

## The elected representative as an intermediary between the group and the power

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**Abstract:** The article examines the hypothesis that the democratic system as a model for organizing established groups has an intersubjective function of maintaining social bonds by transferring the discomfort of coexistence to the chosen representative, all without endowing the representative with absolute power. The representative therefore holds the taboo position, maintaining the narcissistic and omnipotent desire rejected by members. From the representative's point of view, this means subjugating his/her ego ideal to group ideals in a movement contrary to that of the leader; as described by Freud in *Group psychology and the analysis of the ego*. This hypothesis was used to analyze the life story of a union representative and to depict his psychological suffering during his mandate and after leaving the union. Psychoanalysis and psychosociology are the primary underlying theories used in particular texts by S. Freud, R. Kaës, J. Barus-Michel and E. Enriquez.

**Keywords:** social psychology, group psychoanalysis, democracy.

The objective of this article is to reflect on the role that an elected leader takes in a bonded network of a democratically organized group. Our main hypothesis is that such a leader, which we will call here the 'elected representative'<sup>1</sup> or 'elected leader,' does not only seek to enforce his ideal on the group, unlike the leader that Freud discusses in his texts about group bonds (Freud, 1913-2012, 1921-2011, 1939-1997). Such a leader will be in another role: that of the intermediary between the power and the group<sup>2</sup>.

To discuss our hypothesis, we seek to reflect on democracy, based on the Freudian perspective, and using the theories of Eugène Enriquez and René Kaës on Freud's social work. Then we will discuss the case of a trade union leader, obtained through a life history interview. Finally, we will present our conclusions about how the constitution of bonds and alliances in this trade union group culminated in distress for the research subject when assuming the position of intermediary.

### A hypothesis for democracy based on psychoanalysis

Our objective, here, is to mark the hypothesis that Psychoanalytic theory allows discussing, based on the theory of subjectivity in democracy, in which democracy appears as a psychic function, enabling a fraternal social

organization that seeks to prevent the omnipotence of a subject upon the others. In this sense, the elected representative can be thought of as a different concept in relation to that of a leader that intends to be omnipotent, proposed by Freud (1921/2011). To do so, we will explore the idea that the elected representative can occupy an intermediate function between power (defined by the alliances formed) and the group.

To this end, we will begin by reviewing some of Freud's hypotheses. Freud, in *Totem and taboo*, (1913-2012) began building his theory by seeking anthropological roots on which to study the issue. His first step was to analyze the totems and taboos of various tribes, where the archaic social organization of totemic clans is closely related to the sexual prohibitions imposed on the members. In this work, we are mainly interested in the concept of taboo, defined by Freud as a dichotomous element between the sacred and the forbidden or dangerous (p. 9), resulting in bans and, at the same time, in sanctification or veneration of this element. Thus, taboo has the mythic function of protect, guard and preserve the development of life through the violent punishment of those who transgress against it. Freud points out that there is no direct relationship between the real – threatening exterior circumstances – and the taboo. It appears as a social and psychological construction.

Freud says:

Taboo is a forcibly imposed (by some authority) primeval prohibition from outside, and is directed against the most powerful longings to which human beings are subject. The desire to violate it persists in their unconscious; those who obey the taboo have an ambivalent attitude to what the taboo prohibits. (1913-2012, p. 55)

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1 We would like to stress that we will use the representative, in this work, specifically to designate the subject's position to which a specific type of power is attributed by members of the group, so that he occupies the position between those represented and the establishment (as we shall see below). We will not deal with the representative in the Freudian conception (as a psychological representative or representative of drive).  
2 We started studying stories of bonds of representatives previously elected in our PhD dissertation (Galery, 2014), from which we based some of the analysis and theoretical elements that are part of this article.

The author proposes, in this text, a sociogenic myth<sup>3</sup>. He suggests that “the men lived originally in small hordes” (p. 90) in which “a violent and jealous father . . . keeps all the females for himself and drives away his sons as they grow up” (p. 103).

According to Enriquez, the power of this despotic father over the horde, “expressed directly by his physical and sexual power . . . is equally followed by the power of the word, which appears as the only one that the group should consider.” (1990, p. 42)

Freud continues,

One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, they killed and devoured their father and thus ended the patriarchal horde. United, they had the courage to do so and succeeded in doing what would have been impossible for them individually. . . . Cannibal savages as they were, it goes without saying that they devoured their victim as well as killing him. The violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each of the company of brothers: and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength. The totem meal, which is perhaps mankind’s earliest festival, would thus be a repetition and a commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things – social organization, moral restrictions and religion. (1913-2012, p. 103)

However, after such celebration, an overpowering remorse of the group as a whole emerges, which will be the basis of the taboo’s contradiction (desire and prohibition).

At this point, Freud focuses his analysis on the construction of the social pact that will establish the possibility of coexistence between men. According to him, a need arose of a pact that would prohibit someone from taking the place of the despot.

