

Is not being in love, is to love! Going through the psychology of the masses

Jairo Enrique Gallo Acosta  | Daniel Alfonso Castiblanco Cortés

Faculty of Human and Social Sciences,
Psychology Program, Cooperative University
of Colombia, Bagotá, Colombia

Correspondence

Jairo Enrique Gallo Acosta, Faculty of Human
and Social Sciences, Psychology Program,
Cooperative University of Colombia, Bagotá,
Colombia.

Email: jairogallo75@yahoo.com.ar

Abstract

The paradox that Freud borrows from Schopenhauer's hedgehog dilemma describes how to deal with human relationships and bonds, and how to approach others without injuring ourselves. However, if we move away from that other, we suffer. This paradox describes in a similar manner, the relationship of the hypnotising leader to the masses. We cannot live without them, but being with them causes us suffering. When others approach us, it makes us uncomfortable; we cannot cope with the hedgehog's spikes, and we do not know what to do with them. It seems that the only thing we can do is hurt ourselves. This paper proposes that the way out of the hedgehog's dilemma is not the optimal distance, but instead a brave proximity, through the path of love.

KEYWORDS

event, love, not-all, politics, psychoanalysis, sinthome

1 | INTRODUCTION

They think they choose her and then they love her, when actually it is a ray that cracks you. (Cortázar, 2017)

Freud (1992), in Chapter VIII of *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, entitled 'Being in love and hypnosis', raises a question regarding love: what can be called love? Perceiving these questions as problematic, he starts talking about being in love, which he defined as:

In one class of cases, being in love is nothing more than object cathexis on the part of the sexual instincts with a view to directly sexual satisfaction, a cathexis which expires, moreover, when this aim has been reached; this is what is called common, sensual love. (Freud, 1992, p. 105)

According to Freud, *being in love* is a sexual overestimation. There is an exemption from criticism of the object; therefore, ensues the idealisation that, in the text, is exposed as follows:

We see that the object is being treated in the same way as our own ego, so that when we are in love a considerable amount of narcissistic libido overflows on to the object. It is even obvious, in many forms of love choice, that the object serves as a substitute for some unattained ego ideal of our own. We love it on account of the perfections which we have striven to reach for our own ego, and which we should now like to procure in this roundabout way as a means of satisfying our narcissism. (Freud, 1992, p. 106)

Here is the famous phrase: 'The object has been put in the place of the ego ideal' (Freud, 1992, p. 107). According to Freud, the stretch between being in love and hypnosis is not excessively big. Further, this approach can be useful for political theory because it can throw light on the figure of the leader and his enchantment on individuals in different contexts.

2 | THE JOUISSANCE OF THE IDENTIFICATIONS

Álvaro Uribe Vélez was president of Colombia during the years 2002–2010. His influence on Colombian politics is still important several years after leaving the presidency. During the last 20 years, Uribism, as a political phenomenon, has taken over Colombia. For some people, Uribism can be described as a kind of 'spell' because it can be linked to fascination or a strong influence. These acts are associated with hypnosis. The question is: why in Colombia, was Alvaro Uribe Vélez able to place himself in a place of fascination and dazzling? Again, the answer seems to be found in the text *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*.

Why in Colombia was a hypnotising politician who placed himself in the place of the ego-ideal needed? In a country like Colombia, what is this mysterious power that strips individuals of their will and attributes it to that other person as a politician? The Freudian response seems to address the libidinal bond or being in love that binds the members of certain groups around that hypnotising figure.

