

Authority, Violence and Education ^{1 2 3 4 5 6}

Autoridade, Violência e Educação

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Abstract

The article aims to focus on the relationship between violence and the crisis of authority in the educational context, considering the saturated environment of biopolitics. It seeks to interpret the work of the final phase of Sigmund Freud's life, Man Moses and the monotheistic religion as a counter-hegemonic witness to biopolitics. Based on some thesis defended in the work, especially the one of the vacant place of the image of the father, the article establishes relations with the role of the teacher before the scenery of violence and lack of recognition of their action. It concludes by the need to deconstruct the panorama that motivated the outbreak of the original violence, now being necessary its reconstruction it in the hermeneutic perspective. As well it indicates the need to rethink biopolitics in the teacher's life, always challenged to take sides for a repressive or moral authority.

Keywords: authority, violence, teacher, hermeneutics, biopolitics

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⁶ As for the quotes used throughout the text, we chose to translate directly from the excerpt used, instead of looking for any materials originally written in other languages, as that is what the author had access to and what informed his reflection. We did, however, use the books' titles in their English published version, maintaining the dates referent to the issue used by the author.

Resumo

O artigo procura enfocar a relação entre violência e a crise de autoridade no contexto educativo, tendo em vista o ambiente saturado da biopolítica. Procura interpretar a obra da fase final da vida de Sigmund Freud, *O homem Moisés e a religião monoteísta* como um testemunho contra-hegemônico da biopolítica. A partir de algumas teses defendidas na obra, especialmente a do lugar vago da imagem do pai, estabelece relações com o papel do docente diante do cenário de violência e falta de reconhecimento da sua atuação. Conclui que é necessário desconstruir o panorama que motivou a eclosão da violência original, cabendo, agora, reconstruí-lo na perspectiva hermenêutica. Bem como indica a necessidade de repensar a biopolítica na vida do professor, sempre desafiada a tomar partido por uma autoridade repressiva ou moral.

Palavras-chave: autoridade, violência, professor, hermenêutica, biopolítica

*“We live in a particularly curious time.
We discover with amazement that progress has sealed
an alliance with barbarism”*

(Freud, 2018, p. 97).

*“The school, par excellence, is the place dedicated to the education
and socialization of children and adolescents, it has become a scenario
of aggression, authoritarianism and mutual disrespect.
These are lessons that could never be in this booklet”*

(Abramovay, Avancini, & Oliveira, 2006, p. 29).

Introduction

The text intends to address the correlation between authority and violence in education influenced by the context of contemporary biopolitics. For this, it uses a suggestive reflection by Roberto Esposito, exposed in his book *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, when analyzing the last great work of Sigmund Freud as a testimony against the biopolitics of the German Nazi state of the 2nd World War. The balance appears in chapter 5. *Philosophy of bios; 1. Philosophy after Nazism*, which addresses the increase in biopolitical violence after the end of the WWII concentration camps experience. And not the other way around, as might be expected.

Biopolitics or politics of life debates the emergence of government techniques based on biased biological and genetic concepts as badges for the criteria for electing public policies. What was clear to the ancients, with the separation of animal life (*zōē*) and qualified life (*bios*) became, at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, a gray area of indistinction. Thus, population behavior technologies are developed as a way to control life, which can lead to both an increase in the quality of human life and its animalization. The subjects are now in command of measures coming from the great social medicine, not only being seen as private bodies, but as a species-body. In this sense, Nazism and Fascism would be the most genuine by-products of biopolitics taken to the maximum exponent of the degeneration of governmentality techniques, in which life was left bare. It is in this context of war that several works appear as key witnesses of the reaction of European intellectuality to the progressive increase in the negative effects of biopolitics – part of the works of Foucault, Hannah Arendt and even Martin Heidegger, among which Esposito situates the seminal work by Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, written at the end of his life and published in 1939.

Before entering into the appreciation of Freud's book, it is worth remembering that the solution proposed by the Italian philosopher is far from being a Darwinian acceptance or adaptation to the immeasurable planetarization of biopolitics experienced today. Esposito (2011) realizes that biopolitics has become a core issue in the international debate in several areas of knowledge in recent years, not by chance. There is an important expansion given to the ethnic element in the relations between people and their respective states, also passing through the centrality of the health issue as a functioning measure for the economic productive system. In addition, it cites the entry of work in the sphere of cognitive and emotional life of individuals, exponential increase in the migratory flow of individuals deprived of legal identity and the ostensible apparatus of internal and international policing, as evidence of the growth of *bios* policy in all segments of social life. In fact, he proposes to seek strength to confront it within the biopolitical discourse itself, more specifically in the category of immunization. In this aspect, the reference to such authors takes into account their legacies as statements in the counter-hegemonic defense of the politics of life, and of its ailments or pathologies, such as Nazi-fascism.

We also take into account, in our analysis, Richard Bernstein's testimony in his book *Freud and the legacy of Moses*, when he asks why this publication has aroused so much interest from several important thinkers in recent times, such as Jaques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian*

impression; Yosef Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*; and Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*⁷. The north-american author himself is quick to try to answer: “It is almost as if there was a *belated* recognition that *Moses and Monotheism* is one of Freud's greatest works” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 10). Bernstein is concerned with interpreting the Freudian legacy not from a strictly biopolitical point of view, as is Esposito's motivation. However, as he seeks to understand it from the point of view of the ethnic issue, of the “essence of (his) Judaism” (to which, obviously, Freud is subjected), seeking to understand “the key to Jewish survival and deep psychological reasons for anti-Semitism” (Bernstein., p. 9), he adds his effort to this scope as well.