Though the brothers had banded together in order to overcome their father, they were all one another’s rivals in regard to the women. Each of them would have wished, like his father, to have all the women to himself. The new organization would have collapsed in a struggle of all against all . . . Thus the brothers had no alternative, if they were to live together, but – not, perhaps, until they had passed through many dangerous crises – to institute a law against incest, by which they all alike renounced the women whom they desired and who had been their chief motive for despatching their father. In this way they rescued the organization which had made them strong. (1913/2012, p. 104)

3 “Accepting the interpretation by Lévi-Strauss (1982) of *Totem and taboo*, in which the acts perpetrated by the brothers do not correspond to any fact, “but translate, symbolically, a both lasting and old dream.” (pp. 531-532)

The pact that arises is one in which the men gave up violence and desire for coexistence. It is an identifying negating pact, as suggested by Kaës (1993, p. 32). This author remarks that *Totem and taboo* is the work of Freud that “exposes, for the first time, the passage from the plurality of isolated individuals to the group.” (Kaës, 1993, p. 31, our translation). The murder of the despot is, therefore, the principle of democracy, as advocates Barus-Michel (2001).

## The leader’s path in Freud

In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud also devotes a section to the “taboo upon rulers.” (1913-2012, pp. 27-35) He clarified that at the same time fantastic characteristics are attributed to the ruler, ceremonies are intended to strip him of his power. Freud concludes: “The taboo does not only pick out the king and exalt him above all common mortals, but it also makes his existence a torment, an intolerable burden, and reduces him to a bondage far worse than that of his subjects” (Galery, 2014).

The ruler, according to the author, is therefore entitled to a position of power, which must repeatedly undergo punishments so as not to arouse the members’ desire of assuming such position. It is a subject power, in part, that guarantees privilege but runs the risk of being deposed at any moment, because of any mistake made by his always attentive followers. Different from the power of the tyrant father, this leader who is subjugated to the taboo, in order to take advantage of his position of power, must refrain from part of his desires, in particular those related to narcissism, so as to represent the group’s Ego Ideal.

Freud says, in *Group psychology and the analysis of the ego*, that the leader, in the primaeval horde, was akin to the Nietzschean *Übermensch*:

The father of the primal horde was free. His intellectual acts were strong and independent even in isolation, and his will needed no reinforcement from others . . . Even today the members of a group stand in need of the illusion that they are equally and justly loved by their leader; but the leader himself need love no one else, he may be of a masterly nature, absolutely narcissistic, but self-confident and independent. (2011, p. 25-26).

But the leader can only put himself in that lordly position if, in the group, there is such a space, which means to say that the group allows the leader’s existence and transfers his own powers to him. The concrete process of power transfer is accompanied by an intersubjective transfer, through the idealization of the leader, as occurs in the enamourment. Freud writes:

We see that the object is being treated in the same way as our own ego, so that a considerable amount of narcissistic libido overflows on to the object when we are in love. It is even obvious, in many forms of love choice, that the object serves as a substitute for some unattained ego ideal of our own. We love

it on account of the perfections that we have striven to reach for our own ego, and which we should now like to procure in this roundabout way as a means to satisfy our narcissism. (Freud, 2011, p, 21)

In this text from 1921, Freud exemplifies the leader's role as that of the one who, at the same time, occupies an equal position and a different position:

Even Moses had to act as an intermediary between his people and Jehovah, since the people could not bear the sight of God; and when he returned from the presence of God his face shone-some of the *mana* had been transferred on to him, just as happens with the intermediary among primitive people. (2011, p. 26)

What we would like to highlight, in proposing the present reflection, is that: 1) the leader's role depends on the transfer of power from the group to him; and 2) this prominent role in relation to the group is not static – a representative who embodies the idealization of power and submits to the group ideals can become a seductive or despotic leader, and this position depends both on the leader's desire and on the composition of the group bonds.

The representative democratic model used in constituted groups (as in those we describe below) can be seen as an interesting form of political organization within the logic presented so far. It ensures, in particular, that the leader can be divested of his role without the risk of a violent struggle for power.

## The democratic model and the taboo upon rulers

Democracy<sup>4</sup> needs to ensure “the right of access to power and to word, equal for all members of the ‘city,’ that is, of a group is defined by an identity, circumscribed in a territory, while sharing common reference institutions (Barus-Michel, 2001, p. 32). For that end, psycho-social theory:

It is necessary . . . to ensure the possibility of change, so as to ensure the exchange of representatives in case they no longer meet the requirements idealized by the members of the group. To this end, the election mechanism is created, with the dual function of allowing the elected individual time to do his work and ensuring his deposition from power. (Galery, 2014, p. 29).

