

Dr. Strangelove or How I Should Stop Worrying and Love Fascism

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Abstract

This paper presents a Foucauldian discourse analysis of Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. The analysis examines linguistic and extralinguistic aspects of both the film and the novel. It is composed of three parts: the first is an analysis of the Manichaeism during the Cold War period and how it turned the Soviets into mortal enemies of the United States; the second is how the nuclear threat and the Cold War paranoia could destroy the democratic system in the United States; and the third analysis explain how Fascistic relations could be cultivated through the discipline of bodies. It has been concluded that the movie is presenting a concept, here referred to as Strangelove's Hypothesis, that a Strangelovian scenario (i.e., a nuclear holocaust, usually caused by incompetence or without the will to do so) could lead to the emergence of a Fascistic-like form of government in order to restore security. The solution presented to avoid such scenario is a sociopsychological change in order to pursue more peaceful relations.

Keywords: cinema, discourse analysis, Foucauldian discourse analysis, nuclear war, post-apocalyptic politics

1. Introduction

The movie *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* illustrate us a very interesting depiction of society and politics through the analysis of the human phenomenon, presenting a very interesting idea of how the microrelations and the macrorelations of power works. This paper presents a discourse analysis of the movie, examining how fascistic ideals were able to survive inside the American society portrayed on *Dr. Strangelove* and how they were able to take over control of the post-WWIII United States—or what was left of it. The investigation is based on Foucauldian discourse analysis, but it can diverge from Foucault's power analysis in order to get a better understanding of the phenomenon.

Dr. Strangelove premiered on January 29, 1964. Produced, directed and co-wrote by Stanley Kubrick, it was an adaptation of Peter George's novel *Two Hours to Doom*, published in the United States as *Red Alert*. The novel follows the history of an U.S. Air Force General that launches a deliberated nuclear attack against the Soviet Union as his last act before retirement. The President of the United States and the Premier of the Soviet Union agreed that after all the attempts to recall and shot down one of the bombers failed, to let the Soviets nuke an American city. But the bomber was not able to complete the mission and only a small nuclear detonation occurs. No American city was nuked.

Kubrick's movie and novel are not taking the idea of a calculated attack against the Soviet Union. The point here is that surely no sane man would do such a thing. It's pure madness. So, the order to execute Wing Attack Plan R—i.e., nuke the Soviet Union without a direct order of the President, as retaliation after an attack that disrupted the chain of command—was sent under the command of a psychotic U.S. Air Force General called Jack D. Ripper; the name obviously was a joke about the assassin Jack the Reaper. The crew of the bomber Leper Colony would reassure the madness of this idea: in the movie, the first statement made when they received the order was from Lieutenant Goldberg, who said "Major Kong, I know you're gonna think this crazy but I just got a message from base over the CRM 114. It decodes as Wing Attack plan R. R for Romeo." (Kubrick, 1964)

After launching the attack, General Ripper sealed the base and issued direct orders to shoot anyone approaching the base, even if they are in American uniforms. When his soldiers were not able to defend the base, he committed suicide in order to avoid revealing the recall code—at this point, the only way to recall the bombers. But the British Group Captain Mandrake was able to find a hint about the codes and the attack was halted, except for the Leper Colony, a bomber that was damaged in combat and so was unable to receive to recall order. The bomber sneaked inside Soviet territory and successfully detonated a thirty-megaton bomb over the ICBM complex at Kodlosk.

The nuclear explosion triggered a device presented as The Doomsday Machine. It was constructed in order to reduce Soviet spending in nuclear weaponry. The movie stated that “[w]hen it is detonated, it will produce enough lethal radioactive fallout so that within ten months, the [...] lethal cloud of radioactivity [...] will encircle the earth for ninety-three years” (Kubrick, 1964). In order to survive, Dr. Strangelove proposed “[...] an astonishingly good idea” (Kubrick, 1964): use mineshafts as shelters for high-skilled men, high-ranked military, high-echelon politicians and sexually attractive women in the ratio of ten women per men.

