

The Use of Domination in the Maintenance of Female Submission: Traces of Violence Against Women*

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Nowadays, gender issues have been discussed with an increasing scientific rigor. Academic productions that contest the dualistic concept man (aggressor) and victim (woman) have enabled a better understanding of the trivialization of violence against women. Probably, the influences of generational transmission of models of domination and submission shape this violence through the educative process that embraces standards of conduct and by the establishment of constitutive rules of the psyche in terms of identity bonds that label attitudes, actions, and choices. Then, the objective is to demonstrate, making use of the literature in the field, the male perpetuation through educative process by means of the acquisition and repetition of information regarding gender that are transmitted, since childhood, through mother-daughter relationship. The female behavior, practiced by the thoughtless repetition and kept by the strength of ancestral memory many times build a submission bond that is transmitted from mother to daughter, perpetuating the violence against women. The claimed violence, between partners and spouses, highlights hierarchical factors based on the dichotomy public space, aimed at man, and private place, aimed at woman, being a vector that perpetrates the male superiority and the female submission. The condition of female subalternity also reflects the transmission of stereotypes attributed to the woman who identifies herself with a past shaped by patriarchal conceptions, and does not discern whether their conceptions result from personal experiences or if they are identity traits that resulted from a memory.

Keywords: violence, generational transmission, memory, male domination, female submission

Introduction

The dialogues established in many sectors, including the academic space, about violence between affective partners (especially men and women), allow reflections on interventions in the legal sphere, for the criminalization of violence against women and in the field of collective health with the creation of services that include clarification, treatment, and care services. Because of the perpetuation of a scenario that is part of history of human condition, the criminalization of violence against women, according to Rocha (1994), is a pretty recent phenomenon. Even though there are spaces created to deal specifically with issues concerning violence among affective partners, their range is still very timid, especially considering rural communities; may

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it be because of the lack of knowledge of those women or because of the precarious coverage of some public policies. Allied to this factor, it is necessary to problematize the methodological articulation of research strategies, with its consequent production of various data from different sources, considering theoretical bases that underlie the investigations, often polarizing the discussions in the fight against the male domination and in pamphleteering manifests of militants which seem to ignore entrenched aspects of memory transmitted as unquestionable patterns and values.

Both extremist positions, instead of contributing, they instigate radical and dichotomous attitudes, as well as produce conflicts and tensions that work negatively in the diffusion of information related to women's understanding of the phenomenon of violence, making it difficult to find protective mechanisms. We understand that women subordination to male domination has historical roots that naturalize and trivialize the phenomenon of domestic violence, being men, imbued with the domineering role, the executor of this high power of terror, which functions as "a con that prevents us of thinking and ignores its traumatic aspect" (Žižek, 2009, p. 11). Therefore, it is necessary to destroy, or even minimize, the basis of the process of transmission of the subordination of woman to man, in order to be able to understand the influence of traces of memory, harmlessly transmitted, but that are powerful supporters of the violent practice. Thus, we must be attentive to the individual and collective meanings that influence the subordination of women, in the sense of turning to this mode of transmission of the memory arrangements in the process of socialization.

Following this perspective, the memory building of women victims of violence is a way of reflecting on the process of male domination, which in diverse cultural contexts has unconvincing explanations, usually based on dogmas or questionable scientific constructions, such as the diffusion of women's physical inferiority as a constitutional characteristic. However, in many situations, there are interests that are hidden in these explanations, for instance, in sports, when it is intended to justify, in the same category, differentiated wages for men and women.

We intend to deepen our understanding in order to list the foundations that, historically, are responsible for the process of submission of woman to man and the way in which, in the educational process, legacies that perpetuate a subservience place to man are transmitted to woman, while men, making use of stereotypes diffused in the social imaginary, establishes himself to be the owner of a partner, believing that he has the power to decide about her life, which, unfortunately, happens very often, being articles of newspapers, magazines, and television programs.