The return of this work to Freud is not only due to the fact that a great psychoanalytic work has called the attention of important contemporary philosophers, which in itself would be reason enough to arouse the attention of education. The Freudian interpretation of Judaism departs from the great Renaissance art piece *Moses*, the statue carved by Michelangelo, in which the center of interpretation revolves around the idea of power, something dear to the biopolitical context, and this would be another reason more than enough to awaken our interest. Without excluding these aspects, we agree with Betty Bernardo Fuks, when she says, in the Preface to the recent translation of Freud's book into Portuguese, that: “Open work, *Moses* does not lend itself to capture: multiple meanings – but not arbitrary – bubble up on its pages” (Fuks, 2018, p. 24).

In fact, our endeavor drives the attempt to understand the following questions: does the treatment of the violence phenomenon, as given by Freud in its psychoanalytic origins, contain potential to think about the formation inserted in our context? Is it possible to find within it biopolitical devices⁸ that help to rethink the exponential increase in violence in Brazilian schools in recent times (Gonçalves & Sposito, 2002; Sposito, 2001), as one of the by-products of teacher's loss of authority?

⁷ We can also add, among others, the brilliant essay *Freud and the non European*, by the Palestinian intellectual and peace activist Edward W. Said (2004).

⁸ According to Agamben (2005), the device is linked to the mechanism that develops capture logic and not simply domination in individuals, that is, any artifact that is able to guide, model, capture gestures, attitudes or discourses with the consent of the living beings. Therefore, the device is the rest or the subject that results from the relationship of living beings with the device, demarcating a certain position in this network by subjectivation processes that, by capturing individuals in its web, produce identities (Fanlo, 2011). In this aspect, Agamben emphasizes: “Every device implies, in effect, a process of subjectivation, without which the device cannot function as a governing device, but is reduced to a mere exercise of violence” (2005, p. 14). For a more in-depth look at this issue, see the article *Cultural industry, biopolitics and education* (2018).

In this aspect, we seek to undertake a hermeneutics of the theme, by placing the understanding of authority in line with the issue of violence. First, we will discuss Freud's legacy in his historical and cultural environment, with the concern of understanding the absence of this place of authority resulting from primitive violence. Next, we focus on the issue of the loss of teaching power as a symptom of the inability to fill, effectively or positively, the place of the "original father figure". And, finally, the teacher's difficulties in making his knowledge valid in the context of insurgent violence will be addressed, particularly when we associate with it the theme of biopolitics in the current context of the resurgence of barbarism worldwide. We therefore believe that it is necessary to investigate the contribution of psychoanalysis, this science that investigates the archaic heritage of the human psyche, in the sense that it nurtures the relationship between philosophy and education.

Freud, Moses and the question of authority

It was on a trip to Rome, more specifically to the Church of San Pietro in Vincoli, that Freud was enchanted by the emblematic figure of Moses sculpted by Michelangelo. Sitting in a very large and apparently comfortable armchair, with the 2 tablets of the 10 commandments under his right hand, Freud realized that there were mysteries to be deciphered in this sculpture. Moses' Pan head would not have been placed there by the artist by mere prop or chance, as well as the way in which he holds the Tablets of Stone of the divine law in his right hand. Since psychoanalysis seeks precisely to analyze the unobserved par or details, secret and hidden things that need to be deciphered, there were enigmas to be decoded there, which forced Freud to come several times throughout his life to the sacred city to understand its meanings, as hieroglyphs subject to interpretation: "As often as I climbed the steep stairs of the ugly Corso Cavour to the lonely square in which the abandoned church is located, I always tried to sustain the hero's gaze of hatred and contempt..." (Freud, 2015, p. 186).

Moses is represented by Michelangelo as he received the tablets of the law from God, having descended from Mount Sinai after 40 days and 40 nights of reflection. At that moment, he sees the people dancing and celebrating the adoration of the image of the Golden Calf. Michelangelo would have captured that minute of hesitation, which preceded the act of Moses

throwing the Tablets of Stone to the ground, taken by the indignation of anger against the people judged to be unfaithful.

It is worth remembering that Freud claimed to be an atheist and, although he grew up in a traditional Jewish family, he did not share the same beliefs, or rather, he did not have a mystical attraction for the founding father of Judaism. And yes, he tried to understand how psychoanalysis could help in the interpretation of symbols that were loaded with mysticism, but that corresponded to a situation of personal anguish, as he himself observes: "Because I have never experienced such a strong effect as before this statue" (Freud, 2015, p. 186.).

Freud was also aware that this interpretation could only reach a very restricted audience, already familiar with the discussion of psychoanalysis. From a retrospective look at humanity's childhood, he realizes that myths and legends in general repeat, with Moses, a story of child abandonment, but then, by saving himself from evil intentions, he returns to human coexistence in a heroic way. Therefore, there is ascendancy of child abandonment by a poor family and recovery or adoption by another one with better social and economic conditions. An exception is the tragedy of Oedipus and the legend of Moses, which do not exactly fit this story, which leads us to believe that there was, on the part of the writers, an accommodation to this story of his case. In the first, the true parents are of Theban royalty and, in the second, Moses was probably from a rich Egyptian lineage and was later adopted by a humble family of the Hebrew people. Freud quotes a text by his disciple Otto Rank to illustrate what he means in making this analogy: "A hero is one who bravely rose up against his father and ultimately victoriously subjugated him" (2018, p. 41). What exactly does Freud mean by referring to these words? The father of psychoanalysis comments that the early years of childhood in general are of great reverence for parents, as well as in the tales of kings, queens and princesses, but as time goes by, rivalry and disillusionment with the parents' reality arises, and with that the critical attitude.

