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Observational study on weberian ethics in the film *Sophie's Choice*

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ABSTRACT. When ethical dilemmas of responsibility and conviction seem to involve any human fabric of the real world, *Sophie's Choice* (1982) is guided by an ethic of responsibility of one end would justify the means and she did not have the option to dodge out. Through an observational study of qualitative approach we aim to situate the dilemma suffered by the protagonist of the film within ethical parameters defined by Max Weber when he explains the ethics of responsibility and the conviction ethic. The contributions of this study go beyond the fictional and cinematic limits of *Sophie's Choice* to a time depicting ethical dilemmas that may be suffered by people in the real world and (unwanted) choices reflecting further consequences beyond the end of justifications and axiological assumptions. Thus many other hodiernal historical contexts are diverse, that even in different political, cultural, economic and social conditions, people find themselves forced to make choices that are not intended. This widens the scope of the film and brings the contemporary debate that remains current.

Keywords: ethical dilemmas; responsibility ethic; conviction ethic; *Sophie's Choice*; filmic language.

Estudo observacional sob a ética weberiana no filme *A Escolha de Sofia*

RESUMO. Quando dilemas éticos de responsabilidade ou convicção parecem envolver qualquer trama humana de mundo real, *Escolha de Sofia* (1982) guia-se por uma ética da responsabilidade de um fim que justificaria o meio que ele não teve a opção de esquivar-se. Por meio de um estudo observacional de abordagem qualitativa objetiva-se situar o dilema sofrido pela protagonista do filme dentro dos parâmetros éticos determinados por Max Weber quando explica a ética de responsabilidade e a ética de convicção. As contribuições deste estudo extrapolam os limites fictícios e cinematográficos da escolha de Sofia ao tempo que retratam dilemas éticos que podem ser sofridos por pessoas do mundo real e escolhas (não desejadas) que refletem consequências posteriores além das justificativas de fim e de pressupostos axiológicos. Deste modo são diversos outros contextos históricos hodiernos que, mesmo em diferentes condições políticas, culturais, econômicas e sociais, pessoas se veem obrigadas às escolhas que não pretendem fazer. Isto amplia o escopo do filme e traz à contemporaneidade um debate que permanece atual.

Palavras chave: dilemas éticos; ética de responsabilidade; ética de convicção; *A Escolha de Sofia*; linguagem filmica.

Introduction

Human history is permeated by large and deep discussions that guide evolution of social, political, economic and behavior order. Among them, there are certain issues related to ethics and power, inherent to human thinking and living in society that were and still are large controversy generators throughout the centuries.

The beginning of ethical thoughts first thoughts date back to ancient Greece, around the sixth century BC, when several social forces came to coexist (warrior aristocracy, villagers forces, eminent families, religious people etc.) and initiated the need for social order, permeated by moral reflections on the obligations and coexistence between classes.

However, tradition, behavior, habits, the 'moral' or 'ethos' already have existed for a long time, either through divine ethics, existing in religions; by taboos professed in ancient tribes; being it based on reciprocity of good and bad practices, as was seen in the Code of Hammurabi ('an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'); or simply human intuition. Such reflections were discussed and developed by various scholars and philosophers, such as Platão, Aristotle, Hobbes, Descartes, Spinoza, Voltaire, Kant, among others (Stukart, 2003; Souza, 2007).

Until the Middle Ages, generally, the concepts of moral and ethics started getting confused, especially by the fact that both words have similar roots, since they deal with conduct considered mandatory (La Taille, 2006).

According to Chauí (2009), the confusion between ethics and moral can be explained etymologically, since moral word comes from the Latin, *mores*, and the word ethics comes from the Greek *ethos*, both meaning customs. However, the Greek word *ethos* can be written with a short vowel, *epsilon*, meaning natural character, temperament, or the long vowel, *eta*, meaning customs.

Officially, procedures of conduct considered more suited in this or that society are understood as moral, as ethics relates directly to the philosophy that studies the nature of human beings whose actions are founded on the reason, considering moral values and ideal principles of human conduct (Michaelis, 2013). However, according to La Taille (2006), several authors still disagree with the concepts and their differences.

Among the ancient philosophers, for example, Platão (2005) taught in his first positions, that ethics was oriented for and by the good. For Aristotle (1973), the main purpose of ethics was the search for the real cause of human existence, namely the pursuit of the good and happiness, only achieved by the soul and when that execute actions that would enable its fulfillment.

