



The power to dominate, a human stupidity.

El poder para dominar, una estupidez humana.

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ABSTRACT

The power to dominate has always been a human desire and aspiration that many have conquered and used throughout time. It involves a culture of greed that does not have any considerations towards the others because it only seeks for accumulation, control and prestige, causing suffering and devastation. The power to dominate can be practiced from the economic and political macrostructures, as well as from the social microstructures because control and abuse of the others can be observed in all kinds of social relations. This type of power is defined in this article as "power-over", which has been studied, legitimized and questioned in the social sciences and the political philosophy fields. This paper brings together classical and modern authors who had debated about this political issue for many years. The article analyses part of that theory, describing the power to dominate as a stupidity act because of its destructive potential that only privileges private interest. Also, the concept of stupidity is defined in this text. The issue of power has another approach that validates how social or collective power could also lead to achieving common goals of emancipation or the creation of a culture of equality. This paper, however, focuses the debate on the concept of "power-over" which contributes to exploitation and control. This text highlights how slavery, wars, poverty and environmental issues are consequences of that type of power, which is also linked to human stupidity.



Keywords: Power. Domination. Greed. Stupidity. Exploitation.

RESUMEN

El poder para dominar siempre ha sido un deseo y una aspiración humana que muchos han conquistado y ejercido a través del tiempo. Se trata de una cultura de la avaricia que no tiene consideraciones hacia los demás porque lo que busca es la acumulación, el control y el prestigio, causando sufrimiento y devastación. El poder dominante se ejerce desde macroestructuras económicas y políticas, como también desde microestructuras sociales, ya que el control y el abuso hacia los otros también lo podemos observar en todo tipo de relaciones sociales. A este poder, aquí lo denominamos poder-sobre, el cual ha sido estudiado, legitimado y cuestionado desde la filosofía política y las ciencias sociales. En este caso se recurre a autores clásicos y contemporáneos, quienes han debatido sobre este problema político. En el artículo se analiza parte de esa teoría y se asocia el poder para dominar como un acto de estupidez porque es destructivo y sólo privilegia el interés privado. En el texto se conceptualiza la estupidez y se delimita la discusión porque el problema del poder también tiene otro enfoque, aquel que valida el poder social o colectivo y que tiene fines comunes de emancipación y de creación de una cultura aspiracional de igualdad. Sin embargo, se especifica que el abordaje de la reflexión está centrado en el poder-sobre, ese que sirve para la explotación y el control. En el desarrollo del escrito se documenta que el esclavismo, la guerra, la pobreza y la devastación ambiental son consecuencias de ese poder asociado a la estupidez humana.

Palabras clave: Poder. Dominación. Avaricia. Estupidez. Explotación

Introduction

The present work is a reflection from the field of political philosophy, a discussion that emphasizes analyzing the issue of power as a capacity for domination exercised by certain individuals and interest groups, producing tragic consequences in the lives of most people and other living species on whom predation is exercised. In the development of the text it is affirmed that from the perspective of power as domination, which is also associated with control and exploitation, large sectors of societies have been subjected to conditions of suffering, and nature to conditions of devastation, constituting



this phenomenon a great human stupidity because it threatens life itself on the planet. Power as domination unleashes the worst of the human condition giving rise to all kinds of pernicious behaviors, such as greed, insolidarity, violence and self-centeredness, among others, thus constituting a culture centered on private interest.

Historical and present evidence of this exercise of power is abundant, which testifies to the self-destruction of our species and of nature itself. This stratified phenomenon of dominators-dominated has always accompanied human evolution, reaching today an unsustainable point due to the damage caused. Power as domination can be observed at the macrostructural level through capitalism and other systems that have existed in the world, such as slavery, feudalism, empires, monarchies, religious systems, fascisms, communisms, and even in liberal democracy. However, that power as domination is also manifested in the micro social, which has to do with everyday relationships in society. There is also power there and it is used to control, to subdue and to create hierarchies that dominate. That is, the problem of power is not personified only by the state, capital, belief systems or other institutional spheres, but also by individuals who are part of the social fabric of any society and who are not necessarily part of economic or political macrostructures.

Seen in this way the panorama, it is proposed that power as domination is part of social relations and culture, it is a human problem that has led us to commit the worst stupidities, from war, to poverty, racism, control of the other and the concentration of wealth, among many other imbecilities. Not to mention the overexploitation of seas, forests, rivers and the disappearance of hundreds of living species as a result of human action. We have, then, that power in its destructive and negative sense is exercised from large institutional structures that are always in search of legitimation, as it is also exercised in any micro social relationship where some assume the role of dominators and others of dominated. The competition for power is undoubtedly one of the greatest traces in human history, as Marina and Rambaud (2019) point out in their work *Biography of Humanity. History of the evolution of cultures*.