2. Review of Literature

Stanley Kubrick’s Dr. Strangelove has been analyzed by many authors, usually in order to comprehend or debate issues related to Cold War, especially Cold War politics and the so-called Cold War paranoia. The movie was produced just after the Cuban Missile Crisis and was being edited when the U. S. President John F. Kennedy was shot. In this sense, some authors argue that Dr. Strangelove was able to identify some psychosociological issues of its time.

Dr. Strangelove expands the notion of nuclear extinction—a notion obviously difficult to cope with—until we see in it all the elements of paranoia and political insanity that characterized the fifties. If we cannot deal with the notion of extinction directly, we can deal with the irrationality of political and military figures; we can even laugh at it. (Wolfe, 1976) The dark humor of the piece began to resonate with the western dissatisfaction with the Cold War (Case, 2014) and with the public growing disapproval of nuclear weapons policy (Wilson, 1963; Hughes, 1962). The military intervention in Vietnam was just making things worse.

No one accepting the dominant paradigm would see nuclear weapons as a laughing matter, but Kubrick, after studying the arms race, the Cold War, and the idea of deterrence carefully, realized the insanity of the situation and found that the only way he could possibly approach the material was through the satirical thrust of nightmare comedy. By having his audience laugh at the situation, he hoped not that they would realize its seriousness but rather that they would perceive its absurdity (Rollins, 2015).

In this sense, Dr. Strangelove is a direct hit on nuclear policies, working as a resistance against the nuclear proliferation and the Cold War paranoia. The delegitimization of these nuclear policies through humor is pointed by some authors as a way to get rid of military nuclear devices (Tannenwald, 2010). We should take in consideration that humor, or more specifically the ridiculous must be understood here as a political phenomenon (Billig, 2005; Tiburi, 2017).

The ridiculousness of Kubrick’s characters made good use of the political aspect of humor. “Kubrick’s is sardonic and profoundly pessimistic, his characters caricatures of crazy or ineffectual men; in the end the world disintegrates in blinding flashes of thermonuclear heat” (Jeansonne, 2014). Maland (Rollins, 2015) claims that Kubrick’s masterpiece is an adversary of the *Ideology of Liberal Consensus*, defined as an ideology typified as the dogmatical and dominant way of life during the sixties in the United States of America.

Much more than a passing mood or a vague reaction to events, this paradigm—the Ideology of Liberal Consensus—took on an intellectual coherence of its own. According to Geoffrey Hodgson, the ideology contained two cornerstone assumptions: that the structure of American society was basically sound, and that Communism was a clear danger to the survival of the United States and its allies. From these two beliefs evolved a widely accepted view of America. That view argued its position in roughly this fashion: the American economic system has developed, softening the inequities and brutalities of an earlier capitalism, becoming more democratic, and offering abundance to a wider portion of the population than ever before (Rollins, 2015).

According to Maland, these two assumptions guided U. S. social policies during the WWII and the Cold War. The war in Europe and Asia, first against Fascism and later against Communism would shape American national and foreign policies (Rollins, 2015). The constant construction of a national identity through war is a phenomenon pointed by many authors; Charles Tilly’s theory is possibly the best example of it (Tilly, 2015). Maland also refers to Kubrick’s Dr. Strangelove as against the Ideology of *Liberal Consensus*:

More important [...], however, is Dr. Strangelove’s frontal assault on the Ideology of Liberal Consensus. Above all else, Dr. Strangelove uses nightmare comedy to satirize four dimensions of the Cold War consensus: anti-Communist paranoia; the culture’s inability to realize the enormity of nuclear war; various nuclear strategies; and the blind faith modern man places in technological progress (Rollins, 2015).

3. Method

The paper applies Foucauldian discourse analysis in order to understand the power relations depicted in Kubrick’s movie (1964) the novel (2001) Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb. For such task, Foucauldian genealogy was taken in consideration.

A well-known and often copied take on discourse is usually attributed to Foucault. It is typically described to

advance from the assumption that discourses, or sets of statements, constitute objects and subjects are managed and given a certain form [...]. Language, put together as discourses, arranges and naturalizes the social world in a specific way and thus informs social practices. These practices constitute particular forms of subjectivity in which human subjects are. Foucault proposed two ways of investigating discourses: archeology and genealogy. Archeology can be seen as directly related to the clarification of the history of the rules that regulate particular discourses. Genealogy looks after the forces and events that shape discursive practices into units, wholes and singularities (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000).

