Ethics of the Real for Political Analysis:
Reflection on the (Renewed) Conflict in Palestine

Joash Tapiheru

Department of Politics and Government, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia
(Email: tapiheru.joash@ugm.ac.id)

Abstract

This article expounds critical reflections and analysis on the discourse regarding the conflict in Palestine. The case is posited through the lens of a certain ethical position, namely the ethics of the real and the framework that it supports, namely Lacanian Psychoanalysis. Reflecting on the impasse that the discourse on the conflict in Palestine has been confronted with, this article argues that political analysis may take insight from psychoanalysis to make the course of analysis directed toward the deconstruction of the obsessive neuroticism at the core of this impasse. In doing so, the political analysis should take a retroductive course, moving back and forth between the ontological and ontical planes of the reality analysed. This enables political analysis to account more systematically the factors of inevitable lack in the structure and split on the subject and the corresponding affective dimension, which are central in the political constitution of social formation and identity. Through the analytical lens and approach from psychoanalysis, this article investigates and demonstrates how most of the discourses on the conflict in Palestine have strong propensity to avoid the conflict, which on its turn counterintuitively serve to prolong or fan further conflict, as they focus on the neatness and seamlessness of the reality constituted through their own discourses rather than grappling with the conflict.

Keywords:
Lacanian psychoanalysis; Palestine conflict; ethics of the real; fantasy; enjoyment

Introduction

Along with the latest renewal of armed conflict in Palestine, numerous discourses related to the conflict occupy the public space, including online discussions. As usual, most of them relive the already available discourses, focusing on which side represents the virtuous cause, and on some occasions the discourse of humanity comes occupying, sort of, middle ground, position between the Pro-Zionist and Pro-Palestine discourse – unfortunately, the position is often untenable as at the moment when this 'humanity' has to be specified, it becomes subordinate to either Palestinian cause or Zionism nodal point, indicating an impasse. Unfortunately, this also happens in the scientific discourses of political analysis, often becomes great part of the public discourse on this case. Taking this phenomenon as an object of reflection, this article argues that the dominant political analysis on the conflict, and conflict in general, meets impasse as it tends to focus its analysis on the ontical plane, at the expense of the ontological. It often renders the political analysis as mere instruments for ideological propaganda and impotent to break the impasse we are confronted with, not only in the case of conflict in Palestine, but also in many other contentious conflicts and issues. This article argues that if political analysis is to break this impasse it should venture to analyse the ontological plane, how what happen in that plane manifest on the ontical plane, in retroductive circuitous course, and deconstructing the obsessive fixation that causes the impasse. This involves

deconstruction not only of others' conviction but also the analyst' own fixated conviction and place it as object for analysis or interpretation.

The problem and question that this article's argument is addressing, can be formulated as following: "How is it possible to conduct political analysis on conflict that renders the underpinning normative justification as political?". This question pertains to the problem posed by Steven Lukes in his elaboration of the third dimension of power (Lukes, 2005). This third dimension is also known as ideological power and it operates simultaneously with the other dimensions to construct as to see reality as such – and not others. The argument in this article aims to provide a methodological alternative to venture into this register by enlarging the scope of political analysis not only the ontical but also the ontological plane retroductively.

The article gives an illustration on how such analysis is conducted on some discourses from the Israeli New Historians that presented in the Discussion section. Prior to that, the following sections elaborates the Lacanian four discourses as analytical methods and tools to be employed on the aforementioned discourses. This is followed with elaboration on the results

that shows how the discourses analysed has not gone far enough to investigate the ontological plane as most of them entrapped in the essentialization of certain narratives, along with their corresponding fantasmatic or ethico-political underpinnings.

Methods

The methods used are rooted in Psychoanalytic 'free association'. It is important to underline here that the 'free association' here does not take place in the context of therapy, but rather in, to certain extent, scientific discussions. The identification of the methodology used in this article to 'free association' owes rather to the logic and the position that the author takes. The author positions itself as 'analyst' as described by Lacan in *Ecrits* and the interlocutor in the discussion as 'analysand' (Lacan, 2005: 489-495; Fink, 2004: 4-5). In the course of analysis, the author has to occupy two positions interchangeably, to precipitate as well as to respond to the analysands' - the source persons - changing positions back-and-forth between imaginary and symbolic axes. This is intended to identify the structure of the analysand's reality and, from there, the fantasy that supports it, providing the enjoyment promised