Unfortunately, almost always these initiatives only happen when a fatal event takes place, being impotent to reverse the situation, but acting as warnings against a possible repetition, although, until the present day, these initiatives were not able to stop, definitely, men's destructive action directed towards women. Certainly, according to Misse (2006, p. 25), this is the most direct reflection of an "imaginary that is being created by comparison with an idealized past. This imaginary has been reproduced by the media: It sells and it has commercial appeal, besides feeding insecurity, fear and panic". It is an imaginary that inhabits memories of an ancestry that is difficult to change, despite the current trends that have been erected by the numerous efforts to combat violence against women.

It is worth remembering that, when bringing to light the episodes of violence against women, the media not only undertakes the process of description, since it indirectly participates in its construction, but it makes possible to reach out information to agents who are eager for such accomplishment. We will not say, therefore,

that the media produces these agents; it only has the power to foment them or even encourage them to be authors of violent actions perpetrated against women in different environments.

Explanatory Trails of Female Submission

The construction of women's subaltern position vis-à-vis men may have historically had, as a paradigmatic reference, the patriarchy. Interestingly, this ideology has resisted the feminist movements during the 12th century, entering the 21st century, being almost indifferent to the numerous debates on gender inequalities. This ideology, still based on remnants of the Modern Age, embodies the patriarchal character, on the basis of which man is considered the central figure, full of power, while women are relegated to the second plane, destined to the private space, with her domestic and family tasks, without any relevance to society, except for rare exceptions (Perrot, 1992). The patriarchal ideology inculcates purposes that are essential to the maintenance of authoritarian norms that organize life in a hierarchical way. In this arrangement, women are socialized by obsolete devices linked to the dogmatism of biological differences. In relation to the disciplinary process suffered by women throughout the history of mankind, it is clear that, in their baggage, the amalgam of oppression represented and probably still represents a rather strong and to a certain extent naturalized and unquestionable motto.

The dynamics of female oppression and submission have close resonance with the disciplinary process, postulated by Foucault (1997), in the production of docile bodies aligned with a social expectation in terms of a definite model. The discipline that focused on the body of women and also other social categories is aimed at training a body, potentializing it for production purposes, as well as neutralizing it for political purposes. That is, the discipline produces docile and useful bodies, but that are serialized in a format for mass production technology. From this, the discipline operates to dissociate the power of the body by engendering it, on one hand, as a specialized skill in the sense of perfecting its abilities, while on the other hand, produces a radical inversion in the power that can result from that process, by imposing a strict subjection. Therefore, the multiple disciplinary forms act as devices that contribute to a regime of subtle strategies of peaceful coercion, determining the construction of the female identity, whose influence recorded by remnants of memory, strongly models the woman's perception of herself, based on these parameters transmitted as if they were natural.

In this way, the so-called "female identity", naturalized for centuries, must be scrutinized, observing its structure in at least three aspects: the cultural context of each social, the different periods considering the specific historical moment, and finally the complex network of information that are transmitted, from generation to generation, in terms of memory construction, given the importance of this process not only in the ways of reality apprehension, but also in the modeling of social interests, since, as Halbwachs (1997, p. 27) pointed out:

(...) there is no sensation that does not take some time to make us become aware of it, since there is no immediate contact between consciousness and the object. What happens most frequently is the sensation to be formed and to exist only in a moment in which its object is no longer present.

In view of this observation, it is possible that the transmission of submission patterns to women dates back to very old times and operates quietly, but with great effectiveness. Transcendent to individual particularities, women have integrated, through memory, the general categories attributed by the totalizing speech conveying: fragility, self-denial, and docility. The transmission of this memory is made, as Candau (1998) observed

unthinkingly, “It comes from the immersion of women in society from an early age rather than an explicit transmission”. In this context, it is almost always up to women to accept the conservative role and to reproduce it, without having a place or expression for her transforming action by creation. It is as if this last condition were completely excluded from the alleged manual of standards of conduct that should follow and that should also take these norms to refer in terms of their social relations.

