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The Plague of Violence
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The Plague of Violence

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DEDICATORIA

To my mom.

AGRADECIMIENTOS

For my family the backbone of my life,
to my friends, who have motivated me,
to my professors, who inspired me to be the academic that I am today and challenged my
mainstream knowledge, Tamara and Germán.

RESUMEN

El concepto de violencia ha tenido discontinuidades históricamente. Sin embargo, ha mantenido su brújula binaria, aquellos que cometen actos horribles deben ser los perpetradores y los que sufren deben ser las víctimas. Así mismo violencia y el mal son continuamente percibidos como sinónimos debido a una confusión existencial sobre las suposiciones y estrategias que usamos. Estas suposiciones influyen en la percepción que tenemos hacia los perpetradores como malos, que necesariamente no es el caso. Independientemente de esta confusión existe un constante esfuerzo de alejar la violencia y el mal de uno mismo y de los demás en el cuerpo social. Lo prioritario en la vida se convierte en la necesidad perpetua de reducir la incertidumbre existencial a través de técnicas de distracción. A través de estas técnicas, los “otros” y lo desconocido se conciben como malvados. Este artículo cualitativo discutirá que hay una confusión existencial entre violencia y mal. La cual nos lleva a asumir que la violencia puede ser borrada. Sin embargo, mientras exista un cuerpo social, esta prevalecerá debido a su instrumentalidad. Explora la forma en que vemos la violencia y la maldad de acuerdo al conocimiento convencional y cómo ciertas formas de violencia se legitiman a través de la realidad anestesiada. También examina la gran influencia que la tradición judeocristiana tiene sobre el cuerpo social.

ABSTRACT

The concept of violence has had discontinuities historically. However, it has kept its binary compass: those who commit heinous acts must be the perpetrators and those who suffer must be victims. Moreover, violence and evil are continuously perceived as synonyms, due to an existential misconception over the assumptions and strategies we use. These assumptions influence the perception we have over perpetrators as evil, but this is not necessarily the case. Regardless of this misconception, a constant effort is in place to push violence and evil away from the self and those inside the social body. Life's priority becomes the perpetual need to lower uncertainty existentially through distraction techniques. Through these techniques, the "others" and the unknown are conceived as evil. This qualitative paper argues that an existential misconception stands between violence and evil. Leading us to assume that violence can be obliterated. However, as long as there is a social body violence will prevail due to its instrumentality. It explores the way in which we see both violence and evil according to mainstream knowledge, and how certain forms of violence are legitimized through the anesthetized reality. It also examines the heavy influence Judeo-Christian tradition has upon the social body.

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THE PLAGUE OF VIOLENCE

Introduction

The most common form of human evil according to western¹ common knowledge is violence, because it is tangible, performative and easy to pinpoint when perpetrators are needed to take the blame. However, a social interaction has always called my attention: the constant state of fighting violence with escalated violence. This cyclical fight is one of the outcomes due to an existential misconception over the binary assumptions and strategies we use daily. Violence and evil should be seen in a holistic way, which is difficult to do due to our current dualist common knowledge. In addition, due to the perception of violence as evil, violence is witnessed as a plague, making humans uneasy to be directly associated with violence. In fact, salvation and superior placement can only be gained by distancing the self from violence through the passive trait of asceticism, which avoids all sorts of pleasures or sins by turning inward.

The plague of violence can be fought off aggressively or ought to be avoided through honorable anticipation. Notwithstanding, people who commit violent actions can never recognize their actions as evil due to the use of distraction techniques such as religion or material aspirations (Ruiz 2011, 21). These techniques distance the self from the outside world, which anesthetize our senses, blocking our capabilities to understand and accept existence. Because we are constantly trying to convince ourselves that violence and the world is invariable. Thereof, as mentioned by Arendt, inquiry of violence should be kept alive and should not be taken for

¹ Through the whole paper, the word “Western” will be in lowercase. By writing “Western” with a capitalized letter, we are already implying the superiority “binary conception” of the western civilization over others.

granted (1972, 110). True terror, as defined here, is to ignore violence while justifying every wrongdoing through a tautology of violence as evil.

This paper will argue the fact that humans are naively trying to eradicate violence due to its binary/dualist misconception as evil. However, violence cannot be obliterated, due to the implicit rivalry inside the social body. For this purpose, this paper will address the connotation both violence and evil have inside dualist knowledge propelling the use of factual language, which will be defined later on. This study will try to understand how the social body condemns some forms of violence while others are justified. Finally, this paper will analyze how the social contract works through a Teleological Measuring Stick (TMS), as well as the influence Judeo-Christian beliefs have over the social contract.

Chapter I: The Idea of Violence

In this first section, we will explore the connotation that both violence and evil have gained through common knowledge, which is tied to a dualist/separation-based lens. To do so, we will first analyze the separation thought process on which dualism is based. Then we will see how we perceive violence as inherent to perpetrators and foreign to the victims through this lens. Finally we will study the origin of the binary composition violence/evil have with good/pure and its role in humiliating the other. In addition, throughout this whole paper common knowledge will be regarded as the “normal, objective, or real” state of things, propelled by the facticity of things in language also defined as factual language.

