

## Social Psychology at a public university: a psychoanalytical practice for repairing Brazilian memory

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**Abstract:** This text was presented as an erudition examination in a contest for full professor of Social Psychology held at the University of São Paulo in November 2018. In the text, I attempt to denote my responsibility as a professor of Social Psychology at a public university of excellence in contemporary Brazil. I also report my understanding of Social Psychology as a field in which thought, speech and action, theory and practice, are inextricably related. Psychoanalysis is presented as a hermeneutic tool that collaborates with the elucidation of psychosocial phenomena. Texts by Freud and Benjamin, and poems by Carlos Drummond de Andrade help set up Social Psychology as a field of work with memory, meaning and repair.

**Keywords:** social psychology, psychoanalysis, memory, repair.

Eight years ago, I've proposed my name to be part of the group of associate professors at the University of São Paulo, institution of primary importance in building our Brazilian identity. Our university is, above all, a material good of the country, the Brazilian society, the people of Brazil. To teach a class in a competition for full professor in Social Psychology right now is not exactly an honor, a promotion of personal moral values, not even just an intellectual challenge, an action that shows the rational agility that I possibly managed to accumulate and operate in my life. It is not exactly a merit, that is, to bring you the value of my ethics currency, which I managed to accumulate as a result of my exchange with reality. Not that it is not an honor or merit or an intellectual challenge, but if I had to give a name to define what must be present in my class in a more lively way to apply to the position, which would it be?

Social Psychology has a twofold yet unique purpose. It deals with human beings and History. If we want to integrate, we can even say that it deals with human life. But human life, says Hannah Arendt, is only a means, because what always materialize, in her words, is "human habitation" (Arendt, 1958, p. 263). Human life is the construction of this habitation. Everything we do in life, since the act of breathing until the work to form ourselves and to form others, is a construction. The problem is that if we have learned anything in the last 100 years, is that the word "construction" always rhymes with the word "destruction." Human life has the function, by nature and essence to construct human habitation, which

is never ready, complete and well-arranged for the rest of future lives. Messianic readings cherish and delude us. Because if there is something we learned from a tradition that, to make things easier, I'll call Freudian, but dates back to the dawn of mankind, to the origin of religious, philosophical and political ideas, is that the construction of mankind's habitation also implies destruction.

At times, human life presents itself to each one in all its intensity, it triggers our warning signs. We are living a moment like this, and the role of Social Psychology is to understand these times and encourage the possibility of giving elements to strengthen the construction of the human habitation. The work of Hannah Arendt *The Human Condition* (1958) deals with the relationship between the public sphere and the private sphere. This is Social Psychology, and if the topic of Social Psychology is the construction of human habitation, this is a topic that one cannot study without doing, or do without studying. It is at its core this interconnection of theory and practice. And we, who study and act in this field, have to consider this strange continuity, always so rugged and that always gives rise to discontinuities and to the unusual, between thinking, talking and doing. Because it is in the core of these human manifestations that all the problems of theory and practice are rooted.

Psychoanalysis is a field of knowledge that knew how to streamline these three dimensions of human existence. It is a knowledge that approaches the act of thinking, talking and doing in a profound way. Psychoanalysis rooted them, or rather, showed the only root that runs between these ways of being of the human condition. Hannah Arendt reminds us

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that – I quote – “History is a story of events and not of forces or ideas with predictable courses” (1958, p. 264). This is integrating the Psychology and the Social, the circularity of the relations between thought and action. Psychoanalysis has allowed us to observe the deep psychic conflict that mobilizes the human effort to construct, since birth. Human life is a traumatic event, that is, subject to discontinuities and ruptures, alienation, and it requires the inner work of personal development: each individual must build their habitation within themselves, in their personal life, and out of themselves, in broader social life, in the world, and with other human beings. The inner habitation must have wide open windows and doors to the outside habitation, so that the personal and the collective formation works are as integrated as possible. The construction of each unique human being deals with psychological and socio-historical conflicts. And as human life is made of events, the main event of whom is rooted in the Freudian tradition is the self-analysis, or critique, both the one promoted for him/herself, toward their own roots, and the one which is the manifestation of concrete work in the public life, with other human beings. Having a Freudian root is to recover the aphorism “know thyself.” The formation of an analyst demands self-analysis, a practical work with him/herself. Reflection taken as practice. Self-analysis includes studies, reflective critique, therefore, in this school of thought, we never interpret the other better than ourselves. *We* are the limit, not the world. Social Psychology has in Psychoanalysis not an answer but an accelerator that demands much more practice, attention, a reflective attitude that compromises a whole life, than a legacy of ideas that help explain human events abstractly. Self-analysis should work on building our identity as psychologists and social psychologists. To say that we are critical is to say that we are self-critical, that we are formed in our practice, knowing the suspicion that the fragility of the human condition deserves. Hence, for this important event in my life, what I want to highlight is my responsibility with the human habitation. This is why I study and the reason I work. The University of São Paulo is an institution dedicated to qualification, research, i.e. transfer of knowledge, which should always be accompanied by the possibility of critical self-reflection, i.e. the strengthening of resources for us to repair ourselves, promote our development, which only occurs with the recognition of what we are and what we live. The study is the activity that is the reason for this institution. To study is to repair, in the broadest sense of the word.