With regard to modern philosophers, Kant (2005) associated moral with human egocentrism, stating that, in general, self-esteem only happens when the self-respect of a person focuses on the existing moral values, that is, when it passes in the pre-social judgment. Mill (1986), in turn, argued that ethics must necessarily harmonize with individual liberty, being actions that guide to human happiness the basic principle for morality and ethics. To La Taille (2006), morality derives from a sense of obligation, while ethics is the expansion of the individual.

Weber (2002), whose study of ethics is the focus of this work, lectured on ethics in political affairs, dividing it into two parts: the ethic of responsibility and ethics of conviction. The ethic of responsibility is guided by the purposes; as the conviction of ethics is guided by the values of the individual. Weber's work (2002) is widely used in the legal environment to streamline judicial decisions, which, in theory, seek a balance between the two Weberian ethics enhancing the understanding of the facts and the sense of justice (Costa, 2009).

Therefore, considering that ethics is indelibly embedded in the human character, aggravated by moral, Ullmann-Margalit (2007) states that it is fateful that everyone faces a choice that will lead them to a deeper ethical reflection, influenced by the social and moral rules that were submitted for life, or to a situation that presents a challenge of

incalculable choice because of certain characteristics of their own choice or scenario that the person is facing.

Thus, a film that could exemplify an ethical dilemma faced according to Weber's ethics on the topic was identified: *Sophie's Choice*. The objective of this article is to situate the dilemma suffered by the protagonist of the film within ethical parameters defined by Max Weber, through an observational study. It is emphasized that this film is constantly referenced in several areas, especially in the social and legal sciences, to exemplify great ethical dilemmas or justify controversial decisions (Maslin, 1982).

This study is important to discuss a relevant and current issue for society as a whole, through a playful deception of greater spreading power, which is the filmic language. In addition, relevance is emphasized by strengthening observational studies in the academic community, which is already recognizing the value of this type of technique.

Moral and ethical relativism in the history of mankind

The words and the concepts of ethics and morals are frequently used in everyday life of people in the media, in publications, in many ways. This exacerbated use is called by Romano (2001, p. 94) a “[...] violent inflation of the term [...]” considering that when the public and the experts talk too much, these elements are certainly being conveyed uncritically. At the same time, they are very important concepts for the design of society, overflows of questionable practices are often perceived and they could be the inverse of morals and ethics in the history of humanity, causing it to fall into a chronic nihilism of these values (Romano, 2001).

On the other hand, even if their importance is understood, are they absolute and irrefutable values? Silva (2007, p. 109) points out the impossibility of building a moral from which one could make out the absolute good, considering that no moral behavior - and why not ethical - is eternal, but “[...] subject to contingencies of a country or a people”. That is, the author relativizes customs, considering the cultural idiosyncrasies of each people, each nation. Silva (2007, p. 109) further says that “[...] the right to act is defined by respect for the customs of each people and the improvement of common sense and the virtue of moderation”.

Knowledge of history and nations is important not only to assess continuities and transformations, as well, if the customs remain or are transformed into liberal or conservative perspectives in order to deliver this knowledge to support discussions and

analyzes on moral relativity and the necessary critical vision to judge it (Silva, 2014). It is clear, therefore, that the relativity of morality is discussed openly. Tugendhat (1998, p. 49) stated that “[...] the concept of morals that would not allow maintaining the possibility of a plurality of moral conceptions is now unacceptable”.

According to La Taille (2010), there are two types of moral relativism: the axiological and anthropological. The axiological relativism, according to this author, implies thinking that any and all moral values assumed by different cultures or people (and the rules of conduct arising) are equivalent, and it is impossible to establish a hierarchy between them or consider some as immoral. La Taille (2010) even gives as an example of axiological relativism the case of an individual who although does not practice genital excision in girls himself, considers valid that some people do so in the name of religious precepts, i.e., tolerance is maximum with the differences. On the other hand, according to the author, how can anyone that really believes that maim is morally wrong accepts, without problems of conscience, that people are maimed in many parts of the world? They would miss experimenting the feeling of indignation, inseparable from the sense of obligation (La Taille, 2010).

The anthropological relativism, in turn:

[...] does not consist in saying that all moral choices are worth but that, in fact, they exist. For example, here, to kill the wicked is forbidden, and there it is a duty; here, having sex outside marriage is allowed, and there it is strictly prohibited etc. [...] If we analyze the various known moral systems, we find that the virtues of justice and benevolence are always present. But the fact is that this presence receives very different and even contradictory interpretations. Islamist terrorists kill in the name of (divine) justice; human rights activists condemn the death penalty, also in the name of justice. In short, it appears that, in fact, the moral level can be occupied by a variety of content (La Taille, 2010, p. 107).

