
Women, otherness and human rights: the recognition of the *Other* as an ethical attitude

Maria Betânia do Nascimento Santiago
Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (Brasil)

Abstract

The phenomenon of violence against women in our society is an expression of the denial of the *Other* and constitutes a fundamental issue in the field of human rights. From this perspective, this study aims to understand this reality, recognizing that confronting it requires uncovering the *specters* of this violence, considering the context in which it is constituted and fed, and assuming it as an *ethical* problem. The study addresses elements that traverse this debate, based on a documentary and bibliographic analysis, and grounded in contributions from feminist philosophers, who unveil the historical trajectory of domination and annihilation of women, associated with the reading of thinkers who discuss the meaning of *difference*, in the sense of recognizing the otherness of the *Other*. The theorization about this reality highlights the special and complex role of education, given the need to seek formative paths that lead us to more humane ways of life.

Keyword: Otherness. Violence against women. Human rights. Education.

Mulheres, alteridade e direitos humanos: o reconhecimento do *Outro* como atitude ética

Resumo

O fenômeno da violência contra as mulheres em nossa sociedade é expressão da negação do *Outro* e se constitui em questão fundamental ao campo dos direitos humanos. Nessa perspectiva, o trabalho objetiva compreender essa realidade reconhecendo que o seu enfrentamento pressupõe descortinar os *espectros* dessa violência, considerando o contexto no qual ela se constitui e se alimenta, assumindo-a como problemática *ética*. O estudo aborda elementos

que atravessam esse debate a partir de uma análise documental e bibliográfica, fundamentada em contribuições de filósofas feministas, que descortinam a trajetória histórica de dominação e aniquilamento das mulheres, associada à leitura de pensadores que discutem o significado da *diferença*, no sentido de reconhecer a alteridade do *Outro*. A teorização sobre essa realidade evidencia o especial e complexo papel da educação, ante a exigência da busca de caminhos formativos que nos levem a modos de vida mais humanos.

Palavras-chave: Alteridade. Violência contra mulheres. Direitos humanos. Educação.

Mujeres, alteridad y derechos humanos: el reconocimiento del *otro* como actitud ética

Resumen

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El fenómeno de la violencia contra las mujeres en nuestra sociedad es una expresión de la negación del *Otro* y constituye una cuestión fundamental en el ámbito de los derechos humanos. Desde esta perspectiva, el trabajo tiene como objetivo comprender esta realidad, reconociendo que su enfrentamiento implica desvelar los *espectros* de esta violencia, considerando el contexto en el que se constituye y se alimenta, asumiéndola como un problema *ético*. El estudio aborda elementos que atraviesan este debate a partir de un análisis documental y bibliográfico, basado en contribuciones de filósofas feministas, que desvelan la trayectoria histórica de dominación y aniquilamiento de las mujeres, asociada a la lectura de pensadores que discuten el significado de la *diferencia*, en el sentido de reconocer la alteridad del *Otro*. La teorización sobre esta realidad evidencia el papel especial y complejo de la educación, ante la exigencia de buscar vías formativas que nos conduzcan a modos de vida más humanos.

Palabras clave: Alteridad. Violencia contra las mujeres. Derechos humanos. Educación.

Introducing the questions...

The phenomenon of violence against women is a recurring theme in studies in the field of human rights, being addressed in its socio-historical, political, psychological, or psychoanalytic aspect, considering the scars left by these experiences. It also presents itself as an educational problem and as a demand for an *ethics* that does justice to the *Other*, and it is in this perspective that it embraces the concepts of *alterity* and *recognition*.

This issue is the object of study in the research entitled "Girls-Women, Education and Human Rights: *Specters* of Violence and Formative Challenges in the Agreste of Pernambuco" (2024)². In it, we inquired about the genesis of violence against women, seeking to understand the relationship of this phenomenon with our cultural heritage, marked by practices that violate the dignity of girls and women. The study, of an empirical nature and preliminarily based on documents and literature, points out some factors that cross this debate and inquiries about the role of educational institutions in coping with this reality.

According to this perspective, the debate about the condition of women and girls in our society, and especially the situation of *violence* to which they are subjected, presupposes an understanding of the context in which this experience is formed and sustained as a demand for a historical-social perspective, seeking, in the words of Professor Ricardo Timm, "[...] its deepest historical-cultural and philosophical roots [...]" (Souza, 2001, p. 7), which relate *violence* and *otherness* in the contemporary context in "*Três teses sobre a violência*" (Three theses on violence). The proposed reading understands *violence* as a philosophical category and identifies it with the *denial of otherness*. This denial slips into the neutralization or the attempt to annihilate the other, either by reducing him to the same, by conforming to the instituted, or through his actual destruction.

From this angle, the affirmation of *otherness*, as an essential difference from the *Other*, acquires centrality in a scenario paradoxically marked by several manifestations of extreme violence, demonstrated in xenophobia, homophobia, and racism, which express the denial of *difference*. Likewise, we observe its opposite and complement in the generalization of *indifference* to the *Other* and in the coldness that marks human relations.