It is never enough to highlight the important fact that our predecessors knew the importance of implementing it in Brazil, given its historical and socioeconomic conditions, a public university of excellence. Of course, for many, we do not need to justify the idea that any society is strengthened when

it welcomes inside a situation of higher education of excellence, a university of excellence. What is not obvious to all is the need for the *public*, more so in our country. We will try to explain it. This is what a social psychologist has to always try to do.

We constructed ourselves throughout our history in a segregationist way, which resulted in huge portions of society being expropriated, alienated, and feeling separated from society. Octavio Paz is an author that I take as a good model of Latin American thinker because he was able to combine poetry, critical and cultural essay, political criticism, Philosophy history, psychoanalytic self-analysis, in short, the structures of thought and important contemporary authors, at the service of his concern about what he calls the *Mexican identity* and its future, that is, the vicissitudes of being Mexican. For him, the identity is a problematizing concept, an opening mobilized by historical, material and cultural circumstances. He has much to teach us about how we deal with our Brazilian identity and our vicissitudes, which is the central theme of Brazilian Social Psychology for me. But this is not our concern now. What I want to remember is that, for this author, criticism is a difficult exercise in Latin American territory, given the violence, that is, the accumulation of expropriation and expropriated people our historical process raises. It is hard to think and live our history until its roots, because the result of the expropriation assumes an almost unbearable proportion, and thinking, in these conditions, tends to be more defensive than critical. Violence supports all our structures of thought. In Brazil, we were historically made by promoting divisions. Social exclusion, this eclipsing mechanism of large portions of the Brazilian nation throughout History, sets a broad split object when seen through a psychoanalytic magnifying glass positioned in front of the Brazilian reality. The drama of our historical condition is that these violent division processes were operated in resonance with the various projects promoting progress in our country. And it is this combination of division and progress that hinders our critical work. It is difficult to perceive all Brazilian population and the necessary sublimation of powerful violence that acts as imperative as quietly in the deepest strata of the Brazilian socio-historical process, to effectively be critical, that is, perform an intellectual reparatory action. A good example of what we are saying about the difficulty of thinking and living Brazil in an integrated way, is the famous phrase from the professor of our university, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, when installed as president: “Forget what I wrote.” This should not have occurred, not even as a thought, or as speech, or as an action, so an actual social progress could be more fully rooted. What limits the criticism is that the actual construction of the Brazilian state and its institutions is, at the same time, fruit and agent of these violent

division mechanisms in operation. The result is a State, in every way, far smaller than the nation's greatness.

Pragmatic economists throughout History continually claim that we cannot bite off more than we can chew, and that Brazil should give up on a public university of excellence. But I referred to the important fact that those who came before us have honored the public attribute of this university. And my responsibility works in resonate with them. I do not know the ideological bias of each of them – if they were aligned with what we usually call leftists, or Marxists. I do not think so, not all of them. I believe their choice emerged from a reading that surpasses ideological positions of left/right, more statist or liberal matrix. Therefore, this is not an issue that should be equated exclusively in the economic field. I suppose the *public* was and is an essential measure for combating the violence of exclusion and its deep involvement in the critical exercise, since this exclusion is a remarkable trace in the Brazilian consciousness and identity. The adjective *public* only legitimates itself through a concrete political action. *Public* is not an ideal, it is an accomplishment. For our predecessors, a public university of excellence was the way to root the study in all Brazilian people – and when I say people, I mean a collective that always tends to elude us for historical reasons, and that confuses, always in a conflictive, violent and, oddly enough, sometimes friendly way, Indians with immigrants, coup with constituents, doctors with peddlers, black with white, women with men, children with adults, the most diverse religions, which sometimes reconcile animism with monotheism.