Thus, a society or group can create, through the idea of democracy, mechanisms to ensure surveillance

<sup>4</sup> Barus-Michel speaks here of democracy as a form of government. We would like to stress that we do not believe it is appropriate to compare theories of State and theories of group, that is, it is not possible to reduce the group to a small democratic State. That said, we allowed ourselves to extrapolate some of the principles of democracy advocated by the author so as to illustrate principles of democratic organization in constituted groups.

over the leader, preventing him from assuming the role of tyrant. But let us note that, even so, the phenomenon of narcissistic transmission and power transmission remains, albeit restrained by the protection mechanisms that prevent tyranny. What we want to say is that, when put in the role of representative, the elected is given a ‘carte blanche’ to take decisions and actions on behalf of the group. We believe that this *carte blanche* has the following psychic function: to ease the tensions of members and allow them to remain out of distressing processes, which shall be carried out by the ruler. It is an attempt to solve the malaise of coexistence in society as stated by Freud (1930-2010): the pursuit of balance between these individual requirements and the cultural demands of the masses. The election of a representative, as well as the creation of institutions such as Justice, make it possible for ordinary citizens to drive away the anxiety related to shared cultural boundaries and allows them to focus on their personal fulfillment.

Taking care of what is common to all means being permanently in favor of the social bond, always prioritizes the group over the individual subject, and living permanently with the responsibility (and guilt) in relation to the situation of the other. This situation is distressing and may result in depersonalization, which the leaders described by Freud in *The taboo upon rulers* (Freud, 1913-2012, pp. 27-35) try to avoid. A leader that was elected by a community should be subjected to the same taboo role of the rulers studied by anthropologist J. G. Frazer:

The sovereign in them exists only for his subjects; his life is only valuable as long as he discharges the duties of his position by ordering the course of nature for his people's benefit. So soon as he fails to do so, the care, devotion and religious homage that his subjects had hitherto lavished on him cease and are changed into hatred and contempt; he is dismissed ignominiously, and may be thankful if he escapes with his life . . . But in this changed behaviour of the people there is nothing capricious or inconstant. On the contrary, their conduct is entirely consequent. If their king is their god, he is or should also be their preserver; and if he will not preserve them, he must make room for another who will. (1913/2012, p. 29)

It is necessary to transpose this statement to the present day and perhaps temper it; however, in the mythical plan, such an idea still seems to make sense.

## The power and the subject of the group

We characterize this space between the power and the subject of the group, occupied by the representative, as a intermediary space. According to Kaës (2011), the intermediary connects two discontinuities: inside and outside, the conscious and the unconscious, between the demands of the Ego, Id, and Super Ego, between the individual and the group.

According to the author (Kaës, 2005, p. 13), the intermediary connects various elements, establishing continuity for that which was considered to be divided or fragmented, based on their common traits, by contiguity or by similarity. In this way, the intermediary would act on the oppositions present in such elements, such as conflict or tension, reducing them. The representative would be situated in this role between the power and the subjects that are part of a particular group, which is used to drive away the anxiety of the joint decisions and the rupture of the bond. On the other hand, the representative serves as a conduit between the individual subject and the Ego Ideal. The elected representative, if conceived as an intermediary, connects his electors among themselves, in being thought of as the Ego Ideal for the whole group<sup>5</sup>. The Ego Ideal is the egoic instance resulting from the narcissistic idealizations and parental identifications with the external and collective ideals (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1992, p. 222). The Ego Ideal contains the influences of the collective upon the subject, demanding compliance from the latter but, at the same time, enabling the identification between the members of a particular group, who share the same ideal. The Ego Ideal also adds the order of potential (that which may become) to the common idealization. “The Ideal then is directed to the future, to a becoming” (Fernandes, 1989, p. 69). At the same time, it links the actualization of this potential to the other members of the group.

The elected representative also establishes a continuity between the group members and the power. According to Kaës (2011, p. 155), Freudian theory “assigns functions to the leader, as well as to the poet and historian (*der Dichter*), that also derive from the category of the intermediary,” by instituting formations that delimit boundaries between the psychological and social reality. It is within this logic that Kaës would analyze Freud’s 1939 text:

Moses partakes the characteristics of the two sides for which he is the *Mittlesman*: he is not only close to the people but . . . receives from Yahweh a part of his power. He is, therefore, doubly installed in this position of intermediary, both by delegation and by investment (2011, p. 156).

The leader, then, “brings together the two separate fragments of a set united by an alliance.” (p. 157)

<sup>5</sup> We adopt, in this text, the perspective of the Ego Ideal that Freud presents in *Group psychology and the analysis of the ego* (1921-2011). The author, subsequently, would resume the concept in texts such as *The Ego and the Id* (1923-2011), in which he related it to the Oedipus complex. At the beginning of his text, however, the author states: “The considerations that led us to assume the existence of a grade in the ego, a differentiation within the ego, which may be called the ‘ego ideal’ or ‘super-ego’, have been stated elsewhere [On Narcissism: an Introduction (1914), *Group psychology and the analysis of the ego* (1921)]. They still hold good” (1923-2011, p. 34). Based on this validation that Freud makes of his previous texts, and as our interest, here, is to analyze the group-related character of the concept, we focused on the 1921 text – similarly to Enriquez in his work –, understanding and assuming that this is a partial reading of the Freudian work.

