Multiple-faces authoritarianism in Brazil: anti-Semitism, Bolsonarism and Education

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Abstract

This article addresses the theme of authoritarianism in Brazil, by reflecting on three fundamental concepts: anti-Semitism, Bolsonarism and education. For the development of the argumentation that supports the article thesis, three aspects will be highlighted: the first relates to the understanding of the historical-cultural configuration of Brazilian society, which amalgamates a kind of Brazilian-style authoritarianism; the second addresses the possible link between Bolsonarism and the elements of antisemitism, which were developed by Horkheimer and Adorno in 1947; and the third reinforces the need for critical self-reflection, as a practical manifestation of non-conformity and combating the diverse authoritarianisms in Brazil.

Keywords: Authoritarianism, Anti-Semitism, Bolsonarism, Critical Theory and Education.

“Chora
A nossa pátria mãe gentil
Choram Marias e Clarisses
No solo do Brasil

Cry our gentle motherland, cry Marias and Clarisses, in the soil of Brazil.

(João Bosco e Aldir Blanc, 1979)
Introduction

The current discussions on totalitarianism, in the sense of the questions formulated by Arendt (1989) and Weinstein (2018), raise a set of reflections on the process of revitalizing authoritarianism in the world and, more specifically, in Latin America. According to Jessé Souza's argument, in recent Brazil, the “2016 Parliamentary-Legal Coup” enshrined not only the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff, but also recovered a series of authoritarian and violent actions, which are the basis of the historical-cultural constitution of Brazilian society. The slavery tradition, the exploitation and concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and, mainly, the denial of republican actions aimed at the Common Good, certainly figure as important elements for the understanding of authoritarian practices, which prevail today in Brazil and threaten the Democratic State of Law.

In educational terms, the imperative “May Auschwitz not be repeated!”, Enunciated by Theodor Adorno in 1965, is updated, almost 80 years after one of the most tragic manifestations of Nazi-fascism, which resulted in the mass extermination of more than six millions of Jews. A question that we could ask at this moment would be: how and why does authoritarian culture, of neo-fascist character, gain more and more space in so-called “democratic” societies, such as the Brazilian one?

The episodes of authoritarianism are multiple and constant in the history of Brazil. They can be observed, at all times, in many segments of Brazilian society. It is not just about specific periods, such as: the genocide of the indigenous people, during the invasion of Brazilian lands in 1500; or more than 300 years of official slavery; the Vargas Dictatorship in Estado Novo; the “Years of Lead” (1964-1984); or the extremist authoritarian personality - of a fascist type - of Jair Bolsonaro, his government and insurgent Bolsonarism; which dispute our territory and threaten us every day. Authoritarianism, with multiple faces, can also be seen in the “segregative grammar of affections”, manifested by attitudes of indifference, ambivalent hatred and segregative hatred; that mark the violent actions of Brazilians. The racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic speeches, among many others, which are multiplying in Brazil, remind us of the verses of Aldir Blanc and João Bosco, eternalized in 1979, in the voice of Elis Regina: “Cry our gentle motherland, cry Marias and Clarisses, in the soil of Brazil...”. We cry not only for exiles, tortured and killed by the military dictatorship; moment when we asked for amnesty, but mainly because until...
today some lives are worth more than others. We cry, because many are massacred, excluded, have no voice, are not free, have no rights and, therefore, are not recognized in their citizenship and human dignity.

In times of neoliberalism and COVID-19, with the flagrant collapse of the economic system, in a capitalism that survives from financial speculation and social indebtedness; the struggle for survival is humanly desperate. Economic and social inequalities, structural racism, thousands of unemployed, discriminated against, invisible to the State, without documents or registration in the Federal Government’s social programs, “entrepreneurs” without income and any assistance from the State; all these question the constitutional guarantees of fundamental rights, provided for in Article 5. of the 1988 Federal Constitution, in which:

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All are equal before the law, without distinction of any kind, guaranteeing Brazilians and foreigners residing in the country the inviolability of the right to life, freedom, equality, security and property ... (BRASIL, 2000, p. 15).
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The current context presents us with a set of issues that need to be dealt with very lucidly, with a critical distance and a sense of social responsibility. In fact, this is a term widely used and trivialized by the marketing departments of powerful companies and government advertisements, both at the Federal, State and Municipal levels. The actions are very ineffective, considering the concrete life situation of most Brazilians, the exponential destruction of the environment, threats to democratic institutions, attacks on culture, the university and people in general. A kind of cynical ignorance, which threatens us daily. When Theodor Adorno declared in 1965, in one of his most known radio conferences, that “the center of all political education should be that Auschwitz does not repeat itself” (ADORNO, 1995, p. 137), what he was wanting us to really say? What is the legacy and what pedagogical guidelines were shared by the author? Certainly, in Adorno’s words there was a diagnosis of time, a commitment to human formation and a desperate concern for the future of humanity and societies.

This article is based on the thesis that the authoritarian personality finds fertile ground for social dissemination, in places and situations where the instrumentalization of training, the development of technical-scientific rationality and the blind culture of “progress” predominate. Human formation, which is the responsibility of all of us, is increasingly damaged and distant from an educational perspective focused on aesthetic sensitivity and the ethical-political dimension of common life. For the development of the arguments that support the thesis of this article, three aspects will be highlighted: the first relates to the understanding of the historical-cultural configuration of Brazilian society, which amalgamates the Brazilian authoritarianism; the second addresses the possible link between Bolsonarism and the elements of anti-Semitism, which were

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8 COVID-19 is a disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. It presents a clinical picture that varies from asymptomatic infections to severe respiratory conditions.

described by Horkheimer and Adorno in 1947; and the third insists on the need for critical self-reflection, as a practical manifestation of non-conformity and combating diverse authoritarianisms in Brazil.

