## Psychoanalysis, Helplessness and Contemporary Violence

Érico Bruno Viana Campos, Josiane Cristina Bocchi, Débora Regina Sertori, and Ercílio Domingos Turato Junior

### Introduction

Violence, in its many expressions, is an obvious and urgent issue in contemporary culture. The psychological and sociological aspects of human relationships generating violence are many, and sometimes (not often enough) interdisciplinary. The growing liberalism, individualism and consumerism of post-industrial and informational societies clearly are contributing common trends that lead to disinvestment in solidarity and collective political agendas, stoking intolerance to difference and a reactive dogmatism in many aspects of social life.

The basic conflict between social and individual demands, regarding desire and its limits, is a crucial concern for applied psychoanalysis (Freud, 1930/1955, Campos, 2011). In this long-range sense, psychoanalysis, since Freud, has been updating this discussion, especially as to changes in psychopathological symptoms as human subjectivity is more deeply affected by the modernity crisis (Birman, 2014, 2019). On the other hand, psychoanalysis, at least in some hands, has shifted towards a stance of an *implicated clinic* in order to consider the political, social and economical dimensions of subjectivity (Rosa, Estevão, & Braga, 2017).

Plenty has been written about the role of repression and superego in the civilizing process, and the failure or limits of these functions (Bauman, 1997, Lustoza, Cardoso & Calazans, 2014, Saroldi, 2015, Birman, 2019). Cultural critics also have examined narcissistic influences acting on personality and social bonds (Lasch, 1979, Amaral, 1997, Lebrun & Melman, 2002, Reino & Endo, 2011), but few discussions properly have addressed helplessness (Menezes, 2005, Oliveira, Resstel & Justo, 2014), taking it as a key means to understand contemporary vicissitudes, and not only be regarded as a result of them. Our theoretical essay stresses this point, discussing violence and helplessness as a means to defend difference and otherness as foundations of social relations, and therefore of human subjectivity itself.

### Modernity and Metapsychology

Modern Western civilization is typically understood to be a historical and social construction beginning with the Enlightenment and the ensuing Age of Revolution in the 18th Century (Hobsbawn, 1962). A great interest in the advantages of reason and

progress arose together with political and economical changes that engendered capitalism and imperialism. Ideally, through the stringent application of reason, man could achieve social and political freedom as well as material progress. In this context, a figurative social pact was established, exchanging a degree of freedom for at least a sense of security, guided by liberal ideals indicating how we should act, think and feel, and all the while promoting the domination of nature and human relations (Bauman, 1997).

The rivalrous versions of psychoanalysis sprouted in this cultural context. Birman (2019) indicates that Freud's social analysis is a product of modern subjectivity, marked by two phases. Initially, Freud (1908/1955) entertained the possibility of achieving harmony between instincts and civilization. However, eventually, he veered toward a more tragic and pessimistic dimension. This second and enduring phase focuses on a malaise that is intrinsic to the civilizing project, as an effect of the unlikelihood of overcoming man's destructive tendencies (Freud, 1930/1955). Hence, "the so-called civilization of material progress, founded in science and technique, is unable to achieve a broad, general and unrestricted happiness, as promised in its heroic origins" (Birman, 2019, p. 38). As Freud departed from these particular enlightenment ideals, he presented a critical reading of culture based on the primitive horde myth of patricide. Freud (1913/1955) asserts that horror and death were at the origin of civilized order: "death is the Other of reason in the universe of modernity" (Birman, 2019, p. 41).

The immense First World War slaughter spurred Freud to recognize the autonomy of drives, establishing the basis for the death instinct, characterized by its non-discursive action, its dimension of silence; that is, one not articulated in language. This unrepresentability signifies that which "resists all possibilities of psychic development and linkage, indicating the recognition of a radical alterity of the drive in the background of psychic life" (Campos, 2011, p. 861).

In addition, within Freudian metapsychology the role of helplessness became magnified. Helplessness appears for the subject in earliest life experiences, as the result of the organism's incompletion, the need to carry out exchanges with the world and the overriding dependency on other people for care for physical and psychological needs of the subject (Oliveira, Resstel & Justo, 2014, Menezes, 2005). Helplessness is a mental state of internal awareness of being beyond help via assistance or intervention of others. Hence, witness the importance of the object relations approach bringing the mother figure tightly in as interpreter and supporter of the baby's demands, anxieties and fears. If this aid does not occur, or is seriously inadequate, the baby can fall into a state of psychic helplessness and disintegration (Winnicott, 1965). These primordial experiences of dependency on other people, the need for protection from internal and external dangers, are reinvested into the experiences that occur throughout subject's life.

