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EDITORIAL

HABITABILITY IN THE NEW CLIMATIC REGIME*

Marco Bontempi

Università degli Studi di Firenze

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The articles in this issue reflect the need to renew politics around the question of the habitability of the planet. Within a perspective in which the generality and particularity of interests are redefined in a way that is radically different from the past. Indeed, the need to consider the implications of every decision, for example on the temperature of the atmosphere, changes the idea and practice of what is “general interest” and “special interest”. The general interest can no longer be that of Rousseau, which is an interest that becomes general by disregarding particular constraints and entering into a perspective that is general insofar as it is free and abstract from any particularity. At most, nature could enter modern politics as “concern for the environment” and its specific problems - protection, emergencies - but it made no sense to address the conditions of existence of life forms - the highest degree of generality - as a political matter.

Although they are of such a magnitude as to go beyond the scope of politics, the conditions of existence of life forms were considered to be external to society and to the

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life forms themselves, indifferent to the decisions and conflicts of people in society. But today we see that this is not the case and that, as Michel Serres was one of the first to point out, nature reacts and responds to anthropic action. This fact has, like a domino effect, numerous and fundamental consequences on the composition of the modern political cosmology, which ordered dichotomously different realities and ontologies such as nature/society and human/non-human.

Having entered, *malgré nous*, the era of the inadequacy of the modern political cosmos, we could find in the rethinking of the concept of habitability a useful tool for guiding thought and action. Planetary habitability, as conceived by the moderns, had as its specific characteristic the becoming favourable to life of an environment other than life itself, as an external framework for life, as a preliminary and necessary balance of elements for the appearance and development of life. A balance that had to be maintained and, today, restored in order for life to continue. Habitability in the New Climatic Regime has profoundly different characteristics, beginning with the recent understanding that it is the activity of life forms themselves that creates their own environment. If living beings themselves make the world habitable, then the problem of the conditions of existence of life forms becomes the central political issue, regardless of the distinction between humans and non-humans, because the survival of the former cannot be at the expense of the latter.

Meaningful dialogues

Over the last decade, Bruno Latour has worked intensively to outline conceptual lines and perspectives that can be useful in coping with the changes in political thought and action necessitated by the decline of modern cosmology. There are many authors with whom he has engaged in dialogue and from whom he has selectively collected ideas and stimuli for his own theoretical work. Among these, the works of Michel Serres, Isabelle Stengers, Donna Haraway and Peter Sloterdijk play an important role in the dialogue with Latourian ideas.

Translation is a key concept in Serres's thought. It is primarily an operational concept that Latour takes up and reinvents in Actor-Network Theory. But there are also several specific problems and themes that come from Serres and with which Latour has been confronted, especially in the last decade, which has been characterised by the persistent presence of ecological themes. First of all, the search for the conditions of possibility of a new contract, natural and therefore more than social, ecological,

we would say. This theme, so central for Serres and omnipresent in Latour has been developed in a perceptive context which guides their thinking: living in the awareness of an impending shipwreck and at the same time trying to rethink a contract, between us and the world, capable of mixing constraints and freedom in a new sense.

A passion for the materialist, non-dialectical, philosophical tradition unites Stengers and Latour. Whitehead, W. James, Bergson, Serres, Deleuze, to name but a few, are authors with whom both have engaged. Stengers and Latour have been in dialogue for decades, and in a game of references and differences, explored in this volume by Federica Giardini, they compose a canvas in which one is essential to the other. The passion for science, as an object of empirical and conceptual exploration, and cosmopolitics, as a new political ecology, seem to us to be two crucial vectors around which their intellectual complicity has condensed.

If Latour taught us that hybrid worlds have proliferated in modernity, Haraway reads in the implosion of modern binaries (human/machine, nature/culture, semiotic/material) a decisive feature of our contemporary era. Her research on technoscience, and thus along the lines of mutual involvement and co-articulation of science, technology and society, has been an essential reference for Science and Technology Studies, for philosophical research on new materialisms, for Environmental Humanities, and more generally for political thought and the social sciences. Latour was convinced that Actor Network Theory was a key for exploring ecologically critical zones, and at the same time we could add that Haraway's figuration of the cyborg is an integral part of the Chthulucene narrative. Both, albeit through partially divergent research paths, invite us to regenerate ecological politics from the question of the habitability of the planet, resisting any return to Nature.

Latour has drawn on Sloterdijk's work primarily in relation to his critique of the globe and his rethinking of the concept of space. Sphere and network, whose incompatibility Sloterdijk emphasises, are taken up by Latour as two different ways of pursuing the same goal: the overcoming of modern dichotomies of nature/culture, human/non-human. While Sloterdijk criticises Latour for absorbing into the socio-technical every mode of human relations with non-humans, emphasising, with Heidegger, that practices bring into presence something that always exceeds them and remains inappropriate, Latour emphasises the condition of being located as a more significant feature of being thrown into the world to capture the metamorphic nature of the living and their activity of generating their environment.

Open issues

The exit from ordered and indifferent Nature is an entry into a multiple and heterarchic reality characterised by conflicts, both potential and actual. Conflict is central to the New Climatic Regime and will become even more so as the political dimension of habitability becomes more relevant. What will be the cleavages around which the political space will be defined? Who and what will divide it? These questions will occupy the work of political theory and practice, starting from a rethinking of the concepts of space, matter and materialism in forms different from their modern ontologies.

In a horizon of conflict, there is a need for a work that offers meanings and categories that can define what is happening and take a stand. The immense work of this kind carried out by socialisms and liberalisms in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is now behind us. Socialisms and liberalisms, in their diversity, had a common basis in the recognition of the centrality of production (then called “modernisation”). Both ignored the fact that production does not take place in an abstract space but is embedded in the conditions of existence of the planet and is limited in its expansion by the limits of the planet. The pursuit of infinite growth is now criticised as irrational behaviour. The same irrationality that Norbert Elias showed was attributed to the aristocracy by the emerging bourgeoisie, because the aristocracy was locked into a narrow and circumscribed horizon of its own reproduction, while the bourgeoisie, with the discovery of the productive forces, claimed for itself a rational superiority in the ability to change and transcend limits.

In his latest book, co-authored with Schultz, Latour evokes a new ecological class as an actor capable of turning its gaze from production alone to its conditions of existence, showing the retreat of the bourgeoisie and outlining the ideas, concepts, and affections of a mobilisation oriented both to theoretical work on the political transformation of more than human worlds, and to the concrete action of institutional change. The question of institutions, which is central in contemporary theoretical-political debate, could be crossed from the need of a politics of ecological reparation. Latour’s figuration of the Terrestrial offers us many ideas for thinking about the conditions of possibility of a third political space, irreducible to both regressive nationalism and univocal globalism.

The New Climatic Regime presents us with a double challenge: on the one hand, to think about new or revised forms of organising material life (work and econo-

mies) that are aware of and respectful of the limits of the planet; on the other hand, to reflect on the institutional and political contexts that make them possible. Which new economic and political institutions are needed for a Terrestrial politics? This is a key question for the fate of democracy in the era of the New Climatic Regime.

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AFTER NATURE. THE IDEA OF HABITABILITY IN THE CONCEPTS OF GAIA, CRITICAL ZONE AND TERRESTRIAL IN BRUNO LATOUR'S POLITICAL ECOLOGY*

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DESPUÉS DE LA NATURALEZA. LA IDEA DE HABITABILIDAD EN LOS CONCEPTOS DE GAIA, ZONA CRÍTICA Y TERRESTRE EN LA ECOLOGÍA POLÍTICA DE BRUNO LATOUR

Abstract

In this paper I aim to show the relevance for social and political theory of some of the conceptual performances of Gaia and Critical Zone and the connections of these

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performances with the concept of the Terrestrial. These three concepts play a key role in the 'political turn' that has characterised Bruno Latour's most recent theoretical work. The analysis is developed through the variations of the concept of habitability in Gaia, Critical Zone and Terrestrial, employed as a tool to grasp the semantic shifts from the scientific-naturalistic field to the political field generated by the changes that have taken place over the last twenty years in the way the different sciences of Life understand the logic of the habitability of planet Earth. Special attention in the analysis is given to the implications, for social and political theory, that the changes detected with Gaia and Zona Crítica produce on the ideas of freedom and necessity once they have emerged from the modern nature/humanity dichotomy and on the logic of the conflicts that open up in the horizon of the Earth.

Keywords

Latour, Gaia, Critical Zone, Terrestrial, Habitability, Political Ecology, Ecological Class, Actor-Network Theory, New Climate Regime.

Resumen

En este artículo pretendo mostrar la relevancia para la teoría social y política de algunas de las interpretaciones conceptuales de Gaia y la Zona Crítica y las conexiones de estas interpretaciones con el concepto de lo Terrestre. Estos tres conceptos desempeñan un papel clave en el "giro político" que ha caracterizado la obra teórica más reciente de Bruno Latour. El análisis se desarrolla a través de las variaciones del concepto de habitabilidad en Gaia, Zona Crítica y Terrestre, empleadas como herramienta para captar los desplazamientos semánticos del campo científico-naturalista al campo político generados por los cambios que se han producido en los últimos veinte años en la forma en que las distintas ciencias de la Vida entienden la lógica de la habitabilidad del planeta Tierra. En el análisis se presta especial atención a las implicaciones, para la teoría social y política, que los cambios detectados con Gaia y Zona Crítica producen sobre las ideas de libertad y necesidad una vez que han salido de la dicotomía moderna naturaleza/humanidad y sobre la lógica de los conflictos que se abren en el horizonte de la Tierra.

Palabras clave

Latour, Gaia, Zona Crítica, Terrestre, Habitabilidad, Ecología Política, Clase Ecológica, Teoría del Actor-Red, Nuevo Régimen Climático.

In Latour's reflections over the last decade, three fundamental concepts - Gaia, Critical Zone and Terrestrial - have gradually, but not systematically, emerged and played a key role in the 'political turn' that has characterised his recent theoretical work. Each of them contains and mobilises a plurality of semantic fields and conceptual dimensions that allow and stimulate, sometimes clearly, sometimes more obscurely, unprecedented conceptualisations and crossings of boundaries between different scientific paradigms of the study of nature and between science and politics. To this polysemy is sometimes added a semantic uncertainty, which, while inevitable in order to sharpen one's gaze on the unprecedented, is reinforced by Latour's unsystematic use of these concepts, which can confuse the reader.

My intention in this paper is to show the relevance for social and political theory of some of the conceptual performances of Gaia and Critical Zone, highlighting the connections of these performances with the concept of Terrestrial, the most political-social of the three, introduced by Latour in *Facing Gaia* (2017a) and developed in subsequent works. In this analysis, the idea of habitability can serve as a thread, with the multiple implications that its meaning of "the set of conditions that make life possible in a given place or environment" sets in motion. "Habitability" problematises the scientific and political meanings of space and, above all, the normative conditions of its regulation in relation to the possibilities of life in that space, and can help us to grasp the semantic shifts from the scientific-naturalistic field to the political field generated by the fundamental changes that have taken place in the last twenty years in the way the logics of the habitability of planet Earth are understood by the various life sciences. These changes resonate strongly with the need for new concepts capable of illuminating and understanding the logic of those biogeochemical processes that challenge the modern paradigm of nature, of its habitability for all forms of life, and, no less importantly, blow up the normativity of the modern idea of nature - still in force in the distinction between organism/individual and environment - opening up to ideas of space and habitability that have strong political implications.

The concept of Gaia, formulated by Lovelock and Margulis in the 1960s and 1970s, long misunderstood and marginalised, revived and strengthened by a new interpretation by Latour and Lenton (2019), provides an epistemically relevant key to understanding the above processes. The concept of the critical zone addresses empirical-experimental and social science practices aimed at elaborating new concepts and new understandings of local configurations of the logic of habitability. Together, these two concepts indicate a profound shift in the notion of nature and non-human realities, which can no longer be thought in terms of the modern concept of nature, as is still often the case in socio-political interpretations of Latour's work. In fact, it is not a question of 'opening

up' or 'relating' to those non-humans who are modernly thought of as Galilean objects of a nature ontologically different from the social. The scientific discoveries of the last twenty years converge in revealing Gaian (or Lovelockian, as Latour sometimes calls them) objects and logics that pose unprecedented problems of conceptualisation and demands for new scientific practices in the life sciences debate, with significant political and social implications even for Critical Zone scientists.

The concept of the Terrestrial captures these transformations and invites a political thematisation of their habitability, starting with a rethinking of the conditions of human and non-human presence and the political implications of their regulation.

Gaia

In his research on the identification and measurement of polluting industrial gases in the mid-1960s, Lovelock took an innovative epistemic step by adopting a perspective from which, looking at the Earth from the outside - i.e. assuming a criterion of general and non-local validity of the still unknown processes he was trying to study - he asked himself how to identify and measure the transformative effects of the environment that any form of life on Earth could produce. Thus, both anthropogenic emissions and those produced by other life forms were placed on the same level. By asking how and to what extent life forms can modify the environment beyond the local level, it already initiates a move away from traditional conceptions of the order and regulation of nature, expressing a concern that anticipates the idea of the Anthropocene by a few decades. Even more significantly, by equating biotic activity with human industry, Lovelock conceives of biotic processes as free from dependence on a general or superior order, which ultimately directs its functioning according to an idea of nature as a plural reality, but integrated into its processes and consistent with the principles and/or primary factors of its own transformation - for example, natural selection of species, conceived as a universal process of adaptation to the environment, but with the capacity to modify it only locally.

With the development of this research and the elaboration of the concept of Gaia, Lovelock and Margulis (Lovelock & Margulis, 1974a; Margulis & Lovelock, 1974b), place themselves clearly in discontinuity with the conceptions of order and regulation that had long conceived of nature as a coherent whole, as a totality, whether initially in metaphysical and theological paradigms or, from the 17th century onwards, in mechanistic, organicist, cybernetic or other paradigms (Latour, 2017a). Despite their great diversity, the question of the relationship of the parts to the whole and the normative criteria of regulation that are assumed to be valid, i.e. philosophical, theological,

biological finalisms, laws of nature, determinisms and systemic processes, remain central in the idea of nature that they contain.

It is important to bear in mind that Lovelock does not start from a definition of what life is, or what Gaia is, but from the question of what life does, i.e. from what activities it is possible to derive information about life, in particular from what living beings do to the environment in which they live. For example, how they have transformed the atmosphere, creating the imbalance between methane and CO₂ that makes it breathable, and above all, how they continue to maintain its composition in an imbalance that allows living things to continue. In his writings, Lovelock fluctuates considerably in his use of metaphorical meanings, making his argument unclear, but when he states that what has been thought of as the 'external framework' of life, i.e. the interconnected whole of the atmosphere, the oceans and the Earth's surface, is alive, he has no symbolic or metaphorical intentions; on the contrary, he means that this whole is not external to life, but a part of life.

Dutreuil (2020) pointed out an important difference between the current use of the term 'life' and Lovelock's use of it. The former refers to a class of which organisms are cases because they share necessary and sufficient properties, e.g. metabolic or evolutionary. Lovelock, on the other hand, uses it as a proper name to denote a singular entity: all the living organisms that have succeeded each other since the origin of life, not in terms of shared properties, but in terms of their own conditions of existence, and in particular asks how living organisms, through their own activity, influence and change their own conditions of existence. Lovelock's hypothesis is that Life - capitalised to denote the individual entity made up of the material ensemble of living beings that have succeeded one another since it appeared on Earth –

at an early stage of its evolution acquired the capacity to control the global environment to suit its need, and this capacity has persisted and is still in use. (...) in this view the sum total of species is more than just a catalogue "The Biosphere," and, like other associations in biology, is an entity with properties greater than the simple sum of its parts (Lovelock, 1972, 579).

It is because of these sui generis properties - properties that are greater than the sum of the parts - that Lovelock sees Gaia as a singularity. In what non-metaphorical way can the set of all living things that have ever existed on Earth be thought of as an individual?

A first possibility is that practised by evolutionary biologists, who believe that biological species should not be thought of as classes (or natural types), but as individuals, and that individual organisms should be thought of as parts of the unified entity

'species', situated in space and time. The bond of union of the parts into an individual totality is identified in the genealogical continuity determined by descent. By virtue of this vertical link, species selection plays the role of both the logic of individual-species change and the general criterion for regulating natural change valid for all species.

However, Lovelock is not interested in this question of the relationship between the parts and the totality, but in the relationship between the activities of the life forms and what this activity does to influence and transform the living conditions of the life forms themselves. There is, in Lovelock's view, no supra-individual order or totality that would justify the *sui generis* character of this collective reality, not even in a metaphorical sense, there is a capacity for action, acted out collectively but not holistically, by the life entity, which is expressed in the transformation of the environment in favour of the conditions of existence of the life forms themselves.

It is a change of perspective from the current idea that the physiology of an organism is confined to the body of the individual and is separate from the environment in which it is found. When we look at the physiology of termites, for example, we see how in a termite mound the temperature and concentration of gases such as CO₂ are controlled by the termites themselves, which can change the aeration and orientation of the termite mound, delineating an organic reality - defined by Scott Turner as the 'Extended Organism' - in which what we usually recognise as the 'inanimate world' is not merely a *habitable container* for living things, but a constitutive part of the organisms' own life processes. If we focus our attention on the conditions of existence of an individual, e.g. how a termite manages its vital needs for oxygen, CO₂ and temperature, it is necessary to follow the flows of matter and energy that are absorbed and produced between the termite mound and the individual, crossing - both in the sense of production and in the sense of use - the covering formed by the termite's exoskeleton many times: The boundaries between the individual and its environment are thus blurred to the point where the entire termite mound is considered the material boundary of the termite-individual (Turner, 2000; Lenton, Dutreuil & Latour, 2020). It is precisely this connotation of vital extension that characterises the idea of Gaia as life interconnected with its environment, delineating a *sui generis* reality generated by heterogeneous agencies, neither integrated by general criteria nor reducible to primary factors (Dutreuil, 2020).

In Gaia, the organism loses the centrality that its identification with life has given it since the establishment of biology as a scientific discipline at the end of the 18th century, when the organism emerged as a category that held together the idea of a property common to all living things and the concepts of order and purpose associated with their development. Considering the 'environment' as an extension of living beings also implies the inclusion of geological realities in the study of biotic processes, and thus a focus

on processes on deep time scales - from thousands to millions or billions of years - and on measures of space calibrated to the scale of the entire planet and the size of the Inner Earth. The inclusion of geological time and space in habitability processes overshadows the time and space scales at which organisms and their activities are perceptible and meaningful.

It is the metabolic processes by which life forms modify and maintain their environment that emerge as the metamorphic extension of the living into the non-living. Of great importance in these processes is the fact that elements produced as waste from the metabolism of some life forms are recycled for the metabolism of other life forms, e.g. oxygen produced as waste from photosynthesis enters the metabolism of living species through aerobic respiration. This results in

the organism ending up fully entangled in the consequences of the metabolism of its predecessors, thus creating a cascade of modifications. If we follow the cascade far and long enough, the idea that an organism resides in an untouched environment becomes ridiculous: what surrounds an organism are all the chemical transformations generated by all the other organisms living before and alongside it. Habitability is a joint venture (Lenton & Dutreuil, 2020a).

Although these processes of metamorphosis are numerous and complex, for the purposes of our analysis they can be metatheoretically grouped into three types of agency of life forms, each of which emerges in an apparent paradox (Lenton & Latour, 2018; Lenton & Dutreuil & Latour, 2020; Lenton & Dutreuil, 2020b).

The first type of agency appears in the paradox of a 'permanent disequilibrium': as mentioned above, the habitability of the atmosphere for life forms is not the result of a stable chemical equilibrium, but, given its composition of gases that react with each other by changing chemically, it is only possible under conditions of disequilibrium, which, however, is maintained over time. In fact, the proportion of oxygen must remain in the 17-25% range, but the presence of methane in the atmosphere reduces it by reaction. In addition, habitability also depends on maintaining the level of CO₂, a greenhouse gas which, unlike other atmospheric gases that are rapidly eliminated by the atmosphere, has a residence time of between 300 and 1000 years and therefore tends to accumulate: it is known that at the beginning of the industrial age it represented only 0.0280% of atmospheric gases, whereas today it represents 0.0415%. In the absence of biotic activity, oxygen would gradually be reduced to a ridiculous level over billions of years, and CO₂ would already have created a greenhouse effect that would make the Earth uninhabitable. The habitable atmosphere is therefore not an 'environment' prior to life, but the

unstable product generated and continuously maintained by biotic activity. With a ratio of 10,000 to 1 between biotic and abiotic activities, living things produce, discard and recycle oxygen in various metabolic cycles in which life forms are interwoven.

The second type of agency emerges from the paradox between the availability of energy and the proliferation of life forms. On the one hand, the abundance of solar energy on Earth is such that all the life forms that have succeeded one another over 4.5 billion years have captured only 1% of it and chemically transformed only 0.3; on the other hand, the availability of the elements necessary for the survival of living beings on Earth is very limited and does not allow their proliferation and expansion in space and time. So how can life forms proliferate? The disproportion between the number of ingredients available at the beginning and the immensely greater number of organisms today has been made possible by the autotrophy of metabolic cycles which, by recycling the waste products of other metabolisms, multiply organisms which, in turn, by entering into these cycles, increase the conditions of biotic existence. The cycles of use - production - consumption of the six elements fundamental to life - carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, phosphorus and sulphur - are for some, as in the case of phosphorus and nitrogen, entirely biological; for others, as in the case of carbon, the biological fluxes are some 400 times greater than the abiotic chemical-physical fluxes to and from the solid Earth (Latour, 2019). The agency of life forms is therefore the condition of their proliferation. It should be stressed that this agency is the result of processes that are not coordinated in a finalist sense, but are intertwined because they are interconnected and interdependent in a reticular form that multiplies the effects, allows the association of agents who, in turn, by expanding the network, distribute the activity by extending it, both in space and in time, without at any point closing it to the possibility of interference, modification and alteration.

The third type of agency emerges from the paradox that, despite its small size and very low energy consumption, the agency of vital activity, its influence and its effects are to endure over time, not passively but through its own activity. Latour calls this form of agency *historicity*.

The idea that the presence of liquid water is a necessary condition for the habitability of a planet is now common knowledge, made famous by NASA's space missions. On Earth, however, the presence and persistence of liquid water is not independent of biotic activity itself. Without the activity of living forms in retaining carbon in the rocks, the CO₂ in the atmosphere would have gradually increased, causing the greenhouse effect and raising the temperature above 50°C, which in turn would have increased evaporation, which would have increased the temperature, which would have increased evaporation dispersing ever greater shares of hydrogen into space until there is no longer any

water on Earth. In other words, the existence of liquid water is not a mere fact, but an action in itself, acting through the chain of agents triggered by the metabolic work of living things on carbon. The persistence of liquid water over time is not a matter of mere availability, but an action that is continuously composed of the network of a plurality of actants activated by the metabolic fluxes of organisms. In short, water is not there, but it is kept there by chains that can be understood by following the action and its metamorphic links through biotic and abiotic actants.

Gaia is more than just Life, as it includes the effects of Life on its habitability conditions throughout the entire history of the Earth. What is crucial is that Life's action contributes to shaping habitability constraints from within feedback loops, therefore, it not only influences environmental variables, as it does the action of abiotic processes, but, unlike abiotic processes, it is sensitive to its own action, in the sense that the chains of which it is composed redistribute and amplify the feedback it receives from its own action. Without there being a Totality or a coherent order, it is this heterarchical dynamic that allows Gaia to *respond* to the feedback generated by its own action, decisively influencing the shaping of the conditions of its existence¹. It is very well known that

there would not be enough rain to maintain the Amazon rainforest without the actions of the forest itself: through evapotranspiration, bringing soil water up into the atmosphere, the Amazon rainforest contributes to maintaining the precipitation it needs to thrive. In the long run, therefore, plants have not *adapted* to a given climate: they have contributed to *maintaining* a climate in which they can persist (Lenton & Dutreuil, 2020, 173).

The multiple implications of these types of agency show that life forms are always situated within broader frameworks, and that these frameworks are partly generated and modified by biotic activity itself. The central point of the novelty introduced by Lovelock and Margulis “consists in granting historicity and agency to all life forms, that is, in attributing to the life forms themselves the task of creating the conditions for lasting in time and expanding in space. It is in that sense that they can be said to obey their own laws” (Latour & Lenton, 2019, 664). The great heterogeneity and heterarchic logic of Gaia's biotic processes prevent any reductionist attempt. The heterarchy of Gaia's metabolic processes also implies abandoning reduction to a spatial or temporal scale

¹ For example, ‘Life strongly amplifies the silicate weathering feedback on Earth today and by having organisms such as plants with narrower habitability bounds than 0°C-70°C entwined in the feedback loop, gives rise to narrower stabilising ranges. Furthermore, the biogenic weathering effect with plants may now be so strong that it could be maintaining Earth in a habitable state for plants when, without them, it would by now have become (or could soon become) uninhabitably hot for them’ (Lenton, Dutreuil & Latour, 2020, 261).

and keeping the analysis open to different scales and to a conception of a self-producing order that, by generating the conditions for its own continuation through its own forms of action, has no elements of necessity, remains open and unstable, differs in temporal and spatial scales, and does not subordinate the actors to a general principle. This lack of an integrated order makes it difficult to conceptualise, as scientists working on these processes have found, because there is a strong tendency to coordinate heterogeneous elements within a framework governed by cognitively coherent principles.

To achieve greater clarity, Latour calls for a move in the opposite direction: resistance to the addition of any further framework. At the same time, Gaia's heterogeneity is not chaos, but rather heterarchy, a plurality of orders that differ in scale and type of processes and cycles generated or mediated by life forms that are difficult to define positively and inappropriate to represent conceptually in a unified way as a totality (nature, superorganism, etc.). Gaia presents itself as a 'reticular, lacunar, dappled, distributed sort of entity', that makes its openness and precariousness a powerful resource in the absence of 'strong bonds'. This is particularly evident in life's use of free energy and the storage and processing of information: "If you look at energy transfer, life is barely visible; but if you look at the amount of new information and the fluxes of key biological elements, Gaia is everywhere and has modified the whole system - except it is not a 'whole system' " (Latour & Lenton 2019, 670).

This reticular entity cannot be an organism. In the first place, an organism is always in an environment with which it exchanges flows of matter and energy for its own survival; moreover, animal organisms are heterotrophic, i.e. they feed on organic matter; on the other hand, Gaia is autotrophic, because it produces itself with inorganic materials, or more precisely, photoautotrophic, since this self-production is powered by solar energy. Above all, Gaia carries out the vast majority of its exchanges internally, recycling many materials, while it carries out very limited exchanges of matter between the inner Earth (below the surface) and space. For these reasons, unlike organisms, Gaia has no exterior, no environment, understood as everything with which an entity enters into some kind of mutual relationship with others and as a source of resources for its own survival. In short, Gaia is her own environment (Lenton & Latour, 2018).

Secondly, as I have tried to show, the heterogeneity of the materials used in the biotic cycles and of the processes responsible for the cycles makes it impossible to speak of a coherent interior of Gaia, the heterogeneity of the biogeochemical cycles discovered over the years precludes understanding them in terms of a homogeneous biosphere. Indeed, the heterogeneity of transformation cycles makes the biotic/abiotic distinction, so important in Earth System science, much less meaningful than it was in the past. In rocks, for example, some solid mineral forms are produced directly by life (bio-miner-

alisation), some are indirectly due to life because they depend on oxygenation of the atmosphere, and some are entirely abiotic. Similarly, some gases are exclusively biogenic (isoprene, dimethylsulphide), many others are massively altered by life, and some do not interact with life (noble gases) (Lenton, Dutreuil & Latour, 2020). In short, the biotic/abiotic distinction cannot sustain a general criterion of regulation in Gaia. It makes sense, but in a necessarily nuanced, non-dichotomous way. This makes it impossible to speak of Gaia as a single entity, because it is composed of different material cycles, which differ in terms of the mediation carried out by living forms to maintain their biological function, and also in terms of the presence or absence of living forms as mediators. In fact, the intensity of the cycle will vary in relation to the needs of the life forms for their own survival: a high need will be met by a higher intensity of elemental recycling between life forms.

Thirdly, Gaia's heterarchy is not so much about the many elements mobilised in its cycles, but rather about the diversity of processes responsible for these cycles. The discoveries of the biogeochemical sciences in the last half century have made this point much clearer than the knowledge that may have existed when Lovelock and Margulis addressed this question. However, the fundamental point that justifies the absence of an intrinsic order of general scope and challenges the idea of totality is not so much the quantity of elements and processes that characterise Gaia, but the acquisition that "life forms produce their own extension in space and time" (Latour & Lenton, 2019, 671), i.e. their agency is not "located" in an a priori space and time external to it, but produces its own space and time in the way it extends and lasts (Latour, 2018). In the billions of years since its inception, Gaia has expanded both in the atmosphere and in the Earth's crust, generating and increasing its own conditions of proliferation.

The spatial extent of Gaia is influenced by different time scales, which define extremely heterogeneous types of agency and effects. For example, a short-term analysis of the feedback to intensive fossil fuel use unfolds in space between the atmosphere, the oceans and the Earth's surface, where life forms are located, down to the ground and underground. If we ask about long time scale feedbacks from the same analysis - for example, the influence of current climate warming in bringing forward the next glaciation (estimated at 100,000 years), or the presence and persistence of anthropogenic metals in sediments, rocks, the seabed, the inner Earth - then we have to change time and space scales, including exchanges with the crust and sedimentary rocks, and much longer time scales.

The residence time of elements in metabolic processes, the associations or couplings between elements and the strength with which they are more or less stabilised are important elements of Gaia's heterarchy. Different types of couplings, forces and

properties develop at different and intertwined spatial and temporal scales. Moving from one scale to another involves moving to different forms of self-generated order with varying degrees of stability/instability, persistence and expansion. At the local scale, for example, the cycling and recycling of nutrients within a forest is the result of a coupling that is reinforced by forms of natural selection that allow it to persist and even expand as the forest expands. At the individual scale, natural selection has perfected forms of homeostasis, such as human body temperature, that are highly effective but undetectable at other scales, such as the homeostasis of the atmosphere mentioned above. On a global scale, the coupling between living forms and climate is unstable, leading to greater uncertainty about their persistence, and thus difficulty in evolving, through natural selection, traits that favour persistence. Latour and Lenton show that on a biotic planet the possibilities for coupling and the development of evolutionary processes of different kinds are far greater than on a planet without life, testifying to the fact that life itself is a fundamental generator and multiplier of its own possibilities for survival.

Taken together, all these aspects break with the idea that nature is a homogeneous or integrated reality and show us that

Gaia is a heterogeneous phenomenon created by the actions and interactions of many diverse biological free agents and aspects of their abiotic world, the result of which is a risky and provisional extension in space and duration in time (...) [Gaia] continually creates its own domain and behaviour through information and evolution, that is, through some sort of learning. What is observable is only the relative success of life forms in extending in space and lasting slightly longer in time-no more and no less. There is no guarantee of its continuity-no destiny superior to that of the life forms themselves. (Latour & Lenton 2019, 672)

Critical Zone

If in Gaia there is not a predetermined or finalistically self-determined order of Galilean objects, but a reality of many different biological free agents, then the heterarchy of its processes is not reducible to matters of fact and can be selectively composed through matters of concern (Latour, 2004) that mobilise communities from the research questions of scientists. In 1998, at a conference of the Geological Society of America, Gail Ashley introduced the concept of the 'critical zone', arguing for the importance of focusing on the interdependencies between the physical, chemical and biological

dimensions of life-critical processes that take place between the lower atmosphere and the barren rocks, i.e. in the vertical band around the Earth's surface, between 50 metres above the ground and below the ground to the barren rocks, from 30 metres to several hundred metres. Subsequently, in 2001, the National Research Council - USA initiated a funding project that led to the establishment of a few dozen Critical Zone Observatories between 2007 and 2020, to be reorganised as a system of hubs and clusters from 2021 onwards, in order to enhance both the development of research and the training of critical zone scientists (Brantley et al. 2017; Waldron, 2020).

“Critical zone” is a locally and thematically circumscribed, non-definitive way of re-defining the object of scientific research from the interdependencies between different levels of biotic and abiotic processes. The study of interdependencies is always situated and determined by the local characteristics of the site. That is, it cannot be done in the laboratory, because the transformation processes of, for example, the minerals that form rocks are up to ten thousand times faster in the laboratory than in the field, where they can be slowed down and interrupted by the mobility of the elements and the variety of physico-chemical and anthropic conditions.

Unlike the objects of modern nature, abstracted from their secondary qualities, the intricacies of Gaia are not reproducible in laboratory abstraction. The difficulty of understanding them makes it difficult to conceptualise these processes and to define their spatial and temporal boundaries, but at the same time it opens up interdisciplinary modes of research previously excluded by the segmentation and specialisation of the various Life sciences.

The critical zone is thus configured as a space for segmentation of the Gaia entity, with the advantage of being able to capture situated interdependencies, placing analysis at a level very close to the ‘experience’ of non-humans and humans who ‘inhabit’ this critical zone. This space opens up possibilities for innovation in scientific paradigms and practices. The boundaries of the critical zone are defined horizontally in terms of the ability to obtain reliable data from research questions on the fluxes of activity of any of the agents whose actions - chemical, physical, metabolic or social - affect the present and future conditions of habitability of particular segments of the space occupied vertically by biotic activity between the lower atmosphere and the barren rocks.

In contrast to the container space of modern nature, which is occupied, dominated and controlled by the human subject as the only one endowed with agency, the critical zone is a reticular, heterogeneous and heterarchical space, structured by the agency of each actor in the network. It is the action that structures the space by connecting and disconnecting the actants, distributing agency and mediating it in distribution, extending or not the network in space and time: ‘it is not the human we are considering, it is

the action' (Latour, 2014, 4). This means, for example, that the change in agricultural practices can be studied in its connections with changes in the nitrate and calcium content of the water at the mouth of a catchment area and the biodiversity in the area, and these can be linked to changes in the presence of tourists and their motivations as detected by the researcher, and finally the whole chain can in turn be linked at several points to the political-economic-administrative chain that brought EU subsidies to the area, mobilising and connecting other actors. One is thus outside the modern 'natural' space, which in classical geographical representation is stratified into ontologically defined levels, separating the 'physical' from the 'political', and these from the 'economic', and so on. This does not mean that in the network agency is always of the same intensity and effectiveness, and that there are not points of thickening or even hierarchisation. In fact, Latour has shown in many of his works, especially on technical-scientific innovation, that networks are not flat.

The logic of composition of this reticular form of research seriously allows connections to be made between the different carriers of knowledge in the critical zone, practising in a situated form the works of 'progressive composition of the common world' that Latour (2014, 3) defines as fundamentally political. In this sense, the qualification of the critical zone as 'critical' also contributes to the redefinition of space as a reality that is not stable or permanent, but exposed to the 'critical point', to the threshold beyond which change takes place or irreversible degradation begins, in whose web both humans and non-humans are caught, and in which the conditions of existence of the former are also indispensable for the latter. This networked, shifting, risky space defines a reality that can only be understood from within and that is very different from the 'territory' that is typically conceived and ordered from the outside by means of law or the distant and disinterested gaze of research; instead, critical zone researchers are themselves part of the space they study and contribute to making it visible precisely through the instruments of their research.

The visibility of the Critical Zone, that is to say, its being perceived first and foremost by those who are part of it, constitutes a very relevant aspect in the organisation of Critical Zone Observatories, because it extends the network, on the one hand, to the training of new Critical Zone scholars, through the creation of bachelor's, master's and doctoral courses that, by overcoming the disciplinary separations that still exist in universities, offer interdisciplinary training from the very beginning of university studies, without first having to teach separately what then needs to be rethought interdisciplinarily. This will produce an unprecedented generation of critical scholars who will bring truly interdisciplinary expertise to universities. On the other hand, the visibility of the Critical Zone is implemented through information/education

activities aimed at the inhabitants of the Critical Zone themselves, in order to increase awareness and responsibility, not towards a generic 'environment', but towards the dependencies that make their collective life possible and sustainable, and that need to be taken care of by the collectives of humans and non-humans as a matter of common concern for their mutual survival.

Partly a concept of locally declining gaian processes, partly an epistemically innovative organisational set-up of scientific research and training, partly a centre for information and promotion of awareness and responsible practices towards the inhabitants of the critical zone in relation to the dependencies that bind their community to the non-human actors of local biotic-abiotic processes, the critical zone introduces a significant change in the conception, definition and experience of space and its habitability, generating scientific, social and cultural practices and representations of the relationship between humans and non-humans.

Terrestrial

The concept of the Terrestrial brings together and thematises in a socio-political theory the key to the various meta-theoretical and empirical dimensions that we find in the concepts and practices of Gaia and the Critical Zone. Like, and perhaps more than, the other two concepts, both of which, for different reasons, are unsystematic, unfinished and open to revision as a result of new understandings, the concept of the Terrestrial seems to me to be even more marked by this incompleteness, which could border on incomprehensibility if one did not take into account its fundamental links with Gaia and the Critical Zone. The concept of the Terrestrial has been articulated in various ways by Latour in recent years (Latour, 2017a; 2018; 2022). However, it seems to me that certain dimensions are fundamental, which I will try to outline here in a necessarily schematic way, also for reasons of space.

First, the question of the relationship between necessity and freedom. In Gaia, necessity is not defined by a pre-existing order, but by the historicity of agency, i.e. the continuation of relationships in time and space according to laws generated by the agents themselves. Unlike nature, in Gaia we do not encounter

the inflexible domain of necessity but, strangely enough, what is largely a domain of freedom, where life forms have, in some extraordinary ways, made their own laws, to the point of generating over eons multiple, heterogeneous, intricate, and fragile ways of lasting longer in time and extending further in space' (Latour & Lenton, 2019, 679)

When nature is conceived as the realm of necessity, it becomes important to protect human freedom from the regulatory devices of society that are inspired by or based on the idea of nature, and to do so by making freedom an intrinsic property, ontologically exclusive to humans. However, the heterarchic and autotrophic nature of Gaia, and the consequent capacity to respond to human action, places us in a very different situation: that of the new climate regime, in which, more than in the past, we do not want nature to dictate human behaviour. But we can no longer avoid learning lessons from the way the Earth responds to human behaviour. As we have seen in the Critical Zone, the Earth's behaviour is a matter of concern to us, i.e. it is significant in defining our behaviour. This significance makes the Earth's behaviour 'political', not in itself, but for us, as it is, one might say with Weber, oriented to the attitude of others.

Gaia and the critical zone overcome the separation between the realm of necessity (i.e. nature) and the realm of freedom (i.e. politics and morality). The main consequence of the end of this separation is the redistribution of necessity and freedom between humans and non-humans. This repositions human and non-human forms of life in a way that is different from the rigid dichotomy that reciprocally paralysed humans and nature into predetermined and unchangeable positions, and which today shows its inadequacy in the face of the political effects of climate change. It is a political distance, made up of that mistrust, perplexity, enigmaticity, and mutability that seeks the - always provisional - settlement between behaviours in view of a common motive of concern (Latour & Lenton, 2019).

Secondly, the interdependencies that we have seen in Gaia and that in the critical zone become visible for those who study it and those who inhabit it, find in the concept of the Terrestrial the space for the elaboration of an idea of freedom that is not primarily identified with the forms of emancipation but maintains the link with the dependencies that make the living conditions of collectivities possible, including the practice of freedom. The exercise of freedom, in fact, never depends only on the legal-economic conditions available in an abstract space; the current Anthropocene condition makes dramatic the question posed already by Fichte and recently taken up by Charbonnier (2020): "What land does a community need in order to have access to the means of its emancipation?" The gulf between the world *in which* we live, the nation-state, and the world *from which* we live, the global economy, today traps the citizens of the rich West within nation-states that can no longer guarantee those conditions of freedom that were built at the expense of other peoples and other territories to allow the expansion of the production and mobility of consumer goods towards the West and the absorption of waste produced by the West (Latour, 2022). The limits of the planet and the new climate regime enter into this double movement, reversing into limits for all what were opportunities for some.

Thirdly, unlike nature, which guaranteed a higher order that was inaccessible to the social and political conflicts of which humanity was seen as the sole generator, Gaia does not guarantee order, and the conflicts are not only between humans, but also between humans and non-humans. For Latour, “landing on Earth” means becoming aware that we live on an Earth whose habitability is not only unstable, but will always be subject to and changed by the conflicting definition of the freedoms of its human and non-human actors. Thus, even for human survival, the planet has far more relevant and powerful capacities for action than resources for the ‘development’ of the industrial production system.

Capitalist production does not generate Life, but abstracts from the conditions of Life, assembling and combining, entangling, so that as it expands it captures and brings back all change, increasingly concealing from its agents the life-generating processes on which production obviously also depends.

The Terrestrial perspective extends the redefinition of human and non-human collectives to the connections generated by biotic processes, reducing the influence of production in the vital decisions of collectives. The timing and reproduction of collectives, when no longer subordinated to the rhythms and growth imposed by production, slow down and contract, anchoring the nexus between well-being and freedom in the conditions of existence of life itself. Modernity has decoupled this nexus, generating the two impossible promises of the infinite growth of production-profit and the infinite emancipation of the individual.

On this horizon, for Latour (2022), the political cleavage along which the fundamental conflict today is laid out is the distinction between those who want to narrow the space of relations of production, extending the collective to non-human actors, and those who want to preserve the centrality of production and its reproduction. This conflict separates, or will separate, the possible new “ecological class” from its opponents, which does not replace but complements the conflicts within the system of production. The transition to this dual level involves a redefinition of the ideals of freedom and emancipation in a context of dependency. The redistribution of freedom and necessity between humans and non-humans changes the meaning of emancipation, redefining it through the necessity of practising dependence on what makes us live.

The ‘new ecological class’, the addressee of Latour’s latest book, could be the collective Terrestrial actor - brought into being by the conflicts generated by the current inability to respond to climate change - that introduces the perspective of anchoring the redefinition of the values of freedom and emancipation in the conditions of existence of life forms and the dependencies derived from them. By taking the redefinition of habitability as a privileged criterion, the ecological class finally meets its true owners. Ownership is not man’s ownership of a world, but the world’s ownership of man: it is the living

beings who, by definition, own themselves, because they have generated themselves out of themselves and, little by little, have generated the planet Earth through a process *sui generis* that has generated itself.

Nature is therefore not a victim to be protected: it belongs to us, and not in a symbolic sense. The challenge before us is to transform into common sense the idea that “ I depend, and it is this that frees me, and I can therefore act”, always bearing in mind that on the horizon of the Terrestrial, conflicts are neither temporary nor preliminary to a pacified order of man in nature (Latour, 2022, 16-20). Just as in Gaia there is no higher order that defines a habitability prior to the development of life, in Terrestrial there is no ideal of perpetual peace, not even utopianly understood as a regulative ideal, but a context of distributed freedom and necessity that always makes both conflict and integration possible, without this ineradicability of conflict having to be blamed exclusively on some negative anthropology.

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COSMOPOLITICS. IN CONVERSATION WITH ISABELLE STENGERS

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COSMOPOLÍTICA. EN CONVERSACIÓN CON ISABELLE STENGERS

Abstract

The collaboration, the exchange, the convergences and divergences, between Bruno Latour and Isabelle Stengers stretched over the decades, settling in different textual forms. While in De Vries' text dedicated to Latour's work this collaboration appears only in passing; Philippe Pignarre's recent volume is entirely dedicated to it. This text intends to focus on the concept of cosmopolitics, in the use that both Stengers and Latour make of it. The issue is interesting, namely because it constitutes a point of access to Latour's thinking, enriching it with the exchanges that oriented him, but above all because it allows us to clarify in a differential way what can be understood by politics, in the perspective of the socio-environmental crisis.

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Keywords

Bruno Latour; Isabelle Stengers; cosmopolitics; political ecology; situated knowledge.

Resumen

La colaboración, el intercambio, las convergencias y divergencias, entre Bruno Latour e Isabelle Stengers se prolongó durante décadas, asentándose en diferentes formas textuales. Mientras que en el texto de De Vries dedicado a la obra de Latour esta colaboración sólo aparece de pasada; el reciente volumen de Philippe Pignarre está enteramente dedicado a ella. Este texto pretende centrarse en el concepto de cosmopolítica, en el uso que hacen de él tanto Stengers como Latour. La cuestión es interesante, sobre todo porque constituye un punto de acceso al pensamiento de Latour, enriqueciéndolo con los intercambios que le orientaron, pero sobre todo porque permite aclarar de manera diferencial lo que puede entenderse por política, en la perspectiva de la crisis socioambiental.