Finally, it is important to emphasize the profound link between the concepts of morality and ethics, to the point they start to merge in certain discussions. For La Taille (2010), both are linked to the alleged duties of persons: ethics usually related to public order duties; and the moral related to the intrinsic duties of the role played by the person in a given social context. Thus, it is believed that thinking about the moral motivation through the ethical choices allows greater flexibility to account for the variety of behaviors that are observed (La Taille, 2010).

But ethics does not create morality. While it is true that all moral assumes certain principles, standards or rules of behavior, it is not ethics that establishes a particular community (Vásquez, 1995). On the liability of human decisions, Vásquez (1995, p. 2) states that:

It is possible to speak of moral behavior only when the person who behaves that way is responsible for his/her acts, but this, in turn, involves the assumption s/he could do what s/he wanted to do, namely, that s/he could choose between two or more alternatives, and act according to the decision. The problem of free will, because of this, is inseparable from responsibility. Decide and act in a particular case is a practical-moral problem; but to investigate the way in which the moral responsibility relates to the freedom and determinism to which our actions are subject is a theoretical problem, the study of which is a matter of ethics.

The problem we see is that, now and throughout history, many times individuals have found themselves in situations where they had to make decisions that they did not choose to take, but they had to do.

Theoretical reflections on weberian ethics

Max Weber stands out today as one of the most prominent philosophers of modern sociology, presenting new perspectives with regard to politics and power (Marsal, [s.d.]). Also, according to Marsal ([s.d.]), Weber was an author dazzled by political power or even all forms of domination. Thus, his studies and his positions influenced the most varied areas, such as economics, management, medicine, law, among others.

In politics harvest, Weber (2002) discusses the legitimacy of state power, which happens through the recognition of the old; the charismatic domain of who occupy positions of power; and the obedience of faith to the laws imposed by society. In relation to this obedience, Weber (2002, p. 62) believes that “[...] modern state is a grouping of domination that has institutional character and who sought (successfully) to monopolize, within the limits of a territory, the legitimate physical violence as instrument of domination”. The legitimacy word pervades Weber's studies (1991, 2002) on domination, ie the efficiency of domination lies in legitimation by the dominated.

Analyzing the legitimate physical violence, Arendt (1999) warns of guilt and individual responsibility in the modern bureaucratic state, coining the phrase ‘the banality of evil’ from the Adolf Eichmann’s Trial in Jerusalem in 1961.

It is seen that the concept of morality, appointed by La Taille (2006), can be seen in the work of Weber (2002), who even says that the political values go beyond the ethical values, which, in turn, took larger dimensions, requiring greater specialization according to the area in which they apply. Today we see, for example, ethical precepts very specialized in the legal and medical fields (Teixeira, 1999).

One of the greatest contributions of Weber (2002) was the informative discussion of ethics in the light of human rationality. The author said that it is an inherent human need to justify their actions to at least their own conscience, whether their cause is noble or not, rationalizing their decisions and looking for peace of mind and maintaining their understanding of honor and dignity (Weber, 2002). Thus, ethics for all is difficult to implement, especially in politics because, on all sides, there will be those who defend what belongs to them, with their own understanding of ethics.

Weber (2002, p. 114) distinguishes ethics in two clear strands of social action, “[...] entirely different and irreducibly opposing”: the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility. It can be considered that the ethics of conviction, corresponding to the Kantian categorical imperative, since it emphasizes the relationship between moral norms and values, while the ethics of responsibility corresponds to the hypothetical imperative, emphasizing the relationship between means and ends.

Relating with two types of social action proposed by Weber (1991), the ethics of responsibility is based on rational social action-oriented purposes, while the ethics of conviction has its base solidly planted on rational social action guided by values.

In terms of clarification, social action, as every action can be:

[...] 1) rationally determined related to the purpose: by expectations about the behavior of the outside world objects and other people, using these expectations as ‘conditions’ or ‘means’ to achieve their own purposes, rationally weighted and pursued.

2) rationally determined related to values: by the conscious belief in the value - ethical, aesthetic, religious or whatever your interpretation is - absolute and inherent to certain behavior, regardless of the outcome (Weber, 1991, p. 15, grifos do autor).

Action and behavior have different concepts, because in action there is a sense given by the agent itself. Thus, to Weber (1991, p. 15-16)

Acts rationally related to the purposes the one who guides his/her action by the purposes, means and secondary consequences, both rationally pondering the means with regard to secondary consequences,

as well as the different possible endings to each other.