The Immersion of Thought

The thought process we have adopted has the need to reach a continuous objective reality, which must be independent from everything outside the self or the mind. This process builds our common knowledge through a dualist/separation lens that condition our assumptions of the given reality. Dualism draws a straight dissociable line between what is categorized as good “victim” and what is categorized as bad “evil”. It assumes the world as totally independent and certain, because our primary goal is to lower uncertainty in a world filled with anxiety, thus promoting a binary understanding of the world through factual language. Factual language nullifies all connecting symbolism within things. In contrast with poetry it heavily depends upon the limited human condition, therefore, is constantly trying to persuade us of the categorical invariability of the world (Watts 1969, 11). Factual language tries to erase the polarities or existential

discontinuities², which must not be seen as ill fortune because a discontinuity is simply a change of thought and therefore actions. The assumptions we have are given by a discourse forged through factual language. Discourse, even though factual, does not really care about rationality or objectivity, which is not necessarily bad, for objectivity should not be seen as the goal. Nonetheless, it claims an objectivity while creating a cyclical biased world by looking at it with one eye shut.

Factual language as the only way to speak limits our thought process and the assumptions we have of our given reality. For instance, using a binary compass produced through factual language leads people to perceive violence as inherent to others but not to themselves. Factual language assumes that the self must be categorized positively and violence is something incompatible with the self. Something can only be one thing and not two things at the same time, if the other is violent he must be evil and cannot be good/pure. This binary thought process forges self-contradictions, which beings when people start dealing with socially assumed concepts such as violence. In the light of social binary assumptions as explained by Zizek, “The antinomy arises because it is possible to construct valid arguments for both sides of the question: we can conclusively demonstrate that the universe is finite and that it is infinite” (2008, 105). Nonetheless, the antinomies in the world do not rise due to a limited human condition as many authors such as Zizek and Watts mention, but is rather a consequence of the limited thought process we have unanimously embraced.

The incoherencies in the thought process are an outcome of complex dynamics. It relies upon interconnected, complex, socio-political and socio-economic systems, which are used as

² Michel Foucault in his book *The Order of things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (1970) uses the term discontinuity as synonymous for multiplicities, which will also be used in this paper. Foucault explains that a discontinuity is simply a change in thought, when an old way of thinking is replaced by a new one due to an erosion from outside. (53-54).

rational institutions of verification. These institutions such as law, order and social rules influence the social body, by verifying and establishing what is consensually acceptable or punishable. Therefore, these social institutions are constantly organizing and creating dualist/binary categories. They play a game of Biopolitics, an authoritarian administration of the body and mind, whose authority Foucault describes as involving “the rules and processes of appropriation of discourse... and the capacity to invest this discourse in decisions, institutions, or practices” (1989, 75). Those with a positive category, authority, or “status” are able to reuse or update the meaning of things and statements. They can dictate who is good or bad and what is evil and pure. Words said in the right way or said by people with certain status can change the assumptions people have of common things.

The current thought process previously mentioned has a practical functionality, because the social structure will constantly try to protect itself from the outside world as a way to maintain consensus and continuity. It creates an “enclosed” identity through an illusion of public consensus, while providing an illusion of modern freedom called *Gesellschaft*.³ This statement over the functionality must not be taken as an attack over this dualist process, but must be seen as another perception over the process. Continuity is the only way to establish order and discover general categories; without it, factual language and dualism would fall (Foucault 1970, 158). Therefore, continuity hides the absurd in what is perceived as a default, such as social habits or culture that are performed for the sake of their historical continuity. Discontinuities on the other hand would imply multiplicities and ruptures in any domain. The ruptures mean that the binary

³ Ferdinand Tönnies (1997) mentions that the social order in the primitive *Gemeinschaft* is dictated by irrational mores and religion. The *Gesellschaft* on the other hand requires rationality through institutions, science, and laws, which are based on supposedly conscious collective rationality. All in all the urban *Gesellschaft* is a direct reaction against rural irrational thought, nonetheless religious elements of the *Gemeinschaft* will always be lingering in the *Gesellschaft*. Coupled with the fact that the *Gesellschaft* urges rationality, “Tendencies to urge the state to use its irresistible power to force everyone to do what is useful and to leave undone what is damaging” (70).

categorization will fail to work, because discontinuities negate the dualist assumption that the world is seen only through a continuity of two opposing symbols and not a multiplicity of symbols.

A dualist thought process relies on status, which depends upon context. Due to this dependence on context or ‘face of the period’, words are only a sequence of signs set by authority’s perception. They can be heavily vulnerable to misinterpretation and change, with this in mind, “a status that is never definitive, but modifiable, relative, and always susceptible of being questioned” (Foucault 1989, 115). A great example of social discontinuities is the act of human killings⁴. Europeans commonly used human killings during the neo-pagan era. They used to perform massive killings as a way to appease the ancient gods⁵, because death meant a renewal leading to a far more important cosmic balance (Bray 2008, 131-132). However, this act of killing another human for religion nowadays is barbarized by our own white western culture. This is due not because sacrifice itself is seen as a wrongdoing, but the act of killing someone has acquired a negative status, it is categorized as a genocide worthy of condemnation by authority.

