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Nietzsche and the sublimation question: amid *Erhabenen* and *Sublimierung* notions

Nietzsche e a questão da sublimação: entre as noções de Erhabenen e Sublimierung

Nietzsche y la cuestión de la sublimación: entre las nociones de Erhabenen y Sublimierung

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Abstract

The notion of sublimation is critically important as regards the physiopsychology of Nietzsche. The pathway of impulses sublimation is that of increasingly better-evaluated objectives, and variation in satisfaction of means and purposes allows for new impulses combinations to arise, as well as new forms of support between them, which in turn ascertain psychic pleasure maximization. The purpose of this paper is to analyze sublimation according to Nietzsche's two fundamental perspectives. On the one hand, as a form of psychic satisfaction through transformation and subtilization of impulses targets (*Subliemirung*), and on the other hand, as a form of elevation (*Erhabenen*).

Keywords: Impulse. Sublimation. Transformation. Subtilization. Elevation.

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Resumo

A noção de sublimação é de crucial importância no contexto da fisiopsicologia nietzschiana. O caminho da sublimação dos impulsos é o caminho das metas cada vez melhor avaliadas. A variação de meios e fins de satisfação possibilita o surgimento de novas configurações de impulsos, assim como novas formas de apoio entre eles, o que determina a intensificação do prazer psíquico. O que se propõe aqui é analisar a sublimação em Nietzsche sob dois aspectos fundamentais. Por um lado, como forma de satisfação psíquica através da transformação e utilização dos alvos dos impulsos (Sublimierung) e, por outro, como forma de elevação (Erhabenen).

Palavras-chave: Impulso. Sublimação. Transformação. Utilização. Elevação.

Resumen

La noción de sublimación tiene una importancia crucial en el contexto de la fisiopsicología nietzscheana. El camino de la sublimación de los impulsos es el camino de las metas cada vez mejor evaluadas. La variación de medios y fines de satisfacción posibilita el surgimiento de nuevas configuraciones de impulsos, así como nuevas formas de apoyo entre ellos, lo que determina la intensificación del placer psíquico. Lo que aquí se propone es analizar la sublimación en Nietzsche bajo dos aspectos fundamentales. Por un lado, como forma de satisfacción psíquica a través de la transformación y utilización de los objetivos de los impulsos (Sublimierung) y, por otro lado, como forma de elevación (Erhabenen).

Palabras-clave: Impulso. Sublimación. Transformación. Subutilización. Elevación.

Introduction

According to Nietzsche, the notion of sublimation appears recurrently as a key that allows to characterize psychic functions, which occur through a constant impetus linked to the organism. Such impetus is based on the abundance that the philosopher understands to be at the foundation of the existence phenomenon. Nietzsche claims that harmonization of conflicting forces within psychism is sought, and sublimation is addressed as a continual refinement of impulses targets and objects. This is already assumed in the primary tendency clearly apparent in its relation to art and to degrees of extreme spirituality. Nietzsche values the vital impetus through the acceptance of suffering (without resignation to it) and considers pleasure a primary phenomenon linked to the feeling of power. This inversion of values with respect to Schopenhauer's philosophy leads him to the assumption that even genius and ascetic remain masks of the Will to Power (*Wille zur Macht*) as phenomena that allow for its existence and continuity regardless of conditions. The fundamental quality of impulse is, according to this argument, its capacity for sublimation and resumption of vitality and joy in different conditions. What is proposed in this article is to analyze sublimation from two perspectives: as a form of satisfaction by transforming and subtilizing impulse targets (*Sublimierung*), as well as in the form of elevation (*Erhabenen*).

Physiology of esthetics and sublimation in Nietzsche

Nietzsche holds that the pleasure related to Will to Power implies resistance, as long as they can be surmounted and the desire can be affirmed. On the other hand, the pathway toward impulse satisfaction is not reduced to a single effective possibility of attaining pleasure. Under certain conditions, preserving previous objectives may result in deep psychic displeasure, in that purposes and means do not correspond to Will of Power maximization. Stagnation naturally urges psychism to strive for new forms of satisfaction.

The conceptual importance of sublimation as regards Nietzsche stems from its similarity to assertive notions such as perspective and self-fulfillment. Therefore, the refinement of impulses targets is an inherent condition of Will to Power. Accordingly, as states Nietzsche, valuation estimates are inherent to impulses to the degree that Will to Power is expressed in them.

In this sense, sublimation is critically important in the physiological psychology of Nietzsche. The pathway of impulses sublimation is that of increasingly better-evaluated objectives, and variation in satisfaction of means and purposes allows for new impulses combinations to arise, as well as new forms of support between them, which in turn ascertain psychic pleasure maximization.

In this regard, all currently hegemonic standpoints on psychic economy must once again be superseded and consequently rendered redundant as new powers emerge. These will also entail new force combinations and consecutively other unusual forms of creation and destruction.