The study of this problem is made from the analysis of the concept of power from its negative self-referential meaning, that is, as domination from individualistic interests, which as said, the term



is also associated with control, oppression and exploitation. As is known, political philosophy has also studied power from its positive version, that is, power seen as a collective social power that serves for common causes of liberation and emancipation, an approach that constitutes the other side of the coin of this discussion that takes centuries. However, the interest from these lines is to know the power from the self-referential perspective of individuals and groups, since it is this power that generates multiple existential crises, which drives us to continue examining this conflict to ponder the backgrounds of the problem and raise the possibilities of building other cultural options other than domination. Thus, the emphasis of reflection is placed on what John Holloway (2005) calls power-over, that is, the power that is exercised over others for control and domination.

An important objective of this analysis is to make a theoretical review of some authors who have written about power as domination, this, to record that this power is a problem that crosses human history. In turn, another purpose is to expose various phenomena that are a consequence of the exercise of oppressive power, which are reproduced in each historical moment and have become part of the culture of our civilization. In the same way, we reflect on the concept of stupidity, with the intention of asserting that the actions of self-referential power are stupidities that do a lot of damage to the world, but that, nevertheless, we naturalize them by considering that there are no possibilities to change human destiny.

The issue of power is perhaps one of the most studied issues in philosophy and social sciences, from which a series of theories have been proposed to explain its nature, its foundations and its consequences. From these philosophical and scientific references, an extensive literature has been produced that studies various variables of the processes of domination. Some authors converge in their theories, while others oppose giving rise to a debate that does not cease in this regard. In most theoretical positions the reference is political power, which continues to be studied in detail from different historical and cultural contexts. In this regard, it is convenient to say that here the problem of power as a political power is addressed, however, the specificity of the analysis lies in the fact that political power is conceptualized as a power that encompasses and underlies the economic, military, ecclesial, ideological, gender and other types that serve for domination. In the understanding that



any social process where oppression, control or exploitation manifests itself is ultimately a matter with political origins and implications. So structural and micro social domination are political phenomena where power is used to subject the public to private interest. With the above, it is not denied that economic, military, ecclesial, ideological or gender power have their own specificities. The relevance lies in understanding power as a domain, its manifestations, causes and alternatives.

Power as domination without more

In the exercise of approximation to scrutinize the concept of power, there are, from semantics various definitions, but there are two that are reviewed at this time. In the Dictionary of the Spanish Language (2020), of the Royal Spanish Academy it is indicated that "power is the faculty or power to do something". While another definition of the same dictionary, says that "power is to have more strength than someone, to overcome him fighting hand to hand". In this sense, the second definition is more appropriate for the purpose of these lines, since power is associated with the use of force, which has historically been used to oppress. Meanwhile, the first meaning of power as a faculty or power to do something, is not used in this analysis because it is very generic, since, according to that meaning, we all have power because we all have faculties or power to study, work or do anything else that suits us. This definition of power is not associated with the domination, oppression or control of others, but with the capacity of doing that every human being has, so this meaning of the term is surpassed by historical events that have given rise to deeper conceptualizations about power, which is used to understand power-over others.

In this search to expand and understand the meaning of power as domination, classical authors such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, Bakunin, Weber, and other contemporary thinkers such as Holloway, Dussel and Foucault are called upon, who propose their theories that reaffirm the existence of oppressive power. The reference to these authors gives documentary support to the analysis presented here, without this meaning that the discussion has its limits in these theories. They are important references in the literature on power, but, nevertheless, there are many other philosophers and sociologists who continue to address this problem, which is not resorted to because



the objective is not to address the state of the matter, but to generate a reflection from certain postulates about the dominant power.

To begin with the references of these thinkers we have Niccolò Machiavelli, who was a deep connoisseur of European history. This author who wrote *The Prince* points out that, in most of the empires, duchies, principalities and reigns of his time, and those that preceded him, they resorted to violence as a means to seize power, to preserve it and to expand it, thus establishing mechanisms of domination that guaranteed the elevation of kings and nobility. Machiavelli's text dating from 1532 illustrates with historical arguments the evolution of states, their emperors, princes and kings, and their incessant struggle to empower themselves through any means. For this Italian writer and diplomat, power can be conquered and preserved through thick and thin:

A question arises from this: whether it is worth more to be loved than feared, or feared than loved. Nothing better than being both at the same time; but since it is difficult to gather them and that one must always be missing, I declare that it is safer to be feared than loved [...] And it must be borne in mind that a prince, and above all a new prince, cannot observe all the things thanks to which men are considered good, because, often in order to retain himself in power, he is drawn into working against faith, charity, humanity and religion. It is necessary, therefore, that he has an intelligence capable of adapting to all circumstances, and that, as I have said before, he does not depart from the good while he can, but that, in case of necessity, he does not hesitate to enter into evil [...] Try, then, a prince to overcome and preserve the State, that the means will always be honorable and praised by all (Machiavelli, 1978, pp.29 and 31).