Figure 1.
Simplified L Schema I
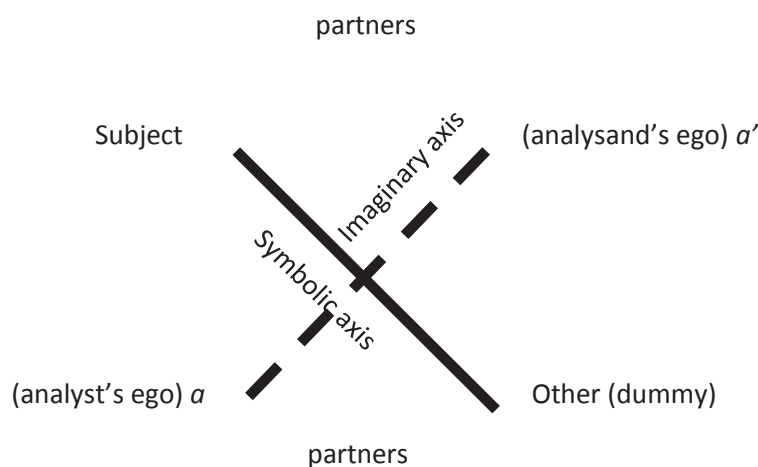
Source: CITATION Bru04\p5\t\l 1033 (Fink, 2004, p. 5)

to its subject. The **a** or object *a* represents the surplus of enjoyment, the unattainable object of desire. It is the irrecoverable loss that emerges due to the constitution of the subject through the constitution of the bar in (**S**), the castration process (Fink, 1995, p. 48).

The 'free association' here is also utilised to focus the analysis on the discourses produced through the encounter with the analysands. It is not the analysands' psyche that becomes the focus of the interpretation but the discourse they produce – despite in the context of analysis, the discourse analysis is intended to analyse the analysand's psyche, thus psychoanalysis, the analysis here does not pursue it to that point. In this research it covers policy documents, news media, and literature. They all have something in common with the statements made in the moments of discussion above, the moment we read or watch them, they become instances of meaning productions, possible only based on a certain structure of significations. The course of analysis is the same, even though the shifts from imaginary to symbolic axes and vice versa may take different modalities.

The methodology through which this research is carried out has strong similarities to the Logics of Critical Explanations-LCE (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). The main difference is rather on its starting points. The research here started initially with observation, followed with analysis, on individual opinions and explanations on the actual case at hand and not the intersubjective broad discourse. More importantly, the decision to utilise this methodology is related to the intended elaboration on the ethics of the real and its application for political analysis. Both have this ethical standpoint as their underpinning, however, for the sake of this analysis, it becomes easier to accentuate it through the psychoanalysis, especially through the notions of four discourses, the master; the university; the analyst; and the hysteric, (Lacan, 2006, pp. 11-26) to foreground this ethic.

Before elaborating the four discourses, it is important to elaborate the role of each position in the quadrant, regardless of what variables occupy those positions. We start with the bottom left position; it signifies the 'Truth' in the sense of what the discourse wants to express. The upper left signifies the position of the agent who articulates and produces the discourse toward the other – the position on the upper right – to produce something – positioned on the lower right. These positions are filled with four variables of the Master (S_1) – the master signifier that has to be obeyed just because it is as such; the other (S_2) – it refers to knowledge; body of knowledge; knowledge of the time; the subject (**S**) – the 'bar' signifies the split that, in Lacanian view, is the exactly the subject; and a or object (a), is the enjoyment or surplus of enjoyment that all subject pursues as part and parcel of its subjectification process.
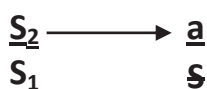
Figure 2.
The Discourse of the Hysteric

$$\underline{\underline{S}} \longrightarrow \underline{\underline{S_1}}$$
$$a \qquad S_2$$

Source: Lacan, J. (2006).

The analysands' discourse is perceived to be always, to various degrees, the discourse of the hysteric. The subject here stands as the split subject that demands fulfilment of its desire (articulated as demand) from the Other (S_1). What desire? It is the desire to overcome the 'bar' that symbolises the split that constitutes the subject. It aims to transform the split subject, as the actual subject (S_1) into another subject freed of this split (S_2) – see **Figure 2**. Many phenomena strike us as something which are dislocated from our sense of reality and, thus, demand explanation. Some phenomena have been proven to be more resistant to such effort than the others. Nonetheless, they always

demand explanations. The dislocated nature of the phenomena confronted causes the split that constitutes the subject to come to the forefront, thus rendering the incompleteness perceivable and generates the demand for explanation. The demand, motivated by enjoyment- or the lack of it, sets the Master (S_1) into motion that produces knowledge intended – but not always succeeded – to satisfy the demand.