A primary group of this kind is a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego. (Freud, 1992, pp. 109–110)

The identifications are an issue of jouissance – a concept introduced by Lacan through all his theory. No identification can complete the subject; hence, the subject slides between signifiers. Thus, jouissance is always considered as that which was lost among those signifiers that failed to complete identification in the subject. This is where the charismatic figure of the leader comes in – one who could create the illusion of completeness and thus respond for that identification in each subject, '*you are*'. This brings a problem. In order for that identification to be sustained in an imaginary way, it is necessary to situate an external element that helps to hinder that identifying completeness. That element that does not allow that identification to be completed and that does not allow access to the lost jouissance can be the Jew in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, or the immigrant in the 21st century. In Colombia, the guerrillas were that element that hindered national harmony. For many years, the guerrillas were the element that had to be eliminated to achieve national jouissance:

The element that holds a given community together cannot be reduced to the point of symbolic identification: the bond that unites its members always implies a relationship ... towards the incarnation of jouissance. (Žižek, 2007, p. 44)

Thus, Lacan's answer to the matter of Freud's identifications in '*Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*' begins with seminar 16 '*From an Other to the other*'; although there are much more explicit answers in seminar 17 '*Psychoanalysis upside down/The reverse side of psychoanalysis*' (Berenguer, 2009, p. 13). In this last seminar, the concept of jouissance linked to discourses appears more clearly. The seminar tries to break the hegemony of linguistics to analyse how the subjects within a libidinally discourse invest themselves with jouissance. That is where the concept of plus de jouir appears. In Lacan's theory, this concept is developed in seminar 17. According to Lacan (1992), the *plus de jouir* has to do with a renunciation, but also with the attempt to recover that jouissance.

The problem of capitalism is not that only some must win, but that others must lose. This is capitalist jouissance, Marxist surplus value. The capitalist jouissance of surplus value is not only to obtain one more profit, but to take it from the other. In other words, the other loses what I am gaining. It exists as imaginary; that there is something to possess and to have, and that I can obtain it to complete myself.

The *plus de jouir* joined the protection mandates of the democratic security policy in Colombia at the beginning of the 20th century and has adhered to government prosperity policies in recent years. In one case or the other, to obtain security it is necessary to take it away from another. Consequently, the democratic security policy of the Uribe government in Colombia left a trail of deaths, murders, and displaced people. The security of few people was the condemnation of many; just as the prosperity of some people is the poverty of almost all.

Returning to jouissance, this can be made tolerable and even pleasant when it is linked to the phantom (Stavrakakis, 2010). For this imagining jouissance to be positioned in that place of pleasure, there must be a bet for the fullness that will be achieved by recovering that which is lost (Stavrakakis, 2010). This is how political promises were materialised in Colombia, using signifiers as security or prosperity. During Uribe Vélez's democratic security government (2002–2010) many Colombians felt that they finally achieved that identification or full jouissance.

That privileged moment in which for a moment he reaches that identification always sought and always fugitive where he is, he, the subject, recognized by the other as the object of his deepest desire, but where at the same time, thanks to the jouissance of the other, he can recognize it as the one that constitutes it as a phallic signifier. In that single instant, demand and desire may coincide for a fugitive instant, and it is this that gives the ego that identifying expansion from which jouissance draws its source. (Lacan, 1961–1962)

Here the issue is: how to break through that identification in the masses and that hypnotising effect to constitute an alternative social bond? How can someone avoid being trapped by the enjoyment of the identifications that illusively intend to complete the subject? The first thing to point out is that a full identity cannot be accessed. This impossibility is where psychoanalysis and its conceptualisation of the subject comes in; the subject is not a substance that is waiting to be interpreted by the practitioner of psychoanalysis. The subject is a negative entity, part of that triple Lacan's negation: '*Woman does not exist*', '*There is no sexual relation*' and '*There is no Other of the Other*', grounding the postulate of not-all.

The answers to the previous questions can be found on the side of how to establish links with the Other and with others. Freud (1992), in '*Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*', commented that human bonds are like Schopenhauer's hedgehog dilemma:

On a cold winter's day, a community of hedgehogs huddled very close together to protect themselves from freezing through their mutual warmth. However, they soon felt one another's quills, which then forced them apart. Now when the need for warmth brought them closer together again, that second drawback repeated itself, so that they were tossed back and forth between both kinds of suffering until they discovered a moderate distance from one another, at which they could best endure the situation. (Schopenhauer, 2009, p. 384)

The paradox that Freud borrows from Schopenhauer's hedgehog dilemma describes how to deal with human relationships and bonds, and how to approach others without injuring ourselves. However, if we move away from that other, we suffer. This paradox describes in a similar manner, the relationship of the hypnotising leader to the masses. We cannot live without them but being with them causes us suffering.