For his part, Thomas Hobbes, who was a prolific writer, raises the need to centralize power in the hands of a sovereign, in this case, a king with the capacity to impose order and guarantee security. In *Leviathan*, a book published in 1651, Hobbes refers to power with several nuances, among which some stand out because they delineate power as the privilege of a few who have the "honorability" to impose their will on others. In this work Hobbes privileges the exercise of power as an absolutist power capable of controlling the entire population where the subjects cede all their rights to the



sovereign to govern and impart justice. In Leviathan the search for wealth and ambitions is legitimized, and for the sake of this power is exercised:

Therefore, anyone who makes a man loved or feared of others, or the reputation of such a quality, is power, because it constitutes a means of having the assistance and services of various [...] Nobility is power, not everywhere, but only in the States where it has privileges: because in such privileges consists the power [...] Dominion and victory are honorable things because they are acquired by force; and servitude, out of necessity or fear, is dishonorable [...] To be distinguished, that is, known by riches, offices, great deeds or eminent goodness, is honorable because it constitutes a sign of the power of one who is distinguished [...] The greed of great wealth, and the ambition of great honors, are honorable, as signs of power to obtain them, Greed and ambition of small gains or preeminences is dishonorable (Hobbes, 2005, pp.91,95,96,97).

The list of authors who have dealt with the problem of power is long, some have done so to legitimize power as domination, while others, to question that phenomenon. In the history of Western political philosophy we can read multiple thinkers who have been concerned with the problem. For example, in another historical moment other than that of Machiavelli and Hobbes, we have Bakunin, one of the founders of anarchism, who has a very critical view of power and the state. This theorist and political militant even affirms that the state itself is the organization of power, and that all states have in their sights the conquest of others. In his Complete Works, in volume 4, entitled The Principle of the State (1871), the following can be read:

In the end, conquest is not only the origin, it is also the supreme end of all states large or small, powerful or weak, despotic or liberal, monarchical or aristocratic, democratic and socialist also [...] That it was the starting point of all States, ancient and modern, cannot be doubted by anyone, since every page of universal history proves it sufficiently. Nor will anyone deny that the great current states have as their object, more or less confessed, the conquest [...] As ridiculous as you want, but nevertheless it is your dream, as the dream of the smallest peasant owner is to round up your land to the detriment of your neighbor; to round, to grow,



to conquer at any price and always, is a tendency fatally inherent in every State, whatever its extension, its weakness or its strength, because it is a necessity of its nature. What is the state if it is not the organization of power? But it is in the nature of all power the impossibility of supporting a superior or an equal, for power has no other object than domination, and domination is real only when everything that hinders it is subject to it; no power tolerates another other than when it is obliged to do so, that is, when it feels powerless to destroy or overthrow it [...] Therefore, among all the States that exist side by side, war is permanent and their peace is nothing more than a truce (Bakunin, 1986, p.185).

Another theorist who is a reference for the study of power is Max Weber, German philosopher and sociologist, who is considered one of the founders of modern sociology. This thinker has a classic work entitled *Economy and Society. Sketch of comprehensive sociology*, a book in which he expressed his ideas about politics, public administration, and of course, the capitalist economy. In this text, which was published between 1921 and 1922, Weber expresses his idea about power, and perhaps it is one of the most referenced approaches by scholars of this political phenomenon, in this work its author makes explicit the relationship between power, domination and obedience:

Power means the probability of imposing one's own will, within a social relationship, even against all resistance and whatever the basis of that probability. Domination should be understood as the probability of finding obedience to a command of a certain content among given persons; discipline should be understood as the probability of finding obedience to a mandate by a group of people who, by virtue of entrenched attitudes, are prompt, simple and automatic. The concept of power is sociologically amorphous. Every imaginable quality of a man and every sort of possible constellation can put someone in the position to impose his will on a given situation. The concept of domination therefore has to be more precise and can only mean the probability that a command will be obeyed (Weber, 2002, p.43).

