


## Indiciary paradigm as a possibility of textual reading: Perverse logic in politics

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2024.026-046>

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### ABSTRACT

This article presents an indiciary and ethnographic inventory inspired by Ginzburg (2007) and Žižek (2010), presenting an analysis of the affects contained in the emotions present in politics, under a new light of interpretation of totalitarianism, which goes beyond instrumental rationality, seeking a dialogue with psychoanalysis, dealing with the perverse logic of ideology in both intellectual and artistic productions.

**Keywords:** Ideology, Perverse logic, Totalitarian regimes, Indiciary paradigm and Psychoanalysis.

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## INTRODUCTION

The historian's challenge in studying the history of the present immediately raises the discussion around the objectivity of knowledge. The distancing from the object of study, in the case of history, requires extra attention. However, we believe that no historical construction, "whether from this century or from the past, is immune to the prejudices and deviations of historians (...) it means affirming that all history is thought from the time of the historian who seeks in the near past the interlocutions for the understanding of reality" (SANTOS, 2009, p. 10).

The constant proposal to maintain the political dimension of our analyses recalls one of the main accusations made against history, for studying, among other things, the local political conjunctures. In this regard, René Remond states:

If the political must be explained first of all by the political, there is also more in the political than the political, and consequently political history could not close itself around itself, nor take pleasure in the exclusive contemplation of its own object. Nor to privilege one type of relationship: there is, for example, no scientific reason to establish a closer connection between the political and the economic than with the ideological, the cultural, or any other term of relationship" (RENÉ REMOND (1996 p.36).

That said, we believe that the importance of studying the perverse logic in politics, from the perspective of political history and history of the present, points to possibilities of relations between history and power and their inseparable character (FALCON, 1997).

The fragment of the text *The Narrator* (BENJAMIN, 1993, P. 221) partially translates the objective of this article, which is to tell the experience of reading a thought-provoking text, such as that of Slavoj Žižek, entitled "The perverse subject in politics: Lacan as a reader of Mohammad Bouyeri", where the author analyzes the letter of a Muslim fanatic, Mohammad Bouyeri. In the text, there is an affective memory and a diversity of stories, tales, films that bring out artistic sensibility, with the aim of establishing a relationship between past, present and future, history, affections and politics.

## THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE TEXT

At first it was difficult, because to a certain extent still crystallized with the logic of study and research of the positivist paradigm, it was necessary to read and reread to perceive the signs, clues, traces and indications present in Žižek's text. As Ginzburg (2007, p. 11) states, "reading historical testimonies against the grain, or as Walter Benjamin suggested, against the intentions of those who produced them" to understand totalitarian regimes, misogyny and religious fundamentalism, with imbrications with the logic of the perverse subject coined by Lacan. To guide the text, we use the paths taken by Paulo Freire (2011) who, when writing about the



importance of reading, reaffirms that to read words is to read the world, and with this we "re-read" fundamental moments of our experiences as individual and collective subjects. In our case, we "re-read" as mothers and educators, who carry out research and extension projects in the area of human formation.

## PERVERSE LOGIC IN POLITICS

In order to unveil the authoritarian ideologies present in our intellectual and artistic productions, it is urgent to think about the political and ideological effects of the unconscious emotions that affect us and are present in the historical and cultural formation of Brazil. Seeking to discuss this issue, we will follow two paths to understand: how perverse logic operates in us and how resistance to this logic is possible.

In order to understand how perverse logic operates in us, it is urgent to unveil the "role played by unconscious emotions in the formation of ideologies, politics and social structure" (RODRIGUES, 2014, p. 67). Considering the individual psychic dimension of the subject in politics is, in our view, not only important but also urgent, because consciousness (Reason) does not control impulses and thoughts so efficiently. In fact, the revolution announced by Freud was precisely that "the unconscious is made of thought. It is a question here of the subject not of unreason, but of unconscious reason, whose logic is also presented through a method" (QUINET, 2011, p. 12). Thus, it is possible to conjecture that the perverse logic that operates in politics – in religious fundamentalism, in totalitarian regimes or in misogyny – is not only commanded by political, economic and cultural conjunctures and as purely conscious actions, but mainly by unconscious emotions. In other words, understanding authority and power also as emotions contained in the unconscious helps us to broaden our view of the historical and cultural process of Brazil, analyzing its political-affective implications in social relations. Behaviors or thoughts reveal feelings that help us to unravel the contradictions and ambiguities present in Brazilian political culture.

