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Justiça e violência: um paralelo entre John Rawls e Eric Weil

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Resumo

Após sua publicação em 1971, *Uma teoria da justiça* de John Rawls reuniu em torno de si grande debate. Eric Weil publicou sua *Filosofia política* quinze anos antes da obra de Rawls, em 1956. Ambos utilizam termos como comunidade, sociedade, racional e razoável, com significados próprios. O objetivo do presente artigo é ampliar o debate em torno da obra de Rawls realizando um paralelo com Eric Weil, utilizando os conceitos mencionados. O paralelo leva em conta também o conceito weiliano de violência, incontornável para a definição do autor do que ele entende por *razoável*. O conceito weiliano de violência pode fornecer então uma crítica à noção rawlsiana de senso de justiça, limites do juízo e a própria noção de razoável adotada pelo filósofo. Ao final, aponta-se uma possível resposta que o pensamento de Rawls oferece à violência weiliana.

Palavras-chave: John Rawls; Eric Weil; violência; razoável.

Abstract

After its publication in 1971, John Rawls' A Theory of Justice generated intense debate. Eric Weil published his Political Philosophy ten years before Rawls, in 1961. Both use terms such as community, society, rational and reasonable, with their own meanings. The purpose of this paper is to broaden the debate around Rawls' work by making a parallel with Eric Weil, using the aforementioned concepts. The parallel also takes into account the Weilian concept of violence, unavoidable for the author's definition of what he understands as reasonable. Weil's concept of violence can then provide a critique of Rawls's notion of justice, limits of judgment, and the philosopher's own notion of reasonableness. At the end, a possible answer that Rawls' thought offers to Weilian violence is pointed out.

Keywords: John Rawls; Eric Weil; violence; reasonable.

INTRODUCTION

Since its publication in 1971, John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* has generated a fruitful debate, attesting to its non-tautegorical character. The work was followed by *Political Liberalism* in 1993 and *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement in 2001*[1], which deepened the discussion orbiting Rawlsian theory of justice. Among these debaters, thinkers from the most varied tendencies followed: communitarians[2], adherents of Critical Theory[3], libertarians[4], thinkers of hermeneutics[5]. Eric Weil's *Political Philosophy* was published in 1956, twenty-one years before the death of its author, fifteen years before A Theory of Justice. Although Weil is not part of the community of debaters of Rawlsian justice theory, his concept of violence can provide an important element for a possible parallel between the two, as it serves as a horizon for comparing commonly used terms – but with different meanings – such as society, community, social cooperation, well-ordered society, reasonable and rational.

According to Canivez (1999, p. 143), Weil's work, *Political Philosophy*, can be read as a debate between Kant and Machiavelli, that is, between the moral human being and the political individual[6].

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[1] In the lecture Justice as Fairness: A Political, Not Metaphysical Conception, Rawls alludes to the changes made to his theory of justice since the publication of A Theory of Justice (1992, p. 26). For a general overview of the state of the discussion of Rawlsian theory prior to Justice as Fairness, see Felipe, 2001, pp. 134–161, Gargarella, 2008, pp. 1–32 and 223–248, and Oliveira, 2003, p. 150.

[2] "According to MacIntyre, Rawls' greatest mistake lies precisely in placing right or justice above the good. According to MacIntyre's communitarian theory, it is necessary to start from subjectivity in its knowledge of the values shared in the society or community in which one develops as an individual or self, insofar as through such values the subject can recognize what is good for himself and for his community" (Oliveira, 2014, p. 399). See also Sandel, 2012, pp. 177–205, Araújo, 2014, pp. 359–372 and Silveira, 2007, pp. 169–173.

[3] See Oliveira, 2014, pp. 386–410 and Barbosa, 2016, pp. 484–485 in this regard.

[4] The leading figure in this school of thought, in its debate with Rawlsian theory of justice, is Robert Nozick. "A master of 'conjectural reasoning,' his work was planned and composed in the environment of contention on Californian campuses that followed 1968. His fundamental postulate, 'individuals have rights,' brings the author closer to theorists who took the position of staunch opponents of socialism, such as the economists Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman, a position seen as contrary to the contractualist theory of John Rawls, whose postulates about the processes of justification and application of the principles of political justice had been presented in A Theory of Justice, from 1971. While the latter appears as a defense of the welfare state, a charter of social democracy, an attempt to philosophically found the type of social policy proper to Western economies, including income redistribution, public aid to the poor, sick and injured, Anarchy, State and Utopia criticizes these known practices of our social landscape, assimilating them to a violation of the fundamental rights of the human person, to a regime of forced labor" (Sahd, 2004, p. 225). See also Gargarella, 2008, pp. 33–62.

[5] See Ricoeur, 1995, pp. 89–142 in this regard.

[6] It is also possible to identify in Rawls a great influence from the philosopher of Königsberg (Felipe, 1997, p. 105). However, it is worth considering that Rawls considers that the Kantian idea of constructivism adopted by the author indicates analogy, not identity (1992, p. 26, note 2). It is also noteworthy that Rawls's theory of justice is seen as an attempt to reconcile Kant and Hobbes (Dutra, 2017, p. 686, note 83). On constructivism and intuitionism in Rawlsian theory, see Dutra, 2017, pp. 687–690 and Barbosa, 2016, p. 480. On the presentation of Kantian constructivism in Rawls, see Rawls, 1980, pp. 515–572, Rawls, 2005, p. 270 – 311. Regarding Weilian Kantianism, see Perine, 1987, p. 57 – 108 and 120 – 125, Kluback, 1987, p.77 – 92, in addition to Weil's essays contained in Kantian Problems.