Kaës (2011) also interprets the taboo as an intermediary position, since transgressing it would mean a threat to the continuity of the social contract.

In this context, the intermediary [taboo] performs a social function of connection and commitment. Here is the example of a intermediary function that can be understood from the perspective of the intrapsychic processes and from the perspective of the intersubjective group processes. The mediator (*der Vermittler*) is situated between the ego of the subjects and what is, for the divine or regal figure, arousing in them the “archaic heritage” (of the archaic superego) and the relationship with the originating father. (Kaës, 2011, p. 157)

The leader also reduces the conflicts between the desires of members of the group by occupying the position of taboo, thereby enabling their coexistence. Founded on the view of word-bearer – the one who “takes or receives the task of speaking on behalf of many, instead of Another or of a group of others” (Kaës, 2005, p. 45) – Kaës will identify in the leader someone who, by an intersubjective necessity, is put in a particular position. “A group cannot function if its members do not abandon part of their ideals to entrust them to an ideal-bearer, who is the chief.” (p. 44)

We thus conclude that within our theoretical hypothesis that there may be an intersubjective function for the choice of a democratic model in certain groups. In order to analyze such a hypothesis, our proposal was to investigate the life history of a union representative who, for 20 years, participated in democratically elected slates within his category. However, such a history proved far more complex than our hypothesis, as was to be expected: the manner of the representative’s diverse intertwined relationships was an extremely rich network of alliances and bonds. This article’s scope does not allow us to explore all these nuances properly, and we seek to focus our analysis here on the issue of leadership as an intermediary position and its role on the mental suffering experienced by the union representative.

## The life history of a union representative

The life history, a method that is part of the discipline of Oral History, will be used here in the perspective of method, as advocated by Amado and Ferreira (2006). The method consists in producing a report from a source whose life history can provide data to reflect on the objective of the research (Alberti, 1989, p. 14). “Thus, an oral history research project always presupposes the relevance of the question . . . : what can the account of those who lived or witnessed the theme tell us about the place that that theme occupied (and occupies) in the given historical and cultural context?” (p. 13)

Thompson (1992) and Dacorso (2007) argue that the life history method is compatible with using Psychoanalysis as a theoretical basis in research. The Vocabulary of

Psychosociology (Barus-Michel & Enriquez, 2002) contains a text by Le Grand on the method. According to this author, the life history method is “a way to (re)live symbolically a past moment . . . to communicate it, to integrate it into a relational and social universe.” (Le Grand, 2002, p. 361)<sup>6</sup>

In summary, the oral life history seemed a convenient data collection method for our purposes, due to its characteristics of qualitative reconstruction of the history, its potential for data collection from the point of view of subjectivity, and as it is a method compatible with the use of Kaës psychoanalysis and Enriquez and Barus-Michel (2002) Psychosociology as theoretical framework.

### Analysis of the interviews

We conducted seven open interviews (a total of 15 hours and 23 minutes of recording), with no structured guide, but with themes, as listed below:

1. Admission and first years as public servant in Electoral Justice;
2. Early life (childhood, adolescence) with focus on groups in which he participated;
3. Participation in union linked to Electoral Justice;
4. Participation in national federation and in unified union of all Justice public servants;
5. 1st and 2nd PSPs (Plan of positions and salaries);
6. 3rd and 4th PSPs;
7. Recent years (from 2009 to 2013) and end of syndical activities.

We focus, for the purposes of this article, on the issues concerning the way the position of the representative in the group was established and its consequences.

### Admission to the Judiciary and formation of the union

The respondent was born in 1965, in a neighborhood on the outskirts of a large capital city. He was admitted to the position of judiciary attendant in an electoral courthouse, in 1987, after passing a public service exam. Upon starting work at the courthouse, his impression is that there is a contradiction between the function of this organization, to ensure the electoral process, and the lack of democracy that prevailed in labor relationships. He says:

*The Courthouse that feeds democracy was one of the least democratic.*

The respondent went on to act politically through his contributions to an institutional newspaper of the courthouse. When the new Constitution of 1988 allows the formation of unions of public servants, the heads of the union to be formed would come from this newspaper. The issue of power, as well as that of desire, was already present according to the respondent, which can be observed when he reflects on why he wanted to be a union representative:

*The idea of being part of the union fulfills, back in [19]89, a number of wishes. There was the issue of the relationship with the power. There was the issue of intellectual challenge. There was the issue of human relationship and today I realize that there was also a matter of vanity, which was bigger than I thought it was. It wasn't a vanity related to feeling more important than other people and such. It was all about the praise, this thing of being an authority made me very conceited. Also, the recognition of capacity, both for leadership and formulations, it fulfilled an important role on the issue of vanity. From the very beginning, there was even a vanity aspect, a little personal, more in the sense of, "Gee, that's cool . . ." I think the thing begins as friendship, really. A group of people doing something cool. And very soon, there comes the power thing. Wait, this is about power, and it's not an abstract power. It is a very immediate power.*

The respondent also attempts to reflect on how he saw himself as union leader:

*You have those people who have political, personal projects and such, and then, in general, they subordinate the collective to the project, or guide interventions; and there are those that are trained in the milieu, who have the will for leadership, but without having a own project, they have a purpose but it is a common purpose. That's because this is more or less my case...*

We see, therefore, that, in his discourse, the respondent chooses a role in which he seeks satisfaction (recognition, praise) through the democratic attitude, through the common purpose, the group's purpose. He characterizes his way of leading as coming from a “Christian communism,” with a fatherly style:

*My conception of leadership was another type, a watered down one, so it's really going to define my situation of leader in the beginning. I wasn't a political leader, I was a leader in a group, a social leader, so to speak. And then the character is different. There is authority, but authority in a social group, in this case, was not an authority that subordinates. It is executive, we could say, it has no direct and immediate effect on people. . . . So, I*

<sup>6</sup> Our translation.

*really come with this very paternal view . . . It is that Christian communism, that thing.*

One of his stories also shows his position of taboo, submitted to the group's idealization and desire.

*One of the first times I felt in the direction was when we organized a strike and the Court asked us to suspend our action. And not only ask us, but the general director [of the Court] comes into the assembly and convinces the category to suspend the movement. He didn't offer anything, he said: "give a vote of confidence." . . . And the category gave the vote of confidence. . . . Just to try to give us the context: there was a claim of the category, and which depended on the position of the president [of the Court], and the general director comes into the assembly . . . and suggests that, if we suspended the movement, the president would grant us the claim. He doesn't say that, but the category wants to understand that, and understands that. Furthermore, the direction of the union, which was us, says, . . . "he's not offering anything concretely." And, in fact, the president denies the claim of the category.*

*And then we make a bulletin saying "treason of the Court for the category." To our surprise, in the following assembly, the category lashed out in the direction of the union, saying that they shouldn't have said that. There . . . it was an important lesson on the role of leader. Because this example is very rich: you warn about the risk of defeat, you're contradicted by the category, that is, democratically you're defeated. You do something right, you were right, and when you say that you were right you still pay the price. So it taught me a lot about the role of the director. That sometimes you're right and fuck that, the category doesn't care. Because maybe that is related to people's need to be okay, to not seek the negative answer, to try to avoid the truth.*

At this point, it is interesting to note that the syndical participation puts the subject in not just one group, but in a network of bonds. The respondent defines at least four different levels of bonding of which he felt he was part: 1) the public servants are seen within the general category of workers. Federal public servants are specifically the category defended by the federation and, regionally, by the union. 2) the base (often also called the category by him) consists of those public servants that are members of the union, who participate in the union assemblies. 3) The union's board of directors is composed of elected representatives, including the base directors. 4) The vanguard is a specific group: they are responsible for considering the lines that will guide the organizations at a strategic level. It is not a group formalized in the hierarchy.

## **Formation of the Federation and of the respondent's persona**

In 1992, a national federation was created that brought together trade unions linked to Justice, of which he was part. The respondent was elected one of the general coordinators, on the first slate. Assuming this position led to a change. He claims it was then that he began to build a 'character' of a leader. This character was created to deal with the fact that he saw himself as very sensitive. He reflects:

*I'm an artist who is a manager, more than anything else. An artist who occupies a role of a director more than anything else. An artist in the sense of sensibility. So, I could say, in a burst of hubris: I'm an actor who served the role of leader very well. But obviously the burden from this was very heavy, because there came a time that the actor came to believe in the character more than in himself, or value the character more than himself. . . . There [in the first union in which he participated], I could be myself. There was no need. Because the persona is a thing of seeking effectiveness but also protection. There came a time when I realized that I couldn't expose myself so much. I couldn't be 100% forthright.*

This persona, an intrapsychic intermediary created by the respondent to unite his lust for power and his weakness (designated by him as sensitivity), was both creature and creator. The respondent goes on to perceive the position of ideal created by the group and occupies that role, but in order to accomplish that he must devise a "character" that can correspond to that which was idealized. As elected representative, he becomes responsible for those he represents:

*Now, my political capacity emerges in the [federation], 'cause then I have to represent 100,000 people. This thing of representing 100,000 people is the second component of the persona. Because that showed me something: my personal interest must come second. When I'm here personal interest is secondary.*

His own desire is deferred; the punishment of being taboo begins to be felt. The fact that his actions, as representative, have an impact on the lives of so many people is lived as a conflict.