What we are affirming is that the subject is simultaneously individual and collective and that his emotions are a manifestation of politics:

"Affection is political and shapes our actions much more than thought. We highlight Lacan's maxim (1966/1988), that the unconscious is structured as a language and this language is a drive. (...) language is life (drive) and offers a very rich material for the analysis of social symptoms (RODRIGUES, 2014, P. 239).

Putting together evidence present in different political discourses, we can observe that conservative or totalitarian thinking is always motivated by emotions of anguish and fear. Cerqueira Filho, discussing the difficulties and impasses of this thought/feeling conceptualized

by him as affective authoritarianism, states that with the crisis of the judiciary in contemporary times we have become "mini-States" and have started to submit the norms exclusively to our personal interests and decisions (CERQUEIRA FILHO, 2005).

In this sense, perverse logic can be observed in political discourses of different shades, particularly in the current political conjuncture of radicalized modernity (GIDDENS, 1991, p. 13), where it becomes imperative to problematize how resistance to this logic is possible? As possibilities of counterpoint to the perverse logic, we bring to the debate what would be the ethical act. For Žižek, the subject who acts within the perverse logic, or the "perverse", is the one who seeks to meet the will of a great other, regardless of how it inflicts suffering on someone. In short, he is capable of causing suffering to others with the awareness that he is only fulfilling a duty and therefore is not responsible for the pain he causes. The ethical act, on the other hand, is the opposite of perverse logic, the subject, even in all kinds of adversities (mistreatment, unfair accusations), persists and does not give in to the temptation to humiliate, torture, because he is fully aware that he is responsible for all his acts.

Thus, in contrast, an ethical act is the opposite of the perverse elevation of oneself to an instrument of the great other is (...) "Simple persistence against all odds is ultimately the raw material of which ethics is made." The question is how would this resistance take place? If we think of perverse logic as evidence, Foucault's discussion would help us a lot, but as our analysis also falls on the understanding of this logic as a symptom, we will seek in the discussions about memory, in dialogue with psychoanalysis, a possible path for the construction of true ethics, as opposed to this perverse elevation of ourselves, as emphasized by Žižek (2006. p. 142)

The contribution of Foucault's studies to confronting the perverse logic in politics is based on the understanding of power as a set of devices of subjection that circulates. Therefore, power is not a thing, but a relationship that produces effects at the macro and micro levels. It has a positivity, which translates into effectiveness. For the author, knowledge is a fundamental piece of power relations, and the analysis of domination is hidden in the various instances and as practices, knowledge, which do not appear as practices of subjection and domination. Foucault states that we act in the illusion that we are free, without understanding what power produces in us and, therefore, inevitably, we can become accomplices of our own domination (FOUCAULT, 2001). Thus, the confrontation proposed by Foucault would be to resist from the perspective of the agonistic, making criticism; engaging in punctual and specific struggles; offering ourselves as a point of resistance, within the understanding that power crosses us.

With the intention of expanding and not opposing Foucault's thought, we bring the possibility of thinking, not knowledge, but emotions, as a fundamental piece of power. With this, we will rely on the discussion of memory, problematizing forgetting or remembering, seeking to



build the proposal of Žižek's text on ethics, as a confrontation with the device of subjection present in the perverse logic of politics embodied in ideology. Ideology here is understood as a conception, not as a concept, given the complexity of the phenomena to which it refers. So we think like Eagleton that:

(...) Ideology is more a matter of "discourse" than of "language" – more a matter of concrete discursive effects than of meanings as such. It represents the points at which power has an impact on certain enunciations and is tacitly inscribed within them. But it should not, therefore, be equated with any form of discursive partisanship, "self-interested" discourse, or rhetorical bias; rather, the concept of ideology aims to reveal something of the relationship between an enunciation and its material conditions of possibility, when these conditions of possibility are seen in the light of certain power struggles central to reproduction" (EAGLETON, 1997, p. 104 and 105).

That said, we emphasize that one of the concrete effects of power, present in the mechanism of ideologies, is forgetfulness. So, following the principle of "mnemotechnics" announced by Nietzsche (apud WEINRICH, 2001), the pressing issue between forgetting and remembering involves the need to keep forgetting within certain limits. The challenge would be, then, to think that, based on reflections on guilt that remain in the memory only because they cause us pain, forgetfulness should be limited for moral reasons. But how to do it, if guilt and pain are stored in the unconscious and therefore not fully accessible to reason?