Besides dependence, the human constitution itself imposes suffering on mankind from three main sources: one's own body, that is doomed to decay and to the end; the external world, that can turn against us with its destructive force; and finally, the relationship with other men (Freud, 1930/1955). Thus, helplessness is connected to the structural weakness of the subject. Helplessness, for psychoanalysis, is primordial, marking human subjectivity in indelible ways.

So as human destiny establishes dependence and a need for protection, the father figure, guardian of the law, replaces the mother figure as a source of protection from internal and external dangers, enables the creation of gods whom the subject fears, but from whom they also look for protection. This view traces the origins of religious attitude to feelings of childhood helplessness (Freud, 1930/1955). Therefore, religions exploit human helplessness, ensuring that no one will abandon the subject, making him feel protected and loved. The price paid by the subject, to avoid suffering and to seek happiness, is his submission to groups and to institutions in general, which can easily slip into a form of servitude.

However, the central issue of helplessness is that, for protection and satisfaction, man/woman depends on civilization while simultaneously the same civilization imposes limits on their satisfaction and desire. (Hence, Freud's recognition that man must make sacrifices in order to live in civilization.) It is the needs of others that establishes ethical and moral norms of human conduct, as stated in an early passage from Freud (1895/1955), and stems from our initial helplessness.

**Helplessness Today**

Reason and science did not promote freedom and human happiness as much as expected. The consequences of this helplessness phenomenon, as often noted (Kehl, 2000, Lebrun & Melman, 2002, Menezes, 2005, Oliveira, Resstel, & Justo, 2014, Birman, 2014, 20019), are mainly two: the weakening of large symbolic institutions of modernity plus a troubling change in the subject's temporal relationship to objects. The subject is adversely affected by a weakening of organizations such as schools, churches, and mass production factories (Bauman, 1997; Kehl, 2000). These sites offered security, acceptance, and the possibility of symbolization to memberships. They attributed meaning to reality and the possibility for the subject of more or less accurately representing - and containing and soothing - his affective experiences. They had power over the subject's life, establishing and undergirding his way of thinking, feeling, and acting on the world. If excessively repressive institutions produce a specific coding of malaise into suffering, than, in turn, the weakening of these institutions creates different kinds of subjects, producing different and worrisome symptoms too (Dunker, 2015).

The contemporary malaise is found more in the deregulation than in excess of order, as well as more of an excess of individual freedom than in lack of it. Moreover, as Bauman (1997) stated, if freedom is sacrificed in name of security then freedom of the individual becomes narrowly conceived as the unlimited search for pleasure, which necessarily and ironically puts the subject's safety at risk. Lacan (1959-1960/1992) proposed the concept of *enjoyment* (*jouissance*) as the real imperative of the superego. On one hand, superego is heir of the Oedipus complex and, as such, the institution of the Symbolic order: "who kills the living being or organism in us, rewriting or overwriting it with signifiers such that being dies and only the signifier lives on" (Fink, 1995, p. 101). On the other hand, it is indeed the heir of the Real order, both bringing and demanding a surplus of pleasure and satisfaction that appears more like a violent intrusion bringing pain: "to enjoy is not a matter of following one's spontaneous tendencies; is rather something we do as a kind of weird and twisted ethical duty" (Zizek, 2006, p. 79). This way of understanding the superegoic imperative is relevant to the contemporary craving for pleasure. In a word: Enjoy! (Saroldi, 2015).

The weakening of social and moral institutions establishes an emptiness in the subjects; experience is guided by the feelings of insecurity and fear, is allayed, at least in part, by unbridled pursuit of pleasure. Given the increasing instability of the world, the imposed flexibilization and high competitiveness in the labor market, and the corrosion of ethical and moral values, the subject experiences a psychic drain. Psychoanalysis, in a structural variant, refers to this crisis of values as an insufficiency and fragility in the symbolic field, which can also be termed a decline of the paternal function and its imaginary supports (Kehl, 2000, Lustoza, Cardoso, & Calazans, 2014).