The Perception of Violence

The categorization of violence as evil is highly subjective, because the perception of evil depends on the eye of the beholder. Since categorization relies on status and not on content, a jury or people who were not involved whatsoever in a violent act can still categorize someone as a perpetrator. As Gilligan mentions “I have often heard people explain a person’s violence by

⁴ The word “killings” is used in this section, for using “sacrifice” would mean that life is far too important to be ended. Life is better than death. This implies a TMS, which will be explained later on.

⁵ From this moment onward God will be a pivotal point. However, I do not agree with the importance the word God has over our existence nor our perception of what is good or bad through the principles of morality. Therefore, even though it is grammatically incorrect, god will be presented in the lowercase.

saying, ‘He must just be evil’. This usually happens when no one understands why the individual committed the crime.... or when the crime, even if there is an apparent motive, is so heinous as to defy ordinary human understanding” (1997, 91- 92). The connotation given to others as “evil” is only a value judgment that comes from the status the perpetrator has, leading him to gain such a negative categorization by others with a positive status. This categorization is given to the perpetrators as a reaction towards their inferior binary categorization.

To discern evil in a different perspective than only dualism, one needs to understand that everyone has the same potential to be evil as good, because violent acts do not necessarily come from criminals or aggressive people. The social body perceives the majority of evil from perpetrators, which mostly regard themselves as innocents. In fact, for the perpetrators it is quite difficult to acknowledge their acts as evil due to egotism⁶. They might even try to justify their actions as divine justice due to their need of self-innocence, which implies self-importance. This sense of self-importance/egotism can also be translated into high self-esteem, which also increases the need of respect by others. Both Gilligan and Baumeister mention that people with high self-esteem when disrespected by others execute violent acts by losing their “self-control”. Here the loss of self-esteem is translated as the death of the self, which is far more important than the death of the body. Normally violence is the consequence of small trivialities in contrast of “rational self-interest” theory⁷. The escalating hostility is due to the “secret shame” of feeling anger over those irrational trivialities, in other words, “regardless of the root causes of violence, the immediate cause is often a breakdown of self-control” (Baumeister 2015, 372). The way that

⁶ Roy Baumeister in his book *Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty* (2015) mentions that violence through the eyes of the perpetrator is differently seen in contrast with the eyes of the victim. Not only evil is responsible to explain violence, but also the sense of high self-esteem, “We will see that egotism is an important and pervasive cause of evil. Unlike this case, though, egotism usually causes evil because people strike out at those who insult, criticize, or humiliate them” (312).

⁷ James Gilligan on this book *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic* mentions that violence most likely does not have a rational cause. In spite of thinking otherwise through a rational self-interest theory “assumes that those who engage in violence do so for the reasons of rational self-interest and common sense... and all we need to do prevent violence is to threaten to punish those who would commit such acts with greater violence of our own” (1997, 94).

violence is witnessed has nothing to do with existential reality, for violence is mostly distorted by the *myth of pure violence*⁸, which portrays violent acts as being exclusive to some minority groups such as blacks or Muslims. This myth of pure violence relies not on content but upon the categorical status of these minority groups. Therefore, when the subject of the violent act committed does not have the status of those exclusively violent groups, a status of “insanity” is designated as the root cause of evil actions.

Separating the victims as the innocents from the perpetrators as the ones with lack of self-control is hyper-subjective, because there are no clear borders in any sort of categorization. If anything can be categorized inside the concept of “good” or “pure” this also implies that things have the potential to be equally “bad” or “evil”. The problem is not violence itself. The ultimate problem is the thought process we have inherited from dualism, because evil is not the static tangible trait we might think it is, but is simply the other spectrum of good, the antinomy of the concept (Arendt 1972, 155). We only see a glimpse of what violence is due to our anesthetized senses. Nevertheless, we must not see the anesthetizing of the senses negatively because we are programmed to see the world in this way.

The disassociation of the commonly known concept of violence is filled with dualist ruptures or “contradictions”. These ruptures and discontinuities are simply there to propel categorization whilst trying to erase the uncertainty of things by attempting to create concreteness. According to Trowsell, “When reality is perceived to be so uncertain in the light of no connectedness and when we are filled with anxiety because of it, decreasing that uncertainty becomes the principle existential drive” (2013, 281). This singular outlook influences

⁸ Ibid., 435. The myth of pure violence is a tendency that those in minority groups or those that are underprivileged are given the exclusivity of violence. The reaction of violence is more concrete and predictable, “having a perpetrator from a different race increased the resemblance to the popular, deeply rooted myth of evil” (2015).

the assumptions and therefore the strategies we use in the world. In other words, when someone is evil in a separatist/ dualist thought process, that same person cannot be good at the same time, despite the fact that antinomies imply unity. The primary goal is to lower this existential uncertainty through invariability. This is because dualism in contrast with other existential lenses such as monism is constantly alienating us from everything outside ourselves, which rather backfires and increases paranoia over more uncertainty.