Foucauldian genealogy is derived from Nietzschean genealogy and it is established on three axes: power, truth and the subject (Mahon, 1992). It doesn't take in consideration, for instance, that a dogmatic truth can arise from the analysis of data. Instead, Foucault proposes a study of the discourse in order to understand not what was being said but how it was related with other discourses, integrating a net of power relations and creating a *locus* for the knowledge produced by this ideology.

[...]Foucault [...] argue[s] that “the process of analysis is always interpretive, always contingent, always a version or a reading from some theoretical, epistemological or ethical standpoint” (Wetherall, 2001, p. 384). Understanding that meaning is an inherently unstable construct negotiated by and through the “cultural politics of the sign” (Trifonas, 2000, p. 275), methodologists from this tradition tend to discount the sovereignty of the author, establishing the treasured relationship between signifier and signified (Peters, 2004; Trifonas, 2000), in the recognition that the reader has ultimate authority over interpretation and therefore meaning— not, in fact, the author (Graham, 2012).

Because of these characteristics, Foucauldian genealogy is a very interesting tool to analyse not only linguistic aspects of a piece, but also the social and political aspects of its time. From this perspective, it is possible to understand how the power relations were established during the period it was produced, but also how a particular discourse emerges and how the link between the old and the new meaning of this discourse could help us to better understand our own society (Monteiro, 2002).

Researchers drawing on Foucauldian ideas therefore do not speak of their research “findings”. They tend to use less emphatic language, recognising that truth is contingent upon the subjectivity of the reader and the fickleness of language. They would recognise the futility of trying to mine a policy document for the writer's intention (Graham, 2007), and would not seek to speak for the subject of analysis (see Graham, 2007, p. 14). It is for this reason that those using discourse analysis with Foucault shy away from prescribing method, for no matter how standardised the process, the analysis of language by different people will seldom yield the same result. This is not seen as problematic for the aim of poststructural analysis is not to establish a final “truth” but to question the intelligibility of truth/s we have come to take for granted (Graham, 2012).

It is important to notice that there isn't a specific model for Foucauldian methodology and the arguments made in this paper may diverge from Foucault's ideas. The paper presents a poststructuralist analysis of Kubrick's *Doctor Strangelove* taking in consideration mainly the appointments made by Foucault about his genealogy of power. Due to the characteristics of Foucauldian discourse analysis, it may be impossible to argue that this methodology is totally Foucauldian because it is not a dogmatic methodological model. This paper aims to produce a new way to comprehend Kubrick's piece and its *locus* through linguistic and extralinguistic aspects.

Therefore, the paper presents a discussion about three main points that emerged from the analysis of the movie and the novel. These points are keys to following question: the possibility that an enormous catastrophe, like a nuclear war, could lead to a fascistic organization of American society. The first point discusses a binomial opposition between capitalist Americans and the communist Soviets during the Cold War period. The second point discusses how the State of Exception imposed after a nuclear war could be a direct threat against democracy. The third point is a discussion about human bodies and how they can help us to comprehend the relationship between an individual and the world and how Fascistic relations could be cultivated through discipline and punishment. These three points are the main forces that drove America into fascism in Dr. Strangelove's world.

The data collected are the linguistic material and extralinguistic characteristics (physical characteristics and body language) of the characters presented throughout the movie and the novel. As this methodology is developed from a Foucauldian perspective, more emphasis is attributed to the *locus* of the discourse rather than to these two aspects. Indeed, Foucauldian genealogy tends to emphasize its power analysis instead of literal quotations from documents (Monteiro, 2002), paying attention to rhetorical constructions.

Discourse analysis consistent with a Foucauldian notion of discourse does not seek to reveal the true meaning by what is said or not said (Foucault, 1972). Instead, when “doing” discourse analysis within a Foucauldian framework, one looks to statements not so much for what they say but what they do; that is, one questions what the constitutive or political effects of saying this instead of that might be. As Foucault (1972, p. 134) argues,

“there is no subtext”. The analyst’s job “does not consist therefore in rediscovering the unsaid whose place [the statement] occupies” (p. 134). Instead, Foucault (ibid.) maintains that “everything is never said” and that the task is to determine, in all the possible enunciations that could be made on a particular subject, why it is that certain statements emerged to the exclusion of all others and what function they serve (Graham, 2012).

