATION POSSIBILITY OF THE POLITICAL

The previous section concluded by pointing out the relevance of the instinctual irruption in the mass, an irruption that is referred to as a work of the instinct. Such a critical approach involves reworking the role of identification in the organisation of the mass, while the emergence of instincts calls into question, at least momentarily, the synthesising and binding function of identification. There is something traumatic at the moment in which the instinct comes into play in the dynamics of the mass, a breakdown of the forms of binding that supported libidinal ties and the representation mechanisms that made individual and collective reality intelligible. If, as Rozitchner (1972) affirmed, it is the recognition between brothers and sisters that marks the transition from nature to culture, it is no less true that this reorganisation that allows the emergence of a new historical subject is subsequent to the traumatic tear of the coexistence that the murder of the father must have supposed. Let us stop then in the logic of trauma to think what could be a work of the drive, and how this could be involved in a reorganisation of the mass and its identifying mechanisms.

Take Freud's (1920/1992a) reflection on war neuroses in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as a point of support. In a summary of what Freud exposed, we point out that he repairs the fact that survivors traumatised by the experiences of war return in their dreams again and again to the scenes that plunged them into horror. This compulsion to repeat that which is manifested in the traumatic experience would be the index of an inaugural psychic work; namely, the link between the impact of an excessive and incomprehensible event and a representation that allows its inscription in the psychic space. The compulsive return of the same, a condition that characterises the drive dynamics, is the indicator

for Freud of that beyond or logical anteriority that precedes the entry into play of the pleasure principle. Before the psychic apparatus is in a position to regulate its functioning through the balance of tension, a first enabling step is a fundamental requirement for the entry into force of this organising law of psychic occurrence, which is the pleasure principle.

This first moment is constituted, as such, always retroactively, since the possibility of representation is necessarily displaced from the moment of irruption of a reality that, as a pure energy impact, excites the perceptual surface of the mental apparatus. The origin of the psychic operation occurs after what could be called an inaugural experience of confrontation with reality. It is this moment, temporarily displaced, which operates logically as the beginning of psychic life, understood as the articulation between an 'amount of affect' and a 'representation' that inscribes it – without fully expressing it – in the psychic space. The trauma, as a moment of collapse of the relationship between representation and experience, exposes the retroactive structure that shapes the entry into functioning of the psychic operation.

We have pointed out that the drive bursts into the mass in the manner of a traumatic experience, insofar as it is a manifestation that is strange not only with respect to the behaviours that characterise a given community, but that, and above all, to the extent in which the capacity that same society has to comprehensively represent such a rupture of the everyday overflows. Following this logic, the question to be asked regarding the constitution of the masses must then consider not only identifying factors, but also the libidinal economy. This approach can be useful in the framework of the current mass demonstrations, since a common factor in them is the absence of identifiable leaders, despite which they manage to sustain and impact the organisation of the social bond. Approaching the masses from their drive-libidinal dimension, and the perspective of identification, allows us to get out of the interpretive quagmire in which the absence of leaders in the contemporary masses leaves us.

Let us return to the argument that we had been developing regarding the impasse between affect and representation in the Freudian understanding of trauma. Without a leader towards whom to direct affect, one might expect the mass to succumb under its own deregulated potency. What is the mechanism that allows a leaderless mass not to vanish into an objectless dispersion of affections? We previously pointed out that the primary psychic work is to link a quantum of affect to a representation that allows the articulation of the drive to the field of the psychic. What happens if we take this intellection to the field of mass psychology? As it happens individually, also for the mass the primordial psychic work will be to link the affect to a representation, now what form can this tie/investiture take in the absence of a leader?

Before answering the question just posed, we must recall a fundamental and problematic aspect of Freud's theory of representation. For Freud (1915/1992b), the drive is unrepresentable in a direct way, it can only obtain a place in the psychic field in a delegated and indirect way through a representative representation. The delegative character of the representation accounts for an intrinsic negativity to psychic functioning, since every effort of delegation finds a limit insofar as the drive itself can never become an object of consciousness. This impossibility of direct representation in the centre of representation can be understood as the gap on which the psychic becoming is constituted. The whole operation of the mental apparatus revolves around an impossibility; yet, this impossibility mobilises the distinctive productivity of psychic life. For Freud, there is something insurmountably lost in our mental operation – the perceptual remains of our primary experience have disappeared from the system in which our thinking develops, being able to access consciousness through a qualitative change when linking to the word. Through the link with the word it is possible that perceptions that 'could not carry any quality' (Freud, 1915/1992c, p. 199) can acquire quality.

The word is capable of providing quality to that which was outside even direct sensory representation, which shows us how, for Freud, the word fulfils an essential function of substitution; while, through its mediation, it acquires a positive existence something that did not have any quality from the beginning. In what way are these ideas linked to the problem of the irruption of the instinctual in the masses and the absence of a strong figure towards which to direct the identifying ties?