And it is in this context, also marked by undeniable and significant social and legal achievements, that high rates of violence against girls and women are evident, indicating the persistence of a patriarchal imaginary, which survives as an *echo* of the past that spans generations in a *spectral* way. This reality denies fundamental principles for the constitution of a humanly viable future, and is also a great formative challenge for contemporary society.

Thus, looking at this reality results in a complex task. In this regard, there is a greater potential for expression and interpretation of reality, recognized in *literary texts*³ and in the language of *cinema* that is not captured so simply by scientific or philosophical discourse. As an example, we use two film narratives in this work, taking two metaphorical images extracted from the films *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982) and *Malena* (Tornatore, 2000) as two ways of thematizing violence against the *Other*, the different, the non-human and against the *female Other*, the different, the woman... In both, we find *traces*, elements of depth, which can help to understand the various manifestations of violence, assuming an interdisciplinary approach to this phenomenon through these readings.

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It is from this bias that we understand *otherness* and challenges in a scenario of denial of the *Other*, in which several forms of violation of fundamental human rights are manifested. The proposal associates the contributions of thinkers such as Martin Buber (1979; 1991; 1994), Jacques Derrida (2001; 2010; 2013) and Theodor Adorno (1993) with other references as a possibility of understanding and confronting the phenomenon of *violence* against women. Such an approach allows us to problematize significant issues that cross the debate about the condition of women and the recognition of the *Other* as a basis in ethical relations.

Violence against women and human rights: challenges of *difference*

The phenomenon of violence as denial of the Other

Violence against girls and women is a phenomenon that crosses generations as a *specter* that emerges from the past, haunts our present and

projects itself as a dark future for children and adolescents. Lives marked by insecurity, fear of the violation of their bodies, stories that continue to be repeated and reveal how much the world – private and public – is a hostile space to the female presence.

This reality gains specific contours, considering the way it manifests itself in its geographical, economic, ethnic, and cultural aspect, having in common the inequality of the condition experienced by women. Many of these stories bear the marks of abandonment. Girls and women who have their pains silenced and *justice* denied; justice that involves the guarantee of rights and an *ethical* demand; heirs to a history of violence, which is perpetuated in frequent cases of femicide, manifestations of the denial of *otherness*, in the form of female annihilation, without there being a safe place for them.

In view of this, Verónica Gago (2020, p. 96) asks: "[...] what message is transmitted by these crimes that now seem to be no longer restricted to the domestic environment, and can happen in the middle of a bar, in a kindergarten or on the street?" This question does not have a simple answer, like anything that involves the human condition, and more than answering it, it is worth asking other questions to understand its ethical, political, and emotional implications. Even considering the scenario of achievements arising from the struggle of women, the fact is that the world in which girls are inserted has traces of historical violence, *specters* that haunted our mothers and grandmothers and that continue to haunt us.

From this perspective, it is observed that the formalization of rights by law does not mean their immediate fulfillment, since other factors interfere with the effectiveness of these guarantees⁴. In our culture, traditionalism still prevails in private life, with hetero-patriarchal bases, which condemn women to loneliness and silencing. Added to this is the absence or precarious conditions of public infrastructure, in a society marked by the absence of the State in guaranteeing fundamental rights.

This is how we come across daily records of violence against women, of serious violations of human dignity on the streets, and in homes, conveyed by the media. And these, on the one hand, shed light on the phenomenon, on the other, the approach, by itself, does not seem to have the immediate effect of reducing the propagated indexes. The seriousness of this situation makes it

urgent to solve the problem, which even the media records and criminal and social statistics do not fully achieve, because violence occurs and is silenced in the "place" of so-called private life, where even "silence" is violence.

The current scenario demonstrates that we are far from overcoming this reality. Even legislative policy, made up of individuals elected to defend citizen life, is the first to show contempt for female life⁵. The reality shows how far politics is from considering the lives of girls and women as an absolute human value and reinforces the question of Derrida (2007): How does politics distinguish a "force of law" from the violence we deem unjust? What is fair about a law in the face of violence that we deem unjust? When a law judges and condemns the person assaulted and violated, this law normalizes violence, silences the victim, and forces them to carry with them, for the rest of their lives, the stigma of the violation suffered.

This reality becomes more tragic, as the women raped are mostly girls up to 14 years old, as shown by the report of the Brazilian Forum of Public Security, of the 1st semester 2023. The alarming data, despite the situation of violence against girls and women in the national territory, indicate that almost 30% of Brazilians woman suffered some type of violence or aggression in 2022 and in July 2023 when there was a "[...] growth of feminicides, sexual violence, aggression as a result of domestic violence" (Brazil, 2023).