The Binary Compass

Modern morals and the transformation of what is good or bad is an outcome of the artificial binary compass we use to generate common knowledge. This acts as a compass because it directs the social body towards the assumptions it should have over existence, guiding us towards the strategies we should adopt. However, the compass is binary because it can only see two opposites and not multiplicities, meaning it can only account for two contrasting symbols. This binary compass is one of the outcomes of the dualist lens we use towards our understanding of things. Because dualism as previously mentioned divides things as having only two parts, which are dissociable for they need to be opposites. However, in the western religious thought process what can be good or bad have no clear-cut borders.

Due to this binary assumption of the world, there is this constant need to draw a dissociable line between the others and yourself, which is normally reached through the constant humiliation of the other. The most notorious way to separate yourself from others through humiliation is through the categorization of the concept “masters” and “slaves”, also known as “superior” and “inferior.” The slaves who inhabit in a negative status of inferiority, also referred as the common man, do not hold responsibility nor do they have a life project due to their lack of

self-ownership. In contrast, the masters hold a positive status of superiority, they are responsible, life-owning people and own a life project. The pivotal point is the status of superiority versus inferiority that in dualism is translated into “good” and “bad” accordingly. The invariability of this division, when following a binary compass, implies humiliation. This categorization of masters versus slaves can lead to violent responses through a drive toward revenge by those categorized negatively as the common man. Nietzsche calls this drive of revenge “a morality of resentment”, which in this paper will be described as “evil morality”.

Modern morality is the outcome of an evil morality, triggered by resentment, where the self does not gain anything tangible from evil morality. However, it gains the violent satisfaction of damaging the other out of revenge, due to a complex of inferiority by constant humiliation. This type of violent resentment was applied by the priestly caste or in Foucaultian terms “the pastoral power”. They work administering the social body, attributing the religious connotation of good or noble to some people “masters”, and categorizing the others as bad or common “slaves”. The priests are in charge of the principles of morality therefore, they are able to reverse the labels through the same dualist thought process. Those who were part of the noble class are now seen as the inferior slaves, while those who belonged in the slave class are now the superior good masters, which are the modern common man. The common man and the modern common man have the same traits of being plain, simple, plebeian, dirty and so on, which transfers to the concept of bad (Nietzsche 2007, 13). The only difference is the categorical placement the priests give to the modern common man, the transfer of some of these traits might not always go towards the concept of bad.

The western priests are the most evil enemies to everyone, because they hold a grudge against the life-owning masters and they use the slaves to their advantage through a fantasy world

that give comfort to the slaves. Since the priests hold some noble attributes but cannot keep up with the noble class, they despise the nobles. They are always one step behind the nobles, which creates resentment for their subordinate position in the social hierarchy. Because unlike the nobles, the priests turn inward through asceticism as they are unable to express their emotions and angers. Therefore, the priests see every desire that comes from the flesh and its ramifications as evil, the thought as well as the act are equally as dangerous to the purity of the soul (Foucault, 1978, 38). Moreover, the priests are also the enemies of the slaves because the priests use the slaves in their favor, the priestly caste knew a conflict was imminent between the nobles and the priest. Through an ascetic fantasy world of torment for compensation in the Kingdom of god, the priestly morality gained adherents from the slave caste, changing morality (Nietzsche 2007, 29). In modern morals, obedience is the virtue everyone in the social body needs to have for a superior categorization by the priests. The newly formed noble class apart from being obedient to the priest must also have self- control, which is achieved through the condemnation of the flesh and the soul by turning inward.

However, classic morality should not be blame for the vengeful reversed morals, in the classical world, a slave was sometimes able to become master. An example of this can be seen with the gladiators. They could fight for their freedom and eventually become masters. Categories could vary. In fact, the classic world was built differently in contrast with the modern world as explained by Foucault, "Further, they appeared in 'scattered centers' whose origins were in different philosophical or religious movements. They developed in the midst of many separate groups, they proposed-more than they imposed-different styles of moderation or strictness, each having its specific character or 'shape' (1985, 21). In the classical world resentment also happened to the ancient masters. However, their resentment was different. It was not transformed

into poison for the soul by turning inward as the priests did. When the master felt resentment, an immediate action was made to obliterate that resentment through *Parrhesia*⁹. For the classical individual in *Parrhesia* is not only constituted by himself, but is also influenced by the others who engage in constructive criticism, triggering a violent self-unfolding through free speech. For so being a *Parrhesiastes* or a freely spoken person should not be confused with the pejorative term of saying anything that comes to mind, but is rather to tell what is true and necessary. However, for *Parrhesia* to work an awareness and culture of the self, an *epimele seauto*¹⁰, is required. Therefore, a binary compass is not compatible with the *Parrhesiastes* because he will feel the limitations of such opposite assumptions. In contrast, the common man cannot bear explicit frankness because it sets his life into conflict. They normally respond to conflict through anger, because taking responsibility over himself produces existential fear.