A classic example of one of these unfounded logics is the concept of maternal instinct as women’s biological fate, what is strongly criticized by Badinter (2011). This belief supported and gave consistency to the ideology of difference between male and female intellectual capacity, in which women are once again inferior, as they do not present gifts for certain professions, especially those classically considered noble, such as law, medicine, and engineering. Hence, may it be because of the organizing principle of fragility or because of the unfounded principle of intellectual incapacity, restrictive paradigms have been rooted and still circulate in the social context that echo up to the present time in the imaginary of men and women who have perpetuated the inequalities between male and female genders. Thus, the social representations of men and women continue to be dissociated from the perspective of gender related to sex, as unambiguous and stratified categories. Considering that the development of the human being occurs within the scope of inter-personality, i.e., that the psychic-dynamics develops from the existential experiences that reference values, beliefs, and perceptions of oneself and the world, we understand that the gender relations built in the interchange with cultural agents, such as family, friends, school, and religion influence individual and collective autonomy by prevailing what culture chooses by the selection of memory, in order to maintain stable conceptions and millennial values, in which men are in the domain and women in the dominated position. As Mayor (2001, p. 36) highlighted,

(...) this submission and passivity attributed to the girl, and consequently, to the woman, do not represent an option but a reflection of the socio-historical context, in which women would be inferior to men.

Although we are attentive to the Manichean position that only women suffered and suffer the effects of socialization based on sexual division, we insist that social expectations about the stability of sex roles linked to sexual division have had a more negative impact on women than on men. We emphasize that women are still universally responsible for the socialization of their children, and consequently, for the maintenance of the classic dichotomy among genders. In this regard, Chodorow (1978) stressed the fundamental importance of the mother-daughter relationship for women and for a focus on the effects of women’s first involvement with their children of both sexes. This experience of attachment will, in the identity of the female gender, cause enormous difficulty regarding separation of intimate relationships.

The Process of Transmission of Submission Patterns

We understand that due to the fact that the basic process that structures the identity of female gender is forged for the attachment, the woman presents, in interpersonal relationships after the period of childhood, certain types of dependency. And since female socialization is focused on connection and attachment, it becomes more understandable that gender identity, although crossed by the various socio-historical-political and cultural moments, presents slight variations in the search for affection in relationships, completeness by maternity and the maintenance of the family union to the detriment of personal and professional growth, especially when the latter are perceived as threats to the legacy transmitted by the mother to her daughter. Then, it is evident that the construction of female gender identity is not natural as any identity, as Butler (2003)

pointed out, but rather is shaped by the classical gender roles distribution that generationally are transmitted by female discourse, which unthinkingly, keeps the woman attached to the private space of home, as being her first place, which she has to maintain and for that matter she has to remain in it.

Considering the devaluation of roles linked to the domestic sphere by patriarchal thinking, by being linked to home, the woman also depreciates herself. And being responsible for the success or the family's failure, the woman may feel needy and dependent on the husband to maintain the so idealized family union, becoming submissive to his impositions. This conduct that reveals the expropriation of one's will and servitude can become a message of consent to higher levels of demands that, if not attended, may elicit different forms of reprisal, aiming at maintaining domination and the consequent female submission.

Frequently, submission to domestic violence has been explained by the coexistence with fear, financial dependence, feeling of pity for the husband, the amount of life time together and by the existence of children. We consider, however, that other factors deserve to be highlighted: A certain ambivalence of the woman, who judges her aggressor as good and bad, the representation of violence as inherent in conjugal relations, a greater desire to fix than to break the violent conjugal relationship: The same man who beats and devalues her is also the one who protects, sustains, is good father and lover. These representations may arise from the socialization received in mother-daughter relationship that constitute, as the main virtues of a woman, the prioritization of the family, temperance and subordination, with which she would develop the necessary house care, education for children and bondage to her husband, and consequently, the permanence in the conjugal relationship, even if violent. In terms of the permanence in violent relationships, Castro (2004) indicated that, in women, the belief that the bonds are their responsibility is rooted, considering themselves responsible for the continuity and success of the relationship. This dedication makes women feel important and valuable, as well as it gives meaning to their existence. We also remind that in her education, until very recently, the woman model taught was that she was responsible for the balance of the conjugal and consequently familial relationship. It is possible to infer from this process the propensity to take responsibility for the ill-treatment received by the husband.

