

INVISIBLE GEARS: UNCONSCIOUS HABITS IN THE FORMATION OF HUMAN PERSONALITY

ENGRENAGENS INVISÍVEIS: OS HÁBITOS INCONSCIENTES NA FORMAÇÃO DA PERSONALIDADE HUMANA

ENGRANAJES INVISIBLES: HÁBITOS INCONSCIENTES EN LA FORMACIÓN DE LA PERSONALIDAD HUMANA



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Gilson Aires de Menezes Júnior¹

ABSTRACT

This article takes as its starting point the hypothesis that unconscious habits function as “invisible gears” that sustain the construction of human personality, insofar as, throughout life, recurrent ways of thinking, feeling, and acting are established that escape conscious awareness and end up being confused with a simple “way of being.” In this trajectory, it seeks to bring together the tradition of classical psychoanalysis and contemporary research on habits and self-regulation, showing how these repeated patterns arise from unconscious formations derived from repressed desires, internal conflicts, defense mechanisms, and implicit learning, until they are consolidated into relatively stable traits of character that guide choices, affective bonds, and forms of presence in the world. Drawing on the contributions of Freud, Lacan, Jung, and Klein, it discusses the constitution of the psychic apparatus, the mechanisms of defense, the logic of repetition, and the central place of desire, relating these formulations to contemporary authors such as Clear and Brewer, who conceive habits as reward circuits, automatic routines, and devices for identity construction, which makes it possible to bring psychoanalytic vocabulary closer to findings from cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and habit science, culminating in the proposal of the metaphor of invisible gears to understand unconscious habits as an axis articulating subjective experience, symbolic structures, and everyday practices, with important clinical and ethical implications for processes of personality change and the reorganization of ways of life.

Keywords: Unconscious Habits. Personality. Psychoanalysis. Desire. Language. Contemporary Habits.

RESUMO

Este artigo toma como ponto de partida a hipótese de que os hábitos inconscientes funcionam como “engrenagens invisíveis” que sustentam a construção da personalidade humana, na medida em que, ao longo da vida, se estabelecem modos recorrentes de pensar, sentir e agir que escapam à consciência e acabam sendo confundidos com um simples “jeito de ser”. Procura se, nesse percurso, articular a tradição da psicanálise clássica com pesquisas contemporâneas sobre hábitos e autorregulação, mostrando como esses padrões repetidos nascem de formações do inconsciente, derivadas de desejos recalçados, conflitos

¹ Master's Degree in Constitutional Law. Instituto de Direito Público (IDP).

internos, mecanismos de defesa e aprendizagens implícitas, até se consolidarem em traços relativamente estáveis de caráter, que orientam escolhas, vínculos afetivos e formas de presença no mundo. A partir das contribuições de Freud, Lacan, Jung e Klein, discutem se a constituição do aparelho psíquico, os mecanismos de defesa, a lógica da repetição e o lugar central do desejo, relacionando essas formulações a autores atuais como Clear e Brewer, que concebem os hábitos como circuitos de recompensa, rotinas automáticas e dispositivos de construção de identidade, o que possibilita aproximar o vocabulário psicanalítico dos achados da psicologia cognitiva, da neurociência e da ciência dos hábitos, culminando na proposta da metáfora das engrenagens invisíveis para compreender os hábitos inconscientes como eixo de articulação entre experiência subjetiva, estruturas simbólicas e práticas cotidianas, com importantes efeitos clínicos e éticos para os processos de mudança de personalidade e de reorganização dos modos de vida.

Palavras-chave: Hábitos Inconscientes. Personalidade. Psicanálise. Desejo. Linguagem. Hábitos Contemporâneos.

RESUMEN

Este artículo parte de la hipótesis de que los hábitos inconscientes funcionan como "engranajes invisibles" que sustentan la construcción de la personalidad humana, en la medida en que, a lo largo de la vida, se establecen formas recurrentes de pensar, sentir y actuar que escapan a la conciencia y terminan confundándose con una simple "forma de ser". En este proceso, se busca articular la tradición del psicoanálisis clásico con la investigación contemporánea sobre hábitos y autorregulación, mostrando cómo estos patrones repetidos surgen de formaciones inconscientes derivadas de deseos reprimidos, conflictos internos, mecanismos de defensa y aprendizaje implícito, hasta consolidarse en rasgos de carácter relativamente estables que guían las elecciones, los vínculos afectivos y las formas de presencia en el mundo. Basándose en las contribuciones de Freud, Lacan, Jung y Klein, este artículo analiza la constitución del aparato psíquico, los mecanismos de defensa, la lógica de la repetición y el papel central del deseo. Relaciona estas formulaciones con autores contemporáneos como Clear y Brewer, quienes conciben los hábitos como circuitos de recompensa, rutinas automáticas y mecanismos de construcción de la identidad. Este enfoque permite una conexión más estrecha entre el vocabulario psicoanalítico y los hallazgos de la psicología cognitiva, la neurociencia y la ciencia de los hábitos, culminando en la metáfora propuesta de los engranajes invisibles para comprender los hábitos inconscientes como eje articulador entre la experiencia subjetiva, las estructuras simbólicas y las prácticas cotidianas, con importantes implicaciones clínicas y éticas para los procesos de cambio de personalidad y la reorganización de los estilos de vida.

