

DOSSIER

Education in times of barbarism: dialogues with Psychoanalysis and Politics

“The time is out of joint.”

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I, 5

Trivium: interdisciplinary studies — a journal of the Graduate Program in Psychoanalysis, Health and Society at Universidade Veiga de Almeida — in partnership with the Research Center on Psychoanalysis, Education and Culture of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (NUPPEC/Axis 3), and invited contributors, presents a collective work authored by women and men from the fields of Psychoanalysis, Education, Psychology, Philosophy, and International Relations. In their writings, the authors set out to examine a kind of storm moving toward barbarism within the educational field.

In Shakespeare, nature screams, the earth opens, the axes are thrown into disarray, and human beings find themselves without an azimuth. Storms and catastrophes seem to reveal a world of cosmic disorder, or rather, a world without *nomos*, without law — a world that loses its center, direction, and meaning. A suspension of the norm, a moment of exception in which everything becomes possible.

In the staging of a tragic cosmology, we also observe a profound political critique through which the grammar of life and the meaning of time are called into question. Ungoverned, violent, and immersed in the uncertainties and disorders of the English Renaissance, the anxieties of the men and women created by the English playwright poetically anticipated what today presents itself as the deleterious effects of human actions upon the world.

When Adorno (2020) addressed education against barbarism, he highlighted the extent to which social theory is also a formative and educational reflection focused on the political dimension of education. By engaging with the conditions of emancipation in the educational field after Auschwitz, he named not only genocide in the extermination camps, but also the tragedy of semi-formation present in capitalist societies, today referred to as neoliberal. At the time, the philosopher warned of the morbid effects of the ideology of linear progress, technical rationality, and the banalization of evil in the educational field. In the essay *Theory of Semi-Formation* (1959), he described formation (*Bildung*) as a transformative, critical experience linked to the subject’s autonomy of thought. He defined what he called *semi-formation*, or *Halbbildung*, as something merely functional — a way of denouncing the dangers of the emptying of education’s transformative power.

By intertwining psychoanalysis, education, and politics, the writings gathered in this dossier deepen this discussion. Although psychoanalysis still faces resistance, since Freud we have witnessed that the subject of the unconscious and psychoanalytic knowledge has also become an unprecedented theory of culture and of the social bond. As for the field of Education, it clearly appears in the inventory of scientific domains of interest to Freud (Freud, 1913). A disposition with a specific address, insofar as the horizon of the “extension” of Psychoanalysis to other fields of knowledge was the desire of its founder. As for politics, we understand that it implicates both the educator and the analyst, insofar as both have the possibility of confronting modes of governing bodies, words, and affects.

It must be emphasized that, in recent years, Brazil’s social, political, and educational reality has demanded positions from the axis that articulates Psychoanalysis and Education, especially due to the plurality of forms that barbarism has taken within the educational space in the face of advancing neoliberal agendas. Among some contemporary educational ruins, we

observe the increase in competitiveness within bonds, climate change denialism, the demonization of teachers, racism, misogyny, extreme violence in schools, gender-based violence, and hatred as pedagogy (Cássio, 2019). This led us to question how Psychoanalysis, as a critical theory and in dialogue with Politics, might contribute to the de-barbarization of Education. How might it collaborate in better understanding the social symptoms that manifest themselves in educational issues?

We understand that there is a worrying scenario when we look at Brazilian education, which bears a history marked by unsatisfactory results across several spectrums. Recent data from INEP (2025), for example, indicate that fewer than 60% of students in the 2nd year of elementary school were literate by the end of 2024. Darcy Ribeiro's (2019) famous phrase that the crisis of education in Brazil is not a crisis, but a program, comes to mind. Perhaps Ribeiro forged this kind of aphorism based on what he witnessed in the country during the 1950s and 1960s — a time of ideas out of place (Schwarz, 2014).

It is worth recalling that during Brazilian redemocratization, progressive educational projects nourished emancipatory ideals; however, from the mid-2010s onward, there was a discursive shift marked by religious influence and the centrality of assessments and metrics, displacing education from a critical horizon toward functional, reproductive, and entrepreneurship-oriented learning. Thus, over the span of a few decades, we witnessed a transition from an education guided by emancipatory and critical ideals of thought to a conception of learning based on functionality, reproduction, and entrepreneurship. On the other hand, we assess that Brazilian education has been repeating the country's tragic history of social injustices and inequalities.