For the latter, *politics* presents its own logic and objectives; against an action guided by high principles, he opposes realistic activity and concern for efficiency, making explicit the limits and compromises imposed by the exercise of power. This debate is important for the philosopher, who must understand the insufficiency of pure moral criticism in the construction of a world in which morality is better realized. To act, the philosopher must take into account the reality of this world permeated by power relations and the pursuit of power. What is the goal sought by the philosopher? It is non-violence (Caillois, 1977, p. 7). Tosel defines Weil's *Political Philosophy* as follows:

> *Political Philosophy* presents itself as an interrogation about the possibility of a good life, of a sensible and reasonable orientation in the modern world. She seeks to make explicit the category of action, from the point of view of finite and reasonable freedom, which is known as a historical result, but is intended as the principle and foundation of the world of the modern condition. This finite and reasonable freedom is articulated with a science of the social mechanism, proper to modern society (1981, p. 1174).

The terms contained in *Political Philosophy*, such as rational, reasonable, social mechanism and modern society, will serve as Ariadne's thread for the parallel between this Weilian work and John Rawls' Justice as Fairness. Let us move on to the first of them.

2. SOCIETY AND COMMUNITY

Both Weil and Rawls present the source of the perspective according to which society is discussed in their respective works. If for Rawls the conception of society is drawn from the same source as the other fundamental ideas of his conception of justice, the public political culture of a democratic society[7], for Weil, society is presented according to the way it occurs in its self-understanding: according to the social sciences. Aiming at knowledge of the conditions related to the social field,

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[7] This public political culture accommodates implicit and intuitive ideas that citizens of a democratic society share, which are revealed in everyday discussions about the meaning and foundation of constitutional rights and freedoms. Although these ideas are not explicitly formulated and their meanings clearly demarcated, they play an important role in political thought and in the interpretation of institutions, an interpretation offered by courts and texts considered to have lasting importance (Rawls, 2003, pp. 7-8). Removing ideas from a public political culture means that Rawls's conception of justice does not depend on philosophical propositions such as "the presumption of a universal truth or of an essential nature and identity of persons" (Rawls, 1992, p. 25). Furthermore, it should be added that political values are important because they govern the basic structure of society, values such as equal political and civil liberty, fair equality of opportunity, economic reciprocity, and the social bases of mutual respect among citizens, values expressed in the two Rawlsian principles of justice (Rawls, 2000, pp. 184-185).

the social sciences – divided by Weil into theoretical[8] and historical[9] – see themselves as practiced by an observer-analyst who is willing to offer a description guided by objectivity (Weil, 2011, pp. 19-20). This is how, according to Weil, the social sciences express the self-awareness of society (2011, p. 99).

So how does society present itself? The definition of modern society is surely one of the most reproduced passages of Weil's *Political Philosophy*, describing this society as calculating, materialistic, and mechanistic. The calculating aspect indicates that decisions, transformations in work processes and organization, as well as the use of available natural and human forces, must be justified with a view to improving human control over matter, with these forces being best utilized according to the method used. The materialistic trait indicates that only factors of this order are taken into account in its decisions. Finally, the mechanistic element arises because any problem posed to this society that is not a method of work restricted to the mechanism of social work is a false problem (Weil, 2011, p. 87).

This social mechanism described by the social sciences corresponds to the techno-economic system of the human struggle against nature (Dubarle, 1970, p. 527). Society, therefore, is a working community in progressive struggle against external nature (Weil, 2011, p. 73). Here, we should bring up Weil's distinction between a community and a society.

> One can, then, distinguish *community* from *society*, reserving the first term for what is lived in a direct experience of 'human' understanding, within the framework of institutions that were neither created nor 'reorganized' by a rationalist and calculating organizer, and that go back to the 'origins', to 'immemorial' times, to the mos majorum. One can oppose,

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[8] Its spearhead is a functional analysis of certain social structures, guided by the concept of institutional effectiveness. But effectiveness in what sense? It refers to the effectiveness of the social mechanism, the effectiveness of institutions, including the best form of organization of social work: income, progress, standard of living, social wealth. Theoretical social sciences, therefore, take these rational factors as should prevail over those that are not. Factors that are not considered rational, such as historical values that do not lend themselves to measurement, should be taken as obstacles to progress. Taking certain values and institutions, theoretical social sciences then elaborate social types, formal, hypothetical-deductive schemes, making explicit the incompatibility between institutions and values that are obstacles to their progress. According to Weil, the most important, even original, part of theoretical social sciences is political economy. These sciences represent not only the product of a society that is rationally understandable, but one that wants to be rational (2011, pp. 87-88, note 3).

[9] It focuses on various historical social systems, taking into account factors for their understanding that are not purely rational, such as values. Historical social sciences consider the concepts of their theoretical counterpart, which allow for the analysis of any historical social system. There is, therefore, a relationship between the two, although it is nonetheless conflictual, given the tendency, since its origin, of theoretical social sciences to proceed according to considerations regarding the best form of organization of social work, originally defined as the analysis of all historical factors that can become obstacles to the best configuration of this organization of work, that is, impediments to the effective implementation of the best way to produce the maximum amount of goods, distribute them more effectively, and encourage ever-increasing production by the individuals engaged in this production—factors that, in the eyes of this social science, are considered non-rational (Weil, 2011, pp. 87-88, note 3).

> practically in an analogous sense, the people to the State considered as a recent creation, not as the result of an 'organic' evolution (2011, p. 85).