This position, however, is not static. Moreover, its dynamic needs to be precipitated and will not take place automatically. It is the task of the analyst to precipitate the reconfiguration of the relations initially depicted as in the **Figure 2** above. Moreover, in the instances of encounter with those discourses, they may not appear as hysteric one. In literature they often appear as the discourse of the universities – see **Figure 3**. It appears as an authoritative discourse (S_2) that gives the definitive line between what is right and wrong; just and unjust; etc. In this scheme, the Master (S1) invokes the authority of the body of knowledge to set in motion a certain surplus of enjoyment (**a**), promising the eradication of the split it experiences through their compliance to its authority-castration, thus producing the barred subject on the bottom right corner. From which the Master, through the body of knowledge, acquires its enjoyment. In fact, this is the type of discourse that the author encounters most frequently. This is partially due to the fact that the discursive engagements, mostly, took place in the context of academic discussion, either between the author and the relevant literature or between the author and other participants.

Figure 3.
The Discourse of the University

$$\frac{S_2}{S_1} \longrightarrow \frac{a}{\text{S̸}}$$

Source: Lacan, J. (2006).

Figure 4.
The Discourse of the Master

$$\frac{S_1}{\text{S̸}} \longrightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}$$

Source: Lacan, J. (2006).

The discourse of university easily slips into the discourse of the master (see **Figure 4**). The discourse of the Master positions the Master as the one that issues demands or orders to the other (S_2) as a response to the split on its subjectivity **S**. It sets it into motion thus produces the split subject (**S̸**). What motivates the Master is the enjoyment produced through setting the other in motion. This discourse of master is homologous to Hegel's Master-Slave dialectic relations.

In the analysis, the author aims to reconfigure the discourses found into the scheme of the discourse of the analyst. In the discourse of the analyst, positioning itself as the (dummy) Other, the analyst navigates the position as this (dummy) Other to transform the overall scheme of each discourse met into the scheme where the other or knowledge (S2) motivates the articulation of enjoyment (**a**) to set the subject (**S̸**) in motion to produce its master and to demonstrates and guides the analysand to see that the desire is not his/hers, but the master's, and the relations between **a** as object *a* and enjoyment are contingent. The overall aim of the analysis is basically to deconstruct this fixation – the fundamental mechanism of neurosis, to which hysteria belongs to (Fink, 1999; Glynos, 2002a; Glynos, 2002b). The knowledge here should be understood in Lacanian terms as knowledge on how every phenomenon operates through and based on a certain structure that is necessarily lacking, manifested in the barred subject and animated by certain fantasy. The specificity of the actual structure and fantasy operating in each instantiation is what the analysis aims to find.

Figure 5.
The Discourse of the Analyst

$$\frac{a}{S_2} \longrightarrow \frac{\underline{S}}{S_1}$$
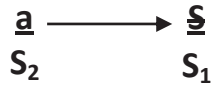
Source: Lacan, J. (2006).

The knowledge here refers to certain ontology through which the phenomenon and how it comes into existence are rendered intelligible. The course of the analysis here is not linear but going back and forth between the phenomena, the ontical plane – reality or things as we perceive them, and the structure, the ontological – how we come to perceive things as such, and not others (Tapiheru, 2021). The course of the analysis is rather cyclical and comprised of multiple courses in the sense that what stands for the source-persons' or analysands' jouissance and how it is specifically structured may requires multiple attempts of interpretation before it could be ascertained and, much less, the fixation deconstructed. Thus, the course of analysis is, as aptly described by Glynos and Howarth, retroductive instead of deductive or inductive (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, pp. 30-33).

The point in the previous paragraph is central to the analysis in this paper. It is exactly the very operationalization of the Ethics of the Real as an ethic without ideals. It perceives that every attempt to positivize any imagined unity ultimately fails. The analysis positions this inevitable failure as the starting point of the analysis or interpretation as, in most of the discourse interpreted, this failure, manifest in its limited nature, is often covered-up by certain fantasy. The fantasy here refers to the support that maintains the cohesiveness of our reality (Zizek, 1989, p. 44), that belongs to the register of the symbolic.

Considering the centrality of the notion of antagonism, both theoretically and regarding the actual case, the conflict in Palestine, that prompted this research and discourses it interprets, it is important to briefly explicate how antagonism is perceived and utilised as part of the analytical framework here. Referring to Laclau and Mouffe, antagonism here is perceived as a situation where "the presence of the "Other" prevents me from being totally myself" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 111). This situation is not given but discursively constructed, involving the constitution of a certain nodal point, symbolised with S_1, and simultaneously its limits. In cases such as conflict in Palestine, each discourse sets a nodal point, for example, Free Palestine, and with it something that obstructs it, the state of Israel. The same logic operates in the opposing discourse. The discursive nature becomes more obvious as the fact that Palestine and Israel exist next to each other and what this means can be interpreted in many different ways. The political nature of the discursive construction comes to the fore when, against this contrast of polysemy of their existence next to each other, we ask the question, "Why is this antagonistic relation that comes to the fore and not others?".