In this dire social context the weakening of the State is noteworthy. Unlike the social welfare State, minimally a provider of services supporting the citizen throughout his life, we are increasingly governed by a neoliberal State, absent for men but present to prop up the market and its major players. This is universal deregulation, where the priority of mythical free trade comes at the expense of social priorities. Immense socioeconomic inequalities between countries, and within them, shake belief in any ability of the system to regulate and correct itself. Psychological distress spreads through the specter of future personal ruin; there is just no guaranteed employment for anyone except those who don't need it: "The way of life, social status, recognition of usefulness and deserving of self-esteem may all fade simultaneously from day to night and without being noticed" (Bauman, 1997, p. 35).

Existential emptiness and anguish are exacerbated by the destruction of the narratives that initially informed the individual coping with his culture. Such destruction promotes the formation of an *ahistorical* subject (Birman, 2014, 2019), who loses his point of contact with the past and future, leading the subject to experience abject helplessness:

> In the framework of current times, the narcissistic modalities of sociability predominate where subjectivity linked to human historicity is no longer valued and, consequently, the symbolic mediations and regulations are disappearing. The movement of human historicity builds on a time axis from the present, evaluating the past and projecting into the future. It is this 'narrative', this dominant 'plot', by means of which we are inserted in history, which seems to have been destroyed. The symbolic universe to which the subject referred no longer serves as a support. (Menezes, 2005, p. 200)

From the loss of familiar frameworks of life, which nourishingly came from the institutions and narratives through which the subject had continuous contact and was constituted, he starts to experience a psychic or emotional drain and, consequently, has difficulties coping with anguish. So the subject looks for compensatory mechanisms to deal with his felt helplessness. The second consequence is a change in subject's temporality relations with objects (Birman, 2014). These are spaces and scenes that the subject experiences in a fleeting and transitory way, not allowing any real experience with objects. It entails a spatialization of time, signifying the loss of temporal perspective and, therefore, being and feeling in a historical drift.

The experience of solitude in a crowd becomes accentuated. That is a paradox, given constant technological advancement. There is a reduction of distance between subjects yet at the same time there is a weakening in social bonds and personal relationships. This bind is added to the increasing individualism and high labour market competition. In that threatening context, the presence of other people can give rise to feelings of discomfort or terror. The safety nets created with the

family, neighborhood, etc., sustained the individual to face the challenges of life have been considerably stripped. The lasting links between individuals become more narcissistic, avoiding difference brought by the others and taking them merely as means to an end (Lasch, 1979/2018). Another defining trait is the performative feature of people's behavior, valuing the aesthetic dimension of image, in a spectacle society (Debord, 1967). Therefore, instead of social links, a bond with consumerism is sought (Bauman, 1997).

This witch's brew of malaise and suffering is responsible for a turn in the shape of psychopathology symptoms and their diagnosis, (Dunker, 2015) such that borderline and narcissistic condition become a paradigm for *borderline organizations* (Bergeret et al, 2012). These structures are centered in narcissistic relations and primary object loss. Consequent conflicts between the ego and its ideal consist in a broad array of processes, from psychosomatic to perversion categories, all indicated by a *negative narcissism* (Green, 2001; Campos, 2011). Green (2005) stipulates four destinations for the instincts upon experiencing object failure: a) *Drive overflow* is an emotional charge that the psyche cannot contain and/or elaborate, throwing it into the social field (outwards), or to the physical self (inwards). b) *Drive divestment* is related to boredom, apathy and emptiness, with the subject finding it impossible to connect or invest in objects. c) *Addictive behaviors* are more socially accepted, and consist of stoked-up sensory stimuli, through which the subject is reassured, like drugs, excessive physical activities, etc.; *Compulsive behaviors* are determined by the culture to which they are linked, and in ours exacerbated behaviours such as manic consumerism, food compulsions, and excessive exercise workouts qualify. Birman (2005) brings the symptoms of panic, depression, toxicomania and destructive acting out across these dynamics.

### Groups and Ideals

Freud (1921/1955) employs the myth of the primeval horde to explain origins of civilisation. For Freud, man is not a gregarious and democratic animal but rather a horde animal, in which the assembly must be led by a chief (Freud, 1913/1955). In his imputed primitive forms of society, a despot eventually gets murdered in a violent manner, which results in the transformation of the formerly envious horde into a community of brothers, giving rise to totemism, religion, morality and their own social organization by agreement. The social order is erected on the basis of relinquishment of guilt regarding the murder of the primeval father.