**Brazilian authoritarianism**


Coincident in some aspects and contrary in others, these works express, with significant clarity, some remarkable characteristics of Brazilian culture, of which: the adventurous spirit, cordiality, elitism, dualism, personalism, patrimonialism, familialism, clientelism, *coronelism* 10, authoritarianism, slavery, racism, among others. The emphasis on the formation of a ruling elite that ignores, in most cases, the ethical-political sense of society, only accentuates in Brazil, the deep marks of social and racial inequalities, which have always been part of its history, since “discovery” in 1500, until today.

Some specific reflections on the formative features of Brazilian culture, which take as reference the classic works mentioned above, have already been dealt with in a recent article by Lastória and Gomes 11 (2015), in such a way, that it would not be the case to resume them in detail in this article. It is worth highlighting, at this moment, the more general aspects of the historical constitution of Brazilian society 12, which can help us understand the cultivation, in fertile ground, of the neo-fascist offensive Bolsonaro type, that inhabits Brazil today.

The arguments of Caio Prado Júnior presented in 1942, in his work “Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo” 13, demonstrate with significant clarity the importance of understanding the history of the colonial period in Brazil, in its first three centuries (from the “discovery”, in 1500, until 1822 with “independence”), since the marks of colonialism are not registered only in its official period, but are still present today in the social, political, economic, cultural and educational

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10 Translator’s note: In Portuguese, from the word “colonel”, it is characterized by one person, the colonel, who held economic power and exercised local power through violence and exchange of favors.


life of Brazil. The question we could ask is: why are we unable to root out the elements that enslave us, even though the speeches point to a certain “desire” for emancipation?

In the work “Raízes do Brasil” by Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda, published in 1936 and considered in the preface by Antônio Cândido as “a classic of birth”, some aspects of Brazilian culture deserve to be highlighted. Among the constitutive elements of the cultural base and which can be interpreted as “roots”, some of them deserve our attention due to the power of influence exercised in the Brazilian mentality and way of being. In Hollanda’s (1995) interpretation, it initially draws attention, the Iberian cultural heritage arising from the process of colonization of Brazil by the Portuguese in the 16th century, notably the spirit of “adventure”, seen as a great contrast to work ethics, as it was handled by Max Weber:

A dignified idleness has always seemed more excellent, and even more appealing, to a good Portuguese, or to a Spanish, than the insane struggle for daily bread. What they both admire as an ideal is a life of great lord, exclusive of any effort, of any concern (HOLLANDA, 1995, p. 38).

From the point of view of values, which nourish the way of achieving the goals of the Iberian peoples, Holland asks: “This yearning for prosperity without cost, for honorary titles of easy positions and wealth, so notoriously characteristic of the people of our land, is not well one of the crudest manifestations of the adventurous spirit?” (HOLLANDA, 1995, p. 46). The “personalism” that accentuates the “laxity” of the institutions, the lack of social cohesion and the “neglect” are other important traits of Iberian culture transplanted to Brazil. The result of this process of personalizing culture was the institutionalization of a political principle based on the centralization of power and obedience as the supreme virtue. It is a peculiar orientation that demands the will to command and the willingness to carry out orders. Among the guidelines of the Catholic colonization process of Portuguese character, it was up to the Companhia de Jesus, in addition to the resistance of the indigenous peoples, to the pedagogical task of implanting in Brazil the principle of discipline by obedience.

From the economic point of view, it is worth highlighting, due to its strong power of social constitution, the three essential factors that, according to Prado

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16 Translator’s note: The Society of Jesus was founded by Saint Ignatius of Loyola in the midst of Counter-Reformation, in the year 1534. He, together with a group of students from the University of Paris, made vows of obedience to the doctrine of the Catholic Church and were recognized by papal bull in 1540.
Júnior (2000), determined the structuring of the Brazilian agrarian society in the colonial period: large property, monoculture and slave labor:

These three elements are combined in a typical system, the "great rural exploitation", that is, the meeting in the same producing unit of a large number of individuals; this is what constitutes the fundamental cell of the Brazilian agrarian economy. As it will also constitute the main base on which the entire structure of the country is based, economic and social (PRADO JÚNIOR, 2000, p.121).

It should be noted, according to the analysis of Celso Furtado (2007), in his elaboration on the "economic formation of Brazil", that from the 1930s onwards Brazil developed on the basis of a material structure, whose dynamic axis was the process industrialization and urbanization. The economic paradigm that guided the process of integrating Brazil into the world capitalist system was what was conventionally called "import substitution". Although we can see changes in economic activities, with specific production, export and import policies in Brazil's economic history, including the “national developmentalist industrialization movement of the 1930s" (FURTADO, 2007 and IANNI, 1991), and which impacted the process of urbanization and development in Brazil; subordination and external dependence, as well as the concentration of income and wealth in the hands of a few still continue to determine the bases of a profoundly unequal social life in Brazil.

In a continental country like Brazil, with a long territorial extension, with fertile land; global agribusiness, led by large international economic groups, has found more and more space in the current Brazilian economy. The increase in productivity, made possible even with the use of a high content of pesticides and transgenic seeds, in addition to intensifying the concentration of income in the hands of the heirs of the large states, suffocates family farming of small producers and harms the health of the Brazilian population. It is a set of contradictions, with a strong power of destruction and disrespect for the life and public health of Brazilian society.

The maintenance of social inequalities, distinctly present in Brazil since the colonial period, is structured according to the arguments of Prado Júnior (2000) by the economic foundation of large private properties, the concentration of income, the separation of classes and the enslavement of work. This means, according to the recent analysis by Souza (2017), that any threat to this historically constituted social model can reignite the flame of authoritarian fascist practices.