The post-Oedipal ideals in which the current revolt participates seriously challenge the leader/father model used by Freud to understand the organisation of the libidinal ties that shape the mass. The mythical-anthropological model of totem and taboo does not seem to serve adequately either, since in his case the murdered royal father leaves a

space that is filled by the symbolic form of the law, through which the father survives as the ideal that organises the relationship between siblings. However, when Freud analyses the phenomenon of totemism, he referred to a specific theory that tries to explain its origin: nominalism.

In succinct terms, nominalism understands totemism as a way of solving the need for lineages to differentiate from each other by means of names. The human capacity to make distinctions through language, giving names, is a faculty that involves introducing the nominative role of the word into reality, and its ability to produce identifying processes of a collective nature. The nominalism to which Freud alluded, finds in Laclau (2005) a contemporary reception, who, making use of Freud's Lacanian rereading, reaches the following conclusion:

the identity and unity of the object are the result of the naming operation itself. However, this is only possible if the nomination is subordinate neither to a description nor to a preceding designation. In order to play this role, the signifier must become not only contingent, but also empty. (p. 135)

What should not go unnoticed is that the signifier, the word it names, is not only empty in itself but also accounts for a void that takes shape from the very fact of the nomination. If the totem is just a name that introduces the possibility of the distinction and identification of a group as such, could this procedure not be replicated by the current masses? In the absence of a leader to invest libidinally, could not the nominative act be a form of production of a referent that fills this void?

In an interview published in 2012 (Parkin-Gounelas, 2012), Laclau pointed out that undecidability is the abyss on which the social is built, an idea on which he structures his rhetorical approach to the organisation of the political and occupies a central place in his conceptualisation of populism, for which he takes as a starting point the analysis of *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. The undecidability to which Laclau refers is already prefigured in Freud, as we have tried to maintain from his conclusions about the capacity of the word to name what is absent in the original remains of perception. The undecidability in Freud refers to the fact that the representations only represent (forgive the redundancy) the original experience, that is, the word testifies about that unspeakable remnant. Laclau (2005) translated Freudian undecidability into the structural codes of rhetoric, for which he uses a particular figure of language, catachresis. Both Laclau (2005) and Joan Copjec (2006) referred to catachresis as a rhetorical figure that fulfils a supplementary function, insofar as it allows establishing a figurative reference by means of which it is possible to name something that through literal language results impossible. Laclau (2005) pointed out that catachresis 'is linked to a constitutive blockage of language that requires naming something that is essentially unnameable as a condition of its own functioning' (p. 96).

Without a leader to follow, which would mean not having an identifying figure that can organise the irruption of the drive, the mass could come to 'say' or 'name' the referent that is required to go from the traumatic irruption to a 'work of the drive'. This capacity for nomination can be the very way of producing a referent from the unspeakable, which implies that it is not necessary to suppose a previous plenitude or some ideal that brings together the mass, since the catachresis nature of language allows us to name that 'which is both impossible and necessary' (Laclau, 2005, p. 96). Instead of returning to the logic of identification and what this implies regarding the relationship to the figure of the leader, we propose that the mass can find a place as a historical subject through a work of the drive; that is, to go through the complex path that goes from the irruption of the traumatic to the formulation of a nominative referent to which to contingently anchor the affect.

The October outbreak in Chile left us as an example of an act of spontaneous nomination of the mobilised mass, which was embodied in the use of the signifier 'dignity'. This word came to fix a meaning that polarised the demands of the social movement, giving it orientation in the absence of any clearly recognisable leadership. The word dignity came to name that empty locus of power (Lefort, 1988) around which the Chilean outbreak was organised, a word that names what is impossible and necessary on which the political demand of the mass is articulated.

Instead of a foundational ideological support, the Chilean mass was articulated around an act of nomination, which founds its ideological support in the contingent a posteriori of its formulation. There is no original and stable

foundation to which the mass of the Chilean revolt can turn in order to find the ideal meaning of its political thrust. The political ideal capable of dealing with the liberal ideological unfolding does not exist, it is radically lost, just as for Freud the remains of an original perception are lost. Nevertheless, the naming capacity of the word, in its essentially catacritical nature, can provide the support that gives rise to political significance.

What should not be lost sight of here, since it represents the real contribution of psychoanalysis to the theory of representation, is that the process of binding. Whether we understand it as the link between an amount of energy and a representative or, in a structuralist version, like the stitch that contingently joins a signifier to a signified, it is never a purely formal procedure, since it implies the inclusion of libidinal investiture, of affect, as a fundamental factor in any process of representation of which the political representation does not escape. To affirm that there is an unconscious dimension in operation in the mass, even when we understand the unconscious as a field articulated by the function of the word, is to affirm the inclusion of affect as consubstantial.

The mass is not a political agent per se but, as Mladen Dolar (2009) highlighted, it is the space for political intervention. The tear of the everyday that introduces the irruption of the mass is an incitement for political subjectivation (Dean, 2016); a necessary but incomplete moment. Only once the function of nomination is introduced, in our case a popular demand that invests the word 'dignity', it is possible for people to appear as a political subject. The political subject is the effect of a retroactive operation; it arises when the mass has been able to circumscribe, as a result of an act of nomination, that pulsating emptiness that prompted it to take the streets.