If community is vital and "organic" in the opposite sense to that of a calculating organization, society is artificial and rational (Weil, 2011, p. 169). Weil's definition of community bears a certain resemblance to the community as described by Rawls. In Justice as Fairness, Rawls (2003, p. 28) states: "The members of a community are united in the pursuit of certain common values and objectives (distinct from economic ones), which leads them to support the association and which in part commits them to it." For Rawls, a community is "a body of persons united by the same comprehensive, or partially comprehensive, doctrine"[10] (2003, p. 4), that is, a community is "an association or society whose unity depends on a comprehensive conception of the good" (2000, p. 192, note 13). For Rawls, a democratic society contemplates a variety of communities existing within it. We are born into society, and although we may have been born into a community – a religious one, for example – only society in its political form of government and according to its laws can exercise coercive power. Furthermore, communities allow for a departure from the norm, which does not occur in political societies. Communities allow their members to be rewarded according to their contribution to the maintenance of common values – something that does not occur in society[11], given that all members are seen as equal[12], tolerating differentiated treatment only according to what is permitted by that society's political conception of justice (Rawls, 2003, pp. 28-29).

> It is a serious mistake not to distinguish between the idea of a democratic political society and the idea of community. A democratic society undoubtedly welcomes many communities within it, and attempts to be a social world within which diversity can flourish in a climate of mutual understanding and concord; but this society is not in itself a community, nor can it be in view of the fact of reasonable pluralism[13]. This would only be possible through the oppressive use of governmental power, which is incompatible with basic democratic freedoms. From the outset, therefore, we conceive of a democratic society as a political society that excludes a confessional or aristocratic state, not to

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[10] The variety of these diverse doctrines, which involve divergent conceptions of the good, characterizes what is called the fact of reasonable pluralism, since these doctrines are incompatible with each other, many of which lack reasonableness. "This fact consists of profound and irreconcilable differences in the reasonable and comprehensive religious and philosophical conceptions that citizens have of the world, and in the idea they have of the moral and aesthetic values to be achieved in human life" (Rawls, 2003, p. 4).

[11] "For justice as fairness, a democratic political society does not possess such common values and objectives, apart from those that are part of or linked to the political conception of justice itself" (Rawls, 2003, p. 28).

[12] For Rawls, citizens are seen as equals insofar as all are considered to be endowed to a minimum degree with the two moral faculties necessary to engage in social cooperation and participate in society as equal citizens (2003, p. 27).

[13] Rawls distinguishes reasonable pluralism from pluralism itself; the former refers to comprehensive doctrines that are reasonable, whose diversity results from the long use of human faculties of reason in the context of free institutions (2000, p. 190). "The fact of reasonable pluralism is not an unfortunate condition of human life, as we might say of pluralism as such, which admits doctrines that are not only irrational, but absurd and aggressive" (Rawls, 2000, p. 190).

mention a caste, slave-owning or racist state. This exclusion is a consequence of taking moral faculties as the foundation of political equality (Rawls, 2003, p. 29).

Finally, in opposition to Weil, Rawls notes, among the fundamental ideas drawn from public political culture, his conception of society: it is a system of social cooperation whose natural order is not considered fixed[14]. Social cooperation for Rawls comprises three elements: it is distinct from mere socially coordinated activity – such as, for example, coordination through an absolute central authority – being guided by publicly recognized and widely accepted procedures; it contains the idea of equitable terms of cooperation, terms reasonably accepted by the participants and which include the notions of reciprocity and mutuality; it contains the idea of advantage or rational good of the participants (2003, pp. 8–9).

This conception of society presents a basic structure: "its main political and social institutions and the way they interact as a system of cooperation" (Rawls, 2003, p. 12). This conception of society is drawn from public political culture, not from a strict analysis of the social sciences. However, the element of production and distribution of goods and the notion of rational calculation by those involved are traits that are repeated in the views of both authors.

When comparing *Justice as fairness* with *political philosophy*, would considering the moral faculties of citizens suffice to exclude the aforementioned violence, given in the form of eternalist conceptions of citizenship, such as slave-owning or caste regimes? The rejection of this conception is a touchstone between the positions on society of both authors, since for Weil, in principle, there is no racial or sexual hierarchy in the self-presentation of modern society (Canivez, 1999, pp. 133-134), just as a democratic society can be understood as a system of social cooperation for Rawls when there is a public discussion of issues of political justice and when its citizens do not consider this social order as naturally fixed or as hierarchical principles that express aristocratic values (2003, p. 8). To answer the question posed above, it is necessary to present how Weil understands modern society and its relationship with communities.

First of all, it is important to highlight that effectiveness in the fight against external nature is the most precious driving element for society, according to Weil. Communities also respond to external violence for their survival, but their struggle presents diverse aspects, not constituting what is most precious to them (Quillien, 1970, pp. 407-408). As what we have concretely are particular societies, that is, societies-communities (Weil, 2011, p. 150), competition between

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[14] Regarding the central organizing idea of Rawlsian justice theory as a fair system of social cooperation, see Silveira, 2009, pp. 140-141.

nations forces them to sacrifice part of their traditional values in the name of technological advancement, which is, in principle, the same throughout the world (Tosel, 1981, p. 1176).

Modern society, for Weil, is also characterized as a mechanism of exchange and production, a system of social functions hierarchized according to their importance in the overall social mechanism. Social functions are unequally connected both to the benefits of social work (financial return, free time, etc.) and to power over society as a whole (2011, p. 105). The presence of these inequalities as something necessary for the functioning of social cooperation is a point shared by Rawls.[15]

The principle of modern society suggests that the motivations for its actions are always rational. This, however, is only the ideal type of this society, since, in reality, no modern society corresponds strictly to this model: the organization of social work is permeated by contradictions, and both individuals and groups have irrational motives for their actions, motives that are purely traditional in nature. If for Rawls the function of *Political Philosophy* as realistically utopian, contemplating the realization of political possibilities according to their practicable limits (2003, pp. 5-6), posits the well-ordered society as an idealization that is possible given what is permitted by ideas drawn from the public political culture of a society, in Weil's analysis it is the very source of the self-awareness of modern society that contains the element of idealization: the social sciences describe an ideal type that does not correspond exactly to particular societies.