Weinrich, in dialogue with Nietzsche, makes approximations with Freud's studies, presenting questions about mnemotechnics, now on the psychoanalytic basis. In a first observation, we could say that Freud is opposed to Nietzsche, if we understand that for psychoanalysis we forget what is unpleasant, guilty, painful, instead of remembering as Nietzsche says. However, we only apparently forget what causes us pain. Freud states that, in fact, we always remember our pains. They reveal themselves in the symptoms, which appear and reappear repeatedly and, almost always, without our awareness of what they reveal, to which pains they refer. For if they are repressed, although always present, we do not know, we are ignorant of their meaning, just as when we are challenged by an ideology. Reason does not reach meaning, because the logic that is operating is that of the unconscious. This path seeks the use of the method of investigation of psychoanalysis, that is, the psychoanalytic hermeneutics of discourse analysis, in a dialogue with history in the study of ideology. Ideology, as part of the social instance, is the architect of the subject's conduct. The social analysis of ideology

"requires the explanation of the process in which the global structure, through the ideological apparatuses and from the concrete social practices in which the individual is inserted, determines the universe of meanings that impacts the subject who, in turn, elaborates it at an imaginary level in his psychic structure, resulting in an internalized ideology. Thus, the system of the unconscious is linked to the ideological instance, because the manifestations of the

unconscious are supported by practices (acting) and discourses (thinking)" (RODRIGUES, 2008, p. 70).

In this sense, the question between remembering and forgetting needs to be understood, understanding that the repressed has not been forgotten, because it has not been resolved, it remains in the unconscious, working to frighten the soul, producing diseases, such as unconscious subjection to perverse logic. So "the patient is forced to repeat incessantly what is repressed/forgotten, as a symptom of illness" (WEINRICH, 2001, p. 187). With the objective of treatment, the psychoanalyst makes his patient speak, for the construction of ethics. Similarly, in order to make a critical analysis of the affects present in the ideological discourse, we can return to Benjamin, agreeing with Weinrich, and use narrative as a strategy of memory that is political; narrating and allowing oneself to be narrated as a process of social analysis of ideology and, therefore, a process of resistance, through the criticism of perverse logic.

### **THE INDICIARY AND ETHNOGRAPHIC INVENTORY OF THE TEXT "THE PERVERSE SUBJECT OF POLITICS: LACAN AS A READER OF MOHAMMAD BOUYERI".**

Like a "detective", with knowledge, looks, desires and multiple languages, we followed the clues left by Žižek and produced the following analysis:

The text deals with an analysis of totalitarianism and political fundamentalism. To carry out this analysis with greater propriety, the author makes use of psychoanalysis based on Lacan and interprets historical acts of politics and religion using concepts coined by Lacan, such as: the perverse subject and the ethical subject. The characters and plots present in the text are contained in the presentation that we will make of temporality when presenting the ethnographic inventory.

Following the guidance of an ethnographic inventory, we organized the study with the following themes: temporality, conjuncture, periodization, problem, argument, digression, argumentative reinforcement, conclusion.

In relation to temporality, the text establishes a dialogue between present, future and past, and presents discussions at three levels. The first, citing examples of experiences, problematizing perverse logic; the second, building possibilities to broaden the understanding of how this logic operates in us; and the third, problematizing how resistance to this logic is possible. Let's go to the text: as examples of perverse logic, the author presents the trial, which took place in 1963, of Adolf Eichmann, treated by Hannah Arendt as a Nazi executioner, who was tried for killing thousands of Jews during the holocaust and who claimed that he was simply fulfilling his duty as an official. It also brings to the debate a murder carried out in 2004 by a

Muslim. The religious extremist claimed to have murdered the Dutch documentary filmmaker Theo Van Gogh because he, by producing documentaries, in partnership with the Muslim, Hirshi Ali, about the mistreatment suffered by Muslim women, would be going against the truth preached in the Koran.

In order to problematize the relationship between truths and lies, the author brings to the debate plays by William Shakespeare, dated 1601 and 1608 (*Well is what ends well* or *All is well when it ends well*) and 1566 and 1600 (*As You Like It*); he also highlights the existence of works of art by two great painters of Ancient Greece, Zeuxis and Parrásio, works dating from the 5th century BC; He also narrates the defeat of June 1848 in which the deputies of the party of Order were also pretending to be republicans to be what they really were.

