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THE CHARLIE-EFFECT AND THE POLITICS OF NOT-ALL

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ABSTRACT

This article works on the notions of One and feminine jouissance to analyze the politics and ethics of current civilization. This analysis is based on the political events in France starting from the terrorist crimes at the headquarters of the French satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo* and at the *Hyper Cacher* market. The author also reviews the possibility of an ethics of psychoanalysis that measures up to the standards of our times, using the notion of semblant as a tool from a “politics of not-all”.

KEY WORDS

Politics | Ethics | Not-all | Feminine Jouissance | Charlie Hebdo | Terrorism

From its beginnings, Lacan’s teaching warned about the function of psychoanalysis in civilization to think about the intimate connection between its political and ethical dimensions.

The simple idea that ethics concerns the individual and politics concerns the collective is radically questioned. Therefore, the obtuse view that ethics is embraced in order to escape politics is rejected. Instead, by means of his new approach to the death drive, politics and ethics appear as deeply interlinked domains. What is new about his reading of ethics is that he takes the drive from the perspective of the death drive, since in life libido is not opposed to death. Moreover, in Lacan, the conceptualization of jouissance emerges in order to translate the paradoxical and intricate relationship of life and death in the field of the drive’s satisfaction. Likewise, Freudian dualism between life and death is replaced by another form of dualism: that of “internal cleavage” and the dimension of the intrusion of jouissance in the body. In those terms, the ethics of psychoanalysis is founded on the paradox that “this life we’re captive of (...) is as such joined to death, it always returns to death,” and in that way, it is concluded that jouissance itself becomes dark, enigmatic and also the origin of evil. From that confluence of ethics and politics, a question is derived for the psychoanalyst: What jouissance does the subject orient himself/herself with today?

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The problem is compounded by the fact that modern politics is framed within the introduction of the universal, consistent with human rights and the increasingly urgent issue of citizenship. Therefore, under the weight of the presence of science, politics receives the effects of universalization and homogeneity, in which the *for-all* logic prevails. The universal is conceived as something that *can be applied to all*. When in the 18th century Louis de Saint-Just considers that the search for happiness is a factor in politics, the interference of the universal in politics can be easily seen. In other words, the statute of politics is made visible in the face of the claim to unify different subjective states, following universal criteria of happiness, and taking them as valid for everyone. That is why Lacan states that the French political thinker makes the Aristotelian solution to happiness unfeasible in that he withdraws its ethical content in the name of politics, which would be happiness and well-being for all.

The political events that happened in France¹ in response to the terrorist and anti-Semitic killings between January 7 and 9, 2015, at the headquarters of the French satirical weekly magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and *Hyper Cacher* –a *Kosher* market in eastern Paris– involved an immediate response from the French population, and also became evidence of the inadequacy of the category of the universal to capture the scope of these phenomena.

In other words, by ignoring the intertwining between politics and ethics, this horizon of the universal favors the orientations toward the irrepressible willingness to normativize *jouissance*. For psychoanalysis, what is in question in these events is not the clash between East and West, between expressions of different civilizations, but the clash between the diversity of two modes of *jouissance*. The violence of religious jihadist terrorism cannot be explained with history's sole argument; i.e., that this is just a relationship that was established throughout history as Western domination over and discrimination against Muslims². We should also consider those multiple and fragmentary *jouissances* that threaten the cohesion of the social bond and, first of all, admit that this is the starting point for the emergence of the temptation of the universal in the form of a unifying God.

TERRORISM

It becomes evident that the point of view of the universal proves to be incapable of perceiving how the universes of discourse are presented, nowadays, as separate and stagnant. Such events exemplarily show the way in which different discourses, either political or religious, mix up and communicate with each other. Also, in the name of submission to God's will, the *One-God* of Islamic tradition –religious *jihadist* terrorism sacrifices its own life to eliminate that of others. Its action is also qualified as fundamentalist because it is based on the worship of the transcendent *One* that, in the case of Islamic monotheism, is taken to extremes, since it presents itself entirely separate from the *multiple*.

How does libido come into play in the political action of the religious terrorist, considering the importance he gives to the worship of the transcendent cause of *One*? Following Miller, the subjective principle of terrorism has nothing to do with a scoundrel; it presents itself closer to

¹This article was written before the events of November 2015 in Paris. [E.]

²Ali, T. "Guerra entre fundamentalismos" Folha de São Paulo, 11 January 2015. In the name of the History, the author does not assume the responsibility for the decisions taken by the terrorist: "The circumstances that attract young men and women to these groups are not elected by them but by the Western world in which they live - that is itself a result of long years of colonial domain".

the mental functioning of anorexia. To a scoundrel, the Other does not exist because his laws are embodied in the subject himself, in such a way that his ultimate intention lies in wanting to be the Other for someone. In contrast, both the terrorist and the anorexic are prisoners of an Other who expresses himself through the ideal of an “angel’s body” that appears as a messenger who is able to fulfill God’s unlimited will. Albeit differently, there is something sacred and angelical in the strategy of the terrorist and the anorexic, namely, to become a messenger of that absolute Other. The anorexic responds to the devouring will of the maternal Other by her devotion to *eating nothing*, as a means to divide that Other, seeking to restrain her excesses. On the other hand, the terrorist gives proof of his submission to the Absolute with an unlimited sacrificial jouissance because, beyond the provision of the extermination of the blasphemer, his own life is placed as a point (target) of the supreme sacrifice.