A given particular society will be well-organized when it achieves maximum production with minimum expenditure of human resources. This system is well-ordered[16] when, due to technology, positions are filled by the most capable and the means of attracting the most competent are the incentives given in the form of social goods (Weil, 2011, pp. 104-105). This is not what is observed: individuals who are better established in certain social groups take the best positions for themselves without rational justification. Hence the feeling of social injustice. In particular societies, where groups, even losing their interest to society, will try to maintain their privileges, and where groups that were previously devoid of prestige, but are now essential to the social mechanism, will fight to rise to the place that is rightfully theirs. Thus, the organization of certain

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[15] These inequalities are what Rawls' second principle of justice aims to regulate according to two criteria: being linked to positions accessible under conditions of fair equality of competition and benefiting the least advantaged members of society to the maximum extent (Rawls, 2003, p. 60).

[16] Note that Rawls also speaks of a well-ordered society. However, for the author, this is "a society effectively governed by a public conception of justice" (2003, p. 11). Furthermore, it is a society in which its basic structure and each of its members accepts and knows that others accept the same principles of political justice and is endowed with a sense of justice (2003, pp. 11-12).

groups in combat forms strata[17] that confront each other, being the expression of the feeling of social injustice, whether by those who claim an ascension or by those who desire the possession of privileges (Weil, 2011, pp. 105-106).

It is of interest to us that Weil, like Rawls, speaks of a well-ordered society. But while for the author of *Justice as Fairness* a well-ordered society is one effectively regulated by a political conception of justice, be it utilitarianism or justice as fairness, for Weil a well-ordered society is one as conceived by the social sciences: it is perfectly rational, global – the form of global rationality is that which allows the best use of resources, access to each function and the division of the benefits of the production of social goods being determined only by the capacity to collaborate with labor. A society is considered well-ordered for Weil when, thanks to technology, positions are filled by the most capable, and the means of attracting the most competent are the incentives provided in the form of social goods (2011, pp. 104-106). The feeling of social injustice arises when the individual who is promised the reward for dedication to the principle of rationality in modern society finds himself unduly excluded from his share of social benefits. This is because the Weilian individual is also reasonable in addition to being rational, and the term "*reasonable*" in Weil acquires a meaning distinct from that employed in Rawlsian justice theory. Before dwelling on this difference, it is necessary to briefly discuss this revolt caused by social injustice as described in Weil.

Modern society acts upon the individual, obliging him, if he wishes to enjoy the advantages derived from social work, to abandon the historical values that impede the full functioning of society, thus reducing himself to a useful piece or article (Doumit, 1970, p. 515). This is how the principle of modern society presents itself to the individual, through the self-awareness of society: he who dedicates himself to social work, relinquishing any other historical element that may be a factor of inefficiency, will have a greater share in the advantages of the struggle against external nature, as he will be more qualified for this confrontation. However, this maxim is not verified in practice, not even in most cases (Weil, 2001, p. 114). The revolt that the individual feels when faced with this social injustice is of the order of violence. It is the revolt of one who believes he has nothing to lose because he considers himself excluded from the progress of society.

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[17] "Strata are not produced by the organization in terms of its rationality, but by what it retains of its historical context. They are distinguished from groups that, rationally necessary, will exist even in the best-organized society: it is their perfect organization that precisely characterizes a well-ordered society. In such a society, strata would not exist, firstly because the rise or fall of groups would occur without historical resistance, and secondly because the circulation of individuals between groups would only be regulated by their personal qualifications" (Weil, 2011, p. 106).

Besides the perception of social injustice, another feeling can generate the violence of revolt. This is the case of the individual who, unlike the first, has their needs met by the rationality of society: they participate in social work, obtain a good share in the distribution of its goods, including one of the most precious among them: free time. With all needs met, the question remains: what to do with free time? Emptiness breeds boredom. Idle time, free from the need for engagement in the social mechanism, leads to this feeling. The feeling of boredom overflows in various ways: motiveless crimes, forms of seeking thrills and distractions. It is a form of revolt against pure arbitrariness, given as a feeling of dissatisfaction not directed against this or that aspect of social organization, but contrary to the organization itself in what it has of rational (Weil, 2011, pp. 114-115). Therefore, Weil's diagnosis is that the absence of meaning can lead the individual to the violence of despair, even in situations where success is achieved against necessity (2012, pp. 64-65). Boredom can provoke the voluntary rejection of reason. This occurs because, for Weil, the human being is *reasonable*.

3. RATIONAL AND REASONABLE

We mentioned that *reasonable* in Weil has a profound difference from the homonymous term as integrated into Rawlsian theory of justice. Let us begin with the Weilian view, whose key to understanding requires consideration of the undeniable concept of violence. Perine clarifies the meaning of the term reasonable in Weilian thought, considering the indelible presence of violence, pointing out that the human being must be understood in the wake of his Kantian heritage, in fidelity to which Weil maintains the awareness that man is an individual, that is, that he is not essentially reason, but carries inextirpably animality and passion, so that he is only reasonable. Put another way: the human being is not only reason, he is so at some moments, at others he is violence (1987, p. 174).

The meaning of reasonable here can signify an openness that the human individual possesses for both reason and violence. The human being will not necessarily act solely driven by reason. What, then, would be the distinction that could be drawn between the rational and the reasonable in Weil? Such definitions may seem nebulous; nevertheless, one way to present them would be the negative way, that is, to define what it is *not* to be reasonable. Reasonable is *not* the quality of a thing, of an object that human beings encounter in the world, like the colors in a blade of grass. Reason, going further, is not described from the outside, but describes itself, sets itself in motion, and is a subject insofar as it separates itself from that which is an object only in opposition to itself. Rationality, in turn, would be linked to the technical sphere, to the rationality of work, to

understanding, while reason would be related to absolute philosophical discourse (Kirscher, 1992, p. 134).