It is indeed this conceptual progression of impulse, in accordance with Nietzsche, what demonstrates that sublimation cannot, by any means, rely on a single form of evaluative estimation, if not depending on a constant evaluative rearrangement in psychism, especially in relation to unconsciousness. Consciousness is consigned to a secondary and potentially equivocal function, as the impulses connected to it by force of moral ideals may indicate a defensive stance to life, which does not contribute to self-creating beyond oneself. Thus, Will to Power endures if enfeebled. This is the diagnosis of philosophy in relation to the human condition in today's context, especially when it comes to the "depleted" European continent.

To Nietzsche, the unconditional will of European Christian civilization was exclusively to affirm moral values, which meant "the most dangerous and ominous of all possible forms" of a Will to Decline (*Willens zum Untergang*)¹. In the preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*, i.e., *Attempt at Self-Criticism*, written years thereafter, Nietzsche establishes opposition in a similar way to life and death impulses from the second Freudian impulse theory. Opposition occurs between affirming and negating Will. The morality of compassion is described as the "life-negating will, secret instinct of annihilation, principle of decay, eternal no, the "beginning of end, danger of dangers." The opposite tendency is labelled by the philosopher as the "instinct for life". He speaks of a Dionysian "counter-doctrine," purely artistic and anti-Christian², and stresses the possibility of reaffirming life and thus attaining other satisfactions for other objectives and by way of other objects. Hence, he praises sublimation as an affirmation and refinement of impulses targets, according to the interweaving and reciprocal support of two propensities: the Dionysian and Apollonian. Here he begins to develop what would later result in his uncompleted formulations on Will to Power.

To Nietzsche, the intellectual negation of Will is an instinctive-based impulse that reaffirms the Will to Live through the negative, identically to the negation described by Freud, even though this distinctive affirmation corresponds to a symptom of psychic impoverishment and ailment. Through this dualistic approach between affirmation of the affirmative and the opposite affirmation of negation, Nietzsche rejects the hypothesis of desexualizing impulses, and understands that sublimation (*Sublimierung*) is not only a healthful experience of affirmation, life and joy renewal by means of the unique creation and rearrangement of forces interplay, but also a form of preserving the action that creates Will to Power, even in situations and contexts linked to cultural decadence, moral stiffness, and psychic ailments. Accordingly, even pain and suffering can elicit pleasure, if they are accompanied by the feeling (*Gefühl*) of elevation (*Erhabenen*). Therefore, the term *Erhabenen* (sublime) is to be utilized to designate states and qualities seemingly contradictory, but which share in common intensification of desire and pleasure: "the coexistence of the most luminous and the most fateful forces" (*lichtesten und verhängnisvollsten Kräfte*)³.

Sublimation as Erhabenen

The German word *Erhabenen* designates not only a rare and superior quality, according to the current term usage, but also ironically and inversely, aspects of the ailing situation of Western culture following almost two thousand years of Christianity. Examples are plentiful throughout the work in diverse contexts⁴. It is utilized, for instance, to discuss the tragic myth in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1871). This work recognizes the specificity and autonomy of esthetic pleasure related to Dionysian impulse:

1 GT, Versuch einer Selbstkritik, 5, KSA 1, p. 18.

2 GT, Versuch einer Selbstkritik, 5, KSA 1, p. 18.

3 EH, Die Geburt der Tragödie, 4, KSA 6, p. 314.

4 Nietzsche employs the word "Erhabenen" in the expressions "sublime predecessor" (erhabenen Vorkämpfer), "sublime gestures" (erhabenen Gebarden), "sublime and exalted tragic art" (erhabenen und hochgepriesenen tragischen Kunst), "great and sublime forms" (erhabenen Formen), "sublime paladins" (erhabenen Vorkämpfer), "morally sublime" (Sittlich-Erhabenen), "sublime look", "scale of the beautiful and sublime", "sublime construction", "expression of the sublime, terrible, mysterious", "sublime-unsettling", "ugly-sublime", "sense of the sublime", "sublime states of mind", "sublime and rapturous instants", "sublime amusement", "sublime and eternal foolishness", "language of the sublime", "expressing something sublime", "dogmas and sublime monsters", "aspirations to the elevated", "sublime unreason", "inherently sublime", "rare and sublime natures of the ancient world", "elevated possibility", "being sublime", "sublime and absolute philosophical constructs", "sublime abortion", "discoverers of the field of the sublime".

To shed light on the tragic myth, the first claim is precisely to seek the peculiar pleasure in an esthetically pure realm, without any encroachments on the fields of compassion, fear, morally sublime. How may the ugly and the disharmonic, namely the substance of tragic myth, elicit esthetic pleasure? (...) The pleasure that tragic myth generates has a similar origin to the pleasurable sensation of musical dissonance. The Dionysian, with its primordial pleasure perceived even in pain, is the shared matrix of music and tragic myth⁵.

Nietzsche sees existence and the world as justified only as esthetic phenomena. This means that even the ugly and the disharmonic express an artistic game in which the Will to Power, in the completeness of its pleasure, is at self-play in terms of effectivity. In this variation of intervals that provides harmony and disharmony of features, Nietzsche perceives the playful Dionysian phenomenon that constructs and deconstructs the individual as "effluvium of a greater pleasure." He recalls Heraclitus, who compares the "molding force of the universe" to a child who builds sandpiles in play and then knocks them down again⁶.

