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MAKING ONESELF PARVANA IN THE WORLD: A STUDY FROM THE SARTREAN BIOGRAPHICAL METHOD

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Abstract: This production consists of a biographical analysis of the fictional character Parvana, an Afghan girl who stars in the eponymous trilogy inspired by real stories, by Deborah Ellis. This study, centered on the first book, "The other face: history of an afghan girl" (2002), sought to understand Parvana as a being-in-the-world, focusing on the anthropological and sociological dimensions, as well as on her experiments and appropriations. that enable the constitution of their project-of-being, as conceived by Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism. It is a theoretical study that adopts the Sartrean biographical, phenomenological and dialectical method as a form of analysis. The study of the work made it possible to highlight the role of women and children in the most (a)diverse sociocultural contexts, as well as the contribution of existentialist psychology to the analysis of contemporary issues.

Keywords: Project-of-being. sociabilities. Biographical method. Sartrian existentialism.

INTRODUCTION

In "The other face: the story of an Afghan girl", a fictional narrative stitched together by reality, Deborah Ellis (2002), a Canadian writer and activist who has published several books on children's protagonism, supports the story of this book in the accounts she heard while she was in refugee camps in Asia and invites us to meet the character Parvana, an eleven-year-old girl who lives with her family in the city of Kabul, Afghanistan, in a context tormented by the dictatorial regime imposed by the radical Taliban group. This book is the first in a series of three - the other two are entitled "Parvana's Journey" and "My Name Is Parvana" - which describe the girl's trajectory in a time-space crossed by fear, persecution, repression and violence. From this, we aim to analytically explore the constitution of the girl Parvana from the perspective of the

existentialist phenomenological theory of Jean-Paul Sartre, a philosopher who developed conceptions that involve the subject based on his singularity and sociability, constituted in a dialectical way.

Parvana experiences her life completely transformed, demanding new positions and choices from her, which puts the future projected into question. In the existentialist perspective, the person is a being-in-the-world, since it is only constituted from the relationships that it establishes with it. Sartre's theory (2015) tells us that such relationships are configured from materiality, temporality, by an experience of a body and by others/people. The subject is launched into an existential space, that is, in a given anthropological context, and inevitably comes across others, with whom he establishes relationships, that is, he experiences a sociological dimension, building, from this, his psychological and psychological dynamics. weaving your project of being.

Sartre (2015) points out that the project-of-being consists in the movement of the subject for its realization as being-in-the-world. This movement takes place from all the choices made and from a temporal process, which places the future as a crucial dimension, which is a condition of existence. We understand, therefore, that there is no subject without a project of being, that is, that does not make this movement of totalization in progress. It is worth noting that, simultaneously with the experience of a project, the experience of the desire-to-be occurs. Sartre (2015) points out that desire is what characterizes the project-of-being, that is, it is through desire that the subject is driven to carry out a certain project. Desire and project are also consolidated in the daily choices of the individual, according to their singular-universal condition.

In this direction, as the subject is historicized, it is constituted as a project-of-

being (because it is not determined, that is why its freedom is due; because it is launched towards a future, an end, insofar as its actions project it. to some place/situation, whether you like it or not; because it is open, making a “construction of the self” necessary). Thus, it is worth asking: how does this self-construction of the girl Parvana take place? How does the weaving of your project-of-being unfold? Under what anthropological and sociological conditions does the girl build her psychological dynamics?

In view of this, we consider it relevant and opportune to undertake this study on Parvana, since she, as a child and female figure, assumes a courageous role in a context full of adversities. This scenario in which the girl finds herself is one of war – mainly against women, education and individual freedoms – and does not spare even the children, who, like Parvana, are an active part of the process of resisting and finding ways to do things., to demarcate oneself as a subject amidst the chaos and suffering caused by the Taliban’s actions. Therefore, the importance of highlighting the role of the child and the female personality in the most (a)diverse sociocultural contexts motivated us to understand Parvana as a being-in-the-world. Another reason for undertaking such a study refers to the desire to expand biographical research based on Sartrean Existentialism, making visible the power of this theoretical-methodological contribution to the analysis of contemporary issues.