We point out that the reasonable in Weil is understood through the relationship between reason and violence. How then to understand this concept? According to Kirscher (1992, p. 141), violence is the constitutive problem of philosophy. It is important to emphasize that Weil does not offer a summary definition of the concept of violence[18], this being a notion that permeates all of Weil's philosophical production.

Violence appears in multiple forms, so much so that Weil uses the figure of Proteus to represent its mutable aspect (2003, p. 9). In this way, Weil's philosophical effort turns to these multiple forms of violence given in history and that permeate human reality: from nature, from necessity, from the climate, from catastrophes; social and political violence, from war, from exploitation and domination; violence that the individual suffers from himself, from the passions that destroy him. In its multiple forms, violence is what creates obstacles to the contentment of a sensible life (Canivez, 1999, p. 38). Violence is the refusal of truth, of meaning, of coherence, and the choice of the negating act, of incoherent language, of technical discourse that serves without questioning its purpose. It is silence and the expression of personal feeling, which is intended to be personal (Weil, 2012, p. 99). A possibility always open to humanity, never definitively sealed, violence is original, radical, and irreducible (Quillien, 1970, p. 407). Violence is the refusal to understand the other and to understand oneself from the point of view of one's other. As long as the violent person knows nothing beyond their own world, they exclude all otherness (Kirscher, 1992, p. 279).

In principle, this trait of violence would be rejected by the Rawlsian citizen due to the presence of a sense of justice, but violence stemming from social boredom would still remain an open possibility for the individual. At this point, we can state that a violent individual, motivated by feelings of boredom or by outrage at the perception of social injustice, would not be willing to act in accordance with the second moral faculty proposed by Rawls, the sense of justice, that is, the capacity to act from – and not merely in accordance with – the principles of political justice that

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[18] However, some interpreters of Weil's work have offered typologies of violence present in his thought. Kirscher lists three types of violence: Natural violence as faced by the community; violence resulting from the loss of the sacredness of the community by the individual; and violence resulting from the loss of ontology, of the sacredness of the community that becomes a work society and confronts the individual with the problem of boredom (1992, pp. 126-131). Cailois presents three forms of violence: Natural violence of man as prey and predator; inner violence, of passion, radical evil; and pure, diabolical violence, of boredom (individuals and small groups) and totalitarianism (1977, p. 214). Costeski presents his typology based on the development of philosophical discourses, each of these discourses corresponding to a specific form of violence (2009, pp. 26-29).

define the terms of social cooperation, which would equally distance the violent individual from the Rawlsian conception of reasonableness. What, then, does Rawls understand by *reasonable*?

For Rawls, the ideas of reasonable and rational are complementary and comprise the fundamental idea of society conceived as an equitable system of social cooperation.[19] A reasonable individual is one who is able to propose or recognize the principles necessary to specify what everyone can consider as equitable terms of cooperation, honoring these principles, even at the cost of their own interests, provided that others do so (2003, p. 9). "Common sense considers the reasonable, but generally not the rational,[20] as a moral idea that involves moral sensitivity" (Rawls, 2003, p. 9-10). According to Oliveira, in Rawls, the reasonable presupposes the recognition of the inability of reason to provide an ultimate justification for moral judgments, including the reciprocity in recognizing this fallibility of reason, in recognizing the limits of judgment (2013, p. 40). Reasonableness, therefore, will be the same as the recognition of the limits of the rational (Oliveira, 2013, p. 45), being a social virtue presupposed by justice as fairness (Oliveira, 2013, p. 49). This is because the reasonable is public, allowing the public sphere to determine social cooperation in an equitable way, while the rational is not (Barbosa, 2016, p. 488). Furthermore, the reasonable in Rawls has a pragmatic character, functioning as a middle ground for the values/facts dichotomy, which attests to its origin: the public political culture of a society[21] (Oliveira, 2013, p. 46). Finally, for Rawls, the reasonable precedes the rational (1992, p. 42, note 20), due to its willingness to judge based on criteria of reciprocity and to accept the limits of judgments (Silveira, 2009, p. 143, note 3).

For Weil, reasonable means that the human condition is not definitively closed to violence, so that, even recognizing the limits of judgment in some circumstances, this does not mean that the individual always exercises it. Therefore, it is not surprising that this rationality of modern society provokes strong, sometimes violent, opposition – integralism, fanaticism, religious fundamentalism – from traditional sectors that hold the concrete content of communities (Kirscher,

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[19] For Rawls, when it is stated that justice as fairness stems from the fundamental idea of society as a fair system of cooperation, the resulting conception of political justice is said to be abstract, that is, it selects certain aspects as especially significant in terms of political justice, ignoring others (2000, p. 201, note 20). It is possible to draw here a principle of analogy, but not of identity, with the procedure used by the social sciences in elaborating the description of the principle of modern society in Weil.

[20] Rationality is linked to the capacity to pursue and examine the most varied particular projects motivated by the most diverse conceptions of good (Barbosa, 2016, p. 487). Irrationality exemplifies, for instance, someone who harms themselves in order to harm another (Dutra, 2017, p. 683).

[21] Being reasonable therefore implies recognizing reasonable pluralism and that only oppression by the State can provide moral unity in this scenario (Oliveira, 2013, p. 49).