On the third level, the author presents what he called Lacan's ethical act. To build his argument, the author turns to a documentary on the spread of the culture of life, produced in 2005, emphasizing the fundamental role of Pope John Paul II for the end of communism in Poland and perhaps throughout Europe. It also describes the experience lived by Anne Frank in the period between 1942 and 1944 which, with her diary, allowed a problematizing analysis of the Second World War; narrates a story that took place in the late 40s, of Sophia Karpai, and the conspiracy plan built to exterminate Jewish doctors. Although the author does not give details, it opens the possibility of also understanding the importance of the role played by Hannah Arendt, during the trial of the Nazi executioner, as a true ethical act.

The conjuncture is contemporaneity. The periodization of the text dates from 2004, focusing on the perverse logic that operates in fundamentalism. We then come to the problems present in the text. They are: Can resisting the temptation not to humiliate, torture and murder be considered an ethical effort (true ethical act)? And what does the wicked not understand, in his effort, to absolutely separate truths from lies?

Analyzing the arguments present in the text, we find four that we consider important: misogyny and religious fundamentalism, as unconscious feelings in the examples brought in the text; the relationship of a perverse logic present in politics, religion and women, as truths with seductive appearances to the subject; the figure of Mohammad Bouyeri, who obeys the perverse logic present in religious fundamentalism and recognizes in women the infernal phallic powers; and finally, the true ethical act presented in the text, using examples of women, Hannah Arendt, Anne Frank, Sophia Karpai. This was presented as the opposite of the perverse elevation of oneself to an instrument of the great other.

From the perspective of the digression, the author begins the text with the murder of the Dutch documentary filmmaker Theo Van Gogh, in Amsterdam, in 2004, and uses the technique of free association, going through several previous historical moments to analyze the fact.





As an argumentative reinforcement, the author uses some examples to explain the logic of temptation. However, we notice that he organizes these examples in two moments: the first to emphasize the perverse logic and the second to show the effort to resist this logic.

In perverse logic, the author emphasizes that the falsehood of the perverse lies in his own unconditional attachment to the truth, and in his refusal to listen to the truth, which resonates in a lie. As examples, Shakespeare's plays, the works of art of the painters Zeuxis and Parrásio, and the defeat of June 1848 were presented; The author makes it clear that the subject makes himself the instrument-object of the will of others. The examples cited are the murder of Dutch documentary filmmaker Theo Van Gogh and the letter threatening Hirshi Ali; The examples of the true ethical act, cited by the author, as a counterpoint to the perverse logic, are: Hirshi Ali, an ardent fighter for the rights of Muslim women - religious fundamentalism; Annah Arend, an author who describes the subterfuge used by the executioners to be able to endure the horrible acts they committed – they followed orders; Pope John Paul II, who propagated the culture of life as our only hope against the culture of death; Anne Frank, who declared her belief that there is a spark of goodness in every human being, and lastly, Sophia Karpai who with the impact of her perseverance averted yet another catastrophe in Soviet society and politics in general, and saved the lives of thousands, if not millions of people.

The perverse logic can be observed in greater action in religious fundamentalism, totalitarian regimes and misogyny; history shows that in totalitarian regimes, Stalin promoted horrible purges and executions, claiming that he did everything for the progress of humanity; in politics linked to religion, Osama Bin Laden and Bush acted on the assumption that their actions are directly ordered and guided by the divine will. We can also observe this logic in misogyny. The discussion of misogyny is present in both Lacan's and Shakespeare's works. The examples of both, highlighted by Žižek, allow us to observe the self-perception – present in Shakespeare's plays – of the female figure, who appears as the only one who can overcome appearance, and also in Lacan, when he states that "only a woman can pretend to be what she is not". The author concludes, using a fragment of Lacan: "only a woman can pretend to be what she is (...) and if in order to reign the law has to be based on the reciprocal action of deception and deception (ZIZEK, 2006. P. 142).

By way of conclusion, we can highlight that the dialogue between history and psychoanalysis opens a fruitful space in the understanding of the emotions that affect the subjects and that, therefore, are present in the political discourse and embodied in the ideologies taken as discursive formations, in the words of Foucault. The social analysis of ideologies can reveal something of the relationship between an enunciation and its material conditions of possibility, when these conditions of possibility are seen in the light of power struggles for the





reproduction of capitalism and its perverse logic of domination, which is traversed in different forms, including religious ones. The critique of the effects of this mechanism requires a paradigm beyond instrumental rationality, for the perception of ideology and its logic. We believe that our proposal of analysis, even if incipient, can provoke developments that bring the power to modify our way of perceiving and being in the world and help to re-elaborate the role of the human formation of the intellectual.



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