When others approach us, it makes us uncomfortable; we cannot cope with the hedgehog's spikes, and we do not know what to do with them. It seems that the only thing we can do is hurt ourselves. Here is where the figure of love appears. In Freud's theory, love can almost never be separated from narcissism, and the text *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* is no exception. This writing proposes that the way out of the hedgehog's dilemma is not the optimal distance, but instead a brave proximity, through the path of love.

According to the Slovenian philosopher, Žižek (2005), true love is not afraid of getting too close and it is ready to assume the loved object in all its reality and preserve its sublime status. Some people cannot get closer to others, they cannot get closer to themselves. There are people who approach others to get away from themselves. In the *Fight Club* film (Fincher, 1999), the protagonist does not want to realise that the fight is with himself. If he does not achieve defeat of himself, it will be impossible to subvert that reality with which he fights. The issue in that path is that he gets lost fighting with others; however, the real issue is how to be able to fight against himself in order to defeat not others but with others. It is impossible to renounce to your own world for another, or to dream the dreams of others. The idea is to be able to make your own world the best possible; and then, bring company to others to make their own. It is not about making two worlds one, but to make the two worlds something better. That is the subversive possibility of love that philosophers and poets have shown. In the *Fight Club*, is proposed a version of pain beyond masochism or the enjoyment of inflicting pain on oneself. In the movie, a version of healing pain is proposed, a pain that brings with it recognition, the pain of transformation, that makes one consider the transition through psychoanalysis as a spiritual practice, as Foucault put it, or as the French philosopher Badiou commented:

Love is an insurrection that tears you from your condition of ordinary existence and takes you out of individual experience, because you see the world in two, instead of to one. It is leaving the individual. (Pérez, 2009)

Love is not a matter of harmony or tranquillity. Following the path of authors such as Žižek, Badiou, or Lacan, love is imperfect. It is milk with lactose, coffee with caffeine, beer with alcohol. What if you do not know that it can make you die, but also from a know-how can do something: to live. Love in current capitalism believes that it is not necessary to compromise, thus individuals believe they are free by not marrying or not assuming certain formalities to create the feeling of freedom. The issue persists, how to link desire to love beyond these perception of freedom? In these practices what can be shown is a pseudo-freedom that capitalism offers: be free by being a slave! Since, as in formal practices, as in marriage, the renunciation of the path of desire for an illusion of freedom can be made more hidden.

There is something about love that, although it repeats some marks that have to do with the history of each subject, escapes, and is not directly subordinate to the Other. That is why Lacan (2010) even said that 'love is a sign, scanned as such, that reason is changed, and that is why the poet addresses that reason. You change your reason, that is, your discourse' (p. 25). The love that is being proposed goes along the lines of traversing the phantom, passing from the symptom in Freudian mass psychology to the sinthome of the latest Lacanian teaching, passing to that point where 'Something that allows the symbolic, the imaginary and the Real to stay together' (Lacan, 2012, p. 92).

The sinthome is a proposal in the last Lacanian teaching whose function is to keep linked the Borromean chain of the Real, Symbolic, and imaginary; it is what comes to repair the fault in the Borromean chain. It is that which does not work as a symptom, which in this case would be the social and political symptom, the sinthome would be the way to elaborate a know-how about that symptom, so as not to continue repeating that which causes us discomfort or makes us suffer as subjects. The bet is to achieve the sinthomatic chain, a know-how with the symptom, to recognise in that symptom the only support of being, that which allows us to live.

That knowing how to do is also that which returns from the repressed, that something that does not come from the past but from a future present, and on that we must emphasise, psychoanalysis is not about something that happened but that happens and will happen, says wisdom ancestral: Going back to the past is coming to the future. So, crossing the social fantasy is identifying with the social symptom, with that which does not work in the social sphere, that which is believed to disturb social harmony, such as the figures of the Jew, black, mestizo in Latin America, the immigrant in Europe – that which is used to hide that society itself does not work.