For group maintenance, libidinal bonds firmly are established both between individuals and between those individuals and their leader(s). Occasional outbreaks of anxiety (Freud, 1921/1955) demonstrate and test the strength of these ties. *Panic* appears when mutual bonds cease, when there is a relaxation or abandonment of the libidinal structure of the group. "Under this perspective, the panic is about the anguish aroused by the collapse of the illusion of an ideal omnipotent protector, who guaranteed the stability of the organized psychic world far from uncertainties, the lack of guarantees and identifications" (Menezes, 2005, p. 197). The significance of panic is that it becomes the key affective possibility to which the subject resorts in order to deal with the fright of helplessness.

The metapsychological mechanism forming group bonds is *identification*. Identification plays the lead role in the Oedipus complex and also is a derivative of the oral phase, in which the object of desire will be ingested and annihilated. Freud

(1921/1955) affirms that identification shapes the ego of a person according to what aspect was taken as a model. As possible articulations of the relation between ego and its ideal instance, through identification, Freud (1921/1955) notes two paths: love and melancholy. *Melancholy* is characterized by a real or emotional loss of a loved object. This loss then causes a self-devaluation of the ego, self-criticism and self-censure, and is a revenge of the ego on the lost object, introjecting it. This is what Freud (1917/1955) summarized in the maxim that the shadow of the object falls upon the ego. Thus, the mechanism of identification in melancholy demonstrates the division of the ego. One part of the ego introjects the lost object; the other part behaves cruelly, The ego ideal is also the heir of the original narcissism: one can find lost childhood satisfactions in this differentiation from the ego. Freud (1921/1955) further discusses the relationship of the ego with its ideal. In the idealization of the beloved object treated as our own ego - the narcissistic libido overflows to that object. The object, therefore, represents an ego ideal for ourselves too. Thus, it is precisely the *sexual impulses inhibited in their goals, which also characterizes a sublimation process, constitute this permanent bond between people in the group*.

The individual replaces his own ego ideal with the group's version. This switch is facilitated or obstructed depending on the distance between the ego and its ideal instance in each case. Other group members will join him. There is *a dual type of identification bond: placement of the object in the place of ego ideal* and, therefore, this trait brings all the congregated egos into common ground. However, this differentiating gradation in the ego cannot be maintained for long. It is what happens in festivals, in which violation of the rules is expected, which generates relief and allows the ego to be satisfied with itself. There is a feeling of triumph when an element in the ego coincides with its ideal, and a feeling of guilt and/or inferiority when tension increases between these instances, such as in what is known today as bipolarity. In mania, the actual ego and ideal ego merge, bringing out a mood of triumph and self-satisfaction, without the discomfort of self-criticism, so one can enjoy the abolition of inhibitions, feelings of consideration for others and self-censure. In melancholy, there is the depreciation of the ego by its ideal, condemning it with delusions of inferiority and masochism.

Narcissistic identification brings together the egos of group members, and also brings together an identity for the group. This illusory identity is sustained by a projection of destructive libido into rival groups - the *narcissism of minor differences* (Freud, 1921/1955). This projective counterpart to introjective group dynamics, undeveloped in Freud's theory, was elaborated by Kleinians in the object relations school. Bion (1961) and Pichon-Rivière (1977), took the schizoid-paranoid position into group dynamics highlighting psychotic anxieties and defense mechanisms to show how groups and institutions are bound together by archaic fantasies, acting as depositaries of destructive libido. Resistance to confronting the psychotic part of personality is embedded in institutional structures. This realisation engendered a new psychoanalytic perspective - after overcoming the simplistic dichotomy between individual experience and group behaviour.

The narcissistic "double," or mirror effect in object relations, is of an ambivalent and ambiguous nature: "a comprehension of group psychology could also help to comprehend how it is that individuals fell themselves alienated in groups at the same time that make themselves submerge into groups" (Parker, 1997, p. 51). The social relations context is always a special and fragile arena for the expression of

violence, prejudice, and discrimination as derivatives of the death instinct (Reino & Endo, 2011, Birman, 2014, 2019).