Palabras clave: Hábitos Inconscientes. Personalidad. Psicoanálisis. Deseo. Lenguaje. Hábitos Contemporáneos.

1 INTRODUCTION

The metaphor of invisible gears suggests that what moves the human personality is not always directly seen, because behind our daily gestures, affective choices, ways of speaking and occupying social spaces, unconscious habits operate that have been formed in successive layers of experience and defense, often since childhood, in such a way that the subject tends to confuse these crystallized patterns with a supposed essence of his "I", when, in fact, they are repeated responses to psychic conflicts and environmental demands that have been automated over time.

From another perspective, Jung emphasizes that personality is built in the tension between consciousness and the unconscious, which is populated by complexes and archetypal images that decisively influence the way the subject perceives and interprets reality, which leads to the formation of habits of perception, feeling and action that are repeated as relatively stable internal scripts.

By proposing that complexes are organized around intense affective nuclei, often associated with early experiences, the author opens the way to understand how certain situations trigger automatic responses of the subject, who always repeats the same type of reaction, even when he recognizes that the result is dysfunctional or painful. This repetition is not only an observable behavioral data, but translates the permanence of unconscious configurations that have not yet been integrated into the conscious personality, indicating that the invisible gears of psychic life continue to operate in defiance of the declared will. (JUNG, 1912)

Lacan, in turn, radicalizes the understanding of the unconscious by formulating it as structured as a language, which implies thinking that habits, far from being just mechanical routines, can be understood as modes of inscription and repetition of signifying chains that organize the subject's desire and relationship with the Other. From this perspective, personality is less a substance than an effect of positions assumed in the symbolic fabric of discourse, so that what manifests itself as a "way of being" corresponds to reiterated ways of responding to the demands and desires of the Other, through gestures, choices and styles of jouissance that are sedimented.

This article intends to articulate these contributions of psychoanalysis with contemporary studies on habits, exploring the hypothesis that unconscious habits function as invisible gears that, at the same time, stabilize the personality and limit its capacity for transformation, pointing to the importance of a clinical and critical reading of these repetitive patterns. (LACAN, 1964)

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 THE FORMATION OF PERSONALITY IN FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS

2.1.1 Structure of the psychic apparatus: id, ego and superego

In Freudian theory, the id is conceived as the most primitive drive reservoir, governed by the pleasure principle and the immediate search for satisfaction, which means that, from the beginning of life, impulses of desire tend to repeat themselves in search of relief from internal tensions, producing patterns of pleasure search that can become ingrained habits throughout development. This deep layer of psychic life is not guided by norms or by the logic of reality, but by experiences of satisfaction that leave marks, so that certain ways of obtaining pleasure or avoiding unpleasure can be automatically re-actualized in different contexts, without the subject recognizing the repetition of an old drive script. (FREUD, 1900)

Thus, the id provides the energetic raw material that, when meeting the demands of reality and culture, will be progressively organized into relatively stable ways of desiring and reacting, contributing to the constitution of personality traits that express these invisible gears of pleasure-seeking. (FREUD, 1900)

The ego, in turn, emerges as a mediating instance between the instinctual demands of the id, the interdictions and ideals of the superego and the conditions imposed by the external world, which puts it in the position of creating strategies to deal with recurrent conflicts and situations of tension, transforming momentary solutions into habitual modes of functioning. As the subject discovers that not every desire can be satisfied, the ego learns to postpone, displace, or transform instinctual demands, and this work of negotiation is consolidated into ways of dealing with frustration, guilt, and anxiety that tend to be repeated as personal styles. (FREUD, 1900)

In this way, what appears as a personality trait, such as a tendency to avoid conflicts or to put oneself in a position of control, can be understood as a relatively effective arrangement that the ego has found to manage internal and external contradictions, an arrangement that becomes a psychic and behavioral habit. (FREUD, 1900)