ROUTE METHODOLOGICAL

For this analysis, we chose as the main material the book “The other face: history of an afghan girl” (2002), by Deborah Ellis, which presents the character Parvana inserted in her anthropological and sociological contexts, as well as describes episodes that we can consider indicative of his psychophysical

experiments and his project-of-being.

This work narrates a short passage of Parvana’s childhood, in which the girl is eleven years old and the family experiences the specific situation of war, consequently, of changes and losses, ranging from the father’s job to the girl’s freedoms and all her life. family. This analysis, then, is restricted to a small part of Parvana’s life, which begins with a description of her life and that of her family before the Taliban took power and ends with the agents’ invasion of her home for the capture. father, who is later arrested. In the course of the narrative sequence of this and subsequent books, Parvana experiences other stages of her development and her trajectory.

Initially, we read the book in question in full, in order to obtain a more panoramic view of Parvana’s life. In later readings, we highlight the excerpts of the work that express the elements related to the proposed analysis, that is, to the elucidation of the anthropological, sociological and personal dimensions that constitute, in a dialectical way, the project of being Parvana.

We chose to divide the development of the analysis into two axes: first, we discussed the anthropological and sociological conditions of Parvana’s life, highlighting excerpts from the book in which the data of her inscription in these two dimensions are shared and weaving comments in dialogue with the Sartrean ontology; in the background, we debate issues related to the unique appropriations carried out by the character, issues that involve emotions, thoughts, affectations, psychophysical experiments, the relationships he established with the unwanted present and the future narrowed by oppression, the rupture of the your project of being, among others.

This way, we seek to identify, conceptualize and explain Parvana’s field of existential possibilities, discussing her objective

conditions - materiality and social and epochal context where she grows up and lives, as said, in extreme violation of rights, subjugation and objectification. At this juncture, we collected data from her social experiences in a group, such as her family; the states and qualities that constitute her profiles and characterize her psychological conditions; the experiences imprinted on her body; the realization of totalizing syntheses, which make possible their recognition of themselves as "a certain someone"; the types and levels of consciousness; the construction of her desire to be and project to be, and the way these two aspects of her personality are related.

In order to support our understanding, we selected as sources of information some works by Jean-Paul Sartre, such as "Criticism of dialectical reason" (2002), "Sketch of a theory of emotions" (2006) and "Being and nothingness" (2015), in which the author weaves the crucial concepts of Existentialism and theorizes about aspects of the constitution of subjectivity. At the same time, we support this analysis in scholars of Sartrean Existentialism, who help us to better understand the elaborations of this ontology.

The analysis and understanding of the data were carried out using the Sartrean biographical method, which is characterized by the progressive-regressive movement and the existential psychoanalysis developed by Sartre (SCHNEIDER, 2008). This method's fundamental quality is the phenomenological description and understanding of the dialectical movement that constitutes human reality. This method, in its progressive-regressive character, is anchored in the continuous movement between the singular and the universal, in the existence of the subject intimately intertwined with time and the sociocultural context. It is characterized, therefore, as a back-and-forth, which sews the subject with the world; which takes place

in the horizontal direction, linking past, present and future, and in the vertical, with a dynamic in the singular and universal aspects (SARTRE, 2002).

In this sense, Maheirie and Pretto (2007) reinforce that this method consists of a possibility of knowing the subject that is supported by analyzes that go through totalizing syntheses, both of singularities and universality. Thus, "it seeks the movement of historical totalization of the singular subject in the imbrication of the collective historical totality, one weaving and explaining the other" (MAHEIRIE and PRETTO, 2007, p. 460). Therefore, we realize that the Sartrean biographical method proposes an understanding of the subject so as not to detach him from History, viewing him as the one who makes History, universality, and is made by it. This way, we understand that the method corresponds to an investigative journey, in which the purpose is to pay attention to what unifies the subject in all its dimensions.