In the picture of horror that appears, there has been a growth in cases of sexual violence, in a situation in which "[...] every 8 minutes a girl or woman was raped between January and June [2023] in Brazil, the highest number in the series started in 2019" (Brasil, 2023, p. 15). An alarming reality, especially considering the under reporting of cases, since it is estimated that "[...] only 8.5% of rapes in the country are registered by the police and 4.2% by health information systems" (Brasil, 2023, p. 15).

The reality is even more terrifying, considering the profile of victims of sexual violence, since they are children and this violence occurs in their own homes (68.3%), "[...] authored by people known to the victims, usually family members" (Brasil, 2023, p. 20). Added to this picture is the social and racial aspect, since these violence affect mostly black and poor girls-women.

These data still need to gain contours of a reading that advances beyond the statistics, as they reveal the impacts on the lives of the girls and

women victimized, as this violence generates damages that are often irreparable or difficult to overcome; it leaves marks on the body and soul, physical and emotional scars, in the forms of injuries, sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. That is, serious consequences, scars that perpetuate that violence.

It is important to recognize that violence establishes other forms of violation of human dignity, since girls and women need to deal with legal aspects and not with *justice* itself. It is a saga of investigations, in which one seeks to build and define a "truth" about the event, anchored in moral and religious precepts that reverse the logic and, as a victim, the girl-woman becomes a suspicion of a crime, even if not yet committed, a kind of "pre-crime" (Diniz; Dios; Mastrella; Madeiro, 2014; Diniz; Madeiro, 2016). This is because we are inserted in a culture of violence and without capable apparatuses to reduce it, there is still a lack of legal instruments to quickly investigate and punish these crimes, which, thus, tend to be naturalized.

The data highlighted show the urgency of a rigorous investigation committed to ensuring the rights of girls and women, built through dialogue with theoretical fields capable of questioning an understanding of humanity that has reduced the *Other* to the condition of an object, in a perverse logic of the subjection and silencing of women.

From this perspective, the proposed reading is in line with an interdisciplinary approach to the phenomenon of violence. A theory that encompasses aspects related to philosophy, politics, human rights and education. This implies looking at political and social issues as engendered by forms of cultural, legal, and ideological domination. In this field, feminist theorists demonstrate how violence to women is eminently *political*. This position is defended by Françoise Collin (2006), for whom private life has long been crossed by politics. Likewise, Verônica Gago (2020) points to a network of violence, in which girls and women are inserted, which crosses a political fabric and materializes in the bodies of women, and "[...] it is singular to the body of each woman" (Gago, 2020, p. 73). In addition to these readings, the look proposed by "black feminism [...]", in the defense of *intersectionality* as an analytical tool (Collins; Bilge, 2021), shows how the condition of class and race is articulated in this framework of violence against girls and women. Thus, outlining its social

place can contribute to understanding other factors that add to the traditional denunciation of the logic of patriarchy that generates and perpetuates forms of violence.

Certainly, a discourse to combat violence against women requires a wide debate and much has been produced in the field of Philosophy, from different approaches. These are readings that reveal the historical trajectory of *patriarchy*, in which this violence originates and from which it still feeds. According to Tiburi (2008), the image that is established of women in society has the mark of domination of the other and what remains is its own annihilation as highlighted by the author: "The good woman is the dead woman. This is the desirable feminine in a patriarchal society" (Tiburi, 2008, p. 66). This perspective, built in dialogue with Adorno's reading (*Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, paragraph 78) of the short story *Snow White*, reveals the double "life and death" of the female character, and in view of which the author argues that *life* is the *death* of the heroine, saved by the prince, which is equivalent to: "[...] having power over her may also be her executioner" (Tiburi, 2008, p. 67).

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Another approach, which sounds like a warning, is announced by Gagnebin (2008) when pointing out the relations of domination between the sexes and the social strategies of domination, control, and discipline. And from this perspective, she asks: "How does the question of sexual difference, considered inessential, return to the absence of philosophical consciousness, in the same way that, according to Freud, the repressed returns to the very constitution of thought and speech?" (Gagnebin, 2008, p. 175).

The question, in its complexity, allows several readings and other referals. Thus, and considering the specificity of the assumed cut, we return to the thesis of Professor Ricardo Timm, who points to the demands of understanding this phenomenon, considering the deep bonds that violent acts have with each other. In this regard, the author points out that "intellectual-emotional fragmentation" prevents us from understanding the phenomenon of violence. This reading is also the greatest form of violence: the disconnection between this chain of facts that are an expression and translation of the denial of *otherness* (Souza, 2001, p. 9).

Confronting the *spectral* inheritance as a challenge of *difference*

The aspects mentioned above are presented as marks of a tradition about the condition of women, which we have not yet deconstructed. This tradition that typifies them and that does not recognize a place for them/us in the masculine space is not something that has remained in the past, but a *specter*, which haunts our present. It manifests itself in the multiple and recurring forms of violence experienced by women in our society.