*But then I started to worry because they are people. Those were the first times I stopped to think that I'm here and there are 100,000 families depending on what I'm going to say. If I talk nonsense here I have fucked up, I mean, I'm screwing 100,000 families. . . . In my case it was that snap. I have to speak not on my behalf, only. Then, I realize: but I'm a director. Then I realized what it was to be a director, and director with responsibility.*

Due to the limitations of this article, we will leave aside part of the life history that refers to other issues. We hope that it will be enough to make it clear that, for about 15 years, the respondent became involved in the issue of developing a plan of positions and salaries (PSP) of the regional union of which he was part, which he would defend later, in the federation. He went on to be recognized in his midst as an expert on the subject.

However, the actions of the union vanguard were not always intertwined with the principles that he perceived as those which a unionist needed to have. He believed that such actions would be associated with personal or party interests. Thus, the ruler begins to feel as if he has some sort of debt to be paid. We resort to Kaës:

The bond of belonging entailed by the alliance – whatever its structure and purpose – does not always imply the recognition of otherness. But the counterpart of that relationship is, always, that each one is potentially under *vis-a-vis* debt with the other or others, a debt that is annulled in the case of maintenance of a benefit for each one, but that is exposed when the terms of the alliance are no longer actualized. There is, therefore, a constant between alliance, mutual obligation, and indebtedness (Kaës, 2009, p. 26).

With psychological debt, the respondent will hesitate between attacking the bond and maintaining the alliance, between the mutual commitment which had already been made and the growing impossibility of satisfying his Ego Ideal in the group. However, for some years, he submits to it. Kaës would describe this process: “We interfere in another process, which consists in the sacrifice of certain psychic objects or in waiver of certain benefits to join the alliance and to obtain other benefits.” (2009, p. 26) The author concludes: “without the gift and its counterpart, the alliance puts one of its members in debt, until the drama of insolvency.” (p. 27)

After the third PSP, the respondent, due to his previous successes, received, in his own words, “carte blanche” to develop the next plan, which in fact means that he is left on his own devices to perform a task:

*Although I offered the people the opportunity to be involved in this process, they wouldn't. . . . What the category wanted we already knew. . . . So what did it need? We take what we already know, the desire of the category, and translate, update. Update. See those intentions in an updated proposal. So that was it. Now what the directors really did... was that the thing of the manager that is full of himself. So [he says]: “my activism is something else. I'm not going to be exposed.” I think the directors just washed their hands, “I'm not going to be exposed in this [career discussion].”*

The issue of an extremely technical PSP development was avoided by the other members of the board. In giving

carte blanche to the respondent, the group is able to dispel the contradiction between their ideals of the partisan left and the fight for economic benefits desired by the class. To that end, the leader must be narcissistically invested. Such investment is carried out through the dimension of authority:

*I saw myself a little obliged, somehow, to occupy roles of greater responsibility, because of people's lack of capacity. . . . At one point, people's appeal in relation to my capacity was very strong. I become an authority in, let's say, career, because people recognize me . . . . But there comes a time when people realize that “damn, this guy is talking about something I don't understand.”*

Then, there is the constitution of a narcissistic pact, in which the representative will receive the role of *taboo*, assuming a superior position which at the same time brings him suffering. Superior for he is now the recognized authority, capable of providing the group the satisfaction of their hunger for power. Such process feeds the Ego of the respondent from a narcissistic transference (Galery, 2014, p. 140). Suffering because it is an isolated position, overridden with responsibilities and requirements, and yet rejected and denied.

As the economic gains of the class increase, ensured by the PSPs, the psychological arrangement that the respondent organized to justify his activity in the fight for better salary weakens. We can assume that, psychological, the debt that the direction of the union amasses with him becomes too large, in deviating him from the project that he considers essential: a union struggle to ensure the democratization of the workspaces in the courts. The representative is thus torn, for his connection to the board is mediated by his bond with the category.

That is, participating in the board means, to him, representing the class. His identification is not with the Ego Ideal of the union's board of directors, seen as increasingly totalitarian and exterior to the interests of the class, but rather with his own Ego Ideal, which intends to become the Moses of his people: intermediate between the category and the mythical ideal of a democratic working environment. (Galery, 2014, p. 138)

At the time of the fourth PSP, there is a break. He will be left with the option of betrayal. Kaës (2009, p. 28) describes how the moment of betrayal occurs:

Treason is one of the ways out of a psychological indebtedness which became insolvent, but it is also a movement of breaking the bond established so as to seek the attainment of a desire elsewhere. Treason proves the existence of a bond – a close bond in which the traitor removes his/her investment out of fear of losing it or because he wants to destroy it.