The superego represents the internalization of parental and social norms and prohibitions, functioning as an internal judge that watches, criticizes and punishes, which introduces into the personality a gear marked by ideals and demands that are often rigid, which manifest themselves in habits of severe self-evaluation and constant self-demand. (FREUD, 1900)

The formation of the superego implies that the subject incorporates the voice of the Other as an instance that observes and judges, and this voice tends to repeat phrases, mandates and prohibitions that turn into automatic thoughts and feelings of guilt that arise

almost instantaneously in certain situations, even if there is no clear rational reason. Thus, habits such as perfectionism, the need to please, or the tendency to sabotage opportunities for pleasure can be seen as lasting effects of a superego structured around hard-to-achieve ideals and a difficulty in tolerating one's fallibility. (FREUD, 1900)

The articulation between id, ego and superego allows us to understand the personality as a configuration in constant negotiation, in which psychic and behavioral habits are formed as compromises between desires, defenses and internalized norms, in such a way that each repetitive gesture bears the mark of a singular arrangement between these instances. (FREUD, 1900)

Instead of thinking of the subject as possessing a fixed essence, Freudian psychoanalysis shows that what we call "character" results from the sedimentation of compromise solutions that have shown themselves to be minimally functional in the history of that individual and, therefore, have been repeated until they become part of his way of being. This view allows us to reread habits not only as practical routines, but as formations of commitment that keep the invisible gears of psychic life in operation, stabilizing the subject and, at the same time, limiting the plasticity of his personality. (FREUD, 1900)

Thus, the structural model of the psychic apparatus offers an important key to understanding how the axis of the personality is constituted, because the way the ego organizes defenses, negotiates with the superego and channels the forces of the id tends to crystallize into regularities of response, which are perceived by others and by the subject himself as characteristic traits. (FREUD, 1900)

Over time, the individual begins to identify with these traits, saying of himself that he is "anxious", "controlling" or "disconnected", without realizing that such qualities result from dynamic arrangements between conflicting psychic instances, which have been reinforced by external contingencies and secondary gains. In this sense, the structure of the id, ego, and superego can be seen as a set of internal gears whose movements, largely unconscious, produce the appearance of a cohesive "I," while in reality it is an always precarious balance between desires, prohibitions, and adaptive resources. (FREUD, 1900)

2.1.2 Defense mechanisms and pattern repetition

Defense mechanisms are described by Freud as unconscious strategies of the ego to deal with impulses, feelings and ideas that cause anguish, which means that, in practice, they function as psychic habits of avoiding or transforming contents that threaten the cohesion of the self, being activated with such speed that the subject rarely perceives their operation. (FREUD, 1900)

Repression, for example, excludes from consciousness representations incompatible with the ideal of the self, but does not prevent them from returning disguised in symptoms, faulty acts and repetitive choices, through which the repressed insist on manifesting themselves. In this way, the same type of defense can be mobilized in different situations, producing stable patterns of reaction, such as the tendency to deny problems, to shift responsibility to the other or to rationalize intense affective experiences, which contributes to the formation of a personality that is organized around these habitual modes of protection against anguish. (FREUD, 1900)

Klein broadens the understanding of defense mechanisms by describing processes such as splitting, idealization and projective identification, which operate very early in the baby's relationship with his primary objects and create matrices for the subsequent organization of the personality, especially in the conditions that we now call personality disorders. (KLEIN, 1952)

When the subject tends to split objects into totally good or totally bad, and to project onto other impulses that he cannot bear to recognize in himself, he is repeating a defensive arrangement that crystallized in a period of extreme dependence, transforming itself into a relational habit. These mechanisms, when repeated throughout life, organize a characteristic way of bonding, in which the other is constantly placed in extreme positions, sometimes idealized, sometimes persecuted, which evidences the strength of the invisible gears constituted in the initial relationship with the caring figures. (KLEIN, 1952)

Jung, when working with the concept of complexes, shows that certain nuclei of experience highly charged with affect tend to become autonomous within the psyche, reacting almost automatically to stimuli that function as triggers, which explains why certain situations provoke disproportionate and repetitive responses. (JUNG, 1912)

Each complex, linked to a specific theme, such as rejection, abandonment or power, contains a set of memories, fantasies and emotions that are activated as a block, guiding perception and conduct in a habitual way, as if the subject were taken by a "way of being" that imposes itself in that context. In this sense, personality disorders can be understood as arrangements in which certain complexes dominate the psychic field, causing habits of feeling and acting linked to these nuclei to be repeated in a compulsive way, even to the detriment of the individual's well-being. (JUNG, 1912)

