Contemporary Violence: Reflecting the Banalization in the Present Day

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"Life is not what it's supposed to be. It's what it is. The way you cope with it is what makes the difference" Virginia Satir

I thought of approaching here in this text the contemporary violence linked to the tendency to justify it in mental illness or drugs. A vast and complex topic that I do not intend to clarify in such a short article, but for which I can brush up on some information and raise some questions. I will bring certain data about mental illness and drugs, but I will not focus on these, as I believe that the violence we are currently experiencing is a movement, effect, reverberation, social symptom and not just an isolated phenomenon of a certain "deviant" group.

One of the worrying characteristics of our current society is not violence itself, since it has always existed, but its gradual increase combined with an absurd trivialization of occurrences. Nowadays, we often face a massacre, a traffic light robbery resulting in death or a terrorist attack by drug dealers at some commercial establishment as common news - it has become "normal", everyday things. Such cold behavior, which can often represent a defense against the anguish that such news generates in us, can also lead to a dangerous and inhumane state in the face of daily events: indifference.

Indifference, as a passive and disinterested state, makes questioning, reflection and the attempt and possibility of change impossible. You accept things as they are and move on. Nothing shocks us anymore - the violence rates increasing, people killing each other, but as long as it doesn't hit me directly, it's ok! We don't care, as there is no time for this, we are not ashamed, as we are no longer affected by it..."la belle indiferance".

The most important thing at this moment is exactly the opposite, the active, problematizing posture, which seeks to give consequences to cultural-social movements - which seeks to understand murders, cruelty, torture, or serial crime not only as an isolated event, but as a phenomenon of our culture. If the outside world is violent, it's not because I don't carry a gun or keep myself locked up at home because I don't also have responsibility in front of that social movement. How will I deal with this? What are the consequences of my isolated acts on the environment in which I live? Am I and/or are we making good use of our citizenship? What is my ethical stance in the face of current manifestations of violence?

Violence itself is trivialized, but it is the violence of someone like me, "normal", that is shocking and moving television sensationalism and the search for answers in all means of knowledge. It is the son who murders the father or the fact that the father abuses and kills his daughter, son and wife that is

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terrifying us. It is the violence within the home and in the most culturally sacred and valued institutions of society that show that something is not going well and for this malaise we have given old answers. The three most used justifications to explain violence are: drugs, mental illness or demonic possession. But can we apply such responses to contemporary culture?

It is commonly known that the issue of crime and violence involves a series of reflections and comments that go far beyond the violent act itself; are questions that slip into the ethics and morals of our society. There is always someone trying to adjust to the criminal and the violent manifestation, psychopathological, abnormal traits and characteristics: why did X commit this crime? Was he psychically disturbed? How was your childhood, was it abused by your parents? Would you be suffering from social pressure? Is there a cure? How to keep it away, segregated, incarcerated, from us "normal" people?

The questions are diverse and the answers vague and incomplete - just like the Human Being himself is! As Ballone (2002) puts us, "with regard to recent neuroscience knowledge, most research has either not found an association between mental illness and the risk of committing crimes of violence greater than in the general population, or has found only a slight association, statistically. not significant".

Some psychiatric conditions usually draw the attention of society when involved in serious crimes that invariably shock people for their sadism and cruelty. Some of the most common situations will be briefly presented, making it clear that the fact of being mentally ill does not necessarily entail criminal or anti-social behavior, but often in the search for answers to crimes, clinical diagnosis is used to justify the same.

A lot has been heard in the media about psychosis - it was even the subject of one of Alfred Hitchcock's best-known thrillers ("Psycho"). One of the most exuberant and characteristic symptoms of it is delirium. In many psychotic conditions, we find a marked trace of distrust, resentment, frigidity in interpersonal relationships and a search for social isolation. Delusions in psychoses are usually persecutory, that is, they revolve around a theme of prejudice, persecution and reference to the patient's person, being also systematized and well organized. The idea of reference is consistent with the impression that he is watched, he is pursued by mysterious plots, he is predestined to execute a plan of salvation for humanity, he possesses the ability of extrasensory perception, he is the most harmed, etc. Thus, the psychotic person builds his particular reality and assumes a central position in his world, serving as a reference for the events that follow. You can get a good idea of what this is from the movie "Bright Mind" (directed by Ron Howard) or from the movie "Spider" (directed by David Cronenberg).

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The psychotic's manifestations of aggressiveness, although uncommon, have a defensive character for him, against a system that wants to harm him, influence him, steal his thoughts, kill him through strange, mystical and disturbing influences. Thus, he commits crimes or is aggressive, reacting to a delusional system created by himself, which shows the difficulty of adapting to the external reality. He interacts through his internal reality, ignoring or precariously perceiving external reality.

The first psychotic crises usually appear in adolescence, when the main symptoms such as hallucinations, excessive distrust, social isolation, relationship difficulties, altered mood, eccentric behaviors, incoherent speech, intensify. Currently, such conditions have a good prognosis with the use of psychopharmacological medications (eg: anxiolytics and antipsychotics) in psychiatric and/neurological follow-up and psychotherapeutic follow-up (therapeutic groups, psychoanalysis, therapeutic follow-up, and family therapy).

Now a condition most commonly associated with crimes and violence is that of Psychopathy. A large proportion, around 25% of prisoners, show many characteristics of what psychiatry calls Sociopathy. (Antisocial Personality Disorder).

The characteristics of sociopaths mainly include a disregard for social obligations and a lack of empathy and consideration for the feelings of others. They have exaggeratedly pathological selfishness, are narcissistic, with superficial, theatrical and false emotions, poor or no control over impulsivity, low tolerance for frustration, irresponsibility and what makes the condition more difficult to treat is the absence of feelings of remorse. and guilt about their behavior.