1992, p. 274). Society offers much, however, because it is the negation of individuality, it cannot offer an individual meaning to existence (Weil, 2011, p. 291-292). The emptiness of the absence of meaning opens space for the emergence of violence. Technical rationality as an attitude does not produce a positive meaning. It produces a void, whose consolation is given through distractions (2011, p. 306). The emptiness of an existence devoted to the endless struggle against external nature is expressed and felt in violence (Weil, 2011, p. 311). A fundamental problem of philosophy, violence demands the creation of a discourse about reality so that violence can be overcome; philosophy emerges as a choice of discourse against the violence present in itself and in the world (Canivez, 1999, p. 38).

At this point, we recall that for Weil, the social sciences express the self-awareness of society. But this awareness has limits, because while the positive research of the social sciences is indispensable for indicating the necessary conditions for human action, it is incapable of grasping the meaning of action (Doumit, 1970, pp. 511-512). *Political Philosophy* offers an analysis of the social mechanism and the role of the individual, which is an adequate representation of the figures of rationality and the violence that correspond to it. Violence here is the revolt resulting from the feeling of despair, stemming from the perception of social injustice. This injustice makes the individual realize that, even though the social mechanism is presented by society as purely rational, it does not allow for ascension to the best positions (Kirscher, 1992, pp. 132-133). The language of rational calculation is common to all members of modern society. The possibility of change that this language formally opens, when it does not materialize, generates a feeling of social injustice: the individual becomes sensitive to the contradictions he sees affecting the rational functioning of society, which appears to him as irrational and hostile. Due to the fact that no society is entirely rational, he will never be certain of obtaining recognition for his efforts. Just as there are no guarantees for his personal projects, there are no guarantees that his social group will not be condemned to stagnation or regression in the social hierarchy (Canivez, 1999, p. 158). In this sense, Rawls' second principle of justice appears as an important solution, acting to regulate the functioning of the basic structure of society[22], nullifying the effects of this revolt pointed out by Weil. However, the problem of violence stemming from boredom remains unresolved. This violence is not the only form of political violence present in modern democratic societies.

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[22] Rawls understands the "basic structure" of democratic society as its main political, social and economic institutions and the way they combine into a system of social cooperation (1992, p. 27).

4. EDUCATION, VIOLENCE, AND A SENSE OF JUSTICE

This is where education, violence, and democracy intersect. This is because, for Weil, the degradation of the population's living conditions can provoke a revolt against democracy itself, causing it to turn to a providential leader, to the man of action.[23] Democracy presupposes that the material conditions in which the citizen lives do not preclude political life, that they have sufficient leisure and a certain level of culture, that their entire life is not devoted to work and the satisfaction of vital needs. However, even so, the conditions of possibility for democracy may not be met, and even if they are, they may not be perfectly met. For Weil, in addition to the conditions mentioned above, an essential condition for democracy is education. There is no democracy if: citizens are violent, incapable of following a rule and of convincing or being convinced by arguments and understanding the problems presented to them. The proper functioning of democracy presupposes active citizens, that is, those who take part in the discussion, advancing it without necessarily holding political office; it also presupposes citizens who are not passive. A passive citizen is one who is content to express their particular interest, both on the moral and material planes (Canivez, 1999, pp. 198-199).

For Rawls, the citizens of a well-ordered society are those who possess the two moral faculties: the sense of justice and the conception of the good. The *sense of justice* is the ability to understand, apply, and act based on the *principles of justice* that determine the *equitable terms of social cooperation*[24]. The conception of the good is the ability to have an ordered family of ultimate ends that determine a person's conception of what has value in human life, which usually integrates comprehensive religious, philosophical, or moral doctrines. These two faculties mean that the individual is able to engage in social cooperation and honor the equitable terms of that cooperation; They define what Rawls calls *moral persons*[25] (Rawls, 2003, pp. 26-27).

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[23] See Weil, 1991, pp. 319–322 in this regard.

[24] Rawls' sense of justice also includes the commitment to uphold commitments made even if the consequences are disadvantageous for the one who made them (Dutra, 2017, p. 670).

[25] "A person has the capacity for a sense of justice (reasonableness) and a conception of the good (rationality)" (Oliveira, 2013, p. 50). See also Rawls, 1992, pp. 37–39. The origin of Rawls' conception of the person, along with the other fundamental ideas of justice as fairness, is drawn from public political culture. "This means that the concept of personhood was not drawn from metaphysics, philosophy of spirit, or psychology, and may have little relation to conceptions of the self discussed in those disciplines [...]. The concept of personhood is, in itself, normative and political, and not metaphysical or psychological [...] the concept of personhood is elaborated from the way citizens are viewed in the public political culture of a democratic society in its basic texts (constitutions and declarations of human rights) and in the historical tradition of interpreting those texts. To find these interpretations we look not only to the courts, political parties and statesmen, but also to the literature on constitutional law and jurisprudence, and to enduring writings of all kinds related to the political philosophy of a society" (Rawls, 2003, p. 27).

These moral faculties would be necessary for engagement in social cooperation in an egalitarian manner. For Weil, however, in his *Political Philosophy*, if education for democracy is not contemplated by political action, this cooperation will be threatened by violence, like a sword of Damocles. This is because, for the philosopher, democracy is something never definitively acquired, as it is always dependent on a potentially fallible education, as well as on social and economic conditions susceptible to deterioration (Canivez, 1999, p. 201). Democracy requires perpetual care for its institutions. It is within this horizon that the role of the philosopher appears for Weil.

The philosopher is an educator exercising a social function, his participation in the educational process taking place through the activity of teaching, educating other individuals for reflection, the philosopher's own practice as a positive participation in the world of action (Canivez, 1999, p. 138-139). Viewed as a social function, education aims to allow the individual to take a place in society. To do this, he must be able to master his own share of natural violence, that of passions.[26] Such violence is not only an impediment to action in accordance with the rules of common life, but also to action that is both reflective and accessible to argumentation. Without this education, it is not possible to meet the conditions that define Rawlsian reflective judgments: those in which there is a *desire* to make the correct judgment, in which there is no interest in not doing so, and in which *temptations* to do so do not exist (Rawls, 2003, p. 41).