Therefore, we consider this methodological proposal as a coherent, viable and comprehensive possibility of Parvana's biography. Consequently, a proposition of understanding the phenomena that reach it, since it provides access to the subject's experiments, contemplating the subjective and objective aspects of its existence, as well as the relationship of this being with the world.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF PARVANA'S LIFE

We begin the analysis by discussing fundamental anthropological and sociological elements of Parvana's life, since, in the Sartrean perspective, only from them will it be possible to build her project-of-being and, also, our understanding of her ways of feeling, think and act, since the being of a subject, in this

case, Parvana, takes place in its relationship with the place, the things and the people that surround it.

Regarding the cultural context of Parvana, it is worth mentioning that it is an amazing scenario, in which the rules of social conduct are dictated by the Taliban, a group that took possession of Afghanistan in the mid-1990s and early 2000s. During this period, women and girls – including Parvana – were prevented from studying and, also, from walking on the streets of the country. The Taliban reconfigured the reality of Afghanistan through invasive, aggressive and cruel means, in order to unleash a war that devastated the country for decades: houses, schools and other buildings were destroyed by bombs; people lost their lives or body parts as a result of the explosions. Parvana, then, lives in the midst of a society paralyzed by fear, under the constant thunderous sounds of bombs exploding and frequent episodes of horror. Parvana's family group was directly affected by this context, having its life completely transformed, with losses that extended in all areas, social, material, cultural and affective.

Ellis' narrative presents the family routine where Parvana shares her days with her father, mother and brothers - an older sister and two younger brothers, one girl and one boy. The family occupies an extremely limited space as a dwelling: a room in which there is barely any possibility for family members to circulate. Before the war, they lived in a big and comfortable house, but they had to move a few times because of the explosions that reached the houses where they lived. With each change, the space got smaller, until it was reduced to this little room, which houses the home and vetoes the possibilities of privacy.

The father, once a university professor, has to hide his books and sell haberdashery in the city market, where only men are allowed. In this new and difficult scenario, compounded

by the fact that he lost one of his legs in an explosion caused by the Taliban, he has to work alone and for many hours straight to guarantee the minimum support of the family, which is experiencing financial scarcity. In addition, his wife and children began to live in cloisters, under constant threats from the Taliban, and Parvana, being a child and female, finds herself cornered by the prohibitions imposed by the dictatorship, but sometimes she runs the risk of walking around the city and behaves subversively to help the father.

The mother, in turn, is too busy with household chores and the care that her youngest child requires, still a baby. Parvana gets along well with her younger sister, with whom she shares fantasies and dreams. On the other hand, Parvana's older sister is a young woman who dedicates much of her time to implicating Parvana's attitudes and opinions, in a hierarchical dynamic between sisters of different ages. There was, in another time, another component of this family: an eldest son, who died prematurely when stepping on a mine – a reason for the family's great pain, especially for the mother.

Let us consider these fundamental sociological conditions in the constitution of Parvana's being, as Schneider's statement assures us:

[...] the child is always inscribed in a certain anthropological context: he is born in a certain place, with its culture, its specific values; at a certain time and in a given social class, with the material, productive and ideological conditions; in a certain family, surrounded by certain people, with their specific values and rationalities. This social inscription is the first condition for the personalization of the subject (SCHNEIDER, 2011, p. 158).

Within this sociological nucleus, we find space to approach group conceptions according to the existentialist theoretical perspective. According to Sartre (2002), not

every gathering of people can be understood as a group, since the constitution of a group requires some specific conditions. From the group characterizations elaborated by the theorist, we highlight here the *series and the merged group or organized group*, which are Parvana's most visible experiments in the course of the narrative.

In this direction, Sartre (2002) calls series what involves individuality, the solitude of the being that, despite sharing a certain environment with other individuals, does not join them in a relationship of reciprocity, that is, of exchange. In this context, it is worth highlighting the moments in which Parvana, although inserted in a collective context, which is her family, feels completely alone, unable to elect a member of her own family as "closest". Parvana, as we are able to perceive in the story, is known to be alone, she feels alone, especially when she observes the dynamics of relationships between her family members and verifies that all of hers have fixed, silently elected companions, while she, Parvana, it's just. When she perceives herself and feels this way, the girl experiences seriality.