Dr. Strangelove contains various interesting linguistic and extralinguistic characteristics for this research. “Kubrick once agreed that whereas 2001 develops its focus visually, Dr. Strangelove does so much more through its dialogue” (Rollins, 2015). These characteristics favour the use of the Foucauldian approach once this methodology can use such material in order to provide an analysis.

4. Results

The results of the discourse analysis are presented in a blended format, showing both parts of linguistic and extralinguistic characteristics and the pertinent literature to support three main points in order to answer the main question of this paper. These points could be understood as steps taken Dr. Strangelove’s society that contributed to the fascistic-like takeover in the end of the piece. The political ideology presented in Dr. Strangelove resembles Carl Schmitt’s political ideas (Schmitt, 2007).

4.1 *Damn Commies*

The first aspect of this analysis is the fact that Dr. Strangelove is portrayed in black and white: not only the image, but how people are depicted. In this vision of the world portrayed by Kubrick, manicheist thinking is present everywhere. We can attribute this characteristic to the conflictuous zeitgeist during the Cold War era. The tensions between the Capitalist and the Socialist blocks were astonishing.

The presence of an external—or even an internal—enemy is an important element used to maintain a group unified in their purpose. According to Salvador Sandoval (2001), it’s crucial that:

[...] an individual’s sentiments with regard to how one’s symbolic and material interests are opposed to the interests of other groups and the extent to which antagonistic interests lead to the conception of the existence of collective adversaries in society. [...] [It supports] the feeling of an adversarial relation between oneself and another group or social category. Without the notion of a visible adversary, it is impossible to mobilize individuals into collection and coordinated actions against a specific target whether this target is an individual, a group or an institution (p. 188).

But in Dr. Strangelove, we face this aspect on a deeper, more specific level. The clear definition of who is an ally and who is our enemy was the main concept of the Nazi philosopher Carl Schmitt vision of society, known as The Political. Schmitt claims that, in order to produce a stable society, the State should not get involved with social issues but take measures to make a clear distinction between friends and enemies among other measures in order to maintain the national sovereignty. In this sense, the Cold War was a very interesting phenomenon, once it instigated this behavior.

The political does not reside in the battle itself, which possesses its own technical, psychological, and military laws, but in the mode of behavior which is determined by this possibility, by clearly evaluating the concrete situation and thereby being able to distinguish correctly the real friend and the real enemy. (Schmitt, 2007)

Even after those apocalyptic events depicted in the piece, both sides were still engaged in war. The Russian Ambassador DeSadeski used a hidden camera to gather information from the Americans; General Turgidson demanded immediate actions to prevent the Soviets from nuking their mineshafts; some concerns were raised about a possible Russian superiority in numbers and weaponry after the fallout. The picture of who is the enemy and who is your friend was never so clear.

Yeah. I think it would be extremely naive of us, Mr. President, to imagine that these new developments are going to cause any change in Soviet expansionist policy. I mean, we must be increasingly on the alert to prevent them from taking over other mineshaft space, in order to breed more prodigiously than we do, thus, knocking us out in superior numbers when we emerge! (Kubrick, 1964)

In this sense, this new configuration of the American society is ready to follow this fascistic way of life, where the threat of an external enemy and the idea that people are somehow different (women, children, foreigners and the sick are inferior) are allowing the government to maintain the State of Exception and doing so they can reach the apices of the political power, implementing a strictly program of biopower (i.e., control over the bodies). The war will never end.

A world in which the possibility of war is utterly eliminated, a completely pacified globe, would be a world without the distinction of friend and enemy and hence a world without politics. It is conceivable that such a world might contain many very interesting antitheses and contrasts, competitions and intrigues of every kind, but there would not be a meaningful antithesis whereby men could be required to sacrifice life, authorized to shed

blood, and kill other human beings.