Palabras clave

Bruno Latour; Isabelle Stengers; cosmopolítica; ecología política; conocimiento situado.

The collaboration, the exchange, the convergences and divergences, between Bruno Latour and Isabelle Stengers stretched over the decades, settling in different textual forms. From dedications “For Félix Guattari and Bruno Latour, in memory of a meeting that never took place” (Stengers, 1993) and acknowledgments: “[His] fine and demanding reading is part of a process which, for more than twenty years, has shown that agreements between sometimes divergent paths are created thanks to divergence and not in spite of it” (Stengers, 2013, 5); while Latour mixes dedication and acknowledgment in *Politics of nature*, “I shamelessly looted Stengers’ *Cosmopolitics*” (Latour 2004b: v, viii). From forewords, such as Latour’s *Stengers’ Shibolletth* (1997); up to texts written jointly, such as *Le Spynx de l’œuvre*, an introduction to the work of Etienne Souriau (2009), without forgetting the intertextual conversation through the countless footnote references.

Some perplexity therefore arises from De Vries’ text dedicated to Latour’s work (De Vries, 2016), where this collaboration appears only in passing; an omission amended by Philippe Pignarre’s recent volume, *Un double vol enchevêtré* (Pignarre, 2023), which is specifically dedicated to the relationship between the two. This relationship is formulated in terms of “a philosophical friendship”, a relationship with someone with whom “you don’t have to explain too much”, with whom “an ‘exchange’ could be possible, like a double entangled flight” (Stengers, 2006, 161), “a space of practices that is perfectly distinct from the space of scientific practices” (Stengers, 2000, 63).

Pignarre’s volume, dedicated to the complex reconnaissance of a commonality between the work of the two, indeed traces recurrences of issues as well as interlocutors; both started their research on sciences in a dialogue with Michel Serres, shared the references to American pragmatists such as William James and John Dewey, and to Alfred North Whitehead, Gilles Deleuze and Donna Haraway – and yet, in Pignarre’s work clear divergences emerge.

For its part, this text intends to focus on the concept of cosmopolitics, on the use that both Stengers and Latour make of it. This issue is interesting, namely because it constitutes a point of access to Latour’s thinking, enriching it with the exchanges that oriented him, but above all because it allows us to clarify in a differential way what can be understood by politics, in the perspective of the socio-environmental crisis.

Cosmopolitanism and Cosmopolitics

The term appears in texts by Latour and Stengers between the 1990s and early 2000s. In 1996-1997, Stengers published the seven volumes collected under the title *Cosmopolitics* (Stengers, 2010, 2011); Latour's earliest uses of the term occur both in conversation with Stengers (Latour, 2004) and in the field outlined by Ulrich Beck's proposal to re-actualize Kantian cosmopolitanism (Latour, 2003, 2004a). Stengers herself joined the debate at the 2003 Cerisy-La Salle Colloque - dedicated to "The emergence of cosmopolitics and the refoundation of planning thought" and to Beck's proposal - which led her to publish an article in which she also clarifies the relationship between the different concepts of cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitics (Stengers 2007).

As is well known, the German sociologist Beck announces that modern, industrial society has entered a new phase (1992). In the same period of the Colloque of Cerisy-La Salle, Beck reiterates the thesis of the end of modern politics, based on the State-Nation and State-Society couples, and focuses on the question regarding which new collectives are at stake:

To discuss these questions properly, it is essential to appreciate that in world history the mingling of boundaries and cultures is not the exception but the rule. The separate worlds or spaces claimed by territorial nationalism and ethnicism are historically unreal. (...) The question for all minorities, then, is whether to assert their difference and strengthen it both internally and externally in the form of transnational networks and identities. (Beck, 2004, 447-448)

This double questioning – on history and on collectives - will be stressed by Latour's conception of cosmopolitics and affects the meaning of what he conceives as politics. On the one hand, he joins the debate on globalization, in continuity with part of his previous theses, especially the ones exposed in *We have never been Modern* (1993) - Latour then discusses cosmopolitanism in its specific aspect of a discontinuity in history. It is the Latour practicing a sort of reversed philosophy of history, which enacts an epistemological periodization of the Modern and assumes the present as a different historical time from which to deconstruct modernity itself. On the other hand, appraising Beck's social theory as "one of the most lively, creative and politically relevant forms of sociology developed in recent years" (Latour, 2003, 20), Latour specifies:

I am not debating the usefulness of a cosmopolitan social science that, beyond the boundaries of nation-states, would try to look at global phenomena using new types of statistics and inquiries. (...) for me, society has never been the equivalent of nation-state. For two reasons: the first is that the scientific networks that I have spent some time describing have never been limited to national boundaries anyway: global is largely, like the globe itself, an invention of science. The second reason is that, as disciples of Gabriel Tarde know very well, society has always meant association and has never been limited to humans. So, I have always been perfectly happy to speak, like Alphonse de Candolle, of “plant sociology” or, like Alfred North Whitehead, of “stellar societies” (Latour, 2004a, 450).

Latour sums up cosmopolitanism, in its specific philosophical-historical and sociological declination, in a series of axioms and procedures; a sort of cosmopolitical Constitution.

The subjects of Cosmopolitics. Abandoning the modern partitions between subject and object, and especially between Nature and Society, implies acknowledging that there is only one collective, an “association”, a gathering of associations, of both humans and non-humans. (Latour, 2004b, 41)

Event, inclusion, and recognition. New entities knock on the door of the existing collective, asking or pressing to become included. The appellant may be a virus, a new technology, immigrants, a threatened species. Whatever it is, the collective sees itself confronted with a multifaceted process of recognition and inclusion (Latour 2004: 102–109). These processes must be oriented by *perplexity*, that is the disposition to reconsider already existing knowledge; *consultation*, that is inclusive debate; *hierarchization*, that is a decision taking into account and selecting the multiple interests of all the actants involved; and *institution*, that is the inclusion of the new actants involved in the event, once and for all (cf. De Vries, 2016, 140). Moreover, the effect of these procedures will provide the collective with some self-image, a “scenerization of the totality” (Latour, 2004b, 137-138), that provisionally defines what is inside and outside the collective. Thus, the image provided by the modern Constitution, the image of a Society surrounded by Nature, is replaced by a distinction between what is internalized and what has been externalized.

Flat ontology, immanence, and a reversed philosophy of history. Latour’s argument on these new collectives leads to the empirical evidence that cosmopolitics is already

practiced, although unwarily. Going back to the Roman civilization, the example is drawn from the sewage:

The word [‘collective’] should remind us of sewage systems where networks of small, medium, and large ‘collectors’ make it possible to evacuate wastewater as well as to absorb the rain on a large city. This metaphor of the *cloaca maxima* [ancient Rome’s sewage system] suits our needs perfectly, along with all the paraphernalia of adduction, sizing, purifying stations, observation points, and manholes necessary to its upkeep. The more we associate materialities, institutions, technologies, skills, procedures, and slowdowns with the word ‘collective’ the better its use will be: the hard labor necessary for the progressive and public composition of the future unity will be all the more visible. (Latour, 2004b, 59).

The role of sciences. Latour assigns a specific role to the sciences in progressively composing a collective. In fact, he states that nature becomes knowable through the intermediary of the sciences; and sciences themselves are formed through networks of instruments, interventions of professions, disciplines, and protocols, are distributed via data bases, are provided with arguments through the intermediary of learned societies (Latour 2004b, 4). Moreover, without sciences – such as geology, ethology, or climatology – we would be powerless to face what, on her part, Stengers would have called the “intrusion of Gaia” (Pignarre, 2023, 157).

Latour himself extends this assumption to a political issue that he shares with Stengers, that is “to imagine a political order is always directly predicated on a certain definition of science”, as well as the criticism towards the “legal and humanitarian forms of cosmopolitanism [that] forget entirely the theory of science that has been surreptitiously used to assemble the cosmos in a peaceful manner but without due process”. (Latour, 2004a, 455)

But we could stress that, on the contrary, some different perspectives and questions about sciences arise between the two. In Latour, sciences appear as a set of knowledges and actants that are already transnational; for both Stengers and Latour it is a set of practices confronted with other practices, which are not carried out in the laboratory, in the strict sense of the term. But, while sometimes Latour gives a broad meaning to the notion of laboratory, extending it to other associations and assemblages, Stengers stresses the problematic attribution of a privilege to Science, with a capital S, with respect to knowledge of facts and truth and deals with the problem of how to prevent it from cannibalizing all knowledge, all practices.

Cosmopolitics

In his second confrontation with Beck's cosmopolitical proposal, Latour explicitly refers to Stengers' conception and traces the differences between the two. It is an opportunity to appreciate another difference, the one between Latour and Stengers; in fact, while Latour stress in his own terms what is at stake, we can consider further aspects. First, there is an issue about identity: while the Stoic or Kantian cosmopolitanism concerns the "citizen of the cosmos" and not of a particular state, adhering to a particular religion, a particular guild, profession, or family, Stengers intends to alter the meaning of "to belong" or "to pertain" (Latour, 2004a, 454). In Latour's words, on the one hand, it seems that for Stengers the question is disidentifying politics as a solely human concern or capability – "The presence of cosmos in cosmopolitics resists the tendency of politics to mean the give-and-take in an exclusive human club" (*ibidem*). This is precisely what, in her turn, Stengers recognizes as the task Latour is confronting (Stengers, 2007, 48); but, on the contrary, for Stengers the main and starting question is not about (dis)identification, as we will see, rather it is about situating knowledges. On the other hand, "The presence of politics in cosmopolitics resists the tendency of cosmos to mean a finite list of entities that must be taken into account" (Latour, 2004a, 454), that is, politics is associated to the liberal conception of inclusive procedures, while, as we will see, for Stengers politics entails materializing any encounter and even any conception of the issues at stake.

Situated knowledge. Beyond a philosophy of history

At the Colloque of Cerisy, Stengers admits:

I was unaware of Kantian usage when, in 1996, I was working on the first volume of what was to become the series of seven volumes *Cosmopolitics*, this term imposed itself on me. And when I discovered that the term "cosmopolitics" affirmed the Kantian confidence in a general progress of humanity which would find expression in the authority of a "jus cosmopoliticum", it was too late. The word had taken on, for me, its own life and necessity. (Stengers, 2007, 46)

The outrage encompassed by the historians of philosophy (cf. Zarka, 2012, 379) is precisely the occasion to stress a major difference between Latour and Stengers. At a

first glance it could appear as a question of methodology, the way in which philosophy is a work on and about concepts – should they be historical reinterpretations or the creation of neologisms. However, the question is rather about “situating”.

We have seen that Latour’s ambition is to give a sort of Rawlsian general rule for the Constitution of a new multispecies-actants collective, assuming that he is speaking as... well, we do not really know, from Latour’s exposition, from where he is speaking. But on the base of his assumptions, the cosmopolitical proposal appears to be inscribed, although critically and through his reversed philosophy of history, in the Western auto-instituted canon of Modernity. On her side, Stengers claims for a word, a concept, which emerged from within her questioning, with respect to the problems she is dealing with in the present. A first divergence could be then assumed between Latour’s philosophical-historical and Stengers’ genealogical approach - in the Foucauldian sense, power and conflict indeed define what and who can be heard -:

those who know present themselves as claiming that they know what they know, that they are capable of knowing in a mode independent of their “ecological” situation, independent of what their *oikos* imposes on them to take into account or instead allows them to ignore. [The question is to] eventually modify (in the mode of the event) not the reasons but the way in which the reasons of those who are discussing present themselves. (Stengers, 2007, 53)

Situated knowledge is far from a kind of Rawlsian multispecies and actants “overlapping consensus”; it implies not being proprietary of a word, transmitting the true signification of it, but rather showing the different questions at stake that underlie the use of a word. In fact, while Latour has no problem to consider positively some aspects of cosmopolitanism, Stengers finally states that:

I must therefore affirm that the cosmopolitical proposal as I am going to present it explicitly denies any kinship with Kant, or with ancient thought. The “cosmos”, as I will try to convey its meaning, has little to do with the world of which the ancient citizen claimed to be at home everywhere, nor with a finally unified earth, of which everyone would be a citizen. Quite the opposite. (Stengers, 2007, 46)

Another, and related, divergent convergency concerns what Latour calls “perplexity”, which in Stengers appears as an *attitude* to slowing down, a situated “mode of life”:

How can we present a proposal whose aim is not to say what is, nor to say what should be, but to make people think, and which requires no other verification than that: the way in which it will have ‘slowed down’ reasoning, created the opportunity for a slightly different sensitivity in relation to the problems and situations that mobilize us? (...) This question is all the more important since the “cosmopolitical” proposition, as I will try to characterize it, is not primarily addressed to “generalists”. It can only make sense in concrete situations, where practitioners work (Stengers, 2007, 45).

While Latour’s perplexity pertains to the discursive realm, both as the set of knowledges and theories that constitute it and as a mode of the regime of enunciation, in Stengers knowledge itself appears altogether as a material and embodied activity that affects the constituting situations.

What is politics in cosmopolitics?

We could start examining the differential approach to politics of Latour and Stengers in a first immediate way, as Pignarre himself does:

Latour and Stengers do not do politics in the same way. They do not seek the same allies. Thus, Latour often exasperated the Marxists (...) Stengers has multiplied her contacts with activists of the most diverse causes, from the electro-sensitive to the GMO plant pullers and the zadists. She has had the neo-pagan witch Starhawk translated into French, with whom she affirms her closeness, and she has praised the work of Houria Bouteldja, one of the founders of the Indigènes de la République Party (...). Latour has more often kept his distance from any direct involvement. (Pignarre, 2023, 13)

While the direct experience of the political questions as they arise in a constituting collective is not less important, this aspect has to be intertwined with the theoretical effects it produces. Moreover, in this respect the conversation among the two appears intensified.

In fact, as we have seen, Latour’s cosmopolitical issue stems from the definition of the political subject. The definition draws on his diagnosis of the end of society and the need for *Reassembling the social* (2005). Association is gathering different actants, that are no more organized along the partition opposing subjects and objects, society and

nature, and so on. Along these same lines we find a reference to Stengers' "ecology practices", that Latour presents as a different and yet equivalent theoretical proposal (2004b, 137-138). While Latour will continue to develop this proposal until the final idea of an "ecological class" (Latour & Schultz, 2022), as we will see, it is worth considering closely what is at stake for Stengers.

First, the focus is indeed different. Stengers' starting point, formulated as the ecology of practices, entails "inventing ways in which different practices, responding to divergent obligations, could learn to co-exist". (Stengers, 2007, 48)

Here the interesting point is not only that Stengers has a more concrete idea of what is heterogeneity *as a process*, but also that – as she stated in the seventh volume of *Cosmopolitics*, significantly entitled *The Curse of Tolerance (Pour en finir avec la tolerance)* – conflict has to be taken into account, firstly in its generative effects:

No unifying body of knowledge will ever demonstrate that the neutrino of physics can coexist with the multiple worlds mobilized by ethnopsychiatry. Nonetheless, such coexistence has a meaning, and it has nothing to do with tolerance or disenchanting skepticism. Such beings can be collectively affirmed in a "cosmopolitical" space where the hopes and doubts and fears and dreams they engender collide and cause them to exist. (Stengers, 2010, VII-VIII)

It is not by chance that her conversation with Beck concerns his *Pouvoir et contre-pouvoir à l'ère de la mondialisation* (Beck, 2003, quoted in Stengers, 2007, 67). In fact, the second relevant difference concerns "the political" itself. While Latour aims to include new actants in the realm of politics – thus replicating the canonical frame of a reassembled society responding to a new political constitution –, Stengers is aware that "the category of politics I was working with is part of our tradition, draws on the resources of invention specific to that tradition" (Stengers, 2007, 48). Thus "the problem of the ecology of practices can finally become worthy of the awe-inspiring word that gives its name to this series: cosmopolitics. For the word signals the path along which the question is to be constructed, that of the (re)invention of politics" (Stengers, 2011, 355-357).

Moreover, Stengers is aware that politics is about *a world*, its questions, threats, problems that, even on a planetary scale, are nonetheless expressed by human knowledges, concern facts produced by human technological apparatuses, and are associated to evaluations linked to human practices. Along the same lines, Stengers point out the

different way in which Latour formulates the question, that is not about the anthropological (dis)identification of politics, but rather about the “enunciation regimes” of the different actants, and – as we have seen – about the modes of taking them into account, thus betraying the implicit assumption that politics is resumed in its western liberal representative version (“the fetishism of representative politics”, already advanced with the ‘Parliament of things’, denounced by Guilibert & Monferrand, 2023).

In the perspective of a different realm of questions, cosmopolitics assuming a more than human reality, Stengers’ proposition avoids what instead in Latour’s flat ontology appear as a view from nowhere. Cosmopolitics is not beyond politics, “it designates our access to a question that politics cannot appropriate” (Stengers, 2011, 355-357).

Cosmopolitics and political ecology

We could say, assuming for a moment Latour’s rhetorical style, that cosmopolitics is the immanent utopia of political ecology, which can be summed up in a final consideration ‘there has never been a political ecology’. Indeed, in *Politics of nature* the question is proposed precisely in these terms – “What is to be done with political ecology? Nothing. What is to be done? Political ecology!” is the very first line of the book (Latour, 2004b, 1). Cosmopolitics is the word naming the same set of actions and entities, once the fallacious modern partition distributing the human and the non-human collapses. We must also recall the fact that non-human – i.e. the modern concept of nature – is represented within the scientific production of knowledge and techniques, thus acquiring “ecology” in the political ecology to the scientific realm: “Ecology, as its name indicates, has no direct access to nature as such; it is a “-logy” like all the scientific disciplines” (Latour, 2004b, 4). This assumption resonates with the conclusion of the book in which Latour invites us to consider that cosmopolitics has always been practiced. It is quite interesting to compare this assumption with the episode, told by Stengers, concerning the immanence approach:

Souvenir. Here, at Cerisy, Michel Callon came to speak about ‘hybrid forums’, that emblematic figure of the transformation of a situation into a collective ‘matter of concern’. Everything he said was very accurate, very relevant, very well thought out, but this did not prevent the stampede. Everyone knew, recognized and was already practicing. A museum could be presented as a hybrid forum, an interdisciplinary conference could be presented as a hybrid forum, and even

the commissions in charge of the five-year plan. And one economist said triumphantly: “But we know this well: the hybrid forum par excellence is the market! Is the market not in fact what brings together all those concerned, all those who have an interest in a situation, all those whose contradictory interests give the situation its relief and finally, without external arbitration, bring out the solution that will bring them all together? (Stengers, 2007, 56)

This anecdote, as well as the fact that Stengers sees and recounts it as a problem, allows to pose a first order problem with respect to Latour’s assumptions – an equivocation about immanence. If the perspective at stake is the “art of concepts”, of which cosmopolitics is an example, the production of a concept has to be considered as a force among forces, modifying the situation or the assemblage where it operates. In Latour, on the contrary, some undeclared modern idea of concept as representation seems to persist – concept seems to work *within* the represented situation. Referring to the differential relation with Stengers, we could say that in Latour concept as a production of “situated knowledge” remains unnoticed.

The same problem arises with Latour and Schultz’ proposal of an “ecological class” (Latour, Schultz 2022, 59-60). In a similar quite static conception of present as immanence, the ecological class seems to designate a technocratic assemblage:

A technocratic class composed of “activists” but above all “industrials” and “inventors”, good leaders aware of their dependence on the planet’s habitability. After the “parliament of things”, we should now rely on an ecological class, i.e., an elite capable of adequately embodying the needs of the Earth and its inhabitants. The extension of this class is not clear, but it certainly includes ‘innovators dispossessed of their capacity for invention’, ‘intellectuals and scholars’ who would be ‘all [...] ready to oppose their rationality to the knowledge economy’, ‘engineers broken in their desire for innovation’. (Guillibert & Monferrand, 2023)

The reversed philosophy of history about modernity as well as the equivocation on immanence lead to the criticism of some who believe that Latour’s work avoids the critical analyses of the economic and political power and processes of production, which is capitalism, all along with their technoscientific effects and therefore ends up praising:

a moderately progressive intelligentsia that realizes how the situation calls for radical intervention but stubbornly believes that the world in which it has prospered,

and which for it therefore constitutes the best of all possible worlds, can be safeguarded in its fundamental coordinates: as if, to put it in Marxian terms, the means of production were convertible to other ends without calling into question the relations of production that forged them. (Pellizzoni, 2019, 156)

On her side, Stengers, in considering cosmopolitics as a problem of an ecology of practices deals immediately with the problem of partiality, which is one of the true effects of immanence. Moreover, partiality, or being situated, implies

an “etho-ecological” perspective affirming the inseparability of the *ethos*, the way of behaving proper to a being, and the *oikos*, the habitat of this being, the way in which this habitat satisfies or counteracts the requirements associated with such and such an *ethos*, or even offers new *ethos* the opportunity to be actualized. (Stengers, 2007, 52)

Another major divergence with Latour thus appears. In cosmopolitics it is not the flat linear network of different actants that is confronted – indeed, even if reassembled, it echoes the “society of individuals” – rather, it has the material consistency of the forms and conditions of living. At the same time this divergence allows to reintroduce the consideration of inequalities not only, as Latour puts it, in terms of actants prediscursive claims, their discursive translation, and the related processes of recognition, but also in terms of conflicting worlds, that is conflicting modes of action, organization and modes of human production.

While in Latour the liberal, utilitarian, and representative conception of politics remains unquestioned - actants could be called “stakeholders” as well -, Stengers considers politics in a dynamic materialistic perspective. Ethics itself is reconsidered from a situated perspective. The ecology of practices allows to consider that ethical evaluation has to be transformed in “the question of what counts for the mode of life” of different types of being (Stengers 2007: 38), in the dynamics and the becoming that constitute, by a plurality of encounters and conflicts, each *oikos*, each *environment*.

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PETER SLOTERDIJK AND BRUNO LATOUR NOTES ON A “STAR FRIENDSHIP”*

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to show some theoretical points in which Sloterdijk and Latour influenced each other. Sections 1 and 2 are devoted to Latour’s influence on Sloterdijk, particularly in the formulation of the concept of anthropotechnics and in the attempt to overcome the nature/culture and subject/object dichotomies. Paragraph 3 is devoted to Sloterdijk’s critique of the concept of network and Latour’s response to this critique. Paragraphs 4 and 5 are dedicated to Sloterdijk’s influence on Latour: in particular, Latour’s use of the Sloterdijkian concept of “Globe” and Sloterdijk’s philosophy of the environment, interpreted by Latour as a philosophy of design.

Keywords

Bruno Latour, Peter Sloterdijk, Ecology, Design, Anthropocene.

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Introduction

An in-depth analysis of the scientific relations, mutual influences, and intellectual friendship that linked Bruno Latour and Peter Sloterdijk would require a systematic study of the entire corpus, as well as the biographies, of the two thinkers: in addition to having had close personal relations, they have – over the last three decades – often drawn on each other’s theories. To try to describe the relationship between Sloterdijk and Latour, it is perhaps simplest, then, at least as a preliminary step, to use a conceptual metaphor: that of “Star Friendship” formulated by Friedrich Nietzsche in the aphorism §279 of his *The Gay Science*:

We were friends and have become estranged. But this was right, and we do not want to conceal and obscure it from ourselves as if we had reason to feel ashamed. We are two ships each of which has its goal and course; our paths may cross and we may celebrate a feast together, as we did—and then the good ships rested so quietly in one harbor and one sunshine that it may have looked as if they had reached their goal and as if they had one goal. But then the almighty force of our tasks drove us apart again into different seas and sunny zones, and perhaps we shall never see each other again; perhaps we shall meet again but fail to recognize each other: our exposure to different seas and suns has changed us. That we have to become estranged is the law *above* us; by the same token we should also become more venerable for each other—and the memory of our former friendship more sacred. There is probably a tremendous but invisible stellar orbit in which our very different ways and goals may be *included* as small parts of this path; let us rise up to this thought. But our life is too short and our power of vision too small for us to be more than friends in the sense of this sublime possibility. —Let us then *believe* in our star friendship even if we should be compelled to be earth enemies. (Nietzsche, 1964, 225-226)

Although Sloterdijk and Latour never became “earth enemies” (Nietzsche, 1964, 226) – quite the contrary – the relationship between the two, the constant mutual references despite theoretical differences, and, last but not least, the readiness to accept both criticisms (Latour, 2009) and praise from the other¹, were the hallmark of a long intellectual partnership.

¹ Sloterdijk delivered the laudatio for Latour’s 2008 award of the Sigfried Unseld Preis, cf. Sloterdijk 2012, 75-87.

The aim of this contribution is not so much that – as mentioned at the beginning, only possible in a wide-ranging systematic study – of analysing in detail the relationships, both scientific and personal, between the two authors, but rather to offer an overview of them through a specific interpretative lens. Given that Latour's references to Sloterdijk and vice versa are scattered throughout many parts of the two thinkers' work, rather than a reconstructive work, I will privilege, in the following pages, an approach linked to a few concepts, highlighting the importance that Latour and Sloterdijk had for each other.

In §1 I will present Sloterdijk's concepts of anthropotechnics and highlight the role played by Latour in the formulation of it. §2 examines the book's chapter where Sloterdijk confronts Latour's theories more directly, contained in *Spheres III* (Sloterdijk, 2016, 193-230). Starting from this analysis, §3 highlights how the two concepts of "network" (Latour) and "sphere" (Sloterdijk) were used in the reciprocal dialogue between the two authors. The last two sections will reverse the perspective, offering a look at Sloterdijk's presence in Latour's work. Specifically, I will analyse how Sloterdijk's spherology is a privileged point of reference for Latour's "ecological" theories (§4) and how Latour uses Sloterdijk as a philosopher of design (§5) in order to criticise the equivalence between subjectivity and the body of the single (human) individual.

Latour in Sloterdijk I: Anthropotechnics and the Critique of Ontology²

"No ethics works successfully for modern thought, as long as its logic and its ontology remain unclear." (Sloterdijk, 2017a, 148). This plea for a reform of ontology closes Sloterdijk's *The Domestication of Being and* represents one of the most relevant and, at the same time, least explored points of his reflection on the concept of anthropotechnics. To better understand it, I will show how this plea was influenced from Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern* (fr. 1991; en. 1993).

Before proceeding to such an analysis in detail, however, it seems useful to define Sloterdijk's anthropotechnics. Under this denomination, Sloterdijk defines first and foremost those techniques that have consistently been implemented, both non-programmatically (e.g., partner selection through aesthetic-cultural criteria) and planned (e.g., the history of pedagogical institutions) in human history by power systems, social structures, and human groups in general, to 'construct' certain types of subjects (Sloterdijk, 2017a,

² This paragraph contains a reformulation of the arguments previously presented in Lucci 2011, 60-72.

126-127). In the essays *Rules for the Human Park* and *The Domestication of Being*, this anthropotechnics are defined as *primary*: based on *routines*, cultural conventions, and pedagogical-social programming. From these are differentiated that anthropotechnics that the evolution of genetic engineering is bringing closer and closer and that concern the programming of genetic traits at the prenatal level, defined by Sloterdijk as *secondary* (Sloterdijk 2017a, 126-127). The concept of anthropotechnics undergoes a turning point in Sloterdijk's 2009 volume *You must change your life* (*dt.* 2009; *en.* 2013): here, Sloterdijk, from the very first pages of the text, programmatically establishes an inseparable link between anthropotechnics and exercise, substantially modifying the concept of anthropotechnics developed previously. Athletically-oriented anthropotechnics, in fact, compared to primary anthropotechnics, introduces the possibility of the subject's action in what were previously considered to be cultural practices applied 'top-down' exclusively by institutional-intersubjective structures, and compared to secondary anthropotechnics, presents itself without any biotechnological aspect:

One can therefore not emphasize enough that the most effective forms of anthropotechnics in the world come from yesterday's world – and the genetic engineering praised or rejected loudly today, even if it becomes feasible and acceptable for humans on a larger scale, will long remain a mere anecdote compared to the magnitude of these phenomena. (Sloterdijk, 2013a, 78)

Returning to *The Domestication of Being*, Sloterdijk shows here, through reference to the eccentric figure of Gotthard Günther (Sloterdijk, 2017a, 136-138) – cybernetics scholar, science fiction writer, aviator as well as Arnold Gehlen's pupil and assistant – how classical metaphysics is based on a monovalent ontology (=Being is/non-Being is not) and a related bivalent logic (=true/false) that now appear inadequate to describe the multiple levels of complexity of reality. In this context, in addition to Günther, Sloterdijk's main reference is Latour: this is why an analysis of *We Have Never Been Modern* appears necessary to understand how Sloterdijk arrives at these considerations (which in *The Domestication of Being*, it must be remembered, are only hinted at, but not explored in depth).

Latour's text, notoriously, is an epistemological manifesto in favour of reintegrating into the binary logic characteristic of Western thought those realities that he calls "hybrids" or "quasi-objects" (Latour, 1993, 1-3; 51-55), which in his opinion, in the constitution of modern rational thought have been systematically excluded from an epistemological framework based on the subject-object dichotomy. Latour even goes

so far as to make the *modernity* itself coincide with the series of theoretical operations that led to this exclusion: 1) Continuous creation of *de facto* hybrids of Nature and Culture (forming what Latour calls “*networks*” and constituting the objective, material conditions upon which our society is founded); 2) Implementation of a series of epistemological procedures of *purifying hybrids* into ontologically separate realities belonging to the pole either of the human (=subject) or the non-human (=object); 3) Creation of the two ‘pure,’ ontologically substantiated domains of Nature and Culture, devoid of relations of mixture:

The human is not a constitutional pole to be opposed to that of the nonhuman. The two expressions ‘humans’ and ‘nonhumans’ are belated results that no longer suffice to designate the other dimension. The scale of value consists not in shifting the definition of the human along the horizontal line that connects the Object pole to the Subject pole, but in sliding it along the vertical dimension that defines the nonmodern world. [...] The expression ‘anthropomorphic’ considerably underestimates our humanity. We should be talking about morphism. Morphism is the place where technomorphisms, zoomorphisms, phusimorphisms, ideomorphisms, theomorphisms, sociomorphisms, psychomorphisms, all come together. Their alliances and their exchanges, taken together, are what define the *anthropos*. A weaver of morphisms – isn’t that enough of a definition? The closer the *anthropos* comes to this distribution, the more human it is. The farther away it moves, the more it takes on multiple forms in which its humanity quickly becomes indiscernible, even if its figures are those of the person, the individual or the self. By seeking to isolate its form from those it churns together, one does not defend humanism, one loses it. (Latour, 1993, 137)

With this incisive reflection, Latour calls for the courage to think of an ontology that no longer separates humans and non-humans. In *contrast to* Heidegger, Latour and Sloterdijk believe it is no longer possible to think starting from the ontological difference between Being and beings or divide material reality into stones, animals, and humans (Heidegger, 1995, 186-200). This is because we are, *ab ovo*, but in an increasingly pronounced manner with the advancement of technology, forced to think of concepts and beings that are entangled and inseparably linked to one another. In their description of hybrids, Latour and Sloterdijk carry out analyses that complement each other perfectly, as the following passage from Sloterdijk shows, which could be seen as the ideal continuation of the previous Latourian quotation:

Holding on to traditional conceptual classifications leads to the absolute inability to describe in an ontologically appropriate way ‘cultural phenomena’ such as tools, signs, artworks, laws, customs, books, machines, and all other artifices, because in constructs of this type the fundamental highcultural classifications of soul and thing, mind and matter, subject and object, freedom and mechanism, must miss the mark: all cultural objects, according to their constitution, are indeed hybrids with a spiritual ‘component’ and a material ‘component,’ and every attempt within the framework of a bivalent logic and a univalent ontology to say what they ‘really’ are inevitably ends in hopeless reductions and destructive abridgments. (Sloterdijk, 2017a, 137)

Sloterdijk and Latour hold the same position on these issues: the challenge of contemporary philosophical thought is no longer to analyse the *ontological difference* subsisting between Being and beings but to understand the *ontological plurality* they contribute to composing.

However, the challenge of interpreting, for example, entities such as the human being and the machine without postulating an ontological or axiological difference between them is, according to Sloterdijk, a theoretically and ethically difficult proposition for those who are not ready to abandon the classical concepts of subject and object:

It is clear that in these processes the traditionally interpreted personal subject no longer rediscovers anything to which it was accustomed — neither the side of the self, as it was presented in the moral traditions, nor the side of things, as one was familiar with them in dealing with them in the lifeworld and preparing them for scientific study. For this reason it appears to the subject that is bound to tradition as though it were confronted with an alarming case of anti-humanism: it seems to the subject as though in current biotechnology there were the sharpest opposition to the humanist and Olympian program of appropriating the world as a home for the human subject or the spirit/person and integrating its externality into the self. It now appears rather as though the self would be submerged without remainder into thingliness and externality and would be lost there. (Sloterdijk, 2017a, 140)

Thinking *after* the age of ontological monovalence is the task Sloterdijk and Latour take upon themselves. This task stands in contrast to the anti-technological catastrophist hysteria, which still starts from metaphysical dichotomies such human/machine,

science/philosophy, and Being/beings (for example Han, 2022). Once again, in theoretical consonance with the direction taken by Sloterdijk, a similar operation was proposed by Latour in the last chapter of his *We Have Never Been Modern*. Here, in a paragraph significantly entitled *The Parliament of Things* (Latour, 1993, 142-145), Latour propose to give political representation to non-human actors:

There are no more naked truths, but there are no more naked citizens, either. The mediators have the whole space to themselves. The Enlightenment has a dwelling-place at last. Natures are present, but with their representatives, scientists who speak in their name. Societies are present, but with the objects that have been serving as their ballast from time immemorial. Let one of the representatives talk, for instance, about the ozone hole, another represent the Monsanto chemical industry, a third the workers of the same chemical industry, another the voters of New Hampshire, a fifth the meteorology of the polar regions; let still another speak in the name of the State; what does it matter, so long as they are all talking about the same thing, about a quasi-object they have all created, the object-discourse-nature-society whose new properties astound us all and whose network extends from my refrigerator to the Antarctic by way of chemistry, law, the State, the economy, and satellites. The imbroglions and networks that had no place now have the whole place to themselves. They are the ones that have to be represented; it is around them that the Parliament of Things gathers henceforth. [...] We scarcely have much choice. If we do not change the common dwelling, we shall not absorb in it the other cultures that we can no longer dominate, and we shall be forever incapable of accommodating in it the environment that we can no longer control. Neither Nature nor the Others will become modern. It is up to us to change our ways of changing. (Latour, 1993, 144-145)

In congruence with Latour's proposal to establish a '*parliament of things*,' Sloterdijk sought to develop a series of concepts for a non-dichotomic metaphysics. The most representative one, together with that of anthropotechnics, is that of *homeotechnics*, that indicate those techniques that stand in continuity and not in rupture with nature, such as agriculture and breeding (Sloterdijk, 2017a, 133-148). This concept, unfortunately, will be practically abandoned by Sloterdijk (Lucci, 2021, 93-97), but it still testified of an underground dialogue between Sloterdijk and Latour that has decisively marked Sloterdijk's anthropotechnical reflection.

Latour in Sloterdijk II: assemblages and foams

Sloterdijk directly analyses Latour's work in a crucial passage in the third volume of *Spheres*, placed at the end of the long introduction to the volume (Sloterdijk, 2016, 193-230). Sloterdijk has just recapitulated the transition from the second to the third volume of his trilogy through a history of the concept of *anima mundi* (Sloterdijk, 2016, 179-192), used to summarise the historical, epistemological, and psychological function of the concept of the Globe in the history of Western culture. With this concept, Sloterdijk defined the planet Earth as an "universal monad" (Sloterdijk, 2016, 60), i.e., a physical-geographical and conceptual totality. For a long period of (Western)³ history, according to Sloterdijk, the anthropological, historical, scientific, ontological, and metaphysical horizon had been relatively stable: although constantly endangered by the irruption of various forms of otherness, these had been progressively integrated, in a more or less (physically and conceptually) violent manner, without however leading to radical changes in the existing ontological and epistemological status quo. A series of material and conceptual changes following what Sloterdijk calls "globalisations" – a plural term indicating a series of progressive relationships with otherness, that occurred following the geographical discoveries of the early modern age, which led to the deflagration of the single world image (= "The Globe") (Sloterdijk, 2013b, 9-10) – has led to the current fragmented situation, in which the singularity of the Globe of modernity is to be replaced by the plurality of the Foams of post-modernity (Sloterdijk, 2016, 60-61).

In this context Sloterdijk uses Latour as a conceptual support for the theses that will be expounded in the "programme" of the book, set out in the pages immediately following (Sloterdijk, 2016, 231-242). The question that Sloterdijk deals with in the passages about Latour's theory may seem at first glance to be of a definitional order – Sloterdijk is explaining the reasons for using the metaphor of foam and its value as a spatial concept – but it is, actually, of epistemological order. According to Sloterdijk, Latour is the author who, ever since his sociological investigations of "*laboratory life*" (Latour & Woolgar, 1986), has better understood how what in everyday language is defined as 'discovery' is, in reality, the result of a more complex process involving a series of human and non-human actors, of scientific and social protocols. These makes what is usually understood as 'discovery' definable in more correct terms as a 'product':

³ Sloterdijkian Eurocentrism has been noticed and criticised. Cf. among others Sunderland 2019.

In reality, the function of the discoverer is a far more active and complex one, as it is through their suppositions, observations, manipulations, descriptions, attempts and conclusions that the “matter” to be discovered takes the form in which its discoverability as an autonomous entity or a delimitable effect can intensify: The discoverer who is later acknowledged as such is, according to Latour (who refers to Whitehead’s *Process and Reality*) a manipulator and co-producer of “statements,” or rather “propositions,” from which the future discovery can emerge – not simply an ascertainment or finder of contextless facts. (Sloterdijk, 2016, 202-203)

The principles of what will become known as Actor-Network-Theory are used by Sloterdijk to explain the transition from macrospherology to plural spherology: the deflagration of the macrosphere, of the Globe, has to do with real changes, with ‘inventions’ and ‘discoveries,’ but these are never *ex-nihilo* events. They are rather the result of a series of actions, reactions, and relations between human and non-human, material and immaterial beings, which resemble much more a ‘migration’ into the social and epistemic realm of something that was previously, though present, excluded from it, than the creation of something that was previously relegated to non-existence:

Explication-conditioned innovations do, in fact, often make it seem as if aggressive new cohabitants had moved into the “house of Being” but found no suitable space available, causing them to take their lodgings by force. Small wonder that this has sometimes been described as “revolutionary” turbulence. There is, to recall one of the most dramatic developments, no doubt that the explication of writing through printing with movable type jumbled up the entire ecology of European civilization after 1500. One can even go so far as to describe the post-Gutenberg world as an attempt to incorporate the seemingly harmless new arrivals, which appeared in the typesetting workshops in the form of small pieces of lead, into a bearable cohabitation with the remaining cultural faces, especially people’s religious convictions. Proof through success came with modern literature and the school system of nation-states, and proof through failure came with the disastrous role of printing presses as carriers of nationalistic deformations of consciousness, as allies of all ideological perversions, and as disseminators and accelerators of collective hysterias. (Sloterdijk, 2016, 197)

Sloterdijk believes that having developed a heuristic model that allows one to escape the dichotomous alternative between ‘created’ and ‘discovered’ is Latour’s most significant

theoretical merit. However, Sloterdijk believes that Latour should be ‘tempered’ with Heidegger’s critic of technique. In his *Question Concerning Technology* (dt. 1954; en. 1977) Heidegger, while admitting that “Technology is a way of revealing” (Heidegger, 1977, 12), never ceases to warn that in the contemporary world, these unveiling risks becoming the only mode with which human beings relates to the non-humans. In this sense, Heidegger can be interpreted as a restraining force to the techno-enthusiasts, who believe that unveiling what is still concealed (=not known, not owned) is the great task of future humanity. Sloterdijk, on the contrary, believes that what is at stake for the future society is not so much the progressive ‘unveiling’ of all that is concealed but rather the maintenance of a certain balance between what is ‘brought into presence’ through a series of practices involving human and non-human actors, and what remains inappropriable: this is why Sloterdijk criticizes the contemporary era as the era of the “organized rupture of latency” (Sloterdijk, 2016, 210), i.e., the era in which something ‘new’ coincide with something either ‘invented’ or ‘discovered’.

Sloterdijk *contra* Latour? The (false) dichotomy between spheres and networks

In the paragraph of *Spheres III* following the one analysed above, Sloterdijk critiques the concept of network, a critique that could be indirectly referred to Latour. According to Sloterdijk, the metaphor of the network flattens a series of relations that, in his opinion, are always located in very specific and material 3D-spaces, into a horizontality lacking authentic spatial concreteness:

The concept of co-isolation in foam can be used to redress the misleading effects of the strained metaphor of the network, of which too many authors expected too much usually without noticing that their talk of interconnection was borrowing from an incorrect picture and an overly reductive geometry: instead of emphasizing the independent spatiality of the communicators that are meant to be connected to one another, the image of the network suggests the notion of inextended points joined as intersections of lines – a universe for data fishers and anorexics. (Sloterdijk, 2016, 237)

Although Latour is not directly named in these pages, the critique of the network metaphor can also be applied to the Actor-Network-Theory. In this sense, it is evident

how, for Sloterdijk, as much as Latour was and remained a point of reference on an epistemological level, it must be supplemented with a more spatially concrete metaphorical horizon. For Sloterdijk, the question concerning the human being is always also a question concerning its 'where', and its conditions. Latour's willingness to engage in dialogue on this point, and to admit the limits of his network metaphor, was concretised by Latour in a public conference held on 17 February 2009 at the Harvard School of Design (with Sloterdijk present). Latour, after having opened his speech emphatically and unequivocally with the phrase "I was born a Sloterdijkian" (Latour, 2009), accepts Sloterdijk's criticism of the concept of network, claiming however, beyond the different metaphorical horizon, the commonality of intentions that led Sloterdijk to formulate the concept of 'sphere' and himself that of 'network':

Peter and I have proposed to introduce, each in our own way, two sets of concepts, one coming from spheres and the other from networks. And let me say at the beginning that I have to agree with Peter that what is usually called networks is an "anemic" conjunction of two intersecting lines that are even less plausible than the vast global space of no space that it pretends to replace. [...] Spheres and networks might not have much in common, but they have both been elaborated against the same sort of enemy: an ancient and constantly deeper apparent divide between nature and society. (Latour, 2009)

Spheres and networks, apart from the essential metaphorical differences, are two similar concepts, according to Latour, because they were coined to try to overcome the nature/society dichotomy (as well as the nature/culture dichotomy), which isn't in things themselves at all, but rather the result of a precise epistemological narrative (what Latour called 'modernity' in *We Have Never Been Modern*). For both Latour and Sloterdijk, space is not something in which subjects and objects act, but is an element that helps to constitute the different actors, that co-determines them, and that is inseparable from the very concept of 'action':

Is space what *inside which* reside objects and subjects? Or is space *one* of the many connections made by objects and subjects? In the first tradition, if you empty the space of all entities there is something left: space. In the second, since entities engender their space (or rather their spaces) as they trudge along, if you take the entities out, nothing is left, especially space. (Latour, 2009)

Under this commonality of intentions, it is possible to argue that the dichotomy between networks and spheres is only a dichotomy if one thinks of the net solely as an immaterial, virtual space, as ‘net’ in the sense of the internet. In contrast, it ceases to be so if one understands ‘net’ in the sense of *Actor-Network-Theory*. It is for this reason that Latour can, on the one hand, claim that “In the case of Peter and me, I hope it’s clear that we belong to the same side of the divide” (Latour 2009) and, on the other hand, devote a significant part of his theoretical attention to Sloterdijkian spherological thought when it comes to giving a spatial dimension to his critique of modernity as an era of epistemological separation between beings.