In order to maintain a relationship, even if it is a violent conjugal relationship, the woman goes to great lengths to adjust to the parameters established by the other in order to satisfy all the demands, without often considering herself the right to claim something. These aspects, in particular, the adaptation to the parameters established by the other, lead the woman to the condition of submission, in which the conflicts that occur in this type of relationship are experienced as real failures that, in the final analysis, compete even more to diminish self-esteem and self-worth.

We consider it fundamental to point out that situations of conjugal conflict also constitute a device for thinking about the complexity that intertwines human relations from birth. Regarding women, the experiences of respecting, abiding, and waiting for male protection populate the female imaginary until adulthood, reinforcing the subordinate place, internalized since the nuclear family. Concerning the family participation in the construction of the conception of the woman regarding her place in the social hierarchy, Meler (2005) asserted that it is a matter of "recognizing the importance of the power relations that begin with life, given the inequality between the child and the adults who attend it".

In the Context of Domestic Violence

According to this position, we consider that the family, reflection of social organization, educates women to maintain power practices that support male supremacy and female devaluation, thus supporting a framework

of social inequalities, whose hierarchical structure retains women in lower condition. The effects of this framework of inequalities produce relations in which women pay the price of violence, perpetrated in all social spheres.

It is worth emphasizing our understanding of the fact that domestic violence universally knows no boundaries. It occurs in different social classes, ethnicities, religions, and cultures, occurring also in populations of different levels of economic and social development, and its impact causes damage not only to women, but also to a network of relationships. It is prominent that violence, in its family and domestic modalities, does not occur randomly, but originates from a gendered social organization that privileges the male. As Scaffo and Farias (2017) pointed out, the multiple causes of violence, in general, place us before a rather complex approach. In relation to violence against women, it is possible to say that besides being a complex subject, there is no consensus, resulting in several debates about its perpetuation and determination. We emphasize that when speaking of violence, we are not only exposing the physical aggressions, more commonly understood as absurd and even unthinkable. We are defining violence as “any and all types of coercion, applied by physical, or psychic means and always based on cruelty, with the aim of total or partial destruction of something” (Farias, 2010, p. 91).

We highlight that the inter-personality in conjugal relationships places women not as a victim, but as a partner, and violence, in this perspective, is evidenced as a means of communication between men and women, even though it has an evil nature. This relationship of partnership already brings in itself a previous situation of power inequality. We recall that the educational process to which the woman has been subjected, common to the patriarchal culture, still manages the woman for a permissive behavior towards the man, and it is therefore a mistake to dissociate any interpersonal relationship from the norms that structure the society, as Hirigoyen (2008, p. 13) underlined: “contrary to what is often said, domestic violence is only possible because society accepts it in silence”. This silence is a result of the maintenance of the conceptions of patriarchal ideology that generally condemns acts of violence against women, but still accepts as natural, in love relationships, in which there is ambivalence of feelings and aggressiveness, lived by means of conflicts, confrontations, and retreats. In physical confrontations, physical violence is only the tip of the iceberg of a process that begins with intimidation, coercion, and abusive behavior, whose intentions focus primarily on the woman’s psychic-fragility, which makes it easier to show who is in charge and who needs to obey in the relationship.

Regarding abusive strategies, we note that control over women also aims to lead to progressive isolation, restrictions on family and social contacts and even the work environment, in short, the destruction of all networks of possible support, in which women can experience the least of alterity. In order to cancel her out, the husband attacks self-esteem, indicating that she has no value. Violence is expressed in the form of contemptuous attitudes, pejorative words, and unpleasant remarks that are, in fact, systematic acts of disqualification which can lead to loss of self-confidence and can cause indelible sequels. In this case, the man fortifies himself of a transmitted legacy, that is to say of memory traces, to guarantee himself in the exercise of power, therefore, in these conditions, the man, also a group or a society, as Gondar (2016, p. 23) indicated “wants to hide everything that could reveal his paradoxes, his failures, in short, anything that could compromise the image he intend to provide about himself”. Turning in this direction, we could admit that man, by appropriating this legacy, hopes to count on the woman’s internalization of the submissive condition, to act unrestrictedly and to exempt him from guilt.