The field of Social Psychology can only gain a full critical status when it is deeply guided by the perception of the entire nation and the violent division mechanisms that tend to constantly eclipse this totality. It is noteworthy that the violence of these mechanisms is operating, so to speak, from within and outside of each investigator. This is what Octavio Paz says. The difficulties of the critique stem from the difficulties of including ourselves in the critique. The political reality we are living, so urgent that it cannot be left aside in this contest itself, is a good example of this lack of self criticism and its serious consequences. No political party, no political figure so far, has been able to properly criticize the process we are going through. And it does not justify the precarious notion that we must gain a historical distance to more fully understand the time we live in. Rather, the test of the Human Sciences, of what they produce, is always in the here-and-now of their achievements. This is what Hannah Arendt reminds us when she calls the human life an event. We, intellectuals, still murmur some fragments of criticism, but we cannot perform a proper critical narrative while the avalanche of events is in process. What we do know is that the *public* attribute of the University of São Paulo is threatened. And this

threat tends to further astray the intellectual from what I have called the Brazilian totality.

Social Psychology can be established, at present, as a problematizing territory of models and methods of Human Sciences, as long as we contextualize it, that is, grant a space-time coordinate, refer it to History. Social Psychology should contribute to the development of historical processes. We do not propose that any method or model can prove more effective in the setting of this field. What we want to highlight is that, in contemporary times, the encounter between the psychological and the social is a fertile territory to be something such as a laboratory for production in Human Sciences. Maybe we are not exaggerating if we say that in the twentieth century, the social led more and more toward the psychological. This brings a number of problems, since the historical dimension tends to be mitigated. From this we conclude that the more the reality is subjectivized, the more the researcher of Social Psychology should strive to objectify it. This means that this field should always be mobilized through an exercise that promotes and operates the historical imagination. Thus, in this class, as in all the classes I teach, I will use authors that focus on history as territory for the construction of critical works, whether in the form of essay or poem. Here I work with Freud, Benjamin and Carlos Drummond de Andrade and I also want to share with you fragments of a text of mine that I use with my students in the discipline of Social Psychology. I believe it is what best shows how I understand the qualification and research in this field.

In Social Psychology, our struggle takes place essentially in the way we understand the hyphen in the integration between the psychological and the social, which this field of study seems to always reference. It is the nature of this hyphen that appears to be at all times on the horizon of the studies in this area. We usually allocate it in a virtual horizontal line separating the individual from the collective and, in ideational resonance, the psychological from the social. Thus, the psychological would be in resonance with the individual and the social would be in resonance with the collective, and the hyphen between them both. Of course we have learned that the individual is a construction of the collective and, therefore, that the psychological is a product of the social. But we have also learned that individuals crave the collective, they value it and cling to it with the same intensity and the same root from which it unfolds into subjects. In this sense, the social would be a ramification of the human psychological demand. In other words, we learn that between the psychological and the social, the hyphen dominates. Not only it indicates the existence of a connective element between the psychological and the social elements, but here it lets emerge the relational essence that is inherent to each of the elements.

The hyphen is the nature of the psychological and the social. It was the history of achievements in the field of Human Sciences that led to this state of affairs in which the hyphen is established to bring together seemingly separate fields. Now is not the case to show how the main models to understand human beings and their productions operated in order to signal the strengthening of the relational essence that defines the psychological and the social. But we must highlight the contributions of Freud, because even if not exactly his theoretical constructs that had a larger impact to stress the importance of the hyphen – although we cannot forget, for example, the famous phrase with which, in 1921, he begins the text “Group Psychology and the analysis of the ego,” that all Psychology is Social Psychology – undoubtedly his general model to understand the human being had a huge impact on the entire production of knowledge, from the twentieth century. Freud, by creating and mobilizing what we might call the psychoanalytic metaphor, that is, the extremely powerful and unique way to both study and streamline psychological phenomena, was able to inspire an approach with profound implications in the field of Human Sciences. But what we want to stress here is the action of psychoanalytic language within the field of Social Psychology. Freud was able to give a completely unique psychological status, allowing the appointment of relationships and linkages that enhance our understanding of how human beings are built. An example that can illustrate what we are suggesting can be extracted from his 1930 essay, “Civilization and its discontents.” Even if the central ideas he addresses in this text may seem not very successful theoretical outlines if we consider the developments in Anthropology, Ethnography, History, Psychology and even in Psychoanalysis itself, his more general approach and model from which he conceives human beings and their surroundings overlap in a powerful and inseparable way the psychological and the social, individual and collective, reaching to the overlapping of phylogeny and ontogeny. Thus, for example, in his investigation of the reasons why “it is so hard for man to be happy” (Freud, 1930/1976, p. 105). Freud indicates three sources “of our suffering comes from: the superior power of nature, the fragility of our own bodies and the inadequacy of rules that seek to adjust the mutual relationships of human beings in the family, the State and Society” (p 105). We may not consider all the arguments he develops below. The important thing is that he entwines nature, subject and culture inseparably to understand a state of affairs and, in the way he operates, the old distinction between subject and object in causal models is significantly overcome, since what would be part of the cultural and social field – relationships of human beings in the family, the State and Society – are somehow resulting configurations of the action of nature in the body, as the