We can also identify, in today's political practices, aspects of colonial culture, which emphasize “patrimonialism”, “coronelism”, “clientelism”, “familism” and “personalism”, as they were treated in the works “Raízes do Brasil” by Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda in 1936, “Coronelismo, enxada e voto” by Victor Nunes Leal in 1948 and “Os Donos do Poder” by Raymundo Faoro in 1958. What these practices reinforce, regardless of the use of concepts, is the authoritarian way of imposing private interests on public ones, which tended to prevail in Brazil, contrary, in ethical-political terms, to the will of the community and the guarantee of the Common Good.
The “rural heritage” that legitimized the landed aristocracy is a determining feature in the process of shaping Brazilian culture. This “patrimonialism” heritage, as a source of political and economic power, is based on the model of the patriarchal family, and on this:

Thus, the family situation becomes so powerful and demanding that its shadow persecutes individuals even outside the domestic environment (...). The result was that the feelings of the domestic community, naturally particularistic and anti-political, predominated throughout the social life, an invasion of the public by the private, the State by the family (HOLLANDA, 1995, p. 85).

The indistinct significance about what belongs to the family and the State has generated the power of domination of the patriarchal family and, at the same time, a social imbalance that persists today. In “Os Donos do Poder” Raymundo Faoro highlights:

Politically oriented capitalism - political capitalism, or pre-capitalism, the center of adventure, conquest and colonization - shaped State reality, surviving, and incorporating modern capitalism, industrial in nature, rational in technique and founded on freedom of the individual, through the freedom to negotiate, to hire, to manage property under the guarantee of the institutions (FAORO, 2001, p. 819).

This is not a process of bureaucratization of the political system, in Weber's sense, but of a bureaucratic State, founded on the patrimonial system of politically oriented capitalism, which acquires a patriarchal character, identifiable at the behest of the farmer, the plantation master, the colonels and, also, of the sectors that define the political agenda of those who carry great decision-making power in the deliberative instances, especially in the legislative. Still according to Faoro:

In an initial stage, the patrimonial domain, constituted in this way by the eState, appropriates the economic opportunities to enjoy the goods, the concessions, the positions, in a confusion between the public and the private sector, which, with the improvement of the structure, becomes extreme in fixed competences, with division of powers, separating the fiscal sector from the personal sector (FAORO, 2001, p. 823).

17 The issue of rural inheritance/patriarchal family is a controversial aspect in Brazilian historiography, not coincident when analyzing the interpretation of Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda - “Raízes do Brasil” and Gilberto Freyre - “Casa grande & Senzala” and “Sobrados e Mucambos”. If for Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda the cordial man is the Brazilian par excellence, a kind of son of the patriarchal family, for Gilberto Freyre in “Sobrados e Mucambos”, patriarchy is the symptom of a historic moment that, with the decadence of patriarchy, it generates another type of social accommodation.
Specifically, about “Coronelism”, Victor Nunes Leal, in “Coronelismo, Enxada e Voto” clarifies that many political party organizations in Brazil are constituted at the local-municipal level, as a kind of:

[...] result of the overlapping of developed forms of the representative regime with an inadequate economic and social structure. It is not, therefore, a mere survival of private power, whose hypertrophy is a typical phenomenon of our colonial history. It is rather a peculiar form of manifestation of private power, that is, an adaptation by virtue of which the residues of our former and exorbitant private power have managed to coexist with a political regime with an extensive representative base (LEAL, 1997, p. 40).

This type of political organization centered on the mandates of the colonels, and sustained in large part by the “halter votes”\(^\text{18}\), seals a commitment, an exchange of profits between the government, progressively strengthened, and the decadent social influence of the local chiefs, notably the landowners, landowners. Therefore, the importance of a broader understanding of this social phenomenon, which is based on the country’s agrarian structure and still maintains, in many cities in the interior, a strong influence of private power in public administration.

Faoro’s argument shows the strength of the political patronage which, by separating politics from social life, is able to resist even social pressures. “The owners of power”, an expression used by Faoro (2001), of a personalist and oligarchic nature, do not represent the general popular will, but the private interests of some sectors of society. The State, with its form of co-optation and use of violence, if necessary, resists eventual popular conflicts, through the use of the machine and governmental equipment of State control. The people, in turn:

[...] oscillates between parasitism, the mobilization of marches without political participation and the nationalization of power, more concerned with the new masters, children of money and subversion, than with the commanders from above, paternal and, as the good prince, dispensaries of justice and protection (FAORO, 2001, 837).

The law, to be enforced by some and ignored by others, under the protection of the motto “for friends everything, for enemies the law”, is a legal apparatus not necessarily committed to Justice. Universal suffrage, which would tend to be democratic, in terms of a public debate about government programs for the country, is also eaten up by the various forms of manipulation of public opinion, with fake news financed by businessmen and published instantly on social networks. In the end, the voter does not know, in depth, what project he

\(^{18}\) **Translator’s note:** The halter vote, known as “voto de cabresto” in Brazil, represented an imposing and arbitrary electoral form imposed by the colonels. It is an expression given by the superposition of two words. Thus, we have “voto”, which is the full exercise of democracy; and the word “cabresto”, from the Latin *capistrum*, which means “gag or brake”. In this way, we have an almost paradoxical concept, insofar as it represents democracy gagged and guided like a pack animal.
chose, even without having had the opportunity to actively participate in its discussion and elaboration. The government is rooted in vitality, with strength and dominance that exceeds generations. Still in the words of Faoro:

On society, above classes, the political apparatus - a social, community layer, although not always articulated, often amorphous - reigns, rules and governs, in its own name, in an impermeable circle of command. This layer changes and renews itself, but it does not represent the nation, but, forced by the law of time, it replaces young men with old people, apt for the unfit, in a process that emphasizes and empowers the newcomers, printing their values (FAORO, 2001, p. 824).