Results

The on-going conflict between Israel and Palestine, or Hamas in some discourses, re-sparks the debates over which side has more justifiable claim over the territory. The latter often spiral down into debates over the theological, political, and military might of the belligerents and other parties associated with each. Central and common among these discourses are the essentialist ontology in the construction of the propositions and presuppositions. This is even found in the discourses that attempt to pave alternative paths and deconstruct the existing antagonism. For example, there are discourses that try to constitute 'humanity' as the nodal point for an alternative discourse. The majority of such discourse is structured around the idea of the inherent virtuous essence of human beings that is tarnished by the social, economic,

cultural, and, ultimately, political reality. Other essentialist tendencies, articulated in the manner of the discourse of the master or the discourse of the university, are more easily found in the discourses that, explicitly or implicitly, articulate on which side they stand between the two contending claims.

Such essentialization is seen as an attempt to reduce and avoid the traumatic event of conflict as the manifestation of structural lack and the subject split. Unfortunately, in both context of political analysis and conflict management, such moves lead to the opposite direction of pushing conflict away as object of analysis and potentially fanning the conflict. Instead of grappling with the phenomena of conflict at hand, in such discourse conflict is articulated as something that has no place in the presupposed reality. It is something that is 'out of place' that disrupts the seamlessness of reality. This is found in all discourses ranging from those that sides with one of the belligerents or one that tries to propose a new position such as the discourse of humanity. The logic of their discourses can be described as follows: this conflict should not have happened had what my desire – or the desire of the cause I identify myself with – is met. Since the conflict is taking place now, it is necessary to end it and to do so, the only possible way is by meeting what I – or the cause I identify myself with – desire. Here, the conflict itself is pushed into the fringe of the discourse as something that needs no further explanation as it is something out of place that owes its existence only to the fact that it disrupts the presupposed neat and seamless reality.

The analysis shows that this is the result of the 'traumatic' impact caused by the encounter with the phenomena of conflict such as in Palestine, where a tiny parcel of land viciously fought over between two group of people for a long period in modern time – not to mention it has been changing hands numerous times since antiquity. It seems as if it is something that is totally out of place in the reality of the modern world. Moreover, the conflict in this region often becomes headlines in the media and gains global attention. These further increase the magnitude of its image as the representation of the dislocation or limits of modern reality. In such a situation, the attempts to make sense of this phenomenon into the topography of our reality is in high demand – the discourse of the hysteric.

The essentialist ontology, in its multiple modalities, are the attempts to recover the losing sense of reality, and thus its enjoyment – perceivable only when it is lost, and safe-guarding the hysteric from the traumatic shock they face. The discourse of the university comes as the most frequently articulated. Each camp invokes the presumed scientific discourses and rearticulates them as moments in their discourses. However, as the essentialist ontology privileges the positivity of certain signifiers as the representation of the lack and the lost enjoyment, the fantasy that supports it also covers up this lack, presenting it as something that 'is within our reach and graspable if we just try harder'. In the actual cases found, it is often expressed, explicitly or implicitly, everything will be better after we totally eradicate our enemy, either Palestine or Israel depending on the position in the discursive field. As long as this total eradication and the 'better' situation it promises to entail are still beyond reach, the enjoyment it promises is substituted by the continuous 'war efforts' for the proponents of each camp against each other. Even if the intended eradication becomes factual, the enjoyment it produces will eventually be short-lived, as total enjoyment is loss beyond recovery and this loss is constitutive to our reality and identity.

Incorporating the notion that the hegemony of the structure and the castration it causes 'is always already there', which discourse one is identified with is rather of the function of how the loss is represented to it

with regards to the specific symbolic order that hegemonically structure its subjectification. Thus, the loss can manifest in various forms, though each is no less traumatic than the other. But how the loss manifests itself to one is correlated to the desired object of enjoyment that comes to cover it.

In this kind of discourse and absence of critical reflection on the ontological plane, political analysis becomes stuck in impasse as each discourse and its underpinning nodal point becomes essentialized. It turns into what Mouffe describes as 'moralization of politics.' Power struggle becomes struggle between good vs. evil, supported with fantasy that the good will always eventually win. The latter is exactly the ideological operation of fantasy as it covers up its own impossibility, at least to totally and permanently represents the good. If it is good and it will eventually always win, what is the relevance of the struggle then? If the 'struggle' becomes the main criterion of being good, the framed as evil opponent also meets this criterion, so, at least, they cannot be totally evil, nor its counterpart as totally good. These juggles can go on forever as it is the manifestation of what is commonly known as 'metonymic slide', where the signifier never meets its supposed signified. Thus, this path of portrayal and political analysis, as exercise of power, becomes less relevant at best or futile, at worst. Since there is nothing political when the contest is situated on a space whose frontiers are given.