socio-political-cultural productions also have a deep root through which flows an instinctual vitality, one of the driving forces behind the conflicting dynamic inherent in the production of history. And this does not mitigate the autonomy of the social field, which in turn demands in the body the same imperiousness, that is, it sets the same limits and determining possibilities for its existence, acting on it with the same determination with which nature acts, to the point where maybe we can name the cultural element as a second nature of the body, which in turn is not only object of these two compelling forces – nature and culture –, but a key agent between nature and civilization, because it is up to individuals, to become subject, to appropriate, even if in their narrow limits, the condition of being responsible to the nature and the social and, therefore, the principal agent of their historic achievement.

Of course this is not about reducing the complexity of the field of social psychology to a psychoanalytic conception. The application of Psychoanalysis as an aggregate of theories constructed over the history of this discipline, on a certain context to be studied, greatly reduces the scope that it would have to offer to the study of the phenomenon. By this we mean that the application of Psychoanalysis, as a pre-established theoretical set on any research field is a limited exercise and nothing close to the psychoanalytic exercise itself. For the psychoanalytic model and method to be more effective, Psychoanalysis should discard its theory in order to become silent, because only in silence the phenomenon we are seizing from Social Psychology will emerge with its specificity. In the case of the construction of knowledge in the psychoanalytic field, it is the establishment of a process of observation and intervention whose developments are seriously considered through an intense reflection of these phenomena, in a dialogue with all theories that support and reference psychoanalytic intervention, but which gives the phenomenon observed the privileged place, which can never be moved or eclipsed by any theoretical conception taken *a priori*. Theories tend to be very noisy. The misapplication of Psychoanalysis, too. This property of Psychoanalysis, as presented here – the one of seeing itself unable to act with all its capability if reduced to a number of theoretical constructs to be applied over a phenomenon –, in our view is the richest contribution this research field has to offer for the creation of knowledge in the university, because Psychoanalysis, as we understand, demands an intervention in reality, a mandatory practice for achieving the structuring of the research field not given *a priori*, capable enough to let the psychoanalytic knowledge emerge. The theories, when applied to the field of Social Psychology, often translate into ideologies very easily, and they operate on the phenomenon in order to instrumentalize it, either through its definition or practical action. But if in

the visible clash there is a huge over-determination of the invisible aspects that operate irrationally, with the ability to produce phenomena as disturbing as the violent totalitarianism that ravaged the twentieth century, Psychoanalysis as a model and method can help us indicate the presence of the invisible in the social phenomena studied, expanding the knowledge about them. We can understand the field of intellectual history in analogy to the field of mental functioning, that is, in the former, as well as in the latter, reason suffers from disorders. Irrationality may erupt in the field of reason, as Adorno stresses in his work. This way of understanding the social production and the ideology itself is already the result of the psychosocial hyphen force in contemporary thinking. The whole Frankfurt School worked this way.

Of course, the human production is still essentially historical, and to understand History is essential. Thus, the most compelling bids in Human Sciences occur in the History of Philosophy, which is the field where we signify them. But today the conflict and the ideological production are guided by the use and attempt to impact primarily the psychological aspects rather than to arouse and mobilize the historical consciousness of the subjects involved. The fragility of politics understood as an ideological game for power, i.e. the depoliticization of politics, pushed the clash to the field of Social Psychology. Election campaigns are an example of we are trying to say. It is not the political discourse that governs them, not even organizes them, but rather the improvement of a speech and an image that intend to imply each voter, considering their psychology, to speak more generally and to signal what we are trying to emphasize.

If we focus on Psychoanalysis as a model and method, we do not do it in order to increase the “psychologizing” element of the social. On the contrary, if it is certain that Psychology deeply entered the Philosophy of contemporary History, i.e. the ways of conceiving History, our proposal is to use the psychoanalytic model and method to help locate the social phenomena studied within History, since it is the historical consciousness that allows the full elucidation of the social phenomenon. And if it comes to subjects, adequate Social Psychology is the one that helps them to know themselves as part of History and take the possibility of acting on it. Therefore, Psychoanalysis is not an end but a hermeneutical instrument to assist in the elucidation of the phenomena discussed.

If all we have been discussing about the hyphen condition, that is, its understanding and how it is operated, is correct, this leads us to conclude that history is also a psychological achievement, just as the body is a historic achievement, without ever ceasing to be an embodiment of nature. In this area, we must always work to ensure the multidimensionality of the phenomenon.