Treason will appear in the formulation of the project of the fourth PSP. He will employ his “carte blanche” to follow his convictions and ideals, without sharing them with the other heads of the union. If there is evidence, on the one hand, that these leaders did not want to get involved, then, on the other, the respondent concedes that he embarrassed people. He gives the following statement on the subject:

*In the end, I think I overwhelmed people. You see that's fucked up. . . . You have a theoretical formulation that people don't understand and disagree. It is like that: "I don't know what it is, but I don't like it." And then what happens? I answered. So people were offended. There's no point in arguing with me because I have a theoretical foundation. So that was one aspect. Now I have the impression that, some of the people, I know they didn't participate in order to be free to criticize. That was one thing I later realized clearly. People who didn't get involved in order to not be compromised.*

According to Kaës, betrayal “is also one of the forms of change in belonging to a group at a time when a subject wants to become autonomous.” (2009, p. 28) Betrayal is synthesized in the preparation of a plan of positions and salaries that obeys his ideals, which characterizes a break with the alliance that had been established within the group.

In undergoing the break, the respondent feels a sort of aggrandizement. He now believes he no longer needs the endorsement of the union group, for his technical knowledge would give him conditions to exclude the others from the discussion. He thus believes to have the freedom to propose something that requires no approval from the board. At this point, the respondent is believed to be an undisputed authority on the issue of career, as can be observed in the following statements:

*Actually the problem was really related to credential. There was no one in condition of... Everyone, I mean, most people had no idea that it was a difficult subject. A hard topic. And most people had no idea that it was necessary to have advice. And therein lies the problem. No one was able to talk with the assistants. The thing of people underestimating the issue of authority [by not accepting the career plan proposal] hurt me deeply, because career is a subject I have studied for 20 years.*

He thus begins feeling omnipotent. He believes that his ideals are superior to those of the group and that he has full freedom of action, without having to be endorsed by the others. But the direction of his union realizes that the respondent's proposal diverges from their ideals when the proposal is presented in the congress of the federation. He explains how it happened:

*. . . People didn't read. They didn't bother to read. And it was something that had been there for three years. So people didn't read. A problem of the left. They didn't read things. It had been there for three years. No one had ever paid attention. Then to prepare for the national event the people read it and got scared.*

Continuity is impossible for the respondent, who withdraws from the discussion on career.

*And then, what happens? I was dissatisfied and, as soon as they outlined the disapproval of the claim [returning to the discussion on of a plan of positions and salaries], I thought that I had nothing else to do. . . . But I remember that at the time I assumed a somewhat childlike attitude: well, since you don't want it, then do it yourselves. It is clear to me, today: my answer was a bit immature. But it wasn't something like... usually I'm not tolerating with myself, but in this case I am. I had some good reasons. I kinda said something like: so I won't play anymore.*

He then quit his position as union director and returned to the courthouse. At that time, the crisis was affecting his mental health:

*Well, then what happens, I call it a day [from the Union]. And maybe I should have written, I ended up not writing a text, at the time, of farewell. I didn't do it because I was already suffering from depression. . . . It affected me, today I know, it really affected the aspect of creativity. Now, three years later, I'm recovering a bit. I already have a problem of very harsh self-criticism, and I think my self-esteem was obliterated.*

After that, he began to suffer political persecution within the sector to which he was moved.

*So, that was, emotionally speaking, the trigger of the malaise, because by then there was the treason [of the union vanguard] and I was going to have to learn to deal with it. Then came the second institutional betrayal: political persecution.*

A few months after these events, he suffered a heart attack and was hospitalized for about two weeks. He then returned to his job at the courthouse and began attending a music college. The cycle of union activities was over. When we asked, at the end of the interview, what we should have asked and didn't ask, he answered, ending his account:

*You could have asked if it was worth it. Then I'd say it was worth it. . . . The best answer is "I confess that I've lived," these things of Neruda. . . . I went where I wanted to go. I have no regrets. And I think that if I had risked being more than I was, I believe I would*

*not be the same. I'd have to put up more. I'd have to make personal concessions. Not for the category. The category would love. Because, modesty aside, I really go for it. I'm not there for mise-en-scène. I was not a director just to satisfy myself. But I think I went as far as the price was bearable. I think if I had gone beyond, it would have cost a lot more than my health. It would have cost my dignity. And regarding that... So that's why I say: I think it was very worthwhile. I think it was worth it. Even to have realized my limit in relation to power. I used to say, when I was younger, that absolute power corrupts absolutely. . . . The corruption of power is directly proportional to the size of that power. So the more power you have, the more you take risks. Then it is not being afraid to take risks. It is knowing that after some point the power implies that you give up convictions, principles. . . . If I had gone further it would have cost me a lot. I mean, it would have been more than a week in an intensive care unit. Maybe I wouldn't recognize myself anymore. So I guess I ended the cycle at the right time. The cost was a little high, but I think it was worth it.*