In this sense, it is essential to assume a critical perspective of this reality contaminated by the "spectral" or symbolic cultural heritages that permeate consciences and are present in the actions of social individuals, in everyday language and in the archetypes of morality. This perspective is fundamental for the investigation of the violated feminine. The *spectral*, heritage and tradition are categories that, in the *deconstruction* movement, Jacques Derrida (2001; 2010; 2013) announces as ways of thinking about the reality of society, politics and laws from the horizon of *justice*. This reading of affirmation of the otherness of girl-women is the denunciation that the law and the discourses about it are lacking with justice that does not correct the injustice suffered. The future of justice is more than a desire of female *otherness*, it is a cry to be answered in the scope of politics, social life, and legal practice.

To speak of spectral inheritance is to recognize that there is a type of reading that does not cease to feed in the basements of society, aspects of a culture of violence, denial of the *Other*, that cross generations. Such *specters* manifest themselves as social and historical phenomena that present phallogentric archetypes embedded in cultural, normative, legal, and political heritages, which "justify" social practices of violence. Undoubtedly, the issue is a socio-cultural heritage as acute as it is silent. Silent because the culture of violence against girls-women only makes news about the victims, the aggressors are little reported and punished, allowing barbarism to continue to reproduce.

In this way, the democratization of information becomes a great ally in addressing this reality that renders women "socially inferior," while at the same time it can lead to a more effective discussion about the education of men in our society. The awareness of "sexist education," which reigns in most homes, reaffirms the need to build gender relations according to other parameters and

can help to understand violence against women. Discussing this reality is a way of deconstructing it and remaking it on ethical bases.

This is precisely the task of an approach from the perspective of Philosophy in the field of human rights: to embrace the problem from the perspective of an "ethics of otherness," which, in its essence, is an invitation to "respond" to the *Other*, who launches an appeal in his vulnerability, with the ethical responsibility of responding in a gesture of solidarity with his pain, with his suffering (Douzinas, 2009). From this perspective, human rights represent the denunciation of injustices and the affirmation of guarantees in the recognition of humanity.

In this debate, it is worth thinking that the relationship between *ethics* and *human rights* results in a complex task, as we have a scenario of defense of the universality of rights, but also the demand for a rupture with universal principles for the affirmation of singularity. This is because the changes that have occurred in recent decades and the emergence of new recipients of rights have revealed the insufficient, generic, and abstract character of the discourse on universality, based on the recognition of the dignity of every human being and the principle of *equality*.

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However, to recognize these rights as universal is to affirm the dignity of every human being. That is, even if this universality is experienced in specific times and places, being, therefore, historical, there are elements of this human condition that we share, that are common to us. This is how the recognition of the "right to life" as the fundamental core and assumption of human rights can be understood. This is also a historical value, which has evolved in relation to time and place, which, thus, can be eventually contested, according to the cultural specificities and the peculiar contours of the situation. Likewise, talking about the right to life goes beyond "thou shalt not kill," in the literal sense of the term, as one can kill someone or become a holder of the right to life in different situations, such as slavery, forced labor, private prison, or even deny the primacy of the dignity of the human person.

It is, therefore, a matter of affirming that the right to *equality* is combined with the right to *difference* as a possibility of promoting those who are on the margins: women, homosexuals, blacks and indigenous people, children, marginalized social segments. Thus, the affirmation of equality as a universal

right reveals different perspectives and relates the ideal of justice to the recognition of *identities*.

This is not a merely conceptual problem, because affirming equality means recognizing the universality of rights and duties, with no privileged people, who have greater access to benefits denied to others, nor people exempt from collective responsibilities. According to this principle, the individual of rights has a singular condition, having the right to *difference*, regarding individual aspects, such as gender, issues related to physical or cognitive limits, as well as those of a broader cultural aspect like belonging to a certain ethnicity.

In fact, the statement proves to be even more complex, since the denial of *difference* occurs in a scenario marked by the generalization of *indifference*. This issue was pointed out by Adorno (1993), a few decades ago, in *Minima Moralia*, when referring to *the dialectic of civility (tact)*. The author points out the identity between civility and humanity and argues that it goes beyond "refinement or taste" as a possibility that social experience can be established from the "prism of consideration of the other, in what is universally valid".

In view of this, the author problematizes the *insufficient* character of the affirmation of *difference*, as Cohn (2004, p. 85) argues: "[...] so decanted respect for the other does not break the perverse circle of the confrontation of the particular with the particular, in which each one is on their side in their irreducible difference". More than that, it can cover the generalization of *indifference*, which Adorno found as *barbarism*, "[...] a perverse form of universalization: everything that is not identified with the given peculiarity is undifferentiated, irrelevant, indifferent..." (Cohn, 2004, p. 85).