In the Lacanian reading, the repetition of patterns is not only a behavioral or defensive phenomenon, but reveals the insistence of a signifier that returns in the place of the repressed, marking the position of the subject in the symbolic chain that constitutes it, which

makes many apparently banal habits actually forms of inscription of a response to the desire of the Other. (LACAN, 1964)

The compulsion to repetition, therefore, is not limited to the idea that the subject repeats in order to master a traumatic situation, but indicates the very structure of his insertion in language, to the extent that certain scenes, phrases and gestures are resumed at different moments of life, as if the subject were always staging a text that he did not write, but in which he participates. This allows us to think of habits as effects of a significant logic, in which the position assumed in front of the Other is translated into repeated ways of speaking, desiring and suffering, which end up composing the texture of their personality. (LACAN, 1964)

In dialogue with these psychoanalytic conceptions, Brewer describes, based on neuroscientific evidence and his clinical experience, how the brain learns to associate certain behaviors with anxiety relief or small rewards, generating habit loops that are repeated even when the subject declares that he wants to act differently, which is particularly visible in cases of anxiety and dependence. (BREWER, 2021)

These loops involve an internal or external trigger, a routine, and a sense of reward that, when reinforced, creates a preferential path in the neural network, making it increasingly difficult to disrupt the pattern, which approximates the psychoanalytic idea of repetition compulsion. By understanding these circuits, it becomes possible to propose interventions that introduce curiosity and awareness into the moment of routine, opening the possibility of making habits more flexible that, until then, functioned as invisible gears conditioning the individual's field of choices. (BREWER, 2021)

2.2 HABITS AS FORMATIONS OF THE UNCONSCIOUS IN FREUD

When Freud analyzes dreams as disguised fulfillments of repressed desires, he describes mechanisms of condensation and displacement that reorganize the psychic material into apparently strange narratives, but endowed with their own logic, which allows a conceptual approximation between the work of the dream and the formation of unconscious habits. (FREUD, 1900)

Just as in the dream unacceptable contents are transformed into less threatening images, in everyday life desires and conflicts can be displaced into repetitive acts that function as avenues of expression and, at the same time, of masking the repressed. Certain habits, such as check-in rituals, small quirks or stereotyped ways of reacting, can then be read as substitutive formations that fulfill the function of keeping something of desire in circulation, without it reaching consciousness in its most direct form. (FREUD, 1900)

Freud also points out that many neurotic symptoms have the structure of a compromise between a desire that seeks expression and a defense that seeks to stop it, which makes them highly repetitive, to the extent that the underlying conflict remains unresolved and finds in the symptom a partial way out. The frequency with which the subject repeats certain behaviors or thoughts does not depend, therefore, on a conscious decision, but on the insistence of the repressed person who seeks ways of manifestation acceptable to the ego and the superego. (FREUD, 1900)

From this perspective, habits that seem only stubbornness or personality vices can be analyzed as solutions found by the psyche to give vent to impulses, affections and fantasies that do not find a place in conscious discourse, at the cost of imprisoning the personality in cycles of repetition. (FREUD, 1900)

Transference, a central concept in Freudian clinic, illustrates in a privileged way the habitual dimension of the formations of the unconscious, as the patient tends to repeat with the analyst patterns of attachment that originated in his childhood relationships, updating old scenes in a new context. Instead of simply remembering the past, the subject repeats it, treating the analyst as if he were a significant figure in his history, which reveals the strength of the invisible gears that organize his way of loving, trusting and defending himself. (FREUD, 1900)

Freud also observes that character can be understood as the result of the sedimentation of childhood experiences, fantasies and defenses, in such a way that certain qualities such as parsimony, obsessiveness or impulsiveness can be seen as forms of psychic organization that have stabilized around specific conflicts, such as those linked to the control of the sphincters, fraternal rivalry or the experience of castration. (FREUD, 1900)

What is socially perceived as a "personality trait" corresponds, therefore, to instinctual investment and defense habits that have proven useful at some point, having been reinforced by external and internal rewards. From this point of view, understanding the genesis of these traits means reconstituting the history of the choices and renunciations that configured the libidinal economy of the subject, bringing to light the unconscious gears that make him react in a predictable way in certain situations. (FREUD, 1900)

From the point of view of technique, psychoanalytic interpretation aims precisely to make conscious these formations of the unconscious that are expressed in dreams, faulty acts, symptoms and habits, allowing the subject to recognize, in his repetitive ways of acting and feeling, the mark of desires, fears and fantasies that until then operated in secret. (FREUD, 1900)