The analysis presented here recovers the political nature of the contending discourses and the contention as 'analytically' pure contention of force only through the reconfiguration of the discourses of the Master and University into the discourse of hysterics, from and through the discourse of the analyst. By doing so, it also reconfigures the sequences in the articulations interpreted. The normative elements, such as freedom; humanity; democracy are part and parcel of the discursive strategy of each

discourse to win the hegemonic war over the meaning of the struggle and identities of the good/bad.

The ability to identify the conflict as power struggle as such will contribute to identify the neurotic obsession that underpins the antagonism between or among the belligerents, the fantasies that support them and the kinds of enjoyment they produce. This will contribute greatly to further exploration and elaboration on the multiple modalities of power as well as its nature and operations, beyond the traditional field of political study. For empirical purposes of conflict resolution, these all are the conditions of possibility for the deconstruction of the fixation that underpins the antagonism and precipitate the subject to look for alternative objects of desire to represent the impossible enjoyment (**a**).

Discussion

The renewal of violent and armed conflicts in Palestine, especially in the Gaza Strip but also simultaneously in various parts of Israel and the Israel occupied zone, also rekindled the debates over who has legitimate right over the territory. Once again, however, the discourses involved, we can say the knowledge and body of knowledge (S_2) that emerge in this debate are hardly new. The rekindling of the debate, of course, is prompted by the hysteric spiking demands for explanation, that has never been in short supply, but in such moments where the conflict escalates to a certain level it suddenly gains an increasing sense of urgency. This increase in demands and its accompanying sense of urgency are addressed to those who are perceived to be in a position of authority to give credible explanations. Science, typical of our age, and, in this case of Palestine, religion become two of the main institutions perceived by many to have such authority.

Such practices are obvious in the discussions, through physical or virtual encounters. Some literatures become more

often to be referred to as authoritative reference to give credence to each discourse. From the Pro-Palestine discourses, studies from anti-Zionism Jews are often cited or referred to, to bolster the legitimacy of their claim of the illegitimacy of the state of Israel and its Zionism underpinning. The works such as Chomsky and Illan Pape's Gaza in Crisis (2016); Pappe's The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine (2011); and some other works from among the 'New Historians' of the likes of Benny Morris and Avi Shlaim. How elements of these works are articulated, however, overlook and exclude the equally factual fierce debates among these so-called 'New Historians'. This is despite their commonality of developing critical studies on the 'Zionist myths'. Benny Morris throws his criticisms in length to Pappe's works as well as his political stance. Pointing to the latter's works as historian, Morris says: "At best, Ilan Pappe must be one of the world's sloppiest historians; at worst, one of the most dishonest. In truth, he probably merits a place somewhere between the two" (Morris, 2017). Morris also launches fierce criticism to his fellow 'New Historian', Avi Shlaim, exposing the latter's tendency to overgeneralize the events and contention in Arab/Palestine-Israel conflict, advocating his perspective that the phenomena are more complex and nuanced (Morris, 2009).

Morris himself is not immune to criticism. His notable critics are, not surprisingly, Ilan Pappe-his fellow New Historian, Michael Palumbo, Norman Finkelstein, Nur Masalha (Masalha, 1991), and historians who are critical toward 'New Historians' in general such as Efraim Karsh (Karsh, 1996). Pappe replied to Morris' criticism by saying that Morris holding "abominable racist views about the Arabs in general and the Palestinians in particular." (Pappe, 2004). In this response he also points to what he perceives as Morris' flaws and shortcomings with regards to his works and his (ethico) political stances. He mentions his engagement with Morris as: "The

debate between … historians who believe they are purely objective reconstruction of the past, like Morris, and those who claim that they are subjective human beings striving to tell their own version of the past, like myself." His more specific criticisms against Morris in this response are based on this distinction of (ethico) political presuppositions, such as Morris' usage of only IDF or Israeli sources (Pappe, 2004) – the same criticism from Masalha (Masalha, 1991) against Morris.

Looking at the history of the emergence of the 'New Historians', it may well be said that it is a discourse of the analyst. It tried to open up the fissure in the then held as immutable facts and narratives of the history of Israel and Zionism. By doing so, New historians' discourses foreground the promised journey of finding the 'Truth'. What is missing here is the cognition of the impossibility of *jouissance* itself and the 'Truth'. The New Historians, expressing new knowledge they acquire, articulate the discourse of the analyst that sets into motion the split of the subject (of the previously seamless discourses) or the S̶. That in turns produce the Master (S1) as they acquire the knowledge expressed through the discourse of the analyst. Subsequently this discourse is articulated as the discourse of the Master where the Master subject feels it is necessary for others to comply with the new knowledge they perceive to have mastered.