Sloterdijk in Latour I: the Globe as artefact

It could at this point easily be understood, why the part of Sloterdijk’s production that Latour cites the most in his work is that which deals with spatial issues (with particular attention to the second and third volumes of *Spheres*): in this books Latour sees reflected the attempt to go beyond the dichotomies (nature/culture, nature/society, subject/object, human/non-human) that make it impossible to think of reality in a non-anthropocentric way, and which consequently make it impossible to think in a way that is up to the current ecological crisis. If even punctual quotations and references to the *Spheres* trilogy are scattered throughout much of Latour’s production dedicated to ecological themes, it is possible to argue that such quotations can be considered a *unicum*, as they all aim at the same goal: to explain through Sloterdijkian spatial analyses how concepts such as ‘globe,’ ‘global,’ etc. are anything but descriptive. Instead, they result from precise theoretical construction that have been structured over centuries and reflect equally precise political and metaphysical ideas (Latour ,2016). It is for this reason that in the present section, it will be considered, on an exemplary level, a single text by Latour – *The Anthropocene and the Destruction of the Image of the Globe* – as it presents in a particularly concise and argued manner the parts of Sloterdijkian special thought of most significant interest to Latour (Latour, 2017).

In a particularly incisive passage of the text, by concisely and poignantly summarising one of the cornerstones on which the entire *Spheres* trilogy is articulated, Latour clearly shows the reasons for his interest in Sloterdijk’s work:

Sloterdijk borrowed von Uexküll’s notion of *Umwelt* and extended it to all spheres, all enclosures, all the envelopes that agents have had to invent to differentiate

between their inside and their outside. To accept such an extension, one has to consider all the philosophical and scientific questions thus raised as being part of a very broad definition of *immunology*, viewed by Sloterdijk neither as a human science nor as a natural science but, rather, as the first *anthropocenic* discipline! Sloterdijk is a thinker who takes metaphors seriously and fully tests how well they measure up to reality – for hundreds of pages, if necessary. His immunological challenge is to detect how an entity, whatever it may be, protects itself from destruction by building a sort of well-controlled internal milieu that allows it to create a protective membrane around itself. [...] For Sloterdijk, the complete singularity of Western philosophy, science, theology, and politics lies in the fact that they have infused all the virtues into the figure of a Globe – with a capital G – without paying the slightest attention to the way in which that Globe might be built, tended, maintained, and inhabited. (Latour, 2017, 122-123)

Sloterdijk, as captured here in a masterly manner by Latour, drops ecology to the heart of philosophical anthropology itself, making the two disciplines indistinguishable. It is not possible, in fact, according to Sloterdijk, to think of a subject separately from the spherological conditions (i.e., ‘environmental’ in a broad sense: physical, symbolic, cultural, material, etc.) that make it possible, and these are an integral part of subjectivity. Abstracting subjects from their spherical environments and, conversely, abstracting these environments from what makes them what they are (i.e., both their ‘inhabitants’ and the theoretical and symbolic constructions that constitute their form) leads to untenable theoretical, ethical and political short-circuits: it is the possibility of drawing such conclusions from Sloterdijk’s spatial analyses that interest Latour.

In this sense, according to Latour, Sloterdijk’s philosophical greatness consisted in showing – mainly in the second volume of *Spheres* – how the Globe, that is, the ontological-metaphysical unity that functioned as the image-guide of Western Modernity, only existed as a construct: Metaphysical, theological, and ontological conceptions, but also works of art, literature, geographical expeditions, and political interests, have allowed it not only to become the unique self-representative image of the West but even to end up representing Nature in its entirety.

If Nature is the result of ‘technical’, theoretical-practical design operations, it is then possible to translate the problematic of creating images of the world back into ‘design’ terms. And it is exactly as a philosopher of design that Sloterdijk, once again, will be the focus of Latour’s interest.

Sloterdijk in Latour II: Design as *Dasein*

“Peter Sloterdijk is *the* philosopher of design” (Latour, 2011, 159). This sentence emblematically indicates how Latour, in his small treatise on design philosophy entitled *A cautious Prometheus*, places Sloterdijk, once again, in a central position for his analyses. Latour intends to show how a philosophy that places design at its centre can only take the form of a theory of action. Design aims to have an impact on reality, to modify things. But *how* it modifies things has nothing to do with a sort of divine *creatio ex nihilo*, or with a radical change of the existing, which brings into presence something that did not exist before. This is why, according to Latour, the first trait that defines design philosophy as a theory of action is its “post-Promethean” dimension (Latour, 2011, 153). To this ‘humble’ dimension proper to the design mode of action Latour adds four other characteristics: Concentration on details (which contrasts with the Promethean dream of an action that definitively breaks with all the past), lending itself to symbolic elaboration (artefacts need interpretation), elaborating materials and situations that are always already present (renouncing *ex-nihilo* creation) and always implying an ethical dimension (the production and design of artefacts always also implies the question of their accessibility, usefulness, usability, etc.).

This ethical dimension intrinsic to design practices allows Latour to call Sloterdijk into question. If design ethics is modal – that is, it applies to the different and singular ways in which artefacts are designed and produced – Sloterdijk can be considered its champion. Sloterdijk conceives the human being-in-the-world – which Latour defines in Heideggerian terms as *Dasein* – always in conjunction with the modes of such being:

To try to philosophise about what it is to be “thrown into the world” without defining more precisely, more literally (Sloterdijk is first of all a literalist in his use of metaphors) the sort of envelopes into which humans are thrown, would be like trying to kick a cosmonaut into outer space without a spacesuit. Naked humans are as rare as naked cosmonauts. To define humans is to define the envelopes, the life support systems, the Umwelt that make it possible for them to breathe. (Latour, 2011, 158)

In this idea of subjectivity extended to one’s environment, Latour finds the ethical dimension of Sloterdijk’s philosophy of design, and in parallel, of his philosophy *tout court*.

By ‘non-human beings’ is to understand not only living beings such as animals and plants, but also environments, atmospheres, and everything that Latour claims have

always been conceived as 'mere materiality' (Latour, 2011, 160). If one thinks of the subject beyond his/her immediate bodily boundaries, one must extend the boundaries of ethical behaviour to include non-human beings. It is in this sense that Latour reinterprets in Sloterdijk's favour the controversy the latter had with Jürgen Habermas in 1999 following the publication of *Rules for the Human Park*:

It is somewhat understandable that when Sloterdijk raised the question of how humans could be "designed", that is, artificially nurtured, this invokes the old phantasm of eugenic manipulations. But the similarities between these two projects prove to be completely superficial when submitted to a close examination. They are similar only in the same way that two trains can both be moving ahead even though they are at an intersection that will lead them toward completely different destinations. Habermas missed the switch, the bifurcation that is so important for us to locate. Yes humans have to be artificially made and remade, but everything depends on what you mean by artificial and even more deeply by what you mean by "making". We have returned to Prometheus and to the question of Creation. Are we able to be the God of intelligent design? This is the heart of the matter. This is why it is so important to talk of design and not of construction, creation or of fabrication. To design something as I indicated earlier, allows us to raise not only the semiotic question of meaning but also the normative question of good and bad design. (Latour, 2011, 160-161)

According to Latour, when Habermas attacked Sloterdijk in the late 1990s for his text on the human park, he embodied a way of seeing ethics that was still tied to an idea of the subject to be understood as a human being endowed with a body whose boundaries are delimited by his skin. Sloterdijk contrasted Habermas's humanistic ethics with his discourse on anthropotechnics, which, if one continues Latour's reasoning beyond the letter of the text, should be understood as a form of a spherological ethics. To speak of anthropotechnics, for Latour's Sloterdijk, is to speak, once again, of the non-human conditions that make the human possible. Artifacts, how collectives direct pedagogical, aesthetic, and political practices are forms in which the spherological design of the human is given, which require their own ethics. This ethics cannot be the anthropocentric ethics of classical humanism because it must be confronted with the fact that the human is at least also the object of a design, as well as being one of its subjects.

Conclusions

The path just taken shows how the dialogue between Sloterdijk and Latour is developed along parallel axes. On the one hand, when Sloterdijk confronts Latour, he appreciates and uses his epistemological critique of dichotomies such as human/non-human and nature/culture. This utilisation of Latour finds concrete expression in the two texts that Sloterdijk dedicated to anthropotechnics in 2001, *Rules for the Human Park* and *The Domestication of Beings*, where it is evident how his critique of monovalent ontology and bivalent logic uses Latour's texts (among others) as a theoretical pivot in order to demonstrate that 'pure' subjects and objects do not exist. On the other hand, Latour uses Sloterdijk's theories for similar purposes: for Latour, the most interesting point in Sloterdijk's work is the fact that Sloterdijk theorises an anthropology that goes beyond the human as a subject limited by his bodily boundaries, and includes the environmental dimension. It is in this sense that for Latour Sloterdijk becomes "the philosopher of design" (Latour, 2011, 159): if 'design' means thinking about a creative process that also involves the human being, then Sloterdijk is the thinker who, in contemporary times, has contributed the most to developing a philosophical-anthropological vocabulary that helps to extend the boundaries of *anthropos* to its environments and conditions of existence. In this sense, it is possible to conclude this paper by attributing characters of reversibility to Latour's statement, "I was born a Sloterdijkian" (Latour, 2009). If this sentence, in fact, in the light of the considerations above on Sloterdijk's relevance for Latour is true, the specular one can also be considered as such: it is possible to imagine a Sloterdijk who, by virtue of that "stellar friendship" mentioned in the opening and interrupted by Latour's death in 2023, could claim: "I was born a Latourian".

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THINKING POLITICAL ECOLOGY WITH LATOUR, HARAWAY AND STENGERS*

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PENSANDO LA ECOLOGÍA POLÍTICA CON LATOUR, HARAWAY Y STENGERS

Abstract

In recent years a significant number of contributions coming from different fields of study are developing an understanding of political ecology beyond the modern bifurcation between society and environment. Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour and Isabelle Stengers occupy a prominent place in the contemporary debate. In this article I explore a network of key concepts, such as terrestrial politics, Chthulucene and cosmopolitics, as a lure for thinking political ecology in the human-non-human continuum. These three perspectives are helping me to stay with three key problematics in

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contemporary politics: the necessity to think a third political space against and beyond regressive nationalism and green globalism, the processes of politicisation of a rising everyday environmentalism and the pragmatics capable of nurturing transversal alliances, compositions and coalitions amongst divergent singularities and socio-ecological movements in the time of the intrusions of Gaia.

Palabras clave

Ecología política; cosmopolítica; naturalezacultura; política alternativa de la materia.

Resumen

En los últimos años, un número significativo de contribuciones provenientes de diferentes campos de estudio están desarrollando una comprensión de la ecología política más allá de la bifurcación moderna entre sociedad y medio ambiente. Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour e Isabelle Stengers ocupan un lugar destacado en el debate contemporáneo. En este artículo exploro una red de conceptos clave, como política terrestre, Chthulucene y cosmopolítica, como un atractivo para pensar la ecología política en el continuo humano-no-humano. Estas tres perspectivas me están ayudando a quedarme con tres problemáticas clave en la política contemporánea: la necesidad de pensar un tercer espacio político frente y más allá del nacionalismo regresivo y el globalismo verde, los procesos de politización de un ambientalismo cotidiano en ascenso y la pragmática capaz de nutrir alianzas transversales, composiciones y coaliciones entre singularidades divergentes y movimientos socioecológicos en el tiempo de las intrusiones de Gaia.

Keywords

Political ecology; cosmopolitics; natureculture; alternative politics of matter.

In recent years a significant number of contributions coming from Science and Technology Studies (Haraway, 2019; Latour, 2018; Papadopoulos, 2018; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017), cultural anthropology (Holbraad, Pedersen, & Viveiros de Castro, 2014; Kohn, 2013; Tsing, 2015; Viveiros de Castro, 2015), geography (Braun & Whatmore, 2010b), political theory (Bennet, 2010; Coole & Frost, 2010) and philosophy of science (Barad, 2007; Stengers, 2010, 2011) are developing an understanding of political ecology beyond the modern bifurcation between society and environment. Starting from divergent theoretical perspectives, this series of authors are inviting us to take seriously what Braun and Whatmore call *the stuff of politics* (Braun & Whatmore, 2010a). This expression emphasises the need to develop a conception of political ecology that does not separate the forms of human association and conflicts that we are used to call politics from the socio-material basis of life, and the concrete practices and infrastructures through which forms of life are created, reproduced, sustained. This focus on material politics brings with itself a significant attention for the role that more than human actors, including artefacts and technological objects, play within the fabric of social conduct. Politics is materialised through the ways in which things of all kinds – material objects, chemicals, bodies, machines, digital ecologies, ecosystems – help constitute the common worlds we share, and the dense fabric of relationships in and through which we live. The ecological perspective emphasises the interconnectedness of people, animals, plants and the geophysical world, as well as the intertwining of ecosystems, histories, technologies, institutions and cultures (Chakrabarty, 2021). While an environmental viewpoint predominantly conceives nature as separate from human societies, ecological thinking understands the complex web that binds together humans, non-humans and planetary worlds (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2014). According to Latour (Latour, 2018), ecological thinking introduces the biggest paradigm shift in the social sciences in the last fifty years, framing societies in interconnected multicultural and multinatural worlds.

Among the different theoretical perspectives that help us think political ecology beyond the environment-society dichotomy, those developed by Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour and Isabelle Stengers certainly occupy a prominent place in the contemporary debate. In the next three sessions I will explore a network of key concepts, such as terrestrial politics, Chthulucene and cosmopolitics, as a lure for thinking political ecology in the human-non-human continuum. Haraway sees the depletion of the culture of modern humanism and the simultaneous decentering of the human in relation to the material world, technologies and other species as a condition of possibility for experimenting with richer socio-material compositions and more sustainable

multispecies coexistences. Latour invites us to think the continuity of all worldly action within a human and non-human continuum, showing us how an ecological perspective can be developed beyond a normative notion of nature, which increasingly appears as the outcome of a purification that claims to separate human society from the material world. Finally, Stengers asks us, in the time of the intrusions of Gaia, to reactivate our capacity to pay attention. In the first instance, we must pay attention to what we depend on because, as Stengers tells us, humans depend on something greater than themselves, on a chain of susceptible forces with which, nevertheless, we must compose ourselves. As we will see in the next sections, these three perspectives are helping me to stay with three key problematics in contemporary politics: the necessity to think a third political space against and beyond regressive nationalism and green globalism, the processes of politicisation of a rising everyday environmentalism, the pragmatics and ethics capable of nurturing transversal alliances, compositions and coalitions amongst divergent singularities and socio-ecological movements.

Political ecology in hybrid collectives

Rejecting any essentialist distinction between nature and society, Latour taught us that *we have never been modern* (Latour, 1993) humans, for millions of years, have extended their social relations to a range of non-human actors with whom they form material collectives. This notion of collective emphasises how human and non-human actors continuously compose each other in common worlds. Latour complicates and rethinks the category of agency, challenging the humanistic and intentional traits through which it is usually defined in sociological and political thought. Agency is the power to act and, in Latour's perspective, this power, or *potentia*, rather than being located exclusively in the human body, is distributed among all the things of the world. That's why Latour means by political ecology not so much a concern for nature but a certain way of fostering and conceiving the association between humans and non-humans as an alternative to modernisation. In this section I explore Latour's political ecology, starting from his materialistic approach.

“There are simply more agencies in the pluriverse, to use William James' expression, than philosophers and scientists thought possible” (Latour, 2005, 116). In Latour's thinking, things themselves are multiple. This notion of multiplicity has nothing to do with interpretative flexibility or symbolic representations, rather is, according to Latour,

the thing that dislocates itself as multiple. Because a thing is always a node, a pluriverse of material agents. The composition of the real is here defined as the outcome of actions and influences that actively involve heterogeneous actors: the real is always the outcome of a co-action, it is performed by a co-production of agents, enacted by a hybrid composition. A pluriverse is never a stable object but is continuously performed by a set of relationships and actions carried out by both human and non-human agents.

Latour is telling us that in the constitution of a material world, human beings are not the central actor, rather they share their agency with a diverse number of material agents of which they are not masters and over which they exercise no control. This perspective complicates the modern bifurcation between subjects and objects. Moreover, an entity's power to act is not separable from the network of relationships that influence a possible action. Heterogeneous connections perform the real, which is the unstable, always provisional outcome of exercises of creation involving a plurality of agents, both human and non-human. The continuity of a flow of actions is allowed, permitted, made possible by this co-action, co-participation, co-extension. One actor is made to act by many other actors, and thus action is always borrowed, distributed, suggested, influenced, linked, translated. Action is dislocated within a network of actions, of influences, of relations.

Modern humanism is reductionist, in Latour perspective, because it relegates action to a few powers, conceiving the rest of the world as mute forces. If this is what modern political mediation does, thus relegating many significant actors out of the political field, Latour's proposal for a "non-modern constitution" consists in recognising a right of tribune, a right of political participation and representation to non-human actors. A "parliament of things" in which a kind of hybrid management is exercised starting from the partial agreements that gradually emerge among heterogenous actors. If politics in Latour refers to the capacity to extend and foster practices of negotiation, the non-modern constitution constitutes a way for including new agency in constituted forms of policy, in order to cultivate better conditions of negotiation. In this way, new agencies are introduced and included within the constitutional project.

The need to include non-human entities in politics becomes even more urgent in times of ecological crisis. It is a matter, according to Latour, of reconstructing a realism of the Earthbound (Latour, 2018) capable of reconnecting politically with the material dimensions that enable the generation of terrestrial life: the necessity of recognising the fabric of material dependencies that make up a territory, a *milieu* of life. Latour resists to think Gaia (Latour, 2020) as a total organism because it is populated by different scales

and durations, and thus a territory of life can only be traced through an exercise of mapping in which different entities belong to and co-produce heterogeneous scales and durations. If we trace the elements that make life possible, we find a tangle of dependencies, implications and co-actions that are configured as more than local and less than global. The task of a terrestrial politics, which Latour contraposes to both a universalistic understanding of the global and a local folded in on itself, would be to cultivate roots and routes capable of relearning what could mean inhabiting a territory. A terrestrial politics comes with our capacity to reconnect ourselves to a past to reinvent and with our capacity to situate ourselves in a milieu. These are two fundamental dimensions for a terrestrial politics, a politics that refuses any localist and reactionary belonging. The politics of univocal globalisation has made a tabula rasa of these two dimensions, conceiving the territory as an effect of global forces and the past as something to be overcome. Instead, Latour proposes that we reconnect with the many dependencies that allow us to live in a territory – a fundamental exercise in trying to understand what we are willing to defend – and to conceive the past as inheritance, passage, resurgence, transmission, transformation, generation – a fundamental exercise in understanding what to pass into the present, and what is worth to reinvent (Latour & Schultz, 2022).

This terrestrial perspective is certainly a relevant conceptual tool for thinking a horizon of political ecology beyond, and against, the paradigms of univocal globalisation and regressive localism. Unfortunately, Latour seems incapable of bringing the investigation of the terrestrial into the ecological experiments and the multiple attempts to inhabit territories differently: recognising the trafficking of human-non-human relations is not enough for a politics of material regeneration, it matters how practices generate, or not, other entanglements and alternative politics of matter. Latour stops at the threshold of practices, unable to leave the political framework of modern representation. Nevertheless, in the current political landscape, in which the more than local and less than global processes of ecological transitions are trapped by these two fronts, the terrestrial perspective constitutes a precious lure for thinking (beyond Latour) a possible *third* political space, starting from the experimentation of processes of *reparative governance and ecological democracy* across different scales and geographies: alternative forms of agriculture and soil renewal, re-vegetation of urban spaces, indigenous ontologies, experimentation with bio-fuels and green chemistry, recuperation of traditional and indigenous systems of land use and land care, water and biodiversity conservation, production of alternative forms of energy, participatory practices of urban and regional ecological planning, to name just a few examples.

Du Bois (Du Bois, 1964) provides the conceptual framework for reparative justice in *Black Reconstruction in America* and Fanon (Fanon, 2004, 58-59) raises the question of reparations as part of anticolonial action. Reparations have a long history in postcolonial thought and practice and are also a defining moment of indigenous politics for decolonising settler colonial lands (Bacon, 2018; Whyte, 2018). Reparative governance reinstates a postcolonial and decolonial perspective into the governance of ecological transitions. Unlike “romanticised reparations” (Cadieux et al. 2019, 649), contemporary transition projects start from the assumption that there is no pure and original state to begin with: environmental destruction, colonial and racial injustices, geopolitical inequalities, and the eradication of other ways of life are deeply intertwined with ecological degradation (Cairns, 2003). Reparative governance relies thus on the framework of reparative justice that seeks to address the wrongs done to those who have suffered and, in most cases, are still suffering the ecological consequences rather than focussing solely on the punishment of the offenders (Almassi, 2017; Macleod, Beynon-Jones, & Toerien, 2017; Perez Murcia, 2014; Walker, 2010; White, 2016).

An ecological democratic political constituency addresses, involves, and implicates increasingly a very different set of actors, human as well as nonhuman, in its material workings. Such a reconfiguration of the political constitution is of course refused from the perspective of regressive nationalism or liberal green globalism, and it is impossible to be conceived through existing political institutions. In the sense of Rancière (Rancière, 1998), we could say that a constituent democracy (and a new institutional imaginary) emerges as those nonhumans and more-than-social actors enter the political scene only to reorder it, so that it can allow for them to act politically.

The sympoietic game of the Cthulucene

How is it possible to think the constitutive nature of material forces and processes in ecological, social, technological and political life not as an inclusive politics of representation, but primarily as an instituent politics capable of inaugurating alternative politics of matter and more sustainable entanglements? This question brings us to explore a significant difference between the perspectives of Latour and Haraway.

For Donna Haraway, we live in hybrid worlds as a consequence of the fact that the modern chronotope, the specific ways in which time and space were conceived in modern science and culture, imploded in contemporary forms of life (Haraway, 1997).

The modern frame of meaning has imploded. And thus, the essentialist dividing lines that separated the natural from the cultural, the technical from the political, the human from the non-human, the material and the semiotic have imploded. An imaginary made up of delineated regions and stable boundaries is replaced by one in which fusions and condensations create hybrid worlds (Haraway, 1991). If Crutzen told us in the early 2000s “welcome to the Anthropocene” (Crutzen, 2002), in the same years Haraway told us “welcome to the implosion of anthropos, welcome in natureculture”. The continuous folding of everyday life, science and technology, something we have learned, with Haraway, to call technoscience, is the main material vector that brings us into the contemporary era. Technoscience disarticulates the time/imaginary called modernity, it marks a mutation of the historical narrative, “similar to the mutations that mark the difference between the sense of time in European medieval chronicles and the secular, cumulative salvation histories of modernity” (Haraway, 1997, 4). Technoscience overcomes modern distinctions between nature and society, subject and object, the natural and the artificial. In the midst of these implosions, new practices and configurations of knowledge emerge. Haraway helps us to glimpse in the end of the humanist culture and in the decentralisation of the human subject with respect to the material world, technologies and other species, a condition of possibility for escaping humanity in favour of richer forms of socio-material composition and multi-species terrestrial coexistence. Within these multiple implosions, Haraway explicitly tells us that the political difference to be made consists in not so much restoring the modern frame of meaning, but experimenting with forms of life that can assemble humans and more than humans in more sustainable ways.

In *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Haraway, 2016), a book dedicated to the unpredictability of kinship, Haraway gives us a series of practical notes for living, surviving and subverting the age of human exceptionalism. These are stories collected and recomposed in a game of strings, speculative fabulations, scientific theories, artistic performances, ethnographic studies, imprints of activism, reflections on bodies and technosciences, stories and landscapes whose contours are redefined daily from the plural and heterogeneous forms of living that are inhabiting these landscapes. Stories and facts in which being in the world and making worlds are always collective and multiple exercises, in which acting means, consciously or unconsciously, acting with other creatures: becoming with significant others. This is the Chthulucene, a space-time useful for staying in contact with what lives and dies, in barbaric times. The

companion species – the commensals of the earth – carry out forms of partial recovery, work the earth in the earth, create multi-species shelters and refugia, learn from each other from the problems they are facing.

The Chthulucene is also the name of a *third* narrative, third in relation to the narratives of the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene. The Burning Man, Haraway tells us, is the true icon of the Anthropocene: humans busy burning fossils and determined to create new fossils as quickly as possible. Haraway looks also at the stories of the Capitalocene because it was not the human species that created the conditions of colonialism, forced industrialisation, the nuclear age or the sixth mass extinction. The capitalist globalisation, and its socio-material implications, continue to be a fundamental object of her investigation. At the same time, the stories of the Chthulucene conceptualise the political ecology of our current historical moment in a very different way than the narratives of the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene. The symptom Anthropocene testifies to the indelible traces of human presence on planet Earth, positioning humans as equally the source of the problem and the key to the solution. In a similar pattern, Capitalocene anthropomorphises an economic system by assigning to it some form of human agency as if it is the system itself that is the subject of history. In both narratives the ecological is dependent on the social and humans are positioned as the culprits and, simultaneously, the guarantors of social and ecological peace. Within the framework of the Chthulucene and the imperative to “make with” something else emerges: human beings are in and with Earth, and the abiotic and biotic powers of the planet are the key actors of this narrative. Regenerating the biodiverse powers of Earth is the work and the sympoietic game of what Haraway calls the Chthulucene, an alternative grid which defines an era that should be dominated by multi-species responsibility and material, experimental justice.

What happens when human exceptionalism and utilitarian individualism of classical political and moral economy become unthinkable in the more advanced scientific disciplines? This fundamental question confronts us with a key concept in Haraway’s thought: sympoiesis. Taking seriously the invaluable work of biologist Lynn Margulis (Margulis, 2007), Haraway rearticulates the notion of sympoiesis and extends it in natureculture starting from an ontological primacy of relations over individual entities. Creatures do not precede their relations, quite the contrary. The tortuous and continuous mundane Earth making is not made up of pre-existing entities bound together by competitive interactions, so neoliberalism is a poor narrative.

We relate, know, think, world, and tell stories through and with other stories, worlds, knowledges, thinkings, yearnings. So do all the other critters of Terra, in all our bumptious diversity and category-breaking speciations and knottings. Other words for this might be materialism, evolution, ecology, sympoiesis, history, situated knowledges, cosmological performance, science art worldings, or animism, complete with all the contaminations and infections conjured by each of these terms. Critters are at stake in each other in every mixing and turning of the terran compost pile. We are compost, not posthuman; we inhabit the humusities, not the humanities. Philosophically and materially, I am a compostist, not a posthumanist. Critters – human and not – become-with each other, compose and decompose each other, in every scale and register of time and stuff in sympoietic tangling, in ecological evolutionary developmental earthly worlding and unworldling. (Haraway, 2016, 97)

Haraway's thought constitutes an invaluable contribution for thinking a materialism capable of staying with the challenges of political ecology, a materialism that allows us to think processes of ecological regeneration not only as a social process. We are facing the sixth mass extinction. The productivism of globalisation has been developed through a colonial politics of matter. Certain humans and certain non-humans have been composed in unsustainable ways. The consequences are in our soil, air, water, within us and around us. The threshold of ecological sustainability has been crossed. We need other politics of matter: alternative forms of coexistence between species, inorganic substances and artefacts (Ghelfi & Papadopoulos, 2021). I find this *alternative* material politics in a myriad of contemporary environmental and ecological movements that, starting from specific practices and contexts, are inventing other modes of existence by experimenting with forms of interaction that actively involved the significant presence of human and more-than-human entities. By inventing ways of relating between heterogeneous elements, by creating ecologies of existence rich and responsible enough to be able to cultivate mundane prosperity, these movements invent practices of "making with" within a politics of everyday life. From ecological and peasant movements to practices of solidarity for the right to health, from permaculture to occupied factories, from feminist and queer movements to indigenous resistance, a central point of contemporary political ecology consists in the experimentation of other ways of relating amongst people, plants, humans and soil, technologies and humans (Ghelfi & Papadopoulos, 2023). If an instituent politics refers first of all to the capacity to practice material transformations,

this capacity to act cannot be defined as a human agency or as a universal to be realised. On the contrary, a politics of matter is sustained by a situated capacity to ‘make with’ others, human and more than human. If historical materialism has been characterised by an extraordinary ability to hold materialism and activism together around the knot of class struggle, the materialism that emerges from the Chthulucene reactivates a relation between materialism and activism. But rather than starting from a regime of intelligibility of politics within the social sphere of production, it locates politics in the cosmos, in the scientific laboratory, in the commune, in the farm and the field, in the hackerspace and in the many other places where we are learning, in times of ecological crisis, to decolonise our relationship with the materiality of life.

The intrusions of Gaia

The traces of the ecological conflict are everywhere, while the chemical, biological and geophysical modifications of the Earth are leading to increasingly ungovernable consequences. As Crutzen argues, we live in “terra incognita” (Crutzen, 2002). This is the new ecological condition (Ghelfi, 2022a). This condition of unpredictability forces us to be with the many “intrusions of Gaia” (Stengers, 2017): the uncomfortable truth that ecological crises are part of our present and our future. Gaia is the name of a Greek mythological deity who shows a firm indifference to the effects of her actions: Gaia does not act to punish anyone or to restore justice. She acts, plain and simple. Gaia’s intrusions interrupt any idea of historical progress, geocentric humanism, passive nature.

In the time of Gaia’s intrusions Isabelle Stengers defines political ecology as the politicisation of existing problematics in relation to the material processes that inhabit the world: “No issue, no politics”. And more specifically, she tells us that the ecological question has to do with the frictions that the intrusions of Gaia are determining. In order to stay with such frictions, Stengers suggests a relationship between problems and solutions in which the emphasis is on the ability of a common problem and a matter of common interest to capture the attention of different actors. But here what is common is not a common property or a substance, rather it is what calls different actors into play, what forces them to think, to invent, to act in concert depending on each other. The common activated by an ‘acting with’ is what emerges between us, what in various ways challenges us, what forces us to think and act. The common, then, is what reactivates a collective capacity of composition between different actors,

who compose themselves by refusing the presence of an external authority, of a moral arbiter. This notion of ecological composition marks a clear discontinuity with an idea of politics in which agreement and unity are based on a supposed common nature. In contrast, Stengers is inviting us to go slow, and slowly compose common worlds and ecologies of existence. As the etymology of the word *interest* suggests, what is interesting is what emerges between us, what forces us to think with others, what extends our rationalities, what puts us in touch with the consequences of something that is happening.

The word cosmopolitics (Stengers, 2005) signals the need, in the new ecological condition, of the re-invention of the political, a precious term. The cosmos signals not the presence of a theory of the cosmos that grounds cosmopolitics, but the focus on an *indeterminacy* that makes politics possible. Only by placing this element of indeterminacy at the beginning of politics is it possible to enter in cosmopolitics, and in the experimentation of possible modes of coexistence, without hierarchies, between modern and nonmodern cultures. Stengers suggests resisting the temptation to think politics as a plan for a “good common world”, that is, to turn a situated practice of which we are particularly proud into a general key: a neutral universality that is good for everyone in every situation. His proposal is not aimed at providing us with a list of procedures that can capture a definition of what is good in a good common world, rather the implicit idea implied in her enigmatic cosmos suggests precisely that we should slow down, creating a space of hesitation about what it means to say *good*. The cosmos is not an object of representation, but it refers to an unknown, “the unknown constituted by these multiple, divergent worlds, and the articulations of which they could eventually be capable” (Stengers, 2005, 996). Stengers’ proposal works as a lure for creating forms of self-regulation: an ethics capable of facilitating the experimental invention of reciprocal constraints in collective action. This ethical-political proposal is aimed at supporting our attempts not to surrender to what has caused Gaiia’s intrusions, and to reactivate our capacity to pay attention.

In the first instance, we must pay attention to what we depend on because humans depend on something larger than themselves, on a chain of susceptible forces with which, nevertheless, we must compose. The collective re-appropriation of the capacity to pay attention is, after all, what Stengers has always been concerned with: the experimental nature of scientific practices, the gathering around “common causes” and the enterprise of risk-taking are examples, some of the many possible ways for regaining a sense of what we are doing. A meaning that is always situated, precarious, vulnerable, linked to

the invention of practical tools, to the fabrication of *dispositives*. The culture of political dispositives is a pharmacological affair. Medicines, like any artifice, can be both remedy and poison. And we must reckon with the ambiguity that every pragmatics of political construction brings with it. Times have changed: teleologies of salvation, epic heroism and the truths of utopia do not belong to the pharmakon culture. The commoners, those who gather around “common causes”, agree with prudence, learn to value, act, feel and think with others: “multiplicity of gatherings around what forces thinking and imagining together, around common causes, none of which has the power to determine the others, but each one of which requires that the others also receive the power of causing to think and imagine those that they gather together” (Stengers, 2015, 94).

This ethical-political approach is a precious tool for nurturing processes of transversal alliances, compositions and coalitions amongst divergent singularities and socio-ecological movements in the time of the intrusions of Gaia. Stengers’ ecology of practices suggests ways in which we can rally around what we depend on: a river, a forest, a school, a health centre, a neighbourhood, a farm. She invites us to think about how situations can be transformed if those who suffer find techniques and pragmatics to think and act together. It is not just a matter of opposing a refusal or to pull the handbrake, but of working practically on the construction of material alternatives capable of allowing something from the past to make room for itself, to reinvent itself in the present. In her *In Catastrophic Times. Resisting the Coming Barbarism* (Stengers, 2015) she focuses on a political event: the anti-GMO resistance movement in Europe and its ability to create a wide network of alliances and to generate around this partial victory a new field of visibility capable of questioning what the agriculture of modernisation has become. The agriculture of Progress, the one that was able to put traditional seeds and small farmers out of business, no longer appeared so “rational” after this battle. On the contrary, a set of farming techniques, ways of life, ecological concerns and food cultures (Ghelfi, 2022b) that were supposed to belong to a peasant past destined to pass away, began to emerge for what they are: material alternatives in the present.

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CLIMATE CHANGE REGIME AND THE GOVERNMENT OF EMERGENCY. A CONCEPTUAL PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS*

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RÉGIMEN DE CAMBIO CLIMÁTICO Y EL GOBIERNO DE EMERGENCIA. UN ANÁLISIS FILOSÓFICO CONCEPTUAL

Abstract

In his late writings, Bruno Latour identified a profound mutation of our relationship with the world whose outcomes relapse on the dimension of nature and the

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human species. The problem of the unity of the world that he evoked from the Anthropocene caesura coincides with a vision dominated by technology that leads to a planetary Climate Leviathan that, in other words, represents a previously unknown planned organization of natural phenomena. Our contribution aims at reflecting on the concerns that the New Climate Regime (and its relationship with the political) launches in a world challenged by the climate emergency. It empathizes that the adaptation of the political produce new techniques of the government of the emergency insofar as the demos – a reality constituted by bodies as political subjects– are excluded from crucial decisions which concern the political.

Keywords

Anthropocene, Climate Change Regime, Emergency, Latour.

Resumen

En sus últimos escritos, Bruno Latour identifica una profunda mutación de nuestra relación con el mundo cuyos resultados recaen en la dimensión de la naturaleza y de la especie humana. El problema de la unidad del mundo que evocó a partir de la cesura del Antropoceno coincide con una visión dominada por la tecnología que conduce a un Leviatán climático planetario que, en otras palabras, representa una organización planificada de los fenómenos naturales hasta ahora desconocida. Nuestro aporte apunta a reflexionar sobre las preocupaciones que el régimen del cambio climático (y su relación con lo político) lanza en un mundo desafiado por la emergencia. Se enfatiza que la adecuación de lo político produce nuevas técnicas de gobierno de la emergencia en la medida en que el – demos realidad constituida por un agregado de cuerpos, entidades biológicas y políticas – es excluido de decisiones cruciales que conciernen a lo político.

Palabras clave

Anthropocene, Régimen de Cambio Climático, Emergencia, Latour.

Introduction

In a series of conference papers, edited with the title *Face à Gaïa*, Bruno Latour invited the reader to reflect on a “transition” from a world to another. The passage implied a transformation whose outcomes relapse not merely on the physical-biological dimension of the Earth system, but also on the mere existence of human species. Latour referred to something as “*a profound mutation in our relation to the with world*” (Latour, 2017, 8). A New Climatic Regime emerges and the problem of the political asserts itself under new guises. The dilemma has its backdrop in the modern age when the contract to seek security through the State and the process of domestication of nature through the means of science took place.

By mentioning Thomas Hobbes’s Leviathan, Latour identified the transition phase to a New Climate Regime as the conclusion of an era: the Hobbesian sovran gives way to “this other Cosmocollus”, the Anthropocene (Latour, 2017, 227). For Latour, it not implies an ecological crisis but a sort of “*mutation*” (Latour, 2021, 38).

Environmental historians usually date the beginning of this “new planetary age” at the end of World War II.¹ This term indicates “that anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions have taken over from variations in solar radiation as the dominant influence on the climate and hence on the biology and physiology of the earth” (Northcott, 2014, 21-22). However, since the industrial revolution era, the impact of human activities on planet earth has played a decisive role in the substantial alteration of the climate (Jamieson, 2014). The late eighteenth century coincides with the beginning of a new energy regime based on fossil fuels. The intensive exploitation of oil, natural gas and coal made the economy of Great Britain – and later the global economy – flourish (McNeill & Engelke, 2014).

The year 1610 represented another relevant stage that historians usually associated with the beginning of the extirpation of the American Indians (Lewis & Maslin, 2015). This date probably embodies the modern character of the Anthropocene, up to its definitive affirmation that will take place in 1945, a *caesura* that someone defined as the “Great Acceleration”.² It implies that “what has been done by man, mainly between 1945 and today, will leave a mark of our passage on the planet, on its climate, on its ecosystem,

¹ The Nobel prize winner Paul Crutzen first identified the beginning of a new era called the Anthropocene, starting from his studies on the alleged effects of a nuclear war on the ozone layer of the earth’s atmosphere. His research led him to believe that since 1950 the great acceleration of gas emissions, combined with other factors, marked a caesura point and the beginning of the Anthropocene, see Northcott, 2014.

² McNeil & Engelke (2014) use this expression with a direct reference to Karl Polanyi’s *The Great Transformation*, a book published in 1944.

on the acidification of the oceans and elsewhere, which will remain indelible over the millennia to come” (McNeill & Engelke, 2014, 7).

These suggestions make intelligible the intrinsic, but also unavoidable, character of the Anthropocene, upon which the New Climate Regime consolidates itself and new adaptations of the political emerge. This contribution intends to offer an interdisciplinary reflection on the transformation. It will do it through the lens of the different methodological approaches of the authors. Firstly, it will introduce a conceptual discussion of the nature of climate change and its relationship with the political, also pointing out why the challenge of climate change should be prone to re-politicization. Secondly, it will investigate a crucial point arising from the adaptation of the political in the post-modern age, i.e., the criteria heuristically oriented of the techniques of government in the context of the emergency.

The paper follows this structure. The first part of the paper offers a historical philosophical reenactment of the categories of nature as political actor and its links with the New Climate Regime drawing from Bruno Latour and Carl Schmitt. It emphasizes a polemic struggle, i.e., a conflictual dichotomy, that the ecological mutation involves (Section 1). Nature, as political actor, refuses any instrumental approaches to climate change, that is a managerial technique whose employments are far to expect any possibility of tackling climate change. It brings us to discuss the plausibility of planetary management (what Geoff Mann and Joel Wainwright rebaptize “Climate Leviathan”). However, as we will argue (Section 2), the advocacy of global climate justice is no longer a valuable instrument to grasp the climate change dilemma.

In the second part of the paper, we reflect on the fact that, in the regime of emergency, the adaptation of the political produces new forms of “governmentality” (in a Foucauldian meaning). Contemporary democracy has been characterized by radical mutations in the techniques of the government of the emergency represented by climate change (and, more in general, by environmental and healthcare emergencies). They have challenged the endurance of institutions vis-à-vis the *demos*, understood as population and aggregate of bodies, upon which the techniques of government build themselves. Hence, the focus shifts to the troubled relationship between governmental practice and the forms that the political can assume (Section 3). We reflect on some questions: who can be called to decide on collective issues with a close (and intrinsic) political meaning, as the dynamic of the Anthropocene will have irreversible outcomes on the human species and future generations? Which political regime will be desirable? Which strategic alliances or climate sophistication techniques/technologies will be legitimately prosecutable?

Climate change: a conceptual-critical outline: starting from Latour

In order to understand the evolutionary dynamics of climate history, it is interesting to consider the events surrounding the modern spread of European civilisation. The struggle for the conquest of the New World is connected to *spatialisation* practices, which gave rise to a new relationship with the Earth (and sea): a relationship of domination which has shaped political history as a dialectical opposition between different elements (Sferrazza Papa, 2021).

Latour draws upon Carl Schmitt's categories, comparing the German jurist to a toxic poison "kept in a laboratory for the moment when one needs an active principle powerful enough to counterbalance other even more dangerous poisons: it is all a matter of dosage!" (Latour, 2017, 228). In this passage, Latour presents Schmitt as he who has succeeded in grasping that space of modernity densely constituted by the (problematic and cogent) bifurcation between *physis* and *nomos*, between natural law and positive law (Latour, 2017, 230). Nature, hitherto envisaged as formless and chaotic space – let us think of Hobbes' *state of nature* – becomes subject to the hegemonic conquest of technology and state sovereignty, just as the *free space* across the ocean becomes a land of conquest, upon which a new legal order, the international one, is imposed. For both Schmitt and Latour, therefore, the technological turn is the linchpin in the changing relationship between human beings and the world (according to Schmitt, 2015a, 31, "in this pivotal period, an important technological event occurs"); the representation of the *globe* is the outcome of a relationship of domination, of a subordination process³.

The critical picture outlined by Latour is thus associated with the idea of change. His reflection on the concept of *Gaia* expresses the need to "repoliticize" the issue of climate change, not through a political redefinition of the question, but rather by emphasising the *polemical* – i.e., conflictual – aspect that the dilemma of ecological transformation entails⁴. In this sense, the controversial relationship with modernity concerns the need to defuse the conflict between European powers by means of the conquest and partition of the New World; the resulting international order coincides with the establishment of a balance based on the process of occupation of *terrae nullius* and the civilising of (non-human) humanity. Latour turns to Schmitt's radical and theological conservatism

³ The very image of the *globe* that emerges in the modern era reflects the need for the self-representation and legitimisation of the system of nascent states; European rationalism synthesises (and reduces) the vastness and diversity of *space* into a *map*, starting from a blank slate, see Farinelli, 2009.

⁴ Latour (Latour, 2017, 237) uses the expression "repoliticize ecology".

in order to rediscover those categories that have shed light on the *depoliticising* character of liberalism and the techno-industrial era⁵. The issue concerns the process of global Eurocentric standardisation and involves what Schmitt calls “the unity of the world”, understood as “the unity of the organisation of human power which is to plan, direct, and dominate the whole Earth and all of mankind” (Schmitt, 2015b, 271, *our own translation from Italian*).

According to Latour, another question arises. The dynamics of conquest in the modern era allowed states to mitigate their rivalries; the process of conquest and extension made it possible to imagine the pacification of the globe through the domination of European states. The transition to a New Climate Regime coincides precisely with the decline of the *ius publicum europaeum* and that international system⁶. In this regard, no new land to conquer can serve to defuse the economic and power rivalries between states, especially at a moment of transition in which what most attracts expansionist aims no longer extends above the Earth, but rather involves resources located *under the surface of the Earth* (Latour, 2017, 233). This is connected to the relationship between mining and quarrying practices and the significant increase in carbon emissions into the atmosphere. The contest between economic-productive powers in this area opens up a new scenario, with a twofold outcome: on the one hand, the race to seize resource-rich deposits – be they energy resources, rare-earth elements, or other materials indispensable for technological production⁷ – exacerbates geopolitical tensions, potentially leading to unpredictable and risky outcomes for the global order (Northcott, 2014); on the other hand, the impossibility becomes apparent of identifying a “sovereign arbiter” (Latour, 2017, 238) capable of acting as a neutral third party during phases of tension.

The emergence of the New Climate Regime envisaged by Latour is fraught with antinomies. It presents a new war of all against all, in which the unpredictable *Gaia* exerts her primordial force, at once creative and destructive. According to Latour, *Gaia* cannot be reduced to the symmetrical representation of the *Globe*; rather, it “can be defined as the multiplication of the sites in which radically foreign entities practice mutual ‘existential negation’” (Latour, 2017, 238). What lies on the horizon is not a scenario of

5 With regard to this point, an interesting critical interpretation is provided by Palano, 2018. In his view, Schmitt seems incapable “of truly moving beyond the horizon of liberalism”, as the most significant – as well as etymological – aspects of *nomos* reveal the determinism and “economic foundation” of sovereign decision-making (Palano, 2018, 107-112, *our own translation from the Italian*).