Let us return to Freud. When he locates the hyphen in the natural, in the body and in history, and when he interlaces them in order to familiarize them inextricably, this is never done by reducing each other or all to an exclusive field, because then they would not be nature, body and History. Freud is never one-dimensional. His own model of the psychic apparatus, which is also the psychoanalytic model, was set up by him to deal with the multiplicity of determinations in human production. The unconscious is not exclusively intrapsychic, but perhaps the manifestation of all human doings throughout History. Freud, in *Civilization and its discontents* (1930/1976), raised to the status of law a strange and surprising hypothesis, but of deep meaning to what we are saying: what was lived never disappears. Forgetting never means the complete elimination of the memory trace.

The unconscious is the place of memory, and it is Freud himself (1930/1976) who, to illustrate this phenomenon of conservation acting on the psychic scope, approaches it to a fantastic understanding of Rome presented here literally in the condition of eternal city. I quote:

Now let us, by a flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is not a human habitation but a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past – an entity, that is to say, in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest one. This would mean that in Rome . . . in the place occupied by the Palazzo Caffarelli would once more stand – without the Palazzo having to be removed – the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus; and this not only in its latest shape, as the Romans of the Empire saw it, but also in its earliest one, when it still showed Etruscan forms and was ornamented with terracotta antefixes. (p. 88)

The eternal city that Freud supposes condenses all human history in an architectural image in which nothing is ruin, in the sense of losing its symbolic vitality. All that is gone is still alive and demands from the eternal city built by Freud. The eternal city is the origin of various human manifestations, in all fields of its making. Thus, all human achievements, the development of each one, the scientific and technical production, the Human Sciences, literature, poetry and other arts are all overdetermined elaborations of this gigantic and condensed living memory, which constitutes History itself, the land on which are rooted all human constructions. And when we say rooted it has a double meaning: the whole construction is another deployment, another building in the eternal city and, on the other hand, the whole building is a

construction built from the elements and vitality placed at provision by the state of things in the eternal city.

Benjamin (1940/1971), in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, also built an image that somehow allows us to deepen our understanding of History, working in resonance with the image of the eternal city assembled by Freud. He says in his thesis number IX:

A Klee painting named *Angelus Novus* shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angles can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (p. 82, our translation)

In Benjamin, we rescue the processual dimension that is inherent in History, the dynamism that is inherent in the hyphen that interests us. History is not exactly the eternal city, but what one can seize here-and-now, the uninterrupted storm of progress that, from Paradise, blows into the future. Freud built his eternal city preserving it from the flow of History. Benjamin introduces the dynamic element, and then the image of the ruin must be reconsidered. Because everything that is seen as building in Freud, in Benjamin, who has his gaze fixed on Paradise –, that is, in the territory of expectations of improvement and even redemption of the human being –, is seen as ruin, demanding repair. Each construction, each dead person, demands. The eternal city becomes the land not only of a living memory, but of a strong demand made to the angel of History, that the storm of progress drags. Demand is so intense that the angel would like to stop and, seriously considering the demand of dead and ruins, work on a repair. But the storm does not give time, and all that the angel can build on his reparative act is perhaps an ill-finished fragment that immediately after, given the strength of the storm which is nothing more than the succeeding time, becomes a new ruin deposited under his feet, that is a new demand to join the desperate cry of the ruins. This desperate cry would be the realization of History.

What we gain by integrating the images of Freud and Benjamin is that, first, they seem to strengthen History as a field in which we work

with the psychosocial hyphen. Second, given the tension established between the two images, between buildings and ruins, between the preserved and active element highlighted by Freud and the frustrated and disappointing element highlighted by Benjamin, this tension can cause a production in the psychosocial field that is a rescue of memory, a resignification and a reparatory act. That is, a construction in the fullest sense of the term, as it involves memory and repair. Benjamin's image is powerful enough for us to understand it not only as a construct erected to signify the work of History as practice and study, but, in our view, this image somehow also manages to embrace the personal reconstruction processes every human being must perform, because in personal reconstruction processes, a particular angel of History – if we want to use the image that Benjamin depicts looking through Klee painting – is acting, with the same wide eyes, the same mouth open, the same tension on the wings, and, especially, the same implication in time: all he has is the past, presented at the same time, if we integrate the images of Freud and Benjamin, in the form of memory and ruin, demanding the act of personal construction, that is how the future takes place. Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1987) alludes to this personal angel in the first stanza of his “Seven-Sided Poem”: “When I was born, one of the crooked/ angels who live in shadow said: Carlos, go on! Be *gauche* in life” (p. 13).