7 | CONCLUSION

The objective of the text has been to stress the Freudian theory about the constitution of the masses, based on relevant facts and processes in the recent history of Chile, fundamentally from the so-called social outbreak; understanding it within the neoliberal political cycle inaugurated with General Pinochet's dictatorship and deepened to this day. To do this, two capital works of Freud are explored: *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego* and *Totem and Taboo*. In them, Freud unfolds all the complexity of his theory around the links between the subjective configuration and the group, through the concepts of identification and otherness. It has been understood that the subject emerges only on condition of the recognition of otherness, which, in turn, is only possible through the prohibition of absolute enjoyment, which sublimates sexual tendencies by virtue of a loving bond that enables the emergence of a constitutive other of the same.

In *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego*, this sublimation is given by the loving identification with the figure of the leader, which, by placing it in the place of the ideal of the Ego, enables group cohesion through mutual support of the object. If in *Totem and Taboo* the identification emerges from the complicity of the phratry in the murder of the father, which constitutes the place of the father as central and inaccessible by virtue of social peace, in *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego* the leader takes the place of the father, becoming himself the gravitational centre of the libidinal ties of the members of the mass.

However, the historical evidence of the Chilean revolt of 2019 allows us to revisit and interrogate this way of understanding the masses, which for Freud also always had a negative connotation. It is observed that the outbreak, as a mass movement, was not articulated by anointing a leader, but, on the contrary, what it did was to remove the legitimacy of the current institutions and their leaderships, while destabilising the founding idea of neoliberalism in relation to the sacredness of the market as a regulator of the social order.

From there, the approaches of Rozitchner emerge with force, and his reading of *Totem and Taboo*, in which he emphasises that the essence of the mythical moment is not so much the death of the father, as the recognition of the brothers as peers and their consequent political articulation. For Rozitchner, the masses must be understood as historical subjects whose forms are conditioned by their circumstances, leaving the door open to new articulations, such as assembly and horizontal forms.

However, if we accept this possibility, we still have to answer what is the fate of the libido, when the mass does not raise a personal leadership? How was the mass of October configured libidinally, in the absence of a leader? A possible answer arises from the reading of Laclau's reception of nominalism as the origin of totemism in Freud, from which it is argued that what gave shape and direction to the mass was an act of nomination, understanding the emergence of the signifier 'dignity' as a referent of identification, which put the signifier itself as the articulator of the libidinal lasos of the members of the mass.

From the foregoing, not only conclusions emerge, but also questions that cannot yet be answered, since they do not ultimately depend on theoretical analysis, but on the development of historical dynamics that enable subsequent evaluations beyond the Freudian mass.

Until now, it has been witnessed that the masses can dispense with personalised leadership and that said void can be filled by the nomination, the emergence, of the word, of a signifier that brings together and regulates the masses. Further, and this is a matter of fact, that the popular movement with the greatest geographic and quantitative scope in the history of the country emerged from said formation; massive mobilisations in all latitudes of the 4200 km of coastline in continental Chile. It has also been attested that the organic form of said mobilisation moved away from the classic vertical structures of the party-form, being based above all on assemblies of direct democracy, with a high degree of horizontality, which multiplied rapidly by the National territory.

The signifier 'dignity' became, in that sense, a leader-idea with a strong oppositional and dismissive character that catalysed the fall of the formal political leadership of the State, of its constitutional bases and of its cultural logics. The masses of October opened the history and, with it, questions about its very scope and conformation. What will be the scope of this mass, in the no longer destitutive moment, but in the constituent moment that this same mass has opened? Will the signifying dignity – univocal in its challenging character but equivocal in its establishing character – continue to hold the space of the leader or will it go through a process of incarnation delegating command to a person? What will happen to the organic assembly forms that supported the mobilisation? Will they converge into a single organisation, like a kind of assembly of assemblies? Will they keep their organisation? Will they be diluted? Will they transition to other organic forms? What will be its capacity to hegemonise the political field with the oppositional force arising from those groups that until now have been excluded as subjects of the spheres of institutionality?

Certainly, it is not demandable at this time to have answers to these questions because that 'beyond' of the Freudian mass that Chile has witnessed is not a theoretical matter although it can be theorised, but a practical question, in the deep sense of 'praxis', as a concept of a productive social relationship among people, determined in its origin by the history that has preceded it but open to the possibilities that the same practice can engender.

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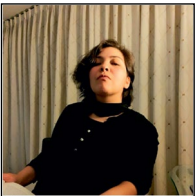
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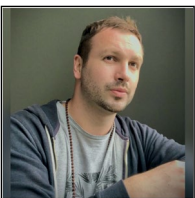
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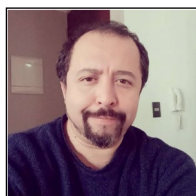
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