“O Homem Cordial”¹⁹, as characterized by Hollanda (1995), is one of the “marks” of Brazilian culture, not necessarily consensual, but which expresses a hegemonic trait of understanding of Brazilian society. A kind of people profile in which the appearance of affection and social solidarity prevails. According to Hollanda:

The hatred in the treatment, the hospitality, the generosity, virtues so praised by foreigners who visit us, represent, in effect, a definite feature of the Brazilian character, to the extent, at least, that the ancestral influence of the patterns of human coexistence, informed in the rural and patriarchal environment. It would be a mistake to suppose that these virtues could mean ‘good manners’, civility, or politeness (HOLLANDA, 1995, p. 146-147).

It is, therefore, a false way of life, observed in the ordinary form of social interaction contrary to politeness, which would imply an autonomous moral attitude of considering the “other” in his own action. According to Hollanda (1995, p. 147) "Armed with this mask, the individual manages to maintain his supremacy over the social". These are very peculiar characteristics, which demarcate what we are calling Brazilian authoritarianism.

**Anti-Semitism and Bolsonarism: two sides of the same coin**

Totalitarian regimes impose a set of actions in which horror prevails over the other, the different, the opponent, in short, the plurality that shapes politics. According to Arendt (1989 and 2017), totalitarian logic destroys the human capacity to feel and think, as well as the capacity to act. It was this type of life that could be observed not only during the Military Dictatorship of Brazil, but also in the colonial past, at other times in history and now, with much evidence, in the various actions of Bolsonaro government and, consequently, of insurgent Bolsonarismo.

In the philosophical fragments that make up the work *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, completed in 1944, during the World War II, Horkheimer and Adorno developed a set of reflections about the process of self-destruction of enlightenment, the predominance of instrumental rationality, the myth of progress, the destructive power of technique, the life managed and damaged by the cultural industry, the State of regression of civilization enlightened to barbarism, the significance of the horror of totalitarian regimes, among other aspects, which are very relevant and which, despite the differences of historical periods, maintain their impressive relevance. In the April 1969 note on the new German edition in Frankfurt am Main, Horkheimer and Adorno warned us:

Conflicts in the Third World, the renewed growth of totalitarianism are not mere historical incidents, nor was it, according to "Dialectic", fascism in its day. Critical thinking, which does not stop even in the face of progress, requires today to take sides with the last residues of freedom, the tendencies that still exist for a real humanity, even though they seem powerless in the face of the great historical march (HORKHEIMER and ADORNO, 1985, p. 09).

Critical self-reflection, as a practical way of preserving and defending human freedom, has always been present in the writings of Adorno and Horkheimer. Even in authoritarian regimes, in which the attacks were directed at freedom of thought, the authors insisted on the perspective of an non-eclipsed reason, capable of transcending technical-instrumental rationality and emancipating itself. It was, in the 1940s, the effective regression of enlightened civilization to barbarism. According to the authors:

The not only ideal, but also practical, tendency towards self-destruction, characterizes rationality from the beginning and by no means only the phase in which this tendency is evident without disguise (... its 'irrationalism' is derived from the essence of itself dominant reason and the world corresponding to its image (HORKHEIMER and ADORNO, 1985, p. 16).

The unrestrained advance of progress, the sale in liquidation of culture, the curbing of the theoretical imagination in preparation for the path of political madness, the enlightenment paralyzed by the fear of truth, blind domination, the annulment of the individual by economic power, are some of the theses of the Dialectic of Enlightenment that reinforce "The idea that today it is more important to preserve freedom, expand it and unfold it, instead of accelerating, even if indirectly, the march towards the administered world ..." (HORKHEIMER and ADORNO, 1985, p. 10).

The essay "Elements of Anti-Semitism: limits of enlightenment", which practically ends the work Dialectic of Enlightenment, is presented after dense reflections on the concepts of enlightenment and the cultural industry, absolutely indispensable for understanding the elements of authoritarianism

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20 The criticism of the thoughtless advance of progress is one of the emphases of Walter Benjamin's thought, and it would be important to consider it in this analysis.
with a Nazi fascist character, and that it had been typified as an anti-Semitism movement. It is a kind of "universal overshadowed nexus\textsuperscript{21}\textsuperscript{21}\textsuperscript{21}\textsuperscript{21}a", characterized by an intrinsic relationship between lights and glare that unequivocally marks the limits of clarification. For Horkheimer and Adorno (1985) the most accomplished historical figure in the Dialectic of Enlightenment was anti-Semitism. We are, therefore, faced with the need for a deep anthropological reflection, which makes us reflexively reach the other in their differences. This would be an attitude to combat the anti-Semitic mentality, which makes it impossible for people to see the other, in their blind and paranoid pilgrimage for self-preservation. There are many elements of anti-Semitism, which coincide and complete the study on the authoritarian personality, carried out by Adorno and three other researchers, in the United States, in the period 1944-1947. It is important to note that the similarities between the anti-Semitism movement and Bolsonarism\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{22} are more than mere coincidences.

The conversion of a false doctrine into a true one is the first of the elements of anti-Semitism highlighted by Horkheimer and Adorno in which Jews are taken as "... anti-race, the negative principle as such; the happiness of the world would depend on its extermination" (HORKHEIMER and ADORNO, 1985, p. 157). The pathological and irrational attitude of the fascists, which spreads throughout the planet, in which hatred and the desire for extermination are expressed in the image of the victim they project, is present whenever it is intended to impose, in an authoritarian way, the false as true. In anti-Semitic conduct there are no real subjects because there is no reflection that allows the subject to return to the object what he received from it. The question of the naturalization of coldness imposed by bourgeois society, in which the supposed unity of men would already be realized in principle, reinforces and enhances what exists. We have many situations and examples in Brazil, including the Bolsonarism movement, which amplifies the culture of extermination and makes potential fascists emerge\textsuperscript{23}\textsuperscript{23}\textsuperscript{23}\textsuperscript{23}. Structural racism in Brazil, with all the culture of discrimination and prejudice involved in it, would not make sense, if people were truly enlightened and recognized in their dignity by society.