In other moments of the narrative, the character lives the reality of *fusion group or organized group*. Sartre (2002) theorizes, in this bias, that the fusion group consists of the gathering of people who are mobilized from a certain situation that requires from these people an instantaneous and reciprocity action. The organized group, in turn, refers to an agglomeration of individuals who, instead of being solitary, are in exchange for a collective project, that is, subjects who become important to each other, develop affection for each other. others and, thus, begin to mediate their individual projects between themselves and the group's common project (SARTRE, 2002).

We understand, therefore, that Parvana's family sometimes lives the characteristics of

this group, although less frequently, as we are told. This finding highlights the moments in which the affection between the members of the family in question is visible, especially when everyone gets together to eat and, in these situations, they talk and laugh among themselves. In addition, we observe the mediations between family members in their individual and collective projects, such as Parvana's father, who is the great mediator of the girl's project, fostering her intelligence; the mother, who mostly collaborates with the eldest daughter's individual project, whom she chooses as her companion for domestic tasks; Parvana herself, who contributes to the family's collective project through the functions assigned to her within this group, which makes her an important protagonist for the family's survival.

WEAVING A SINGULAR PROJECT: PARVANA'S EXPERIMENTS AND APPROPRIATIONS

Directing our gaze specifically on the character Parvana, we found that, launched in her existential conditions described above, she carries out the constitution of her *i* through the appropriation of what they live. In this appropriation dynamics, Schneider (2011) highlights the emotional situations and situates us in relation to the concepts of state and quality, developed by Sartre:

In emotional situations, the subject has a set of psychophysical affectations that occur spontaneously. These affects, which are given as *experiences of being*, they will, little by little, be appropriated by him and, as this occurs, the subject recognizes himself as the one who had such experiences. When this spontaneous (unreflected) awareness of affectation is not limited to a given instant, but gains in duration, compromises the subject's being in the future, it becomes a state. [...] Qualities are the "unity of states".

When I am taken by the same emotion very often, when I react to certain situations always in the same way, these constitutive states of my being end up becoming my objective qualities (SCHNEIDER, 2011, p. 137-139).

In this sense, we perceive, for example, that the emotional situations that Parvana experiences in the exchanges with her older sister, Nooria, are appropriated by her in order to constitute a state, which turns to anger, since this is the emotion that stars the relationship of competition and confrontation between the sisters, and especially, the process of appropriation of Parvana. Still, we take as an example of a state Parvana's nostalgia when remembering a recent past, when peace had not yet been "detonated" in her country, given that the girl appropriates this emotion beyond a single moment during the narrative. It is also not inconsistent to say that, implicitly, fear and sadness confer *quality* the parvana – and her entire family – knowing the frightening context in which she is inserted.

We now turn to the relationship between the constitution of the being and the body based on the Sartrean existentialist theory. In this regard, Sartre (2006) proposes that the subject is body/consciousness, that is, it is a totalization of these dimensions, which are inseparable. In this sense, the body is the main mediation of the subject in the relationship he establishes with the world; the body is what the subject is (SARTRE, 2006).

In this sense, Parvana is described by the author of the work in question as a small girl for her age and, because she is seen in the same way, the family, especially the parents, assigns her specific and fixed functions, such as being support from the father in his daily walk, since he had difficulty walking, and to fetch water from the tank so the family can enjoy it – according to the mother (and Parvana does not disagree with her), the girl has the perfect physical conditions to be able to sneak along the

paths that lead to the tank and also carry the buckets full of water. About what this body experience is, Sartre (2006) explains that it consists of the external point of view, that is, of others, on the subject's body, what he calls the body as being-for-another.