For the definition of the political, it is here even irrelevant whether such a world without politics is desirable as an ideal situation. The phenomenon of the political can be understood only in the context of the ever present possibility of the friend and enemy grouping, regardless of the aspects which this possibility implies for morality, aesthetics, and economics. (Schmitt, 2007)

The depictions of communists in *Dr. Strangelove* through the discourse of the military are totally according to the idea of dehumanization of the enemy in order to keep the American society united against Communism. Racialized views of the Russian are present both in the movie and the novel, for example when General Ripper says to Mandrake that the communists never drink water because they drink vodka instead (Kubrick, 1964).

DeSadeski was also portrayed as a trickster, taking advantage of the situation inside the war room to spy. In fact, he did it twice, using two hidden devices. It was a clear message that the Russians are not to be trusted. So was the Soviet Premier, because he ordered a retaliatory strike against the United States after the Doomsday Machine was activated (Kubrick, 1964; Kubrick, 2001). The picture of a red enemy was clear than ever.

4.2 ...As Far As Men Were Concerned

The second aspect to be analyzed is whether the nuclear war is related to the collapse of the democratic system. Peter Krämer, author of the book *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (2014), where he analysed the movie, raised a very interesting question: “What is to stop these numerically far superior women from taking control of the mineshaft society, and treating men like sexual service providers, even sex slaves, who they will drive to exhaustion with their demands?” (p. 92)

To build such society, the democratic organization of the United States must be dissolved at once. It’s obvious that, if women would outnumber men they would take control of this society if democratic dispositives were not removed. But they only refer to women as sexual objects and not like high-skilled personnel.

Across the differences, and beyond the conflict, between the two super powers, men are united in their approval of this sexual fantasy. And since it has been made possible, even—according to *Dr. Strangelove*—necessary, by the explosion of a nuclear weapon, we might say that we all love the bomb now. (Krämer, 2014)

The post-apocalyptic world—and by world I mean pretty much what was left of the United States and the Soviet Union, probably the only countries that would be able to survive—imagined by Kubrick after the activation of *The Doomsday Machine* depicts a new model of fascistic society in the United States that is in accordance with Schmitt’s political view. The astonishingly good idea of *Dr. Strangelove* is to impose a State of Exception—Carl Schmitt’s concept of *Ausnahmezustand*—in order “to preserve a nucleus of human specimens” (Kubrick, 1964) that would be selected by a computer programmed to use as criteria some desired genetic characteristics; i.e., the United States will impose an eugenist program to determine those who will live and those who will be left to perish outside the mineshafts. In the novel, *Dr. Strangelove* also proposes a military intervention to maintain those who were left behind in order to prevent them from rebelling against this decision (Kubrick, 2001).

The Cold War is not over, but now, in the last minutes of the movie, the audience will be presented with the darkest outcome: the strange love of those white men was not about women. It was not about weapons. It was not about the war. It was not even about the bomb. It was about power: the wish of an absolute power that could only be achieved on their underground nirvana.

Things get more clear—or darker—in the last minutes of the movie when General Turgidson is fanatically talking about a mineshaft gap (Kubrick, 1964). DeSadeski also mentioned that the Soviet Union built *The Doomsday Machine* not only to avoid the arms, space and peace race but because the Soviets heard about an American secret project to create a *Doomsday Device*. The Soviet leadership was afraid of a possible doomsday gap. In this sense, the title of the movie is not misleading us from the real meaning of the Cold War. Instead, it is presenting the hypothesis that the threat of thermonuclear war was not an end, but a mean and that’s why we should learn to stop worrying and love the bomb. “If you die by a bullet or a bomb, it’s the same thing” (Kubrick, 2001).

4.3 *Sweet, Sweet Bodies*

A third aspect of this paper is taking the bodies as a way to comprehend the relationship between an individual and the world and how Fascistic relations could be cultivated through discipline. The bodies of Kubrick’s characters are extremely peculiar and they play a very interesting role in our analysis. One can easily perceive the difference between the bodies of the military men and the bodies of the politicians. Military men are stronger, taller and more assertive than the politicians; they are constantly displaying phallic symbols from machine guns to cigars and they are constantly involved with sex, while the politicians are bald, weak and always relying on dialogue to solve conflicts. In the novel, the President also “got a bad cold” (Kubrick, 2001)

and some shots of the movie were recorded according to the novel but were later removed.