Society and the State are unable to produce conditions and possibilities for social transformation through education, and the most recent version of this repetition goes by the name of colonization of thought, where we see a large contingent of functional illiterates. Indeed, we know that the school institution in Brazil has always been hostage to social and political processes; however, it must be acknowledged that in recent decades both schools and universities have been experiencing a crisis of legitimacy. This is a context in which many voices calling for education reform proliferate. But what reform, after all, are they referring to? What kind of education do we want for future generations?

Despite the significant progress that new technologies and advanced possibilities of connection bring to social and educational relations, we continue to face a paradox: even with countless conditions for connectivity, an enormous solipsism remains in the relational lives of subjects of our time. Moreover, capitalist realism (Fisher, 2021), which permeates everyone with the sense that there is no alternative outside capitalism, seems to have reached the school institution as well. In this sense, Laval (2019) suggests that neoliberal logic constructs an imaginary guided by entrepreneurial spirit, transforming subjects into human financial capital. This logic of the financialization of lives is accompanied, in daily life, by the protagonism of object consumption and the abusive and inappropriate use of technological devices.

In the field of mental health, the results of the latest National School Health Survey (PeNSE), conducted with adolescents attending elementary school, indicate that 21.4% of them state that they feel life is not worth living (IBGE, 2021). These data are associated with IBGE statistics showing high rates of school dropout in 2023, especially from the age of 15 onward. Such indices add to the countless reports of malaise and psychological suffering that we have heard in the narratives of university students within the scope of a multicenter research project on mental health conducted at the University. These are therefore issues that demand more attentive listening to the conditions of the social and educational bond and their effects on the mental health of adolescents and young people attending schools and universities.

The social and political aspects related to educational impasses are varied and complex. Thus, beyond the management of deaths operated by contemporary necroliberalism, from Nancy Fraser's (2024) perspective, cannibal capitalism would be the expression that best qualifies the kind of world we have built — that is, a society organized to feed on the materials present in the earth that sustains us and to monetize the creative capacities of workers, without any commitment to replenishing what has been extracted or repairing what has been damaged by extraction.

In other words, the specter of death that haunts the conditions of cannibal capitalism (Fraser, 2024) also appears in the field of youth formation and school education. Statistics on depression and suicide among adolescents and young people continue to rise, demonstrating how the formulation of the desire to live (Freud, 1910/2013) is no easy task — even more so during adolescence, when the imaginary surrounding the meaning of life intensifies and the question of the self takes on a new position. In sum, the wavering will to live of today's youth, expressed in rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide, evokes a question about what meaning life can have when those who occupy the place of transmitting desire build a society guided by policies of death.

In a scenario marked by the proliferation of storms and crises, a logic of civil war in social bonds is forged, according to which discourses of hatred and intolerance multiply, impoverishing debates in the public sphere — a situation from which the educational field is not excluded. How can we curb the effects of an economic policy that operates through the management of lives, calling subjects to adjust themselves to the demands of capital? How can we deal with the fractures of our time when thinking about the educational formation of children and youth? What can Psychoanalysis do, in dialogue with Education and Politics, to evoke some kind of emergency brake?

Through four axes of work articulating psychoanalysis, education, politics, and barbarism, the texts published in this issue critically present alternatives to the impasses of the current educational field. Through the ethical-political implication of each author, we find a collective effort to rekindle the desire for knowledge within education. In place of profit-making machines, the de-barbarization of educational formation is claimed, repositioning the place of the subject, desire, and imagination.

We begin this issue with the axis “Critical Education, Psychoanalysis, Barbarism”, featuring the article “*The Subversive Potential of Psychoanalysis in Interdisciplinarity*” by José Mauricio Loures and Gloria Sadala, in which psychoanalysis is situated as a form of knowledge that, since its origins, resists the logic of adaptation and productivity that permeates school and higher education. By taking the unconscious as a common operator of interdisciplinarity, the article shows that psychoanalysis's contribution cannot be reduced to mere technical articulation between disciplines; its operation produces an ethical and political fracture in discourses that seek to administer, normalize, and dehumanize the subject. In dialogue with Freud and Lacan, the authors affirm the ethics of desire and of not-knowing as positions of resistance against imperatives of performance and measurement.