6 On the international law and the context of global climate change, see Adamin (Adamin, 2008, 67-87).

7 Interesting remarks on this point may be found in Crawford, 2021. She focuses on the advances in Artificial Intelligence and the material and mineral resources required to develop it. She criticises the definition of “clean technology” by emphasising its negative impact on ecosystems and environmental resources.

peace, since climate change – which concerns the transformation of our relationship with the world – cannot easily be contained by resorting techno-scientific forms of management, and the mere maintenance of the “cosmic vehicle” Earth, or by adopting technologies to re-engineer the planet (Latour, 2021; Sloterdijk, 2018; Northcott, 2018). The crucial point, which concerns the political, is related to *decision-making* processes in an emergency context: what political regime will be desirable, what strategic alliances, what climate engineering techniques/technologies will be legitimately pursuable or employable?

With the turning point of the Anthropocene, the problem of the unity of the world – evoked by Latour himself – has come to coincide with a dominant vision of technology in the contemporary system, a kind of technical development that “inexorably leads to new forms of organisation and centralisation. If technology and not politics is really the destiny of mankind, then the problem of unity can be considered solved” (Schmitt, 2015b, 272).

Towards a Climate Leviathan?

The point at issue in the transition to a New Climate Regime involves the public dimension and is intertwined with the political question: decision-making at a planetary level fosters a range of tensions, different perspectives, and different perceptions of the kind of risk associated with the state of emergency. Latour intuits that the prism of modern European sovereignty is the critical factor in the political re-framing of the ecological question; by retracing Schmitt’s uneven intellectual path, Latour stresses the need for fragmentation – the inevitable multipolarity of the terrestrial sphere.

The nostalgic turning towards a planetary sovereign, as a typically modern reflex, would no longer suffice to bring the world back to unity⁸. This not only amplifies and multiplies the scenarios of conflict between state actors and geopolitical areas, but also leads to an intensification of the struggle between *territories* and the very configuration of interests at the state and inter-state levels. The extent of the involvement of those on the fringes of the *demos* – understood here as the political-biological body – in the processes of identifying and choosing strategies and responses to cope with *change* is a decisive trait and requires us not to let “the nation-states occupy the stage all by themselves” (Latour, 2017, 262). What seems to be envisaged is an ecological reinterpretation of the awakening of territories through the appropriation of a sort of reverse sovereignty, as a

⁸ For a reading of Latour as a critic of modernity see Fössel, 2023.

response to the planetary sovereign who believed to have asserted his dominion once and for all (Latour, 2017, 263).

Latour's theory is framed within a broader ecological criticism of liberal capitalism by Geoff Mann and Joel Wainwright in the book *Climate Leviathan. A Political Theory of Our Planetary Future* (Mann & Wainwright, 2018). They adopt an interpretative perspective inspired by Hobbes' political theory in order to decipher the character and extent of the state of emergency brought about by climate change. The configuration of planetary governance arrangements becomes a decisive aspect of the very capacity of the political to adapt to the process of ecological mutation. Thus, the authors propose four models – which we might call ideal types, in the Weberian sense of the term – to describe the potential forms by which the political, in its deliberative/decision-making sense, adapts to a phase of transition and instability in order to survive in the planetary future.

At a first level, these four models are distributed on two axes: two formations are distributed on the *capitalist* economy axis, the other two on the *non-capitalist* axis. At another level, the same formations lie, respectively, on the axis of *planetary sovereignty* and that of *planetary non-sovereignty*. The intersection of these formations through their distribution on the axes gives us a combination of possible, potential, and plausible patterns of political responses to climate change-induced transformations. What we have is a climatic Leviathan (capitalist axis, planetary sovereignty), a climatic Behemoth (capitalist axis, planetary non-sovereignty), a climatic Mao (non-capitalist axis, planetary sovereignty), and a “Climate x” (non-capitalist axis, planetary non-sovereignty). Regardless of the specific location of each model and its plausibility, the critical aspect highlighted by Latour concerns the feasibility, effectiveness, and legitimacy of these models as a decisive and adequate means to tackle the transition to a New Climate Regime.

Latour believes that the essentially modern development of Hobbesian sovereignty – be it at the planetary or the nation-state level – tends to define the problem by leading it back to the technical-administrative sphere, evoking a regime governed by means of “police operations” capable of ensuring a degree of coercive or manipulative intervention. In such circumstances, Latour adds, “Peace is given in advance” (Latour, 2017, 238). In the scenario that lies ahead, a war of all against all, peace must be constructed in each case by taking into account the political demands of nature – *Gaia* – that burst forth in all their destabilising and assertive power. In the New Climate Regime, which Latour calls “compositionist”, peace must be created “through the establishment of a specific diplomacy” (Latour, 2017, 238). The decisive issue for Latour

is to deconstruct the categories of modernity and decolonize the lexicon and concepts through which we interpret and orient the *transition* to a New Climate Regime, one that – Latour reiterates – “is in fact a new political *régime*” (Latour, 2021, 122).

This new political regime implies questioning the modes of conquest of the modern era, and the way in which European states defined the subdivision of the earth after the discovery of the New World. Furthermore, Latour sees in Schmitt’s critique of liberalism a source of inspiration for deconstructing the very dynamics of the capitalist economy, seen as a key factor in the increased modification and alteration of ecosystems. The long crisis of global capitalism can only represent one of the stages of transition to the new regime if we look at the opposition between Liberal Politics and Climate Politics (Northcott, 2014, 243).

Governing Climate Change Regime

Climate change regime impacts on every geographical scale, but its particular nature, extent and dynamics still remain a source of uncertainty. The complexity that lies behind these problems got worsen and became more gnoseologically opaque by the nature of the emergence that climate change posed to the planet. The spectrum of Climate Leviathan resurfaces in the light of the political emergencies of our time, which entail the need, often protracted over time, to redetermine the meaning of everyday life, to identify adapting strategies to the crisis and to face unknown situations (Collier & Lakoff, 2021).

By the concept of “emergence,” we must understand a temporary reorganization of society upon a multiplicity of interconnected (but, at the same time, differentiated) levels, whose consequences are lasting and weigh on single individuals and communities (Longo, Preite, Bevilacqua & Lorubbio, 2020).

From a certain perspective, the planetary healthcare emergency laid bare the intrinsic frictions between global political–economic regulation and local communities, drawn by Mann and Wainwright, which testify to the transformation of the existing form of sovereignty, enabling the world’s most powerful states to engage in planetary management. Providing for the emergency needs of the population, preventing and protecting them against dangers, and coordinating interventions in the event of catastrophes, are all the duties of every state. Any politics assumes a historical and geographical terrain to which it lays claim: these are the grounds on which the legitimacy of the nation-state rests because of the “specifically political character” of the capitalist nation-state.

On the other hand, collective duties should adequately promote the protection of people to seek out a stable effort to balance the opposing needs in terms of security and freedom, also giving more attention to the cultural aspects of emergency on political and social life (Beckett, 2013).

The ever-growing interpenetration of science and technology in people's lives, as well as in political affairs and economic interests is a concrete reality by now. In an increasingly complex and interdependent world – not only as regards communication networks, but also because of skill's interdisciplinary that the solution of social problems requires – the modes through which public decisions are taken must deal with the way public decisions are made in a society (Sobel & Leeson, 2007). Moreover, the puzzling epistemic problems upset climate justice-related issues and it challenges the belief that scientific knowledge is objective and can be more or less directly translated into political action (Grundmann, 2007). The discussion on strategies and policies implemented to deal with the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic crisis has suddenly influenced different aspects of human activity from politics to all social and economic relationships and, ultimately, life itself.

The way the climate change regime has been addressed in the public speech is one of the most relevant aspects of this mutation. Although they are aspects often considered on the sidelines of the scholarly debate, the immanent relationship with the political and its mutations, as well as the way the climate change regime, is transforming political and legal theories of sovereignty, legitimacy, and democracy. Far from being interpreted as an issue whose worth is heuristically delimited, namely as a prerogative of “technicians”, the climate change regime should be eminently understood as an ethical, social, and intergenerational problem (Pelling, 2010). For these reasons, it directly claims the political.

In his time, Foucault already observed a crucial transformation in the technologies of government that characterized modernity that includes a wide range of control techniques on population (Foucault, 2007). The term he coined to identify the reflection on the art of government and its transformations over time (“governmentality”) consists of the different techniques and strategies by which a society is made governable. Governmentality techniques organize the political and produce different forms of subjectivity through political (and economic, e.g., think about neoliberalism) means (Burchell, Gordon & Miller, 1993; Lascombes, 2004; Lemke, 2007). From a Schmidtian perspective, the Foucauldian criticism of power can be viewed as a new form of adaptation of the political where biopower constitutes a technology for managing humans in large groups, e.g., populations and aggregate of bodies (Lombardi, 2017).

For more than a decade, the climate change emergency arises the sensibility of political activists and global associations but the solutions that address it (think about the Green New Deal), although enlightened, are mainly inspired by techniques of government whose goal is to achieve the management of the political, a category that, in a broad sense, include both human life, bodies and the nature itself (the earth, the sea and so on). In other words, climate change continued to be framed as a scientific–technical problem, best addressed by a flexible adaptation “governance” translated into policies. (McHugh, Lemos & Morrison, 2021). Instead, according to Mann and Wainwright (Mann & Wainwright, 2015, 316), a materialist approach to these questions should “reflect on the manifest inequalities of power in a mode of global political–economic regulation currently constituted to a significant extent by liberal capitalism” because global climate justice has failed to produce a coordinated response to climate change (Bazzicalupo, 2018)

The increasing resort to measures to rule social problems (whose nature is relevant for the survival of humankind) in the regime of emergency through the means of government assigns public authority the monopoly of decisions that cover life’s aspects that directly concern the political. Hence, the assumption that public leaders can decide on issues that ground on the political and their relationship with human life adapt the political to previously unknown needs.

All these concerns also require a revision of the traditional interpretations of political representation and lead to the question of whether the adaptation of the political will produce a rearrangement of the democratic assets. Thus, against the ever-growing risk of a transformation of the demos’ instruments of participation and deliberation into a sort of epistocracy subordinated by experts provided with epistemic authority (Jeffrey, 2018; Bhatia, 2018), which would exclude it from crucial decisions in increasingly complex contexts, some conclusive reflections are needed. We witness a sort of dichotomy between the forces of nature and the interests that must be publicly represented. On one hand, there is nature, a political actor that refuses the technique, so we cannot attribute the climate change emergency to a unity of the world, where a *police state* can discipline human affairs by the means of technique. On the other hand, the demos are a reality constituted by an aggregate of bodies, biological and political entities, which are frozen out from crucial decisions which concern the political.

Hence, the adaptation of the political also becomes a normative issue as the concern is about which public actors are in the best position to discern collective issues whose consequences are articulated on the dynamics of the Anthropocene, that have

irreversible outcomes on the human species and the future generations. Who takes on the responsibility of deciding on definitive and ineluctable dynamics? Can we solve this dilemma through geopolitics or by an alliance between international forces like in power games? Otherwise, can public decisions be assumed based on the interests of capitalism and its adaptation to new needs, like the so-called Green Economy?

In the perspective of Climate Leviathan, radical climate justice (Climate x), a sort of incitement launched by Mann and Wainwright, might be an alternative practice of climate justice advocacy as it radically counterposes itself to a governmentality reason that pushes global political-economic regulation. According to the perspective of radical climate justice any global policies to counter climate change emergencies (i.e., global climate justice) must be rejected as supranational institutions cannot compete with the alternative ways the local community might pursue and which might better suit their interests (and not to mention that very often local community hold accountable global climate justice for the inefficiencies and inequalities that climate change regime brought to the planet).

Radical climate justice might allow us to get out of the paradigm of modernity so that it reaches a stage of post-modernity and “de-colonizes” the perimeter of the climate change approaches. Climate x might represent a rebuilding of the political space that the demos claim and, indeed, several attempts testify to this need, like the express trust and sensibility towards intersectional ecosocialism and intergenerational equity and justice (Foran, 2020; Singh, 2021). Nevertheless, it leaves some variables open. In fact, despite planetary warming accelerating ecological transformation, the adaptation of the political is not perceived as completed and it nevertheless does not yet signify a fundamental transformation of the grounds of the political.

Conclusions. Space for further philosophical pathways

Our contribution aimed to reflect on the adaptations of the political in the post-modern era starting from the caesura identified by Latour, which coincides with a profound mutation of our relationship with the world. Once the Anthropocene took its path and the acceleration of gas emissions provoked irreversible outcomes on life's planet, it is not possible to come back nor stop its effects on the political – a category that also includes nature as political actor and bodies as political subjects.

After retracing this fundamental mutation in the categories of the political and reflecting on the conflictual dichotomy evoked by Latour that the ecological mutation

involves, we retraced the contractions arising from the unity of the world. According to Mann and Wainwright the dichotomy seems to suggest that if planetary management of the world, i.e., a climate Leviathan, would emerge, it will do so as a transformation of the existing form of sovereignty, enabling the world's most powerful states to engage in a scientific–technical solution to the problem of climate change. The contradiction lies in the fact that nature as political actor is inevitably conflicting with technical management, which concretizes itself in the governance solicited by the planetary Leviathan. On the contrary, from our conceptual analysis state arise that the climate change regime should be understood as an ethical, social, and intergenerational problem.

We found a fruitful perspective that lies at the crossroads of Latour's ecological re-interpretation of territories, understood as natural entities that assume a political subjectivity, and the hypothesis of Climate x suggested by Mann and Wainwright. The aim to put together Latour's theory with the hypothesis of Climate x seems to be achieved by our contribution as both the conceptual frameworks produce new elements of deconstruction and decolonize the lexicon and concepts through which we interpret and orient the transition to the New Climate Regime.

We also framed this need through the lens of Foucauldian categories to stress that the adaptation of the political produces unknown techniques of government which appear diriment in the light of the emergencies of our time and entail the incessant necessity to redetermine the meaning of everyday life and to adapt new strategies to the crisis. The recent dispositions adopted by the United Nations on sustainable fisheries can testify to the needs, moved by the obduracy through which nature is framed in the technical-administrative sphere, employing governmental techniques to ensure a degree of manipulative intervention. A draft resolution underscoring threats of sea-level rise, loss of marine biodiversity, and marine debris has been unanimously approved by the General Assembly of the United States in December 2022. The decision aims to prevent the vulnerability of marine ecosystems on the forecasting of climate scientists to back up the future climate crisis. Hence, we concluded that the adaptation of the political is not perceived as a relevant political (and intergenerational) problem yet, but as a policy-related problem. Instead, nature should be also considered in its “non-human” agency to be a political actor *au pair* with another form of representation of the world. Within this space, Latour's reflections meet the Climate x hypothesis: the sea in its nature dimension reappears to claim a sovereign logical space, overturning the traditional forms of sovereignty.

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THE NEW CLIMATE REGIME BETWEEN LATOUR AND SERRES: THE THÉÂTRE DES NÉGOCIATIONS AND THE EUTOPIA OF THE PARK*

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EL NUEVO RÉGIMEN CLIMÁTICO ENTRE LATOUR Y SERRES: EL THÉÂTRE DES NÉGOCIATIONS Y LA EUTOPIA DEL PARQUE

Abstract

Addressing the New Climate Regime between Bruno Latour and Michel Serres consists here in drawing attention to ‘assonant terms’ (language of the world and retroaction), applying to them the Serresian operation of translation, which could

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allow to grasp the ‘variations’ and the ‘invariant’. Starting with Latour’s remarks (Face à Gaïa) on Serres’ *Le Contrat naturel*, that is credited with pioneering attention to the idea that the Earth ‘retroacts’ to what ‘we’ do to it, I analyze Latour’s reflections with specific reference to his interest in Serres’ idea of translation. I then move on to examine Latour’s geopolitical suggestions (Face à Gaïa) and translate them into Serresian positions (Parc National des Pyrénées). My journey concludes with a problematic reflection on Latourian-Serresian invitation to follow the lines that connect us to things, and to shed light on the compositions to which the human gives rise with the non-human.

Keywords

Language of the world; retroaction; agency; translation; eutopia.

Resumen

El análisis el Nuevo Régimen Climático entre Bruno Latour y Michel Serres consiste aquí en dejar que la atención sea atraída por los ‘términos asonantes’ (lenguaje del mundo y retroacción), aplicándoles la operación serresiana de traducción, que podría permitirnos captar las ‘variaciones’ y lo ‘invariante’. Partiendo de las observaciones de Latour (Face à Gaïa) sobre *Le Contrat naturel* de Serres, al que se atribuye el mérito clamando de haber abierto el camino a la idea de que la Tierra es ‘retroactiva’ a lo que ‘nosotros’ le hacemos, analizo las reflexiones de Latour con referencia específica a su interés por la idea de traducción de Serres. A continuación, examino las sugerencias geopolíticas de Latour (Face à Gaïa), y las traduzco a posiciones serresianas (Parc National des Pyrénées). Mi viaje termina con una reflexión problemática sobre la invitación a seguir las líneas que nos unen a las cosas y a arrojar luz sobre las composiciones a las que lo humano da lugar con lo no humano.

Palabras clave

Idioma del mundo; retroacción; agentividad; traducción; eutopía.

Introduction

Dealing with the theme of the New Climate Regime (Latour, 2015, 17) between Bruno Latour and Michel Serres does not, in my intention, consist in conducting a comparative/textual analysis aimed at tracing cross-references, allusions, or mutual critical observations. Rather, it is to draw attention to assonant terms/arguments such as language of the world and (retro)action, and to apply to them the Serresian operation of translating (*traduire*), which could make it possible to grasp the ‘variations’, to measure the transformations of the message, the negotiations etc., and behind them, the ‘invariant’ (Serres, 1974, 11).

My path begins with Latour’s observations in *Face à Gaïa* (read in relation to some passages of the brief presentation of Serres’s thought made by Latour in 1988 (Latour, 1988)) on *Le Contrat naturel* of Serres (Serres, 1990), which is credited with having ‘pioneeringly’ and significantly drawn attention to the idea that the Earth ‘retroacts’ (*réroagit*) in response to what ‘we’ do to it (Latour, 2015, 74-81). In this context, I analyze Latour’s reflections (subject-object relationship, New Climate Regime, *trait/contract*) with particular reference to his interest in Serres’s idea of translating. I will then examine the Latourian geopolitical proposals expressed in the 8e *Conférence* of *Face à Gaïa* (*Comment gouverner des territoires (naturels) en lutte?*) (and in particular in the presentation of the simulation *Théâtre des négociations*) (Latour, 2015, 285-347) and attempt to translate them into the positions set up by Serres in the *Parc National des Pyrénées* (Serres, 2007). A short text that effectively articulates (a kind of case study?) themes such as change (ecological *latu sensu*), ‘retroaction’, new perspectives of humanization, the question of representation, etc., and proposes the natural park¹ as an eutopia, a real space of free connections and a political (ethical) model.

Finally, in its last part, the circle of my path ‘closes in the opening’, with a problematic reflection, between Serres and Latour, on the invitation to follow the lines that unite us to things, not to interrupt the search for connections, to pass through the different agglutinations to which traditional representational politics does not give voice, and to shed new light on the compositions to which the human gives rise along with the non-human.

¹ Among the many works by Serres reflecting on eco-political issues, the reason for the choice of this text (a recreation of a Serresian excursion in the Pyrenees National Park together with the Gardiens du Parc, published in a celebratory volume released in 2007 on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Park itself) is that it presents, in a concrete and situated way, the ‘model’ of a new world as a hypothesis of ‘response’ to the challenges of the climate crisis.

The Soundtrack of the World: A Latourian Serresian Invariance

In order to better understand and substantiate Latour's (Latour, 2015) recognition of the cruciality of Serres' *Le Contrat naturel* in drawing attention to the idea of the earth's retroactions (it can be moved, and it can react), it is worth taking a step back in time by recalling the Latourian considerations on Serresian 'a-criticism' and 'pre-Copernicanism'. In *The Enlightenment Without the Critique: An Introduction to Michel Serres's Philosophy* (Latour, 1988), in trying to find the best 'word' to describe Serres's thought, Latour identifies as a salient feature of Serres's philosophy a-criticism, that is, its non-belonging to 'critical' philosophy. The philosophy that, from Descartes to Kant, to Marx, etc., has reduced "the world into two packs, a little one <the cogito, the transcendental, the class struggle> which is sure and certain, and the immense rest which is simply believed and in dire need of being criticized, founded, re-educated, straightened up ..." (Latour, 1988, 85); a philosophy that, from Kant onward, can be defined as a Copernican revolution that revolves things around the mind or what is defined as the focus that occupies the center (Latour, 1988, 88).

In Serres's thought Latour, on the other hand, does not find any kind of negation, overcoming, subsuming, overshadowing (Latour, 1988, 91) neither when, for example, it comes to the relationship between language and things, nor between science and the world (Latour, 1988, 89).

Faced with the relationship between language and things, Serres, in fact, in a pre-Copernican way (Latour, 1988, 89), argues that things, because of their richness, are irreducible to our knowledge, and suggests looking at them not from the point of view of the knower, but from that of the known. Faced with the relations of the sciences with the world, he asserts that scientific knowledge does not reduce or abolish the world, nor does it reveal its essence, but it adds to it, it is within it, is part of its culture (Latour, 1988, 89). The Latourian conclusion on Serresian thought is thus that "Serres just provides the soundtrack of this movie: the world" (Latour, 1988, 97).

A reflection is necessary here. I am convinced that, when framed between its 'premises', i.e., the notations above, and what 'will be' of it in the 2e *Conférence of Face à Gaïa* (*Comment ne pas (dés)animer la nature*), this statement constitutes a crucial juncture in the path of focusing/translating Latourian and Serresian 'assonances'. The general features of Serres's reflection that attract Latour's attention/appreciation and lead him to this conclusion seem to be, beyond and within the framework of a-criticism and pre-Copernicanism, a-dualism, a-reductionism, relationality, connections, interest, at-

tention, and recognition of the world in its varieties, agency, etc.; all approaches/themes that, indeed, resonate in Latourian thought: importance of the network of relationships, of context, of the here and now; proceeding step by step; idea that science adds to the world, not replaces it, etc. (cf. Croce, 2021; Manghi, 2018a; 2022).

Thus, the idea of providing the soundtrack of the world appears to be the ‘assonance of assonances’, the ‘common’ task that Latour seems to grasp and express between himself and Serres. To put it in the discourse I am pursuing, it is the general invariant through translation, that is, the terrain of negotiations that can/must be activated between the different Latourian and Serresian ‘assonances’. And in this ‘assonance of assonances’, I see in filigree the theme of the ‘inadequacy’ of any definition, individuation, distinction, separation, hierarchy of subject and object, as well as the theme of the recognition of the irreducibility of multiplicity of the world, of a-centrism and of course of anthropo-eccentrism.

It is well known that these themes ‘become very much’ in Latour and Serres, but, although the references would be many, I believe that Latourian *Comment ne pas (dés) animer la nature* (as well as *Face à Gaïa* as a whole), and the Serresian *Parc National des Pyrénées*, are two of the most significant texts to focus on.

Earth ‘Retroacts’ in Response to What ‘We’ Do to It: A Latourian Serresian Issue

The Serresian (but also very Latourian) concern for the world and its varieties, expressed in *The Enlightenment Without the Critique*, becomes, through a conceptual twist, in *Face à Gaïa* description/warning in the face of uncomfortable ‘truths’ such as global warming and the New Climate Regime (i.e., “la situation présente, quand le cadre physique que les Modernes avaient considéré comme assure [...] est devenue instable”) (Latour, 2015, 16).

As in many of his works over the last two decades, in this book Latour addresses the issue of the climate crisis by believing that it has become essential to forge new categories for living and acting in the New Climate Regime. That is to say, in the current ecological change, geologically called the Anthropocene, but which he prefers to express in sociological-political terms, better suited to emphasize the opposition to the ancien régime and the related ideas of revolution to be invented, the need for a revision of previous concepts of nature and the reorganization of public space to adapt our conditions of existence to this new subversive situation.

The question that runs through *Face à Gaïa* concerns what could replace the old (modern) ways of looking at nature as the pendant of human subjectivity and the background of human actions (cf. Aït-Touati & Coccia (Eds), 2021). Developing Lovelock's insights (Lovelock, 1991; 2000; 2006; Lovelock & Hitchcock, 1967; Lovelock & Whitfield, 1982), to whom he acknowledges the use of the mythical Greek name Gaia (with several misunderstandings) to refer to the fragile and complex system by which living phenomena modify the Earth by keeping it in a condition to harbor life (habitable because it is inhabited), and the merit of pointing out that the Earth itself is not an inert surface and the environment is not a context that shelters and protects us, Latour points to the figure of Gaia itself, understanding it primarily as a collective term to indicate precisely a widespread proliferation of agency ("puissance d'agir") (Latour, 2015, 18).

We are thus witnessing a radical change in perspective: due to the unforeseen effects of human history, the elements that the ancien régime brought together under the name of Nature leap to the fore; everything we have made unstable (oceans, climate, glaciers, etc.) interacts with us, with the risk of a war of all against all. And now the old Nature has disappeared, it is precisely the turn of Gaia, neither subject nor object, neither active nor passive, neither local nor global, an unpredictable being, probably consisting of a series of feedback loops in perpetual turmoil; a system that evolves with us and confronts, questions, and challenges us even violently; in any case, "l'occasion d'un retour sur Terre" (Latour, 2015, 17).

"Mais désormais, il n'y a plus de spectateur, parce qu'il n'y a plus de rivage qui n'ait été mobilisé dans le drame de la géohistoire. Ce qui vient vers nous, c'est cela que j'appelle Gaïa, et qu'il faut regarder en face pour ne pas devenir fou pour de bon." (Latour, 2015, 50). This statement opens the reflection, carried forward in *Comment ne pas (dés) animer la nature*, on agency, on the difficulty of distinguishing between humans and non-humans (cf. Bontempi, 2017) and specifically on the question of Earth's retroaction.

Latour, in particular, with regard to the topics of our interest, clearly highlights the derivative/secondary character of attributing inertia (absence of agency) or animation (presence of soul) to an actor (Latour, 2015, 64), rather drawing attention above all to the intermingling, to the continuous exchanges of action through transactions and negotiations between agencies of different forms and origins, in the context of what, with an explicit geological borrowing, he calls the metamorphic zone (Latour, 2015, 74); a zone that, at the moment when the human-non-human, nature-culture distinction becomes precisely a secondary operation or abstraction, we must learn to inhabit.

It is thus only by setting aside the image of man acting against a background of things that the idea of earth's retroaction in response to what 'we' do to it can be understood 'differently', and one of those who first made such an effort was Michel Serres in his *Le Contrat naturel* (Latour, 2015, 74).

The 'assonance', here, takes shape through the mouth of Latour himself, who recognizes Serres as the first to have drawn attention to the connivance between previously distinct agents (such as the old figures of subject and object), considering them intermingled and interchangeable.

Between Latour and Serres, at this point it seems to me that I can grasp the idea of a 'subject' (agent) that is so called because it can be 'subjected' to the (re)actions of another agent, which, in turn, derives its subject name from being equally 'subject' to the action of the other (Latour, 2015, 77). According to Latin etymology, the sub-jectum, says Serres, is in fact that which is thrown under (cf. Serres, 2001; 2003; 2010) Whether we talk about the Anthropocene, Gaia, the New Climate Regime, the Natural Contract, or the Park (themes to which the operation of translation will apply), it is no longer possible to admit the idea of an active subject acting autonomously on an inert objective context, that is, to dualistically/dialectically oppose subject and object.

If then the subject shares agency with other subjects equally lacking autonomy, and non-humans reveal as agencies connected to what we are and do, the Earth, in turn, loses its role as object, of what 'is thrown in front of' or 'must be kept at a distance'. To understand the meaning of the idea of the Earth's retroaction to our actions, it thus becomes essential, in Latour's words, not to distribute agency simply and a priori between 'human' and 'non-human' actors.

In this perspective, beyond the ambiguities and/or inherent problems of the idea of natural contract, noted by Latour in the 2e Conférence (Latour, 2015, 79) and also more recently (cf. Manghi, 2018b, 119), what I consider a key to interpretation is his focus on the meaning/role of the term *trait* in Serresian thought. Indeed, it should be recalled that Serres traces the term *con-trat* (contract) back to its primary meaning of *jeu de cordes* (set of cords) (Serres, 1990, 169), whose 'simple element' is precisely the *trait*, i.e., the bond, which is a 'technical' expression, drawn from the legal, geopolitical, scientific, and geometric context, through which he designates transactions between the agencies of different types of entities (so-called subjects and objects) (Latour, 2015, 79).

In *Le Contrat naturel*, but also at other times in his works (cf. Serres, 2009; 2010), Serres states something very important for my discussion, namely that we do not know the language of the world, but we do know its animistic, religious, or mathematical

versions, since the Earth speaks to us in terms of forces, bonds and interactions (Serres, 1974; 1990). It is thus that, by pointing to a 'slippage', almost a translation, between *trait, jeu de cordes* (con-tract), forces, bonds, Serres, as Latour points out (Latour, 2015, 80), identifies as a condition of the possibility of speaking the language of the world the ability to translate its various versions from one to the other. In other words, the translation becomes the resource that allows us to understand by what we are attached to and on what we depend on; this is, precisely Earth's retroaction. And in the end Latour says: "si nous devenons capables de traduire, alors les lois de la nature commencent à avoir un esprit." (Latour, 2015, 65).

In conclusion, what Latour reiterates with Serres is the shallowness and inadequacy of the 'phenomenon' of de-animation: to say that the Earth has not only motion but also a way of being moved that makes it react to what we do to it is not the delirium of a madman possessed by the idea of adding a soul to what does not have one (Latour, 2015, 85)

But then, if the Earth system "n'est pas morte" (Latour, 2015, 85), if Gaia is "« en guerre »" and "« prenant sa revanche » sur les humains" (Latour, 2015, 87; Lovelock, 2006, 150), what to do?

The New Climate Regime and its Geopolitics: between the Théâtre des négociations and the Eutopia of the Park

Although the terms, figures, and modes of argument are different, the question, the cogency of addressing it and pointing to hypotheses of response are perceived as unavoidable and urgent necessities by both Latour and Serres.

Before proceeding, it seems appropriate to draw attention and spend a few words on Latour's remark, in the 2e Conférence, that translation is Serres' "grand projet" (Latour, 2015, 80). In this regard, it should be recalled that the character of Hermes, god of the roads, crossroads, messages, communication, and commerce, is the 'sign' that underlies not only the cycle of Serres' works named after him (Serres, 1969; 1972; 1977; 1980) (one of which- Hermes, III- explicitly dedicated to translation (Serres, 1974)), but precisely Serres' entire research, which is informed by the effort to connect 'things' (fields, contexts, sciences, etc.) in themselves heterogeneous (Dolphijn, 2019; Moser, 2016; Watkin, 2020; Rignani, 2022).

Under the Serresian 'big hermetic umbrella', to put into communication/communicating thus means to travel and precisely to translate, to exchange, to negotiate, to pass

into the place of the 'other', taking up the word as a cross version of it. But it should also be specified that translating is properly understood as the operation of translating, which works in the widest way and in the most diverse fields: it is application (Serres, 1974, 11). The operation of translation makes it possible to 'measure' the transformations of the 'message', and the range of variations between the extreme limits of the 'traction' that lies below the threshold of what is invariant.

Thus, if becoming able to translate is essential in relation to the world and its language, in a 'meta-reflexive' sense the same is true from Latour's 'language' to Serres' and vice versa.

So, let us return to the question: what to do?

The essential thing, as Latour repeats again and again, is to try to face Gaia, a kind of signal telling us to return to Earth, as well as the only way to shake Moderns' beliefs about who they are, the epoch they live in, and the ground on which they stand. Only if Gaia appears as a threat, can we be sensitive to the difficulty of being of this earth and become aware of the New Climate Regime (Latour, 2015, 271).

But to acquire such a 'non Modern' view of ecological problems, it is essential to accept that we are divided over them: we must recognize that we are in a state of war, even before we seek new forms of sovereignty; we can no longer believe that we live peacefully under the protection of a single unifying Nature, and must instead seek to identify our enemies and the territories to be defended (Latour, 2015, 271-272).

The New Climate Regime thus requires us to take up the political discourse to finally make it 'geo-political'; and the starting point of this 'refounding' is, along with the awareness of the obsolescence of the idea of an indifferent Nature, the recognition of the non-unity or rather the division of the human species. For Latour, this means making room for collectives in mutual conflict: hence the distinction/conflict between the *peuple de la Nature* and the *peuple de Gaïa*, that is, in geohistorical terms, between the *Humains* of the Holocene and the *Terrestres* of the Anthropocene (Latour, 2015, 274). In the Latourian view, what distinguishes them fundamentally is the mode of "taking possession": *Humains* take the Earth, while *Terrestres* are taken by it. This means that the Moderns are 'incapable' of belonging to any cosmos and indifferent to the effects of their actions and to the retroactions that might make them aware of what they are doing and responsible for what they have done; and that in contrast *Terrestres* can consider themselves responsive because they belong to a territory² and their "délimitation [...]"

² Neither a sign on a two-dimensional map, nor a nation-state, territory, for Latour, is something, made up of networks in constant intermingling and opposition, on which an entity depends for its subsistence and which it is willing to defend (Latour, 2015, 278).

est rendue explicite par l'état d'exception dans lequel ils acceptent d'être placés par ceux qu'ils osent appeler leurs ennemis ” (Latour, 2015, 278).

But if I try to rewind for a moment the thread of this first 'part' of the Latourian response to the “what to do?” question, before entering the 'heart' of the geopolitics of the New Climate Regime, a prolepsis of assonance with Serres' Parc National des Pyrénées (which I 'launch' and introduce now, to elaborate on later) begins to resonate.

In the context of the Latourian-Serresian recognition of the obsolescence of the so-called old climatic regime, that is, of what Serres points to as the attitude of a man who, become strong, endangers an environment that has become fragile, and who is able to 'kill the mountains' (Serres, 2007, 10), the figures of the Gardiens du Parc assume a prominent role in the Serresian proposal of future geopolitics. Referred to by Serres as “Tisserands démocratiques” (Serres, 2007, 23), they are indeed intent on creating a new kind of aggregation in which we, by constructing new human sciences (at the crossroads between the so-called humanities and the so-called exact sciences) and by thinking about a new law, will try to interweave the old exclusively human relations (political, in the sense of referring exclusively to the man-made polis) with the real relationships of the environment.

It is precisely in these “inventors” of threads “propres à tisser la trame arlequine de nos différences humaines avec la chaîne bariolée de l'environnement”, (Serres, 2007, 23), “pères de ceux qui, demain tenteront de renouveler la face de la planète à l'image de leur Parc” (Serres, 2007, 23), it seems to me that I can detect an 'assonance' with the Latourian Terrestres. Of course, in this as in other cases, we need to perform the 'translation operation' that allows us to 'measure' the range of variations under the threshold of the invariant. In so doing, we realize that the variations here are not negligible: there is no mention (at least not explicitly) of territories to be defended, nor of enemies, nor of conflicts; but at the same time it comes to light that the invariant exists and has its consistency: the Terrestres and the Gardiens du Parc are different from the 'Moderns', they are 'tied' to the earth and aware of its retroactions, they are 'heralds' of the new geopolitics 'dictated' by the New Climate Regime, and they are in a broad sense 'relationists'.

Having said and kept this in mind, it is now necessary to continue with the overview of Latourian geopolitical suggestions, of course with an ear outstretched to perceive 'Serresian assonances'.

So, if Humains and Terrestres are at war, how to govern the territories in struggle?

To hypothesize answers to this question that informs the 8e Conférence of Face a Gaïa, Latour starts from the Théâtre des négociations, a simulation/performance that

took place on his initiative at the Théâtre des Amandiers in Paris in May 2015 (Latour, 2015, 285-311; cf. Ferrando, 2015).

One of the main goals of this play was to revisit and redefine the principles and implications of international climate conferences in an attempt to overcome the aporias of climate negotiations. Thus, the basic idea/objective was to stage alternatives to COP (Conference of the Parties) type negotiations by representing 'prospective' geopolitics, i.e. the map of new territories, the conflicts they provoke and the methods of resolution that should be imagined to restore peace. In other words, it was to propose, in a kind of alternative diplomacy experiment, new rules for negotiating on climate by simulating aspects that real negotiations generally leave out.

One of the major critical issues identified in these negotiations was representation: classical representatives (delegations of nation-state) monopolize the stage by misrepresenting all beings and collectives involved in the ecological crisis. Therefore, in addition to not providing any arbitrator/unifying element of these delegations, in order to facilitate the start of the negotiations, it was deemed essential to consider other actors by introducing delegations of non-states, such as the collectives or territories most directly affected by climate issues, some critical regions (polar regions, Amazon, California), and non-humans. These delegations, understood as powers possessed by interests (general properties of the interpenetrating agents) other than human ones, were intended to activate processes of re-politicizing the negotiation by acting on territory, that is, by pressuring human interests through the formation of other territories, so as to prevent the too rapid development of some coalitions at the detriment of others. On stage, therefore, only strong interests capable of designating other stakeholders as enemies were represented, thus creating an opposition that redefined territories.

Unlike the Holocene, in which these interests and connections were not present in the debate except in the form of 'silent' and 'inert' data and reports, the agents received a voice and authority compatible with that of the other agents and capable of defending their own interests, even exerting a corrosive action against the boundaries of the territories of which the nation-states continued to consider themselves masters.

The attempt/purpose, in short, was to politically express a disaggregation of agents to make visible the encroachment of territories on each other, the fronts of the conflict, and the 'borders' between friends and enemies, which could only be done by including as many delegations/land-grabbing parties as possible in the negotiation room.

What the simulation ultimately showed is that the most realistic way of doing politics and governing in the era of climate crisis is not to appeal to a (utopian) common prin-

ciple (state of nature, etc.) that would only be able to depoliticize negotiation by turning it into a simple application of rules of distribution, but rather to give oneself a territory, thus re-politicizing negotiation through the idea of belonging to a land (Latour, 2015, 298). This means acting from the bottom up, asking stakeholders not to lay down their interests, but to redefine them by modifying the territories they want to dominate, possibly lengthening the list of entities included in their interests. (Latour, 2015, 299).

The perspective that has emerged to which Latour draws attention is thus, on the whole, that of a decentralization and diversification of the diplomatic scenario, a functional enlargement of the collectives represented, a disaggregation of the aggregate of the nation-state, and thus a reopening of negotiations as well as a highlighting/representation/tracing/reproduction of other encroachments, assemblages, alliances, front lines, feedback loops.

In short: a multiplicity of actors, a distribution of agency that corresponds to a multiplicity of territories interacting, reacting, and mixing with each other, a rethinking/redistribution/sharing/limitation of sovereignty. All this in the pluri/multi-verse of Gaia, which does not claim to rule in place of states forced to submit to its laws but manifests itself “comme ce qui exige que la souveraineté soit partagée” (Latour, 2015, 307), a configuration of new political entities in the perspective of a (always fragmented) political body to be composed one agent after another.

At this point, there are two alternatives that Latour sees for the future: either a kind of violent eco-modernization constituted by the extension of the hegemony of the nation-states on earth, with the simultaneous opening, for the moderns, of a new horizon of domination, or instead the acceptance of bowing to Gaia, taking on distribution the of agency and the rethinking/renewal of the question of democracy as the focus of political debate and action (Latour, 2015, 311). The “issue de ce combat” (Latour, 2015, 311), with the desirable elimination of Modern and Nature, etc., is largely related to learning to live, as Terrestres, finally taking into account the presence of Gaia and thus accepting finiteness at the political, scientific and religious levels and restoring the meaning of ‘limit’.

In the face of Gaia, we are called to completely redesign our cosmology (Latour, 2015, 317), learning a new way of inhabiting the old world no longer in its extension but in its intensité. Terrestres, in fact, are called to explore the question of their limits, pushing themselves, as Latour puts it, plus intra (Latour, 2015, 318), toward an earth, which is not new, but whose face must be renewed, accepting to weigh less on Gaiia’s shoulders.

The emphasis is ultimately on local experimentation, on the search for connections that allow for maximum plurality and ensure minimum exclusion, on the partial

compositions and configurations to which the human gives rise along with the non-human, on the urgency of a reorientation toward the earth through a re-articulation of human life on it, a redistribution of agency and an attempt to identify the relations of dependence that allow life on earth. All this, of course, once any unifying higher entity has been cleared away.

While beyond what has been said there are perhaps not, at least in *Face à Gaïa*, many other ‘political’ indications for dealing with climate catastrophe (cf. Croce, 2022), what seems to me fundamental, even in terms of ‘assonances’ with Serres, is essentially the call for a renewed awareness of the connections between things and, therefore, for a ‘negotiation (re)composition’ (cf. Corrêa & Magnelli, 2021) of the ‘body politic’, ‘piece by piece’, ‘body by body’, without interrupting the search for connections, going through the various clots, gradually including their perspective, and continuing to follow all the lines, in a framework of increasing complexity.

And it is this very suggestion of a renewed awareness of the connections between things that seems to me to be ‘assonant’ with the perspective indicated in the Parc National des Pyrénées, and on which we can then try to implement, as before, the operation of translation.

The Park is in fact understood by Serres as a space open to free relations; a space in which human interactions play to the full of the interactions of living beings and things with each other, and which is thus the ‘realization’, to be understood proactively as a program of change, of this mutual interweaving of relationships. A ‘political’ context, which precisely because of these characteristics is not utopian, but is instead real and achievable: good governance, that is, eutopia, a good place to live (Serres, 2007, 23-24).

It should be specified and emphasized in this regard that the Park, in the Serresian vision, brings together, as it were, the (last) new disruptive phase of the hominization process and the model/project of future geo-eco-politics. According to Serres, in fact, hominization was/is marked by three phases of domestication (i.e., literally, the human invitation to other living beings in one’s home in order to form with them and with things an original group an original group), the first represented by agriculture, the second by science, and the third precisely by the park, each of which implied/implies groups of individuals, acts, relationships, a space and a habitat (agriculture: rural families, households, farm, domestic species; science: scientists, greenhouses, botanical gardens; park: the *mélange*) (Serres, 2007, 19-22). If in the first two phases Serres identifies in humans a prevalence of ‘parasitic’ attitudes toward other species (in the first domestication there is a selection of domesticated animals and in the second a selection

of individuals that represent a specimen) and a tendency to nullify 'cultural diversity', in the park phase he detects something revolutionary, precisely the *mélange*. That is, as we shall see later, the end of all separation, the consideration of the community of living beings and things in a specific biotope, the coexistence of all species in an open space, with the preservation of the groups corresponding to the farm or the greenhouse, to which, however, is added a new reality consisting of the multiple relationships entertained by humans and non-humans.

In the park (phase), in fact, a collective (political) decision leaves flora and fauna to their relations and their environment, that is, to their interactions, ending the old/modern separation and asymmetry of subject/object, culture/nature, in favor of a reciprocal interweaving of relations. This constitutes a model that, for the present/future of hominization, urgently needs to find a way to be implemented at the geo-eco-political level, thanks in part to the work of *Gardiens du Parc* (interweaving the three phases of hominization), the 'fathers', as mentioned, of anyone who engages in this endeavor (Serres, 2007, 22-24).

Walking in the mountains, at a time when the future of the planet is in question and man's place and role in it unknown, is therefore not painless: the Pyrenees 'need us' and make their voices heard, and the *Gardiens du Parc*, the 'humans of tomorrow', are the Latourian sensitive ones, that is, those who are able to perceive their call.

But then, at this point, could Gaia's challenge be 'translated' into the Pyrenees' challenge? The room for maneuver is certainly wide and the operation is bold, but in any case, the fact remains that the Pyrenees constitute a 'call' addressed to humans to change direction to the earth, as well as to the idea of the limit, that is, to limit oneself in favor of the mountains themselves. It should also be noted that, again, as in Latour, the approach is bottom-up: human-non-human connections and intersections are left free, are recognized, are highlighted, and are also, so to speak, 'represented'.

In other words, it is a matter of eliminating selections and separations, minimizing exclusions, and, above all, 'taking note' of the *mélange*. That, in Serres, is a 'keyword' through which he expresses the spatial or conceptual situation of the node, difficult to analyze (i.e., to undo, to separate), exchanger, floating, facilitator of fusion, fluid prone confluence and producer of intersections (cf. Serres, 1985, 82-83). Indeed, the geo-political perspective that the invention of the Park inaugurates is in fact that of the fluid and the liquid (by its very nature metastable, not sectionable, nor confineable) (a 'metamorphic zone?'), certainly difficult to think through the conceptual-political tools that Latour would define modern, but in any case, a direction of the future

(Serres, 1985, 83). This thus calls for a philosophy/politics of ‘mingle bodies’, which Serres, on the example of the Park, outlines, on the political level, as a recognition of the *mélange* through an institution to be built indicatively on the model of the Park itself, as a collective decision to leave all entities to their interactions, that is, free of their own relationships, and as ‘democratic’ weaving, that is, as the invention of threads suitable for weaving the composite web of human differences with the variegated chain of the environment.