The three elements we have highlighted above are what Weil calls passional violence. The control of this violence comes only through the educational process. It is necessary, therefore, both that the individual maintain regular behavior to perform his social role, and that he perform a prudent, reflective action, through words, being convinced by arguments and becoming a participant in the community of dialogue and discussion. Thus, he wants access to discourse to be a real possibility for every individual, not just the philosopher, and he aspires for it to become a political force. Education should allow each individual to participate in public debates through words, as well as to oppose any illegitimate demand with their refusal. It aims to form a community of people endowed with meaning and capable of confronting violence. Beyond instruction, therefore, the

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[26] This is the educational level that Weil refers to as instruction. At the instruction level, the individual must receive the knowledge that will allow them to take a place in the society of work. This educational level includes the exercise of fundamental virtues, such as objectivity and rigorous argumentation (Canivez, 1999, p. 139). This first educational level entails the requirement of a first universal: that of the rationality of social work. This is a formal universality of understanding and work. Thus, instruction is the formal education of desire and natural passion (Weil, 2011, p. 142). The first universal of work and understanding shapes the individual for the idea of universality. However, this is only a first universality: that of a form that does not determine its content. For this very reason, this universality is capable of receiving numerous contents, including that of violence (Weil, 2011, p. 152).

individual must be exhorted, through education, to personal reflection on the meaning of their actions. Such education is negative: it is not a doctrine to which the individual should simply adhere, like one of several overarching doctrines, but rather to show, through negative criteria of judgment, where meaning cannot be found. Education should not be imposed, but only presented in such a way that the attitude of reflection makes sense in their eyes, revealing the freedom and responsibility inherent in the individual. On a moral level, education aims to lead the individual to autonomy; Its objective is to make the student an educator of himself and of those whom he is responsible for educating (Canivez, 1999, pp. 139–141).

The philosopher enters this confrontation at the point where Rawls' premises for establishing reflective equilibrium fail.[27] For Rawls, a well-ordered society[28] can deal with the fact of reasonable pluralism in a way that fulfills the reconciling function of *Political Philosophy* (2003, pp. 4–5), achieving a reflective equilibrium among its citizens and thus obtaining an overlapping consensus.[29] But what does Rawls mean by reflective equilibrium? This notion, linked to the fundamental idea of public justification[30], starts from the *premise* that citizens are capable of reason

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[27] In this regard, Barbosa argues that contemporary societies face the dual challenge of, on the one hand, correctly examining current demands, such as reasonable pluralism, and, on the other hand, establishing a political foundation that rejects a metaphysical basis, so that the role of the philosopher is not to offer a normativity, but a basis from which to offer a normativity, which Rawls accomplishes through his conception of contractualist justification (2016, p. 478).

[28] A well-ordered society is one effectively governed by a public conception of justice; it provides the common viewpoint from which citizens can arbitrate demands of public justice. A well-ordered society has three traits. First: everyone accepts the same political conception of justice and the same principles of justice. Second: everyone knows that the basic structure of society respects the principles of justice. Finally: citizens have a sense of justice: they understand and apply the principles of justice and act according to what their duties require. The idea of a well-ordered society has two meanings. The first is general: a society governed by a public conception of justice. The second is particular: each member accepts the same political conception of justice (Rawls, 2003, pp. 11-13). Rawls (2003, p. 13) gives examples of: a particular doctrine of natural rights, a form of utilitarianism, or justice as fairness; the fact of reasonable pluralism makes this unworkable. However, political liberalism can offer a sufficient and more reasonable basis for social unity for citizens: even though I profess a form of utilitarianism as a particular political conception of justice, I can agree that political liberalism encompasses this conception of mine in its essential points, as well as the conceptions of other citizens different from my own.

[29] Overlapping consensus, also translated as "consensual interface" in Rawls, 1992, p. 28. According to Freeman, the general objective of political liberalism is to show how a stable society is possible among rational and reasonable people who conceive of themselves as free and equal; to this end, Rawls evokes three ideas going beyond what is found in Theory: the idea of a political conception of justice, the idea of public reason, and the idea of overlapping consensus (2003, p. 33). The idea of overlapping consensus is based on the notion that reasonable citizens in a well-ordered society can assert an independent political conception for reasons that relate to their respective understandings of the good (Freeman, 2003, p. 36).

[30] This seeks to define the idea of justification (for a political conception of justice) that applies to a society characterized by reasonable pluralism. It provides a common basis from which citizens mutually justify their political judgments. It is therefore a matter of forming a consensus that free and equal parties can reasonably endorse. It is not, however, a complete agreement, but a basic concord regarding two essential constitutional elements. First, the fundamental principles of the structure of government. Second, the equal basic rights and freedoms of citizenship that legislative majorities must respect. Thus, it seeks to safeguard the conditions for social cooperation among free and equal citizens. Public justification is built upon public political culture, can be endorsed by comprehensive doctrines; it is more than a mere agreement (Rawls, 2003, pp. 36-40).

and have a *sense of justice*. These are conditions for *reflective equilibrium* to be possible. Reflective equilibrium is responsible for establishing coherence between the moral judgments of agents and the principles of justice, establishing a complementarity between public political culture and the normative ideal of the person in a well-ordered society (Silveira, 2009, pp. 139–140). Rawls considers three levels of *reflective equilibrium*. *Restricted reflective equilibrium*: the conception of political justice that least requires revisions of initial judgments: different conceptions were not taken into consideration. *Broad reflective equilibrium*: other conceptions of justice — and the strength of their arguments — were considered; reflection was comprehensive and changes were likely made. *Broad and general (full) reflective equilibrium*: each citizen achieved a broad reflective equilibrium. Public viewpoints are mutually endorsed; this is the basis for public justification and sufficient to achieve overlapping consensus[31] (2003, pp. 42–44).