It is in this interspersed discussion that Freud parades his theses: 1st) there would have actually been two Moseses, a first one more violent and attached to the codes of the law, who would have been killed by his people, and then another, more prophetic, would have emerged and visionary, who then led the elect to the promised land; 2nd) Judaism has its origins in two distinct gods: Jehovah and Aton, the first being of Semitic origin and the second of Egyptian; 3rd) Moses would have an Egyptian origin. In this sense, Moses invents the Jewish nationality,

their identity is beyond race, language and essentialism, the foreigner being not something foreign to the Jewish people, but what defines them.

Psychoanalysis helps to understand these phenomena, as it is in the character of Moses - violent, angry and jealous - that the Jews interpret God himself. That is, the figure of Moses is confused with the apprehension of the characteristics of the divine being of Jewish monotheism. And the phenomena of religion are understood as the return of repression, the spiritual return of facts forgotten or conceived in the prehistory of the human family. In this sense, the river water in which Moses was abandoned represents the amniotic fluid that shelters the child in the mother's womb. The symbology of the father's death corresponds to the loss of original authority, which leaves a vacant place to be filled by those who come next. On the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, his conclusions go in the same direction: "with regard to the return of the repressed, Christianity was a progress, and the Jewish religion, from then on, was to some extent a fossil" (Freud, 2018, p. 141). The assumption of an Egyptian Moses makes everything much more explosive, as its origin would be associated with the foreigner, with difference and not with the same. The theses raised by Freud about Moses would confront the very purity of an original culture, since there in its foundation another would be found. Therefore, the Freudian strategy immunizes the Jew from persecution and from the attraction of hatred, as anti-Semitism does not hold up since every Jew is an Egyptian.

It is not our purpose to analyze in more detail all the theses at this moment, since there would be no space for that within the limits of this article. It is worth mentioning that they provoked many controversies and polemics, mainly in terms of difficulty in accepting it by the various thinkers who focused on the theme from the Freudian perspective. Bernstein goes so far as to comment that one of the most acidic criticisms was issued by Salo Baron, a great Jewish social historian and Yerushalmi's professor, who wrote one of the first reviews on *Moses and monotheism*. He comments that although his criticism is judicious and worthy of respect, he classifies the Freudian work as "a magnificent castle in the air" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 145). Edward Said (2004, p. 58-59) comments that perhaps the fact that the writing was done at the end of his life, contributed to "the scientist seeking objective results in his investigation" and "Freud, the Jewish intellectual", who sought subsidies in his old faith, had never been "brought into conformity with one another".

It is worth noting that such issues are resignified or gain another meaning if we think of these data from the point of view of “mnemo-history – the history of memory” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 147). Bernstein understands that not all of Freud's theses find sufficient historical support, but that his version of Jewish monotheism transcends it, becoming the culmination of what Jan Assman calls, in his essay *Moses the Egyptian*, mnemo-history, that is, it matters not so much the story as it actually happened, but how it is remembered by the individual and received by the present. In this sense, the past can be reconstructed or reinvented by the present and it is logical to deduce that Moses could be a figure of memory, but not of history⁹.

And this opens up a space for reinterpreting Freud's legacy under the sign of authority in its relationship with violence. Psychoanalysis here can help us capture these forgotten details, which meet some moments of Freud's legacy. And this requires a new interpretation of Michelangelo's creation, which is not at all unusual for hermeneutics that can replace these data in the light of education.

The father's death and the original violence

After presenting the general panorama in which the Freudian contribution to the understanding of the role played by Moses in the foundation of Jewish monotheism is included, it is now time to discuss this legacy from the point of view that concerns us more specifically, that is, the outbreak of original violence and its relationship with the end of constituted authority, as there are several signs that authorize this correlation. It concerns us the investigation on how the theme of violence appears and constitutes a point of reference for contemporary educational actions and how it is possible to face this context from the point of view of the crisis of authority.

We note that Michelangelo captured a moment that precedes, in Moses, a great scene of violence. In this sense, what could lead to that barbarism, in which three thousand Jews were killed due to the wrath of Moses for the worship of the image of the Golden Calf? Furthermore, why the interest of Esposito, Bernstein and other important thinkers in this writing, published on the eve of the Nazi holocaust? Since Freud was a Jew, how does this work constitute an

⁹ See note 8, pgs. 146-147, from the book *Freud and the legacy of Moses*, by Bernstein (2000).

indictment against the violence of National Socialism and anti-Semitic persecution? Therefore, our doubts and motivations, as well as the assertions that led us so far, are nuanced or created under the sign of violence within the context in which the work was created.

