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The Ambassador's Letter: On the Less Than Nothing of Diplomacy

Sammanfattning:

Avhandlingen ämnar svara på frågan *Vad är diplomati?* genom att utsätta såväl diplomatins namn som dess historia och dess representationer i vetenskap och konst för Slavoj Žižeks ideologikritik. Med utgångspunkt i Hans Holbeins målning *Ambassadörerna* tecknas inledningsvis diplomatins tre återkommande problem: namnet, döden och representationen. Utifrån dessa tre områden tar sig sedan avhandlingen an både vetenskapliga, filosofiska och litterära verk från tre perioder i diplomatins moderna historia i syfte att nå fram till den negativa kärna som definierar diplomatins ideologi.

Summary:

The principal aim of this dissertation is to answer the question *What is diplomacy?* by employing Slavoj Žižek's critique of ideology on the concept, the history, the science, and the artistic depiction of diplomacy. The work begins by extracting three recurring problems of diplomacy – the name, death, and representation – out of Hans Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors*. On this follows a presentation of central concepts and theoretical perspectives derived from the work of Slavoj Žižek, focusing on his understanding of politics, ideology, and the core of the conceptual apparatus of Lacanian psychoanalysis. The dissertation is then divided into three parts treating diplomacy as *archi-politics*, *ultra-politics*, and *post-politics*, highlighting three eras of the modern history of diplomacy. The first part takes on the question of the creation of the name diplomacy during the French Revolution, and by reading Immanuel Kant's pamphlet *Perpetual Peace* and Henry James' novel *The Ambassadors* an understanding of the origins of diplomacy is presented. The second part begins with the effects on diplomacy arising from the horrors of the two world wars, something which is investigated through a reading of André Brink's novel *The Ambassador* and International Relations theory from the middle of the last century. Finally, the third part covers another major shift in Western diplomacy during the last century, the fall of the Soviet Union, captured by, on the one hand, the field of *Diplomacy Studies* and, on the other, by Danish-journalist Mads Brügger's film *The Ambassador*. The thesis argues that diplomacy constitutes an *Ideological State Apparatus*, meaning it offers a symbolic link destined to, through ideology, repress the fundamental inconsistencies of the modern nation-state in order to allow it to continue functioning. Diplomacy is, thus, the name that points to the impossibility of the state to become One with itself, and the thesis aims to show how that which must be excluded from this state always returns to haunt it.