Thus, the discourse of legitimacy of the *Other* can lead us to a temporary comfort zone, in which the idea of *tolerance* is found, which so bothered Martin Buber in his personal experience as a Jew, from which he refers to the risk of "[...] mutual tolerance without mutual understanding" (Buber, 1991, p. 15). Going further, Nilton Bonder demarcates the acceptance of *difference* as a measure for one's own *freedom* and warns of the risk of confusing the recognition of the *Other* with tolerance:

Tolerating is an effort to contain contempt and indignation. This does not generate freedom, but creates a tense coexistence, ready to be broken with violence and prejudice. Freedom depends on

appreciation. That is, from the deep awareness that the difference of the other is the true guardian of our freedom. Freedom begins at home, passes through our friends, and ends in respect for the stranger (Bonder, 2010, p. 49-50).

It is important to understand the complexity of violence, manifested in forms of intolerance to the *Other*, which is not resolved by mere tolerance. On the contrary, tolerating can be an expression of a certain indifference and tends to erode the possibility of bonding between people. Thus, the affirmation of *difference*, as recognition of the *Other* differs from the idea of tolerance, goes beyond the problem of identity or the guarantee of rights, even if it does not dispense with them, as they refer to the human condition of being the *Other*, the legitimacy of being who you are. It is from this understanding that we seek to discuss next the issue of the *recognition* of the *Other* as an ethical attitude, from the metaphorical images of cinema and Buber's Philosophy of Dialogue.

The recognition of the *Other* as an ethical attitude

12 The discussion about *recognition*, considering the condition of *women*, has the character of urgency due to the aspects already mentioned, since the ethical issue of the denial of *otherness* constitutes a context marked by *indifference*, which, in a way, is part of the same phenomenon. Its unfolding in the forms of violence can be the destruction of what properly characterizes us as human. To understand this issue, we initially used two images of the cinema that express this reality, to, then, present a possible reading, according to the philosophical perspective of Martin Buber.

The denial of *difference* in violence against the *Other*: cinema images

Our look at the phenomenon from other languages is manifested here in some notes on two *images* of the cinema capable of significantly expressing issues related to the problem of violence and, specifically, violence against women. And, more than the analytical resource, can offer a reading key for this reality and for the challenges that stand in the way of the recognition of the *Other*.

Films *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982), starring actor Harrison Ford and directed by Ridley Scott, and *Malena* (Tornatore, 2000), with Monica Belucci and directed by Giuseppe Tornatore, reveal reality in its complexity and intensity, offering elements of understanding about the human, about the issue of *difference* and *violence* as a denial of *otherness*. From these movies, the reading seeks only to offer images of violence for the potential to help us understand the meaning of the human and the relationships we establish, shrouded in the *mystery* and *strangeness* that is the world of the *Other* as are the challenges of the encounter with the essentially different.

The film *Blade Runner*, inspired by the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, by Philip K. Dick, originally published in 1968 (Dick, 2014), is a book of science fiction that portrays a dystopian, depressing, and melancholic future, set in the city of Los Angeles. We see there the decay and collapse of human civilization, with images of a reality, at the same time, close and far from us. They show problems related to the search for new territories, through colonization on other planets, the profusion of cultures, ethnicities, creeds, and customs, living in a dark and discouraging environment, revealing problems very close to those we live in today. In this context, beings like man, called *replicants*, are created by genetic engineers and used in dangerous activities on Earth and, mainly, outside it. After a mutiny, these androids are banned, being used for menial and entertainment labor in the colonies outside Earth. The film portrays the situation of a specific group – the *Nexus 6*, identical to humans, but stronger and more agile, but with the programmed lifespan. These *replicants* have escaped and are hiding in Los Angeles. We also follow the story of Dick Deckard (Harrison Ford), a retired android hunter who, even though he is reluctant, agrees to do one more job.

The film portrays one of the most significant discussions about the human condition as an expression of our desires and our limits in the difficulty of dealing with the *Other*, in the paradox of fear and desire that the different provokes. In the image of the android, especially the character Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer), we have the *Other*, who is persecuted and annihilated under the classification of being less human. Today, we would say: for being poor, homosexual, black, or simply for being a woman! And, faced with this reality, the questions that hover in dehumanizing experiences are: What makes us human? Would there be a parameter from which we could define who is

human or what is the legitimate way of being human? The film intensely portrays the desire, translated into brutal, affectionate, or melancholic scenes, for humanity and *recognition* of android characters. They are scenes capable of mobilizing us for the great potential of producing experiences that art offers. In this line, the film helps us as an expression of fundamental issues, which, ironically, are seen through the eyes of machines: the question of *ethics*, life, and death, in short, the search for the meaning of life.

According to Jurandir Costa (2010), Phillip Dick discusses issues of an *ethics* that asks about who is truly human, but warns that the "Dickian ethics" does not want to romanticize the issue. Is there really in the text *Androids dream about sheep?* the recognition of the limited character of android morality, for its impossibility to deal with tradition and for the behavior marked by the destructive impulse. But, it seems, the fundamental thing to recognize in Dick's morality, "[...] is the desire to expand the list of those who are recognized as human beings, *by what we know of them and by what we do not know in us and in them*" (Costa, 2010, p. 214, emphasis added).