As we said before, for Freud the prohibition of God's worship in the form of an image, as was the case with the Calf in the desert, is understood as a progress towards spirituality, as it implies the abandonment of the sensitive, as he himself warns: "The progress in spirituality consists in deciding against direct sensory perception and in favor of the so-called higher intellectual processes, that is, memories, reflections and reasoning" (Freud, 2018, p. 177). Unlike Egyptian pictorial religions, which exhibit drawings of birds, moon and sun, for example, the Jewish religion worships a hidden or occult God, who does not admit representation. And this constitutes a form of interiorization of authority – in a spiritual way – in the conscience of the chosen people. The incorporation of power as a renunciation of sensible pleasures, and then of primitive instinct, allows the control of violence, as Freud makes us believe, when he says:

The precedence which over the course of two thousand or so years was given to spiritual efforts in the life of the Jewish people naturally had its effect; it helped to contain the brutality and inclination to violence that often arise where the development of muscular strength is a popular ideal (Freud., 2018, p. 174).

Now, Freud points to the fact that where there is the interiorization of authority, the incorporation of power, there is the containment of brutality and barbarism. But what price is paid for the interdiction of sensitivity? How to make this passage without repressing the sensitive elements? Could psychoanalysis and aesthetics (via *Bildung* and hermeneutics) balance the sensitive and spiritual elements, without threatening the blunting of the former? Here we think of anesthesia and the aesthesia that could occur at the two extremes of the use of sensitivity: either the senses are condemned and we would have a "half-way" thought, that does not perceive the surrounding world and is instrumentalized (one of the problems of education in modernity, in general), or we are held hostage by them, which seems to be a problem of education in our times, in which massive exposure to sensitive stimuli no longer allows abstract thinking. But Freud knew how to get around this problem by admitting, as a caveat, that the fate of the Jewish people was different from the fate of the Greek people, as the latter knew how to unite with more ease the cultivation of spirituality and bodily demands at the same time. And that at least the Jews decided for what, in fact, had the most value: the cultivation of intellectuality. In this sense, Freud frees himself from the weight of lack of sensitivity with the

justification of the option made by the “elected people”, which contributed to the development of his mentality.

As, for Freud, there is a certain analogy between phylogenesis and ontogenesis, the general history and the history of the individual, although there must always be some repairs, this refers to the mechanism that provides this understanding in the individual, since the renunciation of the impulse in it triggers pleasure gains:

The superego is the successor and representative of the parents (and educators) who watched over the individual's actions in his first period of life; it continues its functions almost unchanged. It holds the self in permanent subjection, exerts constant pressure on it (Freud., p. 176).

In a more simplified way, the renunciation of authority, which is obviously not to be confused with authoritarianism, is, after all, a cause of violence, as the loosening of rule normalization in favor of desire somehow leads to the immediate satisfaction of said impulse. The correct understanding of the role of authority and discipline would lead to a postponement of the desire function in favor of a later greater pleasure, while its abolition provokes the dispersion of the spirit, resulting in revolt against the norm itself. It is interesting to think about how psychoanalysis perceives this situation from the point of view of the unconscious, as this empty place, left by the father's death, ended up being occupied, in some positive way, by religions. However, the fact that religions currently want to legislate on the curricula taught in schools and universities, such as sex education, gender education, diversity, etc., would it not be an indication that this vacant place of educational authority has not been sufficiently filled?

This dubious situation is explained, in Costa Pereira's view (2008, p. 224), in the following way: “The emergence of the immemorial entails the ability to break with the tendencies towards totalization, thus leading to poetry or, as we shall see, to panic”. That is, the lack of the authority figure, or its inadequate filling, can cause panic, as the loss of the leader (which in the case of the statue of Moses is illustrated by the head of Pan¹⁰) leads to the

¹⁰ For Junito de Souza Brandão, the horns are signs or “symbols of authority” (2003, p. 205), which explains that at the head of the statue of Moses is the figure of Pan. This divinity, also according to Brandão (2003, p. 237), had the profile of the “old philosopher, the sage”, but at the same time he was a “simple shepherd”, attached to the land, animals and nature”, and who, among other attributions or talents, “had divinatory power” and therefore had the virtue of counseling. Costa Pereira objects in this sense that: “Still in this perspective, 'Moses and Monotheism' suggests that panic would be but one of the possible destinations of the loss of the father as a guarantee of the group's 'totality'” (2008, p. 224).

disintegration of the mass, as Freud (2019) well demonstrated in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. And this leads to suppose that the methods that nullify the authority (the educator's or even the parents') can constitute a contribution to the increase in the rate of violence, since the decentralization of the teacher figure in favor of the student was not accompanied by an effective pedagogical understanding of the educator's role relating with authority. Nor was the incorporation of rules by the self properly worked on, as was evident in several experiences of reducing violence in schools¹¹. It is difficult here to establish a direct parallel with these reflections, but without a doubt Freud raises the core of a problem for education that is universal and, at the same time, presents itself in an indefinite way. On the one hand, it is assumed that the progress of spirituality makes the individual understand the need to live under rules and limits:

At a time when authority was not yet internalized in the form of a superego, the relationship between the threatening loss of love and the impulse demand could be the same. A feeling of security and satisfaction arose when an impulsive renunciation had been made for the sake of the parents. This good feeling could only assume the peculiarly narcissistic character of pride after authority itself became part of the self (Freud, 2018, p. 176).

If authority is not yet incorporated in the individual's consciousness, it means that *eros* and *thanatos* are still on an equal footing in the unconscious exercise of the subject's life. Satisfaction and security are accompanied by the movement of renunciation of impulses only when *eros* predominates in the parent-child relationship. When authority is accepted as part of the self, pride arises that, in a way, also characterized the Jewish people for having been chosen. This is what contributed decisively to the anti-Semitic persecution, because it attracted the hatred of other peoples for having been at a disadvantage, becoming jealous of this privilege granted to the Jews.