In this disorder, individuals are commonly described as cynical people, unable to maintain a loyal and lasting relationship and are very manipulative. They lie excessively, steal, abuse, cheat, knowingly manipulate their family members and relatives, put other people's lives at risk - this set of characters makes sociopaths either unable to learn from punishment or unable to change their attitudes.

Due to the fact that they do not show symptoms of any other mental illness, it is difficult for this type of population to seek psychiatric-psychological help or be referred to such services. Often such an individual is only unmasked or discovered after having carried out criminal acts or having caused various mischief for his anti-social behavior.

According to the DSM. IV, the essential feature of antisocial personality disorder is a pervasive pattern of disregarding and violating the rights of others that begins in childhood or early adolescence and continues into adulthood.

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There is a branch of psychoanalysis that believes in the analytical treatment of this population and some studies of this type have already shown positive results, but even so it is a situation of difficult access and treatment - most of the time they are arrested and kept isolated so as not to cause harm, even within the prison system itself. A book that accurately portrays the picture of psychopathy or sociopathy is "Silence of the Lambs" by Thomas Harris which gave rise to two Hollywood films about the character Hannibal Lecter.

As for the use of drugs related to violence and aggression, we have an excellent example in the recent movie "Carandiru" (adaptation of the book by Drauzio Varella), in which one of the characters, cell chief and also a drug dealer, begins to make constant use of "crack". . In the sequence, the film shows how such use affects the character, who begins to feel persecuted by someone (the well-known "noia" - symptoms of paranoia; the person begins to be extremely suspicious and develops thoughts that they want to harm him. , then starts to act in his environment according to his fantasies, if these are aggressive he will react aggressively towards his external environment). The consequences of such a symptom are disastrous for the character. Such a story can easily apply to constant users of drugs such as alcohol, cocaine, crack, among others.

The drug in its abuse not only physically affects the user who becomes chemically dependent, but also neuropsychologically unbalances him. We could superficially cite certain frequent symptoms of drug abuse: mood changes, physical symptoms such as fever and malaise when in withdrawal, difficulty in relationships with people, tendency to hostility and impulsive and inconsequential behaviors, decreased attention span. and mnemic and many times alteration in the perception of reality. The drug most often works by making its user more comfortable and often without limits, accentuated primitive and hostile characteristics of his personality.

We live in a new socio-cultural moment – we have entered the era of globalization. Internet. Social media. Hypermodernity. Liquid times. The intangible and the virtual. Immediacy and impatience. The era of narcissism and cancel culture. Instant fame and virtual lynching. Excess, exposure, violence in different ways and formats. With this, social relations (with the family as a principle) that were vertical, became horizontal. In industrialization, the family was pyramidal, based on the power of the father, as was the organization in companies (from the president to the different hierarchy categories: vice president, director, manager, employee...etc). As Forbes (2003) puts it, the world has changed, there was a break in verticality and when there is a break in the pattern, there is a feeling of confusion, of being lost. Continuing his exposition, Forbes states that people feel disoriented, "discomforted", and with that comes the unease and the immediate need to name, catalog, standardize and medicate this

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unease - the problem is that we are giving old answers to new problems. It is not enough to simply arrest criminals or use the death penalty as a punishment and example as was done before to reduce crime rates – we have to think about what exactly is happening? Why such high rates of violence (not only in Brazil, but all over the world)? How is our society organized? How does she react to changes? What is the individual role of each? What is happening to humanity as a whole?

Almeida Leite (1998) in an article about the contemporary movement of civilization for total answers to human behavior questions commented that history and science fiction showed the attempt, through scientific knowledge, to categorize human behavior into pre-established patterns. Currently, human achievements and manifestations are typified and described in manuals (such as the DSM-IV, ICD-10), presented with sensationalism and partiality by television, the media and digested without major consequences by society - such a movement is not only aimed at description, as well as the definition, in "scientific standards", of what is normal and accepted of what is objectionable and pathological. This fact is too simplistic and reductionist. It "thingifies" man, forgetting and putting aside his subjectivity.

At this moment we can point to the cradle of our relationships; the family. Our primary socialization. The initial foundation of education. It is an essential datum of our civilization and gives us the clues for future relationships and worldview. Today our way of thinking and acting in society most of the time bears the mark of our first years of life in the family nucleus. It is for this essential reason that the family nucleus needs to start from interrelationships based on respect, dialogue, ethics and responsibility. In agreement with this exposition, Winnicott (1999) reported that children suffer deprivation when they start to lack certain essential characteristics of family life. Without the reference given by the support and family culture, the adaptation to society becomes even more difficult - for example, a child who sees his parents constantly fighting, without respect for each other and acting in inconsequential ways, assumes as a fact that the things can only be achieved with aggressive and impulsive attitudes, and possibly will act this way in their social environment.

We cannot forget that man's conflict with the world is not a defect, a flaw, something that can be fixed and standardized, cured and sequenced, but the basis of its constitution. This was pointed out to us by Freud in 1930 - he spoke to us about the impossibility of harmonizing the instinctual and individual demands of each being to social norms and rules - dissatisfaction and frustration are a permanent mark of this. If, in this conflict, a wave of violence arises that permeates all social-cultural spheres, it is up to man to reflect on what is happening around him and, before looking for culprits, to try to see what his implication is in this movement and what are his possibilities of action to the given moment.

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Ethics - This is a word that has become just a word, because in its Act-action it is somewhat out of use, just look around our Brazil! And each one has his share of responsibility and consequence in front of the world that surrounds him.

"It doesn't matter so much what they did to you, but what you make... of what they did to you".

Jean Paul Sartre

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