In this chapter we have seen the impact dualism has had over our assumptions of the world through a binary compass, which creates an assumption of violence and evil as synonymous. Because evil is the antinomy of good and violence is only instrumental, they indicate different phenomena. However, they are seen as synonymous because people with certain status or authority have categorized them as a negative binary. Categorization implies humiliation because we perceive things as invariable, this means that those in the binary negative will never be able to change or be part of the positive binary, which creates a complex of interiority. Coupled with previous dualist assumptions, an important point arises which is how the legitimization or condemnation of violence within the social body works.

⁹ Michel Foucault in his lecture *The Courage of the Truth* at the College of France “Parrhesia” meaning “to say the truth to one another” and accept the truth in a specific modality. It is a responsible and conscious feedback from one person to another. Nonetheless, *Parrhesia*’s connotation evolves within the New Testament, where the word no longer means courageous free speaking, but turns into a vertical relationship, as a teleological trait. (2011, 326-327).

¹⁰ Ibid., 4. “(epimele seauto: take care of yourself) gave rise, I think, to the development of what could be called a ‘culture of the self’” (2011)

Chapter II: God Made Us Choose Grotesqueness

In the light of the previous discussion on the existential condition of violence and evil, this chapter will analyze how the social body condemns some forms of violence while justifying others through legitimization. This legitimization is gained through a “superior” leader in government, which can be religious or secular, who enables the punishment of certain evil acts or even their normalization by giving them a positive status or categorization¹¹. To further understand this dualist legitimization we will examine the existential need for a leader as “authority”, the role that guilt and compassion play over the social body and finally how these might relate to a god that requires sacrifice.

The Leader

Leadership is normally assimilated with violence as coercion, or even forced persuasion. We assume leadership to be violent due to the dualist mentality we have, since the masters or those in a superior categorization have constantly humiliated the herd, not physically but through silence. This silence creates resentment, leading to evil morality, which is an epistemic violence. For silence is a refusal to give reciprocity in linguistic exchange leading to existential ignorance, limiting perception (Dotson 2011, 238). Due to this lack of reciprocity, not everyone has the same voice, and only certain superior voices can be heard. In contrast to common knowledge leadership is not humiliating nor coercive, but is always violent. Since violence is only the abrupt discontinuity of the *status quo*, it is always present due to the instrumentality the concept has in

¹¹ Michel Foucault in his book *The History of Sexuality* vol.1, states that power-knowledge which is the bedrock of the social order itself is mobile, meaning that there are not static because they are all matrices of transformations, which are constantly modified. “...we must not image a world of discourses divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between accepted discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies.” (1978, 100)

the social body. This instrumentality of violence must not be seen in terms of positive or negative binary because only assuming two opposite symbols will create the same tautology dualism already has.

The common man as previously mentioned does not have a life plan for his lack of self-ownership, this turns him into part of the herd. This negative status of “herd” sets an assumption that they need a shepherd for existential guidance. The need of a leader or authority, at the end is due to our dualist assumptions, as a way to keep continuity through uncertainty whilst reinforcing categorization. However, apart from the fact that there is already a misconception of the words “violence” and “evil” as abovementioned, there is also a misconception on the word “leader”. We see the leader as inherently associated with authoritarianism or totalitarianism. This is not leadership, however, is one type of management called *potestas*. As explained by Foucault, *potestas* is the faculty to use threatening power by force, “the father of the Roman family the right to ‘dispose’ of the life of his children and his slaves; just as he had given them life, so he could take it away” (1978, 135). This administrative control by *potestas* requires of an authoritarian leader. However, this leader is actually powerless, because he depends on the loyalty and obedience from the common man. Therefore, the leader must embody the morals of the common man no matter its current moral categorization in the social binary hierarchy.

The ruler depends as much on the masses as they depend on the leader for power by representation, which creates a sense of collective expendability. For the same reason the only way for the authoritarian leader to increase power is by propelling collective interests through identity politics and advocating only for the group interests, which relies on constantly reinforcing binary boundaries through categorization. Individual thinking and acting are obliterated by *potestas* as a way to bundle tightly collective interests, making a stronger leader for

the common man (Arendt 1951, 325). Through the *patria potestas* it is also simpler to antagonize those who are outside the collective, as the unknown evildoers. Since identity politics strongly limits the linguistic reciprocity and reinforces boundaries, the common man is given a positive status while those who are not part of the group are now humiliated by silence. Those who hold a status of superiority can determine what is right or wrong, and as such it is no longer up to the common individuals to determine. Alternatively, *auctoritas* is power of command through discussion and moral influence, it does not require coercion, but requires persuasion through conviction, which is leadership. Leadership is instrumentally violent for it conveys emotional conviction leading to a self-unfolding of the individual, such as *Parrhesia*. The masters in ancient times did not require rules or norms that led to an administrative control of the body. However, the masters required a leadership that triggered individual growth by promoting a multiplicity of life projects.