Following this line of argument, we can infer that the woman, heir of stereotypes socially constructed by a series of motivations, for example, the relationship maintenance, the belief in possible changes from the husband and the shame of exposing the situation of violence, as accentuated by Ferro (1988), also presents great difficulty in abandoning violent relations. What we can observe is that both the positive and negative characteristics of the abusive husband are mixed, causing difficulty in discerning the reality of the situation in which they live. In this ambivalent process, she submits more and more to her tormentor, sometimes for years, cultivating feelings of guilt and failure that she must bear if she cannot reverse the situation in which she lives as well as comply with the social rules and expectations of maintaining, at all costs, marriage, and family. Thus, with the acceptance of arbitrary conduct, a woman may, unconsciously, authorize a growing continuum of abusive behavior that include insults, denial of her own needs, disapproval of any realization, blame for all the facts and problems which occur in the family, disqualification as mother, wife, lover, and professional.

We emphasize that domestic violence can occur in an increasing way. We do not intend to mean that physical violence is the worst or most deleterious form of aggression, but we affirm that aggressive relationships can become increasingly destructive, whether in the moral or psychological sphere. Any form of violence that women suffer causes a moral and psychological fracture, reducing her most of the time to a state of total impotence, whenever a vestige of memory persists, as an indicator of subservience or subalternity. In this respect, we align ourselves with Orrico (2016, p. 97) for whom “memory must be understood as a faculty of the subject, without disregarding its socio-historical insertion”. This aspect is important for us to think about how each period produces a type of man and also of woman.

Understanding the Female Submission

Focusing on the female submission ahead domestic violence, it is important to ask the following question: Why is the woman often in a violent relationship? Why do women who suffer violence continue to live with their aggressors? In an attempt to answer these questions, we intend to analyze the acquisition and repetition of devices derived from the psychic gender protocols received from early childhood through the mother-daughter relationship. In this respect, we consider two possibilities: First of all, the passage of a legacy from one generation to another takes place through a psychic material that potentiates sacred inheritances. This latter form of transmission, which also bases the discussion on the transmission of gender determinants as a device for female submission to domestic violence has the mother as the main agent, both in the presentation of educational standards as in the maintenance and fulfillment of these standards, especially by women in the next generation. We emphasize that this transmission not only focus on negative or positive issues, but above all, it aims at adapting the next generation to the same conditions experienced by the transmitters. Second of all, the issue of the mother-daughter relationship as the basis for protocolic reprints in the face of violence may be a factor that contributes negatively to her daughter's elaboration of what has been conveyed about the understanding of what it is to be a woman. In view of this, could we infer that the woman-daughter-recipient of these protocols with these biases can be trapped between trying to forget and reworking the experiences? We emphasize that there is no greater subjection and servitude than the imprisonment caused by the position of submission, and that living in adulthood in a violent conjugal relationship, according to the voices of the past, may prevent the woman from recognizing that she once again gave authority to the other to model and to direct her existence, thus repeating the infantile experience that once assured her the physical, moral, and psychic-integrity, but that now, in the adult phase, destroys these dimensions of subjectivity.

We call attention to the presence of memory that acts as a device that brings to the surface traumatic experiences along the existential course, forcing an elaboration in which the woman, in the position of daughter, was prevented from performing. This conflict, which involves multiple and ambivalent aspects, has the presence of fundamental mnemonic traits in the female subjectivation: the legacies transmitted in the mother-daughter relationship. The complexity and strength of the processes present in this situation are of such intensity that the women's choices are not allowed, and they are often confined to the imposition of a single option.

The process of mobilization to change the relational pattern becomes even more complex if, in the position of daughter, the woman was a silent witness of the aggressions to her mother. We point out that this circumstance kept in silence transports herself to her situations of conjugal life, in which it repeats nuances of the previous traumatic experience, lived indirectly: She tends to silence, making use of excuses to naturalize the violence that is perpetrated to it.