Anti-Semitism as a rationalization of domination and naturalization of suffering is another important element of Horkheimer and Adorno's analysis, which would be important to consider. In the self-affirmation of the authoritarian personality of the fascist Bolsonarist movement, the attacks on the university, culture, artists, the Supreme Federal Court (STF), the National Congress and Democratic Institutions, observed daily in Brazil, are configured as a desperate attempt at domination, in which "individuals obsessed and deprived of their

\textsuperscript{21} Term used by Gabriel Cohn in the article “Esclarecimento e Ofuscação: Adorno e Horkheimer hoje”, published in Revista Lua Nova: revista de cultura e política, number 43, year 1998.

\textsuperscript{22} On January 1\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{22}st, 2020, Folha de São Paulo published the article “See Bolsonaro’s prejudiced Statements and what the law says about injury and racism”. The president periodically attacks journalists, indigenous people, women, gay, lesbian, black people, Japanese, Northeasterners, among others. There are countless phrases highlighted by the article that show paranoid behavior, the stereotyped view of science and populations, typically practiced by the Bolsonarist anti-Semitic mentality.

\textsuperscript{23} See the article in Folha de São Paulo, published on January 17\textsuperscript{23}\textsuperscript{23}\textsuperscript{23}\textsuperscript{23}th, 2020, “Em vídeo, Alvim copia Goebbels e provoca onda de repúdio nas redes sociais”. The phrases, the aesthetics, the soundtrack by Richard Wagner refer to Nazi propaganda.
subjectivity find themselves loose as subjects” (HORKHEIMER and ADORNO, 1985, p. 160). It is a typical behavior, triggered by situations of obscurantism, deprivation of subjectivity and, at the same time, release of aggression24, in which:

No matter how correct the rational explanations and counter arguments of an economic and political nature are, they are unable to explain it, because the rationality linked to domination is itself the basis of suffering (HORKHEIMER and ADORNO, 1985, p. 159).

The “clarified” instrumental reason is satisfied with the domain of the object, whatever it may be. It empowers the subject, while impoverishing it. For a subject full of a reason as well, who did not limit itself to projecting lights, there would be no cut between its difference and its similarity in relation to the object. It would be more in the order of mimesis of full reason, than of domination.

There is no genuine anti-Semitism and, certainly, there is no natural anti-Semite, because the victims can change according to the situation: “... vagrants, Jews, Protestants, Catholics, each of them can take the place of the murderer, in the same way. Blind voluptuousness of homicide, as soon as they become the norm and feel powerful as such” (HORKHEIMER and ADORNO, 1985, p. 160). We could ask ourselves: what are the victims that are being targeted by successive attacks in Brazil today? Blacks, indigenous people, homosexuals, Northeasterners, the poor, refugees, intellectuals, the university, science, culture in its rich and plural diversity, finally, in a totally desperate way, to those who are being prevented from breathing? There are many cases and what Adorno and Horkheimer teach us is that the victims can vary, but the systemic logic of extermination does not. This is one of the important characteristics of anti-Semitism that we need to be aware of it in order to develop effective actions to fight against it, especially in the field of education.

The psychic energy mobilized by political anti-Semitism is rationalized idiosyncrasy, which can only be overcome by critical self-reflection. Adorno and Horkheimer (1965, p.168) clarify that: “Anything that has not been entirely adjusted or that hurts the prohibitions on which secular progress has been based has an irritating effect and causes a compulsive disgust”. Society is nothing more than a compulsive prolongation of situations of threat experienced by humans, which reproduce in the individual as self-preservation and domination. “They reproduce in themselves the insatiability of the power they are afraid of” (HORKHEIMER; ADORNO, 1985, p.171) and also “the more hideous the accusations and threats, the greater the fury, the more compulsory the scorn” (p. 172). The compulsion of hatred and the refusal of information and knowledge, which characterize the Bolsonarist movement, are mechanisms of defense and preservation of an authoritarian will, which cannot be questioned and threatened under any circumstances.

Another element of anti-Semitism widely explored by Horkheimer and Adorno, based on Freud’s psychoanalysis, is the question of projection. Anti-Semitism is based on a false projection, a pathological way of making the world

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24 See the case of Sara Winter, a purported extremist, arrested by the PF at the behest of the STF, on June 15th, 2020.
similar to the disease itself. “The impulses that the subject does not admit as his own and that, however, belong to him, are attributed to the object: the potential victim” (HORKHEIMER; ADORNO, 1985, p. 174). It is interesting to note, as this behavior is adopted by fascist politics, since the “... object of the disease is determined realistically, the hallucinatory system becomes a rational norm in the world, and the deviation from neurosis” (HORKHEIMER; ADORNO, 1985, p. 174). The obsession with extermination, the permanent desire to kill an alleged enemy, seen as a persecutor, and which forces him to defend himself, is also one of the hallmarks of extremist Bolsonarism. In this context, the forms of perception of reality, rigorously described by Kant in the Critique of Pure Reason, are directly affected due to the gulf that is created between the object and the undoubted data of the senses. The individual becomes unable to perceive, whenever he only projects his sickly state on the other. “Instead of hearing the voice of moral conscience, he hears voices; instead of entering himself, to examine his own lust for power, he attributes to others the ‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion’ ” (HORKHEIMER; ADORNO, 1985, p. 177). Individual acts of terror, or carefully planned collective acts of extermination, in the form of cyber-attacks, such as, for example, Fake News, characterizing Bolsonarist action25. It is, therefore, what Freud so well called the condemned, castrated impulse, transformed into aggression, that is, the almost complete loss of the capacity for perception and reflection. The fact that the individual no longer reflects the object, much less about himself, makes the capacity for discernment to be totally compromised. This discernment, absolutely indispensable to politics and the Republic26.