[...] Acts in a purely rational way referring to amounts the one who, regardless of the foreseeable consequences, acts in the service of his/her conviction on what appears to order him/her a duty, dignity, beauty, religious policies, pity or the importance of a cause of any kind.

Thus, the ethics of conviction presupposes a reality where human duties never conflict and values are ordered hierarchically. In that ethics, the responsibility of the agent begins and ends with obedience to claims or lawsuits, according to the order of things, and its intention to comply is the most important indicator of moral worthiness. It is an ethic guided by the values and feelings of the individual, in its pure and simple belief that simply should or should not act a certain way or make certain choices. Thus, it is understood that the man who is only guided by the ethics of conviction, disclaims responsibility for the consequences because he did the ‘right thing’ (Starr, 1999; Weber, 2002; Costa, 2009).

The ethics of responsibility, on the other hand, is the formulation of an appropriate policy stance in the face of a serious moral challenge in a world characterized by inevitable and insoluble value conflicts. Thus, the ethics of responsibility is guided by the purposes that justify the means, being it the ethics of the man of action: analytical. Here, man must worry about efficiency, making the best choice within what is exposed, assuming the potential losses for the greater good, ie taking responsibility of the consequences of their actions (Starr, 1999; Weber, 2002; Costa, 2009).

Aron (2000, p. 470-472) states that

The ethics of responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik*) is one that the man of action is bound to adopt; it orders to be placed in a position to foresee the consequences of their possible decisions and is seeking to introduce an act that will achieve certain results or determine certain consequences we want to the plot of events. The ethics of responsibility interprets the action in terms of means-ends [...], it is concerned with efficiency, and it is defined by the choice of means adjusted to the end that it is intended. [...] The problem of the choice of values introduces us to the ethics of conviction (*Gesinnungsethik*) that urges to act according to our feelings, without reference, explicit or implied, to the consequences.

Although Weber (2002) has stated that both ethics are opposed and different, he opposes making it clear that they do not cancel each other, and either do not complement each other. They coexist in society and the balance between the two is the life of

man, which sometimes will come across paradoxes between the two ethics and even with his/her convictions, he/she has to take responsibility for his/her actions, because the loss will be tremendous; or take decisions based on convictions, when they are expected to take losses on the way.

It is important to make clear that the two ethics are not necessarily mutually exclusive, that is, the ethic of responsibility is not the complete absence of conviction and the ethic of conviction is not lack of responsibility (Weber, 2002).

Methods

Given its relevance, ethical dilemmas have been addressed frequently not only in literature but also in other media, such as film. Currently, it is understood that cinema can also be an important source of knowledge, for through it, it is possible to relate to the reality of the viewers with the most different theoretical and philosophical sources, disseminating them in a more playful way for people and becoming an effective teaching tool, because of the huge coverage of this media in a globalized world (Fernandes, 2007; Matos, Lima, & Giesbrecht, 2011; Mesquita, Sousa, Martins, & Matos, 2014). In this case, it is believed that the ethical dimensions presented by Weber (2002) may also be disseminated in a facilitated way through an observational study of a film on the subject.

This research has descriptive qualitative character, using indirect structured non-behavioral observational method (Cooper & Schindler, 2003; Mesquita & Matos, 2014). According to the authors, the observational method is ideal for analyzing aesthetic features such as paintings, recordings and, in this case, motion pictures, because data collection method comprises the subjective parameters contained in this media, such as colors, sounds, settings etc. Moreover, indirect observational study, according to Cooper and Schindler (2003), is beneficial to produce a less biased observation over a direct observation. The authors cited stress that many academics still have a bias towards the observational method, considering it limited and ignoring the potential of observations for in-depth studies.

At first, secondary data collection was performed such as annals, scientific journals and books, with special focus on the work 'Science and Politics - Two Vocations' by Weber (2002), which details the two types of ethics addressed in this work: responsibility and conviction. The next moment, it was sought to identify, through an observational study, the principles of Weber with regard to both ethics that can be identified in the movie *Sophie's*

Choice (Pakula, 1982). Therefore, the cinematographic work was watched five times by the authors: the first for knowledge of the work and the subsequent one to further analysis about the film, trying to observe not only references to Weber in the plot, but also in other compositions of the film, as photography, direction, art, lighting, sound, etc., in close observation with analysis described in the following section.