If I pay attention to the ‘assonances’ and try once again to enact the operation of translation, I seem to grasp the instance, albeit sketchy, of representing the various fluid agglutinations (the invention of threads to weave the warp of human and non-human differences) and of listening to the language of the non-human and translating it in a way that is compatible with human language.

It seems to me, then, that, between Latour and Serres, there is a conviction that realistically one cannot move forward without giving a voice to water, forests, etc., and without representing them with a human voice capable of being understood by other humans. Indeed, Latour in *Face à Gaïa* adds that it is fictional to believe that the ‘interests’ of water and forests can be considered without a human impersonating, authorizing, and representing them (Latour, 2015, 301-302)

Questions rather than Answers...

This is a neuralgic point where the issues of agency distribution, retroactions of earth, its language and translation are intertwined; issues that, on the whole, trigger problematic reflections in me, essentially in the form of questions. Recognition of the *mélange* and entanglement of human and non-human agents most likely ends up requiring humans a representation that brings into play their capacity for ‘interpretation’/‘intermediation’: could this mean lifting the curtain on an ‘ethical space’ of human responsibility for ‘linguistic mediation’ between non-human and human language (this, in an ontological perspective of moving beyond mere flat ontology)?

And again: if the agency shifts from the human to the non-human and vice versa, can there be that ‘agglutinations’ that are more ‘relevant’ than others, which thus crack any flat ontology (cf. Bontempi, 2019, 161) and require ‘particular’ forms of representation?

Is the Serresian call to learn to translate one ‘language’ into another ‘timely’ here? A translation which, however, not to be forgotten, in the effort of ‘traction’ might also

'betray' the 'original message'; and which, in any case, is a kind of negotiation... The area of maneuver is undoubtedly wide and there is room for ambiguity...

But on the other hand, as we have seen, in the operation/process of translation, in addition to variations, there is also the invariant; so, taking a step further, why not think that, across the threshold of the Latourian collection of interests, negotiations, feedback loops, etc., and the Serresian recognition/thinking of the *mélange*, etc., there might be an invariant constituted, for example, by a geo-political instance, realistic in the Latourian language and eutopian in Serresian language, of a different way of being in/with the world, one that seeks to reflect/mirror as closely as possible how things really are (or perhaps even how they have always been)?

An instance, in other words, of recognizing the animation of the world? Surely the 'knot' of representation remains, for the time, being 'knotted'...

In the end, however, the climate crisis was/is the catalyst for the recognition, finally in a geopolitical and geohistorical perspective, of irreducibility, multiplicity, *mélange*, bond/relation/negotiation as categories of existence etc.; as well as of the importance/urgency of acting as the 'soundtrack of the world'.

But could this also eventually mean accepting dependence on non-humans (Latour, 2020)?

Will the future be made of new forms of -cracy or of more-than-human negotiations or instead of no power at all?

Politics? Or instead, as Serres suggests, "il faudrait trouver un autre mot" (Serres, 2007, 21)?

It cannot be predicted; maybe we are still brainstorming, but Terrestres and Gardiens du Parc will/should (most likely) play their part.

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ARTÍCULOS

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POLITICS OF CRIMINOLOGY: PUNITIVE POWER AND LINES OF INSURRECTION

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Abstract

The article seeks to put the criminological criticism in check and produce a “politics of criminology”. The criticism of punitive power stems from three indispensable perspectives. First, assuming punitive power as a device that conveys knowledge, power, and subjectivities. Second, imploding the statist focus of its exercise, analyzing the modes of visibility that justify it and inquiring about the ways of life subjectively forged through punitive forms. Finally, questioning what it means to “punish”, oblivious to mere repression, but as a production, above all, of freedoms ready to be governed, to reach the central question of how the society punishes today. The article aims to expose the immediate struggles of autonomous movements such as those that make the government’s punishment strategies more visible and, above all, demonstrate other possible ways of life that never forsake destabilizing punitive power.

Keywords

Post-critical criminology, policy, punitive power, resistance, Michel Foucault.

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Resumen

El artículo pretende poner en jaque la crítica criminológica y elaborar una “política de la criminología”. La crítica al poder punitivo parte de tres perspectivas indispensables. Primero, asumiendo el poder punitivo como un dispositivo que vehicula saberes, poderes y subjetividades. Segundo, implosionando el enfoque estatista de su ejercicio, analizando los modos de visibilidad que lo justifican e indagando sobre los modos de vida forjados subjetivamente a través de las formas punitivas. Por último, cuestionando lo que significa “castigar”, ajeno a la mera represión, sino como producción, sobre todo, de libertades dispuestas a ser gobernadas, para llegar a la cuestión central de cómo castiga hoy la sociedad. El artículo pretende exponer las luchas inmediatas de movimientos autónomos como los que visibilizan las estrategias de castigo del gobierno y, sobre todo, mostrar otras formas de vida posibles que nunca renuncian al poder punitivo desestabilizador.

Palabras clave

Criminología postcrítica, política, poder punitivo, resistencia, Michel Foucault.

Introduction: politics of criminology

Needless to repeat the very long discussion about the relation between criminology and politics, overcoming the fact that it is no longer possible – if it ever was – to separate the criminological practices of politics (especially, criminal in the strict sense of a state-engineered plan to fight against crime). Furthermore, it is evident that any criminology, to some extent, is always concerned with reinforcing or criticizing political acts, that is, *there is no apolitical criminology* (Zaffaroni, 2011, 1-19). In short, this introductory reflection could be thought of, as already suggested (Cuáron, 1987), a “criminological policy”, which would express the bond between any produced criminology (academic or not) and the political agenda. This does not seem to sufficiently serve our intentions.

Therefore, in what sense could one speak of a *politics of criminology*? Preliminarily, a limited chance of thinking about it would be through the meaning derived from its objective genitive: “politics of criminology”, considering, for instance, what is generally done in universities, in which criminology is forged as a space for knowledge, as an official, marginal or counter-hegemonic discourse. A kind of political study of criminological knowledge would be in place, in which research could be done on which authors are studied instead of others, the options made in the construction of the curricula of the criminological course historically colonized by law schools, the political choices of codification, the historiographical approaches, methods, and schools of greater circulation, types of relations that are established with the legal field and with others, etc. In general terms, *to analyze criminological ideas* and the formation of criminological thinking in its varied spatial and temporal spectrums. The production in this context is abundant and relevant.

Nevertheless, if the *subjective* genitive is considered, “politics of criminology”, as suggested by Sandro Chignola in his studies on Foucault’s “politics of philosophy”, of express inspiration in this article, its semantics emerge much richer. Attentive to the fact that the criminologists are part of the circulation of power through their action, *a politics of criminology as a place of permanent intervention* starts to be produced, which means *to make politics through criminology*. A place for *taking a stand*, producing a critical stance towards the present that confronts us, in other words, an engaged *critical* effort that distances itself from the mere capture of the *Political* (everything related to the encounter, affectation between ways of life, perception, contact that reaches a certain intensity) through politics (converted into a noun, a substance subsumed to the juridical-sovereign aspect and fed by its representative dynamics) (Invisible, 2007, 9).

In sum, a position of intervention is taken, *which opens a gap as wide as possible between politics and political*¹. A trace produced by permanent political intervention in punitive power relations. Thus, never in a totalized way, programmable or theory-bound manner, a politics of criminology is expressed more properly, fragmentary, local, contingent, multiplying, dealing with the incisive path of the critical posture on the practices of punitive power.

2. Punitive Power: practical device, strategic situations, and resistance to the government of punishment

Despite the possibilities of intelligibility capable of deconstructing the “universals” of a *politics of criminology*, that is, its multiple possible entries, given the polymorphism of elements and relations that may converge, in our view, this does not prevent us from being undoubtedly involved with the “punitive power”. However, it would be worthwhile to produce an oblique look through it and invest in the consequent lines of flight from this relationship – even if hastily. In this sense, this article is also an open invitation waiting for a countersignature. It will never be a question of legitimizing or giving palatable contours to the punitive power, but rather, it is about investigating the forms of rationality that are inscribed in it. This article aims, above all, to *problematize* the punitive power differently. This should be done through at least *three perspectives*. The first one, assuming *punitive power* as a *practical set*, as an *interpretive scheme*. The second designating what *power* means for a *politics of criminology*. And the third perspective analyzing otherwise the correlative *punishment* that the sense of *punitive power* must convey. Thus, the study of *problematization* (Foucault, 1984, 43) modes, convened here by a *politics of criminology* does not lend itself to the construction of a theory or doctrine about punitive power, but to the way of analyzing questions of general application. Therefore, to analyze the punitive practices from which these same problematizations are formed (Foucault, 2012a).

- a. *Primarily*, to assume punitive power as a “practical set”, a heterogeneous reference domain of what men do (technologies) and how they do it (strategies). In Foucauldian terms, “the forms of rationality that organize their ways of doing things (this might be called the technological aspect) and the freedom with which they act within these practical systems, reacting to what others do, mod-

¹ “Il faut être aveugle pour ne pas voir tout ce qu’il y a de purement politique dans cette négation résolue de la politique.” (Invisible, 2007, 9).

ifying the rules of the game, up to a certain point (this might be called the strategic side of these practices) (Foucault, 1984, 47). This “practical set”, which is a kind of coordinated bundle of relationships called punitive power, in this first dimension, corresponds to three major axes – *knowledge, power, and subjectivation* – that make it visible as a *dispositif*². So that one does not fall into another abstraction, one should honor facing the domination of things (knowledge), the action upon others (power) and the action upon oneself (ethics). The old concept of “punitive power” (a product of the penal system, an unorganized effect of the activities of criminalization agencies or even a coercive power of the State in the form of a penalty) (Zaffaroni, 2003, 43-59) takes on a more complex feature – as per Foucault, but beyond him. To speak of *punitive power* now is to have it as a *device* that curves, intertwines different strategies, composed through different knowledge and that forges subjectivities. It opposes, composes, overlaps, and thus produces permanent effects. As per Foucault, “this is what gives the resulting apparatus (*dispositif*) its solidity and suppleness” (Foucault, 1991, 81). A problematization that seeks to study the dispersed rationality imposed by the reality of punitive power.

Therefore, *punitive power* seen as a *device* requires a *historical analysis* (Foucault, 1981), strictly understood within the genealogical impossibility of objective history. It is not to imply that it does not exist or that it is a mere invention, but that, when practicing fiction, a politics of criminology emphasizes the character of transformation that even the lexicon of law reminds us: *factio*, as reminded by Chignola (2019, 152), denotes an action by which a thing intervenes over another and modifies it. This transformation when problematizing the “punitive power” must produce a displacement effect so that it has immediate reflexes and modifies the social perceptions of the phenomena that it encompasses. To problematize *punitive power* as a *device* is to be able to experiment with modes of impacting vital needs, as a result of what can be mobilized from the present to produce an event. “The endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known”, writes Foucault (2019, 9). More directly, under the impetus of multiple and

² In short, it would be a network formed by heterogeneous elements that, at their intersections, have a strategic function inscribed in the relations of knowledge-power (see M. Foucault, 2014, 44-77). For Deleuze, we find, in Foucault, a “philosophy of apparatuses”. Therefore, asking “what is a *dispositif*”, he adds a skein, a multilinear whole, that has as components “lines of visibility, utterance, lines of force, lines of subjectivation, lines of cracking, breaking, and ruptures that all intertwine and mix and where some augment the others or elicit the others through variations and even mutations of the assemblage (Deleuze, 1992, 159-168).

critical forces, to tension the denaturalization of the practices exercised by the punitive power.

This happens initially, as a first movement, which, in short, implodes the concept and fragments the *punitive power* to see it as a *device*, as a *practical set* that is not universal or even reducible to State level. As a network formed between heterogeneous elements (discursive and non-discursive), which has a strategic function, inscribed in the intersection of knowledge-power relations, and produces lines of subjectification that affect each other, causing lines of flight.

Aiming to be clearer, from a second perspective, it is pertinent to ask what *sense* “power” takes on here, then to examine its qualification as “punitive” deeply interconnected to the first. To speak of *power*, in the sense proposed in this article, is to see it as a *strategic situation* and not as a general system of domination. There is no general theory of power here, there is no “outside” of power, an external position that would make it possible to locate a privileged place for its concentration.

The methodology adopted by Foucault in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (Foucault, 1990) could be summarized as follows: a) power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, kept or let slip. It is *exercised* from innumerable points and amid unequal and mobile relations; b) power relations are *immanent* and not external to other types of relations, such as social, sexual, economic, among others. They are the immediate effects of these imbalances and the internal conditions of these differentiations; c) power comes *from below*. The relations of multiple forces that are formed and act serve to support the wide cleavage effects that cross the social body. There are lines of force that generate the hegemonic effects of great domination by intensity; d) power relations are *intentional*, not exactly subjective. Power is exercised by a series of targets and objectives. The rationality of such power is that of tactics linked together, which are supported, conditioned, and propagated, finally outlining joint *devices*. Although clear, there appears to be no one to conceive of this logic – the character of the great anonymous tactic strategies whose “inventors” are in no way hypocritical; e) where there is power, never in relation to its exteriority, there is *resistance* – this is the third point of this analysis. Power relations could not exist except because of a multiplicity of points of resistance, which means that there is no *single* locus of the great Refusal. This is the other term of the relation, however, which does not leave one in a merely passive position (Foucault, 1990).

In 1976, Foucault explained his analytical caution for power. However, it will be at two other times that his “Analytic Philosophy of Politics” is presented, avoiding misunderstandings. One in the 1978 Japanese conference, already discussed, and the other in the text published in English by him in 1982, called *The Subject and Power*. Basically, what matters to Foucault, asking what power relations consist of, is to affirm that power is not properly evil and, as he said elsewhere, it consists more in “strategic games” (Foucault, 1987, 129). And if the role of philosophy is to “make visible what precisely is visible” (Foucault, 2018, 192), this is the proposed direction (following the philosophy of language in Wittgenstein), to bring to light what is going on daily in power relations, what they are about, what their forms, articulations, and objectives are. Within this daily strategic scheme, freedom and control fight, and therefore, something and some escape and others are subjugated. In sum, the task is to see how power relations *work*. If it is not possible to escape power relations, it is always necessary to study their *games, tactics, and strategies*: “Rather than studying the state’s grand game (...) I’ve preferred (...) dealing with much more limited, lowly games of power” (Foucault, 2018, 193). It is crucial to highlight that, contrary to what an accommodated reading might imply, it is a *refusal of the game itself*. In this weft of everyday life, of enormous materiality (not for certain academic Marxisms³), it is not a question of assuming such rules as destiny within these games, nor of capitalizing them for efficient purposes, “but rather that of resisting the game and refuse the game itself” (Foucault, 2018, 194) – these are characteristics of fights and struggles – called, as proposed by (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988), “lines of escape” – of certain movements.

If, at a first point, with the assumption of *punitive power* as a *device*, the focus of analysis is broadened, while it is defined through the direction of the knowledge that forges it and that it forms, in close correlation to the strategies and tactics implemented, as well as, in this intersection, by the diverse ways of life that it produces, the subjectivities that act in these relations, an analytical philosophy of politics leads us to realize that *power* is, above all, *exercised*, having the virtue of visualizing how these practices occur.

³ About the universe of approximation and distensions between Marx and Foucault, libraries have already been written. However, even so, it should be noted: Negri, 2017; Negri, 1979; Macherey, 2013; Chignola, 2019, 45-70; Cuccorese, 2001; Leonelli, 2010; Leonelli, 1999; Tellman, 2009; Zanini, 2010; Poster, 1984; Legrand, 2004; Dardot & Laval, 2012. Directly from Foucault about Marx, cf.: Foucault, 2012b, 1972, 1997a, 1991, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1983. Furthermore, see the lectures at the Collège de France, Foucault, 2003, 2016

In this way, studying power reveals at least three important disconnections: a) implosion of the focus of the state of the exercise of power. As a practical set, its exercise takes place at infinite points that are not privileged by reading it through the State⁴; b) analyses of knowledge on power, its modes of visibility that justify, feedback, or intend to limit it in relation to the position it establishes, that is, the force fields undertaken there; c) the node, in the end, of why studying power, is the very question of the *subject*. Therefore, a special moment is found in investigating the ways of life subjectively forged through these forms of rationality, far beyond the dynamics of the legal actors, that is, how, in our punitive culture, the subjectivation techniques of punishment take advantage over others.

But, for our purposes, it is essential to ask what “punishing” means in this context. It already seems clear that the sense of punishment here is by no means restricted neither to the idea of repression, nor state repression⁵. Power is not repression or domination, it is *production*: a key point for Foucault. Power *produces* things (Foucault, 1990, 88-89). This perception is elementary to our interests. When contemporaneity increasingly imposes on us the profusion of practices that convey invested power relations through the instigation of our *freedom* – after all, government always requires *freedom* as a condition – it is worth investigating the “government of punishment”. Freedom here is understood as something to be produced, raised, permanently framed, that incites to live dangerously and implies to establish security mechanisms, which justifies Foucault’s interest in the study of liberalism, in the 18th century, as the condition of intelligibility of biopolitics (Senellart, 2008) and above all, in the “crisis of governmentality” (freedom and security) of the 20th century that caused the neoliberal revisions (German ordoliberalism and American anarcho-liberalism) of harmful reflexes until today (Foucault, 2008).

Here, the State is seen more like a simple “incident” (*peripétie*, writes Foucault) of more general processes that have produced it, which have crossed its legal contours and its institutional dimensions, and which exceeds it to continue to overflow it – State as an

4 See, in particular, the class of January 7, 1976, in (Foucault, 2003).

5 It is worth pointing out the self-criticism made by Foucault since the aforementioned class of January 7, 1976 (Foucault, 2003, 25), the same year of publication of the first volume of the *History of Sexuality: an introduction*. The fact that some mechanisms used in certain power formations “are something very different from repression” and that it “is totally insufficient to demarcate them” is the direction taken, in the following years, for the study of governmentality and biopolitics.

incident of the government, and not as an instrument (Foucault, 2007). Therefore, it is the “age” of *governmentality*. In direct terms, in Foucault’s words:

by this word “*governmentality*” I mean three things. First, by “*governmentality*” I understand the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument. Second, by “*governmentality*” I understand the tendency, the line of force, that for a long time, and throughout the West, has constantly led towards the pre-eminence over all other types of power – sovereignty, discipline, and so on – of the type of power that we can call “government” and which has led to the development of a series of specific governmental apparatuses (*appareils*) to the development of knowledge (*savoirs*). Finally, by “*governmentality*” I think we should understand the process, or rather, the result of the process by which the state of justice of the Middle Ages became the administrative state in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was gradually “*governmentalized*”. (Foucault, 2007, 144)

What is at stake, among other things, is the displacement of the sphere of overvaluing the problem of the State (“cold monster” or, for example, reduced “to the development of productive forces”) from its privileged position that it invariably ends up occupying in many analyses, mainly criminological. The State does not create the system of conditions that organizes the relations between the subjects, foreseen in legal forms, as in a view that can be perceived from Hobbes to the French Revolution, rather, it launches its mechanisms in a fleeting and opaque environment according to irreducible and unavailable randomness. Thus, it is important to understand power not only as a domain but as production. In addition, it is about producing, above all, subjects. In a nutshell, all production and subjection technologies are interconnected, this can be seen in the way that the *sovereignty* strategy, even investing in death, *produces subjects*, individuals, being the factory of the subject of law. Likewise, *discipline*, linking to the body of the living beings, *produces docile bodies*, a productive training that enhances an efficient function, converting lifetime into work time. One should not forget that the “criminal” and the “mentally ill”, for example, are also produced here. But, if *biopower* ends up investing not in the body, not in the system of laws, but *regulating* the population in the reality of securitarian practices, a government art that guarantees the “government of the living” imposes that we think of the “punishment” in a very different way.

If *punitive power* is best combined as an *interpretive scheme* to analyze modern penalties, as a *device* that makes it subsume far more than the repression of state apparatus itself, but programs, practices, strategies that can produce subjects of rights (and also those that do not align with this legal scheme), disciplined bodies that will amalgamate punishment traditionally (“anatomy-politics of the human body”), what stands out here are *governed bodies, through the “biopolitics of the populations”* (Foucault, 1990, 130). Let us remember how *control* presents itself as a determinant trace, expressed, for example, in the subjective formations of an indebted man, a subject psychically exhausted, etc., as Deleuze points out⁶.

Naturally, the breadth of such an “object” could be criticized. Ordinary, when one wants to go beyond conventional criminology and take the power damage to the social aspect seriously⁷ – not that our intention is the same. Nevertheless, *a politics of criminology* does not adduce the search for a scientific unity, to take credibility from transcendental theology, a global history of totalities, or a strict epistemological orientation. On the contrary, it is a *focus*, an adjustable *frame* (Butler, 2009: 08-09), a node of changing problematizations, with varied possibilities of entries and exits, and not the attempt to build a “social and political totalization” of insurmountable knowledge. (Zaffaroni, 2011, 289)

This article is not intended to observe a method, which is precisely why – illuminated by the overriding question that is: *what does it mean to punish today?* — one does not escape from the battlefield and power must be taken seriously, as a non-autonomous exercise that includes an analysis limited to a predetermined field. In other words, it is to extend the question about the permanent transformation of the ways of governing punishment to an extreme, insisting on the question: *how does one punish?* (Foucault, 1991, 74). Precisely to understand the immediate real suffering conveyed in power relations, the concern, for a *politics of criminology*, is not with an encompassing scientific aspect, under the penalty of paying for the omission of not facing such power relations practically as one should. The common thread, the re-updatable focus for a position-taking is the *exercise of punitive power*, the penalty beyond the mere exercise of violent repression.

6 See (Cohen, 2001) and (Hillyard, Pantazis, Tombs & Gordon, 2004).

7 Since the classic study by Deleuze (Deleuze, 1990) pointing out some of these fruitful perspectives of analysis, essential entries to a politics of criminology, for example, we can also find in: (Chignola, 2018), (Lazzarato, 2012) and (Gago & Cavallero, 2019).

The question of what punishment represents, that is, how it is currently being disseminated, in the widest possible way, is undoubtedly a problem that pushes intellectuals to analyze the different familiar forms of life that adhere to perceptions and behaviors. It is imperative to avoid the serious symptom of “criminological chatter”. Foucault warns about the punitive system in one of his last interviews:

(...) and for a hundred and fifty years now, the same notions, the same themes, the same reproaches, the same critical observations, the same demands have been repeated, as if nothing has changed and, in a sense, nothing has changed. In a situation where an institution presenting so many disadvantages and provoking so much criticism gives rise only to an endless repetition of the same discourses, “chatter” is a serious symptom. (Foucault, 1994f, 385)

Thus, the sore point of this third dimension is presented. If *power produces*, above all, ways of life, different forms of subjectivation, its exercise takes place in a *relation* in which the presence of a non-passive *resistance* is irreducible, reaching a decisive point for Foucault within our intentions. Objectively, concerning power, *resistance comes first*, (Foucault, 1997c, 167), hence, it is what forces power relations to change. Therefore, it is of interest to investigate – in the centrality of the *subject* issue (far from that conscious “sovereign subject” that would animate, from the outside, with their *logos* the inertia of the discourse) that is highlighted in this new economy of power relations suggested by Foucault – how the forms of resistance are articulated, capable of producing lines of flight from the dynamics of punitive power. If philosophy is a *reactive*, a *counterpower*, an *intensifier*, a *thickener*, nothing more logical than the practices of resistance to be, on the one hand, the most capable of bringing out the power relations that constitute us, and, on the other, the most capable of also producing ways of life that cannot be captured by the strategies of the “government of punishment”. They are the ones that can allow, not that the punitive game is not played in this way, but, above all, that “impede the game from being played”. Foucault emphasizes in this direction:

it is not up to us to tell you the sauce with which we want to be eaten; We no longer want to play this game of penalty; we no longer want to play this game of penal sanctions; we no longer want to play this game of justice. (Foucault, 2018, 194)

For a *politics of criminology*, more objectively, in this third direction, it is interesting to follow the Foucauldian indication of “taking the forms of resistance against

different forms of power as a starting point”. Here, the famous anticipated metaphor that consists of using resistances as chemical catalysts, “to bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out their point of application and the methods used” becomes fundamental. Therefore, it is not a matter of pursuing an internal rationality of punitive power (or any other form of power), but of analyzing its *struggle* relations, says Foucault (1982, 790). Rather than antagonisms, it would be better to speak of a single “agonism”. To understand power relations, for Foucault, is to “investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations”. This is how, instead of addressing reformist practices that, in the field of punishment, only have the role of stabilizing a system of power after several strategic changes (often only of symbolic effects), the struggles are perpetually open, they “are anarchic”, says Foucault (2018, 186). Immediate struggles, which do not have a strict morphology (or determined program, which has nothing to do with disorganization, lack of true reflection on what happens or even lack of concern aimed at the impossible⁸) and which are not pleased with a future of revolutionary liberation, or a moment, in our case, of abolishing the penal system because they have always been a constantly renewed demonstration of other ways of life that never tire of destabilizing punitive power and inventing other possible forms of power relations.

Movements of perpetual and immediate struggle against *punitive technology*, whose objective to attack “not so much ‘such or such’ an institution of power, or group, or elite, or class, but rather a technique, a form of power” (Foucault, 1982, 781). It is through the analysis of their practices that it is possible to understand how the exercise of punitive power occurs and how new strategies to subvert it are produced. Such diffuse and decentralized phenomena, which are the effect of these autonomous movements, are not only aimed at political or economic power necessarily, as Foucault says about the feminist movement. This type of resistance is essentially concerned with the facts of power, that is, the question “is the fact that a certain power is exerted, and that the mere fact that it is exerted is intolerable” (Foucault, 2018, 195).

If no power exists without resistance, without an “eventual inversion”, every relation implies a *confrontation strategy*. And so that it constitutes a possible point of

8 Not having a program for Foucault, as he refers to when talking about the achievements of the political movements of the sixties and seventies, can be something very useful, original and creative. These practices of the absence of a program as an organized practice are extremely fruitful precisely because they are based on the strategic game of the present and are animated by courage of truth. Escaping the confiscation of the process of creating politics by political programs confirms the virtue that must be preserved at every moment, in other words, the existence of forms of political innovation, creation, and experimentation outside political parties that prove the real transformation in our lives: “These social movements have really changed our whole lives, our mentality, our attitudes, and the attitudes and mentality of other people – people who do not belong to these movements. (...) I repeat, it is not the normal and old traditional political organizations that have led to this examination” (Foucault, 1997b, 173).

inversion, it cannot lose its specificity and be confused with the power relation itself. To put more simply, a strategy against punitive power cannot, wanting to subvert it, act with the same tactic, which invigorates or renews, for example, some symbolic effect sought through it⁸. It cannot be used as a purpose to establish power relations, to replicate the very action (Foucault, 1982). The functioning of power relations is not exclusive to the use of violence. As Foucault precisely says about the exercise of power, “it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult” a way of acting – “a set of actions upon other actions” (Foucault, 1982, 791) – there will always be a possible margin of freedom for practices that subvert certain forms of power that, like punitive power, are intended to “conduct and guide men during their entire life (...), a power that consists in taking charge of the life of men (...) to constrain them to behave in a certain way” (Foucault, 2018, 197). In summary, in a more organized way, the insurgent power of these anti-authoritarian movements is found, in the words of Foucault, above all because they are: a) “transversal” struggles, not limited to one country and not confined to a particular political or economic form of government; b) anarchistic “immediate” struggles because they look for an immediate enemy, they criticize instances of power which are the closest to them, and they do not expect to find a solution to their problem at a future date (revolutions, end of class struggle); c) they are struggles that question the status of the individual, which means, “who we are” and are against the “government of individualization”, against the techniques of pastoral power that subjugate us (Foucault, 1982, 780-781).

Movements that teach to live the time differently (Foucault, 1994e, 88), promoting a somehow continuous uprising. An affirmative “art of living”, which is constantly found in feminist, environmentalist, lgbtiq+, native peoples’ movements, among others, and that is not based on any essentialism. As Foucault writes, when producing the new “anti-pastoral” (Foucault, 1981) forms of life, they do not assert themselves as an identity, but as a “creative force” (Foucault, 1997c, 164). In our view, identity, contrary to the hegemonic uses that can be made of it in the criminal matter – in particular its forms of boosting criminalization demands – it should, in this sense, be nothing more than a mere instrument for demonstrating the circuits of violence related to punitive power, not a fuel that replicates its actions. If punitive power has been crystallized in institutions and has fortresses that are very difficult to break down (identity will be useful, for example, to identify how their differential games of illegalities are exercised, how their unequal, misogynistic, and racist practices occur), the strategic situation that disposes of any power relation always allows changes and transformation.

Finally, the possibility of producing experiences that bring the instant, the fracture, and the interruption of the logic of punishment is always present⁹.

Voluntary insubordination and lines of insurrection...

As mentioned in the first part of the introductory session, since *critique* is not a state, but a *task*, *punitive power* is also not a natural condition. It is, though, a stabilized *device* of credulities that must constantly be fought. For this reason, the imperative to reframe it,

⁹ Despite the legitimate fallacies of the punitive power that could be found in the function of *positive general prevention* widespread recently (ER Zaffaroni will say about the systemic conception of Roxin and Jakobs: seeks positive effect on the non-criminalized, not by intimidation, but by symbolic value, therefore, supposed producer of consensus and confidence-building in the social system in general, the penalty functioning as if it were part of a communicative process, ready to be an instrument of neutralizing publicity), whether from the social reality (use of criminalized people as scapegoats and reinforcement of privileged positions) or even from the theoretical level (an unequal penal system as the only asset to be protected, eliminating any limiting consideration but its effectiveness, in addition to mediating the criminalized, using his pain as a symbol, this never eliminated the tonic adopted until today by much of the criminological criticism in adhering, in not failing to point out the need to punish, to use punishment as a means, even if it is to protect human rights - for all, reference is made to Alessandro Baratta's classic position of a theory of human rights as the object and limit of criminal law (Baratta, 1986), something that always populates the belief in shifting criminalization processes to an *effective penalty* (Baratta, 1982) – for the most diverse movements called “emancipatory”. The myth of the symbolic value of the penalty, its strategic use, is an almost irreducible index when the subject is an “alternative criminal politic”. Even if they are updated, they continue to lead back to the old ethic versions of those same positive general prevention theories of the mid-20th century, as in Welzel and Jellinek, who intended to strengthen the legal awareness of the population, in which the task of criminal law would be to the protection of legal assets through the protection of securities. Striking falsehood, to say the least, which links, in terms of social reality, a certainty, and firmness of punishment, ignorant of the exceptionality of secondary criminalization and the same lack of any limit; and, at the theoretical level, such weakening of value leads to an injury that is impossible to measure, tending to pure retribution for disobedience to the State (Zaffaroni et. al., 2003, 124-125). However, in our opinion, in addition to everything we have been raising, the problem is even greater and deeper. In the analysis of an institution, as is the penalty, for legal purposes, understood as “coercion, which imposes a deprivation of rights or pain, but does not repair or restore, nor does it stop the ongoing injuries or neutralize imminent dangers” (Zaffaroni, 2003, 99 [our translation]) it is necessary to distinguish, as Foucault refers, its *purposes/objectives* (rationality), its effects, and its *strategic use*. In other words, it is necessary to differentiate the program from what it produces as an effect, which is rarely coincident. There are several purposes for the penalty, but effectively, as is known, its product is the reverse (see the classic example of resocialization). But what is important to underline are the possibilities that arise from this: the reform or these effects themselves are taken in another sense and with another use. This, Foucault calls “use” or “strategic configurations”. For example, if the prison was ever intended to amend, it served more as an elimination mechanism; other uses that are rebuilding new “rational” practices and, above all, spaces in which “games between different social groups can find their place” (Foucault, 1994f, 383). But what does that mean anyway? In our opinion, at least three questions: 1) the objectives of the penalty, even if it could overcome its social or theoretical reality, are not controllable; there is an elementary dissociation between its purposes and its effects; 2) but this dissonance is functional for punitive rationality, as its “unforeseen” effects are invigorated and can always be transformed, used strategically, and become new purposes—this is a bit of the miscellaneous fiction of power legitimization theories punitive through the penalty that we find over time: “It is. These are effects that are taken up in different uses, which are rationalized, organized according to new purposes” (Foucault, 1994f, 384), and 3) as the most relevant conclusion, therefore, it is important to analyze the construction of the different strategies, the different possibilities of using these effects, as this was, as Foucault warns, the prison solidified, despite all the criticisms because different strategies are permanently produced and made available so that different groups can adhere to it functionally. Some call for a “strategic use of the penal system” that has nothing to do with a relationship between middles and ends (using it as a means for purposes beyond it). Strictly speaking, yes, on the contrary, it is paying attention to how it operates, manufacturing ways of adhering to these types of objectives never achieved, so that the other real effects are permanently fed back, organized, and rationalized.

tension it, bend it, above all, given the resistances that destabilize its practices. Therefore, the *position-taking* that a *politics of criminology* imposes puts *resistances in the first place*.

They are *minority* forms of resistance that are not passive at all. “Its existence is eminently a resistance”, as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro condenses in the neologism *resist* (Castro, 2019, 14). They are production machines of life forms that not only can delineate how the relations of punitive power work, but that can also subvert it, fabricate lines of flight that cannot be captured by the knowledge, powers, and subjectivities of the punishment government.

Certainly, the notion of a *minority* here has little to do with a statistical and quantitative condition. Frequently, countless national minorities – racial, gender, sexual orientation, etc. – have expressive and sometimes majority populations. Nevertheless, these resistances say, of the opposite, of a *becoming-minoritarian*, as Deleuze and Guattari refer: “all becoming is minoritarian” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, 106). They are “minor” modes of expression in relation to the “Majority” administrative machine called *punitive power*. Minor here is qualitatively opposed to a pattern, it is a variation to the constant of the Majority, which supposes a stabilized state of domination. If the circuit forged by punitive power governs channeling affections to its constant pattern, these *movements of resistance* de-territorialize such flows and update powers of political desire in a different direction from punishment¹⁰.

The lucidity is in remembering that the *majority*, assuming a pattern, turns out to be *Nobody*, whereas the *minority is the becoming of everyone*, it is the variable difference of everyone. There is always the potential trajectory of each one – multitude. In this sense, the government of punishment “is always Nobody” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, 126), not anonymous, but it is always a pattern ready to capture everyone in its homogeneous system. Thus, the power of a minority is always to be an active middle for a becoming, that is, there is a work of “active micropolitics”, indifferent to the teleology of a revolutionary future or past because their becoming is molecular. They do not “organize binary distributions within the dualism machines” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, 292), as is the case with the punitive power itself when conducting its productions of guilt, criminality, violence, etc., governed by the central point of the punishment that is distributed throughout space, but, on the contrary, they are the potential trajectory of its variation.

¹⁰ Beyond any suspicion, a beautiful and rigorous expression of a politics of criminology can be found in this singular effort, which is the spectacular thesis of the “criminological feminisms” proposed by Fernanda Martins. The author indicates, in summary, the subversion of punitive ways of thinking, present mainly in “feminist criminologies”, investing in plural resistance strategies through gender studies and practical experiences arising from political vulnerabilities in an alliance of autonomous manifestations in various parts of the world. See (Martins, 2021).

They are “spheres of insurrection”, in the concept of Suely Rolnik (Rolnik, 2018), among the points of the machine that produces new assemblages, perpendicular lines of flight that, without reconverting or imitating the flows to which punishment leads to, tear up its greater identity. Blocks of coexistence *between* these schemes which, being a *middle*, “not an average; it is fast motion, it is the absolute speed of movement” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, 293). This politics is elaborated, in sum, in assemblages that are neither that of the family, nor that of religion, nor that of the State, by multiplicities of movements composed of heterogeneous terms that do not cease to transform (Deleuze, 2006). Demonic alliances, of course, subject of witches, mainly for the punitive power. And, clearly, these *lines of insurrection* experienced by these movements attract the enemy’s attention, which is why they “always risk abandoning their creative potentialities and turning into a line of death, being turned into a line of destruction pure and simple” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, 506) – here is the great bet of the punitive power that will never stop trying to capture the ways of life.

Thus, a politics of criminology will always be a *limit-posture*, an attitude affected by these fruitful areas of contagion produced by *minoritarian-becoming* of feminist, lgbtqia+, black people, native peoples’ movements, etc. This is closer to an *ethos*, a certain *virtue* that is both *risky* and *elusive*. Foucault, at a conference at the French Philosophy Society in 1978, well before the classic given at Berkeley in 1983, considered critique as a kind of “art of voluntary insubordination, that of reflected intractability” (Foucault, 1997c, 32). A dynamic position-taking in the face of the game of governmentalization (which causes the subject to be governed in a certain way), an anarchic refusal that carries the *virtue* of taking risks in a critical attitude, in an “art of not being governed in this way” or, further, an “art of not being governed” (Foucault, 1997c, 39). A non-ideal *virtue*, therefore, which, according to Butler, will be “the practice by which the self forms itself in desubjugation” (Butler, 2002, 20).

Therefore, a *politics of criminology* serves as a *counterpower* to *contradict*, to *disturb* the established power. It is the answer that Deleuze advises to give, concerning philosophy, whenever the question arises. Basically, in a derogatory tone, a question that is intended to be ironic and scornful, must always be faced with an aggressive answer: “it serves to sadden”. Philosophy does not serve to understand the world, but to take a position, as stated by Foucault, Deleuze insists even more: “philosophy does not serve the State or the Church, who have other concerns. It serves no established power. A philosophy that saddens no one, that annoys no one, is not a philosophy. It is useful for harming stupidity, for turning stupidity into something shameful” (Deleuze, 2006, 106). There would be no other use for a *politics of criminology* that, in every imaginable way, com-

bats *punitive power*, but the task of *demystifying the government of punishment*. To unveil courageously the mystification of the exercise of punishment, demands that the cultural routines (as well as for domestication and selection of critique) renounces to disturb the stupidity that goes through punitive practices. That is, “exposing as a mystification the mixture of baseness and stupidity that creates the astonishing complicity of both victims and perpetrators” (Deleuze, 2006, 106). In this sense, for a politics of criminology, denouncing the mythical belief in punishment, as Deleuze writes, through Nietzsche’s untimely considerations, establishes an essential relationship with time, against and in favor of it¹¹: on the one hand, about time, always critical to the current world and, on the other hand, always against its time, in an untimely and outdated way in its active task of a *time to come* (Deleuze, 2006, 107).

If the task of thought – *to sadden* – may sound too pessimistic to some unwary spirits, reproducing nausea that is indeed infertile, perhaps one should look to those who have always had to deal with various “ends of the world”: the native peoples of Brazil (Danowski & Castro, 2014). They are the purest proof of experience of reality. Creativity and poetry have always inspired the resistance of these peoples. And, in the face of the abyss that insists on being built due to the antics of the punitive spectacle, it is a fall that one must deal with. As Ailton Krenak writes, in his charming prose, recalling the testimony of these *minority-becoming* (in Brazil, approximately 250 ethnic groups who speak more than 150 languages and dialects), perhaps what should be done, instead of camouflaging the fall, is to find a parachute:

Why do we hate the sensation of falling? It happens that is all we have been doing of late. Falling, falling, falling. Why are we so upset over it now? We feel insecure, paranoid even, because all the other outcomes we can see require the implosion of the house we inherited but live in fear of losing. Let us put our creative and critical capacity to use, making some colorful parachutes to slow the fall”. (Krenak, 2020, 34)

Conclusion

Here, finally, a common trace is found, the *position-taking* of a *politics of criminology*. Admittedly, as stated by Marina Garcés, it is a “guerrilla practice” (Garcés, 2016, 9). In the same way that a guerrilla does not have a fixed front, each moment and position

¹¹ “Perhaps the special situation of women in relation to the man-standard that accounts for the fact that becomings, being minoritarian, always pass through a becoming-woman” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, 291).

eventually produces its battlefield. When “every true struggle is a struggle against these laws and their effects on bodies and minds”, a *politics of criminology* only emerges as an additional tool for the struggle for freedom, grown on the margins of *punitive power*, touched by life that hurts and with the desire to subvert it.

Each focus of this produced texture must be understood critically as *imaginative sparks*, concerned, not in reproducing judgments about conventional criminology, but in multiplying the signs of other possible modes of existence, to produce ruptures in common, ready to be shared.

Certainly, other sparks can be found; criminological criticisms, in fact, opposed to the threats of technological progress driven by capital and averse to negotiations with a state that can, without any fear of making mistakes, be called *war*. In a sort of almost desert of critical thinking in criminological matters – which can be proved, in part, by its terminological multiplication (a kind of technical reproducibility in the criminological field), that is, by the frightening profusion of adjectives that are currently attached to the label “criminology” – which, to a large extent, does not even scratch the varnish of the penalty and negotiates with the hypocritical management of control strategies, the effort to think in another way, to produce a new way of looking at the relations of the punitive power, it was never a dispensable task for the critical attitude. After all, to become something else, is what pulses in a *politics of criminology*.

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ON THE GOVERNMENT OF POPULATION. GENEALOGY AND TOPICAL NOTES*

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SOBRE EL GOBIERNO DE LA POBLACIÓN. GENEALOGÍA Y NOTAS DE ACTUALIDAD

Abstract

The essay focuses on the theme relating to the governance of lives based on the categories developed by Michel Foucault. Starting from the reconstruction of the concept of population, the work highlights the paradigm of governmentality as an effective tool to reflect on the reconfiguration of devices in use by the government during the pandemic. These systems reveal the logical medical power managing bodies through a flexible system of hierarchies.

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Key words

Population, event, risk, biopolitics, bodies.

Resumen

El ensayo se centra en el tema relativo a la gubernamentalidad de las vidas a partir de las categorías desarrolladas por Michel Foucault. Partiendo de la reconstrucción del concepto de población, el trabajo destaca el paradigma de la gubernamentalidad como herramienta eficaz para reflexionar sobre la reconfiguración de los dispositivos utilizados por el gobierno durante la pandemia. Estos sistemas revelan la lógica del poder médico que gestiona los cuerpos a través de un sistema flexible de jerarquías.

Palabras clave

Población, evento, riesgo, biopolítica, cuerpos.