The charismatic leader of the mass in Freud's text *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* projects in each member of said mass an ideal of social order, everything can work correctly. The ideological fantasy operates by giving meaning to a reality that works. Thus, the subject can become an individual who can identify with certain traits that modern psychology has called personality, character, or identity. For this ideological reality to work, the emptiness of the subject and the Other, a barred subject and a non-existent Other, must be hidden. Ideological fantasy is the way in which social antagonism, class struggle, no sexual relation, even the very fact that the completed society does not exist, is concealed (Laclau & Mouffe, 2006).

The mass can be formed by an excess of individualism caused by neoliberal capitalism. For certain reasons, Trump was elected by the people in the United States, as was Bolsonaro in Brazil, and Duque in Colombia. For more than 50 years of armed conflict in Colombia, collective ties have been broken due to fear and violence. As a result, right-wing party and far-right governments have been elected throughout that time. In the first decade of the 21st century, governments represent that political trend that is sustained through a messianic figure.

According to Freud, all individual psychology is also social. We could also think that all social psychology is individual, or rather all psychology concerns a subject and the social aspect. The subject is not without the (social) Other, and that is what Lacan emphasises in seminar 16: '*From an Other to the other*', a subject that arises from the impossibility of completing the Other and that this completes it. The proposal in this current paper is for some collectives not-all, some that do not intend to totalise the social field by an imaginary fascist order through some figure of the leader, that being in love with that figure and its policies are not the social way to group in masses, and that social sinthome could be given by means of a politics of the feminine, a politics of not-all, a politics of love.

3 | NOT-ALL AND LOVE IN POLITICS

Love from the feminine perspective, not-all, is what today could make an obstacle to mass individualism. Love borders the gap of what is the Real (Gallo, 2017) and creates new possibilities of Lacan's negations: '*Woman does not exist*', '*There is no sexual relation*' and '*There is no Other of the Other*'. Love mediates between jouissance and the dialectic of desire and can cope with the encounter with the Real. Love supplies the sexual relationship that does not exist, but this love is a feminine love:

That on the side of The woman -but mark that the with the oblique bar with which I designate what should be crossed out- on the side of The (crossed out) woman, something else is at stake, and not the object a, in what comes to supply that sexual relationship that is not. (Lacan, 2010, p. 78)

Contrary to the love as supplency, being in love in the masses places the charismatic leader as the one who can achieve social harmony. But this can never be achieved. It is constituted as in courtly love: 'a very refined way of supplying absence of sexual intercourse pretending that we are the ones who hinder it' (Lacan, 2010, p. 85). And it is not us but the Real, that there is no sexual ratio or relation, but 'what supplies the sexual relationship is precisely love' (Lacan, 2010, p. 59).

Love enables a *symptomatic bond*. In that act of substitution, love can reinvent social bonds in an age where political calculators want to make mass through a series of strategies where social networks seem to be the battlefield. In this bet of love, we do not want to fill the void of the Real. On the contrary, it is an event; therefore, it is rupture, discontinuity, it indicates the crack and not the shutdown, it is contingent, and it indicates the void of the Real as well as the impossibility of the sexual ratio. As French philosopher Badiou (2002) says: 'love is not what, from a Two supposedly given in structure, the One makes an ecstasy' (p. 243). So, there are no mergers with another or a leader to become one.

A not-all love that borders the gap of the Real and that is not the illusion of a total identification with an other or a saving leader, this not-all love in the collectives shows the inconsistency of the Other and, therefore, that of the same subject – a love where there are no guarantees or the promise of reaching an ideal, be it social or particular, but division, that ray that cracks you as Cortázar told us. This should not be confused with a sacrificial waiting, but a know-how that entails the creation from that hole rather than from its filling, is created from that not-all to go beyond the Freudian mass psychology and thus enable other bonds, other collectives.