John Holloway is a contemporary writer born in Ireland, but based in Mexico. He is a heterodox Marxist who has shaken up the social sciences that address the issue of power. His classic book



Changing the World Without Taking Power. The meaning of revolution today was a new and heated debate regarding the state, power and revolution, a discussion that altered traditional visions of social and political change. In this work, Holloway makes a distinction between power-doing and power-over, highlighting that this second type of power is a power for domination. In addition to putting on the table of debate the concepts of anti-power and counterpower. In arguing about power-over, he indicates that:

Power-over is the breakdown of the social flow of doing. Those who exercise power over the action of others deny them subjectivity, deny their share in the flow of doing, exclude them from history. Power-over breaks mutual recognition: those over whom power is exercised are not recognized [...] History becomes the story of the powerful, that of those who tell others what to do. The flow of doing becomes an antagonistic process in which the doing of the majority is denied, in which a few appropriate the doing of the majority [...] The breakdown of doing always involves physical force or its threat. There is always the threat: "Work for us, otherwise you will die or suffer physical punishment." If domination consists in the maker being robbed of what has been done, that theft is necessarily an armed robbery. But what makes possible the use of threat or physical force is its stabilization or institutionalization in various forms, a fact that is crucial to understand in order to understand the dynamics and weakness of power-over (Holloway, 2005, p.34).

For Enrique Dussel, philosopher of liberation, power as domination is a fetishized power, a concept that this author associates with idolatry, corruption and debasement. For this Argentine-Mexican theorist there is a serious problem with this type of self-referential power, since it strips the people or the community of their ability to self-direct. In his work *20 Theses on Politics*, first published in 2006, he refers to fetishized power as the power of colonialist Modernity, of empires, states and liberal parliaments, since their representatives exercise power to protect their own interests and that of the economic elites. In his derivations of the fetishization of power, he points out:

The fetishization of power consists of a "Will-of-Power" as dominion over the people, over the most, over the weak, over the poor [...] Politics is in this case the art of the exercise of



power over antagonists who, at best hegemonically, are subjected to the will of fetishized institutions in favor of some particular members of the community, or, in the case of postcolonial countries (such as Latin America), metropolitan states. The fetishized power itself, not being able to be based on the strength of the people, must be based on groups that violently subdue the people – when the dominant consensus has lost effectiveness in producing the obedience of the masses – (Dussel, 2006, p.44).

In this review of philosophical political literature, Michel Foucault, French philosopher and sociologist, cannot be missing, who in his intellectual production also took care of studying the subject of power, although with a different look. His theory goes beyond understanding power from its personification in the state to propose that it is a problem present in every social relationship. This is what has been said here in the sense that the exercise of power can come from large structures and systems, as well as from the micro social fabric, where it can be observed that there can be gender domination in a couple relationship, or labor exploitation in a small business, or patriarchal control in a family, as well as manipulation of conscience by some local charismatic leader. The establishment of dominating-dominated hierarchical relationships is just around the corner. They can be part of macrostructures and microstructures that produce the same effect damaging human dignity and generating suffering. In this way, Foucault warns of this phenomenon and deals with unraveling these microsocial processes, without implying denying the existence of institutions that are part of structures and systems from which the dominant power is exercised. In his text *The Subject and Power*, published in 1982, Foucault refers to these two dimensions in the following terms:

This is true. But I would like to highlight the fact that the power of the state (and this is one of the reasons for its strength) is a form of individualizing and totalizing power. Never, I believe, in the history of human societies – nor in the old Chinese society – has there been such a complex combination of individualization techniques and totalization procedures within the same political structures [...] No doubt the main goal these days is not to discover what we are, but to reject what we are. We have to imagine and build what we could be to get rid of this kind of political "double bind," which consists of the simultaneous individualization and



totalization of modern power structures. It could be said, in conclusion, that the political, ethical, social and philosophical problem of our day is not to try to liberate the individual from the State, and from the institutions of the State, but to free ourselves from the State and the type of individualization linked to it. We must foster new forms of subjectivity by rejecting the kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries [...] Let us return to the definition of the exercise of power as a way in which some can structure the possible field of action of the others. Thus, what would be typical of a power relationship is that this would be a mode of action on actions. That is, power relations are deeply rooted in the social nexus, and do not constitute "above" society an additional structure whose radical disappearance could perhaps be dreamed of. In any case, to live in a society is to live in such a way that it is possible for some to act on the action of the others. A society "without power relations" can only be an abstraction. Which, by the way, makes politically much more necessary the analysis of what these relations are in a given society, of their historical formation, of what makes them solid or fragile, of the necessary conditions to transform some, to abolish others [...] It can be seen why the analysis of power relations in a society cannot be traced back to the study of a number of institutions, or even to the study of all those that would deserve the name of "politics". Power relations are rooted in the social fabric [...] Domination is a global power structure whose ramifications and consequences can sometimes be found even in the most tenuous fabric of society; but it is at the same time a strategic situation more or less acquired and solidified in a confrontation of long historical scope between adversaries (Foucault, 1982, pp. 8, 11, 17, 18, 20).

