

Editorial

Emotions during the Covid-19 pandemic and the politics of psychological immobilization

In their Editorial for the *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicopatologia Fundamental*, less than a year ago, in September 2020, Ana Maria Oda and Sonia Leite, stated: “the number of deaths caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (disease caused by the new coronavirus) already exceeds 142 thousand people in Brazil, and the number of cases of infection has reached almost 4.8 million. Worldwide, there are over 1 million deaths and 33 million cases” (Oda & Leite, 2020). Besides the effects of horror and numbing, the Publishers had already pointed out the unspeakable character underlying the figures at that moment.

In June 2021, the Brazilian figures exceed 470,000 deaths by Covid and about 16,841,954 people infected. Since then, the uncalled for nature of at least a fifth of these deaths has been reaffirmed. At least 94,000 deaths would have been avoided if the federal government had acted seriously and responsibly in the face of the reality of the pandemic. The Government let the possibility of mitigating its effects pass by, overlooking the acquisition of vaccines when they were offered and not taking advantage of the

SUS network, already in operation, for a planned distribution program. Some aspects of this genocide have been named. Alongside horror and numbness, other affections have taken the scene, such as the indignation with the intentional character of these deaths, as has become apparent in the CPI of Covid. However, beyond this indignation, another affection has persisted, namely the astonishment at the voluntary servitude of large layers of the Brazilian population that support a populist head of State who promotes violence, the precedence of the economy over human lives, and whose anti-democratic actions have systematically aimed to disallow public institutions. Nowadays, alongside the risk put forth by the pandemic, new shadows threaten Brazilian public life, such as the unbridled violence of a legitimate State that is articulated with militias and, thus, favors the return to the regime of the State of force.

252 Some indices show the psychological suffering resulting from this State of affairs. The impact of the pandemic on mental health and the quality of life of Brazilians can be noted by the increase in cases of suicide, depression, anxiety, and domestic violence. According to Rocha et al. (2021), psychological impairments have also been expressed by mood instabilities, high levels of anxiety, stress, frustration, loneliness, anger, and altered sleep patterns. Factors associated with the prolonged duration of confinement, the possibilities of contagion, economic instabilities, lack of knowledge, and the uncertainties that permeate the disease are determinants of the degree of psychological suffering.

Fundamental Psychopathology could not fail to reflect on this catastrophic situation from within its conceptual field. Freud defines suffering as an experience linked to narcissism (Freud, 1914/1982b). Later, he points out humor (Freud, 1927/1980) as a possible defense against suffering. Finally, in the text *Civilization and its Discontents*, he states that suffering derives from three sources. First, it derives from the body itself (through the process of falling ill). Second, it comes from the outside world (which can turn against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction). Moreover, it arises from the relationship with other people (assuming that the latter is the most painful of the three sources mentioned) (Freud, 1930/1982d).

The Covid-19 pandemic places these three sources of suffering into a single event; First of all, it affects the body of each person unpredictably, some remaining asymptomatic, and others having a fatal outcome from the infection; secondly, it represents an invisible threat from the outside world, a threat that reaches the entire planet and demands a preventive stance to face

it, changing our ways of life in an unprecedented way; and, finally, it takes lives that are dear to us, depriving the bereaved of even the obsequies whose public dimension plays the role of helping us to disinvest from the departed and embrace life again.

We can advance our reflection towards the psychic structures affected by the impact of these three sources. Freud invites us to work from the premise that there is a socio-political dimension of suffering (Debieux-Rosa, 2016). The first observation is that the overlapping factors bring serious obstacles to translating these experiences into words, which tends to impel subjects to experience them in the logic of trauma (Green, 2000).

The increase in epidemiological indices linked to psychological suffering confirms a premise of psychoanalysis regarding the participation of the social dimension in the psychological structure. For Freud, the psychic apparatus is from the beginning not only radically open to the social dimension but also structured by this dimension. In this premise, two theses on psychological suffering are present. First, the thesis that pathologies are dependent on the social dimension. This thesis is a theme explicitly addressed by Freud since 1908 in his text “Civilized Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness” (Freud, 1908/1982a). He pointed out in this text the pathogenic character of excessive demand for the sublimation of sexuality in the Viennese culture of the time. At this early time, the pathogenesis of sublimation lies in the origin of neurotic symptoms if it occurs in excess. The Freudian premise that the subject is structured from the society he lives in, referring to a tradition of social critique inaugurated with Rousseau, is presented independently by Marx and has been central to the Institute for Social Research since Adorno and Horkheimer. Such a premise affirms the historicity of ways of thinking and feeling and the social character of all individual suffering.