2.3 LACAN'S CONTRIBUTIONS: THE UNCONSCIOUS STRUCTURED AS LANGUAGE

2.3.1 Signifying chain, desire and "jouissance"

By stating that the unconscious is structured as a language, Lacan shifts the focus of psychoanalysis to the dimension of the signifier, emphasizing that the subject is, above all, an effect of the discourse of the Other, in such a way that his habits of thinking, feeling and acting are organized from signifying chains that precede him. (LACAN, 1964)

Instead of seeking a deep core of identity, this perspective seeks to locate the places that the subject occupies in the symbolic plot, places that are reiterated through utterances, gestures and choices that function as responses to an order of signification. Thus, habits can be seen as ways of tying jouissance to the signifier, minimally stabilizing the subject in a position that, although it causes suffering, offers a certain symbolic consistency. (LACAN, 1964)

Desire, in Lacan's reading, is not simply a need to be satisfied, but an effect of the structuring lack introduced by language, so that it never finds an object that fully fulfills it, which leads the subject to circulate around partial objects that sustain his desiring position. In this logic, habits can be understood as circuits by which the subject circumvents the lack, finding small satisfactions that, although they do not solve the fundamental void, offer a way of dealing with it. (LACAN, 1964)

The concept of "jouissance", often translated as jouissance, designates a form of satisfaction that overflows the principle of pleasure, approaching excess and pain, which helps to understand why the subject insists on habits that he knows are harmful, such as destructive relationships, compulsions or self-sabotage. (LACAN, 1964)

In these situations, it is not only a question of the search for pleasure, but of a way of placing oneself in relation to a type of jouissance that structures the subjective position, often linked to unconscious mandates, such as that of suffering to be loved or failing to remain faithful to an inherited image. Habits, in this sense, function as devices that ensure the continuity of this jouissance, even at the cost of great suffering, keeping invisible gears in operation that sustain the subject's identity. (LACAN, 1964)

Lacan also proposes that the symptom can be read as a text that the subject writes with his body and with his acts, a text that condenses a singular way of jouissance and of signifying his own history, which allows us to think of repetitive habits as part of this writing system. (LACAN, 1964)

When someone finds themselves repeating the same type of affective or professional choice, despite unsatisfactory results, they may be unknowingly enacting a meaning that has been inscribed in their history by the relationship with the desire of the Other, a meaning that

has condensed into a symptom that offers a kind of symbolic anchoring. By inviting the subject to speak and listen to what he says, analysis allows this text to be reread, and the habits that materialize it can be displaced or re-inscribed in another way. (LACAN, 1964)

From this perspective, the signifying chain functions as a set of gears that organizes the way the subject is situated in the world, in such a way that each habit can be seen as a point of fixation in a sequence of signifiers, around which desire and jouissance circulate. (LACAN, 1964)

Analytic work consists of introducing displacements in this chain, producing lapses, misunderstandings and new associations that open up the possibility of breaking the automatism of certain circuits of repetition. In doing so, analysis not only modifies behaviors, but touches the very structure of the personality, allowing the subject to find other ways of positioning himself in the face of lack and desire. (LACAN, 1964)

2.3.2 Habits as a response to the Other and the symbolic order

In Lacanian theory, the Other with a capital letter represents the place of language, law and social discourse, so that from the beginning the subject is summoned to respond to the expectations and meanings that surround him, which implies that his habits are also formed as responses to these addresses. (LACAN, 1964)

The way the child is named, looked at and interpreted by caregivers constitutes a symbolic field within which he learns to occupy certain places, adopting gestures, words and attitudes that are repeated as a way of guaranteeing recognition or avoiding rejection. These movements, initially linked to concrete situations, tend to generalize and become automated, composing a kind of habitual choreography that sustains the personality in the relationship with the Other. (LACAN, 1964)

The symbolic order, composed of shared norms, values and meanings, offers the subject a repertoire of possible positions, related to gender, class, profession and other social categories, so that many habits are, in fact, ways of embodying these prescribed places. (LACAN, 1964)

By reproducing discourses about what it means to be a man or a woman, successful or unsuccessful, normal or deviant, the individual adheres to practices, styles of consumption and ways of expressing emotions that reinforce their inclusion in certain groups, while limiting their uniqueness. Thus, personality can be understood as an arrangement between symbolic identifications and forms of jouissance that are stabilized in the repetition of habits that respond to this order. (LACAN, 1964)

Language habits, for example, are not reduced to conscious choices, but reflect the internalization of ways of speaking inherited from the family, the community and the media, which carry implicit values and rules of hierarchy, which makes apparently neutral expressions reveal positions in relation to the other and to oneself. (LACAN, 1964)