Paranoia, understood as a shadow of knowledge, is another element of anti-Semitism highlighted by Horkheimer and Adorno. It affects culture as a whole, as the false projection usurps freedom and turns it into a false culture. It is a hallucinatory, arbitrary and defensive system, with a high defamation capacity for experience and spirit, which Horkheimer and Adorno characterized as Semiculture, in which:

as opposed to simple inculturation, hypostasis limited knowledge as truth. The semi-cultured individual cannot withstand the rupture between the interior and the exterior, the individual destiny and the social law, the manifestation as essence. The moral conscience falls apart. The internalization of the social imperative is replaced by the prompt and immediate identification of stereotyped values. Culture itself has become ill (...) Culture has become totally a commodity, disseminated as information, without penetrating the informed individuals” (HORKHEIMER; ADORNO, 1985, p.184).

25 See article from Folha de São Paulo on May 27th, 2020: “Decisão do supremo cita ‘gabinete do ódio’ do Planalto e indica possível associação criminosa”. The Federal Supreme Court currently has two investigations underway to investigate the production of Fake News by the hate office and the criminal actions of financing and shooting on the Internet, of messages against political opponents and groups against the distorted view, stereotyped and pathological government.

In the last topic of the essay “Elements of Anti-Semitism” Horkheimer and Adorno make a curious statement: “There are no more anti-Semites, the last ones were the liberals who wanted to express their anti-liberal opinion” (HORKHEIMER; ADORNO, 1985, p. 186). In fact, historically there was no more, in 1947, with the overthrow of Nazism, an orchestrated movement for the extermination of the Jews, however the “experience, replaced by the cliché and the active imagination in the experience by the greedy reception” (HORKHEIMER; ADORNO, 1985, p. 187), were clear signs of maintaining the characteristics of anti-Semitism, which could elect other victims, not necessarily Jews. The fascist ticket mentality still remained strong and harmful, because when the masses accept the reactionary ticket, typical of anti-Semitism, they obey social mechanisms that reproduce in an uncontrolled way. Blindness, stereotyping, ticket mentality and aversion to knowledge are striking features of Bolsonarism and attest to the strength of anti-Semitic behavior to this day.

In the world of serial production, stereotype - which is its scheme - replaces categorical work. Judgment no longer rests on a synthesis that is actually realized, but on blind subsumption (...) In the field of social sciences as well as that of individual experience, blind intuition and empty concepts are brought together in a rigid and unmediated way. In the age of the basic 300-word vocabulary, the ability to judge and, with it, the distinction between true and false are disappearing (...) The labels are glued: whether you are a friend or an enemy. The lack of consideration for the subject makes things easy for management (HORKHEIMER; ADORNO, 1985, p.188).

It is, from a psychoanalytic point of view, the exhaustion of wounded narcissism, in which the weakness of the self keeps the drives within the limits of self-preservation. In this context, conflict zones are huge and neuroses, the result of this drive economy, are inevitable. “The irrationality of docile and applied adaptation to reality becomes, for the individual, more rational than reason (...) the whole man has become the subject-object of repression” (HORKHEIMER; ADORNO, 1985, p. 190). An irrationality transformed into madness, including the political action of non-recognition of the COVID-19 pandemic by the Bolsonaro government.

It is only when the total identification with these monstrous powers is imprinted on people as second nature and when all pores of consciousness are covered, that the masses are brought to that State of absolute apathy that makes them capable of fantastic achievements (HORKHEIMER; ADORNO , 1985, p. 191).

The ticket mentality, a product of industrialization and its advertising, adapts, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, to international relations. The schematism of the cultural industry means that the sense of reality and the ethical-political experience itself are no longer the result of a dialectical process between the subject and reality.
The reactionary ticket that contains anti-Semitism is suitable for the destructive-conventional syndrome (…) only the ticket provides an adequate object of persecution. The elements of anti-Semitism, based on experience and canceled out by the loss of experience that is announced in the ticket mentality, are again mobilized by the ticket. Having already decomposed, they bring to the neo-anti-Semite bad conscience and, with it, the insatiability of evil". (HORKHEIMER; ADORNO, 1985, p. 192).

It is not just the anti-Semitic ticket that is anti-Semitic, but the mentality of the ticket in general, which remains strong, destructive and very present on Brazilian soil. Everything indicates, therefore, that anti-Semitism and Bolsonarism are two sides of the same coin.

Education as a critical self-reflection

Theodor Adorno's need to understand education as a critical self-reflection was expressed in one of the most courageous and anti-authoritarian educational texts we know. This is the essay “Education after Auschwitz”, published in a collection of essays on education, under the title “Education and Emancipation” in 1971. There are several texts, the result of conferences and debates transmitted by Hessen Radio in Germany, from 1959 to 1969: “What does it mean to elaborate the past”; “Philosophy and teachers”; “Television and training”, “taboos about teaching”; “Education after Auschwitz”; “Education - for what?”; "Education against barbarism" and "education and emancipation". The 1959 Semi formation Theory article, which was not part of the collection “Education and Emancipation”, also integrates the set of educational texts by Adorno. The analysis of these texts is of fundamental importance, both for understanding the pedagogical-emancipatory foundations of Adorno, and for reflecting on the current situation of education.

“Education after Auschwitz” is the title of Adorno's lecture broadcast on Hessen Radio, Germany, on April 18, 1965 and published in 1967. It is a reflection 55 years ago on one of the most tragic events of human history. The curious thing is that 25 years after the genocide of approximately six million Jews, the situation, regarding the reasons that could lead people to the desire for extermination, had not changed and Adorno takes this concrete historical fact as the main object of his educational reflection. For Adorno (1995, p. 119) “The demand that Auschwitz not repeat itself is the first of all for education”, and continues:

The little awareness existing in relation to this requirement and the questions it raises prove that the monstrosity did not sink deep in people, a symptom of the persistence of the possibility that it will repeat itself in what depends on the state of consciousness and unconsciousness of people (ADORNO, 1995, p. 119).