14 The other image comes from the film *Malena* (2000), which takes place in the city of Sicily in 1941 and portrays the experience of the beautiful young woman, daughter of the city's teacher, and widow of a soldier, supposedly killed in the war. We follow the narrative through the experience of Renato, a 13-year-old teenager, who follows her with admiration along with other colleagues. The interest in the work and the character is not due so much to the idealized narrative of the young Renato, but to the unfolding of this experience, which takes place in the context of World War II, a historical milestone of *barbarism* and the consequences for the life of a village, and of the character in a special way. The young widow with no family – because Malena loses her father, finding herself helpless – gets involved with men from the city after much reluctance and later prostitutes herself with German soldiers to survive. The issue is discussed by critics as a metaphor for fascist Italy itself, which prostitutes itself to Nazi Germany, as well as for the reference to the female condition⁶, portrayed in different images of which the director makes use. Here we are interested in the character's own *singular* condition and the relationship with the collectivity in which she finds herself.

In it, the experience of the "loneliness" of being a woman materializes,

as she experiences the *indifference* of the community and is left to her own "fate". We use here an excerpt from Goethe's tragedy *Iphigenia in Tauris*, which in a rich debate on hospitality raises fundamental questions about the situation of women, yesterday and today, revealing the condition of abandonment and indifference to which she is subjected and relegated:

The brief struggle immortalizes man. It is barely extinguished, then the songs exalt it. But of the tears, the countless tears of the one who remains, of the woman without support, posterity takes no account, saying nothing of the long days and nights spent crying, in which the sorrowful soul vainly calls upon the friend, so prematurely taken from her arms, and in care comes to an end (Goethe, 2016, p. 119).

That is the condition of the Greek woman, that is the condition of Malena! This is how, in the development of history, especially with the end of the war, we see the *intolerance* and denial of the *Other* emerge in an acute, explosive, and violent way, which, in the case of Malena, is not for an ethnic or religious issue, as she is white and Catholic. Of course, we can associate the situation with a gender condition, as she is a woman, and becomes the object of desire of men in the city, distinct citizens of that community, who take advantage of the condition of vulnerability in which she finds herself. However, the element that stands out as an expression of *difference* is *femininity* and *beauty*, capable of generating admiration in some and envy in others – a contempt and indignation at what is only tolerated. These aspects are manifested in the film, paradoxically, as subversive and conflict-enhancing elements. In fact, the experience of this paradox places it in the same condition as any *Other*: the denial of *otherness*, which can reach the extreme of violence.

This is what we witnessed at the end of the film, with the character being brutally beaten by a group of women from the city. It is possible to see there more than a revolt against the woman who prostituted herself with the Germans who occupied the city. We observed, under the eyes of other women in the village, an expression of profound rejection of what she represented in her unique way of being a woman. The rejection and the subsequent explosion in an act of violence, manifest the inability to deal with the *stranger*, the one with whom we disagree or simply do not understand.

I think that of the images presented, perhaps Malena's is the most disconcerting, as it reveals how the *difference-indifference* pair can trigger forms of destruction of the *Other*, in which we can actively participate, or as spectators, within an "asepsis" that can never be completed, as we will always have blood of Malenas, women and girls on our hands. Such an image of intolerance, expressed in violence, appears in several ways and in several places – on the streets, with the violence practiced against women, against homosexuals; in football stadiums, in the form of swearing at black players; in family homes, in cases of frequent violence that culminate in the death of women.

From this perspective, to affirm the *difference* is to recognize the *otherness* "[...] as a characteristic of something or someone being another in fact, to remain in the difference; that is, he does not bend to identity, to the same, to domestication, to the family, to the ghetto [...]" (Pelizzoli, 2012, p. 26). This is also a challenge to our days as the other face of the denial of otherness: tolerance without recognition, which manifests itself in the form of *indifference*.

16 This issue, about which we have already referred, is addressed by Adorno (1993) in *Minima Moralia*, in aphorism 16, *On the dialectic of tact*, when relating *civility* (tact) and *humanity*, as an expression of respect for the other. In this regard, Gabriel Cohn (2004, p. 84) points out the primacy of the recognition of the "humanity of the *Other*", which is not abstract, "[...] but goes through the difference that is individualized". Going further, the author states that it is an experience that requires exercise and learning, a *formation* of the human to commit to the other, expressed in the idea of *responsibility*, which takes "[...] the form of care for the other" (Cohn, 2004, p. 84).

In this regard, the confrontation of indifference presupposes the deconstruction of an *ontology of the self*, which "reduces the self to sameness". This path proposed by the Philosophy of otherness is central to the thought of Lévinas (1906-1995), who "[...] transformed solipsistic subjectivity into responsibility for the *other*" (Costa, 2006, p. 194, emphasis added). Such a perspective is fundamental for understanding the meaning of *indifference*, which enhances *barbarism*, and assuming a path of *solidarity* in the affirmation of the *Other*. Thus, Lévinas warns about the requirement of recognition of the *Other* as the basis of all ethical relations, as well as about the "forms of

death" of this *Other*, in the denial of its *otherness*.