The interdiction of the sensitive in the form of surveillance to stimuli, or vital impulses, would be the gateway to superego, which in turn would exert constant pressure on it, allowing the assumption of rules and limits. In this way, a very delicate balance would be brought into play: living under rules and limits would be, in the logical sequence of the argument, one of the

¹¹ In this regard, see the article *Public initiatives to reduce school violence in Brazil*, by Gonçalves and Sposito (2002), which discusses some experiences carried out from the 1980s onwards in three large Brazilian cities (Belo Horizonte, São Paulo and Porto Alegre), aiming to reduce violence in the school environment. It is noticed that both where there was an attempt to foster progressive, more participative, or conservative experiences, with relevance to the use of the police repressive apparatus, both ended up not working properly for a number of reasons, but in general due to the forgetfulness of the teacher's role in these processes.

central problems of education. Why in Brazil, compared to many other countries in the world, individuals from the new generations in the process of schooling seem incapable of doing so, causing the generalized refusal of this interiorization to erupt within schools and, against teachers?

In a way, the same procedure occurs in the broader plan of history, since Moses knew how to lead the people according to the demands of the monotheistic religion, of condemnation of idolatry and barbaric polytheism, which explains his role as leader and the fact that he is represented in the statue of Michelangelo with two horns on his head.

It can be said that the great man is precisely the authority for the sake of which the deed is done, and since the great man himself is effective thanks to his resemblance to his parents, it is not surprising that in the psychology of the masses the role of superego befits him. This would also be true, therefore, for the man Moses in his relationship with the Jewish people (Freud, 2018, p. 177).

Freud does not clarify in more detail who he is referring to when he speaks of the “great man” in the first part of this quote. In the second part it is clear that he is talking about Moses but, from another point of view, taking into account the biopolitical context of the time, is it appropriate that this, too, can be the principle of explanation of Fascism and Nazism? Here we remember another controversy, present in Hannah Arendt's criticism, in the book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, when she said that the Jew, in the Second World War, although they were in the vast majority, boarded the trains that took them to the holocaust like true lambs¹².

Education seems threatened and constrained on two sides: either it falls into the barbaric regressivism of the limitless unconscious, or the superego can exert a repressive restraint on sensibility and impulses. The simplistic reading of today's neoconservatives is condemnation on the one hand and assumption, without reservations, on the other. The problem of authority and violence in schools would easily be solved. But at what price: that of repressive culture. There seems to be a system of brakes, since impulsive renunciation for the love of parents, or the great man, is similar to God, who in turn is similar to the authority interiorized in the form of the

¹² In the book *How the Jews Defeated Hitler: Exploding the Myth of Jewish Passivity in the Face of Nazism*, Ginsberg (2014) contests the thesis defended by Hannah Arendt and other authors that the councils that administered the daily lives of prisoners would have collaborated to passively refer victims to genocide, alleging that there were possible resistances, which even played a fundamental role in the overthrow of the Nazi regime.

superego. Based on this, solving the issue, as the neoconservatives would like, would only lead to the assumption of an authoritarian personality, perpetuating the emergence of false Messiahs who embody repression as a solution.

Biopolitics of the teacher's life: repressive or moral authority?

But which biopolitical devices can be indicated so far as being present in the teacher's life? This is not an easy question to understand. More than that, it is a problem that holds a permanent potential risk, but it is precisely this complex relationship that the problem of education, in the generational sense, deals with, divided between repression and mediation in the issue of violence. Repression is the shortest path, as it embodies the need to eliminate the “enemy” from the perspective of the biopolitical imperative of making asepsis, cleaning up violence. “That is, we want to identify those responsible and remove them from our view or from our horizon of common coexistence as if they were viruses or bacteria causing all harm, in order to consider the school environment as a sacred place” (Trevisan, 2018, p. 567).

There are many books and articles that question the teacher's loss of status, but publications that link it to the generational issue of violence from a biopolitical point of view are rare. Generally, investigations focus on the precarious working conditions, the lack of prestige in the career and the low salaries of teachers, as well as the loss of family ties of students that affect school life, as the motto of this phenomenon. Without disregarding the relevance of such situations, which are quite common in Brazilian public schools today, we feel provoked, based on Freud's text and other researches (Gonçalves & Sposito, 2002; Sposito, 2001), to think about the crisis of teaching authority, and the outbreak of violence at school, in direct line with the misunderstanding of the democratic experience of education. That is, the way in which the decentralization of the teacher figure to the centrality of the student, which impacted horizontal and more democratic relationships in schools, may be linked to the opening of doors to the crisis of teacher authority and, consequently, to violence. This situation follows the broader scenario of political change from the 1964-85 dictatorship in Brazil to the democratic regime, and is corroborated by several studies cited by Gonçalves and Sposito, when they state: “the spread of the various forms of criminality, delinquency and practice of extralegal justice in urban regions occurs, paradoxically, with the advent of democracy itself” (2002, p. 102). It is clear the

worthiness of questioning to what extent the official indices adequately registered what happened in this sense in the period of exception. This is certainly why in the democratic period this crisis manifests itself more acutely in our daily lives, when the teacher and the school are targets of psychological violence, such as accusations of political indoctrination¹³ and those responsible for the poor performance of education, on the one hand, and of explicit violence, when practiced by students and members of the school and non-school community, on the other.