For Adorno, conscience, critical self-reflection, discernment and autonomy are essential elements for human formation, with the capacity to define, even, the direction of history. The author explains, right at the beginning of his exhibition, what Auschwitz means:
The barbarism against which all education is directed. There is talk of the threat of regression to barbarism. But this is not a threat, as Auschwitz was the regression; barbarism will continue to exist as long as the conditions that generate this regression are fundamental. This is what terrifies (ADORNO, 1995, p. 119).

Understanding the conditions that generated the regression was one of the tasks of Adorno's critical social theory, because the psychosocial processes that made possible the planned extermination of thousands of people in Auschwitz, could still be noticed and are still present today. Resorting to Freud's Psychoanalysis, especially the works “The malaise in culture” and “Mass psychology and analysis of the self” was the path taken by Adorno to understand Auschwitz, because if “barbarism is found in the very civilizing principle, so pretending to oppose it is something desperate” (ADORNO, 1995, p.120). The Frankfurtian argued that the fact that Auschwitz occurred, “... cannot be minimized by any living person as being a superficial phenomenon, as being an aberration in the course of history... (ADORNO, 1995, p. 120).

Adorno understood, in his time, that the possibility of changing objective assumptions, that is, socio-political ones, which generate events like Auschwitz, was extremely limited and that, therefore, there would be a need to understand the processes of subjective formation, in the sense becoming aware of the mechanisms that make people capable of committing barbaric acts. But what would be barbarism? The author makes an important consideration, in a debate with Hellmut Becker broadcast on Hessen Radio in 1968, in the text “Education against Barbarism”:

I mean by barbarism something very simple, that is, being in the civilization of the highest development technological development, people find themselves lagging behind in a peculiarly misshapen way in relation to their own civilization - and not only because they have not in the overwhelming majority experienced training in terms corresponding to the concept of civilization, but also because they are overcome by aggressiveness primitive, a primitive hatred or, in cultured terminology, an impulse of destruction, which contributes to further increase the danger that this whole civilization will explode, in fact an immanent tendency that characterizes it (ADORNO, 1995, p.155).

Several aspects are important in Adorno's understanding of barbarism. We could highlight at least two: the first is that barbarism is produced by the so-called “civilized” society, with all the scientific and technological advances that characterizes it; the second is the danger that this movement represents for humanity and for the life of the planet. Placing the topic of barbarism at the center of the pedagogical debate means saying, with courage, that education and culture can do something, both in the aggravation of extermination actions, as well as in favor of life, freedom and the Common Good.
But who were the real culprits of Auschwitz? The killers? For Adorno (1995) the culprits are the unconscious, those who direct their hatred and aggressive fury to people. It is, therefore, the need to understand the impulses of destruction and aggressiveness that mobilize people. To this end, Adorno told us that “… it is necessary to counter such an absence of conscience, it is necessary to prevent people from striking sideways without reflecting on themselves. Education has meaning only as education directed towards critical self-reflection” (ADORNO, 1995, p.121). The author is truly clear in his pedagogical proposition: education needs to promote critical self-reflection, to produce a truly anthropological awareness of ourselves. In other words, it means a decision to reflect on the ethical-political aspects of education, placing cultural and social issues at the center of the debate.

In global educational programs, with the OECD27 approval, the human being and the ethical-political dimension of education is just a very thin layer of varnish. According to Dardot and Laval (2016), the constitution of a “neosubject” with a neoliberal character makes man stop being the reference of his own educational process. The neoliberal capitalist system determines what the human being should be and how he should act to integrate himself into the system and be recognized as a kind of successful case. What matters is the formation of professional technical skills and abilities, which can efficiently train the engineer, the doctor, the lawyer, the web designer, among many other professionals, increasingly subservient to the economic demands of the market. Most of the time, under the tutelage of the business “culture”, competitive, cold, insensitive, authoritarian, aggressive people, without due awareness of their performance as a human being, as a person, with effectively social responsibility, committed to the other and with the Common Good.

In the State of claustrophobia that people find themselves in the managed world, in which “semiformation has become the dominant form of current consciousness”, Adorno told us in the Theory of Semiformation (ADORNO, 2010, p. 9), the project of a emancipatory education, contrary to Auschwitz, requires effective and concrete action. In this respect, Adorno is quite incisive:

When I speak of education after Auschwitz, I refer to two issues: first, early childhood education, especially in early childhood; and, in addition, to the general clarification, which produces an intellectual, cultural and social climate that does not allow such repetition; therefore, a climate in which the reasons that led to the horror become somehow conscious (ADORNO, 1995, p. 123).

The reasons that lead us to horror need to be clear and must be worked with great mastery by adults, who are responsible for the formation of new generations, hence the need to start in early childhood. Evidently, breaking the link of an authoritarian chain cannot be done in a violent, segregative, polarized, Bolsonarist way, but in a cultural and social climate that places the ethical-political principle of the Common Good at the center of our interactions. This

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27 OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
conscious educational movement must occur within families, schools, programs broadcast by the media, postings on social networks, in short, by society as a whole, with the purpose of carrying a very simple message: that all lives matter and must be respected, that there should be no better lives than others.

Adorno presents us with some steps in this social process of clarification, of becoming aware of the profound meaning of Auschwitz, and which coincide with the aspects of the unveiling of the authoritarian personality and the elements of anti-Semitism. Let us see some more of them:

How do we view the structures of authority that establish our bonds of commitment? This question, thought from a psychosocial perspective, shows us, according to Adorno (1995, p.123-126), that “people are not psychologically prepared for self-determination”, that “loss of authority is one of the conditions of sadomasochistic dread”, that “people with repressed sadistic traits are produced everywhere by the general social trend”. And Adorno continues:

The bonds of commitment, when they are not experienced by themselves, autonomously, become a kind of moral passport, based on heteronomy, dependent on commandments, norms that are not assumed by the individual's own reason (ADORNO, 1995, p. 124).