These discursive patterns, when repeated, sediment identities, such as that of the subject who always makes self-deprecating jokes or the one who assumes an imperative tone in any conversation, consolidating a personality style that seems spontaneous, but which, in fact, is the product of structured identifications and defenses. To this extent, the habits of speaking and listening are invisible cogs that organize the way of being with the other. (LACAN, 1964)

In the same way, bodily habits, such as posture, gestures and ways of occupying space, also respond to the symbolic order, expressing identifications and positions of power, submission or resistance, which indicates that personality is not only an intrapsychic phenomenon, but is configured at the interface between body, language and culture. (LACAN, 1964)

The child who learns to lower his gaze in front of authority figures or to exaggerate his performance to be noticed, for example, incorporates patterns that can remain throughout life as his "personal mark", even if they have been constituted as defensive strategies in the face of a specific scenario. Thus, the analysis of these bodily habits allows us to unveil the symbolic web that sustains them and opens paths for their transformation. (LACAN, 1964)

In the clinic inspired by Lacan, the possibility of personality change is not restricted to the replacement of bad habits with good ones, but concerns the reconfiguration of the subject's relationship with the Other and with the symbolic order, which implies displacing the signifiers that fixed him to certain positions and allowing the emergence of new arrangements of desire and jouissance. (LACAN, 1964)

When the subject realizes how his habits function as automatic responses to internalized mandates and expectations, he can find loopholes to refuse some of these impositions and invent more unique ways of living. In this way, the invisible gears that previously imprisoned him in a narrow identity can be rearranged, giving way to a more flexible personality that is less determined by repetition. (LACAN, 1964)

2.4 OTHER CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS AND DIALOGUES

2.4.1 Jung, Klein and personality disorders

Jung contributes decisively to the understanding of personality disorders by emphasizing the role of complexes, relatively autonomous psychic structures that are

organized around emotionally charged contents, capable of taking control of the conscious attitude whenever activated by associated situations. (JUNG, 1912)

In individuals with a personality more rigidly structured around certain complexes, very similar responses are observed in different contexts, as if the same "part" took charge, which is manifested in habits of thought, affection and behavior that are repeated, even when they generate damage. The difficulty in integrating these complexes into consciousness leads to a fragmentation of the personality, in which the subject oscillates between ways of being that he cannot reconcile, reinforcing patterns of repetition that function as invisible cogs of his disorders. (JUNG, 1912)

In the Jungian perspective, the process of individuation, understood as the path of becoming who one is in a fuller and more integrated way, comes up against the rigidity of certain unconscious habits that keep the subject tied to partial identities and old defenses, which no longer correspond to the current demands of life. (JUNG, 1912)

When the personality fixates on a narrow set of roles and attitudes, it refuses the possibility of dialogue with the unconscious and with the new, which favors the appearance of repetitive symptoms and conflicts. Analytic work, by favoring the encounter with symbolic images and narratives that expand the meaning of experience, can make these habits more flexible and allow the emergence of more complex and creative configurations of personality. (JUNG, 1912)

Klein, when studying early object relations, points out that the way the baby deals with the presence and absence of the breast, as well as with experiences of frustration and gratification, establishes fundamental psychic positions, such as the schizoid paranoid position and the depressive position, which directly influence the way the personality will be organized. (KLEIN, 1952)

In more severe personality disorders, there is often a predominance of defenses linked to splitting, idealization, and projection, which manifest themselves in relationship habits marked by extreme oscillations between adoration and devaluation of the other, accompanied by intense anxiety. These repetitive patterns indicate that the gears formed in the first experiences with the primary objects continue to operate, guiding the way the subject perceives and reacts to contemporary relationships. (KLEIN, 1952)

In addition, Klein introduces the notion of internal objects to refer to the unconscious representations of significant figures, loaded with ambivalent affects, which come to inhabit the subject's psychic world and influence his future bonds. When these internal objects are experienced as persecuting or demanding in an excessive way, the subject can develop

habits of self-punishment, chronic distrust or submission, which structure personality pictures with paranoid or depressive traits. (KLEIN, 1952)

Bandura, although inserted in another theoretical tradition, contributes to the understanding of personality disorders by demonstrating the role of social learning in the acquisition of behavior patterns, showing that individuals observe significant models and imitate their behaviors, especially when they are rewarded, which helps to explain how certain relational styles are perpetuated. (BANDURA, 1977)

In families in which aggressiveness, manipulation, or submission are frequently reinforced strategies, children tend to incorporate these patterns as natural ways of relating, transforming into habits that may later be recognized as characteristics of personality disorders. The theory of social learning, by emphasizing the role of observation and self-efficacy, suggests that the modification of these patterns requires not only insight, but also concrete opportunities to experiment with new ways of acting, which dialogues with intervention proposals that combine reflection and skills training. (BANDURA, 1977).