Regarding, more specifically, to teaching in the psychoanalytical perspective, the silence of the dead father is resurrected by Freud as a place of absence of the master, somewhat deprived of his power, so much so that he calls him the "God with a prosthesis" (Freud, 1980, p. 111). In modernity, the master has not been able to forge significant goals to assume this weakness, which has contributed to the pedagogization of his exercise. There is a hybridity that combines vertical and hierarchical actions, allowed by rigid and solid modern institutions, such as the school and university, with a forged and quixotic participation that contributes to producing inbreeding. For some, this situation depends on the short life of teaching and the adoption of the precariousness with which relationships are built in scenarios of flexible capital accumulation (Harvey, 1992) and liquid modernity (Bauman, 2001). For others, however, among whom we belong, we will have to return to producing consistent signifiers, in order to object a counter-conduct to the insurgency of violence, the crisis of authority and the proletarianization of the teaching work.

In times of popularization of barbarism and biopolitics, educational institutions still have a long way to go towards the non-reduplication of this negative *Zeitgeist*, as Adorno would say. In other words, it is about not feeding this spirit of the repressive time, as a neoconservative and retro wave, which could constitute a significant contribution to the formative understanding of these processes. And this could help to question why the language of biopolitics invaded the world of life and professions, including educational institutions, and why we are still today kneeling to barbarism and given over to the biological cycle of mere life, or simple survival.

¹³ These facts are happening in several instances, but especially in the State Legislative Assemblies and in the Municipal Chambers there are ongoing processes that seek to criminalize the teacher's action, such as the School without Party (*Escola sem Partido*) project (Cavalcante, 2016).

For this, it is necessary to research how education can still play its formative and normative role today at the same time, answering the permanent question of why to educate or what is education for, in a context marked by constant violence. It is necessary to redimension the relationship between violence and culture, proposing other narratives that contemplate not only the narrative of civility, but also that of barbarism. Furthermore, it is interesting to focus on the possibilities of reversal in the way of thinking about the concept of violence and barbarism, in tune with a post-Auschwitz education model¹⁴.

Freud seeks an answer to this dilemma of the crisis of authority, as he seeks to reflect on the emergence of morality. His thesis is that:

In the shortened development of the human individual, the essential part of this process is repeated. Also in this case, it is the authority of the parents – essentially, that of the unlimited parent, who threatens with the power to punish – that requires the child to renounce impulses, which establishes what is allowed and what is forbidden. What is called "obedient" in relation to the child, later on, when society and the superego took the place of the parents, will be called "good" and "bad", virtuous or vicious, but it is still the same thing, renunciation of impulses due to the repression of the authority that replaces the father and continues him (Freud, 2018, p. 180).

In the step that follows the repression of primeval instincts, and that culminates in the incorporation of authority, morality emerges through the acceptance of norms in an intrinsic way, that is, through what it can lead to understanding good or bad conduct. Here Freud seems to exhibit the defining trait of the idea of father, the unlimited father, who constantly threatens with the power to punish, leading to the renunciation of impulses by establishing the division between permitted and prohibited. It is interesting to note that the power of the *désportes* (*pater familias*) was to exercise the power of life and death over children and servants – is in direct relation with the *homo sacer* (Agamben, 2007) and with the sovereign power.

But this passage is not at all peaceful, as perhaps Freud's remarks might make it clear. Without educational and cultural mediation, it could be said that this is impossible to happen. From there we can see how much hermeneutics and cultural formation (*Bildung*) should go together and be part of the formative processes of being a teacher. After all, without education

¹⁴ Education after Auschwitz is the education model defended by Adorno in the articles "Education against barbarism" and "Education after Auschwitz", contained in the book *Education for Emancipation* (1995), which aims to act in the prevention of collective catastrophes and which allow us to understand the tragic dislocation, without which we will never be able to overcome it. For a more in-depth definition of this concept, see the article "Santa Maria, trauma e resistência: a experiência estética na dor do outro" (Trevisan, Fagundes, & Pedroso, 2018).

and culture, we are animals that behave like herds and social networks are there to prove this phenomenon. Therefore, education should be more present in the debate facing the crisis of authority, because the (unconscious) place left by the death of Moses, and after the Messiah, has not yet been properly occupied by education to avoid setbacks. The decentering of the teacher figure did not solve the problem, as some progressive theories and methodologies wanted, because what we have today is a frightening picture of disrespect for the teacher, which in the case of Brazil borders on the absurd¹⁵. There is an uncomfortable debate to be faced, which is not resolved neither with simplistic formulas such as the migration of the debate to a purely ideological bias, with the transfer of this heritage to religion, or even seeking solace in the classics¹⁶. Although there are eventual merits in some of these proposals, none of this is capable of prospering if, in the case of the teacher, persists “an erasure of oneself as an index of authority or government” (Pereira, 2008, p. 21). And does this raise doubts, in the sense of knowing what authority really means, and whether it must be of a repressive or moral nature?

According to Abagnano (2000, p. 98), authority comes from the Latin *auctoritas* and means the power that one person or group exerts over another person group. In the philosophical sense, authority has to do with the capacity for justification, that is, the foundation from which it starts or springs to account for its exercise. It can be founded on nature, on a divinity, or on men themselves through the consensuses established by them.