All the authors cited at the time dealt with the problem of power, although it should be said that it was not the only issue they investigated, since their works address other circumstances that also have great relevance for the philosophical debate. However, throughout history these thinkers are a reference for the analysis of political power. By way of synthesis, from what was quoted from them it can be said that they all observe the phenomenon of power as a problem from which situations of oppression and suffering emerge. Power-over has been exercised everywhere and in all times, being a matter that manifests itself in the macrostructural, having as its center the state and its institutions,



but at the same time it is proposed that this power-over is also concretized in the daily life of social relations, whether they are part or not, of systems and structures.

Machiavelli and Hobbes are in favor of centralizing power, either to guarantee the creation and permanence of states, or to ensure order and control from the self-referential power of a prince or king. Bakunin warns of the risks of the state, whether monarchical or liberal, since they personify the power of a social class and elites that seek to protect and expand their interests at the expense of the suffering of the majority. That is why it raises the need to abolish all types of state. Max Weber assures that power consists in imposing the individual will within a social relationship despite resistance, achieving the obedience of others, which can be achieved from a state, an economic system such as capitalism or in a given social relationship that can belong to the microsocial. Therefore, domination consists in the probability that a mandate will be obeyed, whether by the action of force, legality, charisma or other means.

Holloway (2005) for his part, argues that power-over denies any capacity to make the community or a society that is subdued, since that power-over denies them. He says that history has become the history of the powerful, since it has been they who in the various historical circumstances have oppressed the majorities. He points out that power as domination has always required its institutionalization and stabilization as mechanisms to legitimize that type of power. Dussel in turn speaks of the fetishization of power, which he associates with corruption, that is, that power belongs to the community, but when it is delegated and the representative is corrupted he becomes a self-referential power that protects personal and group interests. In this sense, the state and its institutions fetishize by turning politics into the instrumentalization for the achievement of individualistic and clique desires. Power is transformed to dominate, which also happens in the economy.

Foucault, as already said, looks beyond the state or capitalism, affirms that there is power for domination, however, he emphasizes that this problem is not exclusive to macrostructures, but there is also a microphysics of power, from which the social relations of domination can be analyzed. In this sense, he exposes that even in the tenuous part of society there can be power of some over others,



so the analysis must contemplate that complex social network from where powers that oppress and control arise. It is not only a question of looking at the structure and the system, but also at the daily social relationship where some assume the role of dominators and others of dominated. Therefore, the study of power must contemplate this phenomenon of oppression, but at the same time it must emphasize the subject that can and must be de-subjected to the processes of hegemony and control to become an actor that can transform social relations.

With the previous references of classical and not so classical authors, it is observed, from one approach or another, that power is a problem because it is exercised to dominate, control and exploit. Throughout history, from antiquity to the present day, self-referential power has been suffered more than collective social power, constituting a historical fact that generates very serious sufferings. The use of force, legality, ideology and even charisma have been means used for control and exploitation. That is, destructive negative power continues to operate in different ways, be it violence or legitimacy; either through systems and structures, or through an infinity of social relations. This power-over is a consummate act, it is a consequence and manifestation of needs, interests and egocentric desires that trample on the dignity of the other, be it person, community, race or culture. The evidence is in sight, and of this, you will realize in the following lines, even if it is by way of synthesis because the list of grievances that constitute the great human stupidity of power is almost infinite.

Power as domination and its stupidities

The affirmation that is raised in this text is that the act of dominating and subduing others is stupid because it is carried out from visions and egocentric interests that produce suffering in those who suffer such actions. But what is stupidity?, according to some writers who have reflected on this matter point out that it is difficult to have a precise definition in this regard, therefore, they have chosen to associate this phenomenon with a variety of attitudes, perceptions and human acts. For example, Antonio Fernández Vicente (2020) points out that stupidity refers to narrow-mindedness, to a kind of intellectual egoism through which judgments and visions of the world are imposed where



only the point of view of the egocentric person prevails. In this sense, stupidity is related to intolerance and the absence of dialogue, conditions that promote attitudes and acts that impose the individual will on any other consideration. "The stupid one is crude and still bragging. It denies complexity and spreads its simplicity in a dogmatic way" (Vicente, 2020). This meaning of stupidity can be linked to self-referential power, since everyone who is the possessor of a will to dominate imposes his worldview on reality without caring about the social and environmental consequences. Therefore, it does not dialogue and is indeed intolerant. Crude acts to subdue and prey are performed without listening to other voices, other needs, other interests or other desires, what matters is self-benefit, considering it as an absolute truth that does not require discussion with anyone.