It is in this perspective that we address Martin Buber's thought, his ontology, and ethics of the *interhuman*, in the demand for the recognition of the otherness of the *Other*, understanding this Philosophy as a "previous" expression of a deconstruction of the ontology of the self by the affirmation of the primacy of the relationship: in the beginning there is no *cogito* but the *relationship*.

The recognition of the *Other* in Martin Buber's Philosophy: notes

In Buber's Philosophy, ethics can be understood from the basic premise that guides the problem of *alterity* as a requirement for recognition by the *Other*. That is: it is not enough to be different! As humans, we realize ourselves in the conquest of "[...] presence in the being of the other" (Buber, 1994, p. 292). *Confirmation* is the response to an appeal addressed to me, something that happens in the encounter between concrete beings and not a duty.

This ontology of the *interhuman* offers a significant theorization about the contemporary crisis, revealing man's failure to find satisfactory answers in the conduct of a more humane way of life. Buber's fundamental thesis is found in the work *I and Thou* (1979), in which the thinker characterizes the human condition by the *double attitude*, expressed in the *I-Thou* and *I-It* principle words that underlie the existence of the *I*, which is constituted in the relationship sometimes with a *Thou*, sometimes with an *It*, as Buber (1979, p. 4) states: "There is no *I* in itself, but only the *I* of the *I-Thou* principle word and the *I* of the *I-It* principle word". On the one hand, life marked by objectification, experimentation, as life in the *It* and on the other, the *relationship* as an expression of saying *Thou*.

A distinctive element of the *relationship* is the fact that it is opposed to experience, which implies a "knowing" about something/someone, between the *I* and the properties of the *Other*. Differently, the relationship occurs *between* the *I* and the *Other*. In a critique of the relationships that predominate in the contemporary world, Buber (1979) warns us that the person cannot be confused with an object to be manipulated, given the human irreducibility to such a condition.

These ideas address us to other discussions and an understanding of

what properly makes our humanity possible and what limits it. In this regard, Buber (1994) affirms the recognition of the *Other* in his condition of essential *difference* as a presupposition for the authentic bond between people. In the work *Distance and Relation* (1994), he points out the meaning of *otherness*, pointing out the primacy of *difference*, an anthropological condition and that, thus, the human being is constituted from a double movement: the first is *distance*, an experience of contrast with the *Other*, and the second, the *relationship*.

Thus, *distance* (*Distanz*) is a presupposition for *entering-in-relationship*, a possibility for each of those involved to present themselves autonomously. However, entry into the relationship does not result from this condition of experienced autonomy. It is not possible to establish a cause-and-effect relationship, as even though the former is a prerequisite for the latter, the latter is not a consequence of the former.

The *distance* (*difference*) offers the space for the emergence of the *relationship*, but it does not necessarily materialize. This is because, in the sphere of interpersonal relationships, as well as collective experience, *conflict* is something that interposes itself, being a component of relationships, to the extent that each of these movements sees the *Other* as an obstacle to its realization: *distance*, as an essential difference, is threatened by the *relationship*, which can lead to a fusion and the consequent dilution of differences; likewise, the *relationship* is continuously faced with the threat of not being effective, due to the requirement of the singular (Buber, 1994).

The *difference* enables communication, the establishment of relationships. To deny it is to break with this possibility and a humanizing experience, revealing itself as a form of violence or a violation of the primordial right to be who you are. There is no greater violence than to deny the legitimacy of the *Other*, by the inability to recognize it in its essential difference. This reality violates a basic postulate of community life: the possibility of its members confirming each other due to their diversity. A society can only be called human in the recognition of the difference that emerges from the possibility of living with others, of entering a *relationship*.

Buber's ontology and anthropology of the *interhuman* leads to a phenomenology of relations and is configured as a reference from which we can

understand the ethical meaning of the recognition of the *Other*, the recognition of women. We consider the essentially ethical character of relationships, the perspective that emerges from this reading allows us to understand the possible paths to a more humane way of life, whose meaning is linked to the relationship with the *Other*.

The affirmation of the *otherness* of women, whose lives are spent in a reality that denies difference, requires the search for formative paths that enable the necessary transformations. It is undeniable that the school, constituted according to the logic of an unequal and discriminatory society, also tends to reproduce this model of relationships in its practices. Thus, the standardization that tends to nullify or normalize the singularity is evidenced, ignoring the requirement of recognition.

In this case, it is important to note that the change in education is made through an investment that involves coping actions, since respect for difference is not something that is constituted by mere theory, requiring a practice that incorporates and respects the *otherness* of the *Other* as a principle, assuming the challenge of working from *differences*, but without losing sight that this human experience is as much human as it is enabling bonds between people.