When it comes to human relations, it is not entirely wrong to say that there is a place to be occupied in teaching which, given the imminence of biopolitics and barbarism, cannot be filled with the rhetoric that this is a “neutral place”, or, what is worse, we would be facing a “non-place”. On the contrary, a transparent debate is needed, which also involves students and society, beyond the usual discourse of knowing who assumes this “protagonism”, whether the student, the teacher or the community.

However, one cannot naively think that the escape or the vanishing point will occur in the transfer of individual responsibility to the collective, because, as Freud himself demonstrated

¹⁵ Brazil holds an uncomfortable place in relation to the discredit of teachers, as can be seen in the survey of the Global Index of Teachers' Status, from 2018, released by the Varkey Foundation, an organization dedicated to education (Palhares, 2018).

¹⁶ The classics are of fundamental importance for education, as a reference for the current world, because, as Calvino points out: “A classic is a book that never finished saying what it had to say” (1993, p. 11). But it is necessary to consider that it cannot become an object of cult, as a “guru” to depend on for everything, to the point of nullifying our critical capacity in the face of the past.

in his analyses, the problem lies at both levels of personality structuring, both in the individual as in the mass. Therefore, we cannot neglect individual responsibility in the face of the chaos of violence that presents itself. As the Freudian theory well demonstrates, the exit from incest is prohibited by the primitive taboo and religion encouraged guilt and the redemption of sin as a form of assumption of the loss of authority, which implies that endogenous exits are blocked for the emergence of a non-authoritarian personality. Therefore, morality is still a transgressive possibility for the other side of the issue (the repression of *thanatos*), because as Freud himself states in the quote above, this is the authority that “replaces the father and continues him”.

How to ensure that culture and education do not fall into mere repressive processes, but that they can make some sense to new generations? The path indicated so far is that of *eros* overlapping *thanatos*, therefore the power of life (by force of love) is preferred over the power of death. We believe that this interpretative path is very similar to that of Esposito (2011), when he speaks of two versions of biopolitics, one positive and the other negative, which not even Foucault was aware of and managed to treat distinctly.

Thus, to test possible answers to this question, it is necessary to briefly return to the figure of *Moses* by Michelangelo, and propose an addition to the Freudian interpretation. Here we can return to the psychoanalytical scheme to think that, given the original violence that made all of us orphans, given the urgency of taking a stand in defense of critical thinking and with affirmative actions, the proposal should have more "spiritual strength" to cope with the problem that presents itself. Returning to the original scene, Moses is looking at the horizon where he should take the chosen people, when he comes across the sad scene of worship to the idol of the Golden Calf. Despite being seated, the position he occupies in the environment is not comfortable for him, as he is rubbing his beard with his fingers, as if thinking about a solution to the dilemma between the fruitless here and now and the uncertain future. We can observe that in his right hand are the Tablets of Stone to be followed, as a kind of external “superego”. This is not the current teacher's dilemma either: how to lead the student to the "promised land" of knowledge, in which the "milk and honey" of knowledge overflows, if he is stuck in idolatry, or more contemporarily, in the seduction of technologies, which have “gone from *modus operandi* to *modus vivendi*” (Zuin, 2013, p. 244)? The tablets would be the teachings, our own manuals, the contents or textbooks to be taught, which then, in a gesture of anger, will be discarded or thrown away. Moses has the symbol on Pan's head, the authority of the leader who calms the people, so his look is densely normative. He is in doubt, given the imminence of adopting extreme

violence, which leads to believe that the difficulty to be faced is very great. In summary, we can make use of some artifacts that we see in the statue: Pan's inspiring head, so as not to be taken by panic, phobias or obsessions; the expressive strength of Moses, as he had a strong and robust attitude; still, most importantly, we have a wide horizon to travel, which causes us to be on the move.

However, as the conflict scene is structured, there is no possibility of reconciliation and that is why the next episode is barbaric. A new hermeneutics, a more inclusive mnemo-history, that faces the problem of losing the relationship with the past (the destruction of the possibility of memory), in which an education focused only on cognitive aspects (psychologized) or on skills and competences (converted into training), will one day have to face itself. This remembrance (*mnemosis*), directly associating forgetting and repression, must be added to the understanding of modern theories of confrontation and conflict mediation (Warat, 1998).

Psychoanalysis can help us at this moment when, as if retrospectively and through the process of recollection, we can understand the artist's intentions, in the sense of saying, with this work, that we have another chance before throwing everything away and adhering to violence, and perhaps then having to start from scratch. Generations pass, but the classic problem therefore remains.

Concluding notes

The text invites us to think about the theme of violence and its relationship with authority in education from the perspective of contemporary biopolitics. We tried to make a historical overview of the problem from the perspective of the book *Moses and Monotheism*, by Freud, using some authoritative interpreters. The objective is to deconstruct the panorama that motivated the outbreak of the original violence in order to reconstruct it in a hermeneutic perspective. Thus, we analyze the loss of teaching power as a symptom of the inability to fill the place of the “original father figure” as one of the constitutive issues of education and culture. In this sense, we also seek to rethink biopolitics in teacher's life, leading us to take sides between repressive or moral aspects. And also tracking biopolitical elements that help to rethink the exponential increase in violence in schools as one of the by-products of the loss of teacher authority. We conclude with the need to deconstruct the scenario that motivated the outbreak

of biblical violence and, therefore, it is now time to reconstruct it from a hermeneutical perspective.