For his part, Paul Tabori, in his work *History of Human Stupidity* (1999), reports that Alexander Feldmann, who was a disciple of Freud, came to contrast stupidity with wisdom, indicating that "the wise is the one who knows the causes of things, while the stupid ignores them". But, we can add in this same sense that the stupid not only ignores the causes but also the consequences of his actions. Tabori, in quoting Loewenfield, says that this doctor focused his analysis of stupidity as a medical problem, and rather than defining stupidity he was responsible for associating it with certain forms of expression, such as that stupidity is "a poor capacity for judgment, it is magalomania, vanity and recklessness" (pp.8,14).

This author states that stupidity is related to most human misfortunes and weaknesses:

[...] for stupidity is like a black light, which diffuses death instead of life, which sterilizes instead of fertilizing, which destroys rather than creates. Its expressions form legion, and its symptoms are infinite [...] All this would matter little if the stupid could only harm himself. But stupidity is the most lethal human weapon, the most devastating epidemic, the most expensive luxury. (Tabori, 1999, pp.18,22).

This author tells in his book that Hugo von Castiglione, who was master of a huge financial and industrial empire in Europe, had a famous phrase that said "never do wrong unnecessarily. Do it to



the extent that it gives you profit and pleasure" (p. 67). So Tabori claims that stupidity is the spring of antisocial attitudes, and that human stupidity has no end.

Therefore, the historical abuses against human groups and nature are repeated and constitute the black light that spreads death instead of life, that destroys instead of creating. Stupidity has certainly become the most lethal human weapon and the most expensive luxury. Hence there are records of acts of barbarism throughout history and the evolution of cultures, phenomena that have caused infinite suffering and destruction. In *History of Human Stupidity*, Tabori refers to phenomena such as the ambition for gold, from which bloody events have occurred to this day. But he also writes about the crooked delivery of justice that courts, magistrates and judges have imparted. Other stupidities, according to this author, are bureaucratism and the attitudes of bureaucrats in all kinds of institutions, as well as myths and magic that are still very present in the social imaginary. In this text we add, following Tabori, other types of stupidities that also destroy rather than create, such as slavery, war, inequality, environmental predation and an accumulation of acts of domination in the microsocial sphere, examples of stupidity that are inadmissible for the terrible damage caused. And it is on this aspect that we reflect on the following lines, which give a succinct account of the attacks against human and non-human life of those acts that spread death instead of life.

Tragic stupidities

Slavery

One of the worst misfortunes that humanity has suffered because of power as domination is slavery in its many forms. Slavery existed in Antiquity, in the Middle Ages, in Modernity, and it exists in today's world. Marina and Rambaud (2019) note that:

[...] at the height of its power, the Roman Empire needed between 250 and 400,000 slaves a year. Muslims were colossal buyers and sellers of slaves. In the nineteenth century there were eight million slaves in India. In three centuries, more than fifteen million Africans were kidnapped and turned into merchandise. (pp.122,123).



These authors report that Ferdinand the Catholic gave in 1510 the first permission to send black slaves in large numbers to the New World to extract gold from the mines of Santo Domingo. This without forgetting that Christopher Columbus trafficked in indigenous slaves of the Caribbean and that Hernán Cortés established a slave regime in America with the consent of the Spanish Crown.

Slavery does not cease, and today in the globalized world there are records of modern slavery. In the XXI century it is estimated that in 2016 around 40.3 million people were forced to work against their will under threats, or living in a forced marriage. Global estimates of this problem focus on two global issues: forced labour and forced marriage. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the estimate of forced labour:

[...] it covers work in the private economy (forms of forced labour imposed by private individuals, groups or companies, in all sectors with the exception of the commercial sex industry); forced sexual exploitation of adults and children; and forced labour imposed by the State. (International Labour Organization, 2017).

Of these 40.3 million victims, 24.9 million people were subjected to forced labour. This is tantamount to saying that they were forced to work, under threat or coercion, as domestic workers, as workers in the construction sector, in clandestine factories, on farms, on fishing vessels, and in other sectors, as well as in the sex industry. The obligation to work was imposed by individuals or groups in the private sector, or by State authorities. In many cases, the products they manufactured and the services they provided were part of seemingly legitimate commercial channels. People subjected to forced labour produce some of the food we eat and the clothes we wear, and clean the buildings in which many of us live or work. On the other hand, 15.4 million people lived in a forced marriage to which they had not given their consent. That is, they endured a situation that implied having lost their sexual autonomy and often involved the provision of tasks under the pretext of 'marriage'. (ILO, Walk Free and IOM, 2017, pp. 7, 8).

If before slavery was carried out as part of the colonial system or by the existence of empires, today modern slavery is part of the functioning of capitalism, totalitarian states and social microstructures



such as patriarchal families. Other data provided by the ILO have to do with the prevalence of this phenomenon, for example, it is indicated that, in 2016, 5.4 out of every thousand people around the world were victims of modern slavery. Women and girls accounted for 71 percent of that slavery that today is exercised as an act of domination. Debt bondage affected half of all victims of forced labour imposed by private actors. By situating this problem in geographical terms, the ILO warns that modern slavery has spread throughout the planet, so it is located in Africa, Central Asia, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America.