Spell-bounded by Sorrow

Guilt is a feeling of blameworthiness, which is categorized through a positive binary in the social body. It also plays a huge part in the restraining of violence against oneself and others. However, sometimes it surpasses what is necessary to achieve this, because guilt not only makes the perpetrator feel bad over their past actions, but also makes man constantly cautious of future actions, which can lead to torture through paranoia. This increases paranoia since human's priority becomes distancing oneself from guilt and therefore violence through more violence in the form of torture. Distancing violence through violence is an incoherency, which normally happens when humans are desperate to dissociate any possible negative categorization of the self. Humans anesthetize the senses through rationalizations. In their attempt to justify their behavior,

where instead of focusing on the action committed, humans think over trivialities of the action such as obedience to authority. This is achieved by distraction techniques such as a no-fault attitude or low-level thinking, where humans only embrace the practical details of the action, forcing the mind to think in the here and now, limiting its capabilities to understand broader implications. (Baumeister 2015, 5061). Overall, these distraction techniques help people by giving them a way to renounce any responsibility over their negative binary actions.

Guilt in modern morality makes man feel ashamed of being a man, because it triggers an irrational discomfort over a lack of compassion. Here evil is seen as a disorderly and irregular state of violence that is incompatible both with humans and the world. In contrast, when cruelty or violence is given as a fact, punishment is simply the compensation of an injury. According to Nietzsche, “cruelty is part of the festive joy of the ancients and, indeed, is an ingredient in nearly every pleasure they have....To see suffering does you good, to make suffer, better still” (2007, 42). During ancient times guilt was an unknown term, because punishment as a term had no positive or negative connotation as it does now. Hence, life used to be more cheerful and less of a burden for the ancients through instrumental violence.

The connotation empathy and compassion have is highly interrelated with the positive categorization of guilt. Empathy and compassion are also conceived as the same thing or as synonyms due to our binary understanding of the world, since it is also the same dynamic that creates the misconception of evil and violence. When we perceive someone as guiltless or not feeling guilt, we assume that they lack empathy and compassion and therefore are evil. Baumeister explains that when we see someone with no empathy we think that person lacks guilt, “The lack of empathy makes violence toward outsiders easier, because it undermines the restraining power of guilt” (2015, 5911). However, neither empathy nor compassion should be

seen in binary fashion as they have been assumed by common man, since everyone is inside the bell curve of empathy and compassion. Baron-Cohen explains that empathy is either present nor absent, everyone has some degree of empathy inside themselves (2011, 307-310). Those who are exceptionally cruel are so not due to a lack of empathy but because they are positioned on the one extreme of the curve. Therefore, empathy is misunderstood as compassion because we think everything, including violence and evil, in terms of presence or absence. Moreover, both terms stand with the same positive categorization of “good”.

When the human is solely focused on the ‘I’, we see the potential to be unempathetic instead of perceiving it as “less empathetic”. Since categorizing someone as “unempathetic” implies the absence of the term, we are assuming that the traits must fully be there or else it cannot be there. Alternatively, when we see someone as “less empathetic” we are not erasing the possibility that the person could be more empathetic or stand on a middle ground, which leaves the possibility of variability open. By seeing people as unempathetic, we are assuming the world as binary. This causes a misinterpretation of this person as “lacking” in compassion, since both terms share the same negative binary categorization, even though the terms are completely different. Compassion is a moral obligation that promotes the deviation or alleviation of human suffering through caring and helping of the suffering other (Käpylä & Kennedy 2014, 255-256). Compassion can only deviate suffering because violence is instrumental, as long as there is a social body several forms of violence such as desire and rivalry will prevail. In contrast, empathy is a collective feeling that does not necessarily aim to help the other, but it does have a double-minded focus of attention (Baron-Cohen 2011, 264). Empathy only tries to understand the position of the other, by finding possible solutions to a deadlock of different approaches.

In addition, compassion and empathy are key in understanding the drive of guilt, due to the salvation implicit in these terms. Every term categorized in a positive binary is perceived for the purpose of salvation of the soul through the payment of a debt/sacrifice. Sacrifice or pain are assumed as the only ways to clean the soul, because sacrifice keeps on playing the same dualist categorical game. If you sacrifice yourself, it means you are compassionate and empathetic. Hence, you are good, pure, selfless, and must be saved. However, this categorization propels resentment by humiliation of the others inside the negative binary, which as previously said increases violent outcomes due to the assumed invariability within categorization.

God as Pain

Pain through self-sacrifice is still seen as the primordial way to cleanse the soul, because self-punishment is normally the automatic response to guilt. Pain is given a meaning in the social body. As Bastian, Jetter and Fasoli explain, pain settles guilt: “Experiencing pain reduces the feelings of guilt.... Understood this way, pain may be perceived as a repayment for sin” (2011, 335). For anything good to come, there must be bloodshed. God is pain because humans are constantly trying to turn themselves into someone sacred through self-sacrifice just as god did. Self-torturing within the Judeo-Christian religions is in fact a consequence of the poorly established division between god and man. Christ is seen as god-man, which consequently makes people act as something they are not (Zizek & Gunjević 2012, 180). Everyone wants at some point to be sacred, due to the term’s status within social hierarchy. In Judeo-Christian religions dying a martyr is still an honor to prove to the father your worthiness, which is not only seen in

the three major monotheistic religions, but was also seen in every single patriarchal religions including paganism.¹²