One might question whether full reflective equilibrium is possible in its entirety. From a realistically utopian perspective, if a considerable majority of citizens achieve this level of reflective equilibrium, overlapping consensus[32] is assured. For Rawls, the impediment to reflective judgments, the so-called reasonable disagreement, is termed the limits of judgments.[33]Rawls considers that overlapping consensus is possible because the limits of judgment largely explain –- though not entirely –- reasonable pluralism, an unavoidable fact of free democratic cultures, so that reasonable people can agree on political judgments (2003, pp. 50-51). Let us now consider two Rawlsian definitions linked to the reasonable individual: having a sense of justice and formulating reflective judgments. Regarding the sense of justice, Rawls states: "the sense of justice (as a form of moral sensibility) involves an intellectual faculty, since its exercise in making judgments calls upon the faculties of reason, imagination, and judgment" (2003, p. 41). Regarding the second definition:

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[31] "In the article '*Reply to Habermas*', Rawls refers to full reflective equilibrium as a point at infinity that we can never reach, but that we can get close to through discussion in which our (i) ideals, (ii) principles and (iii) judgments seem more reasonable to us, presenting intersubjectivity as a central characteristic" (Silveira, 2013, p. 54, note 1).

[32] "I believe we can state, without much fear of missing the mark, that the method is nothing more than a test of personal/social acceptability, a test that is both in the first person (broad reflective equilibrium) and in the third person (general reflective equilibrium). Its function is to show us the moral values that we have already accepted from a social point of view and to guide our moral deliberation in that same direction" (Silveira, 2013, p. 54, note 1).

[33] There are five such obstacles, or sources of reasonable disagreement: empirical or scientific evidence may prove conflicting or difficult to analyze due to its complexity; even if there is agreement on which considerations are relevant, it is possible to disagree on how relevant they are, leading to different judgments; to a certain extent, moral and political concepts are indeterminate, making it necessary to rely on judgments and interpretations; each person's experience is responsible for how we evaluate evidence and weigh values; finally, it is difficult to take into account all aspects involved in a normative assessment (Rawls, 2003, pp. 49-50). The notion of limits to judgment is fundamental to guaranteeing the democratic idea of tolerance (Silveira, 2013, p. 49).

> Reflected judgments are those made when conditions are favorable to the exercise of our faculties of reason and sense of justice: that is, under conditions in which we seem to have the capacity, the opportunity, and the desire to make a correct judgment; or in which at least we have no evident interest in not doing so, since the most customary temptations are absent (Rawls, 2003, p. 41).

When Rawls evokes, in speaking of reflected judgments, desire, evident interest, and temptation, we have what separates his definition of reasonable from Weil's definition. The reasonable, for Weil, implies the possibility always open to human beings: violence. Even if all the limits of judgment are eliminated, human beings can still desire violence. Philosophy is the discourse that understands itself as the discourse of a being for whom another possibility always remains open: violence. This possibility is realized first and foremost, which means that human beings form their discourse in violence, against violence (Weil, 2012, pp. 104-105). Only philosophy is, for Weil, anti-violence, because philosophy can be understood as the science of meaning, the science of non-violence. Precisely because it always maintains, like a shadow, the awareness of its own violent origin, it remains inviting. This is the indispensable role of the philosopher for any modern democratic society.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We have seen that there are similarities, but also notable differences between the analyses of society in Rawls and Weil. The atavistic and persistent character of violence considered by Weil may point to a weakness in Rawlsian justice theory. According to Felipe, Rawls considers that, if the basic structure of society is just, there is no way to practice or suffer injustices from an institutional point of view (1996, p. 90). Also according to Felipe, a problem may lie in the way Rawls considers institutions, given the possibility of their weakening "if it is not guaranteed that citizens value and effectively want to preserve them" (2001, p. 133, note 2). There would, therefore, be a need for the reasonable for the establishment of Rawlsian justice (Dutra, 2017, p. 685-686). Furthermore, in Rawls there is the unaddressed problem of human nature – what differentiates the human being from other beings? – a problem not addressed to avoid an approximation of his theory of justice with a comprehensive doctrine (Oliveira, 2001, p. 151), a problem that Weil attacks by considering the element of violence present in human nature in an indelible way.

In response to the parallel with Weil's conception of reasonableness, it is possible to argue that Rawls' theory of justice is a thought experiment for the purpose of public enlightenment, so it is important to remember that reasonableness in Rawls implies knowing how to distinguish

'competence' from performance, that is: the reasonable in Rawls falls on moral capacity and not on the real action of the agents. In the first case – competence – there is moral knowledge of the action, its mental conditions. In the second – performance – we see how moral knowledge is used, that is, with the moral behavior of individuals (Silveira, 2013, pp. 51 and 57, note 18). "All that Rawls' theory needs is that individuals can act reasonably, that they can choose from what would be a position of reasonableness, but it doesn't need to rely on the actual action of the subjects" (Silveira, 2013, p. 51). According to Rawls, the citizens' sense of justice is guaranteed when they grow up in just basic institutions, the sense of justice being strong enough to resist recurring tendencies towards injustice, achieving a distribution of justice over time (2000, p. 188). This guarantees the functionality of the Rawlsian thought experiment, which is justice as fairness. For Weil, in turn, the concept of reasonable implies a deviation towards the real possibility always open to human beings: violence.

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The texts in this article were reviewed by third parties and submitted for validation by the author(s) before publication