Furthermore, Parvana's body stands out in some moments of the narrative, providing a better understanding of the construction of her personality. One such moment is when Parvana's family home is invaded by Taliban agents and her father is dragged out the door: immediately, Parvana paralyzes, her body expressing nothing but fright and fear; later, the girl, although small, takes courage and physically confronts the invaders, in an unsuccessful attempt to stop them. Her body, at that moment, is mobilized by her ideal, by the desire to be a courageous Afghan woman, like the ones her father described in his storytelling.

What we can highlight in this reading of Parvana's relationship with the body, while seeking to constitute itself as a being-in-the-world, is the transformation of an alienated, tired body, limited in expressions, which daily submits itself, seen by the other as (being-for-another) small, who is used to serving, who goes unnoticed on the streets where women were not welcome, who is fragile, in a strong, courageous, uninhibited, expressive, willing body, which risks and imposes itself in the face of a violent situation (being-for-itself). Regarding this transformation of the body, Sartre (2006) refers to concrete psychophysical experimentation, that is, to the experience of the body experienced by the subject on a daily basis, as a mediation that is in its relationship with materiality and other subjects.

Following the narrative thread, Parvana is beaten by the bullies and cowers. The shrinking of her body at this moment offers us a metaphor for Parvana's movement throughout her life until then: first, her family

shrank; then their houses and material objects shrank; later, intellectual activities, such as reading and the activities she practiced at school, shrank; at last her joys withered away.

And also channeling attention to the girl Parvana, we highlight moments in which the aforementioned character makes significant appropriations important in the constitution of her being. One of those moments can be enjoyed right at the beginning of the narrative, when Parvana claims to herself, in a whisper, that she is a good reader, almost as good as her father. At that moment, Parvana performs a “totalizing synthesis”, that is, she recognizes herself as a certain someone, someone who reads well. In this regard, Sartre (2015) elaborates that the subject is an ongoing totalization, that is, he temporalizes himself, performs a synthesis of his experiments in past, present and future times, and this synthesis is what defines him. This way, we understand that the subject makes himself in what he experiences, in what he has done, does and plans to do (SARTRE, 2015).

In another situation, Parvana recognizes – sometimes with anger, sometimes with pride – that she is, among the components of her family group, the person responsible for performing the specific tasks assigned to her, mentioned above. In a similar way, she carries out this process of self-recognition.

Sartre (2006) also discusses the types and levels of consciousness, understanding this dimension as a means by which the subject relates to the reality that weaves him and that is woven by him. In this perspective, the Sartrean theory classifies these variations of consciousness as: perceptive, imagining and reflective; there are also consciousnesses that are pre-reflective, that is, that precede reflection, and these he calls perception and imagination (SARTRE, 2006).

Perception refers to the consciousness that relates to an existing, present, concrete object;

imagination, on the other hand, corresponds to consciousness in relation to an object that is absent, imaginary, non-existent or existing elsewhere. As for reflection, it consists of the consciousness that is established in relation to an object that can be either existent or non-existent, present or absent, so that there is distance between us and this object, so that we can rationalize it (SARTRE, 2006).

As far as consciousness is concerned, the Sartrean existentialist theory still informs us that all consciousness é *non-positional-of-itself*, that is, it does not take itself as an object of consciousness. From this perspective, existentialism presents us with degrees of consciousness: the consciousnesses of *first degree* are those that give themselves immediately, not also taking the I as an object (they are absorbed in their object) – these consciousnesses are named by Sartre as *thoughtless*, They can be pre-reflective or spontaneous reflexive. It is these consciousnesses that will be the object for the second degree consciousness, which is reflective, called by Sartre as reflective (SARTRE, 2006).

Having that, we can, thus, analyze the consciences that cross the constitution of being Parvana. Throughout her trajectory, Parvana experiences different situations that allow the manifestation of her types and levels of consciousness. Among these episodes, we highlight three, which refer to the perceptive, imagining and reflective consciousness, respectively.