Nietzsche considers that the encounter between harmonic and melodic variations corresponds to human nature, and the immense range of possibilities that he interprets as something that operates between the Dionysian background and the Apollonian representation. If the pure Dionysian is impossible to experience, one has to transcend the terrible worldly image presented by dissonance and displeasure. Human beings are the very embodiment of dissonance, and would thus require a beautiful illusion to conceal their own essence in order to live using a beauty veil. Note that Nietzsche does not reject the terrible provided by pulsional physiology of the Dionysian character, but he assumes that the artistic designs of Apollonian sublimation render existence worthy of living and lead us to desire to live the next moment⁷.

In *Human, All Too Human* (1878/80), this view tending toward physio-psychological analysis shifts to a different connotation, as Nietzsche distances himself from the art perspective and embraces a position of historical-scientific analysis. The factor that persists following alterations, at least in terms of impulse, is the realization that there is a sublimatory power that has historically shifted from art to science. Nietzsche surmises that instincts and impulses lie among the unalterable facts of humans that allow for a more flowing insight into human nature, in which not only are eternal facts no longer admitted, but also any irrevocable being or character: "With religion, art, and morality one does not touch the 'essence of the world in itself' (*Wesen der Welt an sich*); one remains in the realm of representation, no 'intuition' (*Ahnung*) can take us forward." He concludes, "One will tranquilly defer to physiology and the history of the evolution of organisms and concepts the question of how the image of the world can be so distinct from the inferred essence of the world"⁸.

Similarly, the impulses sublimated into "rigorous thinking," "intellectualization of the arts," into "spiritualization of the senses," delve deeper and broaden psychic possibilities into new forms of satisfaction as translated by the philosopher in the expression "intelligent look". The modifications of which, in the sense of its intellectualization and privilege of scientific minds, affect sensibility, and rigorous thinking takes on a higher value than the "most beautiful symbolic structure and the most sublime construction" (*erhabenste Bauwerk*)⁹. The term 'sublime' appears, then, associated with idealized

⁵ GT, 24, KSA 1, p. 152.

⁶ GT, 24, KSA 1, p. 153.

⁷ GT, 25, KSA 1, p. 155. In this sense, Dionysian and Apollonian impulses might also be referred to—with minor interpretative audacity—as pure and sublimated Dionysian impulses.

⁸ MA I, 10, KSA 2, p. 30.

⁹ MA I, 3, KSA 2, p. 26.

and pretentious forms of artistic-philosophical expression, and Nietzsche proceeds thus to surmise that esthetic and moral thinking belong only to the surface of things: "the moral human assumes that what is essentially in one's heart must also be the essence and heart of things"¹⁰. One reaches, therefore, a simple physio-psychological world of impulses that wander in hot pursuit of forms of satisfaction.

Therefore, it is clear to Nietzsche that the means whereby he considers reality are allusive, and define the perspective on the effective world only as intensifiers of interpretive experience, fulfilling a determined historical function. By understanding the functioning of thinking as language that determines logic and even reality, it certainly has preparatory connotations in relation to the forthcoming analyses tending toward a genealogical comprehension of morality, which implies levelling criticism to the possibility of justifying morality beyond a transitory valuation. Nietzsche observes that religious-philosophical dogmatisms insist on the notion of foundation that is directly connected to the corresponding ideals of happiness, thus producing interpretations that are based on errors and self-delusion: "Faulty interpretation (*schlechte Erklärungskunst*) is by no means surpassed"¹¹.

In contrast, the feeling of the sublime is again affirmed in perceiving unconsciousness. Now it is no longer a matter of Greek art, but rather the desexualization of scientific language as well as the consequences or effects of it for the general scope of modern mass culture. Subjective change invades art in the period of Nietzsche through intellectualization: "The ugly side of the world, originally hostile to the senses, was conquered for music. Its sphere of power, especially for the expression of the sublime, terrible, mysterious, has astonishingly increased." Likewise, in the realm of visual arts, "some painters have depicted the eye more intellectually and have greatly surpassed what was formerly known as the pleasure of colors and forms."¹² Here too the side of the world perceived as unpleasant is absorbed and captured by artistic intelligence, rendering the world uglier than ever. However, it is more beautiful than it has ever been by the intellectualization of the look. Art may absorb both the sensual and repugnant.

Nietzsche believes that the sublimatory religious purposes have been discarded in the modern world and its transformation into a scientific mindset—owing to the impossibility of believing in premises linked to Christianity—does not mean that affections linked to religiosity have been forsaken. If indeed "sublime" and "heartfelt" states of mind, "full of premonitions", "deeply sorrowful", "blessed with hope" can no longer be attained through faith in divine powers, they are now realizable through other cultural elements. By means of characterization, Nietzsche reveals not only the essential nature of sublime sentiment, but also the actual way in which sublimation as impulses targets is accomplished by means of several interpretations that substantiate and shed light on the comprehension of psychism as a vital process.