The observational study

Sophie's Choice is based on the eponymous best-selling novel by William Styron, published in 1979, which ranked 47 weeks in the lists of *The New York Times* and won the *National Book Award* in 1980. The film also had great impact in the film society, receiving several awards for the exemplary interpretation of Meryl Streep, as the protagonist Sofia Zawistowski.

The film begins with the arrival of Stingo, 22 year-old from the south to New York, intending to fulfill his dream of becoming a writer. With little money, he manages to rent a room in a pink-colored house that hides dark personal tragedies of its guests Sophie Zawistowski, Polish Catholic survivor of the Auschwitz concentration camp and Nathan Landau, an American Jew.

When he helps Sophie after fainting in a library and takes her to the pink house, Nathan sees on her arm a tattoo of the concentration camp and the scars from cuts on both wrists. Sofia confirms she was in a camp, but says she does not want to talk about it.

Newcomer in the house, Stingo witnesses an argument between Sofia and Nathan, who says, after several verbal abuses, 'Sophie, we are dying'. The scene and the phrase impress Stingo, who is surprised to find the two together after hours, acting as if nothing had happened.

Because he is a writer and his room is just below Nathan and Sophie's bedroom, Stingo questions if the noise of the typewriter bothers them. She says no, that it makes her feel safe because it reminds her father, who was a professor at the University of Krakow and she used to type his speeches in the evenings. She says that her father was a defender of the Jews, who sought to protect them from the Germans and that, therefore, was killed by the Nazis.

The three become inseparable friends. Nathan is a Jewish worship, which dominates different subjects and, as a paranoid schizophrenic, believes he is Pfizer lab biologist involved in a major survey, whose results can take him to win a Nobel Prize. Sophie is a sweet and sad woman, deeply involved with Nathan, who practically saved her life when she arrived in the United States.

The three live in a fragile balance that mood swings and sudden aggressive behavior by Nathan breaks with some frequency. Sophie never mentions her past as Nathan in his crises in blames her for being alive when six million Jews were killed.

After a big argument, Nathan and Sophie no longer live in the pink house and Stingo looks for information in the place where Sophie works. Her supervisor says she missed work and that it may be possible that Sonja, a Polish friend who works at the university, has some news. At the university, the language professor says Sonja returned to Poland, but he knows who Sophie is, professor Bieganski's daughter. Stingo asks if he was his student and the professor says he saw only a lecture by Bieganski, and that it was enough.

Stingo is surprised when the professor shows him a book that says that Sofia's father was a radical anti-Semitic, propagator of the Bank Act, which prohibited Jewish students to sit on the same bench that Polish students sit, and that he was really killed by the Nazis, who one day came to university and killed all students, without asking their political positions.

Disappointed with the situation and the lack of friends, Stingo decides to return to the South, when he hears the voice of Sophie. She bids farewell and he asks why the lie about her father. She says that out of fear, after so many lies she does not even know what is true, but she loved her father until the winter of 1938 when while typing his speech on 'The Jewish problem in Poland' for the first time she identified the word *Vernichtung* - extermination.

Under this impact, she stopped typing the speech and went to the ghetto. She could not understand why those people, men, women and children should be exterminated. She returned to finish the job and made many mistakes in the text, which caused intense anger in her father and her husband.

Disgusted, she went to Warsaw, where she became Jozef's lover who, along with his sister, was part of the Polish resistance. After showing some pictures of Polish children signed by the Germans, Jozef's sister asks Sophie to translate some documents stolen from Gestapo because she is fluent in German. Even being shocked upon learning about The Lebensborn Program – which separated children from their parents, took them to be raised as German, but exterminated them when they were considered racially inappropriate – she refused to translate it, citing fear for the safety of her children.

Two weeks later, Jozef was murdered by the Nazis and then she was arrested with her sons, Jan

and Eva, taken to the death camp of Auschwitz, where her son was referred to Kinderlogg, a children's camp and her daughter was referred to the crematorium II. Because she was fluent in German, she was assigned to work as a secretary for Rudolf Hoess, the camp commander in the period of 1940 to 1943.

In the Auschwitz camp it is possible to identify with shocking clarity “[...] a grouping of domination that has institutional character and that (successfully) sought to monopolize, within the limits of a territory, the legitimate physical violence as instrument of domination” (Weber, 2002, p. 62). Domination and legitimacy are words that go together in Weber's text, but in the death camps, although institutionalized by the Nazi state, domination is not legitimized by its victims. Physical violence is extreme and lethal, although ethically, morally and humanly unjustified.