The poetic voice is demanded since his birth, from his origins and the shadow, to build a certain conception of life, a vision of the human being and the world. To be *gauche* is not really an option, nor a worldview already established and finished that Carlos would have nothing more to do but to start using it. It is more like a demand, a kind of gravitational force from the state of things in their origin, able to organize his unique way of seeing himself and the world. To be *gauche* is not a destination for Carlos. It is an imperiousness raised from the shadows of his origin. To be *gauche* is not easy. To be *gauche* means, somehow, to oppose, but how does one meet a demand for being opposition without opposing to it? It is almost impossible. If Carlos obeys the angel, he will not be exactly *gauche*. A true *gauche* does not listen to the angels. But if he does not listen to the angel, he will be *gauche* and, in this case, he will be under the imperative demand of that crooked angel, of this influence of origin. This paradox raised by the poet is important as a manifestation of the strength of the origin that drives him to be what he will become, in his meditation on himself and the world. Carlos listens to a demand for tradition and disruption, memory and construction. He says in another poem, which is entitled “Questions” (Drummond, 1987, pp. 72-74):

One cold, uncertain hour  
I asked the ghost

what force binds us,  
him to me, whom I think of  
as not bound to anything,  
and me to him, gaseous  
yet vividly felt  
in the shadow he casts  
over all my being:  
reciprocal captives  
of the same principle  
or the same enigma  
that distracts or focuses  
and renews and refines  
an anxiety of time,  
prolonging it in space.

The crooked angel here is depicted as a ghost, as demanding as the first one and, at the same time, able to renew and refine like him. As the angel, the ghost is the enigma that unfolds and roots the poem. In the same poem, Drummond (1987) allows us to get out of the personal angel and go back to Benjamin's angel of History, because the poetic voice asks the ghost one last question:

Finally I asked him  
the unreasonable reason  
for leaning me, in anguish,  
over remains of remains,  
from where no breath wafts  
to cool the fever  
of my reconsiderations;  
over that field of static  
ruins, whose military  
rigidity the morning  
dew no longer  
bathes or comforts.  
...

While rising in flight,  
taciturn and melancholy,  
bound for eternity,  
he gave only this answer  
(if mysteries can indeed  
be answered by another,  
still higher mystery):  
*To love, after losing.* (pp. 72-74, emphasis added)

Carlos Drummond de Andrade's ghost acts as Benjamin's angel. Both are plagued, both produce and leave a very analogous landscape; and both require repair – *to love, after losing*. If Benjamin's angel, in the face of disaster, wants to restore the shattered and wake the dead, Drummond's ghost operates in this "rethinking," which is nothing more than reason without reason to lean grieved over debris remains. In Benjamin, this reconstruction will be one more ruin to join the ruins. In Carlos Drummond de Andrade it

is a fever, here exposed as a poem. What Benjamin and Drummond allow us to discuss is this field of study which is so promising and that is currently called generational transmission. It emerges from the hypothesis so dear to Freud, about the existence of a familiar analogy in the developments of ontogeny and phylogeny. Perhaps what led Freud to this theme was the deep linking he saw occur between his personal biography and the psychoanalysis he created. Alluding to Drummond, we could say that psychoanalysis is the result of Freud fever, while leaning grieved over debris remains of his personal history. Family ties not only integrate the production of his biography, but they also renew and refine themselves in Psychoanalysis. In the correspondence of Freud to Fliess (1887-1902/1986), we have access to fragments of Freud's self-analysis, and we envision that it is not only his emotional ambivalence toward his parents the pillar of the psychic conflict he was going through that period, or rather, the emotional conflict materializes itself in a complex ideational network that entangles the whole family unit, which is also the passageway or access to his ancestors and his ideational tangles, because the study of personal characteristics considers interactions with all family member.

Every family is a language. But that does not mean that it is only a structure. It is also an ideational ball, an eternal city. Children learn among family and through the family. Abraham and Torok (1994), in the book *The shell and the kernel*, underline the fact that the child is attached and aware of the mother's gestures, her psychic attributes and her words. More than realizing and being attached, mother and child are a dual unit from which the child has to be separated, carrying around him/her, according to the authors, a whole series of tracks, the ghost that binds, somehow, being here-and-now with this unique dual unit. The ideational operation of the child is done with familiar elements, permeated by them. This ideational thread is rooted in family life experiences and, therefore, it includes views, expectations, impressions and the recording of histories lived by the members in generations distant from this family unit. Family is also a thread of histories from which each one must organize and gain autonomy, as Carlos, whose poem is an elaboration of his origins, the Andrade. The construction of our being, this ontogenetic operation, is done with the familiar material, around this material, which is the phylogeny of each subject. We are all psychic products of an infinite regress of family histories. Freud highlights in the eternal city the presence of all buildings constructed throughout history. The buildings would be these familiar histories. Benjamin highlights the destructive character. The ruins would also be these histories. Every family history carries silence, suspension, hyphens, and mutism. This does not mean that something is suppressed; nothing is suppressed.