The pursuit of elevation guides the feeling of pleasure along twisted paths. This is due to the tendency of impulses to strive for satisfaction even in suffering, as long as it provides the sentiment of elevation and proximity to a "deeper world of truth". This shows the proximity between symptom and sublime sentiment, in that the affirmation of impulse power requires the returning of the repressed, in Freudian terms, which can lead to disposal through conflicting ways (according to the existing modes of facilitation).

In *Dawn of Day* (1881), this ramification characteristic of impulses is described by the aphorism named "On Detour" (*Auf Umwegen*). Nietzsche believes that every impulse has once philosophized, and

¹⁰ MA I, 4, KSA 2, p. 27.

¹¹ MA I, 8, KSA 2, p. 29.

¹² MA I, 96, KSA 2, p. 177. Some remarks on the historical evolution of "ugly-sublime" are also found in the second part of this book, in an aphorism entitled *Baroque Style*. MA II, 144, KSA II, p. 437.

the function of reason is to translate impulses. He thus strives to unite will and intellect into a single ineffable process. There is no escalation toward a *Quietiv* of human will. Yet the tranquilizer already expresses the effect of impulses sublimation. The nurturing of impulses by means of intellectualized targets and objects expresses a tendency for the peculiar, individual, particular health, by using mind digression for it. Following the same principle, he suggests that "There are many other, and certainly many more superior sublimities, of philosophy, not only those which are more somber and more challenging than my own—perhaps all of them are nothing but intellectual digressions of similar individual impulses?"¹³

Sublimity is characterized as an effect of impulse sublimation. It is an individual phenomenon of satisfaction, as the form of satisfaction desired is non-transferable and does not aim at the definitive or the excessive, but the affirmation to the fragile transition expressed in the butterfly metaphor: "I see, with a new look, the furtive and solitary fluttering of a butterfly". Nietzsche observes the butterfly fluttering, and notes that it seems "unaware that it has only one day to live, that the night will be too cold for its winged frailness. One could also find a philosophy for that butterfly: though it would certainly not be mine."¹⁴ There is always the feeling of immensity towards moments and minor events before impulses filled by revolving around new purposes of an ever-new gestation: "that grows, that comes to light."¹⁵ The valuations in this sense must correspond to the desired peculiarity that instituted them. On the other hand, one ought not to place the estimated objectives too far apart and beyond individual capabilities, i.e., at the maximum limit of strain. Conversely, one should seek satisfaction within the effective possibilities of attainment, and not extrapolate one's own expectations¹⁶.

To what is stated in *The Dawn of Day*, it is appended the following excerpt from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1884). In the text *The sublime ones*, Nietzsche compares "sublime beings" to "penitents of the spirit contempt-laden": "An elevated being (*Gehobener*) must be for me, and not only a sublime being" (*Erhabener*)¹⁷. In an "elevated being" desire submerses in beauty, they have "their muscles at ease and their will is untethered." Zarathustra says to the "elevated being", "someday you shall be beautiful and hold the mirror before your own beauty. This emphasizes a comparison, in that a fluid and rigid impulse tendency bears the relation of valuing or degrading the body, which correlates with the interplay between the affirmation or negation of Thanatos.

The image of "muscles at ease" provides an analogy to what was presented in *The Dawn of Day*, in the butterfly metaphor. The criticism against Schopenhauer, who was pessimistic about his contemporaneity, entails the inversion of signs that Nietzsche applies to Schopenhauer's concepts: "It has vanquished monsters (*bezwang Untiere*); it has solved riddles (*Löste Rätsel*); but it should yet redeem its monsters and riddles; it should yet transform them into celestial children¹⁸."

¹³ M, 553, KSA 3, p. 323.

¹⁴ M, 553, KSA 3, p. 324.

¹⁵ M, 553, KSA 3, p. 323.

¹⁶ M, 555, KSA 3, p. 325.

¹⁷ ZA, *Von den Erhabenen*, KSA 4, p. 151.

¹⁸ ZA, *Von den Erhabenen*, KSA 4, p. 151.

The concept of sublimation as Sublimierung

The concept of sublimation (*Sublimierung*) appears in Nietzsche in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (1873), addressed from its relation to language and culture. In comparing Greek culture with the modern, he states that "in contrast to moderns, for whom the most personal reality is sublime in abstractions (*Abstraktionen sublimiert*), for the Greeks the maximum abstraction was always materialized in a person," as the person was the truth and foundation of things¹⁹. In spite of the intention to draw an opposition and distinction between the two eras, Nietzsche also conveys the volatile characteristic of impulses sublimation, which replaces a concrete experience with another, more abstract, reflective, and which intertwines the Dionysian powers in the guise of beauty and communicability underlying language and culture.

In our text, we aim to highlight the strong correlation between chemistry and the physiology of drive, which explains its use in the context of higher drive targets. These targets, by distancing themselves from objects and taking refuge in abstractions, have suggested, since Plato (for example, in the *Phaedrus* with the metaphor of the winged chariot of the soul), the separation between body and soul.