It is possible to interpret these differences as the representation of the *weltanschauung*, the world view of those men, who are opposed because they were trained under different circumstances in different institutions to achieve different goals performing different tasks. In *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison* (1977), Michel Foucault analyzed how the institutional power could shape the bodies and the will of men, creating more efficient specialists for specific tasks:

Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, “docile” bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an “aptitude”, a “capacity”, which it seeks to increase on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. If economic exploitation separates the force and the product of labour, let us say that disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination.

These military men are the perfect model of individual created under an authoritarian regime, not only because they were trained to obey, but they were depicted as warmongers unable to think by themselves. For example, there is a scene in Kubrick’s novel (2010) where the President left his wallet in his bedroom; the guard recognized him and he was aware that they were dealing with an extremely dangerous situation. But the guard followed his orders to not allow anyone without the security card in the war room. The President only reached the war room after his men fought with the soldiers and forced his entrance (Kubrick, 2010).

General Ripper’s orders to his men in the Burpelson Air Force Base were issued accordingly to this rationality, commanding the troops “[...] to obey without question the orders of the commanding officers [...]” (Kubrick, 2010). This kind of discipline of the will of men was also shown in the first appearance of Mandrake. Ripper asked him to identify his voice and made some questions in order to discipline Mandrake and demonstrate that he is the one in charge of the base (Kubrick, 1964; Kubrick, 2010).

The point here is that the discipline applied to them may lead to a scenario where these men may be unable to think by themselves, to disobey. Thus, they are somehow incapable of discerning between good and evil. The same process was described by Hannah Arendt in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a report on the banality of evil*, where she described how a bureaucrat like Eichmann was totally incapable of distinguishing between right and wrong; his duty was to follow the orders without questioning:

Eichmann’s own attitude was different. First of all, the indictment for murder was wrong: “With the killing of Jews I had nothing to do. I never killed a Jew, or a non-Jew, for that matter—I never killed any human being. I never gave an order to kill either a Jew or a non-Jew; I just did not do it,” or, as he was later to qualify this statement, “It so happened . . . that I had not once to do it”—for he left no doubt that he would have killed his own father if he had received an order to that effect (Arendt, 2006)

That’s why American soldiers fought against American soldiers without questioning the fact that they were in American uniforms (Kubrick, 1964; Kubrick, 2010). In the novel (Kubrick, 2010), they refused to talk with Captain Batguano and opened fire against a battalion of U.S. Rangers. The biopolitics had become so refined and efficient that it left these men inhuman. The planned control of high-echelon specialists over the bodies sooner or later would lead to a mechanization of mankind. These specialists are also in the war room: Dr. Strangelove and General Turgidson are the best examples of how these specialists can influence the President; i.e., how the micro and macrorelations of power are related. That’s why Turgidson is seen in the movie holding the War Alert Option Book and World Targets in Megadeaths (Kubrick, 1964): besides the President supposedly being the only one who could launch a nuclear strike—we know that it’s not true—, if the President followed Turgidson’s advice the General could choose the options indicating where, when and how to attack, because it was also pre-defined by some other specialists. So, the power to launch a nuclear strike is not only in the hands of the President, but also in the hands of men who are unknown to the public and surely were never elected.

The politicians are represented as weak, pale and calm men. They are the opposition to the military men and will pursue the dialogue and any pacific option. The president itself intentionally resembles Adlai Stevenson, who was called an egghead by Nixon; i.e., a pacifist intellectual totally out of touch with the reality. It’s important to notice the dialectic relation between these two forces: the antithesis of democracy is this fascistic ideology; the antithesis of the dialogue is the imposition of physical force and discipline.

Unfortunately, the dialogue was depicted as inefficient in this scenario: both the president Muffley and the Group Captain Mandrake were not able to stop the destruction of the world through peaceful methods. In fact, it was being discredited since the beginning: in the war room, while the president was talking about civilian defense, Turgidson advised his secretary and lover, miss Scott: “Don’t forget to say your prayers” (Kubrick, 1964).