Final Considerations

We conclude by stating that the debate about the condition of women in our society, and especially the problem of *violence*, requires the visibility that the urgency of ethics has. In this regard, the proposed readings reveal how much *difference*, in the sense of denial of otherness, is intertwined with *violence*. It also feeds on *indifference*, co-sister of mere *tolerance*, when not accompanied by *recognition*, it is potentially a generator of violence.

From this perspective, the denial of the legitimacy of *being Other* represents a violation of human dignity, violence that can take subtle and veiled forms, but also explicit, brutal, a manifest inability to welcome the *Other* in its essential difference. In this case, assuming the dimension of *otherness* requires the effort to go beyond mere tolerance with those with whom we disagree or simply do not understand.

The manifestations of denial of the otherness of the *Other* and the unfolding of this refusal to *difference* can become forms of collective *violence* as an expression of the deepest rejection of the *Other*, manifested through his death, his destruction. This reality condensed in the images presented in the cinema, whether the beating of the character Malena or the extermination of the *replicants* in *Blade Runner*, expresses our daily reality of exterminating the *Other*: the girls and women, beaten and raped; the young, mostly black, residents of the periphery; the reality in which the different is seen as the non-human *Other*. So is the black person to the white people, the poor person to the rich people; women to men.

The contained and imprisoned contempt is fiercely broken daily in our streets and "homes", in public and private spaces. This portrait of our daily lives of violence against women painted on our real "screens" with their blood carries in the form of the *metaphor* of the final scenes of the film *Malena* the disconcerting developments of this reality, as the protagonist is beaten by a furious group of women, faithful representatives of the patriarchal culture. These women are outraged, not so much by Malena's prostitution with the German soldiers, but by the singular expression of the feminine she embodies, which places her in the condition of a "stranger" in that world. It is an explosion in the face of the unbearable presence of the *Other*, who is *female Other*!

From this perspective, it is essential to understand that the recognition of *difference* also results from learning, from formation to "care for the *Other*" and this is a task that educational institutions, and, especially, the school, cannot escape. Other differences arise, related or not to these issues, requiring the position of educators to inquire about these attitudes, about their place in the educational environment and about the understanding of how the school provides this experience.

The culture of barbarism that promotes violence against women, physical, sexual, or psychological, will not be banned if all sectors of society do not make a tacit commitment to actions and policies aimed at defending the human person, especially those who today are suffering the consequences of this evil that is not fundamental, but a socio-cultural pathology installed in our country.

Dealing with this reality implies unveiling the *specters* of violence in

its historical, cultural, and political composition, with ethical responsibility, in the urgency of a cultural change, so that the world becomes a safer place for girls and women. This is the challenge assumed in theorizing these issues, as a commitment to critical thinking, in denouncing the "irrationality of certain practices and certain orders of social relations". It is to question this reality, showing that they are not "natural", but historically produced and that, therefore, it is possible to overcome them, establish another way of life, build "[...] a new form of social sensitivity" (Amarós, 2008, p. 13).

We understand this challenge from the postulates of an ethics of *otherness*, as announced in the philosophical perspective of Martin Buber. In it, we find fundamental aspects for the understanding of this phenomenon, as well as the special and complex role of an education committed to the recognition of the *Other* and the defense of the lives of girls and women. An education that aims to contribute to the construction of welcoming and formation environments in another way to be in the world.

Notes

1. Work presented at the *Women, Human Rights and Recognition* table of the *I Symposium on Heterotopias*, held at the Education Center of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte, on August 27, 28 and 29, 2024.
2. The research investigates the phenomenon of violence against girls in the Agreste of Pernambuco, analyzing aspects that make up this reality and establishing a relationship with education. The study is linked to the research group "Education, Social Inclusion and Human Rights" – UFPE/CNPq.
3. Evando Nascimento points out, in the introduction to J. Derrida's work, *That Strange Institution Called Literature*, its correlation with otherness, another kind of *Other* thought, of the type not found in Philosophy, surviving in a condition of *strangeness*, questioning "the limits of any and all institutions" (2014, p. 223).
4. The Maria da Penha Law (Law no. 11.340/2006), with almost two decades, is an expression of achievements and guarantee of rights. The Law represents a great achievement in the fight against violence against women, but the current scenario indicates that we still have much progress to make.
5. The National Congress approved, hastily and without debate with society, the processing of the Bill 1.904/2024 that equates legal abortion with the crime of simple homicide in cases of rape at gestational age above 22 weeks. Only after intense mobilization of society, led by women in several cities, the vote was postponed.
6. Cf. the significant analysis of the film in this regard, carried out by the philosopher Maria de Lourdes Gouveia. YouTube Channel – IDEA Cultural Center, March 4, 2021.

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Prof. Dr. Maria Betânia do Nascimento Santiago
Federal University of Pernambuco (Brazil)

Graduate Program in Human Rights, Justice, and Culture of Peace

Orcid id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8822-1806>

Email: santiagocosta@uol.com.br

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Translator's name and email
Affonso Henriques Nunes
affonsohnunes@gmail.com

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