The war

Another great stupidity resulting from the exercise of self-referential power by individuals and groups is war, which, like slavery, continues to exist in the twenty-first century. It can be indicated that wars have occurred between or within states. Its magnitude has been local, national, regional and even global. The motivations are always the same, expanding dominance and subduing others. In the account of this stupidity it can be pointed out that there have been wars for political, economic, ideological, racist, criminal and even religious interests. All have produced tragedies and the victims who have died for human ambitions can be counted by millions. As a rule, the strongest states declare war on the weakest, although there have also been circumstances in which certain states dare to wage war on the most powerful. The culture of war has been with us for a long time, and its results are just around the corner with the proliferation of atomic weapons on all continents, whose existence puts at risk the viability of life on the planet.

Marina and Rambaud (2019), indicate that "European power, based on industry, science and technology, including the military, ended up dominating the world in the nineteenth century and part of the twentieth century" (pp. 392, 393). However, it cannot be ignored that the champions of war and power in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are the United States. Its power is unmatched, since its military presence and its ability to wage war is highly destructive, as could be seen in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In addition, their enormous technological capacity places them in a



dominant position to destroy in minutes objectives that they consider a danger to their interests and those of their allies. If we talk about global military power, the top of the list is undoubtedly America.

War can well be understood as the expansion of power, whether in its economic or political dimension, and even religious, as already mentioned. The desire to conquer new territories and the desire for new markets and resources are the springs that drive war actions, and that has been going on for a long time. Chinese imperialism, as well as European imperialism in its colonialist, capitalist and communist version, and US imperialism are the historical representatives of expansion, plunder and war. While it is true that the current confrontations in various countries have a local dynamic that goes beyond conventional wars, it cannot be ignored that behind the actors in dispute there are always supranational forces that support one side or the other. That is, geopolitics is always present in war, since territories and their resources are of great interest to the great powers.

A United Nations tally indicates that, in 2016, the number of countries that were affected by violent conflict reached the highest level recorded in nearly 30 years. On the other hand, the international organization warns of a dismantling of the arms control structure that has given some stability to the world in recent decades, which again puts at risk the survival of humanity with the proliferation of all kinds of weapons. He points out that there are currently around 14,000 nuclear weapons installed in various regions of the planet, which remains a great danger to human life and the rest of the species (UN, 2020).

Inequality and poverty

Inequality and poverty are two realities that have to do with the various pre-existing and present economic and political systems that have been structured from the exercise of self-referential power. The existence of highly industrialized and powerful countries, as well as nations with strong economic and social backwardness, are the results of a history of global but also national domination where elites impose their interests on the majority. The contemporary international scenario is revealing of this, the economic and technological prominence of the so-called Group of 7 (the seven most industrialized countries in the world: the United States, Germany, Great Britain, Canada, France, Italy



and Japan), not to mention China and Russia, in the conduct of globalization, is an unobjectionable fact. But, on the other hand, the political prominence of these nations, particularly their power groups, is also undeniable in the current context. It can be assured that this set of countries and their powerful elites govern the global process with the imposition of their policies towards the rest of the world.

Its power resides in its states, in its transnationals and its institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as its enormous influence in the United Nations (UN) itself, whose Permanent Security Council is made up of the United States, China, Russia, France and the United Kingdom. In addition to having its armed wing that is NATO, which reaffirms not only the political, economic and technological hegemony, but also the military hegemony of that great power bloc that is articulated and interrelated. In the international context there is thus a structured power that drives the destiny of contemporary capitalism and that has created a supranational structure to which the rest of the world is subjected. This supranational structure penetrates the national states imposing the economic and political model that they must follow, therefore, global inequality continues to deepen, since the capitalist system responds to a logic of corporate and elitist enrichment that privileges the supranational structure and the hegemonic groups of each country. The problem is huge, since, for example, in 2019, the world's 2,153 billionaires owned more wealth than 4.6 billion people.

According to Oxfam International (2020) this huge gap that is reflected in the previous data is a consequence "of a failed and sexist economic system that values more the wealth of a privileged elite, mostly men" (p.2). According to this global organization that works against poverty and inequality:

[...] the 22 richest men in the world own more wealth than all women in Africa. These examples of extreme wealth coexist with an enormous level of poverty. According to the world Bank's most recent estimates, nearly half of the world's population lives on less than \$5.50 a day" (Oxfam, 2020, p.7).