As we have seen so far, there is no way to escape the fact that teaching is one of the places most affected by the violence originating from the “death of the father”. And that modernity, by proposing a break with tradition, aggravated this problem, which has been exponentially disturbed in recent years by the insurgency, with the support of social networks, biopolitics, barbarism and the state of exception. Faced with this chaotic scenario, there is a challenge to be met, which cannot be resolved simply by adopting the latest methodology or the latest theoretical innovation that appears on the front. Perhaps the permanent work of analysis, deconstruction and reconstruction of the factors that triggered the situation of violence experienced is prominent. In this respect, psychoanalysis has much to contribute to enriching the relationship between philosophy and education, in the sense of a deeper understanding of what is going on, which archetypes of violence are replaying themselves in a disguised way or hidden in other guises.

Freudian iconoclastic critique is necessary, as long as it pays attention to unnoticed details and circumstances, which have often been thrown away by other theories. Without a doubt, it is necessary to take into account the unconscious manifestations, present both in the psychology of the masses, permanently challenged by herd behavior, and in the obsessions of singular individuals. Claiming that the empty place of teaching is a neutral space, or else a non-place, has become an obsolete imposture given the resurgence of fascism in several countries in recent times. So what can we do to rebuild the scenario challenged by the crisis of authority and violence in the biopolitical era?

There is no point in experiencing problems if it is not possible to question their deeper causes. The way in which this vacant place is being filled by connected social networks, by the government of the other - religions or thematic caucuses or political parties -, by our own dilemmas, by self-government, which often proves to be fruitless, which already can immobilize us by panic, instead of putting us into action, paralyzes us. Is it then that the master should descend from his privileged place and put himself on the same level as his disciples, celebrating with them and entering into the same practices, as it appears in general in films inspired by teachers? Perhaps it is not this exit that Freud would most like, since this would not be a progress, but a spiritual return to the visible. Likewise, it is pointless “to design less traditional

teaching strategies, (...) warming up classes with new educational technologies and new 'creations' of pedagogical tentacles; as well as to establish less orthodox evaluation practices” (Pereira, 2008, p. 21), as they would also appeal to the sensitive. Even this exit was harshly criticized by Hannah Arendt (1992) as responsible for the crisis in American education, when the untimely adoption of methodologies and techniques caused a rupture with authority and tradition. Undoing the “Tablets of Stone”, the contents and manuals, is out of the question, but that does not mean keeping us compassionate and inert in this respect. The fall of the *imago paterna* is not resolved by the prescription of the “self-governance” or the “governing of others”, which would still be a way of appealing to the elective conscience.

The return to the debate on the issue of authority is not an appeal to nostalgia for past times, prior to the break with tradition, but it challenges us even today, as the core of the problem raised by Freud (and Arendt) remains, in a way, no solution in the context of democratization of the pedagogical process of recent times. Therefore, there is a need to rethink our theories and practices, in order to avoid, or at least prevent, the reproduction of violence caused by such reasons. It is not just a question of evaluating the situation by what happened before or after the scene in Moses, analyzed by Freud, but more precisely to perceive at that moment a new opportunity made possible by the junction of art and psychoanalysis. The alternative of going back in time and remembering the repressed is therefore, at the same time, a gateway to the deconstruction of the bellicose spectacle that presents itself. If we were to think through this plural perspective and having the opportunity to understand the work of art through the prism of a more radical psychoanalytical recollection, the scenario should be disarmed or dismantled, rather than confirmed. It is true that we can no longer avoid the announced catastrophe, however, from the point of view of prevention knowledge, it is possible to learn from the conflict and develop new knowledge, which protects individuals so that they do not remain as if it were the first time. The constant challenge is not to follow the law to the letter or blindly, because, as the Latins said “*Summum jus, summa injuria*”, that is, “excess of justice results in injustice”. Nor does it provide another religious manifestation to condemnation as idolatry, since plurality enriches human coexistence, while forced unity leads to ruin. In summary, Freud went against Jewish essentialism, and this was a big step to immunize human beings in the face of biopolitical attacks in their own field of action (Esposito, 2011). However, this effect was not enough to propose something beyond, or outside the scene that gave rise to it.

The construction of a “positive totem” takes place on another level, on the spiritual plane, as Freud would say, which is not exactly the level of biopolitical governmentality. The passage from a visible to an invisible religion is perceived by Freud as a gain in spirituality, as well as the devices for exiting the fallen father's condition, which lead from repression to the level of morality. Paying attention to the compulsive repetition of self-protection and self-preservation formulas and techniques in a challenging and changing scenario is a way to transcend the domain of obsessions and neuroses, which surface when panic and helplessness prevail. After all, “for Freud, the emergence of the immemorial is capable of producing both the poem and religion as the installation of neurosis, especially in the symptomatic form of anxiety crisis” (Costa Pereira, 2008, p. 223). The outbreak of repression, of what was controlled and prohibited, is not only a negative aspect, but can also lead to the greatness of spirituality, in the same way that good education and moral authority are mutually reflected in the good governance of self and of others. Understanding the formation and constitution (of oneself as well) is not the same as the thoughtless adherence to neoconservatism and a nostalgia for a supposed golden age lacking in objective reasons. Those who think this way, combining conservatism and progressivism in a strange way without consistent mediations, unwittingly pave the way for a return to mere instinctual and biological life.

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