Stories such as *Lord of the Flies* may provide resourceful metaphors to modern violence. Marooned on an island without adult social controls, the children form rival groups and start hunting each other in a cascade of sadism, with the power symbolically carved in a pig's head. It is a mythological kind of narrative, detached from time and place, but it is a powerful metaphor even if not unchallengeable. Piven's analysis of Goldings's novel argues its relevance: "It is a literary evocation of the gestation of brutality and contagious violence, and may enable us to envisage the spawning of murder and sacrifice, the very birth of atrocity" (2011, p. 58).

"Small differences" narcissism is an expression of structural conflict at the level of social relations, and is closely related to the emergence of tyrannical leaderships requiring group submissiveness. These sadomasochistic trends in the foundation of social bond were a natural or "barbaric" aspect of human beings that is only surpassed with the symbolic and moral law of civilization. The working through on our sadistic and aggressive impulses is a constant subjective project.

**Virtual Outcomes on Social Violence**

Considering postmodern society, a now familiar way of forming groups occurs via social media. In cyberspace it is always possible to find communities that are constituted around a common cause or theme. However, entry into these groups can occur for several reasons, from identification with the theme itself, the influence of media contacts, or even advertisements. Two distinct traits appear in this context: (1) relations are mostly based on the principle of identity by common visible traits, encouraging low tolerance and interest to what is different; (2) relations are based on immediate and concrete interest, tapping consumer style expectations.

Hence, even if the contact with noxious ideas is initially by virtual means, we also note accompanying physical group misbehavior such as pelting other groups with offensive and prejudiced comments. All this is facilitated by anonymity and the imaginary state of virtual relations, which corresponds to the anonymity in a crowd and to the voyeurism of he/she who watches and is watched from a mirror. The *selfie* may well be the emblematic form of this modern relation to the other (Uzlaner, 2017). Many forms of social violence are enhanced by social networking and media, so that a specific term has been created for it: *cyberbullying*.

Due perhaps to the ease of organizing encounters through social media, in recent years, street demonstrations seem to have become more frequent, generally organized around political agendas. Demonstrations, however organized, arguably acquire the characteristics of the masses, with high emotionalism and aggressiveness, and loss of capacity for critical judgment of reality. However, what usually occurs in mass entertainment situations, occurs in political situations too, bringing ideological debate down to crude intolerance and aggression, appealing to an authoritarian personality. Thus, contemporary mass culture has usually taken a right wing and reactionary turn in important political elections, such as Donald Trump in U.S. (Gordon, 2017), and more recently, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil (Leal, Prates, & Garcia, 2018).

If we consider, furthermore, that libidinal bonds are formed by identification between members of the group in relation to the ideal and to other groups, then in the post-modern context, the very notion of identification is at stake. With the

fragmentation of identification to the paternal ideals, the distance between the ego and its ideal instance decreases, and, thus, any idea that is presented as more seductive, as more compatible with the imperatives of enjoyment, can serve as this ideal instance. In the same way, they can also be replaced by others, which increasingly and instantly clamor for more pleasure.

From this relationship between the ego and ego ideal, Freud described two phenomena still identifiable in masses and in organized groups in social media today. Melancholy refers to depressive states marked by death narcissism (Green, 2005; Campos, 2013, Campos, 2016): the offering of ideas and ideals is such that the subject sees himself is emptied and taken over by the shadows of an object. Fascination and servitude in relation to the beloved object, can be the stage for extreme violence acts too. If what was raised into an ideal is the persecution of other groups, of an extremist or totalitarian nature, blind love leads to disasters in the social sphere. Love, as someone said, is not enough in these matters.

Amaral (1997), steeped in Frankfurt School tradition, anticipates how the model of melancholy could indicate the masses' narcissistic identification process, once it establishes a relationship with the ego ideal. The masses would have problems in their own constitution of the ideal sphere due to the insufficiency in the dual process of translation–repression, preventing identification with the total object, there having been, therefore, only a fragmentary identification. Besides favoring the projection of masses´ ego ideal onto an omnipotent leader figure, the inadequacy in the formation of the ego causes the superego to reject the Law, remaining in defiance of categorical imperatives. In short, the blind adherence to the law of the leader would have its origin in a model of partial objects relations (oral-sadistic), in which there is no true symbolization.