2.4.2 Current studies on habits (Clear, Brewer and others)

Clear, by systematizing research on habits in his widely disseminated work, proposes that the formation of habits is based on a cycle composed of cue, routine and reward, suggesting that small consistent changes can produce significant transformations in the long term, especially when associated with a change of identity, that is, when the subject starts to see himself as someone who acts in a certain way. (CLEAR, 2019)

Brewer, supported by neuroscience findings, describes how the brain learns through a reward-based conditioning process, in which behaviors associated with feelings of relief or pleasure are more likely to be repeated, even when they produce negative consequences in other spheres of life, which is evident in anxiety, binge eating, and dependence. (BREWER, 2021)

By showing that these behaviors are organized in loops in which a trigger triggers a routine that generates a kind of reward, the author argues that the simple attempt to rationally control these impulses tends to fail, because it does not reach the level at which the habit is encoded. His proposal to use mindfulness practices to increase awareness of the process at the exact moment it occurs allows the subject to perceive more clearly the real cost of their habits, reducing their attractiveness and making room for change, which has direct implications for the reconfiguration of personality. (BREWER, 2021)

Duhigg, in his analysis of the power of habits, explores both individual and organizational examples to show that much of what we do throughout the day relies on

automatic routines, which allow the brain to conserve energy, but which can also trap the subject in unhealthy patterns of behavior. (DUHIGG, 2012)

He introduces the idea of key habits, those that, when modified, trigger chain changes in other aspects of life, which suggests that punctual, well-chosen interventions can have a great impact on the general way a person functions. This approach offers an interesting bridge with psychoanalysis, insofar as it invites us to locate which habits function as central gears in the maintenance of certain ways of being, indicating that their transformation can have repercussions on the global configuration of the personality. (DUHIGG, 2012)

Baumeister, based on his research on willpower and self-regulation, argues that self-control functions as a limited resource that individuals can dispose of to a greater or lesser extent, so that the creation of favorable automatic habits reduces the need for constant conscious decisions, preserving mental energy for more complex choices. (BAUMEISTER, 2011)

This conception implies that personality, often described in terms of discipline, organization, or impulsivity, is related to the way in which the subject is able to automate behaviors aligned with his or her goals, reducing exposure to temptations and internal conflicts. By suggesting that the strengthening of willpower does not occur only through effort, but also through the intelligent construction of routines and environments, Baumeister offers valuable elements for thinking about how interventions focused on habits can support therapeutic processes that aim at deeper changes in the way of being. (BAUMEISTER, 2011)

Kahneman, by distinguishing between two systems of thought, one fast, automatic and intuitive and the other slow, deliberate and analytical, shows that a large part of our decisions are made by the fast system, based on heuristics and associations that work in a very similar way to cognitive habits, which means that our worldview is strongly conditioned by previously established mental routes. (KAHNEMAN, 2011)

These automatic pathways lead to judgment biases and systematic errors that, repeated over time, contribute to the construction of a personality that may be more pessimistic, overconfident, or risk-averse, depending on how these thinking habits are structured. By highlighting the difficulty of changing these patterns only for information, the author reinforces the need for strategies that act at the level of practice and repeated experience, approaching, albeit in another way, the psychoanalytic intuition that the transformation of the personality passes through the modification of the unconscious gears that sustain our way of interpreting and reacting to the world. (KAHNEMAN, 2011)

2.5 INVISIBLE GEARS: UNCONSCIOUS HABITS AS THE AXIS OF PERSONALITY

By articulating Freudian psychoanalysis with contemporary studies on habits, it becomes possible to conceive the personality as a set of invisible gears composed of formations of the unconscious that are expressed in relatively stable patterns of behavior, whose function is at the same time to protect the subject from anguish and to enable some satisfaction of his desires. Unconscious habits would thus be solutions that the psyche found to manage conflicts between impulses, norms and reality, solutions that, because they worked at some point, were repeated and automated, gaining the appearance of natural character traits. (FREUD, 1900)

This conception allows us to understand why the subject often sees himself acting contrary to what he claims to want, because the gears formed in past contexts continue to operate, producing responses that aim to repeat an arrangement considered, at some level, less threatening than the unknown. (FREUD, 1900)