Simultaneously, those who perceive to be in need for stability, for "Truth", just as those historians of the New Historians before, also seek this stability and address their demands to the Master. This is the discourse of the hysteric indicated by the S̶ that sets into motion the S1 in the **Figure 2**. Yet, when they find that the Master (S1) inadequately meets their demands – they shift into the discourse of the university, overlooking the fact that the inadequacy of the Master is subsequent to the incompleteness of the knowledge (S2). Itself is subsequent to the impossibility of the jouissance (*a*).

The inadequacy and incompleteness that permeates the Master and the Knowledge and the impossibility of the jouissance are covered with its replacement that is a surplus of jouissance produced by the compliance of others to become the subjects of the discourse of the Master.

The New Historians do have investigated the fissures that had been covered by the previously hegemonic narrative of the constitution of Israeli State and its Zionism underpinning. They also have decided to navigate the path between Scylla and Charybdiss. However, the voyage is not an easy one and it does not lead to the "Truth" (with capital T) but rather to its proliferation – of truths – and the subsequent 'trauma' that, intuitively, demands for stabilisation. They, as well those who follow them to take this passage, are prone to veer toward another essentialization.

In the case of the Anti-Zionist discourses, such by Ilan Pape; Finkelstein; and Chomsky, they veer toward essentializing 'humanity' to measure toward which the Israel State and its Zionism underpinning are illegal. We can take this either as the Scylla or Charybdiss and the official history of Israel State as its counterpart. Both, however, equally stand on certain presuppositions assumed to be total and permanent and expect their respective discourse to be neat and seamless, including the divide between 'good' and 'evil'. However, this has not been the case. The emergence of new discourses by the New Historians, while producing more knowledge, have not given clearer explanation on the nature of the situations that took and are still taking place in and around the Palestine-Israel conflict and much less to resolve it.

As the author mentioned earlier, what is missing is the understanding of the nature of the jouissance or the surplus enjoyment, the *a* as something that is both impossible and easily replaced with something else that gives a certain

sense of stability. Pape, Finkelstein, Chomsky and others who, in varying degrees, denounce the Israel State and its Zionist underpinning based their position on certain ethico-political presumptions as the fantasmatic supports of their discourses, with less consideration on the political nature of their ethical standpoints. As if the ethico-political presuppositions are universally applicable.

This is the main contrast between the likes of Pape, Finkelstein, and Chomsky and the discourse such as Benny Morris'. Morris, despite the limitation of his sources as Pape and Masalha pointed out, also found that the Israelis also committed atrocities, especially during the period around and during the Israeli War of Independence in 1948. He equally exposes new facts that question the 'just' claim of the war and the constitution of the Israel State and its Zionist underpinning. However, he is less fixated on certain ethico-political presuppositions and aims to engage with the nuanced nature of and the events investigated and the ethical considerations and judgements – both among those who were involved in the phenomena investigated and among the current generations.

The important point to highlight here is that the supposedly neat discourse of the illegitimacy of Zionism covers deep rifts. It seems to be seamless because the differences among those anti- or critical toward Zionism discourses rearticulated in the discourse of illegitimacy of Zionism is overlooked and suspended for the sake of the expected seamless imaginary unity. There is a reversal here, because initially, the rearticulation of those anti- or critical discourses toward Zionism are intended to support the discourse of the illegitimacy of Zionism and the state of Israel as a seamless unity. However, when it is found that those discourses are hardly unified, some even to the point of antagonistic against each other, the expected seamlessness, that is absence, becomes the underpinning support to

cover the confronted fissures and try to produce the seamless through only in the form of its semblance. "What-the incompleteness that sets the desire for one-is pushed out through the door, comes back through the window". This is the ideological operation that Laclau defines as "… consist of non-recognition of the precarious character of any positivity, of the impossibility of ultimate suture" (Laclau, 1990, p. 92)

In the instances the analysis or interpretation of the author involves the discourse of the Hysteric, and the discourse of the university are often encountered in the engagements that took place. The discourse of the hysteric often manifests in the forms of question, which is basically a demand for answer, addressed to a kind of figure of authority based on knowledge. The discourse of the master is also sometimes found, even though in a rather subtle form. It usually manifests in statements such as, "You don't need to be a Palestinian to support the Palestinians' cause, you just need to be human!" The order may not be a direct one and such statements could also be seen as discourse of the university, but here it is perceived rather as discourse of the master due to that in the context analysed or interpreted, such statements are usually directed toward others (S_2), not enjoyment (**a**).