This brief discussion has argued that, from the failure of the paternal ideals and the institutions, which sustained durable groups, the contemporary subject sees himself as helpless and that this is the distinct trait of postmodern malaise. In this helplessness, he sets off in search of links with ideals that are found in more or less ephemeral groups, like those found in social media, and whose ideas take the role of the leader. It is possible, then, to draw a parallel between the phenomena described by psychoanalysis and the current situation. Thus, masses thoughtlessness regarding the phenomena of love, submission and fascination before certain ideals remain valid today. In the same way, when faced with people or ideas that are opposed or contradictory to that ideal, they resort to violence, which is corroborated by the characteristics of the masses, which can also be virtual.

## Fundamental Violence

In Brazil Costa`s (1984) landmark study highlighted the need for a fresh critical gaze upon explanations in psychoanalysis, which mostly regarded individual-level violence as the expression of a biological death instinct. This standard interpretation was countered by a conception of symbolic violence as the traumatic origin of subjectivity. This latter perspective, then becoming common in the French speaking community, focused on intersubjective relations and therefore on subjects´ responsibility for their actions. For Costa (1984) the concept of violence lost its specificity in discussions - one moment serving to qualify the civilizing process, another moment side by side with the demands of the drive. Violence must be differentiated from raw destructive impulses by its *intentional* and *irrational* features.

Marin (2006) links violence to the particularities of the subject, proposing as transformative and healing agents the role of the family, educators, supervisors, and analysts. She analyses a paradox: in the search for peace there is usually an increase of indexes of violence and a tendency to deny any affect connected to it. So a drive is understood to be an imperfect hinge between the psychic and the somatic, between the social and the biological, exactly because it is unpredictable, insistent, and disruptive force in civilization. Violence is the irruption of a strong force that leaves the subject submissive to what he cannot rid himself.

The problem, Marin (2006) stresses, is that the subject is in a dilemma, pursuing pleasures that must not affect people who supposedly pose obstacles to his satisfactions. Yet psychoanalysis could promote creative transformation. Marin refers to a narcissistic social imaginary which would allow subjects to deny suffering. Invoking *society of the spectacle* (Debord, 1967), she speaks of social rules based more on aesthetics than ethics, which meets the demands of drives and expose the subject to an excess of excitement. This scenario leaves the subject helpless, to which he/she reacts with violent acts as the expression of his uniqueness and a possibility of eliminating other people, as he/she is being harried by increasingly intense drives.

Marin (2002, 2006) recommends that rescuing and converting *fundamental violence*, affirms the importance of attentiveness to intense feelings associated with violence and thereby ensures a healing encounter with difference. In the game between drives and civilization, subjectively and socially, working through violent feelings would be a way of recognizing other people and, therefore, to transform the relationship between "us" and "them" - no recognition of difference - to a relationship between "us" and "you," in which there is potential dialogue. She notes that acknowledging violence as a part of human relations does not mean justifying it, but rather that there is a need to take serious responsibility for bad encounters with difference, and for the reverberations afterward.

These foregoing remarks adumbrate an ethical position towards otherness in which subjectivity also may be constituted by the traumatic encounter with the other, if handled skillfully (Coelho Junior, & Figueiredo, 2003). As Saroldi (2015) emphasizes, if drive ambivalence returns to the subject, there are remnants that must be dealt with, such as madness, suicidal impulses or subsequent crimes.

The relationship with others would pose both a stalemate and a solution to the problem of violence. The psychoanalytic relationship handily would serve to represent and tolerate the remnants of this otherness dimension. If helplessness results from drive spillover and the ego's inability to manage it, the repressive functions fail. It is in the Oedipal pact that the subject faces the need to postpone or waive the full satisfaction of the drive so as to ensure self-protection, recognition and a place in the community. In short, in contemporary society what is compromised are social pacts themselves.

Thus, mental organization would be governed by the principle of ego ideal – the merging of ego and its imaginary image in primary narcissism — instead of ideal ego, which means the symbolic mediation between the ego and what is projected towards it in the secondary narcissism (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1967/2018, Lacan, 1954-1955/1988) The subject feels omnipotent and seeks the full satisfaction of his desires, with the other taken as a fetish object.

This recalls us that the foundation of civilization happens not only around the assassination of a tyrannical father but through a pact between patricidal brothers. We

mut consider Kehl's (2000) proposition that in the establishment of fraternal solidarity bonds exists the possibility of managing helplessness and instituting better ideals. She stresses the importance of *horizontal* identifications between the members of a group, so if "they don't exclude the founding identification, the *vertical one*, in relation to the father or its substitute, they certainly make an indispensable supplement towards it" (Kehl, 2000, p. 43). This positive way of facing human helplessness is seconded by Birman (2014, 2019), who urges creative management of our primal trauma against instincts and alterity. A similar perspective is Winnicott´s view of culture as an outcome of potential space and creativity (Costa, 2000). All these authors advocate a more *transubjective* view of human relations to otherness (Coelho Junior, & Figueiredo, 2003). The stress is co-creation of subjective and objective positions, in a complex ontogenetic pattern, where the flexible interchange is held.

