

The time when one individual seized another by force has thankfully come to an end. However, even with the decline of this ancient practice, a subtle metamorphosis seems to persist in contemporary times. The possession of others is no longer shaped by physical chains but still insinuates itself in a sophisticated manner, permeating the recesses of the human mind.

In this scenario, although freedom is theoretically within reach of any being, curiously, in practice, it does not proceed as expected. An intricate web of mental control now replaces chains, skillfully weaving into the collective consciousness. This phenomenon alludes to voluntary submission, suggesting a paradoxical preference for the comfort of mental servitude over the pursuit of freedom and the assertion of autonomy.

The evolution from physical coercion to a more subtle and psychological form of imprisonment invites us to reflect on the roots of this change. A deeper analysis of the sociocultural, economic, and psychological influences underlying this choice can provide a more comprehensive understanding of this intriguing phenomenon.

Once, Professor Jane Elliott conducted an experiment with her elementary school students in the USA, whose behavior can help us understand our own. At the beginning of the class, Elliott claimed that students with light eyes were superior to others, fostering an environment of discrimination. The next day, Elliott reversed the narrative, stating that students with brown eyes were superior. The quick adaptation of the students to these changes revealed how socially constructed perceptions can shape self-image and, consequently, practical behavior.

This experience, parallel to the evolution of slavery, highlights the powerful and often illusory influence of social narratives in our lives. Illustrating the apparent simplicity of the peasant scenario, under pastoral supervision, the sheep parade in harmony, guided by herd instinct, exploring hills and valleys in search of lush pastures. Meanwhile, the cunning creatures, the wolves, travel in small packs, sharing mutual care and hunting to ensure survival. The apparent symbiosis between these two contrasting worlds has long been socially distorted, fostering disdain for wolves and instilling this feeling in loyal sheepdogs, proclaiming shepherds as the faithful protectors of the sheep.

However, reality may be more complex and paradoxical than portrayed. The shepherds, whose role is to care for the well-being of the sheep, may, at times, reveal a less altruistic

side. The hatred cultivated by shepherds towards wolves, fueled in the hearts of sheepdogs, serves as a veil that obscures the true dynamics of shepherding.

Instead of protecting the sheep, they may actually be protecting their assets. The false security provided by the barriers erected against wolves hides, in reality, the subtle and concealed exploitation that the sheep suffer under the supposed care of the shepherd. The facade of friendship between the shepherd and the sheep, often acclaimed as exemplary, may, in fact, serve as a disguise to conceal real intentions. In effect, the shepherd extracts from the sheep wool, milk, and ultimately, meat, an outcome not much different from what they would have with the wolf.

Thus, this essay challenges the traditional narrative by casting doubt on heroes and villains, inviting us to reexamine the intricate relationship between shepherds, sheep, and wolves that ultimately conditions our behaviors.

“Until the lion learns how to write, every story will glorify the hunter.”

African Proverb