From the time of Schopenhauer, this "soul" has been thought of in the sublimated relations of impulse, which in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1871) appears already transformed as "a powerful yearning for appearance"²⁰, in essence, another conception of sublimation. The Dionysian worldview, which affirms life, is however opposed to the negation of Will, and in particular to the considerations of Schopenhauer that tragedy leads to resignation: "How differently Dionysius spoke to me! How far from me was all this *resignationism* just then! (*Resignationismus*)"²¹ According to him, *resignationism* does not correspond to psychology of the tragic: "Tragedy is precisely the proof that the Greeks were not pessimists: Schopenhauer was mistaken here (*vergriff sich hier*), as he was mistaken in everything"²².

Nietzsche, contrary to what Schopenhauer writes, assumes that the beautiful appearance serves the obvious function of allowing the experience of the terrible and its universal absorption, pushing life forward, that is, affirming the Will to Live and destruction that were established as premises of creation: "My philosophy is an inverted Platonism." According to Nietzsche, "the further one is from the true being, the purer, more beautiful, and better is life." The target is "life in appearance"²³.

Transitioning the concept of sublimation out of the esthetic to the moral field underlines the debate with Schopenhauer, as well as shows not only the question of interpretations' perspectivism and the need for self-surpassing, but also the generalization of the aesthetic phenomenon as an inherent structure of object relation. That which befits the nature of the impulse, namely its variable targets and objects, defines subtilization and sublimation as primary characteristics of impulse and metaphor as its linguistic representative, as seen in *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense* (1873)²⁴.

¹⁹ PHG, 3, KSA 1, p. 815.

²⁰ GT, 4, KSA 1, p. 38.

²¹ GT, *Versuch einer Selbstkritik*, 6, KSA 1, p. 19-20.

²² EH, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, 1, KSA 6, p. 309.

²³ NF, 1870, 7[156], KSA 7, p. 199.

²⁴ Through this sublimatory effect, the impulse does not allow a linear development history nor the inference of an ideal destination. Human inquietude in this sense is related to the capacity for variation, for establishing contrasts, which imposes decisions and choices, in addition to prompting the passage from esthetic values, for example, linguistic structures of nomination and meaning, to moral ones, which institute defensive value hierarchies that generate resistance and repression, all of which are conducive to hospital culture, as

The term sublimation (*Sublimierung*), which, as with Schopenhauer and Freud, refers to the change of physical states from a solid to a gaseous body, is defined in §1 of *Human, All Too Human*, in which Nietzsche proposes a "chemistry of concepts and feelings" (*Chemie der Begriffe und Empfindungen*), claiming that in this domain the most extraordinary colors "are obtained from vile and even despicable matter." The meaning of the term is similar to that expounded by Schopenhauer in the *Metaphysics of the Sexual Love*, but it also includes the provenance of the good and comforting feelings linked to the beautiful and the sublime, showing disinterested contemplation as a mask of unconscious impulses: "Strictly speaking, there is neither altruistic action (*unegoistisches Handeln*), nor totally disinterested contemplation (*völlig interesseloses Anschauen*); both are only sublimations (*Sublimierungen*), so that the basic element seems to have volatilized (*verflüchtigt*) and is only unveiled by closer observation²⁵."

Ultimately, the sublimatory experience may be reduced to a physiological psychology aspect directly connected to the genealogical thinking by using this peculiar key between concrete and abstract world, that is, impulses sublimation. Incidentally, sublimation also emerges in fact, associated with the symptom, which can be conceived as a kind of stressful, ineffective sublimation that produces psychic suffering when it fails. And this indicates, as with Freud and Schopenhauer, the difficulty inherent in the process of impulses sublimation²⁶.

In the second volume of *Human, All Too Human* (1879-80), part I, aphorism 95, Nietzsche discusses how Christianity was considered a "discovery" for people of "sublimated sexuality" (*sublimierten Geschlechtlichkeit*)²⁷. The matter recurs in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1885/86), aphorism 189, in which Nietzsche discusses people and entire eras tainted by moral fanaticism, which compels certain impulses to yield and demean, citing as an example the most Christian period in Europe when "only under the pressure of Christian appraisals of morality, the sexual impulse (*Geschlechtstrieb*) was sublimated into love (*amour-passion*)²⁸. Logically, the counterpoint of this sublimation, once repression fails, is the psychic symptom. This accounts for the medieval panoply of self-destructive scourging and witch-hunting.

Due to these previous associations, the word may reappear in *The Dawn of Day*, book III, aphorism 202, associated with the idea of health promotion (*Pflege der Gesundheit*). When Nietzsche advocates that criminality should be addressed as a psychic illness (*Geisteskranken*), in such a way that the criminal may find protection "against themselves" (*gegen sich selber*) and against the "harassing tyrannical impulse" (*lästigen tyrannischen Trieb*) that impels them. Furthermore, he discusses the possibilities and means of healing (*Geheiltwerdens*), that is, "of elimination, transformation, sublimation of this impulse" (*Ausrottung, Umbildung, Sublimierung jenes Triebes*), which must be made perfectly clear to the offender²⁹.

there seems to be no denying to Nietzsche that this connection ultimately produces symptomatic deflections in the midst of sublimatory movement, causing psychic suffering when it fails.