The battlefield of these two political ideologies, according to Stanley Kubrick, is the mind of men. His idea is that the deterrence and political issues are psychological questions:

Hence Dr. Strangelove was not intended to present political, military or technological solutions to the problem at hand, or take side in ongoing public debates. Indeed, Kubrick wrote “I’m against everybody. The Joint Chiefs and the nitwit liberals and the sit-downers.” In his view, the main barriers to a solution were mental: “By the process of psychological denial we increase our tension and hostility, and decrease our chance to see whatever opportunities may eventually appear” He was convinced that only a, by necessity, rather ill-defined sociopsychological transformation (which he hoped his film could contribute to would help) [...] [would lead to more peaceful relations]. (Kramer, 2014)

5. Discussion, or: How I Learned To Stop Worrying

Marcia Tiburi (2015) proposed in her book *Como conversar com um fascista* (How to talk to a fascist) that authoritarianism is a mental operation. This *weltanschauung* is characterized by rigid statements, perceiving the world in black and white. The authoritarian individual believes in some dogmatic ideas and thus is not able to dialogue, to know other people because this individual is able to find his own answers. So, Fascism is characterized as the radical form of authoritarianism, essentially creating an order, an ideology to be strictly followed. This *weltanschauung* is alive in the mind of men, in the psychological or moral attitudes that don’t take other people into consideration. (Tiburi, 2015)

Some elements of American society also contributed to keep this way of thinking alive in its culture. The freedom of speech, the militaristic culture and the historical conditions that led to deliberate acts of racism and segregation with support from the State were some of the main aspects that corroborated to maintain the fascist spectrum inside the United States. It is undeniable that the idea that “all men are equal” and so the spreading ideology of the abolitionist movement were crucial factors to the eclosion of the American Civil War. The racist culture would survive and so the exclusion of Negroes and foreigners (Massey & Denton, 2003).

During the Cold War the *Ideology Liberal Consensus*, previously discussed in this paper, was the dominant ideology in the United States. This ideology was particularly rooted on a markedly conservative thinking. Besides being hostile to Communism and Fascism, throughout the sixties numerous young radicals professed totalitarian beliefs in America (Skotheim, 1971).

We also should take into consideration the fact that the fascist society proposed by Dr. Strangelove is imposing eugenics as the main aspect of its biopolitical agenda. The sense of eugenics here is:

A policy based on the biological concept of race [...]. Such an idea served to freeze in place a perceived or presumed hierarchy of races, since the qualities and demerits that made a race “superior” or “inferior” were biologically inherited and in the nature of things. Racial improvement was a matter of literally getting rid of inherited “bad” genes by preventing their reproduction. What was biologically determined could not really be changed, only eradicated (Hayes, 2012).

This is one of the darker aspects of Dr. Strangelove, especially because it was accepted without any reluctance, even by the President. Eugenics was also embedded in U.S. history and actually there is a huge effort to not allow these practices, such as Human Research Ethics Committees. But the fact that the pseudo-scientific ideology of eugenics and eugenic practices were developed in the United States long before they were implemented in Nazi Germany (Lombardo, 2010) may influentiate their decision and so this idea wasn’t so strange. It wasn’t the first time they heard about it.

Obviously, the United States government is not fascist. The point here is that the Dr. Strangelove is not showing us the government acting in normal conditions, but is wondering how it would react when facing a hecatomb of dimensions never seen before. In the case of a total nuclear exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union, which was a real threat that time, a new kind of dictatorship could emerge from the ashes of the old world.

The Marxist theories about the Fascism depict the relationship between the capitalistic elite and how they are related to the rise of the Nazi and the Fascist parties in Germany and Italy. We should consider that, in this sense, the United States also has its own capitalistic elite, as Joe Feagin and Kimberley Ducey pointed in their book *Elite white men ruling: who, what, when, where and how*. So, from a Marxist point of view the United States fulfills some necessary conditions to keep Fascistic ideologies alive.

Through the system of governability, people can get used to ideas that are related to Fascistic ideology, such as militarization of daily life, hate discourse against minorities, sacrifices for the country and the common good and a strong and charismatic leader.