In the west, an interesting phenomenon stands. Western society thinks it is post-ideological. Nonetheless, the west is still deeply haunted by beliefs: it is indeed a *Gesellschaft*. Hence, the west still has an existential the need of an authority that can grant the rights for pleasure even if it is through human-made authorities such as religion. Violence in the west is normally seen as a cause of religion, culture or an outside phenomenon, but in fact, the idea of violence is regulated through violence itself (Thomas 2014, 310). Moreover, there is a limited conceptual understanding of religion, because not only religion is seen as universal but also the roles of rituals and sacrifice are ignored in the concept. This limitation leads to an abstraction, prone to scapegoating by the social body. The problem is not god anymore. God in a way wants people to have ultimate freedom, since he did not create any clear-cut borders and attributed himself as both light and darkness. Nevertheless, god is still used by the west as a way to low-level think or to “rationally” justify their actions to avoid feelings of guilt.

There is this constant need to suffer or to feel pain in the west, because without human suffering the concept of god would decay, since historically god experienced human suffering. Taking away human struggle from the picture would imply taking god away from human purpose to withstand the struggle. Whether people are saved or condemned has nothing to do with inherent value. Therefore, god would be an intruder in the institutional order of the Church because he actually misjudged human nature (Zizek & Gunjević 2012, 48-49). Those who demand self-torturing are not gods but human-made entities that destroy the possibility of choice

¹² James Jones in his article *Why Does Religion Turn Violent?* mentions that in patriarchal religions God is seen as punitive and vengeful, to appease the anger of the father one must give blood or commit some sort of sacrifice to prove their purity. Pain purifies, “This develops a patriarchal religion of divine law and power in which submission to the law of the father is the primary moral imperative and guilt the main religious emotion” (2006, 185).

as a way to keep continuity through a suspension of the ethical.¹³ According to Thomas “Religious sacrifice-sacred violence- in the first instance is a founding murder, initially carried out against a real scapegoat by the community in a state of ecstasy and blind fury ; in the second instant , it is ritual violence, a controlled, restaging of the founding violence” (2014, 313). We see god as pain not because god needs pain, but we are the ones demanding pain as a way to keep rivalries and desires in check. When everything is in order and not disorder, uncertainty over violence decreases. Sacrifices and finding a scapegoat are crucial, because violence with a scapegoat has a rational cause “all against one” instead of “all against all”.

In the same fashion as in the first chapter, dualism heavily influences the legitimization or condemnation certain forms of violence have by the social body. Since it has nothing to do with inherent value, it only relies on status by binary categorization. Moreover, every categorization that is seen as a positive binary has something in common: the idea that one is reaching salvation. As explained by Baron-Cohen, we see things as binary present or absent, as a way to lower uncertainty, instead of regarding them through a bell curve. This uncertainty is minimized not only by anesthetizing our capabilities to understand the world, but also by producing purpose through pain and sacrifice. This provides the foundation for what comes in the final chapter, which will discuss the influence the social contract might have with Judeo-Christians beliefs due to the need of purpose.

¹³ Slavoj Zizek & Boris Gunjević in their book *God in Pain* state the fact that people do have morals. Because killing another human being is never easy, consequently those who kill need mechanisms to anesthetize their feelings. To make murder a triviality these mechanism need to make those believe that their actions are sacred and needed for a greater good, “ on a mission from God one is allowed to kill thousands of innocents” (2012, 45)

Chapter III: The Fear-Driven State

In this final chapter we will analyze the heavy influence Judeo-Christian beliefs have over the social body, specifically through the social contract, because religion is normally accused of influencing our western teleological thought process. In addition, we will address the use a Teleological Measuring Stick (TMS) which is a linear tool used by dualist thought. As explained by Trowsell “a teleological measuring stick may be defined as a segmented straight line connecting two ontologically distinct, but related, imagined-to-be-complete categories...these continue are usually seen as being opposite to one another (as dualisms and not parity-based relations)” (2013, 292). To understand this influence we will address how Judeo-Christian beliefs bridge with the social contract and we will discuss how TMS works inside a fear-based social contract.

Teleological Measuring Stick (TMS)

The social contract is rather a “rational” artificial body or *automata* with human self-imposed rules created by social institutions legitimized by citizens. As mentioned by Reis & Martin, “in a tacit social contract, people grant certain powers to rules with the expectation that rulers will offer protection and some degree of justice (2008, 6). This means that we give up part of our freedom to gain security, certainty, and increased productivity within the social contract. Since imposing coercive rules is a way of self-torturing, if you are receiving pain there must be a rational cause to bear it such as salvation or progress, this gives us a sense of purpose and direction. The social contract assumes that humans have a purpose in this world, eradicating contingency/uncertainty or the assumption that everything is simply there by chance, which is highly interconnected with biblical assumptions. The more pain the state inflicts on the citizens, the more worthy they are of superior protection, because pain has a meaning of sacredness in

religious terms. However, as previously mentioned there is this need to feel pain as a way to relinquish guilt and feel worthy of the protection of god. In the social contract, god is the state, the “rational” human made authority.