Something just goes silent, gets isolated and can become a secret. When silent, knowledge is unknown. As a secret, the unknown is known. Both operate in the child's ideational network. Both raise the fever to which Drummond refers in his poem. Both are part of the family language, acting, therefore, as driving forces of the limits and possibilities of ideational operations that all family members are subject to, including the child. If silence and secrecy make a strong amplification in the familiar ideational thread, each member is reduced in his/her possibility of naming as much about what goes on in the family as about themselves and the world around them. The silences and secrets talk as much as ideational threads in the family romance that everyone rises in the construction of their identity projects. Both in silence and in secret there is a traumatic element. If Freud knew how to give Psychoanalysis an etiological character, that is, a link to an origin for the understanding of psychic phenomena, in the origin of this science he granted to the trauma the status of origin of the psychological symptom; there, psychoanalysis emerged. The psychic trauma is a psychic commotion. Ferenczi (1933/1981) points out that the German word *erschütterung*, psychic commotion, comes from *schutt*: ruin, including the destruction, the loss of the form itself. In *Studies on hysteria*, the first psychoanalytic work of Freud (1895/1976), the trauma is understood as a real event arising from reality, a shock in the real experience capable of shaking the defenses of oneself. Freud never silenced the forces of the real. This we can see in all his clinical cases, where the reality is seriously considered by him. If, on the one hand, he moves towards greater emphasis on psychic reality, on the other, this reality consists of a response to the real. All the emphasis that Freud gives to phylogeny is nothing more than pointing out the determining factor of extrapsychic elements that, in some way, compose a kind of psychological history to act on the psychology of each individual. Thus, for example, his studies in *Totem and Taboo* (1913/1976), in which the anxiety of castration and the Oedipus complex itself, which in principle to him are invariables of the psychological constitution, are determined by the psychological history in which the historical, moral and religious processes of men take place, until a mythical primitive horde in which the parricide would have occurred – a historical scene and origin of a singular psychological history of human beings. This means that the ideational thread is a phylogeny, or psychological history that spans generations and constitutes a psychic heritage of each subject's working through: the Andrade are the phylogenetic heritage for the ontogenetic construction of Carlos, which means that the Andrade are both Carlos's socio-cultural-economical reserve and his trauma. The trauma is inherent to the working through, such as the personal construction process is inherent to the reparatory act.

Benjamin, in a text dedicated to the work of the Russian writer Nikolai Leskov, tells us of a disorder occurred in the first decades of the twentieth century, a disorder that involves modernity, urban life, technization, and war. And the way in which he deals with this disorder suggests that, in the history of men, there are events that operate in analogy with those which Freud detected and which promote psychic commotion in the individual subject. Benjamin suggests that, in History, trauma silences the experience, or rather the elaboration of an experience, which is the way lived facts can be realized in experience, that is, in elaborate life, in a personal patrimony, a result of the adventures of each person in the field of life. According to the logic of Benjamin's text, it is possible to live and not gain experience. This is a personal disorder. But Benjamin, performing a social archeology, finds a deeper, that is, broader etiological factor for this inability to elaborate life in experience: the disorders are personal, but the etiological factor is a state of affairs in the social, that is, the disappearance of the narrator and the narrative promoted by a technocratic power. An entire social group can be locked in silence, unable to turn moments lived into experience. Benjamin thus brings the notion of trauma, a word originally from the field of Medicine and used by Freud to refer to psychic commotion, to the field of History. Today, there are several authors working on the notion of trauma in History (see, for example, Robben, A. & Suarez-Orosco, M., 2000), and they observe the reaction of social groups to violent events, from this referential. But Benjamin, in this text, may be a reference for this field of study, because in his reflective sharpness, he knows the catastrophe of war or violent social events can cause far more than the massive material and human losses which are always involved in these events – it can cause a psychic commotion of the group, that is, a disturbance in the way they represent themselves and the world around them, and even in the possibility of representation of themselves and the world, with an intense impact on the history of this social group, to the point of outlining the basic determinations of how this social group will behave historically. The social group may lose the narrative instances capable of giving meaning to experience beyond the mere ideological register, which never fully accounts for the group commotion that the shock of History arouses. The newspapers and books to which Benjamin refers in the same text only circulate an image of the reality that coerces the social group, in the sense of being locked up, hostage of that reality, that is, these newspapers and books are not spaces of elaboration, being, as Benjamin understands them, instruments of the same battle and thus tools, as he says, of the “magnetic field of destructive currents and explosions” (1969/1980, p. 57). Today, narratives



have migrated to digital media with such force that the election we have just lived in our country, the most representative political act of our democratic functioning, has digitalized itself.