Next, Ana Carolina Ferreyra, in “*Between Gramscian chiaroscuro and the darkness that allows us to see fireflies*”, proposes a rigorous reading of times of barbarism through the dialogue between psychoanalysis, education, and politics. Drawing on notions from Gramsci, Walter Benjamin, and Didi-Huberman, as well as Freud and Lacan, the author displaces barbarism from the register of the absence of civility and situates it as a structural effect — today intensified by neoliberal rationality, which not only weakens social bonds but also empties symbolic authority and permeates educational institutions. The analysis of a contemporary school scene, marked by the incidence of digital networks and the blurring

between public and private spheres, highlights the current impasses of the educational bond and cultural transmission, especially in work with adolescents and young people.

With the text “*Education for memory and the struggles against oblivion*”, Silvio Ricardo G. Carneiro makes clear that memory is a fundamental element for the construction of critical thought. Starting from the assertion that all critical education is rooted in a culture of memory — understood as a condition of transmission, belonging, and the elaboration of experience — the author revisits the sociopolitical dimension of memory, demonstrating that forgetting is not neutral: it constitutes one of the marks of barbarism. Remembering, by contrast, is a civilizing gesture that reinscribes experience within the social bond. It is from this perspective that two exemplary experiences are called upon: the aesthetics of forgetting in Glazer, which exposes the ethical risks of the neutralization of memory, and Ailton Krenak’s defense of a social memory anchored in lived experience. Both allow us to think of education not as the management of results, but as symbolic work against the erasure of the subject and of history.

The second axis, “When the Earth Speaks: Psychoanalysis, Education, and Environmental Barbarism,” is composed of two articles that interrogate the ethical movement required for life on the planet to remain viable for future generations. In “*The Collapse of the Earth and the sociopolitical dimension of youth suffering: articulations between psychoanalysis and environmental education*”, Ana Lisete Farias and Rose Gurski present a dense and sophisticated articulation between literature, social theory, geosciences, environmental education, and psychoanalysis, sustained by a clear conceptual axis: the socio-environmental crisis as a symptom of a civilizational collapse that simultaneously affects regimes of world, language, and subjectivation. This is a form of writing that avoids technical reductionism and invests in a critical grammar capable of thinking the Anthropocene beyond its empirical indicators. By interrogating the neoliberal capture of environmental discourses, the essay criticizes the production of emptied signifiers — such as “sustainability” — which, under the appearance of care, operate as devices for managing malaise, reinforcing the logic of adaptation and deepening the sensation of a “slow cancellation of the future.”

In the essay “*Not a Manifesto; It Is Plagiarism: Essays in the In-Between of Popular Education and Psychoanalysis Toward an Ecological Literacy in Brazil*”, by Antônio Carlos Dias and Betty B. Fuks, the authors address the intersection of popular education and psychoanalysis to propose ecological literacy in Brazil. Popular education and psychoanalysis do not appear as fields to be reconciled, but as Brazilian ethical-cultural heritages that meet at the point where educating and analyzing reveal themselves as impossible tasks and, precisely for that reason, as incomplete. From this encounter emerges the ecological literacy they advocate — not as a technique or a moral agenda, but as a formative gesture that traverses subjects, territories, and ways of inhabiting the world. A gesture that assumes incompleteness as ethics, listening as condition, and care as historical responsibility, without promising syntheses, but sustaining the crossing.

In the third axis, “*School Violence and Barbarism: Impasses of the Educational Bond*,” focused on the school institution, reflections by educators, psychoanalysts, and scholars of the social field are presented. In the first article, “*Educate...or worst*”, Rinaldo Voltolini interrogates the medicalization of education as one of the contemporary responses to the malaise that traverses school institutions and the pedagogical field, focusing especially on the idea of the body that this response establishes. Voltolini incisively and ethically proposes thinking about the affectation of teaching knowledge by medical knowledge — that is, when the teacher replaces the question, “Why does this child not learn?” — which defines the teacher’s discursive field — with the question, “How is this child feeling?” — proper to the medical field. By interrogating this movement, the author brings back into play not only the ethics of the educational act, but also the political effects of medicalization.

Next, Andressa Pellanda and Daniel Cara, in *“Extreme School Violence in Brazil: The Impact of Neoliberalism, the Atomization of the Subject, and the Erosion of the Social Bond,”* propose reading extreme school violence in Brazil not as an isolated deviation or an exclusive product of digital hatred, but as a social symptom rooted in recent transformations of the school institution itself. The authors defend the idea that the neoliberal configuration of educational policy converts the right to education into measurable performance and the school into a space of permanent competition.