The discourse of the analyst, however, is the rarest found in all of the conversations and engagements. Among the literature, Benny Morris's inclination to present his historical studies as complex phenomena, irreducible to simple, much less single, explanations but, for avoiding simplification and overgeneralization, demand more nuanced explanations is probably the closer one. This is one of the reasons why Morris' position seems, as if, to occupy the centre toward which the distances of other studies are measured in the discussion above, it is because his is the least positive than the others. In an interview, Ari Shavit even describes him as if there are two Benny Morrises, as a historian and as a citizen, where

the two engage in antagonism, in the sense exactly as mentioned above. The description is as following:

> Whereas citizen Morris turned out to be a not completely snow-white dove, historian Morris continued to work on the Hebrew translation of his massive work, "Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001," which was written in the old, peace pursuing style. And at the same time historian Morris completed the new version of his book on the refugee problem, which is going to strengthen the hands of those who abhor Israel. So that in the past two years citizen Morris and historian Morris worked as though there was no connection between them, as though one was trying to save what the other insisted on eradicating. (Shavit, 2004)

It is this 'split', such as one that Morris is confronting with, that makes the subject that seems as a single seamless full subject political (Stavrakakis, 1999: 13). Such a split precedes the subject. The subject is a result of a decision, which is the political moment of deciding the undecidable (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. x; Laclau, 1990, p. 21; 44; by contrasting Laclau's notion with Derrida's Norval makes the role of this split-undecidability for the constitution of self more explicit, see Norval, June 2004, p. 142). Between or among the available options there is no single option that inherently holds the ultimate truth as each is basically discursive. Therefore, the undecidability can never be fully eradicated, it always potentially re-emerges as presented in the case of New Historians-Zionism above.

The important point here is that the more frequent occurrence of the three discourses, and much less of one has can be explained as due to the latter's lack of positivity for enjoyment or representation of its loss and impossibility

to recover. The latter gets those who occupy the position as the subject (**S**) to encounter with the traumatic kernel of enjoyment (a) as something that is forever lost and can only be substituted by something that represents it, which is not given or predetermined either. If sovereign Palestinian or Israel state stands to represent this loss enjoyment, it becomes so through the operation of certain fantasy. The important thing to reiterate here is that there is no necessary relation between these states and the enjoyment, that is lost but they promise to recover as long the agent subscribes to either of these discourses. While the full achievement is impossible, the discourses and the submission they entail offer something to substitute it if they are to sustain their grips on the subjects.

The analysis in this research attempts to reconfigure the discourses interpreted or analysed. Only by doing so will it become possible to pursue political analysis in a more comprehensive perspective and manner. For example, in the case of the ongoing conflict in Palestine, Israel exercises its power, not only in the form of violent physical force, but also its non-physical form. The latter becomes more important as it defines the reality, such as: what the goal(s) to achieve through the exercise of power, the justifiability of the use of power; including the violent physical one, toward whom or what the exercise of power is directed against, etc.

The mode of analysis or interpretation described above involves a retroductive course, investigating not only the ontical but also the ontological in a retroductive manner. History, which has been one of the fiercest battlegrounds between the conflicting discourses, still tends to be dominated by the former. The near obsessive attempts to find new facts with the hope to corroborate or deconstruct certain discourses become the recurring feature of the studies. Only few specifically aimed to problematize the ontology of the narratives. And, if they do so, the political nature is almost immediately

closed with a certain positive substance, supported by different fantasies to cover again the lack they have previously exposed. Thus, elaboration on how this lack is ineradicable in the final instance and constitutive to the constitution of realities, in plural, once again is pushed to the background.

Political analysis is supposed to cover both dimensions – Mouffe's distinction between 'political' and 'politics' is homologous with the analytical categories of ontological and ontical (Mouffe, 2005, p. 10) – focusing political analysis on the latter, at the expense of the former, tend to reduce the analysis to either, at best, analysis on formalistic technical-administrative matters or, at worst, encouragements to escalate antagonism into war of annihilation. Both are equally based on the givenness and positivity of the nodal point or obsessive fantasy of each discourse.

This does not mean that there is no closure or stability at all. On the contrary, as indicated in the notion 'that it is always already there', the notion of contingency always emerges with presumption that we, or the phenomenon interpreted, is always already defined in relatively fixed structure, therefore it can be perceived as dislocation, as something out of place – there must be a pre-existing notion about what is at-place. The point is that this certain notion of neatly at-place is not something given but discursively constructed and political in nature and always potentially disrupted.