²⁵ MA 1, 1, KSA II, p. 23.

²⁶ Culture is far older than the historical individual, who is not always able to follow the sublimation level that is socially required, both due to the constitutive characteristics and libidinal development in relation to childhood experiences, factors that jointly induce the psychic symptom. The one-sided aspects of culture that were once sublimatory are transformed into particular concepts through their fixation to language. These also produce a certain kind of social symptomatology, which is already implicit in every rationality criticism mentioned by Nietzsche.

²⁷ MA 1, 95, KSA II, p. 415. It is striking how natural it seems to Nietzsche to discuss this theme without previous familiarity with Freud, but this is easily clarified when one recalls the readings of Schopenhauer in *The Metaphysics of Sexual Love* as well as Plato in *The Banquet*, thus facilitating a little bit the comprehension of reference system due to the sublimatory aspects linked to sexual love in regard to these two authors. The recollection of the term *Eros* that Nietzsche utilizes in this aphorism directly evokes Plato.

²⁸ JGB, 189, KSA 5, p. 111.

²⁹ M, 3, 202, KSA 3 p. 176.

It is clear that Nietzsche considers impulse sublimation a form of alleviation and healing of psychic ailments. He envisions psychic healing as a medical art that can recognize guilt as a form of sickness: "Should one not be able to say: Every guilty person is a sick person? - No, that moment has not yet come. There is still a lack of doctors for which practical morality (*praktische Moral*)³⁰ must have developed into an aspect of their art and healing science; the avid interest (*hungrige Interesse*) for such things is still lacking overall³¹." What is the relationship between guilt and sublimation? According to Freud, the feeling of guilt leads the individual to perpetrate actions in an attempt at self-punishment, because the difference between the intensity of the impulse and capacity for sublimation generates the need for the act perceived as guilty, as stated by Nietzsche. The extremely violent impulse is more unlikely to be sublimated, since it tends toward the concrete and is not content with abstractions. Therefore, this is Freud's concern in understanding to what extent it is possible to eliminate, transform or sublimate impulses³².

In *The Gay Science* (1881/82), sublimation is also established in relation to historical forms of consciousness (*Gewissen*) prevalent in different eras, for example, religion and science, in a passage that was later requoted by Nietzsche in the third dissertation of *On the Genealogy of Morality*. The term usage exhibits the correlation with unconscious symptom, prevalent in Western culture across the ages, namely, education in truth, with reference to the "Socratic instinct": "One sees what has really triumphed over the Christian God: Christian morality itself (*christlichen Gewissen*), translated and sublimated into scientific consciousness (*übersetzt und sublimiert zum wissenschaftlichen Gewissen*), into intellectual neatness (*intellektuellen Sauberkeit*) by any means³³."

By this transformation of the ideal of truth, according to the philosopher, Schopenhauer's question emerges directly "Does existence itself have a meaning?" (*Hat denn das Dasein überhaupt einen Sinn?*)³⁴. Nietzsche believes that this is a question to which Schopenhauer responded in a Christian fashion, even though he was an honest and admirable atheist. Ironically, he says that the answer involving elements such as pessimism, contemplation, and *resignationism* is a bit premature. The sincere horror with which, in Nietzsche's terms, Schopenhauer contemplated the de-divinized world, which had therefore become "blind, deranged, and questionable", turned him into a "German event", notwithstanding the fact that Schopenhauer was pessimistic "like a good European and not a German". The both respectful and ironic behavior illustrates how Nietzsche attempts to preserve Schopenhauer's question, stating that it was simultaneously misunderstood by "constipated pessimists" who were, in his eyes, many of his contemporaries.

In the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), Nietzsche once again addresses sublimation and, by doing so, reinforces his criticism for the ascetic ideal. The philosopher regards himself as one who does not want "at all to provide water for the dissonant and creaking mills of life-weary pessimists³⁵." Considering that this same image was employed by Schopenhauer in relation to the Churchmen, it will be apparent that the same reasoning is echoed in *The Gay Science*. The criticism leveled at his contemporaneity is sarcastic. He speaks of "bog plants," "sickening softness," "shame of the instincts."

³⁰ The meaning of the word "morality" in Nietzsche's writings is not limited to ethics and good manners, but comprises all things human (impulses, feelings, thoughts, acts, self-cultivation), as opposed to the physical, instinctive, natural, the extra-human.

³¹ M, 3, 202, KSA3, p. 178.

³² FREUD, S. Obras Completas, Volume III, p. 2427.

³³ GM, 3, KSA 3, p. 600.

³⁴ GM, 3, KSA 3, p. 600.

³⁵ GM, 2, 7, KSA 3, p. 302.