In a dialogue with Hoess, another official says his father asked him what his medical function in Auschwitz was and he answers that he did the work of God: deciding between who should die and who should live. It can be observed that there is no ethics and no moral because it assumes the power of a deity to justify practical actions.

In another discussion, Sophie is physically hurt by Nathan. Stingo tries to help her when they receive a calling by Nathan threatening to kill them and, before hanging up the phone, they hear the sound of a shot and new threat. The two flee and, upon arrival at a hotel, Stingo asks Sophie to move in with him on the farm of his parents. He says he always loved her, that he wants to marry her and that wants her to be the mother of his children. Sophie says that the Stingo's children do not deserve to have her as mother and decides to tell the truth never told.

At dawn, Stingo finds a Sophie farewell note stating that she will seek Nathan. The film's final shows the embraced bodies of Nathan and Sophie in their pink-colored walls room, dead after ingesting cyanide. The quote of the beginning of the film, 'Sophie, we are dying', was prophetic.

In the screening queue of Auschwitz camp, a Nazi officer is attracted by the beauty of Sophie, who takes the opportunity to say that she is not Jewish, she is Polish and Catholic, and she is there by mistake. With absolute contempt, the official says that for her not being Jewish, he will give her the privilege of choice and allow her to stay with one of the children. She despairs and says he cannot choose. After a brief discussion, he says that if she does not choose, he will send both to the crematorium. She insists she cannot pick and he

ordered a guard to take the two children. Sophie then, in utter despair, says that they take her little girl, who by then was in her arms.

Sophia's choice is a dilemma between the ethics of conviction and the ethic of responsibility.

The ethics of conviction is aligned with the rational social action oriented values, acts in the service of her conviction about what appears to order her a duty, dignity, beauty, religious policies, pity or the importance of a cause of any kind (Weber, 1991). For this ethic, no mother delivers a child to certain death. There are no figures to justify or legitimize such action. If her decision was guided by the ethics of conviction, Sophie would not have made a choice, because by this, the individual acts according to his/her feelings, without reference, express or implied, to the consequences (Aron, 2000).

The ethic of responsibility is based on the rational social action-oriented purposes, that is, behavior is guided by the purposes, means and secondary consequences (Weber, 1991). Guided by the ethics of responsibility, Sophie could not fail to choose, because she would have the opportunity to let one of the children live. The ethical responsibility is guided by the purposes that justify the means (Starr, 1999; Weber, 2002), ie leave a child alive (ends) justifies to choose another one to die (means).

The justification of the means for the end, characteristic of ethics of responsibility, is in opposition to ethics of conviction because this condemns any actions that do appeal to morally dangerous means (Weber, 2002). For Vásquez (1995), one can only speak about moral behavior when the person who does the action is responsible for his/her actions, that is, s/he did that because s/he wanted to do, s/he can choose. Forced to choose, Sofia cannot be held responsible because she did not want to do it. The choice of the choice was not of her order, but an obligation.

Before the axiological relativism, which shows that it is impossible to establish a hierarchy of values or consider some as immoral (La Taille, 2010), in Western civilization which culture would consider a mother choose a child to be killed moral?

Conclusion

Forcing a mother to choose one child for death is a torture without qualification, practiced as fun and as if a kind of divine power had been delegated to the Nazis. It was in this historical context that Sophie was forced to transform her perspectives. Before that, she would never choose one of her children over another, but given the situation of

cruelty and brutality imposed by the Nazis, she was forced to that.

Guilt and grief for her decision followed her after the end of the war, crossed the Atlantic Ocean and destroyed any possibility of happiness for Sophie. The stormy relationship with Nathan was the chosen path to her own destruction. Victims of Auschwitz took their suffering with them to the way they have chosen to tread.

Although Sophie has chosen the life of one of her children, she did not 'choose to choose'. That is, Sophie cannot be accused either ethically or morally because of her choice, simply because she had no choice. That's the dilemma. Thus, many other hodiernal historical contexts are diverse, ones that even in different political, cultural, economic and social conditions, people find themselves forced to make choices that are not intended. This widens the scope of the film and brings the contemporary debate that remains current.

The contributions of this study go beyond the fictional and cinematic limits of Sophie's choice, as well as it depicts ethical dilemmas that may be suffered by people in the real world and (unwanted) choices reflecting further consequences beyond the end of justifications and axiological assumptions. The ethics of responsibility and conviction, as Weber (2002) says, should guide human decisions in unity, balancing their choices and those that the institutions impose by mechanisms of domination.

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