The first, corresponding to perceptual awareness – which is when we become aware of a present object, in a pre-reflective moment – happens when Parvana is drawn to a specific object, a vibrant red tissue. Then she realizes that the object was a set of clothes that Parvana was very fond of and that her mother was putting it up for sale. At this moment, Parvana’s consciousness perceives the object

and its characteristics (a fabric, vibrant red) before reflecting on this object and realizing that it was something she was very fond of and would not want to get rid of - which makes her feel vulnerable, dispossessed of something that was hers, cut off from someone she enjoyed being. In this scenario, consciousness of the first degree was manifested, not positional-of-itself, but of the present, existing object.

The second moment, referring to the imaginative consciousness, also pre-reflective, occurs when Parvana and her younger sister, Maryam, allow themselves to imagine a palace in which they would live, dressed in blue/green silk that they would wear when their younger sister sold his drawings and the whole family enriched. In this act, both girls distance themselves from criticism, from reflection, and begin to imagine absent/non-existent objects. This way, in imagination, they also manifest their first-degree, non-positional-of-self-consciousness.

Finally, the third moment, which turns to reflective consciousness, corresponds to the part of the narrative in which Parvana observes boys her age walking through the market labyrinth, bringing tea to the local merchants who could not leave their stalls. At that moment, from the observation of the object, she reflects and realizes that she could also, would be able to do this activity, even though she was a girl. In this panorama, Parvana manifests the second degree consciousness, in which she takes a distance from the object and elaborates a reflection, a criticism.

Continuing our analysis, we point out moments in Parvana's history, in which the relationship between her desire to be and her project to be is evident. As an example, the situation in which Parvana reveals the aforementioned desire to roam freely through the market labyrinth, just like the boys did, but she chooses to remain seated on the blanket of her father's stall; or yet, as also mentioned

before, when Parvana chooses to mutter her skill as a reader, instead of speaking loud and clear, as was her wish. In the two situations described, the project-of-being goes against the girl's desire-to-be, that is, her choices contradict her ideals. Differently, at the moment she confronts the invaders who take her father, throwing herself against them and expelling them from her house, Parvana weaves her project-of-being in line with her desire-to-be, in this case, in the relationship with courage, a trait attributed by the father to Afghan women.

Finally, from the observations made here, we are not mistaken in saying that Parvana is a girl "shrunk" against her will, who lives the paradox of having been sabotaged by her conditions of existence - anthropological and sociological - and challenged to expose her personality. "another face", that of the courageous Afghan woman, in her everyday choices. Parvana is moved by her ideal, by her desire-to-be, at the same time that she lives her project-to-be in the midst of obstacles in her context, such as imminent danger, experiencing affectations - especially and predominantly sadness -, relating to others and materiality; being-in-the-world.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Contrary to the socially predominant view of children's fragility and dependence, Parvana shows herself to be a protagonist of her own story and, also, of her family's history. As Qvortrup (2010) argues, children participate in the reality they share with adults, producing the world, although they are little visible as relevant social beings. With active participation in the processes of resistance and confrontation, Parvana, launched in her anthropological and sociological contexts, makes childhood a potent scenario of her constitution as a subject and, thus, makes herself a unique being in the world, through

her experiments and appropriations. personal.

In general, the story told by Deborah Ellis reveals aspects of human relationships that are complex and contrary to solidarity and democracy while guiding sociability. Unfortunately, in contemporary times, we witness territorial conflicts and dictatorial government proposals, which devastate individual and group freedoms, spreading existential suffering, impotence and despair, interrupting histories and altering life projects. We realize that the Sartrean existentialist ethics understands that, being free subjects in a situation, singular-universal, they can find in each other an existential support through practices of care and sharing that are concerned with the collectivity and guarantee the right to be free and also the right to be in community.

Finally, we understand that the Sartrean biographical method, chosen for the accomplishment of this analysis, allowed the understanding of Parvana as a being-in-the-world in the pre-established cut of life, so that it was possible to verify her existential conditions, considering her contexts. socio-affective, their reflective, imaginative and emotional psychophysical experiences, their project and desire to be. Making a project, in Sartre's view, is an inevitable condition for the living being, even if it has to be lived in situations of confrontations and struggles, like Parvana, who chooses, resists and becomes an agent of transformation.

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