Conclusion

The discussion presented above takes issues with the dominant tendency to conduct political analysis on the ontical level and has high propensity to another impasse for more effective alternatives to resolve or sublimate conflicts, not only one in Palestine but also in other contexts. For example, from the Indonesian case, the electoral conflicts that have been taking place since 2014. Such

analyses pertain to the paradigmatic stance that see objective truth exists and graspable and reality and the external world are two transparent immediate entities. I do not use the term 'positivism' here since such pretension is also found among those who confess that, for example, history is not only about facts but also, even more, about the narratives that render phenomena as facts in certain historical narratives. The critical reflection presented above is not pointed solely on *the* decision on which nodal point upon which a certain discourse or historical narrative is constructed, but the shift of reiteration on the *course* of the shift from 'decision' to the definitive particle of 'the' and becomes 'the decision'. This process is political par-excellence as it involves an act of libidinal investment that prompts and animates the decision – implying a process of inclusion/exclusion, and should not political analysis cover this aspect too, known as the will to power?

The analysis on discourses articulated by some of the known members of the New Historians on their studies on the history of the Israel State, its Zionism underpinning, and its (un)ethical justifications demonstrates how their works are not merely collection of historical facts but also their articulations in certain narratives. It is rather these narratives, especially their ontological nature, that should be further examined to push the political analysis beyond merely what meets the eyes. The analysis ventures beyond certain works of the individual New Historians and to include how they reflect on their works and its implications, especially to the (un) ethical justification of the Israel State and its ideological underpinning to capture the libidinal investment that contributes to their respective decision which narrative is deployed to render their findings as meaningful facts.

The deployment of Lacan's four discourses here is intended primarily to foreground this affective dimension of the political sphere. The analysis or interpretation on the structures of the discourse the author is confronted with is part of the process to identify the 'lack' and how the affective dimension becomes visible in its various forms – beliefs; faith; conviction etc. Parallel to what Steven Lukes maps out as the third dimension of power (Lukes, 2005), this article argues that it is in this domain that political analysis should venture as a new horizon of political study.

References

Chomsky, N., & Pape, I. (2016). *Gaza in Crisis: Reflection on Israel's War Against the Palestinians.* Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books.

Fink, B. (1995). *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance.* USA: Princeton University Press.

Fink, B. (1999). *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique.* USA: Harvard University Press.

Fink, B. (2004). *Lacan to the Letter: Reading Ecrits Closely.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Glynos, J. (2002a). Theory and evidence in the Freudian field. In J. Glynos, & Y. Stavrakakis, *Lacan & Science* (pp. 13-50). London; New York: Karnac.

Glynos, J. (2002b). Psychoanalysis operates upon the subject of science. In J. Glynos, & Y. Stavrakakis, *Lacan & Science* (pp. 51-88). London; New York: Karnac.

Glynos, J., & Howarth, D. (2007). *Logics of Critical Explanations in Social and Political Theory.* New York: Routledge.

Karsh, E. (1996). Rewriting Israel's History. *Middle East Quarterly Volume 3:2*, 19-29.

Lacan, J. (2005). *Ecrits: the First Complete Edition in English (Bruce Fink trans.).* USA: W.W. Norton & Company.

Lacan, J. (2006). *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XVII (Russell Grigg trans.).* USA: W.W. Norton & Company.

Laclau, E. (1990). *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time.* London: Verso.

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (2014). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards Radical Democratic Politics Second Edition.* London; New York: Verso.

Lukes, S. (2005). *Power: a Radical View Second Edition.* Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Masalha, N. (1991). A Critique of Benny Morris. *Journal of Palestine Studies, 21(1)*, 90-97.

Morris, B. (2009, November 28). *Derisionist History.* Retrieved from The New Republic: https://newrepublic.com/article/71480/derisionist-history

Morris, B. (2017, March 11). *The Liar as Hero.* Retrieved from The New Republic: https://newrepublic.com/article/85344/ilan-pappe-sloppy-dishonest-historian

Mouffe, C. (2005). *On the Political.* New York: Routledge.

Norval, A. (June 2004). Hegemony after deconstruction: The consequences of undecidablity. *Journal of Political Ideologies 9(2)*, 139-157.

Pappe, I. (2011). *The Ethnic Cleansing of the Palestine.* Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

Shavit, A. (2004, January 8). *Survival of the fittest? An interview with Benny Morris.* Retrieved from Haaretz: https://www.haaretz.com/1.5262454

Stavrakakis, Y. (1999). *Lacan and the Political.* New York: Routledge.

Tapiheru, J. (2021). *The Dimension of Coercion in Chantal Mouffe's Theory of Agonism: Theoretical Reflection and Empirical Application to Local Politics in UK-PhD Dissertation.* Colchester: The University of Essex.

Zizek, S. (1989). *The Sublime Object of Ideology.* London: Verso.