This institution refers to capitalism as a flawed model that does not distribute wealth, but accumulates it in huge quantities in the hands of wealthy elites who profit in part from the exploitation of women's and girls' labor. An approach that coincides with what has been stated here, and more so when they point out that at the top of the global economy there are powerful groups with unimaginable fortunes, which are exponentially increasing their wealth.

In its 2020 report entitled *Time for Care. Care work and the global crisis of inequality*, this organization points out that the accumulation of wealth and its consequent inequality is associated with "the enormous reduction in the taxation of large fortunes and companies, due to both the reduction of tax rates and deliberate tax evasion" (p.11). Oxfam presents some revealing data of the above, indicating that only 4% of the world's tax collection comes from taxes on wealth, also points out that large fortunes avoid up to 30% of their tax obligations, a situation that favors the best conditions for accumulation and inequality, since this affects in many ways to the states, their societies and the mass of workers who work under precarious wage conditions.

Inequality is one of the serious problems facing humanity, a phenomenon that reveals the imposition of economic and political power, but also of gender, since worldwide it is estimated that men have 50% more wealth than women, so extreme wealth is also based on sexism, this, according to Oxfam. This organization reports that economic inequality has been built on gender inequality, since most of the people at the bottom of the economic pyramid are women. In capitalism, which represents a dominant culture of power, women and girls are more likely to occupy precarious and low-paid jobs than men, thus confirming the existence of inequality produced by a system with a seal of social Darwinism where the strongest subdue the poor majorities. As the agency indicates, "extreme wealth is a symptom that we live in a failed economic system" (Oxfam, 2020, p. 23).

Power-over nature

At the end of 2020, the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) (2020), Antonio Gutiérrez, accused that humanity is waging a war against nature, this in relation to two scientific reports, one from the World Meteorological Organization and the other from the United Nations Environment



Program, organizations that account for the climate devastation produced by human action. In a speech delivered at Columbia University in New York, the UN chief said that "we are facing a devastating pandemic, new highs of global warming, new low points of ecological degradation and new setbacks in our work towards the global goals for a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable development" (CNN, personal speech, December 2, 2020). The two aforementioned reports provide data on the serious environmental crisis that the world is suffering, ranging from the accelerated disappearance of forests, to the overexploitation of the sea, the irrepressible emission of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, global warming and the disappearance of species.

This coincides with many other reports that warn of the profound risks that predatory industrial activity has caused. For example, the famous Earth Charter, which was elaborated in the early nineties and had institutional support from UNESCO to be published in 2003 for educational purposes, which indicates that the foundations of global security are threatened. One of its authors, Leonardo Boff (2020), points out that:

[...] these dangers will only be avoided if we change production and the consumption model. This total civilizational turn requires the political will of all the countries of the world and the collaboration without exception of the entire network of transnational and national production companies, small, medium and large. (Para. 12).

This approach implies, from the perspective of power, that corporations change their worldview so that they understand that overexploitation and profit generate profound consequences in the life of the planet. In the same way, the hyper-consumption of modern societies, which contribute with their unbridled actions to the devastation of natural resources, must be corrected. Therefore, what Boff says is true, indicating that:

[...] the great danger lies in the logic of the globally articulated system of capital. Its objective is to profit as much as possible in the shortest possible time, with an increasing expansion of its power, making legislations that limit its dynamics more



flexible. He is oriented by competition and not by cooperation, by the pursuit of profit and not by the defense and promotion of life (Boff, 2020).

Conclusions

Power as domination continues to exist in the history of civilizations and has become a profound destructive imprint due to its effects on human life and other species. This has been reported by numerous philosophers and scholars of the social sciences, as can be seen in this text. Although the greatest evidence is found in the events that took place in all parts of the world and in all times. If stupidity is depicted as an image of black light that diffuses death and destroys rather than creates, becoming a lethal and devastating human weapon, then there is no doubt that the dominant power is a great stupidity because throughout history it has produced an expanded suffering in all societies.

That kind of power has been the cause of millions of slaves, millions of deaths, millions of poor people and the destruction of nature. Greed, egocentricity and insolidarity are human behaviors that shape the elitist and non-elitist social classisms from which the power of domination springs, thus constituting a naturalized culture to which many aspire because there they find their sense of being. This worldview of life shapes the capitalist ideal, so that culture will continue to reproduce as long as that system continues to exist. The great human challenge lies in generating other types of perspectives where the lives of all people and nature itself are valued and protected, a cultural construct where other values and other reasonings prevail not focused on having, accumulating, oppressing and social stratification. Throughout history that has been very complicated because neither religions, nor human rights, nor social philosophy, nor communism nor liberalism have achieved it. However, as long as there are still emancipatory voices and movements, the aspiration for justice and equality will continue to flash.

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