It is true that psychoanalysis does not flourish in places where the right to blasphemy and to the power of irony are banned, let alone where the transcendence of the One hinders the depletion of the deadly jouissance of the sacrifice exercised in the name of God. It is feminine otherness itself which tests the true nature of these discourses committed to the segregational tendency stemming from this absolute One. There is no extraterritoriality of psychoanalytical practice in the face of other discourses, since the free flow of words typical of a plural social order is inherent to psychoanalysis. It is evident that Lacan had plenty of reasons to teach a Seminar during the effervescent May of 1968, in Paris, with the title “The Other Side of Psychoanalysis”. As we know, the other side of psychoanalysis is the master. Then, through the treatment given to the feminine in Lacan’s teaching, it can be inferred that the politics of psychoanalysis is the opposite of the master’s discourse.

NOT-ALL

Therefore, the politics of psychoanalysis is the politics that is deduced from the otherness typical of the feminine embodied by the logical writing of *not-all*. When it is claimed that the politics of *not-all* is the great pillar of the politics of psychoanalysis, it is because its invention is configured as the objection to that which underlies the master’s discourse in tune with the postulate of the Universal. In contrast, the politics of *not-all* takes objects as singular, because they appear as resistant to any exemplification or prediction required. It is necessary to consider how the sexualization tables take the feminine as a rupture with this way of understanding the Universal. This is a new way of how negation influences the universal quantifier “for-all”, and not the predicate itself; i.e., the universal value of the phallic function. That clearly devolves upon the problem of the distribution of that function in the context of the constitution of what a woman’s *being of jouissance* is. In other words, to postulate sexual difference, it is necessary to conceive the feminine as an objection, in that case, to the universal quantification of the phallic function. From that contraposition, each woman embodies –in her *being of jouissance*– pure exception. In fact, there are only exceptions, there are only femininities! When it is said that in the feminine universe there are only exceptions, one can risk saying that it means bringing into existence a “paradoxical Universal that is configured as a whole (all) that in each case negates that whole (all)”.

This negation of the whole (all) appears in Lacan’s teaching by means of the formulation of the foreclosure of the signifier of the symbolic “THE” woman from the symbolic, implying that every woman is led to invent a singular way of bringing into existence that which does not exist; i.e., the Other sex for the parlêtre. Whereas every man can be taken as a particular example of a set, because everything is inscribed in phallic jouissance, a jouissance that determines a means of substitution in relation to the Other sex, a woman will have to be taken in the singular, since the particular case of the set does not exist. *Bringing into existence that which does not exist*, as is the case of the feminine, becomes the core typical of the politics of *not-all*.

From the fanaticism for a transcendent cause of the One or from the universalization imposed by that which must be uniformly valid for all, to barbarism, there are only a few steps. When every culture clings to the universal principle of its beliefs, it comes closer to the disaster of segregation whose ultimate limit is barbarism. The clash of religions conceals the existence of the different modes of condensation of the jouissance of sacred objects. Some years ago, Lacan warned that the secret to impasse for future civilizations is segregation. The politics of psychoanalysis is that which contains the real antidote to segregation, since it knows that it is not possible to oppose Islamophobia to anti-Semitism and vice versa. As I said before, this also serves for the diversity of civilizing manifestations: There are only exceptions! But stop there! It is not a question of a mere affirmation of differences by differences themselves, of exceptions by exceptions themselves. In addition to a narrow conception of the plurality of the social order, Lacan himself warns that the agreement with this dimension of exception is something that, first of all, mobilizes the responsibility of the *parlêtre*.

As he emphasizes, that factor of the responsibility of the politics of *not-all* is so essentially radical that it risks being taken as a terrorist.^{xi} Nevertheless, that probable terrorism of responsibility, by *making that which does not exist worth existing*, is not ignorant of the death drive; i.e., it is conscious that it cannot despise the various forms of semblants of civilization. On the other hand, *making that which does not exist worth existing* implies, in turn, shaking the semblants of civilization, revealing the basis of semblant of the signifiers of tradition. Civilized life is held together by means of semblants, even those that stem from religion –that is, there are no societies without repression, without identifications. Therefore, it is not overlooked that, by despising those semblants, they can ferociously turn back against civilization itself. However, the only politics capable of preserving the semblants that favor life is granting them the *not-all* existence; i.e., that they are incommensurable one in relation to the others, and that, in that diversity, they neither cease to condense, not without opacity, the real dimension of a jouissance by which each *parlêtre*, in their own way, responds.

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