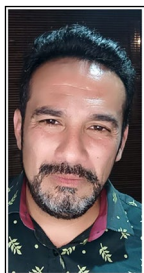
ORCID

Jairo Enrique Gallo Acosta  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4183-7416>

REFERENCES

- Badiou, A. (2002). *Condiciones* [Conditions] (1st Spanish ed.). Siglo XXI Editores.
- Berenguer, E. (2009). El goce Y los discursos. In *Discurso Y vínculo social. Lacanian orientation seminar of Bogotá* (pp. 11–35). Nueva Escuela Lacaniana.
- Cortázar, J. (2017). *Rayuela* (1st Spanish ed.). Editorial Oveja Negra.
- Fincher, D. (1999). *Fight Club*. (Cinematographic tape). Fox.
- Freud, S. (1992). Psicología de las masas Y análisis del yo [Group psychology and ego analysis]. In *Obras Completas* (4th Spanish ed., pp. 63–136). Amorrortu.
- Gallo, J. (2017). *Polis y psique. Ensayos sobre teoría política y psicoanálisis* (1st ed.). Ediciones Cátedra Libre.
- Lacan, J. (1961–1962). *Seminario 9. La identificación* [The seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book IX: Identification]. Escuela Freudiana de Buenos Aires.
- Lacan, J. (1992). *Seminario libro 17. El reverso del psicoanálisis* [The seminar of Jacques Lacan: The other side of psychoanalysis, Book XVII] (1st Spanish ed.). Paidós.
- Lacan, J. (2010). *Seminario libro 20. Aún* [On feminine sexuality the limits of love and knowledge: The seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX Encore] (1st Spanish ed.). Paidós.
- Lacan, J. (2012). *Seminario libro 23. El sinthome* (1st Spanish ed.). Paidós.
- Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (2006). *Hegemonía Y estrategia socialista. Hacia una radicalización de La democracia* [Hegemony and socialist strategy] (2nd ed.). Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Pérez, A. (2009). Los occidentales satisfechos son los adversarios de La humanidad. Digital paper 'Publico.es'. <https://www.publico.es/actualidad/occidentales-satisfechos-son-adversarios-humanidad.html>
- Schopenhauer, A. (2009). *Parerga Y parapolímena. Escritos filosóficos menores. II* [Parerga and paralipomena: A collection of philosophical essays] (1st Spanish ed.). Editorial Trotta.
- Stavrakakis, Y. (2010). *La izquierda lacaniana. Psicoanálisis, teoría, política* [The Lacanian left] (2nd Spanish ed.). Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Žižek, S. (2005). *Violencia en acto. Conferencias en Buenos Aires* [Lectures in Buenos Aires] (1st Spanish ed.). Paidós.
- Žižek, S. (2007). *El acoso de las fantasías* [The plague of fantasies] (1st Spanish ed.). Siglo XX.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES



Jairo Enrique Gallo Acosta is a psychologist and practitioner of psychoanalysis. He has a Master in Psychoanalysis, Argentine University John F. Kennedy and a Doctor in Social and Human Sciences, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. His postdoctoral stay was at the Universidad Michoacana San Nicolás de Hidalgo. He is currently research professor at the Cooperative University of Colombia. Author of the books: '*Psicoanálisis y Teoría Social*' (2009), '*Psicoanálisis, Investigación y Subjetividad*' (2011), '*Polis y Psique. Ensayos Sobre Teoría Social y Psicoanálisis*' (2017), '*Clínica y Acontecimiento. La Práctica Psicoanalítica en la Época de las Lógicas Neoliberales*' (2019), '*Ideología, Salud Mental y Neoliberalismo en Colombia*' (2020), '*Psicoanálisis y Subalternidad. Arte, Cultura popular y Subversión*' (2020) and '*Por un Psicoanálisis Abigarrado*' (2021). Member of the Caribbean Psychoanalytic Circle.



Daniel Alfonso Castiblanco Cortés is a psychologist at the Cooperative University of Colombia; as well as a therapeutic companion and psychotherapist with a psychoanalytic approach at the Surcos Foundation. He is a member of the research hotbed '*A-nudo: Psychoanalysis and the social field*'.

How to cite this article: Gallo Acosta, J. E., & Castiblanco Cortés, D. A. (2021). Is not being in love, is to love! Going through the psychology of the masses. *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, 19(3), e1602. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ppi.1602>