Social Psychology must learn to deal critically with not only this narrative, but especially with the emerging digital characters: a digital campaign, a digital president, digital voters, and digitized opponents. It is as if political life had been entirely transferred to virtual life, and we at the university, the professors, the intellectuals, seem to be further from the possibility of narrating our critical version to our collective, of favoring the whole collective in the construction of the Brazilian human habitation: of the plural Brazils that compose us.

When I choose responsibility as an imperative in constructing this class, and when I relate the primary source of this imperative to the public dimension of this university, I do it motivated by the effort I have learned in my studies and practice to always deploy theories in the construction of the human habitation. The public university is my place of participation,

so as a social psychologist I was not always involved exclusively in the production of knowledge, nor exclusively in its transmission. Or rather, I include both the production and the transmission of knowledge in the task of improving and strengthening the public university in our country. This is my fever. For this reason, I am delighted to have strengthened the international ties between the University of São Paulo and Birkbeck College, University of London, and, at the local level, to strengthen the ties of my disciplines with public policy practitioners; that is why I am involved in all the administrative instances, where we discuss core issues such as the career of a university professor, the various academic projects, and the ways of managing scarce funds. I consider all this part of Social Psychology, because the identity of the Brazilian intellectual is a theme of this field of knowledge. Love, after losing, is not a task only for the Andrade, it is a task for all of us. Freud calls the work of elaborating and repairing, of dealing with all these constructions and ruins, mourning. We have a great period of mourning ahead.

### **A Psicologia Social na universidade pública: uma prática psicanalítica de reparação da memória brasileira**

**Resumo:** Este texto foi apresentado para a prova de erudição do concurso para professor titular em Psicologia Social realizado na Universidade de São Paulo em novembro de 2018. Nele busco explicitar minha responsabilidade como professora dessa área numa universidade pública de excelência no Brasil dos dias de hoje. Trago também o meu entendimento da Psicologia Social como campo em que se realizam de forma indissociável o pensamento, a fala e a ação, a teoria e a prática. A Psicanálise é apresentada como instrumento hermenêutico a colaborar para a elucidação dos fenômenos psicossociais. Textos de Freud e Benjamin e poemas de Carlos Drummond de Andrade auxiliam a configurar a Psicologia Social como campo de trabalho com a memória, a ressignificação e a reparação.

**Palavras-chave:** psicologia social, psicanálise, memória, reparação.

### **La psychologie sociale dans l'université publique: une pratique psychanalytique pour réparer la mémoire brésilienne**

**Résumé:** Ce texte a été présenté pour l'épreuve d'érudition du concours pour professeur titulaire de Psychologie Sociale qui a eu lieu en novembre 2018. Je cherche explicitement ma responsabilité comme professeur de Psychologie Sociale dans une université publique d'excellence, au Brésil de nos jours. Je montre aussi mon point de vue sur la Psychologie Sociale en tant que domaine où se réalisent de façon indissociable la pensée, la parole et l'action, la théorie et la pratique. La Psychanalyse est présentée comme instrument herméneutique qui aide à l'élucidation des phénomènes psychosociaux. Des textes de Freud et Benjamin, ainsi que des poèmes de Carlos Drummond de Andrade aident à configurer Psychologie Sociale comme une domaine de travail avec la mémoire, la re-signification et la réparation.

**Mots-clés:** psychologie social, psychanalyse, mémoire, réparation.

### **La psicología social en la universidad pública: una práctica psicoanalítica de reparación de la memoria brasileña**

**Resumen:** Este texto se presentó como prueba de erudición del concurso para profesor titular en Psicología Social, que se llevó a cabo en la Universidad de São Paulo, en noviembre de 2018. En el texto, intento explicitar mi responsabilidad como profesora de

Psicologia Social en una universidad pública de excelencia, en el Brasil actual. Además, apporto mi comprensión de la Psicología Social como campo en que se procesan, de forma indisociable, el pensamiento, el habla y la acción, la teoría y la práctica. El Psicoanálisis se presenta como instrumento hermenéutico para colaborar con la elucidación de fenómenos psicosociales. Textos de Freud y Benjamin, así como poemas de Carlos Drummond de Andrade, ayudan a configurar la Psicología Social como campo que trabaja con la memoria, la resignificación y la reparación.

**Palabras clave:** psicología social, psicoanálisis, memoria, reparación.

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Received: 07/22/2019  
Approved: 07/26/2019