## Final considerations and limitations

Our purpose in this work was to reflect on the intersubjective position of the representative in a group that was democratically organized. We believe that the history of the union representative was a rich illustration that would allow us some considerations: 1) the elected representative occupied, several times, the role of intermediary between the discontinuities of the various groups that intertwined, especially those between the vanguard (which held a

greater power over union activities) and the base; 2) that, in positioning himself as a representative, the respondent had to give up his ideals and contentment, which did not cease to exist but were deferred for about 20 years; 3) that maintaining the alliance has a psychological cost in the form of suffering, but that seems to be compensated by maintaining other bonds; 4) that the rupture of the alliance between the respondent and the union directorship happens along with a narcissistic investment by the respondent (as protection to Ego, but also as power); and 5) that the respondent, invested in his narcissism, was assigned the position of "father of the horde" and symbolically devoured by the group, in the form of exclusion and ostracism, which was experienced by the respondent as a period of mourning.

The phenomenon proved far more intricate than our first theoretical hypothesis, which we consider natural, given the complexity of the network of bonds of each group and each subject of the group. Further studies could certainly be developed, seeking to deepen the reflection on how these multiple networks establish positions and roles for leaders and representatives. An observation of the same phenomena founded on the concepts that we just proposed could broaden the understanding we gained from the statements we obtained, such as for example: the notion of metapsychology and of ideology, in Kaës; the theme of power and the common cultural, symbolic, and ideological systems, by Enriquez.

On the other hand, as we have previously suggested (Galery, 2014, p. 164), it is important to remember that the socio-historical dimension influences the history of the union and of the respondent himself. Studies regarding other contexts and other democratic institutions would also bring interesting developments for the ideas presented here.

## O representante eleito como intermediário entre o grupo e o poder

**Resumo:** Este artigo investiga a hipótese de que o sistema democrático como modelo de organização de grupos instituídos tem a função intersubjetiva de manter o vínculo social, ao transferir para o representante eleito o mal-estar da convivência, mas sem permitir ao representante o poder absoluto. O representante ocupa, portanto, a posição de tabu, que mantém o desejo narcísico e onipotente rejeitado entre os membros. Do ponto de vista do representante, significa submeter seu ideal de Eu aos ideais do grupo, num movimento contrário ao do líder descrito por Freud em *Psicologia das massas e análise do eu*. Essa hipótese foi usada para analisar a história de vida de um representante sindical e retratar seu sofrimento psíquico durante sua atuação e após a saída do sindicato. A psicanálise e a psicossociologia são as principais teorias de base utilizadas, em destaque os textos de S. Freud, R. Kaës, J. Barus-Michel e E. Enriquez.

**Palavras-chave:** psicologia social, psicanálise de grupo, democracia.

## Le représentant élu comme un intermédiaire entre le groupe et le pouvoir

**Résumé :** L'article étudie l'hypothèse que le système démocratique, que les groupes mis en place comme modèle d'organisation, il y a la fonction inter-subjective de garder le lien social, pour transférer à l'élu le malaise de vivre ensemble, mais sans permettre au représentant le pouvoir absolu. Le représentant maintient ainsi la position de tabou, qui maintient le désir narcissique et onnipotent rejeté par les membres. Du point de vue du représentant, signifie la soumission de l'idéal du Moi aux idéaux du

groupe dans un mouvement opposé du leader décrit par S. Freud en *Psychologie des foules et analyse du moi*. Cette hypothèse a été utilisée pour analyser l'histoire de la vie d'un représentant syndical et présenter leur souffrance psychique au cours de son jeu et après avoir quitté le syndicat. La psychanalyse et la psychosociologie sont les principales bases théoriques utilisés, mis en évidence les écrits de S. Freud, R. Kaës, J. Barus-Michel et E. Enriquez.

**Mots-clés:** psychologie sociale, psychanalyse de groupe, démocratie.

## El representante electo como intermediario entre el grupo y el poder

**Resumen:** Este texto investiga la hipótesis de que el sistema democrático como modelo de organización grupal tiene la función intersubjetiva para mantener el vínculo social, por transferir el malestar de la convivencia al representante electo, pero sin permitir que el representante tenga poder absoluto. Así, el representante ocupa el papel de tabú, manteniendo el deseo narcisista y omnipotente rechazado por los miembros. Del punto de vista del representante, significa someter su ideal del Yo a los ideales del grupo, un movimiento opuesto al líder descrito por Freud en *Psicología de las masas y análisis del yo*. Esta hipótesis se utilizó para analizar la historia de vida de un representante sindical y retratar su sufrimiento psíquico durante su actuación y después de salir del sindicato. El psicoanálisis y la psicología social son la base principal de las teorías utilizadas, y destacan los escritos de S. Freud, R. Kaës, J. Barus-Michel y E. Enriquez.

**Palabras clave:** psicología social, psicoanálisis de grupo, democracia.

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