Population/species government

The government of lives first designates a form of modern political rationality, a technique attributable to the field of research opened by Michel Foucault on power relations in whom he describes the emergence, at the height of the second half of the eighteenth century, of a new collective subject and object of government by the State: the population. Already in the course of 1976, *Il faut défendre la société*, Foucault identifies the appearance of a new political technology with respect to sovereignty and discipline, functional to the historical emergency of the population as a concept forged by knowledge and, together, as a social reality produced by public policies for the demographic reorganization of urban spaces during the eighteenth century. Applied to the population, this technique is, therefore, placed on a different plan of action and scale with respect to the repressive power of the law and the individualizing grip of disciplinary devices. It acts not in the direction of man-body, but in the direction of man-species (Foucault, 1976). It addresses, therefore, the set of biological traits that affect human bodies as a species, on the global plane of the mass and not of the individual considered in his particular field of action. Going back over the stages that marked the theme of the reason for government in Foucault's analysis of power, it is possible to find an important reference to the genealogy in question in the essay *La volonté de savoir*. Faced with the sovereign legal paradigm, implying 'the right of death and power over life' (Foucault, 1976, 181), the notion of "bio power" serves here to designate 'a power to make live or let die' (Foucault, 1976, 181), functional to the management of life, whose development, starting from the seventeenth century, is articulated in two complementary mechanisms, connected by a mobile and oscillating bundle of relationships: discipline, "the anatomical-politics of the human body" (Foucault, 1976, 183), oriented to the strengthening of individual attitudes according to a normalizing action applied to human life for social performance, and population bio-politics, aimed at the governance of lives, that is, at the regulation and taking charge of biological processes – birth, morbidity, longevity, sexuality – that globally invest the life of human beings according to state interests (Foucault, 2004). Now, although these analyses already indicate the emergence of specific problems within the government's methodological perspective, it is possible to trace a systematic analysis of the concept and political rationality only during the Collège de France of 1977-1978, *Sécurité, Territoire, population*, in which Foucault opens a new line of research concerning security mechanisms. This is an important break from the model of *Surveiller et punir* and the disciplinary policies of the body described in it: an excess in the articulation of the relationships of disciplinary power that Foucault registers near an "event" (Revel, 2003, 118), involving a new idea of interaction between

society and the State: liberalism. In fact, if the specific trait of the discipline consists in an individualization mechanism, and therefore, in the construction of new, enclosed, artificial spaces – hospitals, prisons, factories, schools - in which docile bodies are identified, supervised and manufactured, to be conformed to the social norm according to an optimal performance model, the specificity of safety technologies consists in the structuring of an environment, that is, in the regulation of an open space, consisting of a set of artificial and natural elements in relation to each other, according to possible events to be normalized by means of a strategic intervention aimed at maximizing the safety factors and minimizing those of risk. This strategic decline in power relations, identified between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in conjunction with the birth of liberalism, does not entail a substitution or succession of technologies, but rather their interaction and functional complementarity. As “two-sided technology” (Foucault, 1976, 183), bio power involves the oscillation between discipline and safety: if the one implies a taking charge that proceeds in the sense of identification, the other proceeds in the sense of massification, since it is not only a question of normalizing the lives of individuals to make their conduct socially useful, but, more radically, of controlling their entire life understood as a process to be managed in relation to the biological functions of individuals taken in charge as a species that interacts in an environment. The same disciplinary procedure for the identification of bodies is therefore complemented and reinforced by biopolitical rationality capable of extending to the social body (Chignola, 2006, 53), as already demonstrated by the police measures identified by Foucault in the health regulations adopted by the States for the management of the plague epidemic at the end of the seventeenth century. These measures provide, in fact, for a proliferation of disciplinary mechanisms, their extension outside the enclosed spaces for which they have been prepared: the surveillance technique, a panoptic principle of discipline of the bodies identified in the confinement and internment spaces, is combined with the social device of ‘quarantine’, public control of the population throughout the territory of the plagued city, described by Foucault as the “utopia of the city perfectly governed” (Foucault, 1975, 200), as it is totally covered by a regime of visibility and controls. Reconnecting, therefore, to the problem of government as a specific rationality articulated by security mechanisms in relation to the emerging reality of the population (Pandolfi, 2006, 96), it is necessary to underline a decisive point to which reference was made. And, that is, that the modification suffered by the disciplinary government of the bodies in the direction of the biopolitical government of the populations is determined by the industrial development of capitalism and liberal policies during the eighteenth century (Foucault, 2004). In the face of this change, the objective of state policies can no longer be limited to the guarantee of public order and ‘self-preservation’.

It aims to adapt strategically to events, making the management of the relationship with society more effective, ensuring, that is, the circularity of power within the social body, invested with a new idea of economic production. The political end becomes, therefore, the “management of the forces of the state” (Foucault, 2004, 377), that is, the taking charge of life understood as a set of processes to be managed and valued, through the detection of laws that establish the general causes and the factors of incidence. Precisely by virtue of this insurance requirement, dictated by the need to ensure the optimization of the productive forces within the capitalist apparatus and according to state interests, the government of the population takes shape, defined by Foucault as a “set of living and coexisting beings who have particular biological and pathological traits and, consequently, depend on specific knowledge and techniques” (Foucault, 2004, 377). The reference goes to the social sciences that emerged during the second half of the eighteenth century: demography, statistics, social medicine, public hygiene, political economy. Knowledge involved in reality from which they are conditioned according to a practical provision that places them on a strategic level as techniques capable of objectifying facts and events through criteria of probabilistic calculation and quantitative measurement. For this reason, the population affirms itself as a “biopolitical positivity” (Pandolfi, 2006, 109) - observes Alessandro Pandolfi - and that is, as an epistemic construction deriving from the interaction of knowledge and technologies placed at the crossroads between the natural sciences and the social sciences: a collective subject and, together, an object of power procedurally forged by discourses and practices aimed at the production of a “global effect” (Foucault, 2004, 244), relating to the management of all life as a process of production and reproduction of *bios*. In this passage lies the underlying reason why Foucault writes that “the elaboration of the population - wealth problem (in its different concrete aspects: taxation, hardship, displacement, depopulation, idleness-begging, wandering) constitutes one of the conditions for the formation of political economy” (Foucault, 2004, 375). The stakes connected to the production of this knowledge-power is, in fact, the self-constitution of the population as a subject of economic government, whose productive potential must be governed according to the criteria of statistical forecasting, that is, according to laws that detect the average of the behaviors carried out by individuals as members of the species. Here lays the keystone around which to focus the analysis of security technologies. This operative link pushes Foucault to redefine the ‘security-population-government’ problem (government) and convert it from the historical form of power dating back to medieval treatises into a paradigm of governmentality (*gouvernementalité*): “set of institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics that allow to exercise this specific and very complex form of power that has in the population the main target, in the political economy the

privileged form of knowledge and in the security devices the essential technical tool” (Foucault, 2004, 111). In this case, a strategy of relations articulated by an economic logic of power emerges that, following the affirmation of the reason of State, is arranged as a specific political rationality. To deepen the analysis on governance, it is necessary to focus on the precise meaning that the term ‘population’ assumes in the texts of political economy and demography, against the background of the broader philosophical and political debate of the eighteenth century in which the category experiences a real “discursive explosion” (Paltrinieri, 2014, 46-47). If, in fact, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the concept expresses exclusively a passive, accounting meaning, concerning “the numerable set of inhabitants of a territory” (Paltrinieri, 2014a, 47), from the use made of it in eighteenth-century texts an active, incremental meaning also emerges, connected to the life of the species – of which it is synonymous - and to the dynamics of an action functional to a new exercise of power. The objective of governmental rationality, in fact, is the “propagation of men through reproduction for the general welfare of the human species” (Paltrinieri, 2014a, 47). This is the etymological meaning that the notion assumes in the works of very distant philosophers such as François Quesnay, physiocracy theorist, and Jean Jacques Rousseau. For both, in fact, the population emerges as the ‘proof of good administration’ (Rousseau, 1964), and the index of prosperity of the social body guaranteed by a process that, inscribing itself in the reproductive power of the species, has the ability to adapt to the variables posed by the environment. The increasing number of inhabitants of a territory is therefore not to be considered a random factor of the process at stake, but derives from a management technique that acts on the operating conditions relating to the latter. It acts, that is, on a network of conduct and events internal to population phenomena, starting from the observation of the constants and regularities that regulate their developments according to the different age groups of the groups: the birth rate in relation to the sexes, the mortality and morbidity rate, accidents at work. In the face of the decline in population in Europe since 1750, the result not only of desertification caused by wars, epidemics, famines, but also of the new practices of celibacy and birth control adopted by couples within families, bio politics therefore assumes as its own objective the government of reproduction for the health of generations (Putino, 2011, 15). The objective is to encourage the multiplication and de-individualization of the population taken over as living capital, biological wealth, set of production processes to be managed based on the data provided by statistics, political economy, demography, public hygiene, social medicine (Cheinisse, 1914, 54). In the rationalization of this form of power, the analysis carried out by the physiocrats about the ‘naturalness’ of the population takes on a certain importance, as a phenomenon rooted in the spontaneous normality of

desire and in a physical order - 'a priori' - of economic reproduction: agriculture. The idea of convenience introduced by the physiocracy in the context of reason of state therefore becomes 'the universal' of the discourse transposed by government practices in function of a strengthening of lives for "a mutual adjustment between the increase of the population and the flow of wealth" (Paltrinieri, 2014 b, 349). At the same time, as a complex, heterogeneous historical-discursive reality, subject to geographical, climatic and cultural variables, the population highlights individual conduct that cannot be fully controlled by the sovereign. From its interaction with the environment, in fact, emerge behaviors inhabited by a will that cannot be assimilated to the legal sphere of the state, dictated by the calculation of profit and by the free action of subjects who have desires and interests in economic exchange. If, therefore, governmental rationality is capable of guiding conduct according to a purpose appropriate to the purpose it aims at, it is exercised only in relation to subjects capable of opposing a resistance within the power relations in which they are taken. For this reason, - writes Foucault - "governing means structuring the field of possible action of others" (Foucault, 1982). This means affirming the productivity of power in relation to the effects it mobilizes: recognizing the relationality of relationships of force that, on the one hand, produce tactics, strategies, conditioning, but, at the same time, require the freedom of the subjects to be able to exercise and expand. The government of the population intervenes, therefore, on the productive and reproductive activity of the subjects, disposing itself as a 'conduct of conduct': an indirect action on the choices of women and men who implement, in turn, resistances, techniques, behaviors linked to a sphere of interests and an economy of pleasures unavailable to the governmental care of the state. What emerges as the end and instrument of a new technique, is not the accounting set of the inhabitants of a territory, but a collective subject, inhabited by the positivity of choices, desires, decisions, habits.

Normalize the event: between risk, economy, security

At this point, it is a question of examining the link between power and freedom inherent in the rationality of government, as a relational power that produces effects only in relation to free subjects to act. For this reason, it is necessary to focus on a central step of the governmental perspective, that is, on the procedures for the normalization of events mobilized by security devices for the protection and consumption of individual freedoms. Each government of lives has the goal of "reducing the event. Neutralize the event and the contingency" (Bazzicalupo, 2016, 27). This is how Laura Bazzicalupo

writes in an essay dedicated to the critique of neoliberal bio politics. Functional to an economic, strategic logic, the governmentality normalizes the event in order to make possible only the operating modalities adapted to the context, to the rationality scheme in which it fits - in this case, the current neoliberal regulation scheme of the company - in view of a viable solution. For this reason, the government cancels the transformative potential of *reframing*, the opening of the possible real, and the transformation of meaning resulting from the unexpected break of continuity. In its impact with the resistance and excess of living matter, the governmental system modifies its devices and assumes different strategies precisely to position itself in an adaptive, effective, functional way to the normalization of phenomena, to the control of bodies and of the population. On the one hand, therefore, the government implies a radical historicization of power relations, a constant transformation of practices and knowledge to bend contingency to its objectives. But, at the same time, within a process of constant redefinition of the methods relating to control techniques, the aim of the action (Foucault, 2004) remains unchanged: the assurance of life, according to the Foucault hypothesis of an art of governing traced in the techniques of conduct elaborated by the Christian pastoral for the salvation of men, *omnes et singulatim*. As can be seen from the *Course* of 1977-1978, the Christian pastorate constitutes for Foucault the “embryonic germ of governmentality” (Foucault, 2004, 169), the archaic model of an individualizing, beneficial power, aimed at guiding the conduct of men. In pastoral management, therefore, the ability of individuals to act is not subject to a preventive mechanism of renunciation, - as in the legal domain of sovereignty - but is encouraged, rather, by an insurance relationship of care. In this way, through the reference to the religious semantics of the pastorate, Foucault identifies “the point of crystallization” (Foucault, 2004, 169) of the practices through which government reason is institutionalized as an attribute of sovereign power. Against the background of this genealogy, it is understood, then, why the normalization of the event is the goal of every government of lives. As was recalled at the beginning, with regard to the biopolitical code of governmental rationality, it is a question of ‘letting people live’ rather than ‘letting them live’. And, therefore, it is a question of creating a field of exercise in which the subjects are free to carry out actions compatible with the objectives built by the knowledge that define the historical emergency conditions related to that field. The point of node, then, is the functional relationship that governmentality grafts with the regime of truth: expert knowledge that authorizes the exercise of power and allows managing the production of subjectivity, in a dual movement of capture of knowledge and proliferation of subjectivation. The articulation of this strategic relationship between knowledge and power is consolidated at the height of the second

half of the eighteenth century, with the function of police prepared by the State reason for the exercise of medical knowledge. (Foucault, 1963). In eighteenth-century politics, medicine becomes, in fact, a technique of control and management of the social body, understood not in a metaphorical sense, but as “a complex and multiple materiality that includes, in addition to the bodies of individuals, all the material elements that ensure their life” (Foucault, 1994, 13-27). In the face of the practices of medicalization mobilized by the government to ensure the health of families, - in terms of birth management, childhood, the organization of the relationship between parents and children - Foucault highlights the crucial role taken by medicine in the management of collective life and focuses the political status of medical knowledge, as a functional discourse to the exercise of a pastoral power that has the purpose of taking over the religion and converting sin into disease (Foucault, 1994, 40 -58). The underlying reason that explains the attribution of meaning, the leap of trust - the ‘faith’ - accorded to medical science and its effectiveness, is part of the broader process of social transformation that invests the field of intervention of the State at the height of the second half of the eighteenth century: the guarantee of well-being becomes one of the fundamental objectives of political power and the state of health of the population becomes a matter of government within the “field of macroeconomics” (Foucault, 1994, 13-27) to be managed through public interventions aimed at the hygiene and prophylaxis of bodies against the risk of contagion from infectious diseases. This is made possible by the medical police techniques prepared by the government for the control of epidemics, in particular, for the normalization of an epidemiological event – smallpox – organized and perceived collectively as a global phenomenon, generalizable to the whole population with common behavior measures, thanks to vaccination and inoculation techniques based on a statistical evaluation method based on the preventive risk logic. The purpose of government practices, in this case, is not to eliminate the disease or prevent contact - as in the case of leprosy – but, with the safety device organized around vaccination/inoculation, it is, rather, to take into account “the group of sick and non-illiterate, that is, the entire population, without discontinuity and rupture, to see what is its probable morbidity and mortality coefficient, and what for a given population is normal to expect in terms of disease contagion and consequent death” (Foucault, 2004, 64). Therefore, in the management of this epidemic, healthy subjects of the population to whom the preventive measure of immunization from contagion (Esposito, 2002) is extended in a general way are involved. The configuration of the concept of health changes, based on the biological principle of identity of vital phenomena affirmed by Bichat, according to which the pathological does not indicate a qualitatively different state from the normal, but differs

from it by quantitative variations, for changes in intensity in the action of stimulants essential for maintaining health (Canguilhem, 1966), writes Georges Canguilhem. In prevention medicine that addresses the smallpox epidemic and foreshadows the 'epidemiology of risk' that arose in the nineteenth century, medicine and statistics are intertwined to ensure the normalization of the epidemiological phenomenon through the calculation of probabilities, that is, through the analysis of the distribution of cases and the observation of the degree of risk faced by the population groups based on different factors related to age, environment, profession. In the face of this global and quantitative analysis, relating to the different normal contagion curves, "the normalization operation consists in letting these different distributions of normality play among themselves, so that the most unfavorable are brought back to the level of the most favorable" (Foucault, 2004, 65). As Foucault demonstrates with regard to the scarcity – considered by the physiocrats to be functional to the natural order of the economy – even in this case, it is not a question of isolating the phenomenon, but of preventively ensuring its circulation by neutralizing the dangers associated with its contagiousness. What emerges from the Foucault analysis of the medicalization and epidemic management policies is, therefore, a security mechanism that adapts strategically to the economic logic of the government around which the population management practices are structured where the phenomena are observed, separated and calculated through risk (Ewald, 1991) insurance technology. This term refers to a scheme of techno-management rationality – at work not only in epidemiological evaluation – which breaks down and depersonalizes the lives of individuals in data, segments, bands of population behavior "to be probed, regulated, controlled in a sort of administrative counter-activity of the risk that does not know the difference between the investigation plan and the government plan" (Tarizzo, Brusa, 2009, 407). In the wake of Foucault, François Ewald demonstrates, therefore, the progressive centrality of medical knowledge in the process of institutional change that invests the rationality of the State and its discursive regime. In his genealogy of the Age-Providence, Ewald clarifies the role assumed by medicine as a 'power-knowledge' (Foucault, 1976, 93) that acts within the mechanisms of reproduction and adaptation of bios to the environment: insurance technology used by the State for the prophylaxis of health risk and, more extensively, for the guarantee of well-being as an "agent of transformation of human life" (Foucault, 1976, 93) in the field of law, politics, economy. In fact, it is a question of governing life for "all that it produces, including its potential, which must be actualized" (Ewald, 1986, 16). This is where social rights take shape, based on a principle of evaluation structured around the biological value of life as a productive force. With the birth of the Welfare State, in fact, the government of lives is

institutionalized with regard to the protection of health and work, for the recognition of rights previously granted by the State in a paternalistic way as assistance or donation.

Emergency government and care of the municipality

With the outbreak of the pandemic, the government of lives has experienced a radicalization of measures aimed at the management of bodies and populations. The rapid spread of the epidemic on a global scale has caused an unprecedented health emergency for which new control technologies have been deployed together with epidemic risk containment measures dating back to the 14th century (Foucault, 1975). In this context, the paradigm elaborated by Foucault has proved to be the effective tool for reflecting on the reconfiguration of the devices operating in the management of the epidemic, in terms of the medical logic of a power that cures life and rejects death - makes life and lets it die - through a mobile system of hierarchies, classifications, inequalities, selective inclusions, rejections. At the same time, however, the Covid 19 event proved to be irreducible to the government framework, exceeding the risk normalization procedure around which health and safety policies are built. As a global catastrophe, it has opened a crack in the neoliberal governance scenario, causing a trauma in the collective imagination within which it has fallen. This, for several orders of reasons connected to each other. First of all, because it showed the specter of reality regarding the ability to maintain a health system fragmented by neo-liberal policies of dismantling Welfare. With a paradigm shift in the insurance rationality of social policies - from the social form of collective risk to the 'management' of private risk - neoliberal governance has encouraged the generalization of a business model to society as a whole in the name of competitiveness and efficiency. For this reason, the action of the States was no longer directed to the government of the economy for the health of the population, but, rather, it was bent to the government of lives for the taking charge of the economic logic as a new criterion for regulating social relations. Faced with this change that has occurred in the last forty years, the pandemic has shown a generalized picture of impotence from which emerged precisely the failure of the prevention logic for life insurance, in favor of an entrepreneurial technology of risk and a logic of emergency functional to a government action legitimized ex post by the technical opinions of the experts for biopolitical control. For years, in fact, the Italian Ministry of Health had approved a national plan for the organization of a response to an influenza pandemic, which has remained without applications. If, then, - as has been noted - "the global response required the

large-scale implementation of public health measures with rapid identification and isolation of cases and the commitment of the entire community” (Dentico & Missoni, 2021, 180), the outbreak of the pandemic crisis in Italy highlighted the fragmentation of government action in relation to the implementation of the required measures, due to the lack of coordination between the State and the regions and the lack of resources and devices for health service outposts. To this order of causes, as was said, is added another, closely connected to the first. The pandemic has affected us not only because of the common exposure to impotence reinforced by the crisis of governmental care that neo-capitalism has dismantled through privatization, outsourcing, the individualization of productive forces, the exploitation of reproductive work. The Coronavirus epidemic has affected the whole of society with the impact of trauma because it has shown the spectrality of reality - the abnormal character of the normality produced by neoliberal governmentality - appearing to us as the symptom of a deeper removal, linked to the denied condition of interdependence on Earth (Pulcini, 2020a, 240). Instead, it is a vital need to be taken care of: to come back to recognize ourselves as interdependent - not only from each other, but from the environment in which we live, in a common world to which we belong as a population/species among others. On the other hand, if due to a global threat of contagion induced by a jump of species - “the virus shows that everything is always involved in the part and that ‘there are no autonomous regions in the empire of nature that are an exception’” (Ronchi, 2020) - recalls Rocco Ronchi quoting Spinoza - then the question of the interdependence between human and nature assumes an ontological value to be re-launched on the political agenda. The point must be clarified, therefore, not only to reaffirm on new institutional criteria the policies of Welfare, starting from the practices of care, mutualism, proximity and cooperation, against the background of an idea of society understood as a whole in solidarity between the parties that neoliberal ideology has demolished in the name of entrepreneurial autonomy. But, in view of a profound re-discussion of social policies - health, urban planning, redistribution of income - the question of the interdependence between the living and of the vital interaction with the environment takes on a broader scope and is attested as a political challenge and thought to the anthropocentric vision of the world on which the capitalist model of development based on colonial exploitation, the predation of ecosystems, the appropriation of the common understood as the relationship between the vital human and the biosphere. Thus Elena Pulcini focuses on the radical nature of this challenge: “This last crucial point, on which I limit myself here to a brief incision on the need to rethink the concept of life in the Anthropocene: no longer only in the sense of bios, individual life, unique and unrepeatably, in which lies the source of freedom and

dignity of the person, but also in the sense of *zoè*, of that life that we share with the entire living world within the natural cycle (...). In other words, it is a conversion from anthropocentrism to ecology, which, to quote Latour again, “is not the name of a party nor of a particular concern, but that of a call to change direction: “Towards the Earth””. Ecology, it is good to specify it, as a perspective that goes beyond environmentalism itself, in which the vision of the environment as the dwelling place of man remains, which must therefore be preserved and cared for the human being” (Pulcini, 2020a, 247). Hence, the need invoked by the philosopher to experiment with practices of relationship and movement that combine the collective need for change and reversal with a “process of self-constitution and transformation” (Pulcini, 2020b, 151). A process of subjectivation to which Foucault gives a precise name - ‘self-care’ (Foucault, 1984, *souci de soi*)- as a transformational experience of oneself that assumes political force as it is built and experienced through the permanent ability to resist the devices of knowledge-power. Like feminist knowledge that bypasses the devices of sexuality with an unexpected shift of subjectivity, through the positioning of a subjective truth exercised ‘from itself’. It is clear that this is an internal challenge to a field of struggles, full of pitfalls and ambivalences. In the current government dictated by the health emergency, the geopolitical party for the global vaccine market - between monopoly of distribution of the States and control of patents by the pharmaceutical industries - has led to a radicalization of the logic of neoliberal governance. As an immunization device, the vaccine becomes an instrument of power and body management with a view to a global vaccination against Covid 19. The care of the municipality therefore presents itself as a planetary challenge (Mbembe, Shread, 2021): an unthinkable relational perspective to be put into practice starting from subjectivities capable of taking charge of an imaginative step in the relationship with the common world, beyond a paternalistic vision and biopolitical strategy, to trigger a reversal of the public agenda, regarding the responsibility for the decisions to which politics is called today.

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RE-EXAMINING THE CONCEPT OF SOFT POWER AND INITIATING A DEBATE ON HOW TO DEFINE THE CONCEPT FROM THE NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE CONNOTATIONS*

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REEXAMINAR EL CONCEPTO DE SOFT POWER E COMENZAR UN DEBATE SOBRE LA DEFINICIÓN DEL CONCEPTO DESDE LO NEGATIVO Y CONNOTACIONES POSITIVAS

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Abstract

This article makes an attempt to explicate and thus revisit the definition of Soft Power as provided by Joseph S Nye Jr., which has in fact been very widely used by politicians, bureaucrats and scholars. In fact, Nye's definition of 'soft power' has set a domino effect, whereby majority of the definitions that follow, have accepted in principle the definition provided by Nye. Thus, the problem being many simply claim to know what soft power is with the mere reference of the concept. In the process they ignore the obvious, which has been discussed in this article. There is wide flaw in Nye's definition, as a country's behavior in the international platform is never determined by the other parties' attraction in soft power terms. Every country weighs its interest and follows its convictions before taking any decision. The arguments put forward in the article intends to initiate a debate of what soft power actually is and how it should be defined, from the negative and positive connotations. Veritably, two new constructs entitled, 'Negative Soft Power' and 'Positive Soft Power' is introduced and explained. And finally, before concluding the article also analyses the existing critical literature and have justified as to how this work is different from those critical literature and in what way it contributes in furthering the debate on soft power.

Keywords

Soft Power, Positive Soft Power, Negative Soft Power, Smart Power, Hard Power.

Resumen

Este artículo intenta explicar y revisar la definición de "poder blando" de Joseph S. Nye Jr. que, de hecho, ha sido ampliamente utilizada por políticos, burócratas y académicos. De hecho, la definición de "poder blando" de Nye ha creado un efecto dominó, por el que la mayoría de las definiciones que le siguen han aceptado en principio la definición proporcionada por Nye. Así pues, el problema es que muchos simplemente afirman saber qué es el poder blando con la mera referencia al concepto. En el proceso ignoran lo obvio, que ha sido discutido en este artículo. Hay un gran fallo en la definición de Nye, ya que el comportamiento de un país en la plataforma internacional nunca está determinado por la atracción de las otras partes en términos de poder blando. Cada país sopesa sus intereses y sigue sus convicciones antes de tomar cualquier decisión. Los argumentos expuestos en el artículo pretenden iniciar un debate sobre qué es realmente el poder blando y cómo debería definirse, desde las connotaciones negativas y positivas. Para ello, se introducen y explican dos nuevos conceptos: "poder blando negativo"

y “poder blando positivo”. Por último, antes de concluir, el artículo también analiza la literatura crítica existente y justifica en qué se diferencia este trabajo de dicha literatura crítica y de qué manera contribuye a fomentar el debate sobre el poder blando.

Palabras clave

Soft Power, Soft Power Positivo, Soft Power Negativo, Smart Power, Hard Power.

Introduction

In international politics a large number of politicians, diplomats, and academics, predominantly trust soft power to be one of the essential components of international relations, which influences a country's behaviour and facilitates the achievement of one's foreign policy objectives. However, in the practical functioning of International politics it is national interest and hard bargaining that seem to be the most dominant factor in determining a country's behaviour. This argument is substantiated with examples in the article and has been seconded by many diplomats around the world, whom I met during my stint in the Ministry of External Affairs, where I got an opportunity to interact with hundreds of diplomats from over 80 countries. Thus, in this article I make an attempt to revisit the definition of soft power as provided by Joseph S Nye Jr., which has in fact been very widely used. This is apparent from the fact that a Google search of the word 'soft power' will hit about 2,33,00,00,000 searches. However, the primary problem here is that many scholars simply claim to know what soft power is with the mere reference of the concept and in the process they ignore the obvious and the concept is being used naively. The arguments pertaining to the right understanding of the concept and the possible outcomes will be elaborated further in this article. This article thus seeks to explicate the concept of soft power as it applies in international relations. It begins by first revisiting the definition of soft power provided by Nye and many others. Thereafter, an attempt has been made to define soft power in the way it should be from the 'Negative' and 'Positive' connotations. Veritably, two new constructs entitled, 'Negative Soft Power'¹ and 'Positive Soft Power' is introduced

¹ The concept of 'Negative Soft Power' here is used in a very different context and having different meaning as compared to the ideas put forward by William A Callahan (Callahan, 2015), who questionably uses the concept of 'Negative Soft Power' to portray the manner in which China uses soft power.

and explained, primarily to do away with the glitch that exists in the definition provided by Joseph S Nye Jr. The article also deals with the factors that promote soft power and as to what are the primary constituents of soft power. Finally before concluding, the article also analyses the existing critical literatures on soft power and have justified as to how this work is different from those critical literatures and in what way it contributes in furthering the debate on transforming the notion of soft power into something that is well understood and relevance accepted.

Revisiting the concept

To begin with Joseph S Nye Jr's definition, according to whom,

Soft Power is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideas and policies. (Nye, 2004)

The flaw in this definition is that, a country's behaviour in the international platform is not in the least determined by the other parties' attraction in soft power terms. Every country weighs its interest and follows its convictions before taking any decision. If Country 'A' finds Country 'B's' political ideas and policies relevant, it might make an attempt to adopt and apply some of those policies and ideas in its domestic politics, but it in no way would start wanting what Country 'B' wants. India for example, has adopted in its constitution the finer ideas and practices from the constitutions of many countries, for example, Parliamentary type of Government from UK; Written Constitution and the provision of Fundamental Rights from USA; Fundamental duties from USSR; the provision of Concurrent List from Australia; practice of 'Procedure Established by Law' from Japan; Suspension of Fundamental Rights from Germany; Federalism with a strong Centre from Canada; Concept of Directive Principles of State Policy from Ireland and etcetera. However, it never meant that India toed the line with these countries and voted with them in international forums. Similarly, Country B's culture may also be equally attractive, but that again in no way changes a country's behaviour in the international platforms. For most their native culture is always dear and better. To take a very naive example, to most denizens, the taste of their mother's food is always better than the best cuisines of the world. Cuisines of foreign countries do taste good, but they can be alternate only for a day or two or on occasions, what is sustainable is obviously one's

staple food. Another supporting example here could be that many Americans in the United States of America are to some extent fond of Chinese food, however, this love for food, in no way transforms into the love for that country, primarily for the governments that are expected to act in the behest of their country's national interest. Nonetheless, other country's culture may influence the thought process and the behaviour of citizens towards that country, as it fosters better understanding and know how, as for example the Americans at least know that the Chinese cuisine too is as good and popular as theirs own. Thus, it would not be wrong to state that soft power is food for the individuals, but not for countries. However, citing Bourdieu, one may argue that in its deep state, as a way of thinking, there is a sense in which culture is significant, as discussed in Bourdieu's concept 'Habitus' (Bourdieu, 1977). For instance, Anglophone countries have a shared way of thinking, which makes them natural allies. Conversely, South Asia, as an example seems to be least interconnected, despite being bound together by history, geography, kinship, religion, faith, cultural legacy and linguistic affinity. Detailed discussion of the use of culture as a soft power tool and its implications will be discussed in the later part of this article.

Essentially, every country is aware that they are a sovereign nation. They also apparently know, as to which are the country's that are powerful and with whom it will benefit the most. And seemingly they are also aware of the insignificant countries which may be ignored no matter how rich it may be in terms of its culture, political values and ideas. This is also evident from the different official visits of the Head of States to various countries. Such visits are never guided by the extent of soft power resource a country possesses. It is all about one's interest and goals – this is the harsh reality of International politics. However, a point to mention here is that it is the tourist and not countries that are attracted by a country's soft power.

According to Nye again,

A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries admire its values, emulate its example, aspire to its level of prosperity and openness. This soft power—getting others to want the outcomes that you want—co-opts people rather than coerces them. (Nye, 2004)

Here too, an argument can be built that a country may admire other countries values, emulate its example and aspire to its level of prosperity and openness, however, that does not mean that the country starts to want the outcomes of that country. There is in fact no connection between the two situations. However, Nye justifies his point with the help of few examples, such as,

Soft power is also likely to be more important when power is dispersed. A dictator cannot be totally indifferent to the views of the people under his rule, but he can often ignore popularity when he calculates his interests. In settings where opinions matter, leaders have less leeway to adopt tactics and strike deals. Thus it was impossible for the Turkish government to permit the transport of American troops across the country in 2003, because American policies had greatly reduced our popularity there. In contrast, it was far easier for the United States to obtain the use of bases in authoritarian Uzbekistan for operations in Afghanistan. (Nye, 2004)

Here Nye is partly correct in the sense that public opinion matters in a democratic setup (this fact will be elaborated in the later part of the article), but when this example is applied to the behaviour of countries or its leaders, Nye's argument can be challenged. To believe Turkey's noncooperation was the result of a negative image of American policies may be considered to be over simplification of a complex issue. Political leaders look at the larger picture, and weigh their interest, when dealing with larger and powerful countries, as they are equally aware that for a number of reasons, as explained by 'regime theory', their rule is inherently fragile. In international forums, alliances are more a result of hard bargaining that goes on behind the scenes, which are primarily dominated by the national interest of each and most prominently of the dominant power and thus diplomacy too is less about admirability. Everything goes ok with the concept, till they start focussing on the point that understanding and attraction leads to acquiescence. Unfortunately, thus, the use of soft power today has merely become a cliché, with everybody using the term soft power naively. Nye, too acknowledges the limits of 'soft power' in his 2004 book titled, 'Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics'. However, the problem is not with 'soft power' per se, but with its definition and the expected scope.

Nye's definition of 'soft power' has set a domino effect, whereby majority of the definitions that follow, have accepted in principle the definition provided by Nye. In fact, most literatures on soft power first begin by referring to Nye's definition of soft power, and then go on to build ideas upon it (Kroenig et.al, 2010; Callahan, 2015; Kalimuddin & Anderson, 2018; Shambaugh, 2015; Blanchard & Lu, 2012; Hill and Beadle, 2014; Rothman, 2011). To put it in other words, there is more or less a universal acceptance of Nye's definition by scholars signifying that, they are also accepting that a country can be influenced and foreign policy objectives achieved by the use of soft power tools in the international platform. More so, even non-academic writings, for example the Cambridge Dictionary defines 'soft power' as, "the use of a country's cultural and economic

influence to persuade other countries to do something, rather than the use of military power.” Here again, the definition lays stress on the point of persuading others, and altering their behaviour through soft power, which as discussed is not attainable.

Similarly, the body that conducts the study of ‘Soft Power 30’, build on Nye’s definition, and conduct their research. According to them - “soft power describes the use of positive attraction and persuasion to achieve foreign policy objectives. Soft power shuns the traditional foreign policy tools of carrot and stick, seeking instead to achieve influence by building networks, communicating compelling narratives, establishing international rules, and drawing on the resources that make a country naturally attractive to the world.” Though well defined, some of the problematic words in the definition again are, ‘achieve foreign policy objectives,’ ‘achieve influence,’ etc. Here again as discussed, achieving influence or foreign policy objectives for countries through soft power means is not within the realm of possibility.

As is evident, Nye is like the modern day ‘Pied Piper’ (though not in the literal sense), people followed his definition and when they realized there is a ‘cliff’ ahead, they understand that you needed ‘smart power’, and that, soft power was not sufficient ‘to get the others to want what one wants’. The above arguments can be justified by the fact that Nye and many other scholars’ coined and started using the concept of ‘smart power’ within few years of coining the concept, soft power (Nye, 2004, 2017). This happened primarily when they failed to see results from soft power in the international platform. Smart power hence forth became the vanguard of America’s foreign policy and many other major powers. This transformation unfortunately happened without sufficient debates about what can a country expect out of its soft power, or to be precise, without understanding what soft power actually entails. Smart power is defined by Nye as the combination of both hard and soft power. Further, he and Richard L. Armitage, in their report of the CSIS (Center for strategic and International Studies), titled, ‘Commission on Smart Power: A smarter More Secure America’, talk extensively on the importance of smart power. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela R. Aall, have gone a step ahead and defined smart power as something which “involves the strategic use of diplomacy, persuasion, capacity building, and the projection of power and influence in ways that are cost-effective and have political and social legitimacy”.

However, this concept too is not without problems. To put it in a lay man’s term, or to cut short a sophisticated concept, smart power can be understood, with the help of the following example; say, if a man is caught stealing a packet of biscuit from a store. Now an excellent use of smart power can come handy, first, you can chop his hands off (use of hard power), and then apply analgesic lotions (use of soft power).

Now you have a person, who can never steal anything in future, since he has no hands (smart power at work). It has to be realized that the menace procreated by the use of hard power cannot be recompensed. No analgesic tool can recompense a war widow, or a child orphaned in a war. There are studies conducted, which go on to reveal that many of those innocent families that have been impacted or those families that have lost their near and dear ones in the US led 'war on terror' for example, seek revenge with USA, despite the fact that after war US seeks to promote democracy and human rights in the countries that have been impacted (U.S. Drone Strike Kills Aid Worker, 2021; Al Jazeera, 2018). For a country to believe that it is applying smart power and achieving its goals, one primary precondition here should be that the country does not apply much thought. Every country behave or take sides or start to want what you want only if it sees some interest for itself or is forced to do so. They look at the larger picture, and weigh their interest in the long run. So to believe that one's smart power is at work, is nothing less than the show of naivete.

An attempt to define soft power in the way It should be

To some power is guns

To some power is knives

To some power is the ability to read, and write

To some power is control

To some power is a fist

To some like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. power was words

To some power is like a trapped animal trying to get out of a cage

To some power is love

To some power is art

To some power is money

To me power is knowledge

So what is power to you?

Edwina Matthews

No matter what the answer for the above question, "the concept of power remains a decisive reality in International Politics" (Gupta, 2013). Nye is also spot-on, when he says, "Power has never flowed solely from the barrel of a gun" (Nye, 2004). Thus,

respecting all debates on 'power', one acceptable fact is that there are multiple sources of power. Nye's soft power represents few of those multifaceted sources of power, its outcomes may however be debated.

Nye's definition of soft power may be tweaked to read, soft power is that power, which fosters better understanding among two sentient beings and is based on intangible influences such as culture, values, ideology, one's occult knowledge and the like. To put it in other words, soft power may be defined as a means to showcase one's culture and make the other country understand what one really is, beginning from its thought process to its high culture. Soft power is thus about fostering an understanding of what one's country is and what it could mean. The soft power resources cannot definitely direct the other countries behavior, but will definitely generate an understanding of oneself to the other. Such understanding becomes essential primarily to convey the messages like, Americans are not only about bullying in the international platform; Iranians are not only about nuclear weapons; China is not just about communism; and so on so forth. Such a definition of soft power, which does not beget into influence, may be defined as 'Positive Soft Power'. Positive Soft Power helps to promote the idea of compassion with the primary objective of waning away any misunderstanding that exists between nations and the people living within it. Better understanding fosters better harmony and helps countries to predict what the other side is thinking or the way the other side would react in a certain situation. And thus, better decisions can be taken keeping in view all sensitivity and intentions. Thus, policy makers and academicians need to see and focus on 'Positive Soft Power', as a benign statecraft tool.

This argument can be built further by taking the case of the fight against terrorism. A fact to note would be that terrorism is not definitely unsurpassable. As a famous adage goes, 'the one that comes, has to go.' And one of the correct means to eradicate terrorism is to work at its roots. This can be done through people-to-people collaboration - a definite resource of soft power - and definitely not by using missiles (however, not totally undermining the uses and importance of military). Through such collaborations, the general misunderstanding between the denizens of the so-called sovereign nations can be done away with, and the cause towards strengthening humanity can be achieved. As misunderstanding fans hatred, it, in some way or the other, acts as a stimulus and encourages the unwanted elements in a society to flourish and grow. The terrorists avail of such misunderstanding and get a portion of the popular sentiment to support their objective. Thus, it has been evident, no matter how many terrorist one kills, their number keeps increasing, as their leaders are able to fan misinformation and are able to portray their interest to be genuine. This is primarily

because of lack of understanding among civilians of two different countries, who very easily fall for such negative propaganda. However, if a country is successful in showcasing its soft power (Positive Soft Power) to the world, and let know what the country is really about and how rich its culture, its people are, and that it fosters love and humanity, instead of hatred and selfish interest, then it becomes difficult for terrorist to recruit its forces against the people of that country, which they were doing till now by fanning misinformation and making use of people's sentiments. This is one of the ways how 'positive soft power' works. Thus 'positive soft power' can be about showcasing the humane characteristics of a human being.

In this globalized world, one claims that the world is now connected and shrunk with ever growing interdependence and the use of technology has brought us together. Surprisingly, however, if put bluntly there is still so much we don't know about the other countries and their people and culture. There is still widespread misinformation that is influencing our behavior. Unfortunately, one will find that many countries are portraying their soft power resources, which are manipulated and framed or are hiding the stark under side of the country. In this regard, Neal Rosendorf pointed out that if a country's soft power exhibition, does not accurately reflect the state's realities, they are merely putting lipstick on a pig.

Another major lacuna, in the existing literature on soft power has been that the propounders of soft power have been demonstrating it mostly in the perspective of 'ethnocentrism' (Fan, 2008), favoring the region to which they belong, failing to realize that to most, their culture is always better or is second to none. Nye for example, through the introduction of the concept of soft power, tried to portray the strength of US in all terms and in a way succeeded in conveying his message. Likewise, Joshua Kurlantzick talks extensively in the same rhetoric about Chinese soft power; Shashi Tharoor speaks about Indian soft power through his various articles; Nicu Popescu talks about Russian soft power; Hugh Richardson has a lot to say about European Union's soft power, with all its achievements till date; and the list continues. Similarly, the Cambridge dictionary states that "When it comes to soft power, Germany is now one of the most powerful nations on earth." But how many would agree with this proposition. Some scholars and politicians within India, claim India to be Super Soft Power, but again how many outside the country would agree. In the process the concept is used more as a tool with traces of ghetto mentality evident, as everybody is talking about the greatness of their soft power with no listeners. The question here arises, if a nation is attractive by means of other countries soft power, then considering the greatness of all, who is going to get attracted to whose attraction? The problem further escalates, when one starts to assume that the

world will follow its intangible standing and will start to want what it wants. This adverse use of soft power may be termed as 'Negative Soft Power'.

If the concept of soft power is continued to be used as the best form of propaganda tool (Nye, 2017), or as a tool for altering others behavior, or as a tool to make the others to want what you want, or as a tool to further ones foreign policy goals or to enhance its influence, then the concept may be referred to as 'Negative Soft Power'. To put it in Umut Yukaruc's words, there is no difference between hard power and soft power, if their aims continue to remain the same. This negative use of soft power ensures no leverage to nation states, but only ensures distrust because as discussed, all countries are aware of their sovereign status and do primarily act in accordance with their interest and convictions.

On the contrary, as discussed above, when one's soft power is used to spread the message of humanity and foster better understanding amongst one another, that use may be termed as 'Positive Soft Power'. However, the positive use of soft power, may sound very idealistic, and something out of the world to many, when it comes to dealing with nation states in the present international system, which according to many is anarchic and a one where constant rivalry politics is evident. However, the historical uses and evidences of the use of positive soft power prove otherwise. To elaborate, the concept of 'Soft Power' as has been coined by Joseph S. Nye Jr., is actually an age old, time tested idea and practice, applied successfully by fiefdoms, kingdoms, empires, nation-states from time immemorial. The idea behind the use of soft power was to ensure a better understanding, maintain friendship, learn from each other, increase trade and in the process civilizations and empires flourished. It has been evident in history that those civilizations and empires that were the best connected to the world, always did better than those inward looking civilizations. Definitely, the use of soft power was never about "shaping the preference of others", or getting the others to want what one wants. Thus, considering the rewarding and meritorious use of the idea of soft *power since time immemorial*, one must say that the concept and the idea of soft power is being underestimated today. One primary reason for this underestimation is the use of or attempt to use soft power with negative intent. Thus, the concept requires strong theorization so as to abridge all the ambiguities associated with the term and its relevance.

One of the other problems here with the concept of soft power is its oxymoron attribute. The word 'power' appears in conjunction with the word 'soft'. Many believe power is about altering others preferences, thus power in any form cannot be benign. Thus, many would argue, when soft power is defined without the attribute of influence and if it is only about generating an understanding of oneself to the other, the concept, loses

the right to refer to the word 'power'. Thus one must mention that 'power' here should not be seen or interpreted in the sense of an ability to influence other, but the ability to make a difference, the ability to make you help understand and be understood better and thus enabling you to take right decisions.

Likewise, Josef Joffe too put forward the idea, though differently, that soft power does not necessarily increase the world's love for a country. It is still power and that it can still make enemies. A country's culture might be alluring, but how does it necessarily mean anything to a person like Osama bin Laden or Hitler. For example, how effective will America's Hollywood be in changing the ways of the North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, despite his fondness for Hollywood movies? To this however, Joseph S. Nye Jr. replies with an example of Steven Luke's concept of 'vehicle fallacy'. He emphasizes 'context' and says that this is not unique to soft power resources alone and that having a larger tank army may produce military victory if a battle is fought in the desert, but not if it is fought in a swamp (Nye, 2006). However, one must point out that here again the examples provided by Nye are neither sufficient nor satisfactory. When asked about apples, his examples are concerning oranges. If we let go the examples of Osama, Hitler and Kim Jong-il, can we name any leader of a country who has been influenced by other countries soft power, and has taken decisions in International forums, without weighing multiple factors, including his, or the nations interest.

Factors promoting Soft Power

The other major challenge towards understanding soft power has been to identify the factors that promote soft power. Such factors are in fact available in plentiful, the reason being that the idea of soft power is as old as human civilization, and is thus in use since time immemorial. The humane nature of a human being is actually his soft 'power'. Through this section, I will identify some of these humane characteristics that can be reckoned as the major factors that promote soft power.

Collaboration- Collaboration, which forms an essence of humanity, can be considered to be a major ingredient in the promotion of soft power. "It", according to Geoffrey Cowan and Amelia Arsenault,

...provide(s) a useful basis and structure upon which to form more lasting relationship. Individuals who engage in conversation may each leave the room with a better understanding of the other. Individuals who build or achieve something

together- whether it be in building a home, a school, or a church; in composing a piece of music; or by playing side by side on a sports team- are forever bound by their common experience and/or achievement.

Better association among the public of various nations would enable them to understand that we are all humans and that, humanity is what matters. And the feeling of hatred, haughtiness, misunderstanding, arrogance and the want for power through war, are merely shams. Robert D. Putnam, in his article, 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital', emphasized the fact that, "the quality of public life and the performance of social institutions [and not only in America] are indeed powerfully influenced by norms and networks of civic engagement."