Closing this section, the article *“The Sounds of Sewing Machines: Psychoanalytic Listening to Migrants in School”*, by Joana Primo and Miriam Debieux, highlights the invisibility and silencing of the schooling of Bolivian children in municipal schools in São Paulo. Children who arrive at school “without knowing how to speak” are not situated as having an individual deficit, but rather as the effect of a network that articulates migratory history, working conditions in home-based sewing workshops, and institutional modes of reception — or erasure. By shifting listening from the school symptom to the life context of these families, the authors maintain that investigating such crossings does not distance the analyst from their craft; on the contrary, it makes it possible to guarantee the right to differ, inscribing the singularity of the migrant experience within the school space.

In the fourth axis, *“Young People in the Face of Barbarism”*, the reader encounters a series of reflections on the impasses and challenges currently faced by educational institutions and teachers. Nádia L. Lima, in *“Knowledge in Times of Digital Colonization: Education and Barbarism,”* interrogates the effects of the massive use of digital technologies on subjectivity and the contemporary relationship with knowledge, arguing that algorithmic rationality operates a silent deterioration of the experience of knowing. By subjecting knowledge to the logic of the commodity and calculation, this rationality transforms memory into a technical device, subjectivity into a set of data, and knowledge into a functional gadget, profoundly reorganizing the figures of the Other of knowledge. Against this algorithmic capture, the text affirms the ethical and political urgency of sustaining the place of the word, of the unsayable, and of alterity — dimensions irreducible to calculation and the very condition of a form of knowledge that does not reduce itself to information.

Another fundamental article for understanding the current barbarisms faced by young people in situations of violence and vulnerability is *“The Criminal Initiation of Adolescents is not a Matter of Chance: Psychoanalysis, Education, and Politics”*, by Marcelo Ricardo Pereira, Ramón E. L. Mogollon, and Isael de Jesus Sena. The text precisely describes the context in which youth start their criminal actions. This is a symptom that reveals the impasses of education in times of barbarism. Distancing themselves from causalistic or moralizing readings, the authors demonstrate that the infractional act emerges as a subjective response to a short circuit proper to adolescence, intensified by the emptying of symbolic references, the precarization of educational institutions, and the absence of a non-anonymous desire of the Other. It is a call to ethical responsibility to sustain dispositifs that do not abandon young people adrift, reinstating education as a possible space for the reinvention of the common.

Finally, closing this section dedicated to young people, the article *“Working at the University as a Psychoanalyst, at Any Cost”*, by Ilaria Pirone and Marcella Siniscalchi, sustains the idea that the analyst’s work at the university constitutes a political act — not in the partisan sense, but as a political gesture that creates and maintains a common space among human beings, in Hannah Arendt’s terms. From this perspective, psychoanalysis in the university can offer young people deprived of narratives the chance to rewrite their future history. By sustaining desire within a common world that is always uncertain — not through totalizing discourses, but through a poetic narrative marked by ellipses and silences — psychoanalysis

affirms its political dimension. Perhaps it is precisely in the possibility of making room for singular speech and for the future of the social bond that it finds its own strength.

We take advantage of this issue to publish the unprecedented Portuguese translation of the summary of the lessons given by Jacques Lacan at Saint-Anne — “*The Object Relation and the Freudian Structures*” (lessons of November 21 and 28; December 5, 12, and 19, 1956) — within the framework of the teaching provided by the French Society of Psychoanalysis. This inclusion broadens the theoretical horizon of this dossier, returning to its conceptual source decisive questions for the dialogue between psychoanalysis, education, and politics.

The review of the book *Psychoanalysis, Education and Politics in the University and in the City* (2023), written by Estanislau Alves da Silva Filho, offers a critical and creative reading of its sixteen chapters, organized by Rose Gursky and Nádia Laguardia. It highlights the ethical-political commitment of the ANPEPP Working Group on Psychoanalysis and Education to the country’s reality and to the future of our universities.

Concluding this issue, Fernando Marcarello’s critical commentary on *One Battle After Another* (2025), directed by Paul Thomas Anderson, draws attention to the importance of this film within the contemporary wave of U.S. anti-racist films and series. Readers also can follow the author’s turn toward the central thesis of his critique: anti-racist cinema produced in the United States tends to criticize domestic racism but rarely connects this critique to the country’s historical imperialism. In other words, while racism against internal minorities (Black, Latino, and Indigenous populations) is denounced, structural racism exercised against countries of the Global South remains largely silenced.

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