After introducing the death drive in the psychic economy, the sublimation inherent to the Superego formation will be understood as having the power to defuse the death drive from the life drives and, to only refuse them in the form of moral masochism (Freud, 1924/1982c). In this case, suffering assumes a status of inevitability, hence the expression Pathologies of Culturalized Communities, present in “Civilization and its Discontents” (1930/1982d). This reasoning is Freud’s answer to the great enigma of political philosophy described by La Boétie (1553/1976) and known as Voluntary Servitude: “Why do thousands of people voluntarily sacrifice their freedom to a tyrant without being coerced to do so by physical force?”. In other words, how do we understand voluntary servitude?

The Freudian hypothesis is consistent for its time. It allows a strong interpretation of the seduction exercised by totalitarian ideologies and their leaders, which the 20th century witnessed abundantly. Two poles have, thus, solidly supported moral masochism: the psychic economy organized by the Oedipus Complex and the Western patriarchal culture. Religions and related social institutions, such as family, education, and justice, serve as discourses that value sacrifice. In this context, sacrifice to ideals generates an exponential increase in the masochistic satisfaction of the ego, as well as in the rigor of the Superego's demands, which Freud exemplarily described in "Moses and Monotheism" (1937/1982e)

In both cases, the impacts of such endogenous pathogenic factors depend on the subject's relationship to the truth of their own affections, be they erotic desires, desires for cruelty, or helplessness. Truth can be seen, therefore, in the Greek sense of unveiling interpreted by Heidegger in *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1927/1979), as the confrontation with our intolerable finitude. The incessant escape from one's truth has been the psychism's central opening to manipulation by the other, be it by the cultural industry or the government. Indeed, the pathologies of the society can be considered not only as undesirable "leftovers" from cultures but as inherent products of them since they also reveal the 'way' in which each society names the treatable and the untreatable in itself. In such nominations of the treatable and the untreatable lies society's mode of management of suffering, as Michel Foucault demonstrated in his *History of Madness* (Foucault, 1964/1978). The naming and social management of affections reveal themselves as instruments of social management (Cerqueira Filho, 2005; Safatle, 2016; Safatle, Silva Junior & Dunker, 2020).

Therefore, it is now worth resuming the affections of horror, numbness, indignation, and astonishment that the Brazilian population has suffered from due to this political perspective of the management of affections. When translated exclusively as organic dysfunctions, sufferings acquire forms of nomination that distance the subjects from a shared life experience. This resignification of suffering implies in their depoliticization by excluding them from all social and historical causes. However, the federal government's actions have gone a step beyond this already traditional form of political alienation that separates suffering from the social situation in which it arises. It is important that we recognize that this numbing, paralysis, and astonishment have become the main emotions of the instrumental management done by the Brazilian State Government. It follows a strategy

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of constant denials, relentless sabotage of the assumption of a shared reality through fake news, intimidation of journalists and scientists who dare to disagree and denounce the inconsistencies, incompetence, and bad faith in using State apparatuses. Fostering social chaos and psychic immobilization has been a reckless strategy to achieve a sinister goal of personal appropriation of power that belongs to the people.

In this challenging moment of our history, where science has become the preferential target of attacks, we must assume the responsibility of giving RLPF continuity in its long and consistent editorial trajectory. Since it was founded by its first Editor, Manoel Tosta Berlinck, RLPF has been not only a journal that encompasses research related to psychology, psychoanalysis, and psychiatry, but also as one that studies subjectivity in its broader articulations with history, philosophy, social sciences, arts, and culture in general. This stimulus to interdisciplinary perspectives in the approach to psychopathology constitutes the main singularity of the journal, in the face of the journals of the so-called “psi” area (Psychology, Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis, and Mental Health) in Brazil and abroad. We assume the RLPF at a privileged moment in its history, guaranteed not only by the regularity and high quality of its publications but also due to the achievements made by its last three editors: Ana Rudge, Sonia Leite, and Ana Maria Oda, who took decisive steps in its internal organization, in the improvement of its editing processes with the adoption of the ScholarOne platform, in the maturation of its editorial line, in the reinforcement and expansion of the journal’s interdisciplinary vocation, in the search for creative alternatives for its autonomy and financial balance and the implementation of academic criteria for the submission of articles, such as the requirement of Orcid of the authors.

Now, other challenges are set before us, aside from the maintenance of the achievements made so far. On behalf of the importance of punctuality and the quality of information, we have established as goals the maximum possible reduction in deadlines between the submission of the manuscripts, their evaluation, a final editorial decision, and the implementation of a plagiarism detection system.

We are aware and alert that the editorial space for psychopathology and psychoanalysis is narrowing more and more among high-impact scientific journals. The survival of a discipline in the publishing world depends, without a doubt, on its greater visibility in the intellectual world forums, fostering repercussions in the academic environment.

We assume, with commitment and enthusiasm, our promise to invest in the broadening of the circulation of the RLPF in the international sphere, promoting actions in search of international cooperation, whether by increasing the publication of foreign authors in our journal, favoring advances in scientific exchanges or through actions that increase the impact of publications derived from research produced in our own country, resulting in the greater visibility of Brazilian science.

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