Civic engagements or people-to-people collaboration can be made in many fields, through education- especially by emphasizing on student exchange programs; through social development programs - with people and organizations of various countries coming together and working on a common project for the development of the deprived societies; through sports, where players from different countries come together and play as a team; through intercultural programs and tourism- to foster, understand and respect each other's culture and values better, and through many other means, the list of which is measureless. Such collaborations are nothing but major tools in the context of soft power, which ultimately leads to improved understanding and cooperation.

Communication- "The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood" (Quotations on Listening). And the best way to be understood is to be able to communicate well. Through effective communication, one can also persuade successfully. It strengthens affiliations, be it at the individual level or in the arena of international politics. Understanding each other lays the foundation of a base, over which peace and harmony can be established. If the Americans and the Muslim world understand each other better, they will know that America is not just about bullying and dropping bombs and the Muslim world on the other hand is not just about extremism and terrorism.

If better understanding, among the public, is the prerequisite for a better and a peaceful life, then say for example, should the Iranians, try to judge or understand the Americans, through their attack on Iraq, or should the Americans, try to judge the Iranians, through their nuclear development policies. This definitely does not work. A basic means or a source of information is a must, and it is here that the mass media plays a very vital role. Radio, television, newspapers and the internet constitute the basis of mass media. It is this media which acts as a major source of communication and

knowledge for the people all around. It also plays a major role in shaping and molding public opinion. The result of which is that, many governments use the media as a tool of propaganda, to meet their selfish ends. As was apparent in 2003, when the war against Iraq was being orchestrated, the United States of America and its allies, along with their media, were leaving no stone unturned to prove that, the news coming out of Iraq were all lies, and that only they were speaking the truth. This, however, is not permissible, and the media which has percolated into the life line of humans, has to rise above political games, and play a part in the development of humanity. Mass media is a very effective tool, which can radiate soft power to its full potential.

The system of communication however, is incomplete, if 'listening' which is an important factor in the promotion of soft power, is not paid heed at. "The best way to understand people," according to Ralph Nichols, "is to listen to them" (Quotations on Listening). This time again, emphasis is being laid on understanding, but by a different means, that is through listening. By listening to others, one can definitely get to learn, know and understand a particular situation or a behavior better. One can even get to know the reasons for growing terrorist activities. Say, for example, a man, be it strong or weak suddenly starts to act in an unruly manner. The best thing to do would be to listen to him first, as to why is he behaving in such a manner, rather than you reciprocating in a similar way. The reason could simply be that you might be stepping on his foot, which he is not able to remove, because of your heavy weight. Listening thus, can be considered to be a very effective tool in promoting soft power. However, till date, listening, though considered important, has negligibly been put into practice. Many disputing countries who sit over the table to discuss their issues are seen talking 'at one another', rather than talking 'with one another'. They are not ready to listen to one another. Thus, the possibility of any solution is at its minimalist. This is why the 'International Listening Association' which was founded in 1979, has dedicated itself to teaching the importance of listening and its skillful use to understand human activities better.

Diaspora – A country can easily reach out to the world through its diaspora. They are in fact the true ambassadors of a country and act as a mirror of the country of their origin. One of the easiest ways to look at a country or understand its land, culture and people is to look at that country's diaspora who by way of their humility/arrogance and way of life generally represent their home country's ethos and principles. Taking cue from India for example, its "diaspora seems to be winning the hearts of the world with their endearing character and peaceful qualities" (Gupta, 2008). Sreeram Chaulia, in his article, "The Great Indian Diaspora," mentions that, "For the most part, an average American, Canadian or Dutchman does not see Indian immigrants as national security

or economic threats, thanks to their humble, flexible and endearing qualities.” And also Mr. Sinha, according to C. Raja Mohan, pointed out that, “people of Indian origin are extremely important sources of support for the Indian Government in the execution of its policies through the influence and respect they command in the countries in which they live.” Thus, it will not be wrong to claim that diaspora forms an essential factor in portraying ones soft power abroad.

Constituents of Soft Power

Joseph S. Nye Jr. and many other scholars of soft power, along with the publishing houses and consultancies such as, Monocle, Portland and USC Center on Public Diplomacy have discussed in detail the various constituents of soft power. Some of which are discussed below;

Culture- Culture, which is alluring to others, has the characteristics to awe, and ultimately generate an understanding of oneself to the other. A footnote to one’s alluring culture is that, everybody on earth has their own unique culture, of which they are proud and are making every effort to preserve and showcase them. The Post-Colonial scholars are and their works are prime examples in this regard. Culture in general has different meanings, to put it in Manali Oak’s words:

Culture refers to the pattern of human activity and the symbols, which give significance to this activity. Culture is represented through the art, literature, costumes, customs and traditions of a community...Culture is a bond that ties the people of a region or community together. It is that one common bond, which brings the people of a community together. The customs and traditions that the people of a community follow, the festivals they celebrate, the kind of clothing they wear, the food they eat, and most importantly, the cultural values they adhere to, bind them together.

Through cultural exchanges, better understanding among the countries is feasible. However, a very important fact to note would be that such cultural exchanges should always be a two way symmetrical exchange. A country, if it imposes its culture upon others will be viewed with aggression. To everyone, their own culture is dear.

To name a few examples; the American culture with its, “grunge and Google, Madonna and MoMA, Hollywood and Harvard” (Joffe, 2006), are very alluring to majority of the youths around the world. “Even in Iran, where the ruling clerics describe America

as ‘the great Satan,’ the young want to watch American videos in the privacy of their homes,” (Nye, 2005). The Chinese students are said to have symbolized their protest in Tiananmen Square (1989) by creating a replica of the statue of liberty. And also instances of the youth listening to Radio Free Europe (RFE) behind the Iron Curtain, (Maleki, 2007), are examples of American cultural influences around the world. China, with its Confucius Institutes around the world and rapid economic growth, is out on a venture spreading its soft power resources. The result of which is that people around the world have now started to look at China differently, much beyond its communist identity. India on the other hand, with its diaspora and Bollywood, seems to be winning the hearts of the people all over. The list goes on, as every country on this globe have their culture and sub-cultures, which of course is unique and second to none. However, some have managed to showcase it well and the others are in the process of doing so. In the process, one should definitely not believe that their culture is superior, as doing so, is utter foolishness and the portrayal of naivete.

The idea here is very much related to the concept of cultural diplomacy. Cultural Diplomacy, as Milton C. Cummings Jr. puts it, “... (is) the exchange of ideas, information, art, lifestyles, values systems, traditions, beliefs and other aspects of cultures...” (culturaldiplomacy.org). Cultural diplomacy has in fact existed as a practice for centuries, with explorers, travellers, teachers and artists as examples of informal ambassadors or early cultural diplomats. Cultural exchanges can take place in fields that include art, sports, literature, music, economy, etcetera (culturaldiplomacy.org). Such exchanges not only help a nation understand another country better, but also create a world that has its foundation on trust and compassion.

Political Values- Nicolae Kallos and Ovidiu Trasnea define political values “as political relationships, institutions, organizations, views and ideas resulting from the transforming, creative sociopolitical practice of the social forces that meet the requirements of social progress and of the development of human personality on a social scale.” According to Joseph S Nye Jr., when countries live up to their political values at home and abroad, it constitutes its soft power resource. He further adds that “the political values a government champions in its behavior at home (for example, exercising democracy) in international institutions (working with others), and in foreign policy (promoting peace and human rights) strongly affect the preferences of others. Governments can attract or repel others by the influence of their examples” (Nye, n.d.). However, a point here to note is that in academics, it is still being contested as to what is the best form of government and that every society is guided by its own political culture.

Ideology - “Ideas and Ideologies”, according to Andrew Heywood, “influence political life in a number of ways... they provide a perspective through which the world is understood and explained. People do not see the world as it is, but only as they expect it to be; in other words, they see it through the veil of ingrained beliefs, opinions and assumptions.” It is hence conceivable that when a person’s/leader’s ideology - i.e. its beliefs, opinions and assumptions - is appealing enough, it can get the people from the opposition camp to join your end. This is supposed to be one of the cases, in the Capitalist victory over its Communist rival during the cold war. The idea of free market, human rights, democracy and rule of law played a decisive part in beckoning the majority of Eastern European youth towards the capitalist ideology. To put it in YU Xintian’s words, “We should not underestimate the influence of ideology on soft power...The more the ideology suits the trend of the times, the more it will win endorsement and increase the soft power of a state.”

Charismatic Leaders like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Junior or Nelson Mandela had a plethora of followers, primarily because of their ideas and ideology, which has multiple takers. Similarly, however, leaders like Hitler, Stalin, and Osama Bin Laden too had followers. Thus, I will not enter into a debate of whose ideology or what idea is better. The fact of the matter is that leaders have acolytes because people are influenced by their ideas. A point here to note is that Charismatic leaders possess the essence of soft power.

Thus, a unique characteristic of soft power is that it is wielded, not just by the state, but by all actors, including Institutions, employers and employees, sellers and buyers, leaders and followers and even members in a family. Hence, it would not be wrong to view soft power in the eyes of Steve Young, when he defines soft power in many perspectives. To him,

‘Soft’ power is far more strategic.

‘Soft’ power is customer loyalty.

‘Soft’ power is employee skill and commitment.

‘Soft’ power is having investors and creditors who believe in your business and will help you through hard times.”

‘Soft’ power arises from all your intangible assets – relationships, good will, brand equity, unique value proposition, business model, supplier quality, long term thinking.

‘Soft’ power is all about people. Take care of people, and they will take care of you. Trust, reliability, being there for your customers, mutuality of benefit, win-win over zero-sum – these moral factors build business opportunity.”

Likewise, for consultancies such as, Monocle, Portland and USC Center on Public Diplomacy, soft power is constituted in factors such as, Government, Digital Capability, Culture, Enterprise, Engagement with others, Education, Cuisine, Friendliness, Luxury Goods Production and Use, Foreign Policy, Living standards of the people within a country (Human Development Index). In a nutshell, anything and everything that attracts the other and generates an understanding of oneself to the other is soft power. However, what one expects out of such an understanding is the primary issue of debate.

Existing Critical Literatures on Soft Power

There are extensive critical literatures on soft power. Each of the literatures provide a motley of arguments criticizing Nye's presentation of the concept of soft power. Some of the indispensable critical reasoning of soft power are as follows: Incapable of concrete results (Ramo, 2009); vague, confusing and even ethnocentric (Fan, 2008); not easily measurable and better suited to the jargon of politicians, rather than having any analytical value (Hall, 2010; Umut, 2017); ideational and often subjectively employed, far less practical relevance, inherently fuzzy concept and that there are difficulties associated with measuring the impact of the concept, not verifiable concretely (Kearn, 2011); not so soft (Mattern, 2007); limited reach and nothing new in the concept, has similarity with other approaches and it is the other name of cultural imperialism (Ferguson, 2004; Umut, 2017); ambiguity in the structure, as there is no difference between hard power and soft power in terms of its aims (Umut, 2017); lack of clear conceptual framework, as is very easily translated into other related concepts, such as public diplomacy and strategic communication (Liaropoulos, 2011).

As is evident there are numerous arguments pointing out the shortcomings of the concept, and each time they do so, they present a case with justifications and examples. Further, efforts have been made by scholars such as, Pawel Surowiec (Surowiec, 2017), Steven B. Rothman (Rothman, 2011) and William A. Callahan (Callahan, 2015) to develop the concept of soft power by introducing newer twist in the study with concepts such as, 'hybridity', 'harder powers', 'softer powers' and 'Negative Soft Power (questionably only in the Chinese context)', etc.

With this, however, one must also point out that many of the critics who counter the concept or those who are developing the concept further do so only after accepting the definition provided by Nye. Some thinkers start analyzing the concept by bracketing it under some IR theories and then criticize it further through the lenses of those theo-

ries. Some relate it to the concept of Gramsci's 'hegemony' and some with Bachrach's, Baratz's and Luke's 'second and third face of power'. Additionally, many critics of soft power, lay stress on the word and discuss elaborately on the point as to why are the words 'soft' and 'power' used conjointly, while they are words that are juxtaposed to each other.

But in the process of this extensive bickering, some of the critics fail to appreciate the idea and its age old existence, and thus fail to realize that it is not the concept or Nye's explanation of the concept that is important, but what really makes sense is to take the concept ahead by suggesting improvements in the definitions so as to ensure better understanding of the practice through such concepts. It is here that some of these critics have failed as they do not provide any improvements or alternative solutions to the concept. One must realize that the practice in International relations are not the result of concepts or theories, but these concepts and theories are only efforts to understand what the practice is. Thus, if any of the theorists and his concepts fail to explain the real picture, the effort must be to rectify and initiate a debate to further the idea and improve the definition in order to bring out the true picture. With regard to the concept of soft power, Nye had himself agreed to the point that the concept requires further elaboration. This article thus makes an attempt to do that by adding on to the existing critical literatures and introducing two new concepts, that is, 'positive soft power' and 'negative soft power' in this regard.

Conclusion

With all said, this article intends to initiate a debate of what soft power actually is and how it should be defined from the negative and positive connotations, because as mentioned earlier, the concept has merely become a cliché with the majority using the concept without understanding its essence or without knowing what to expect out of it. In the manner it is being used presently, is thus, a clear manifestation of the idea of 'Negative Soft Power'. Seeking to lead has negative effects. Nye starts well, however loses track when he starts to expect too much. Essentially, to do away with the confusion and disagreement, it must be made clear that examples that apply in a society, where individuals are the subjects, Nye's definition of soft power fits the genre. Soft power is the food for an individual and not for countries. It can thus be said that, the concept of soft power is in need of a stronger academic research, which will nullify any attempt to downside its importance. Past usage of the idea of soft power conveys the message that it can even prove to be

stronger than hard power and that it should be used with the positive intent to create a better world where humility and understanding prevails. To conclude in David A. Baldwin's words, "Overall, soft power is a huge conceptual misstep in the right direction."

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AGAINST THE VIOLENCE OF BORDERS: THE POLITICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE INTERNATIONAL RIGHT TO HOSPITALITY IN ÉTIENNE BALIBAR*

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CONTRA LA VIOLENCIA DE FRONTERAS: LA POLÍTICA DE DERECHOS HUMANOS Y EL DERECHO INTERNACIONAL A HOSPITALIDAD EN ÉTIENNE BALIBAR

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Abstract

The essay examines some of Étienne Balibar's recent work in which he establishes a critique of human rights theory. In dialogue with Hannah Arendt, Balibar focuses on the conditions of possibility for a "new politics of human rights" in the context of what he calls "absolute capitalism". Against the current violence of borders within absolute capitalism, and against its phantasmatic neo-racist corollary, Balibar theorizes an "international right to hospitality": a kind of "counter-right" which, through a confrontation with the Marxian theory of "relative overpopulation" and beyond the platitudes of liberal juridical universalism, can reconfigure the fundamental lineaments of a politics of human rights that is capable of responding to the present.

Keywords

Étienne Balibar; human rights theory; violence of borders; absolute capitalism; international right to hospitality.

Resumen

El ensayo examina algunos de los trabajos recientes de Étienne Balibar en los que establece una crítica de la teoría de los derechos humanos. En diálogo con Hannah Arendt, Balibar se centra en las condiciones de posibilidad de una "nueva política de los derechos humanos" en el contexto de lo que denomina "capitalismo absoluto". Contra la actual violencia de las fronteras dentro del capitalismo absoluto, y contra su fantasmático corolario neorracista, Balibar teoriza un "derecho internacional a la hospitalidad": una especie de "contraderecha" que, mediante una confrontación con la teoría marxiana de la "superpoblación relativa" y más allá de los tópicos del universalismo jurídico liberal, puede reconfigurar los lineamientos fundamentales de una política de los derechos humanos capaz de responder al presente.

Palabras clave

Étienne Balibar; teoría de los derechos humanos; violencia de las fronteras; capitalismo absoluto; derecho internacional a la hospitalidad.

This essay establishes the theoretical foundation for a Balibar proposal which has not received much attention in the theoretico-political debate. It reconstructs the “international right to hospitality” that Balibar has turned to in recent years as a way to resume his work on the theme of the universal. Part one of the text demonstrates how Balibar uses Hannah Arendt’s critique of the contradictions of modern universalism in order to open the path – with and beyond Arendt – to a new “politics of human rights” inspired by the principle of equaliberty (*égalité*). For Balibar, as the second part of the text argues, this politics is undermined by an “absolute capitalism” which has as an integral part the violence of borders referred to in the title of the essay. It is precisely against this violence, and through an interesting re-reading of the Marxian theory of “relative overpopulation”, which – as the third and fourth parts of the text suggest – Balibar elaborates the proposal for an “international right to hospitality”: a right beyond borders based on the respect for Arendt’s “right to have rights” and conceived as an integral part of a broader “politics of human rights”, whose theoretical conditions of possibility Balibar aims to think about in a new way.

Balibar and Arendt: towards a new politics of human rights

As is well known, following the approval of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in an essay with the title *Es gibt nur ein einziges Menschenrecht*, Hannah Arendt pointed out that against the dramatic phenomenon of displaced persons which occurred between the World Wars, it was necessary to account for the tragic impotence of human rights. Formally the holders of these rights, but actually deprived of the “right to have rights”, refugees and stateless people had not been able to access the *Staatsbürgerschaft* which, alone, would guarantee the true “human right” (Arendt, 1981, 162, 167; Arendt, 1996, 410). Defined as the “abstract nudity of being-nothing-other-than-man” – Arendt would write in a famous page of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* – human rights were in fact destined to remain “paper rights” (Arendt, 1996, 415).¹

Balibar notes how in these pages, Arendt clearly demonstrated that the universality of human rights could not (and therefore cannot) be understood as “an *a priori* of the constitutions of citizenship” (Balibar, 2022a, 65). And the nation-state – the context in which the “universal proclamation of certain fundamental rights” had taken place – was (and is) also destined to flatten “human rights” onto “the rights of the citizen”, binding the use of the latter to the “status of the national citizen” (Balibar, 2020a, 68).

¹ On this point, cfr. Costa, 2007, 411 and Costa, 2018, 60–65.

For Balibar, the originality of Arendt's analysis not only consists in being "one of the most radical critics [...] of the classical theory of the 'rights of man'", but also in the fact of knowing how to combine this critique with "an uncompromising defense of their imprescriptible character" (Balibar, 2020a, 61). As others have pointed out, against Lefort, Balibar argues that it is impossible to reduce Arendt's discourse to a simple denunciation, à la Burke, of "the abstract and formal nature of human rights", understood as a mere "fiction" (Deleixhe & Lacroix, 2014, 42).² Indeed, if Arendt certainly rejects "the idea that there exist [self-evident] fundamental rights", such as those declared by the Constitutions and the Universal Declarations, she nevertheless also supports the need to "situate an intransigent politics of the rights of man at the very heart of democratic construction" (Balibar, 2020a, 61).

In other words, Balibar intends to make the same move as Arendt in a profoundly different time. Just as she did, he argues that the priority of human rights over politics must be rejected, but he also emphasizes that the contempt of those same rights is equivalent to the "destruction of the human (Balibar, 2020a, 61). Balibar also agrees that human rights have no natural foundation. For him as for Arendt, "there is no universal or formal 'human essence' located in any human individuality" (Balibar, 2020a, 62).³ There is no human nature, that is, but only a human condition: the condition of women and men inevitably thrown into a "plurality of relationships which are more or less conflictual, which are constitutive of their 'common world'" – Balibar writes, citing *The Human Condition* (Balibar, 2020a, 62). The Human in itself does not exist. Human rights cannot therefore be founded on any human essence or nature. They are groundless, absolutely artificial, conventional, "historically contingent" (Balibar, 2020a, 65; Balibar, 2007, 727-738). They are only the "fragile artifacts of life in common" (Deleixhe & Lacroix, 2014, 43).

Starting from the proposition of "the right to have rights" – which for Balibar is not a given but rather something to be relentlessly claimed in order "not to be excluded from the right to fight for one's rights" – human rights must therefore continually be produced (Balibar, 2012, 89).⁴ They must continually be reinvented in public space through the insurgent and potentially constituent action of a plurality of human beings who cohabit within a common world and who recognize that common as "their end" (Balibar, 2020a, 62).⁵ In other words, for Balibar "there can be a right to rights only

² Balibar's object of critique is Lefort, 1986, 59–72.

³ Here is the passage in Arendt that Balibar cites: action "corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, and not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world" (Arendt, 1998, 7).

⁴ On this point, cfr. Chingola, 2011, 503.

⁵ Citing *The Human Condition*, Balibar defines public space as that of "the plurality of relations, more or less conflictual,

where individuals and groups do not receive it from an external sovereign power or transcendent revelation, but where they attribute this right to themselves, or grant each other these rights reciprocally” (Balibar, 2016, 141).⁶ The universality of human rights, that is, is not based on some essence but on the conflictual subjectivation of the governed: on the “contingency of insurrection”, Balibar writes, “or if one prefers, of struggle” (Balibar, 2016, 141). In other words, for human rights to be human rights, they must be politicized. They are in fact indissociable and indiscernible from “a construction of the human [...] immanent in the historical invention of political institutions” (Balibar, 2020a, 72; Balibar, 1996, 372–419); these are institutions in which citizenship can be practiced as a transnational isonomic apparatus centered on the principle and rule of “equal liberty” (“equaliberty”).⁷

Recognizing the limit of Arendt’s analysis in the inability to imagine other institutional forms “for the organization of a community of citizens” than those linked to the nation-state – whose crisis becomes for Arendt “a crisis without appeal of citizenship itself” – Balibar supports it with the awareness of someone who knows that it has not yet been understood how a citizenship “free from the state form [...] can offer legal guarantees and give rise to obligations” (Balibar, 2022a, 65–66). But also of those who consider it necessary to think institutions beyond the nation-form that are capable of producing “equality in the public sphere and at the same time liberty in the relations with power” (Balibar, 2020a, 73). And it is precisely in Arendt’s thought that, despite the limitations encountered, Balibar finds not only a well-equipped critique of human rights but also and above all an attempt to politicize them. In other words, Balibar finds in Arendt the theoretical opening towards a new “politics of human rights” (Balibar, 2020a, 63).

which are constituted by the ‘common world’”. On this subject, he refers to Possenti, (2002, 99ff).

6 On Balibar as a theorist of “insurgent citizenship”, see Boonen, 2020, 60–110.

7 For Balibar, equaliberty (*égaliberté*) is the “arche-institution” of modern democracies, “what precedes and conditions all the others”. Equaliberty can also be defined in Arendtian terms as “the right to have rights par excellence”. Balibar claims that its “active side” consists in the insurgence of the governed for emancipation and the universalization of citizenship, against the denial of rights practiced by “universalist nation-states”. The latter adopt normative models of society on the basis that what is considered “Human excludes the non-human or the inhuman”, and what is considered “Social excludes the ‘non-social’ or asocial”. For Balibar, this “intrinsic violence of the universal” is what the emancipatory politics of the governed opposes, i.e., the active side of equaliberty understood precisely as “the ‘insurrectionary’ principle that universally claims the right to have rights” (Balibar, 2016, 141, 143; Balibar, 2017a; Balibar, 2010, 155, 55–91). On the concept of equaliberty, see also Balibar, 1993a, 75–100. Some interesting critical remarks on this point can be found in Raimondi, 2011, 101–117.

The “phantom of the foreign body” as a legitimate child of “absolute capitalism”

For Balibar, such a politics must be conceived and practiced in a materially determinate way, within and against what he calls “absolute capitalism (Balibar, 2018a, 9–22; Balibar, 2019a, 269–290). With this term, Balibar defines a stage of capitalist development – our own – in which “accumulation occurs simultaneously at the two poles of the value-form”: the “financialization of capital” and “unlimited commodification” (Balibar, 2020b, 272). In other words, absolute capitalism tends to dissolve the bonds that hold back the extraction of value and it aims at the “total subsumption” of life and nature to capital (Balibar, 2019b, 36–58). And yet for Balibar, absolute capitalism is by no means omnipotent, as some critics of his have charged, because it is moved by an unbridled and constitutive drive to self-valorize without limits which does not allow it any stability and characterizes it as “extraordinarily unstable, fragile, and therefore aggressive regime” (Balibar, 2020b, 277).⁸

For Balibar, a new “politics of human rights” will thus have to leverage all of the contradictions opened by absolute capitalism, by virtue of whose ordinary practice inequalities and new forms of racism and violence proliferate (Balibar, 2020b, 273), as paradigmatically demonstrated by the “condition of migrants in absolute capitalism” (Balibar, 2019c). This is indeed marked by the effects of a violence of borders which, while triggering “genocidal tendencies” against the “wandering population” (for example, in the central Mediterranean, in the Bay of Bengal, or in the territories that separate the United States and Mexico), aims to harness human mobility through a double apparatus of differential exclusion and inclusion: an apparatus in which the banalization of camps and the externalization of borders coexist with the subjection of migrant labor and lives in the most precarious positions of the societal order (Balibar, 2019c).⁹ While it structures processes of the hierarchization of citizenship of a systemic character, that is, this apparatus makes the migrant an “*exclu de l’interieur*” (Balibar, 2001, 191). And

8 While grasping the elements of the analytical privilege in the concept of “absolute capitalism”, Sandro Mezzadra notes the risk that it could lead to political impotence. He writes: “once freed from the reigns of politics and the world of states, and in particular [...] from every bond with its essential ‘other’ – labor, however one wants to define it – [absolute] capital would constitute its world, its society, its ‘culture’ without obstacles of any kind, or better, without having to face any setbacks of an essentially reactionary nature” (Mezzadra, 2020, 298). As will be seen below, however, Balibar seems to escape this theoretical risk, noting that the recomposition of fragmented labor along ethnic lines and a “transnational class solidarity” remain the main levels of resistance to absolute capitalism.

9 Balibar defines migrants and refugees as “wanderers” not only to escape the linguistic trap that opposes the “good refugee” with the “bad migrant”, but also to emphasize the condition of instability and insecurity experienced in a context of war on migration that takes the form of a “politics of eliminating the wandering people” (Balibar, 2022b, 24). On the concept of differential exclusion, cfr. at least Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013, 67ff and Mezzadra, 2020, 99–201.

for this reason, Balibar argues, we certainly cannot be satisfied with the idea that “if states and their military and police forces did not use repression, or did not exercise violence against the movements of migrants and refugees, everything would work perfectly” (Navone, Rahola, 2020, 36).

All of this takes place in the context of a genuine “War on Migration”, according to Balibar, in which migrants, refugees, and post-colonial populations are rejected and/or illegalized and transformed into “refugees without possible refuge” (Balibar, 2019c). Thus, in a departure from the Geneva Convention and the legal texts which were inspired by it, a “major reversal of the right to asylum” is produced.¹⁰ And the relation that the “mobile part of humanity” maintains with life and with the territories – Balibar argues, echoing Benjamin – increasingly resembles a “normalized state of exception” (Balibar, 2019c). The entire apparatus is then based on the “phantom of the foreign body”, a “phantasmatics of immunity” articulated around the manipulation, and possibly the fabrication, of the “fear that people will settle”; that migrants “simply arrive, that they are there” (Balibar, 2019d, 31). This fantasy mobilizes “the fear and hatred of the ‘wandering’ foreigner”, understood as “sad passions that make nationalism slide towards a form of generalized racism” (Balibar, 2019c).¹¹ And, continually risking the generation of autoimmune social pathologies – Balibar continues, referring to the work of Roberto Esposito¹² – it combines two different types of fear: on the one hand, the fear that the foreign body could penetrate a healthy one by introducing “decomposition germs” into it, thus undermining the “threatened identity”; and on the other, a “panic of flows” centered on the idea that “capital circulates, jobs leave, migrants and refugees flow,” and that therefore “everything that should remain inside flees, while what should remain outside enters without obstacles” (Balibar, 2019d, 33).

In other words, the phantom of the foreign body, which generates securitarian responses and identitarian reflexes, proliferates on what Balibar calls the “impotence syndrome of the omnipotent” (Balibar, 2019d, 33)¹³: that is, the widespread sensation in large portions of the population – and in particular among the losers and those “humiliated by globalization” (Revelli, 2019, 37) – that the state, “this mortal god who protects the national territory, has become impotent because flows, including migration, escape its control” (Balibar, 2019d, 33–34). The conviction is thus established that “not only would the state no longer protect us from economic risks, but it would also become the instrument of this generalized opening of borders which would consequentially lead to

10 On this theme, Balibar borrows from the theses in Valluy, 2009.

11 On the theme of fear in Balibar, cfr. Grangé, 2021, 93–104.

12 On the immunization apparatuses of society, Balibar refers to Esposito, (2022). Cfr. also Balibar, (2013).

13 On this point, cfr. Scotto, (2022, 7–24).

the dissolution of national identity” (Balibar, 2019d, 33–34). For Balibar, the phantom of the foreign body is the legitimate child of an absolute capitalism that “sets the masses in motion and uses them, or throws them away as unusable or in excess, depending on the case and the moment in question” (Balibar, 2019c).

Balibar and Marx: on the new “law of population”

Balibar picks up Marx on precisely this point, arguing that despite many transformations which neoliberal globalization has caused, at the center of the capitalist social relation there is still a strict link “between the ‘law of accumulation’ of capital and the ‘law of population’” (Balibar, 2019c). Here Balibar recalls chapter twentythree of *Capital* Volume One, where Marx notoriously maintains that with the advance of the capitalist mode of production onto a global scale, there emerges a “relative overpopulation” of increasing dimensions¹⁴: an overpopulation which is an integral part of that industrial reserve army that capital has always used both to “govern its own stock of labor-power according to profit,” and to “decompose the class of waged producers just as it reproduc-es.” In this way it puts workers in competition among themselves and precludes their unification as a “class for-itself” in common struggle (Balibar, 2019c). Marx’s thought “certainly still has much value,” but in the contemporary conjuncture it can cause some “blinding effects” and requires an update. Such blinding effects are caused by the abuses that neo-nationalists on both the right and left make Marx’s theses into when they refer to them in order to argue that “rejecting or limiting the entry of migrants and refugees into national territory” would be in the interest of the native workers, because immigration supposedly feeds “the formation of the industrial reserve army [...] which, in turn, would allow the compression of wages and would threaten social rights” (Balibar, 2019c).¹⁵ The necessary updating of Marx’s thought here concerns, on the other hand, according to Balibar, taking into consideration the two main forms of precariousness that keep the relative overpopulation in its form in absolute capitalism.¹⁶ The first is the “precariousness of the center”, i.e., that of *désaffiliation* – here Balibar recalls the teaching of Robert Castel (1995; 2009;

14 For Marx, “worker overpopulation” is “one of the conditions of existence of the capitalist mode of production,” because it constitutes an “industrial reserve army which belongs to capital as if the latter had raised it at its own expense, and creates for the changing needs of its valorization the exploitable human material is always ready” (Marx, 1973, I, 3, 82).

15 Ibidem. On the abuses of Marxian theory by neo-nationalists on the left, cfr. Basso, 2019, 261–280 and Basso, 2021.

16 It also being understood that absolute capitalism also produces an absolute overpopulation composed of “useless” or “disposable” humans. Balibar maintains this by mobilizing Giraud, 2015 and Ogilvie, 2012. Cfr. Balibar, 2012a and Balibar, 2019c.

2015) – which has made the precariat “a general social condition” (Balibar, 2019c).¹⁷ The new “biopolitics of capital” has relaunched the old truth that “proletariat means precarious”: with neoliberal globalization, “we did nothing but rediscover this reality after the parenthesis of the social state and collective agreements” (Balibar 2017b, 45). The second main form is the precarity of the “‘periphery’ of the world-economy” which arises from “uprooting”: a concept that Balibar takes up from Pierre Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad in order to indicate, with Saskia Sassen, the dispossession and expulsion of the wanderers in globalization (Balibar, 2019c; Bourdieu & Sayad, 1964; Sassen, 2015). Although distributed differently between the Global North and South, these two forms of precarity affect both. Indeed, they are complementary and create a new relative overpopulation that capital uses. And everywhere, Balibar writes, “they put the ‘poor’ into conflict” among themselves, generating “violent antagonisms” (Balibar, 2022c, 314). This, then, is how the Marxian law of population continues to act in absolute capitalism, favoring the decomposition of the subaltern classes on ethnic bases: a decomposition which is then politically capitalized on by sovereigntist and neo-populist political forces, but which is also perfectly functional to the economic and political purposes of neoliberal forces.¹⁸

It is by starting from this post-Marxist analysis that Balibar proposes the idea of a new “international right to hospitality”, understood as a politics of human rights that must be rooted in the “refusal of the intolerable consequences” of absolute capitalism: intolerable like the violence of borders (Balibar, 2022c, 321).¹⁹ By rejecting both the neo-nationalist doctrines of “counter-hospitality” and the “institutional inhospitality” promoted by the European migratory regime, Balibar therefore claims that the “mobile part of humanity” must be recognized as both *hospes* and not reduces to *hostis* (a hostile foreigner) (Balibar, 2022c, 317; Balibar, 2019e, 14).²⁰ Against the idea that state sovereignty and national belonging constitute “the absolute horizon of apparatuses to protect people”, the international right to hospitality must therefore be based, according to Balibar, on the principle that “the wanderers (and those who bring their rescue) can claim ‘sovereign’ state obligations them-

¹⁷ Ibidem. Balibar refers to the “national social state” in several places: Balibar, (2012b, 64–68); Balibar, (1993c, 61–74); Balibar, (1995, 69–82).

¹⁸ As Miguel Mellino has observed, neither of these two forces really opposes the “persistent and spectral color line” that cuts through “the long colonial and post-colonial history of Europe”. For him, indeed – writing with reference to Mills, 1997 – both propose a “new ‘racial contract of citizenship’” to the “productive classes” and the “native popular classes”, each in its own way. This contract provides for the hierarchization of citizenship along ethnic lines and a greater exploitation of migrant work, real and potential, with respect to that of the native (Mellino, 2019, 10–11).

¹⁹ Here Balibar uses the term “intolerable” with a reference to the militant Foucault of the *Groupe d'Information sur les prisons*. Cfr. G.I.P., 2013.

²⁰ On the semantic proximity of *hostis* and *hospes* in the ancient world, cfr. Benveniste, 1976, 64–71.

selves”; and can enjoy opposable rights at any time to the laws, regulations, and arbitrariness of states, based on the *Grundnorm* that “foreigners must not be treated like enemies” (Balibar, 2019e, 11, 14).

Against the “law of population”: the international right to hospitality

From this “principle of principles”, there are then five classes of prohibition which are able to prevent the exodus of migrants from being transformed into a “process of elimination”: the prohibitions on “rejection”; on “brutalization”; on “discrimination on the basis of origins”; on “sabotage of rescue”; and on “the externalization of asylum applications and their rejection” (Balibar, 2022c, 318; Balibar, 2019e, 12–13). In this sense, the international right to hospitality that Balibar theorizes certainly goes beyond the “Kantian proposal of a limited cosmopolitan ‘right’ to visit”.²¹ However, he deliberately generalizes from it – and in a “hyper-Kantian”²² way – the fundamental norm already mentioned, together with the one whereby states must be pushed to internalize the “unconditional” idea that there can be no place on earth in which a human being as such is excluded, undesirable, and therefore deprived of the “right to have rights” (Balibar, 2022b, 24).²³

However, Balibar knows well, as the jurist Monique Chemillier-Gendreau has critically objected, that states sign and ratify treaties of international law “as proof of their virtuous character”, but then “disregard and obstruct their application” (Chemillier-Gendreau, 2018). Balibar believes, however, that the sovereignty of states can be limited by an “supra-statal legal demand”; and the latter can in turn only be built by “states that recognize the need for a ‘self-limitation’ of their power and their autonomy” (Balibar, 2022c, 320). For Balibar, however, states can be driven to such only through the “pressure of citizens who strive to re-appropriate their ‘constituent power’”: a pressure that citizens will be able to exercise only if they can “see that the limitation of state sovereignty does not decrease, but rather affirms their own power” (Balibar, 2022c, 320).

For Balibar, the main obstacle to this political result is precisely the opposition between nationals and migrants whose form is held in shape by the new “law of pop-

21 Ibid., 14.

22 It is Balibar himself who defines it in this way. For the comparison with Kant, cfr. at least Balibar, (2022d, 41–58); Balibar, (2022e, 82–92); Balibar, (2019d, 21–26).

23 Balibar takes the idea up from Derrida (1997) that, in order not to remain an abstraction, the unconditional law of hospitality must be incarnated in necessarily conditional laws. These laws, however, are at first inspired and precisely for this reason oriented “towards the recognition of hospitality as a fundamental right that imposes obligations on states” (Balibar 2019e, 7; Balibar, 2011a; Balibar, 2018c, 23–44). On this point, cfr. Resta, (2019, 140–142).

ulation”. Only by disarticulating it and recognizing the gigantic phenomenon of “re-proletarianization” that unites national (and precarious national) workers with foreign (and precarious foreign) workers will it be possible to reconstitute a “transnational class solidarity”, to start a common struggle in solidarity and more generally, Balibar writes, “a cosmopolitical solidarity in the people of citizens” (Balibar, 2022c, 321–322). For Balibar’s post-Marxism, therefore, in today’s world a “reunification of the proletariat” is the “strategic task” and something that is preliminary to “every politics of human rights” which aims to disarticulate the lines of gender, race, and class that hierarchize citizenship (Balibar, 2022c, 322).²⁴

The international right to hospitality thus can only be based on a political force that is capable of bringing about change in the legal form (state and international). “The idea of an unconditional hospitality”, Balibar writes, “is an idea of struggle, directed against the increasingly restrictive conditions of ‘hospitality’ admitted by contemporary states and by the societies they administer” (Balibar, 2022b, 25). The international right to hospitality is therefore understood as an integral part of a new politics of human rights that “aims not only to constitute a broader inclusion, however useful this result is”, but also an inclusion of those “without part” – Balibar writes with Rancière – which deconstructs the hegemonic legal-political order and empties it “of its ‘concrete’ and ‘particular’ substance which the historical institution that it addresses claims” (Balibar, 2017, 49).²⁵

In other words, by acknowledging a social condition of impotence and striving to remove it, the international right to hospitality works against the legal form that legitimizes that same impotence. It acts, that is, as a sort of “counter-right” – to quote Christophe Menke – which rejects the border violence of globalized capitalism: as a right beyond borders, which forces the meshes of the institutional migratory order by pushing it to accept the continuous reinvention of rights and law (Balibar, 2022c, 316).²⁶

The international right to hospitality that Balibar theorizes is therefore not another attempt to relaunch the exhausted narrative of liberal legal universalism, which

24 Marx’s well-known words that “labor in white leather cannot be emancipated in a country where it is branded when it is in black leather” (Marx, 1973, I, 1, 328) find new relevance here. In the awareness that the pursuit of a new emancipatory political project can no longer be the result of a “single principle” implemented by a subjectivity that can be reduced “to a single actor”: class, gender, and race must be connected in “new fundamental forms of internationalism that are essential for any construction of communism” (Balibar, 2018, 181).

25 On those “without part”, Balibar’s reference is naturally to Rancière, (2007, 35).

26 On this point, critically, cfr. Ricciardi, (2020, 192–193). Menke refers to counter-rights (*Gegenrechte*) as legal apparatuses that contrast the depoliticization produced by the absolutization of subjective rights. For him, “counter-rights” arise from the observation of the impotence of the subaltern and are defined by valuing the practice that combats precisely this impotence. In other words, “counter-rights” aim to re-politicize the juridical and modify the structures of the social order, marking the very “political process that they make possible” (Menke, 2015, 388).

holds that the universal proceeds “by progressive and peaceful inclusions” (Raimondi & Visentin, 133; Balibar, 1993b, 183-210). For Balibar, the universal is affirmed in the conflict that continually raises the question of equaliberty for the “part with no part”, whose condition concentrates “the effects of all the inequalities of the contemporary world” (Balibar, 2019e, 14). This “counter-right” aims to reactivate the “insurrectional” pole of modern politics – a classic theme in Balibar’s thought – by forcing its “constitutional” pole not only to extend the space of rights and the horizon of democracy, but also to redefine the universal meaning of freedom and equality together with the arrangements of the social order.²⁷

Conclusion

As has been noted, therefore, for Balibar the universal can only be fully realized “in the constant critique of the very forms of power and oppression that claim it” (Invernizzi, Accetti & Lacroix, 2016).²⁸ Critique is understood as an infinite task that lays the foundations for a new type of universalism that is rooted, as we have seen, in a politics of human rights. By playing “abstraction as a postulate of universality” against “idealized abstractions” that legitimize exclusion in the name of human rights, this critique aims to materially and symbolically deconstruct the hegemony of the existing order (Balibar, 2017b, 49, 39). The subjects who act out this conflict, moreover, are “already formalized by the language of law and therefore always subjected, always assimilated to a norm” (Raimondi & Visentin, 2003, 133). Their resistance and the projects of emancipation continue to be formulated “in the language of freedom and equality, that is, in the language of human rights”: an ambivalent language which historically has played a “function of domination” and one of “contestation” (Balibar, 2017b, 48–49). It is on this latter function that according to Balibar, in order to claim the extension of the universal against the dominant order of absolute capitalism, a politics of human rights “which is not a fiction” (Balibar, 2017b, 50) must leverage itself. The international right to hospitality, which is a crucial nodal point of such a politics, must therefore be “something destabilizing for the universal itself”: by extending it, it must in other words push it “to

27 On the dialectic between insurrection and constitution in modern politics, cfr. Balibar, (2010) and Balibar, (2012b, 47–50). The point is well understood in Boonen (2022, 904–933); Cesarale, (2019, 128–129); and Mezzadra, (2012), among others.

28 This is what happens “in an insurrectionary way”, Balibar argues, “when “the workers ask for recognition of labor as the foundation of society [...], women ask for active citizenship and participation in all levels of social responsibility, or when the colonized and ex-colonized, and thus the ancient slaves, claim equal dignity of cultures and human beings” (Balibar, 2017b, 49).

enter into the unknown” so that it becomes possible “to rethink another kind of human species for another kind of political community” (Balibar, 2017b, 49)

However, with an objection that even Balibar himself seems to raise, it remains to be seen whether the formulation of a project of universal emancipation in the language of human rights can really go beyond the particularistic element that has always been present in modern political universalism.²⁹ And it must be understood even if, “when it becomes a social movement”, that formulation can lead “beyond the bourgeois horizon, in particular beyond the idea of citizenship, at the same time that it leads beyond capitalism” (Balibar, 2017b, 48). At the time of the crisis of neoliberal capitalism and its program, these questions continue to resonate. Human rights are indeed increasingly separated from social rights and understood as a mere expression of subjective rights: in other words, they tend to be the only way to compensate for an exclusion almost always conceptualized as an individual problem and almost never as a social and collective problem. While representing a “factor of political neutralization”, human rights continue to present themselves as the only language “with which to express one’s claims and to affirm or defend one’s own identity” (Ricciardi, 2020, 190). It is in such a situation that we must continue to ask ourselves “which politics human rights allows for” (Ricciardi, 2020, 185). We need to better understand, in other words, if and how a politics of human rights – even if it is understood as a “politics of the governed” who rise up against the domination of class, race, and gender³⁰ – can lead beyond what Balibar calls the “*universalité bourgeois*” (Balibar, 2011b, 465–515): the particularistic universality conveyed by nation-state citizenship and capital.³¹ Not only from absolute capitalism, but from capital understood as a “social relation between people mediated by things” (Marx, 1973, I, 3, 226).³²

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²⁹ On this point, cfr. Costa, (2017, 89–103); Costa, (2018); (Costa, 1999–2001).

³⁰ The reference is to Chatterjee, (2006).

³¹ For a critique that considers Balibar’s insurgent politics and his discourse on human rights, however radically oriented towards substantial freedom and equality, as still within the “juridical framework of the state” and an overly “juridical [understanding] of universalism”, cfr. Tomba, 2019, 66.

³² Marx, 1973, I, 3, 226.