In Nietzsche's eyes, in wanting "to become an 'angel', men have developed in themselves this ruined stomach and this saburra-laden tongue, which have rendered the innocence and joy of animal repulsive to them, and life tasteless—so that they sometimes cover their noses before themselves³⁶.

Next, Nietzsche establishes an ironic comparison between eras in which suffering was an argument in favor of existence (because one did not forego making suffer in order to promote life) and his current era, in which the opposite was true and suffering became an accusation against existence. The result is an increase in human sensitivity to pain. To him there was no doubt that "compared with a hysterical cultured woman's night of pain, the sufferings of all the animals hitherto interrogated with the scalpel for scientific explanations simply mean naught. He concludes, "Perhaps one can admit the possibility that 'pleasure in cruelty is not really extinct: it would only require, because pain now is more excruciating, some sublimation (*Sublimierung*) and subtilization (*Subtilisierung*)³⁷. In other words, one should move on to the "imaginative and psychic" and adorned realm "with names so inoffensive" that they would not arouse suspicion "even in the most delicate and hypocritical of consciences," and to exemplify, he discusses "tragic compassion" (*tragische Mitleiden*)³⁸. It is clear that, for Nietzsche, people are angered by the meaninglessness of suffering and, as a result, they invent all kinds of resources, including those that, by negating life, reaffirm it. Nietzsche's argumentative strategy is comparable in this case to Schopenhauer's criticism regarding the act of suicide. The Frankfurt philosopher considers *Selbstmord* an ultimate gesture of Will affirmation³⁹.

The ascetic ideal does not refuse "existence" as it supposes, but rather affirms "its own existence". This is all highly consistent with what was previously mentioned about the Will to Power asserting itself even through its negation⁴⁰.

The question of the ascetic ideal's meaning impulse analysis from the perspective of sublimation suggests that everything that is grandiloquently affirmed in the world contains within it the seed of its own obliteration. If Christianity as dogma perished, now is the time for it to perish as morality. The question he asks himself for what he imagines is the threshold of a new era is, "What meaning would our being have, if not that in us the Will to truth becomes aware of itself as a problem?⁴¹" The ascetic ideal is afflicted with the problem of meaning, but its suffering was not the suffering itself, but the lack of meaning for suffering. Asceticism is a "will to nothingness, an aversion to life, a revolt against the most fundamental life premises." Yet, the ascetic ideal remains Will, for one will "nothingness rather than not wish at all"⁴².

In Nietzsche's view, Will to Power is inseparable from its specially determined and unnecessary targets. The essence of sublimatory activity arises in the pursuit of satisfaction and joy linked to self-expansion and the feelings of power and beauty: "In beauty, human beings position themselves as the measure of perfection. There is no beauty-in-itself. What is beautiful is what says yes, what restores human beings to their image. It is nomination, attribution and vanity: "Their deepest instinct (*unterster Instinkt*), self-preservation and self-expansion, still manifests in such sublimities (*Sublimitäten*).

³⁶ GM, 2, 7, KSA 3, p. 303.

³⁷ GM, 2, 7, KSA 3, p. 303.

³⁸ GM, 2, 7, KSA 3, p. 304.

³⁹ SCHOPENHAUER, A. *Parerga und Paralipomena*, Sämtlich Werke 5, p. 361.

⁴⁰ GM, 2, 7, KSA 3, p. 304.

⁴¹ GM, 2, 7, KSA 3, p. 304.

⁴² GM, 2, 7, KSA 3, p. 412.

Human beings believe that the world is full of beauty, and neglect themselves as a consequence of that⁴³. The beauty of external objects promotes expansion, whereas the ugly is a symptom and sign of degeneration. In other words, beauty is posited in the physio-psychological field of impulse to potency. According to the philosopher, the hatred of decadence is what drives deep beauty to be imposed on the world through esthetic pleasure. In this sense, Nietzsche states that art affirms Will to Power.

The Will to Power constrains sexuality direct targets, whereas repression, which determines symptom and sublimation, requires the appearance estimated in a peculiar selection, correction, and reinforcement of certain characteristics not inherent in esthetic state. According to Nietzsche, they rely on values at stake in individual psychism. These affirm or negate some aspect of the relation of the symptom to the objects. Such proportions between affections stress or lessen aspects of perceived effectivity, but they are always equally perspective.

What maintains sublimatory movement in the subject? The response seems to be that sublimatory flow is maintained by ideal sublimation resulting in inner sublimation, that is, the sublimation of predominant impulse around which other Wills of Power have hitherto coalesced⁴⁴.

The perspective of Agon is the dispute preservation, not the final victory. If the predominance of a certain force generates one rate of sublimation and another of anguish. Therefore, it is symptomatic, and it is necessary to counteract the prevailing tendency, testing alternatives, new directions and interpretations. Undoubtedly, these will not be haphazard interpretations, but perhaps they may even be paradoxical, since truth only pertains to the internal coherence of the system that originated it. Physio-psychological health is dependent on nurturing impulses, and life shall – as long as it lasts – and in any case, prevail over weariness and death—immobility signs⁴⁵.