This means that Adorno's bet was limited to the formation of autonomy, to the power of the capacity for critical self-determination, in Kant's sense, as opposed to alienated consciousness. The author also suggests to us a special attention to the disturbed and pathogenic relationship that we establish with the body: “In every situation in which the conscience is mutilated, this is reflected on the body and the body sphere in a non-free way is favorable violence” (ADORNO, 1995, p.126-27). This is a fundamental aspect that requires a deepen reading by educators.

Another important aspect is linked to the affiliations we establish with groups, with collectives, which, like sports, can both mean fair play, as well as promote sadism, brutality, aggression. As Adorno emphasizes, “all this is related in one way or another to the old structure linked to authority, to ways of acting (...) to the authoritarian character, which was manifested in Auschwitz in the form of blind identification to the collective” (ADORNO, 1995, p. 127). It is on this issue that we should stick to and resist: clarifying the problem of collectivization and what group memberships represent, in order to understand which defense mechanisms, stereotypes, are blocking our conscience.

The issue of desensitization and coldness provided by discipline, by severity, is another important aspect that we must consider. “Whoever is severe with himself acquires the right to be severe also with others, taking revenge for the pain whose manifestations he had to hide and repress” (ADORNO, 1995, p. 128). And the author continues, “Education needs to take seriously what has long been known to philosophy: that fear should not be repressed” (ADORNO, 1995, p.129).

The "manipulative character", which is equivalent to reified consciousness, described in the authoritarian personality, is distinguished by organizational fury, by the total inability to carry out direct human experiences, by a certain type of absence of emotions, by a kind of exaggerated realism.
Manipulative people are unable to experiment, in Benjamin's sense. That is why Adorno's concrete proposal is: to use all available scientific methods, especially psychoanalysis for many years, to study to understand why a person becomes so cold and inhuman. “As long as the internal and external conditions that made them so are known, it would be possible to draw practical conclusions that prevent the repetition of Auschwitz” (ADORNO, 1995, p.131). The "being like this", warns Adorno," ...is mistakenly understood as nature, as an immutable data and not as the result of a formation" (ADORNO, p.132).

The relationship we establish with the technique is another essential aspect, which we should consider, according to Adorno: “A world in which the technique occupies a position as decisive as it happens today, generates technological people, in tune with the technique” (ADORNO, 1995, p 132). Contact with the technique cannot be exaggerated, irrational and pathogenic. If so, humanity will tend “to consider the technique to be something in itself, an end in itself, a force of its own, forgetting that it is the extension of the arm of men” (ADORNO, 1995, p. 132) . The process of fetishization of the technique disconnects people from the anthropological sense that is inherent to them: a dignified human life. The concrete example of fetishization of the technique used by Adorno refers to those who designed a railway system to lead people to Auschwitz, with greater speed and fluency, in a way totally disconnected from the victims' lives. Ultimately, it is about the State of profound coldness, of naked and raw indifference towards the other. How many thousand similar examples could we list in the current Brazilian context?

Adorno clearly tells us that the first step, of non-conformity, “would be to help coldness to become aware of itself, of the reasons for which it was generated" (ADORNO, 1995, p. 136), and that the chances of overcoming are greater when we take responsibility and treat our children well. Even though "rational enlightenment does not directly dissolve unconscious mechanisms (...) it at least strengthens certain instances of resistance in preconsciousness, helping to create an unfavorable climate for extremism" (ADORNO, 1995, p.136). We must therefore avoid, as Walter Benjamin would say "the murder of ourselves".

Conclusions

The ethical-political deficit in training, with people increasingly distant from themselves, from the Common Good, has produced human beings increasingly damaged, petrified, authoritarian, cold, unable to recognize each other. A serious risk to the future of humanity that inhabits an increasingly devastated planet. Economic development cannot be ahead of life, on the contrary, we need to understand the complexity of the socioeconomic path of which we make part. We must care for others and, together, build a more just, human and happy world. It is not by "throwing dirt under the rug" in our homes, in our classrooms, or in our WhatsApp groups, that we will change the aggressive and violent way we relate.

Many aspects of authoritarianism can be observed in Brazil today, even after the period of its re-democratization (after 1985), which has made progress in terms of social and educational policies, with emphasis on the promulgation of the 1988 Federal Constitution, which is now under threat; for the sanction of
the National Education Guidelines and Bases Act of 1996 and for the National Education Plan (2001-2011 and 2014-2024), with guarantees, democratic participation and very well defined goals for education. However, the realization of social rights, such as education, is in a process of regression; due to the offensive of ultraliberal reforms underway in Brazil for several years and the anti-Semitic insurgent mentality that integrates the “culture” of the Bolsonarist movement.

The overcoming of authoritarianism, especially in a profoundly unequal society like ours, will not happen through reforms of the “Future-se” type, with the breaking of university autonomy and the advance of privatization, entrepreneurship and technological innovations determined by large economical groups. It will not happen yet, with the imposition of Bolsonarism, strongly criticized and fought, at the present moment, by different sectors of Brazilian society. On the contrary, the way out is in human development, with concrete actions to recognize the other (HONNET, 2009), through the promotion of common life as an ethical-political principle (DARDOT and LAVAL, 2017) finally, by the affirmation of humanization (FREIRE, 1974 and 1982); as a guarantee of a liberating, critical and emancipatory education aimed at cultivating affective bonds, with respect to otherness and the dignity of the human person.

Returning to Aldir Blanc (one of the victims of COVID-19) and João Bosco, some want to exterminate art and culture, but many wish and fight for the show of every artist to continue today and forever!

References


28 FUTURE-SE is a Program of the Ministry of Education, transformed into a Bill of Law, to be considered by the National Congress and which reaches the heart of the public university: autonomy. The Program has already been widely rejected by Universities and Federal Institutes.


Sent on: 10/July/2020 | Approved on: 31/July/2020