Developed by the great French philosopher-historian, Michel Foucault, governmentality is intended to

capture the way that modern governments produce the sort of citizens that they require through “techniques of rule” that could be witnessed in schools, workplaces, hospitals, welfare systems, courts, and so on. In the early 20th century the projects in question were usually eugenicist, and were designed to improve the quality and quantity of the “race”, by confining or eliminating the weak, and through imperial expansion. By stressing that these programmes provided docile, efficient workers and mothers of future workers, Marxists (or ex-Marxists) could tap into new research without abandoning the core of their argument. (Passmore, 2014)

This Strangelove’s Hypothesis is based on Weberian theories. The theories of Max Weber (1864-1920) are very close from Marxism and so their explanation for the rise of Fascism in Europe. But Weber also argued that Fascism was so compelling to people because of the financial and social crisis:

Weberians also argue that the mass of the population becomes vulnerable to fascism when social change is particularly rapid, when traditional ways are eroded by “modernization” or by war or economic crisis. As the old ways of doing things are undermined, people who placed their faith in tradition become disoriented (technically speaking, they suffer from “anomie”). They turn to fascists, who promise to restore lost certainties. To the victims of modernization, fascism provides a total explanation of their place in the world; it explains the causes of change; identifies those responsible (foreigners and Jews, for instance), and provides a blueprint for restoration of a pre-modern utopia, which is totalitarian in character. (Passmore, 2014)

The major goal of this construct is the absolute control of life through the implementation of institutional politics. The totalitarianism was the way to control all the national resources in order to help the State to achieve its goals. The only way to mobilize these resources is through the union of the nation after a major crisis or a rapid change.

Totalitarianism theorists answer critics of earlier versions by arguing that totalitarianism is an aspiration, which in practice did not achieve its ideals. The reality of chaos in fascist regimes is therefore quite compatible with totalitarian intention. Nevertheless, one finds the familiar assumption that rapid change dissolves the traditional world and creates the desire for a new integrating ideology, which fascists provide. In a striking metaphor, Michael Burleigh suggests that the Nazis sought to rebuild German society as engineers rebuild a bridge. They could not demolish it, since that would disrupt traffic, and therefore they replaced each individual part, so that passengers wouldn’t notice. (Passmore, 2014)

It also implies control over the individuals in order to mobilize people as a national resource. To achieve this goal, sacrifices would be required from these individuals, now called to sacrifice their lives for the country. This ideology is very perceptible across both the movie and the novel, especially when General Turgidson said “[...]no more than ten to twenty million killed, tops—depending on the breaks”. (Kubrick, 1964)

Scott delivers these lines with zestful enthusiasm, and his animated features suggest that he can hardly wait for the annihilation to begin. In rhetoric distressingly similar to the arguments occurring occasionally in the journals, Turgidson advises “total commitment,” sacrificing a “few lives” for what he believes would be a more secure and satisfactory “post-war environment”. (Rollins, 2015)

In her book *The Shock Doctrine: the rise of Disaster Capitalism* Naomi Klein established a direct relationship between some catastrophic events and the capitalistic control of masses. After the nuclear annihilation of the world depicted in *Dr. Strangelove*, people would easily be under control. As Theodore Adorno theorized, Fascism is related to fear and an unavoidable threat could be a major factor to incite this latent ideology.

This is the main point of the movie and the Strangelove’s Hypothesis: the fear and paranoia of nuclear war and the fallout effects may lead to a stronger, dictatorial and Fascistic-like government. Once the institutions are perverted, the struggle for power leads humanity to a doomsday scenario. Slogans like “peace is our profession” displayed between a fight scene is a perversion of values and a screaming call to action to change the discrepancy between discourse and practice. *Dr. Strangelove* is, somehow, a paranoia about the paranoia; a terrible hypothesis about what could have been. The only hope to avoid such scenario is a huge sociopsychological and political change in order to promote more peaceful relations. “If fear and destructiveness are the major emotional sources of fascism, eros belongs mainly to democracy.” (Adorno, 1950)

Kubrick’s fumbling attempts to construct a screenplay provide an example of what Gene Wise, expanding on Thomas Kuhn, has called a “paradigm revolution” in the making: a dramatic moment when accepted understandings of the world no longer make sense and new ones are needed (Rollins, 2015).

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