⁴³ GD, KSA 6, p.123. This usage of the term instinct when one would suppose that Nietzsche should have employed *Trieb* is what leads Assoun (Freud et Nietzsche) and Giacóia (Nietzsche como psicólogo), for example, to assume that these terms are interchangeable. Instead, the existence of a criterion is inferred, so that the term instinct evokes the idea of a definite target in the sense explained above, that is, something invariable.

⁴⁴ Freud asks similar questions to Nietzsche and responds to them through his clinical conundrums, which somewhat reconcile the philosophers' views. For Freud, the conditions inherent in repression render a measure of impulses sublimation desirable and inevitably result in the subject's coming face to face with the "rock bed of castration." The impulse to potency is considered only a partial impulse. Moreover, among direct impulse execution, possible sublimation, and repression, there arise conditions that stipulate that desire can never be entirely satisfied. From this arises the existential anguish that contrasts with the transitoriness of satisfaction possibilities, and from which stems the need to forego the impossible. It is thought that a given force course entails both its own sublimation mode and its sublimatory limits. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud states that sublimation enfeeblement as a method of achieving happiness lies in the premise that it is not generally applicable, since it is only accessible to a few individuals: "It implies the ownership of special endowments and dispositions that are nowhere near being ordinary for any practical purpose. Even for the very few that possess them, such method does not provide comprehensive safeguard against suffering. It does not engender an impenetrable armor against the fate onslaughts and habitually fails when the original suffering is an individual's own body" (FREUD, S. *Obras Completas*, III, p. 3027). Thus, want is the ultimate destination of individuation, as the aim of life is death. However, Freud agrees with Nietzsche as regards sublimation with the exception of such extreme conditions, i.e., in conditions in which difference rather than want prevails. In this case, object alteration in sublimation is necessary and favors the creation of other possible objects.

⁴⁵ Nietzsche argues that in both Heraclitus and Schopenhauer striving is characteristic of becoming, albeit divergent emphases. In Schopenhauer such striving "is only evidence of the internal division of Will to Life (*Selbst-Entzweiung des Willens zum Leben*), an autophagy (an sich selber zehren) of that somber and bewildering impulse (*finstren dumpfen Triebes*)" (PHG, 5, KSA I, p. 826). In contrast, as CACCIOLA (1994) notes, creation and destruction in Heraclitus and Nietzsche "exclude self-devouring of Will to Live, i.e., the penalty that affects everything that becomes." (CACCIOLA, M. L. *Schopenhauer e a questão do dogmatismo*, p. 71). There is invariably tension between a similar conception and a vehemently opposed conclusion, as the foundation of reality as self-devouring in Nietzsche take son harmonic features such as in his reading of becoming in Heraclitus. Another example is the manner in which the Apollonian principle intertwines and balances the Dionysian principle in *The Birth of Tragedy*, affording the terrible and the orgiastic a beautiful form, and this is precisely the essence of tragic.

Nietzsche does not outright reject asceticism, as he states that "a harsh and serene resignation (*Entsagsamkeit*), accomplished with the best will, is among the conditions conducive to the highest spirituality, as well as among its most natural consequences."⁴⁶ But this should sustain nature, and not violate it.

Conclusion

Nietzsche's impulse (*Trieb*) is eminently a drive (*Drang*) equipped with immediate and constant propulsive force, as well as sensitivity and irritability. The pressure of constant impulse aims at satisfaction by means of determined objects whereby it is accomplished. The constancy of the force is correlated to the circularity of *Trieb*, while the object is variable.

Moreover, as will later occur in Freud, another feature of impulse is its constant force, which is also related to this concomitant flexibility. There is always a restlessness for new ways of satisfaction, as well as the impossibility of establishing a natural norm of operation.

The question of enabling differences that is implicit in sublimation is one that draws Nietzsche and Freud closer together. The process of differentiation is the escape from the circularity of the impulse according to both authors, even if Freud is reluctant about the concrete and constitutive possibilities of impulse affirmation and sublimation.

The aspect of suffering touching on the question of desire refers to the circularity of desire-to-live. Translated into the language of impulses, this is the particularity they present, in that they neither have nor give respite, be it day or night, as well as remain in constant conflict for hegemony, whether within the physio-psychological organism or as a natural process in the realm of nature.

In Nietzsche, intensification is part of the common reference to impulses for power, which also seek what is opposed to them, reaching compromise solutions and combatting each other, also allowing for a refinement of impulse targets potentially. According to the philosopher, mutual resistance is necessary to maintain the very combat. Suffering is thus assimilated for the sake of affirmation and potency. This includes at its lowest levels survival, and at higher levels, the powerful affections linked to intellect and art as creation and destruction and hence as elevation and refinement of pulsional targets.

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⁴⁶ GM, 3, 8, KSA 5, p. 356. According to Jacques Lacan, this would then be the true meaning of the expression "analyst's desire", and ultimately implies an unrepeatable transference. Such condition rejuvenates the interplay between powers, and suggests new modes of satisfaction and consequently new objects *ad infinitum*.

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