From the Lacanian reading, we can deepen this metaphor of the gears by considering that each habit is inscribed in a signifying chain, occupying a place in the text that the subject writes with his life, a text that responds to the desire of the Other and to the structure of the language that precedes it. In this sense, there is no neutral habit, since even the most trivial behaviors carry marks of identifications, mandates and forms of jouissance that have been incorporated throughout subjective history. (LACAN, 1964)

By shifting the focus from the idea of "changing habits" to the question of repositioning oneself in the symbolic chain, psychoanalysis suggests that the true transformation of the personality requires a work of resignification that goes beyond behavioral adjustments, intervening in the invisible gears that connect the subject to the Other and to his own desire. (LACAN, 1964)

The concept of habitus, formulated by Bourdieu, offers an important contribution to this discussion, by describing systems of durable and transposable dispositions, incorporated by individuals through socialization, which guide perceptions, thoughts and actions in a regular way, without the need for conscious coordination, which dialogues directly with the idea of unconscious habits. (BOURDIEU, 1977)

The habitus is the result of the internalization of social structures, so that practices and ways of being specific to a class or group become natural for its members, functioning as gears that reproduce, in the body and mind of individuals, the objective order. This perspective shows that personality is not only an effect of intrapsychic conflicts, but also constitutes the intersection between symbolic structures, power relations and socialization experiences, which expands the field of analysis of unconscious habits. (BOURDIEU, 1977)

Bandura, with his notion of reciprocal determinism, according to which behavior, personal factors and environment interact in a dynamic way, allows us to think of the invisible gears of personality as systems in constant feedback, in which habits influence the context and are reinforced or punished by it. (BANDURA, 1977)

An individual with personality traits marked by social withdrawal, for example, tends to avoid situations of interaction, which reduces opportunities for positive experiences, reinforcing beliefs of inadequacy and maintaining the cycle of isolation, which manifests itself as a set of avoidance habits. By recognizing this circularity, space is opened for interventions that aim to interrupt the cycle at some point, introducing new experiences that can challenge habitual expectations, contributing to the reconfiguration of the subject's way of being. (BANDURA, 1977)

Clear's contributions on the construction of habit systems can also be integrated into the metaphor of gears, insofar as they highlight that lasting changes in life do not result from punctual decisions, but from the creation of structures that make certain behaviors easy and natural, in a similar way to the way in which the formations of the unconscious guide the subject without him realizing it. (CLEAR, 2019)

By proposing that we focus on becoming the type of person who performs certain behaviors, instead of pursuing only specific goals, the author approaches, in another register, the psychoanalytic idea that the personality is reconfigured when subjective positions and ways of relating to desire and the Other are transformed. Thus, articulating the clinical reading of unconscious habits with concrete strategies for reorganizing routines and environments can enrich care practices that aim at an effective change of the invisible gears that support the personality. (CLEAR, 2019)

3 CONCLUSION

Throughout this article, we have sought to show that unconscious habits can be understood as invisible gears that structure the formation and maintenance of the human personality, articulating contributions from Freudian psychoanalysis, Lacanian rereadings, contributions from Jung and Klein, and contemporary studies on habits and self-regulation. Instead of being reduced to simple visible routines, these habits express arrangements that the mind builds to manage tensions between desire, norms and the demands of reality, being incorporated so intensely into the subject's way of existing that they end up being confused with the very "essence" of who he is.

By considering personality traits as crystallizations of ways of dealing with the repressed and desire, it becomes possible to shift the notion of character from a fixed and

naturalized understanding to a historical and processual reading, in which the gears that sustain psychic functioning can be questioned, reinterpreted and, to a certain extent, transformed.

The dialogue with authors who empirically investigate habits indicates that the automatic component of conduct is not opposed to subjectivity, but actively participates in its constitution, providing relevant clues about how processes of change can be favored by interventions that reach, at the same time, the plane of consciousness and that of concrete action. Measures such as broadening attention to the moment when the habit is triggered, reorganizing signals and rewards, and building routines consistent with broader values and life projects are in tune with the psychoanalytic proposal of making thinkable what previously operated in the shadows, creating gaps for a less compulsive relationship with *jouissance* and desire itself.

When these perspectives are integrated, possibilities are opened up to enrich both clinical practice and initiatives to promote mental health and personal development, to the extent that it is recognized that personality modification necessarily involves intervening in the invisible gears that connect the subject to their experiences of suffering and satisfaction.

The reflection on these gears that articulate unconscious habits and ways of being also points to the importance of interdisciplinary research that brings together psychoanalysis, social psychology, neuroscience and behavioral economics, examining how internal conflicts, forms of social organization and automatic patterns of choice are combined in everyday life.

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