These remarks assume a *tragic* view of the human nature, where violence is not only a terrible experience, but a working through of affect and suffering, in the ancient Greek tradition. Classic mythology contributes, as it always has, to psychoanalytical theory, not in the sense of a resourceful narratives and symbolic conceptions with a historical background, but in that tragic myths are paradigmatic expressions of human condition. Migliavacca stresses that the Oedipus complex "places myth and tragedy in a highly valuable primary position. It functions as a lever to unleash an investigatory process whose development is expanded towards the infinite of the mind" (2011, p. 80). And it is a route to our subjective evolution as individuals and social beings. We may wonder today whether the tyrannical father figure would not be obviated by the possibility of control of suffering, and of unlimited consumption and power. Likewise, the fraternal community would end its social pact with the notion that the privileged brother must be eliminated, and the criteria for this decision would be highly subjective. Therefore, it is necessary to confront being 'orphans' in order to create reciprocity, and respect for differences. However, this process would be difficult in a society where the primordial promise that one will lack nothing (someday) and everything is expendable still seems credible. However, the price to be paid for this false promise is high.

**Final Reflections**

Through this ambiguity of simultaneous exposure to and denial of violence, subjects are spared from coping with their own helplessness, which otherwise would have enabled them to face fundamental violence and otherness. As it is, at the first sign of rupture, there is denial by the subject who believes that the "alien" is a threat because he/she represents what should be suppressed. Therefore, we propose a way to redeem, as it were, fundamental violence, which characterizes encounters with otherness as a vital way of restoring bonds and the social pact. In pursuit of autonomy, it is necessary to recognize other people as such, and these relationships are based on a beneficial dependency. From this redemption flows the fully becoming of a citizen, wherein education must play an essential role. Psychoanalysis provides a privileged way of encountering the other, where the subject is allowed to express himself, accept his feelings and their representations in order to find or create socially accepted means of expression.

What prevails is a failure in the human ability to relate and get organized in society. The promises of happiness offered by modern civilization have failed. This intensifies a flaw in the constitution of collective sustainability of individuals, i.e., a

weakening of the bonds that enable the subject to connect to an object. This phenomenon is magnified when past narratives are forgotten. The haste of the present and the uncertainty of the future inflict deformative impressions on the subject's relationships and experiences. Increasing vulnerability, loss of protection and subjects' existential void propel us into the experience of helplessness, which is a fertile ground for group violence, but also is the condition for creating new relations. In reconfiguring the psychoanalytic concept of helplessness, we align with Costa´s (2000) statement that it should be seen as a contingent emotional complex.

The category of instinct remains a useful one to analyze the phenomenon of violence. This drive impels the thwarted subject to resort to narcissistic satisfaction in the harming of other people. *Fundamental violence* is the acknowledgment of the assassination of the father and confronting orphanhood. The paternal function*,* as a severing of the omnipotent sensation of plenitude in the mother–child relationship, is fundamental violence. The fraternal function, as a narcissistic attachment that sustains symbolic ideals, is fundamental violence too. Here the notion of *helplessness* is recovered and rendered useful to consider and refashion encounters of one drive with another. Deficit in recognition of otherness is the main factor in violence. Here we find an unconscious subject that oscillates between the poles of narcissism and otherness, as well as a tension between the ideal ego and ego ideal. If contemporary violence is based in the lack of recognition of otherness, it is in this relationship of subjects into groups that new ameliorative paths can be found for human helplessness.

## Acknowledgments

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**Érico Bruno Viana Campos** is Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department – São Paulo State University – Bauru, SP, Brazil

**Josiane Cristina Bocchi** is Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department – São Paulo State University – Bauru, SP, Brazil

**Débora Regina Sertori** *is a* Psychologist at São Paulo State University – Bauru, SP, Brazil

**Ercílio Domingos Turato Junior** *is a* Psychologist at São Paulo State University – Bauru, SP, Brazil