We would like to remind that these actions can be used as strategies to appease internal and external conflicts and that women can also, for example, surrender to religion by donating their power of personal resolution to a Divine element that will solve by its own power the destiny outlined for her. She can, finally, become totally submissive to the desires of the other, subjecting herself completely to its determinations. At this point, we consider it pertinent to point out another question. Would not submission be a way of not taking responsibility for her as it is in the mother-daughter relationship?

The Female Submission in the Current Scenario

In the last decades, we have seen a significant change in the social role of women in Western societies. The participation of women in the labor market is already well-known, they have been successfully investing in professional careers and some are occupying even prominent and prestigious posts in the political and public space. However, we cannot overestimate the depth of these changes; much less believe that inequalities between men and women have been eradicated. On the contrary, cultural, political, social, and economic elements that influence social behavior are still present in daily life, maintaining specific patterns that legitimize men's power and authority over women. Although different strategies of power over women are used in society at large, we will focus on domestic space, more specifically marital relationships, in which power and control transactions range from subtle strategies to physical violence, in order to make the other think, feel, and act in a way that would not stem from her spontaneously. And since women have been occupying the fragile side in the dualisms historically established for men and women, it falls upon her the hierarchical and rigid exercise of domestic violence.

Violence against women is a phenomenon that pervades social order, ethnicities, religions, and cultures, occurring in populations of different levels of economic and social development. Due to its high destructive power, violence against women has caused abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, irreversible injuries, and among other sequels, a high mortality rate. Violence does not only mean the use of physical force to subjugate the will to resistance, or even to punish for not attending to the orders of the agent in a position of domination. It must be understood by psychological, moral, sexual, and patrimonial bias, as a form of disqualification, embarrassment, restriction of freedom, threats, abusive conduct, rape, and confiscation of documents and materials assets, among others. This type of violence was considered, for a long time, a couple problems due to the fact that it occurs in private spaces, that is, house hold spaces. However, since the 1970's, with the growth

of the feminist movement (Butler, 2003), it has started to be considered a social issue, based on historical and cultural constructions on gender. There are different causes for the increasing rate of domestic violence against women: partner unemployment, alcohol, and other drugs, difficulty of articulation between primary and secondary care sectors, lack of clarity and objectivity in the records of different areas, in particular health and legal areas. Regarding this last point, the difficulties fall upon the woman herself, on the grounds of the frequent withdrawal of the police record at the request of the partner who perpetrated the violence. This occurrence is often based on hope of modifying partner behavior, fearing of threats, and lack of effective support from social networks in which the nuclear family is fundamental, from the banalization of violence, used on behalf of the family union. A significant contingent of women from the 21st century is still silent, submissive to male domination, as a result of patriarchal ideology.

The violence against women, domestic violence, intra family violence, and gender violence have theoretical implications and lead to different practices. In this domain, violence against women is woven by gender dimensions, which in turn are mirrored in discursive forms and in the value system that circumscribe the female sex as fragile, with less capacity for rationality, belonging to a background. These conceptions not only operate in the symbolic order, but, above all, they structure social places that strengthen relationships historically marked by the inequality between men and women. It is believed that technical-scientific knowledge combined with the sensitivity of health professionals to the application of humanized practices are essential elements in the attention to women victims of domestic violence.

Final Considerations

We emphasize that we do not intend to exhaust the plural possibilities contained in the submissive posture of women facing violence. However, we stress that the strength of the legacy assimilated about being female, transmitted in the mother-daughter relationship, seems to make it natural and inherent in the female nature to live for the other, and consequently, to give up autonomy and self-control. The transmission of this legacy happens through processes constructed by traditions and social values that establish a hierarchy in which the woman only has its recognition and its identity if it is confirmed by the other, her mother, her father, her husband, and her partner. In keeping with the vestiges of memory received, she must give direction and meaning to her existence in the search for a relationship that constitutes her as a woman.

We consider it important to remember that the constitution of being female has as its main determinant the private space of the family and motherhood, by which traditional argumentation tries to explain the difference between male and female, the dependence and the domestic values. Unlike other factors, the dependence has been identified as one of the greatest, if not one of the greatest obstacles to autonomy and consequent submission to violence involving affective partners.

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