Moreover, TMS is used by the social contract as a defense mechanism of existential anxiety that constantly distorts reality. It is a guideline we use to gain a binary understanding of the world, at the top of the measuring stick lays the positive categorizations and at the bottom of the stick lays the negative categorizations. This can be seen in the connotation violence and evil have as synonymous because they are both part of the negative categorization, which belong at the bottom of the TMS. This means that we must constantly aim for progress by aiming towards the positive binary of the stick. “Progress is normally seen as ascending...But even more naturally and essentially we may see a complementary relation between the lower and the higher... they do not generally and essentially mean value and disvalue” (Kolnai 1971, 206). In addition, TMS is a great distraction technique used by the social contract because it eradicates contingency in the world, since the hierarchical scale assumes the world in total concrete separation, where there must be a constant fight of light “good” against its antinomy darkness “evil”. Everything we know is assumed and acknowledged through hierarchical polarities. The *self* has always been identified in opposition to the *alter*. However, these polarities are necessary not to reach personal excellence but as a way to reach social order or continuity. We categorize things positively or negatively to give value and purpose to things. TMS does not lower anxiety, but re-directs it. It assumes that there is one universal progressive linear path for everyone, which at the end propels resentment because it is unreachable for all.

The social contract is constantly setting up barriers that separate the us from the others, while having the complete administration of things, because the social contract is fear based and

it is always gathering more power to secure itself against the outside world. The state must know everything inside the social body, for the only way to eradicate fear is through total predictability, which is viable by using binary knowledge. Moreover, the pain inflicted on the citizens must have a purpose as a way to maintain oneself inside the social contract, which is better than to be out in the world alone with total uncertainty. According to Hobbes, “there is no way for any man to secure himself, so reasonable, as Anticipation; that is, by force, or wiles, to master the persons of all men he can, so long, till he sees no other great power great enough to endanger him” (1997, 69). Humans crave for orderly processes that are predictable and require no reflexive attitude. Therefore, the need for predictable categorization and the need for an entity such as the state, which is constantly in charge of keeping that predictability. This is why in time of crisis or uncertainty violence is the most common form of response. To point at one person at random as responsible for their misfortunes is better than not knowing the rational cause of their misfortunes leading to contingency.

In this chapter we have seen the influence Judeo-Christian beliefs have over the social contract. In religious terms the purpose of withstanding pain is for the purpose of salvation. The more self-torturing or the more obedience to an authority the more sacred we become. However, religion does not influence the state the way I thought it was going to be, religion does provide a nice story for salvation and purpose in our lives but this drive of purpose and direction is actually found in TMS.

Conclusion

Existentially the world itself has chosen a life of ignorance through distraction techniques such as TMS, religion, god and morals. They all play the game of producing concreteness and

order inside a world that is assumed to be made through disorder. Because instead of embracing the discontinuities the world offers, we rather just see the world through a pinhole, which molds our assumptions and strategies we use in existence. Violence in the modern state existentially produces a higher degree of paranoia, as explained by Baumeister, “The principal problem with paranoia is that it tends to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The more paranoid a person is, the more he feels he is surrounded by enemies and needs to be violent toward them in order to protect himself” (1997, 156). This statement is not a criticism to dualism or towards a separation-based lens, since dualism is only one way of perceiving reality. The criticism arises because we only use one pair of lenses to mold our assumptions and therefore the strategies we use existentially in the world. Binary knowledge is not caused by a limitation in human condition, but is the binary programming our human condition has. By using only dualism, we can only account with two contrasting symbolisms and the multiplicities are not only ignored but erased.

There was a misconception between the words evil and violence because they were seen as synonymous when we started this paper. We saw them as synonymous because of our binary comprehension of the world; evil and violence both had a negative categorization. Nonetheless, they are very different, violence is instrumental and evil is simply the antinomy of good. None of them can be erased because violence will always be present in a world filled with desire, rivalry, and emotional neglect, which are implicit traits inside the social body. The only way to obliterate violence will be by killing everyone in the world. In addition, evil is a needed antinomy, as long as good exists, evil will prevail. Interestingly enough we also discovered that the same sort of misconception was found within every single key word used in the paper such as leader, empathy, compassion, guilt, pain, western, god, authority, slave, self-sacrifice, and so on. Because everything is seen through the same pinhole, creating many tautologies that lead us nowhere.

The condemnation or justification of violence lacks inherent value. What is pivotal is the categorization the social body has given to certain forms of violence. This categorization varies since it depends on upon context. In fact, at the beginning of the paper I had a strong opinion against religion. I assumed that god alone propelled what is conceived as violence. In fact, religion and god do influence how the social body acts and thinks. However, not in the precise way as I was expecting, because god and religion are used as scapegoats. Outside forces such as culture, religion or morals do not regulate the assumptions and strategies we have of violence, but it is regulated by violence itself. God does not demand human struggle or sacrifice, but we demand pain for purpose and historical value of god, which erases contingency. This binary knowledge sticks to us not only because it erases uncertainty, but also because we have attributed it personal excellence through value and disvalue. The worst thing a human can encounter is emotional neglect, because violence is seen as a better alternative to gain attention. Violence is seen as a plague not because is one but when we are programmed the way we are, one cannot understand existence and is not prepared to accept it.

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