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THE DISCURSIVITY OF THE THEORY OF THE *WILĀYAT-I FAQIH* AS THE FOUNDATION OF THE IDEALS OF *ORDER* AND *UNITY* IN THE THEOCRATIC VISION OF POWER IN IRAN*

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LA DISCURSIVIDAD DE LA TEORÍA DE LA *WILĀYAT-I FAQIH* COMO FUNDAMENTO DE LOS IDEALES DE *ORDEN* Y *UNIDAD* EN LA VISIÓN TEOCRÁTICA DEL PODER EN IRÁN

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between order and unity in the theocratic vision of power in Iran. Starting from the analysis of the theory of the *Wilāyat-i faqih*, the role that these terms assume within the political project of the Islamic State is studied through the analysis of the speeches of the Āyatollāh Khāmeneī. This paper argues that Michel Foucault's reportages on the Iranian revolution provide conceptual insights for the understanding of the *Wilāyat-i faqih* as an ideology which stands as an alternative to liberalism and positions itself outside the canons of Western thought. Through highlighting the analogical symmetries between Khāmeneī's theory of the Islamic government and Khomeini's speeches, the *Wilāyat-i faqih* is analyzed as a form of ideology that has emerged from the perception of a lack of order in Islamic society following the 1978 Iranian Revolution.

Keywords

Khāmeneī, Khomeini, power, order, unity.

Resumen

Este artículo examina la relación entre orden y unidad en la visión teocrática del poder en Irán. Partiendo del análisis de la teoría de la *Wilāyat-i faqih*, se estudia el papel que estos términos asumen dentro del proyecto político del Estado Islámico a través del análisis de los discursos del Āyatollāh Khāmeneī. Este artículo argumenta que los reportajes de Michel Foucault sobre la revolución iraní brindan conocimientos conceptuales para la comprensión de la *Wilāyat-i faqih* como una ideología que se erige como una alternativa al liberalismo y se posiciona fuera de los cánones del pensamiento occidental. Al resaltar las simetrías analógicas entre la teoría del gobierno islámico de Khāmeneī y los discursos de Khomeini, el *Wilāyat-i faqih* se analiza como una forma de ideología que surgió de la percepción de falta de orden en la sociedad islámica después de la Revolución iraní de 1978.

Palabras clave

Khāmeneī, Khomeini, poder, orden, unidad.

Introduction

It becomes clear from the prominence that theocratic power exercises on Iranian society that the speech delivered by the Āyatollāh Hoseynī Khāmeneī on the 19th of April 2022¹, along with the one delivered on the 3rd of October 2022² on the occasion of the graduation ceremony of the cadets of Hassan al-Mujtaba University, are the complete declension of the *wilāyat-i faqih*³. Proof of this are the events that followed the September 13 2022 protest, after the arrest and the brief, yet fatal, imprisonment of Masha Amini, accused by the moral police of wearing the *hijab*⁴ incorrectly. From this date onwards other young people have been given the death penalty for being enemies of the regime, yet the words “*No Fear*” and “*Woman, life, freedom*”, have been echoing through the streets of Tehran for months now, from the University to city suburbs. Analysts, observers, journalists, and intellectuals are working towards a reconciliation between ideas and events. The respect of fundamental freedoms, the safeguarding and the defense of human rights and, more specifically, the recognition of women’s rights are at the center of international public debate. Dissident cinematography, with Mohammad Rasoulof’s movie *There Is No Evil*, has also shown the courage to denounce the anthropic moralism of the Iranian government, which does not facilitate the regulation of relations between people, imposes the death penalty on opponents of the regime and denies women’s rights. Nonetheless, from a more in-depth analysis, we can assess that what is now happening in Iran is not new. In fact, in order to understand the current events it is useful to turn to Michel Foucault’s suggestions and comments, drawn from his *reportages* in collaboration with *Corriere della Sera* during the 1978 Iranian revolution. These investigations were conceived by Foucault as “*reportages of ideas*”⁵, almost in defiance of those who, in those years, spoke of the death of ideologies. The nine *réportages* ranging

1 Source and Italian translation from Persian: https://islamshia.org/limam-khamenei-sulla-donna-e-la-famiglia/?doing_wp_cron=1675759991.8750219345092773437500. (Accessed December 15, 2022)

2 Source: <https://en.irna.ir/news/84904837/Full-text-of-Ayatollah-Khamenei-s-speech-on-recent-unrest-in>. (Accessed December 19, 2022)

3 *Wilāyat-e faqih* is the theological-political doctrine theorized by Khomeini and proposed in the collection of his lectures *Hokumat-e-Eslami* (The Islamic Government). According to the doctrine, the *faqih* as *mujtahid* (the one who practices *ijtihad*) has the task of acting as a substitute for the *Imām*, both in religious affairs and in conducting the politics of the Shiite community. (Khomeini, 2006)

4 The term *hijab* comes from the root *h-j-b* (to make invisible). Translated, it assumes the sense of a “veil”. The passages of the Koran evoked for the precept of the veil are the *āya* 31 of the *sūra* XXIV al-Nūr (The Light), in which the word *khumūr* appears whose root *kh-m-r* means to veil, by translation the word *khimār* means veil; and of *surah* XXXIII al-Ahzāb (The allied factions) in which the quadrilateral root of the term *jalābib* means to wear.

5 It is Michel Foucault himself who indicated in a note in the *Corriere della sera* of November 12, 1978, that a series of *reportages* for the *Corriere* would begin, dedicated to the Iranian revolution. The permanent team based in Paris (which among others includes the writer Alain Finkielkraut co-author with Pascal Bruckner of the book *Amorous Disorder*) had the objective of dedicating some investigations to the basic themes of current events. (Foucault, 1994, Cavazzini, 2005)

from 28 September 1978 to 26 February 1979 and the Open Letter to Mehadi Bazargan of 14-20 April 1979 were collected and published in 1998 in the *Persian Notebook* (Foucault 1978-1979; 1994). If the contents and the expression of the *réportages* offer starting points for a discussion of the types of ideas which are now to be found hidden in Ayatollah Khāmeneī's speeches, we must take note that the plurality of topics covered by Foucault ignited a lively debate that has lasted over the years (Marengo, 2020, Tesini, 2019 & Marzocca, 2005). In fact, this is the reading grid assumed by the interpreters participating in such debate. The first criticisms emerged on March 8, 1979, when women demonstrated in Teheran with the cry "down with Khomeini". They protested against the obligation to wear the *chador* and against the first executions of the regime's opponents. Foucault was accused of providing support for Khomeini. On March 26, 1979, the French newspaper *Le Matin de Paris* published an article "Michel Foucault and Iran" in which the philosopher dissociated himself from the polemics raised against him by the Broyelle spouses (intellectuals of the left) who "invited him to explain himself", as well as from the exponent of the extreme right, the paedo-psychiatrist Pierre Debray-Ritzen, who also criticized the hot topics of political Islam. Shortly thereafter, Foucault clarified his position by publishing in the *Nouvel Observateur* in April 1979 the *Open Letter* to the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government Mehdi Bazargan in which he made public their conversation they had sometime earlier on human rights, the spiritual dimension of the Iranian people, on the obligations deriving from religion, on the responsibility of governments and on the duty to govern. The controversy reopened in 2005 in the *Corriere della sera* in June 15 with an article by Pierluigi Panza, editor of *Taccuino persiano*, who gave a balanced interpretation of the Iranian events. However, on the same page and with a different tone altogether, the reader can find the intervention of Gianni Vattimo, who accused Foucault of having distanced himself from the left, for having defended Khomeini and for being a structuralist (Cavazzini, 2005, 21). Even more controversial positions are taken by Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson, in their 2005 volume *Foucault and Iranian Revolution. Gender and the Seduction of Islamism* (Afary & Anderson, 2005). This study is the first study in English in which Foucault is accused of political short-sightedness, as he is considered responsible for not having adequately dealt with the gender issue. Scanning this essay makes it immediately clear that the texts analyzed by the authors are the pretext for a polemic against the 1978 revolution. Balanced tones appear in Andrea Cavazzini's 2005 article *Foucault in Persia. Before and after the Iranian Reportage*, which frames the Foucaultian question within a spiral that in a certain sense "rehabilitates" the French philosopher, enthusiastic about the revolutionary experience seen as a sort of critical activity exercised towards

the powers and devices of domination operating in Iranian society. The revolutionary experience is seen by the philosopher as a political-historical-philosophical event that “stages, and makes productive at the level of collective action, devices which are foreign to our idea of rationality and to what, until then, was its result politic.” (Cavazzini 2005, 30). What differentiates this revolutionary experience from Western ones is the different regime of truth, peculiar to Iranian *Shi’ism*, an esoteric regime that allowed revolutionaries to correlate political mobilization to an inner, less visible but more spiritual objective. This consideration allows us to understand the meaning of the conversation between Michel Foucault, C. Brière, and P. Blanchet *The spirit of a world without spirit* (Foucault, 1994), in which a fruitful reflection emerges, highlighting on the one hand the ambiguities of the Iranian people, torn between conservation, tradition and modernity and, on the other, the excess of revolutionary subjectification which is a sign of irreducibility typical of the Iranian people. Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi’s 2008 book, *Foucault in Iran: Islamic revolution after the Enlightenment* puts, only in a certain sense, an end to the controversy, placing Foucault’s position within an anti-teleological line of thought which considers the Iranian revolution as an event that does not fit into the interpretative, progressive and normative discourses of Western thought. The author, of Iranian origin, through highlighting the characteristic features of the reportages, underlines that the spiritual dimension, often emphasized by Foucault, finds its support and its channels in the traditional forms of Iranian society which, at that stage, was evaluating whether it had been possible to think of dignity, justice, freedom through a new regulation of the modalities of Islamic law (Ghamari-Tabrizi, 2008). Today, years later, in a changed historical context, some questions that Foucault had identified are re-proposed. Concerning the current protests, I wonder if it is a question of a request for emancipation dictated by forms of denial, oppression, and rejection of tradition, or a liturgy of liberation from a form of power which constitutes a sacrificial religion. In the following pages, I will try to answer these questions. In order to answer such queries, it is necessary to analyze the structure and function of the theory of *wilāyat-i faqīh* theorized by the Āyatollah Khomeini, a constant term of comparison in the speeches of Āyatollah Khāmeneī. The research is built on three argumentative levels: the first level analyzes the theoretical model of the *wilāyat-i faqīh*, trying to identify the strengths and weaknesses of this model; the second level investigates the analogical symmetries that this theory has with Khāmeneī’s speeches; the third level, starts from Michel Foucault’s speeches and reports, and it considers the hypothesis that *wilāyat-i faqīh* is a form of ideology that matured from the perception of a lack of order in Islamic society following the 1978 revolution.

The theory of the Wilāyat-i faqīh

The Iranian question, along with the implications it is coming to assume, leads us to a reflection that seeks to trace a grid in which to bring together the reasons for a regime that has remained anchored to tradition. The model of political government theorized by Ayatollah Khomeini in the book *The Islamic government. Or the spiritual authority of the jurisconsult* provides useful tools for a first analysis. From research done at the Cultural Institute of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Rome, it was possible to reconstruct the process of compiling the work. First the use of the Persian language. This attests that the work was designed to be disclosed in Iran above all. The text is the transcript of the oral lessons discussed in the teaching sessions held by Ayatollah Khomeini in the holy city of Najaf during his Iraqi exile. The sources are taken from the religious teachings of the *Holy Book*, from the *Tradition of the Prophet*, and from the dictates of the Imām. The lectures were collected and published in Beirut in 1970, under the title *Al-hukūma al-islāmiyya*. The manuscript was published in Iran in 1977 under the title *Letter of Imām Kāshif al-Ghitā*⁶. An analysis of the text shows that the Persian utilized by Imām Khomeini is that of the direct language, typical of the Persian oral tradition which transforms the public speeches and the lessons and sermons of the Imāms into books; a tradition that dates back to the discursive-scriptural practices of the classical *madrassa* (Muslim boarding school). The theme of the Wilāyat-i faqīh is developed with a hypothetical-deductive method that makes use of: 1) the contribution of the *Hawza* (Shiite theological schools) responsible for the transmission of the Koranic doctrine; 2) an analysis of the divergences between the *Koran* and the texts of *hadīth*, i.e. the six books of historical-legal traditions in importance after the Koran which integrate the *sharī* ʿa, and the treatises compiled by the *mujtahids* (experts in law, authorized to exercise *ijtihād*, i.e. the deduction of positive laws starting from the principles of jurisprudence); 3) of the meaning assumed by the *walāya* (a term which in Shiite theology assumes the meaning of authority); 4) of the responsibility that the *wālī-yi amr* (one who has authority to give orders) has in Islamic society. The four axioms constitute the argumentative nucleus around which the theory of Islamic government revolves. The need for this government, says Khomeini, arises from the observation that a corpus of laws alone is not enough to reform society. For the law to be nourishment

6 Translations of the book exist in French, Arabic, Turkish, and Urdu. The first English translation was published by the Joint Publication and Research Service (CIA translation office) in 1978, and reissued by Manor Books of New York. Currently, the most reliable translation is the one edited by Hamid Algar in the 1981 anthology *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imām Khomeini*, which is based on the third edition published in Najaf in 1971.

for social reform and human happiness, it is necessary to establish an executive power and an executor who implements the positive Islamic laws with respect for tradition and custom, pillars of the Islamic order (Khomeini, 2006, 25-26). In this notion of order, the political and religious factors are reunited. In essence, the need to continue to execute the positive laws guarantees, since the time of the minor Occultation⁷, the “conditions necessary for the parousia of the hidden Imām”. These conditions are dictated by the *sharī* ‘a which contains the norms that order the different configurations of society. They regulate, for example, patrimonial laws, the conservation of the Islamic system, the defense of territorial integrity conferred on the army and imposed by the Koranic imperative “gather as much as you can of military strength and horses” (Koran, VIII, 60), individual rights and punitive laws whose execution is the prerogative of the State, the only entity that holds the monopoly of coercion. From this first analysis, it emerges that the configuration of the provisions for the conservation of the Islamic State theorized by Āyatollah Khomeini intersects with the assertions and arguments present in the speeches of Āyatollah Khāmeneī, who resorts to a rhetoric symmetrical to that of Khomeini, which favors the ideological in support of the political, cultural and religious unity of the Islamic community and of the Islamic order governed by positive laws. The first speech, *On women and the family* of 19 April 2022, lends itself to analyzing the different configurations necessary for the preservation of the unity of the state. The second speech of October 3, 2022, is a sort of liturgy that exalts national pride and the role of the armed forces as guardians of order. The *tópos* of *unity* is symbiotically linked with that of *order* under the suffrage of the Islamic government and its institutions.

Difference versus inequality. The search for an ideal of unity

The discourse *On women and the family* is an attempt at blurred truth. The various analogies with Khomeini’s theory, as well as the recurring use of specific lexemes, reaffirm the continuity with the theocratic regime established by Khomeini in 1979. The speech, delivered before an audience of only women gathered on the occasion of the anniversary of blessed Fatima Zahra⁸, on Women’s Week and Mother’s Day, at a glance

7 In the Imamite tradition, the last Imām, the twelfth, entered Occultation in the year 874 and until 941 spoke to the Islamic people through four *nāib* (vicars). After the minor Occultation begins the major one which will last until the end of time when the Muhammad al Mahdi (eschatological figure) will make his appearance. (Khomeini, 29, note 1.)

8 Fātima, known as al-zahrā, daughter of Muhammad and wife of ‘ Ali ibn Abī Tālib, the link between the prophetic mission and the imamate, is the object of intense devotion in Shiism as it is placed at the origin of the *sislila* (chain) of the imāms and is considered the mother of the imāms. She is the only female figure who is part of the *pleroma* of the fourteen infallibles alongside the Prophet and the twelve imām. (Khomeini, 2006, 40, note 9)

can be interpreted as the symbolic configuration of a political model that solidifies the identity of Iranian women and their strength manifested in the area of jihādi activities. The morphological characteristics of the words *infallibility*, *martyrdom*, *spirituality*, and *sacrifice* attest to this specificity. If *infallibility* says Khāmeneī is “a characteristic reserved for a select few people”, and among these, there is the Noble Zahra, a Muslim woman, and fighter, the *martyrdom* she suffered represents an exemplary life conduct for all women. The Noble Zahara represents the symbol of spirituality and political infallibility which is specific “of the imamate who must maintain order and change division into unity”⁹. This phrase attributed to the Noble Fatima is taken up by Khāmeneī who, however, makes instrumental use of it. The torture of the martyr is the medium for the common expiation of guilt, and a means of achieving unity within the community. Principle necessary to preserve *order*. It can be said, in the words of Michel Foucault, that “the sense of guilt is inextricably linked to the exaltation of martyrdom for a just cause” (Foucault, 1998, 52). Foucault, in his 19 November 1978 *reportage*, *The revolt of Iran runs on the minicassette tapes*, written on the occasion of the preparations for the Moharram festivals dedicated to the celebration of the death of Imām Hussein, presents an analysis of martyrdom in which the noun is jointly declined with the terms *death* and *sacrifice*. In this way *martyrdom* is seen as an interior experience, the *sacrifice* that leads to death for a just cause, ignites fervor in souls, transforming itself into a sort of community experience. A liturgical process is set in motion which unites the specificities of each in the sign of *unity*. And precisely women, Khāmeneī says in his speech, following the example of the noble Zhara, are dedicated to the sacrifice demonstrated “from the time of the Sacred Defense (in the war against Iraq from 1980 to 1988) until today”. In this way, we are witnessing a process of responsible assimilation of sacrifice which is “the complete manifestation and realization of the identity and personality of the Iranian woman”. But for Khāmeneī the current question of women must be addressed on a threefold level which is different from any Western perspective. He asks himself three questions: 1) “considering that women make up half of the Iranian population how can they healthily benefit from this potential?” 2) “how can the issue of gender – which is one of the most sensitive and delicate in creation – be at the service of the elevation of humanity and not of its ethical decadence? 3) “considering the natural differences between men and women, how can we establish and institute a model of behavior – both in the social and family spheres – to prevent women from being oppressed?” The complexity hidden in these questions opens up various lines of argument which lead, on the

⁹ Wa tā ‘utuna nizāman li ‘l-milla wa imāmatunā lamman li ‘l furga. (Hāshimi, s. d., vol. I. 483, now in Khomeini, 2006, 35)

one hand, to the question of the *modernization-emancipation* of traditional Iranian society, and on the other, to the question of gender which brings into play the *difference-in-equality* relationship. The theme of modernization refers to a problem that Foucault addresses in the report of 1 October 1978, *The Shah is a hundred years late*. At that moment, however, the philosopher's interest fell on the refusal manifested by the Iranian people against modernization, despotism, and corruption, in a word, against the Shah's regime. In the months of the revolution, the rejection of modernization as a political project and as a principle of social transformation derived from the "Pahlavi corruption" which, in strict analogy with American imperialism, was inherent in the exercise of power. Nowadays there is not a refusal of modernization but a desire for emancipation. Khāmeneī does not seem to disdain this process. In his speech, he focuses on the need to create a supreme super-governmental center in order to discuss the process of women's emancipation and recognize their role within Iranian society. But this process is feasible only under certain conditions. First, Khāmeneī tells the women, "you must clear your minds of Western thinking and reject the authority of such vision as such visions cannot be at all a source of happiness and guidance for human society." Khāmeneī's criticism is aimed at a form of thought ideologically based on an epistemological-materialist and non-divine conception. An argument that reopens the question of those ideas which in Shiite Islam belong to the order of theocratic knowledge linked to a form of knowledge that involves an interpretation of reality wrapped up in a transcendental truth founded on the existence of God, on his presence and authority on Earth. Isn't this the foundation of the *wilāyat-i faqīh*? Related to this is the theme of the Supreme Authority which returns in the discourse strengthened by the Koranic imperatives which reaffirm the transmission of ideas whose regime of truth is that of the effectiveness of rejecting everything that originates from the West. Criticism is also leveled at the mercantilist, profit-making, and economic vision that has created instrumental forms of the woman seen as a means to an end. An argument that refers to the debate on the foundation of political and religious thought of Shiite philosophy as an alternative to the nihilistic imperialism of Western modernity. This western model is opposed by the eschatological conception of prophetic fullness which is synthesis and final completeness which corresponds to primordial fullness. The ideas to which Khāmeneī refers in this speech exhibit verification criteria that envisage an effective, operational, combative dimension that places the question of women's employment in the world of work, in the administration of the State, in sexual equality on specular levels. If justice is a right, equality says Khāmeneī, "sometimes it is right and sometimes it is wrong", since this principle is defined on the basis of "a particular natural-physical-emotional

environment created by the Most High God". On this basis, the equality-difference relationship between men and women is defined. There is no difference between man and woman as human beings, from the point of view of humanity, spiritual stations, and of intellectual talents, but man and woman "have two different molds. Each one is modeled for a function". This is a principle inherent in the natural order of the Shiite Islamic vision which, according to Khāmeneī, is being contaminated by Western thought. The foundation of this principle is in the Islamic sources contemplated in the sacred texts and in the words of the Imām and in Khomeini's theory which analytically elaborates the method of deduction entrusted to the jurisconsults. In this way, the role of the woman within the family is legitimized and considered as the place in which to cultivate talents. A form of discrimination contemplated by the legal system is recognized, based on justice and the preservation of obedience. It is a form of legitimacy that defines the incompatibility of female nature in environments dedicated to men. The theme in question is at the center of today's debate and harkens back to a question that Foucault notes in his 22 October *reportage*, *Return to the Prophet*. The philosopher tries to identify the reasons behind this principle which can be traced in the concept of *conservation of obedience* understood as an ideal that gives depth to the general orientations of social life and, among these, there is the regulation of relations between men and women. For this reason, Foucault writes: "between men and women there is no *inequality* of rights, but a *difference* because there is a *difference in nature*", a principle which is inferred from Islamic sources. And precisely this difference, says Khāmeneī, generates "tranquility and peace within the family". It is this *difference of nature* inferred from the *hadith* that preserves the value and effectiveness of obedience: it is an undisputed truth proper to the Shi'ite current that governs Iran.

Return to the ideal of the Islamic order

The sense of truth, contemplated in the provisions related to the conservation of the Islamic system and the defense of territorial integrity, is at the basis of the speech given by Ayatollah Khāmeneī on October 3, eighteen days after the start of the protest. The speech addressed to the cadets of the academies of the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, is structured based on the principles deduced from the theory of *Wilāyat-i faqīh*. The phenomenology of language, articulated on the religion-politics correlation, assumes a function aimed at constructing a message of "hope, renewal, and innovation", to be placed as a shield against the spread of the protests. If *renewal* and *innovation* are

positive factors for Khāmeneī, since they contribute to increasing the scientific, economic, and political field, they are placed in antithesis to the conceptual tools imported from the West, as they are responsible for a form of “propaganda” which has weakened the values and sense of responsibility of young Iranians. The alternative to this weakening of values is the practice of contrasting and repressing with force any form of denial of the constitutive principles of the theocratic order. In essence, Khāmeneī hopes for a return to the *Islamic order*. The probative value of this assertion is clarified both in relation to the dominance that the jurisconsult has in Iranian society and in relation to the regulation of the tasks entrusted to the Armed Forces, “pillars” of *order*, and national defense. In the speech, there is an evident intensification of the meaning of both the concept of *strength* and the notion of *faith*, in the sense that their link strengthens the *Islamic order* and national pride. “These factors,” says Khāmeneī, “are important means to strengthen the foundations of the country, therefore, our defensive power must be strengthened”. It is like saying that the means are fit to the end. In the plot of the speech, the lexeme *power* is immediately joined to the concept of *national security* understood as “the foundation of all aspects of life in a society”. Through this assertion, Khāmeneī reiterates the relationship between the political, and religious power and the power of the Armed Forces, more specifically of the army (IRGC), responsible for the conservation of the Islamic system and the defense of territorial integrity. Khāmeneī thus recovers the central nucleus of the paragraph *National defense* (Khomeini, 2006, 33) in which the Koranic imperative “*lahum mā sata tum min quwwatim wa min ribāti*”¹⁰ (Koran, VIII, 60) imposes the preparation of armed defense forces and orders to keep alert against the enemy in times of peace and war. The meaning of this maxim has a double sense which allows Khāmeneī to theorize on the one hand the value of deterrence (deduced from the Koranic verse) and on the other to envisage the symbolic construction of the “inner reality of the enemy” whose purpose is “the conspiracy that creates riots, disrupts the security of the country and excites those who can easily be enthusiastic about taking to the streets”. This symbolic construction of the “inner reality of the enemy” serves to legitimize the action taken by the army in repressing the protest. The responsibility for the events, including for the death of the young Mahasa Amini, Khāmeneī says “does not concern the question of the *hijab*, it is not the death of a young girl” but concerns the independence, resistance, strength, and power of the ‘Islamic Iran to be defended with the use of all forces. The use of force, therefore, legitimizes any action contrary to order, and the army is assigned this task according to the positive laws of Islam. This obsessive centrality given to the power of the army is also at the heart of the 28 September 1978 *reportage*, *The army, when the earth trembles*,

¹⁰ “Gather as much military strength and horses as you can”

written by Foucault during the revolutionary days (in particular that of Black Friday on 8 September characterized by the thundering noise of machine guns firing at the crowd), in which the philosopher questions who actually holds power in Iran, focusing on the appeal issued by the Ayātollah Khomeini from his exile in Iraq: “help your brothers, but do nothing through the government, and nothing for it” (Khomeini, 2006, 13-14). Well, based on this appeal, Foucault asks himself the question of whether the reality of power is in the hands of an overthrown government or in the hands of the army. But, first of all, which army, since Iran has four armies? Iran, writes Foucault, “has the traditional army that controls the whole territory, the Shah’s Praetorian Guard, the combat army and a structure resembling the American General Staff” (Foucault, 1998, 15). This is the configuration of an army which, Foucault says, has only half of the power, since it has no ideology, nor a political project, and is pervaded by a form of anti-Marxism that apparently guarantees nationalism. Did the army that fired on the crowd in those months have the same power that the army and the moral police have today? Today the situation is different since it does not manifest itself against the Shah, against the modernization imposed by the West, but against a government that through coercion denies any form of emancipation of women and denies individual rights. Coercion is a tool that the law gives to the army to guarantee internal security and the protection of the Islamic community. In Khomeini’s vision, the concept of community has a fundamental meaning, similar to Khāmeneī’s. This does not escape Foucault who, in his October 22 *reportage*, titled *Return to the Prophet?*, in analyzing the contrast between the Shah (the king who embodies the politician) and the saint (Khomeini the anti-political), constructs the image of a new political subject, the Iranian people, whose sentiment is fueled by an ideal based on the inner community experience that feeds the national sentiment. In essence, as Foucault says in his interview with Claire Brière and Pierre Blanchet, correspondents of *Libération* in Iran:

“national sentiment in 1978 was extremely vigorous: the refusal of submission to the foreigner, the disgust in the face of the plunder of national resources, the rejection of a dependent foreign policy, American interference visible everywhere, were determined so that the Shah was perceived as an agent of the West. But national sentiment has not been, if not one of the components of rejection, by the whole people, not simply of the foreigner, but of everything that had constituted, for years, for centuries, its political system.” (Foucault, 1994, 747).

The national pride that Khāmeneī speaks of is to keep the sense of community alive.

Is the wilāyat-i faqīh an ideology?

In the light of the elements that emerged from the analysis of Ayatollah Khāmeneī's speeches, the hypothesis of evaluating whether the function of the *Wilāyat-i faqīh*, understood as a theological-political doctrine, can be considered as an ideology is proposed. This assertion is justified on the basis of an implicit and constant reference to the *ideal order* deemed by Khāmeneī necessary to guarantee the stability of the Islamic government. If ideology, as Carlo Galli says, seeks order where there is none, we must ask ourselves whether the ongoing project of repression, deemed necessary to guarantee Islamic order, responds to ideological canons bearing an objective truth. In the Western vision, says Galli, ideologies move from the gap opened by philosophy. Ideology is seen as an obstacle to the "unfolding of objective truth". (Galli, 2022, 23). In the Iranian case, we could say that ideology moves from the gap opened by theology and that we are certainly far from a neoliberal apologetics that has claimed to be "the truth that puts an end to every ideology" (Galli, 2022, 131). In Iran, the status of truth is symbolically based on the objective value assumed by the lexeme *wilāyat* derived from the word *wilā* (which means power, authority, or right). In Shiite theology, *wilāyat* is the Authority with which the Prophet and the Ahlul Bayt (as) (descendants of the Prophet Mohammed) have been invested as representatives of God. The term *wilāyat* is declined in a threefold sense: a) *wilāyat-i faqīh* (temporal authority of the doctor of the law), b) *Wilāyat-i i'tibārī* (relative authority), c) *wilāyat-i takwīnī* (absolute authority over the world of becoming). The complete declination of the three modalities of the *wilāyat* defined by Khomeini in his lectures leads to the institution of the government as a tool for the realization of the supreme ends. These ends concern the *order* and *unity* that can be pursued only if the truths of the *wilāya*, which do not generate a difference between the Prophet, Imām, and jurist, indicate the attributions of the three functions described by Khomeini: a) to the worthy individual, endowed with knowledge of the law and righteousness, depositary of the Authority which the Prophet had in the exercise of the administration of the company; b) to jurists who, in the absence of the Imām, have the Authority that the Noble Messenger and his successors had. In this case, *wilāya* means the task of the governmental Authority, the administration of the State, and the exercise of the sacred laws of the *sharī* 'a; c) to the Imām who holds political authority and has degrees of spiritual realization that are independent of his political function. Among these, is the divine general vicariate, a supernatural vicariate by which every atom of the sublunar world is subject to the authority of the *walī-yi amr* (he who holds authority). (Khomeini, 2006, 48-58). Thus, the pursuit of supreme ends has a source of

legitimacy that is located in the foundation of a generative truth, which generated those ideas which Foucault had identified by studying the Iranian reality in the months of the revolution. In that phase, Foucault disputes the pertinence “of the localization of ideas presupposed by the discourses on the end of ideologies” (Cavazzini, 2005, 23) by asking himself what “an idea” is, what its function is, and what its effects are. This reflection allows him to direct his research toward the status of truth, outside the traditional places of Western thought, in places where new ideas germinate. It is precisely along the line of this research initiated by Foucault that the structure and function of the *wilāyat-i faqīh* can be identified as an ideology since the principles that define it are the result of ideas from a place where the localization of thought that belongs to a theocratic order whose regime of truth goes beyond the canons of Western thought and stands as an alternative to liberal thought.

Conclusions

Ultimately, what is the specific way of being of Shiite political thought in the Iranian context, in an era in which, despite the crumbling of values, the defense of human rights and the attention to the process of women’s emancipation is still relevant? Surely the West is going through a deep crisis linked mainly to the alienation of the subject as well as to the failed realization of the ideals promised by neoliberalism, but this does not mean that the string that holds together individual rights, respect for diversity and equality of gender has loosened, nor that the guard has been let down when it comes to inequality and social justice. The many contradictions within the liberal order do not undermine the recognition of individuality, and the centrality that the individual has within society, they do not define the natural environments assigned to men or women, and they do not set limits to fundamental freedoms. Conversely, in Iran, this set of prerogatives is in contrast with the work underway, of educating consciences through forms of repression. Khāmeneī, in his speeches, refers to the pathologies of Western democracy, comparing them to a form of propaganda harmful to young Iranians. To this form of propaganda, the leader Massimo contrasts his own propaganda based on educating the youth to respect the devotional and ritual rules, and to practice worship which is always combined with politics and social needs. Aren’t these the precepts theorized by Khomeini in the *Struggle Program for the Constitution of the Islamic Government*? The implementation of this program is bringing out phenomena of re-politicization which aim to neutralize a vision of the West which, in the words of Khāmeneī, mystifies

the truths of Islam. Undisputed truths, that collide with the metaphysical conception which, in preserving the nature of being as an indissoluble unity, are the basis of fundamental rights and freedoms. On these differences and asymmetries, the conception of a theocratic *order* based on the continuity of the *Shi'ite* legal tradition and the truth of the wilāyat is being protected in Iran; a conception which still persists today and is indeed strengthened by the recovery of Khmeinian lexemes that branch out in the speeches of the Āyatollāh Khamenei. It is the contemporary re-edition of a model that needs emancipation, new points of view that cry out to the motto *Sapere aude*. In this aphorism, the meaning of the apothegm *Woman Life Freedom* is concealed.

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NOTAS Y DISCUSIONES

LAS LARGAS SOMBRAS DEL "SIGLO CORTO".

**Un enfoque sobre las categorías
del siglo XX**

THE RETURN OF *GEWALT*: MIRRORING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

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Introduction

This contribution examines the concept of ‘power’ starting from the historical-conceptual perspective of Karl-Georg Faber, Karl-Heinz Ilting, and Christian Meier in the analysis of the terms *Macht*, *Gewalt* found in the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, edited by Reinhart Koselleck, Otto Brunner, and Werner Conze. The work contains the analysis of 122 terms, not only from a historical perspective but also highlighting the philosophical, legal, and economic aspects behind each term. It is considered one of the standard tools in academic studies in German-speaking countries. However, as only a few terms have been translated into other languages, the full utilization of this tool is unfortunately limited to scholars who can understand the German language.

The two main aspects of power examined here are precisely those of *Macht* and *Gewalt*, and their analysis and understanding are useful in highlighting how these two dimensions never completely overlap in history and the changing of societies but rather influence each other over time.

The contribution also examines the transition from Great Powers to World Powers during the 20th century. This shift led to the emergence of global powers that exercise their *Macht* internationally, influencing global relations, the world economy, and global stability. However, the exercise of this power can also involve forms of *Gewalt* that threaten international peace and stability. The last century was characterized by wars,

revolutions, and large-scale violence, in which *Gewalt* was often used as a means to acquire and maintain power.

Despite the optimistic narrative that followed the end of the Cold War, the contribution emphasizes that the dimension of conflict and power in its most violent manifestations is far from disappeared. The case of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict demonstrates that *Gewalt* is still a reality, with significant regional and global implications. Violence and armed conflict can still emerge as means to exercise power, and geopolitical dynamics continue to influence international relations. Hence, the need for a philosophical reflection that, in debating the nature of ‘power’ and its manifestations, does not solely focus on its disciplinary dimension and social control, seemingly unaware that *Macht* and *Gewalt* are two sides of the same coin, existentially interconnected and both integral parts of human political history.

Power and Violence: A Conceptual Inquiry of the 20th Century based on *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*

In the monumental work *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexicon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Reinhart Koselleck, Otto Brunner, and Werner Conze set out to explore the fundamental concepts in history and politics. In this context, Karl-Georg Faber, Karl-Heinz Ilting, and Christian Meier contribute editing the entry *Macht, Gewalt* conducting a comprehensive analysis of the concept of power throughout history, thereby examining various dimensions and facets of the term over time.

The authors perceive the concept of ‘power’ as encompassing a dual nature, delineated by the terms *Macht* and *Gewalt*. Drawing upon Weber’s definition, Faber characterizes the former as “*jede Chance, innerhalb einer sozialen Beziehung den eigenen Willen auch gegen Widerstreben durchzusetzen, gleichviel, worauf diese Chance beruht*” (Faber, 1982, 817). It is associated with a form of legitimate and institutionalized control, based on social consensus and adherence to existing laws, from which its social acceptance derives. The power expressed by the term *Macht* is linked to a predominantly horizontal dimension of emanation, which does not necessarily rely on the use of force to assert itself. From this perspective, *Macht* can be exercised both by political institutions (e.g., governments, parliaments) and by individuals holding a recognized position of authority. This power is therefore understood as ‘legitimate’ and inherently correlated with the trust that human communities place in institutions and norms that regulate the exercise of power. Consent allows *Macht* to establish and preserve social order (Weber,

1976). On the track of *Macht*, ideas of stability and political order travel, whereby power is exercised through mechanisms of political negotiation, institution-building, and the enactment of laws, aiming to maintain a balance of power within society. The objective is to achieve a framework of temporal duration, rather than transience, wherein institutions and figures of authority can aspire to persist over time as guarantors of stability and political continuity.

Equally crucial for understanding ‘power’ in historical and political contexts is the aspect of *Gewalt*. It denotes the exercise of physical force or even the threat thereof, with the aim of imposing one’s will upon others. *Gewalt* operates in a predominantly vertical dimension, as it is based on coercion, the use of violence, and the ability to establish control through violent means. *Gewalt* can take various forms, such as wars, repression, political oppression, or actions that often violate social and legal norms, rendering them illegitimate. It is interesting to note how Faber identifies the means and events associated with the dimension of *Gewalt* as “*Grundtatsachen des menschlichen Zusammenlebens*” (Faber, 1982, 817), thus asserting that *Gewalt* constitutes an intrinsic aspect of human history, significantly influencing any dynamics related to the acquisition, maintenance, and relinquishment of power. However, it is important to clarify that the concept of *Gewalt* is not limited solely to physical violence, as the use or threat of violence can also take non-physical forms, such as psychological coercion, manipulation of information, or exploitation of economic power. In this sense, *Gewalt* can also be understood as an action (or set of actions) aimed at depriving others of their decision-making capacity, imposing one’s will regardless of the means employed to achieve this purpose.

From the historical-conceptual analysis of ‘power’ conducted by Ilting, Meier, and Faber, it is also evident that “*die Bedeutungsfelder der beiden Begriffe [...] sich keineswegs decken, sondern in einem sich im Laufe der Zeit verändernden Umfang überschneiden*” (*ibid.*), as they are dependent on the theories and political approaches adopted in a specific historical period. An important example of this overlap between the two aspects of power is provided by ancient Greece. The Greeks, in fact,

“haben da begrifflich nicht unterschieden, genauer: sie haben weder einen Macht- noch einen Herrschaftsbegriff gebildet, sondern sich im ganzen Bereich zwischen Macht, Überlegenheit und Herrschaft mit elastisch auf die jeweiligen Positionen zielenden Worten und Sätzen ausgedrückt”. (Meier, 1982, 820)

From Meier’s exposition, it emerges that in ancient Greece there was a predominance of the aspect of *Macht* over *Gewalt*. In Greek society, legitimate power was associated

with the ability to influence, govern, and impose one's will through authority, persuasion, and social consensus. *Macht* belonged to those who held positions of authority, such as rulers or aristocrats, and political institutions, such as citizen assemblies, provided an important formal context for the exercise of legitimate power (Ober, 1996). Moreover, Greek political culture assigned fundamental importance to persuasion and rhetoric as means to obtain consensus and legitimacy, thereby making discourse a tool of power. In fact, orators, including the sophists, developed rhetorical skills to influence public opinion and acquire political power, as "the speech is particularly revealing of the different ways in which power, in the democratic polis, related to equality and inequality, to the private and public realms, and to the social environments inhabited by elite aristocrats and ordinary citizens" (Ober, 1996, 86). Political competition, therefore, was based on the ability of persuasion and compelling arguments, rather than primarily relying on the use of physical force. This explains why different terms such as "ἀρχή, κράτος, ἐξουσία" (Meier, 1982, 820) can be accurately translated both as 'power' and 'dominion'.

This does not imply that the dimension of *Gewalt* was completely absent in ancient Greek history. In situations of conflict or political instability, the use of force could be employed as a means to acquire and/or maintain power. However, it was clear that it needed to remain purely instrumental within a historical period where war was an inevitable phenomenon, to be accepted "like birth and death about which nothing could be done" (Momigliano, 1966, 120, as cited in Berent, 2000, 257). If *Gewalt* had exceeded its instrumental dimension, it could have posed a threat to social and political stability, that is, to *Macht* itself, as violence was a harbinger of anarchy and the ruin of institutions. In other words, when *Gewalt* is no longer in service of *Macht*, that is, of institutionally legitimate power, there is a risk of fuelling a state of constant war, where individuals behave according to the primal impulse to exercise power for the sole purpose of accumulating more power, and where "*die menschliche Natur besonders elementar zum Ausdruck*" (Meier, 1982, 827).

The analysis by Faber, Ilting, and Meier continues in the work of Koselleck on one hand by highlighting the different evolutions that the institution of power undergoes throughout history – "*Macht' und 'Gewalt' bei den Römern*"; "*Die systemgebundene Funktion von 'Macht' und 'Gewalt' im Mittelalter*"; "*Gewalt' und 'Macht' im frühneuzeitlichen Reichs- und Territorialstaatsrecht*"; "*Gewalt' und 'Macht' in den Lexika des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*"; "*Macht' und 'Gewalt' zwischen Aufklärung und Imperialismus*" (Faber *et al.*, 1982, 830-ff.). On the other hand, it highlights its articulations and facets within various political theories and the contributions of important philosophers over time, particularly Marx and Nietzsche. However, the dual nature of the concept of 'pow-

er' remains underlying, and the necessity for the aspect of *Macht* to prevail over *Gewalt*, or more precisely, for the former to utilize the latter to ensure the exercise of legitimate power while always maintaining an authority that is both a guarantor of stability within its borders and a symbol of strength against any potential external enemy. An interesting parallel can be observed here with the concept of "sovereignty" according to Calise, Lowi & Musella (2021), who also characterize it as "*un concetto duale. Esso si compone infatti di una dimensione "esterna" (sovrانيتà come indipendenza da poteri sovra-ordinati) e da una dimensione interna (sovrانيتà come potere assoluto sul proprio territorio e sui corpi intermedi)*" (Calise, Lowi & Musella, 2021, 300). The need to maintain a clear conceptual distinction between the two aspects of power, even though they are phenomenally connected or even interdependent, becomes even more pressing in the period spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, namely with the transition "*von den 'Großen Mächten' zu den 'Weltmächten'*" (Faber, 1982, 930). Until that point, the debate on the exercise of power was focused on the domestic sphere and was "*ein unentbehrliches Requisit in den historisch-politischen Reflexionen über das Außenverhältnis der Staaten, die in der Sprache der Diplomatie traditionell als 'Puissances' ('Mächte') bezeichnet wurden*", constantly engaged in consolidating territorial control, maintaining regional influence, and managing power dynamics within their borders (Faber, 1982, 930).

In the Twentieth century, the world witnessed profound transformations that led to the emergence of the concept of World Power (Faber, 1982, 930). This change brought about the growth of global powers with a reach and impact that surpass national and regional boundaries. Indeed, the actions of World Powers can have global effects, influencing not only the power dynamics within their own territories but also international relations, the global economy, and global stability. In this new context, the distinction between *Macht* and *Gewalt* becomes particularly relevant. World Powers are capable of exercising *Macht* that extends beyond their domestic sphere, employing political, economic, and cultural tools to influence global actors and shape the international system. However, the exercise of such power can also be accompanied by manifestations of *Gewalt* that can have severe consequences for international peace and stability, leading to conflicts, instability, and global human rights violations.

In this perspective, the history of the Twentieth century (from the First World War to the Cold War, from international crises to large-scale military operations) emerges as the realization of the dystopia imagined already in Greece, of what could have happened if governments had begun to exercise *Gewalt* as a substitute concept for *Macht*. In pursuing an ideal of political stability and ideological assertion, which increasingly took the form of uncontrolled expansionism and acts of ideological and physical oppression

by the strongest state, the Twentieth century stood out as “a century of wars and revolutions, hence a century of that violence which is currently believed to be their common denominator” (Arendt, 1969, 1).

Among the various voices that have contributed to portraying an extremely negative image of the “short twentieth century” (Hobsbawm, 1994), Niall Ferguson’s perspective (Ferguson, 2006a) paints a picture that leaves little room for ambiguity: “the hundred years after 1900 were without question the bloodiest century in modern history, far more violent in relative as well as absolute terms than any previous era” (Ferguson, 2006a, xxxiv). Ferguson identifies three main causes of the “extreme violence of the twentieth century” (Ferguson, 2006a, xli): i) ethnic conflicts and theories of race; ii) economic volatility throughout the entire century; iii) “the decomposition of the multinational European empires that had dominated the world at the beginning of the century and the challenge posed to them by the emergence of new ‘empire-states’ in Turkey, Russia, Japan, and Germany” (Ferguson, 2006a, xli). It is precisely this last aspect that can be identified as the exacerbation of the aforementioned process that Faber sees beginning between 1800 and 1900 – namely, the transition from Great Powers to World Powers – which reached its peak in the course of the Twentieth century.

Drawing on the political geographer Friedrich Ratzel, Faber asserts that “*ein Staat naturgemäß nach Ausbreitung und, aufrichtig gesagt, Eroberung strebt*” (Faber, 1982, 933). Such a categorical assumption takes on alarming traits in a context of coexistence between old and new powers at the dawn of the “first age of globalization” (Ferguson, 2006a, 4) in the early 20th century, leading to the notion that “*der Begriff ‘Großmacht’ in seiner Beschränkung auf Landmächte veraltet sei. ‘Weltmacht’ und ‘Großmacht’ waren im politischen Vokabular der Vorkriegszeit identisch geworden*” (Faber, 1982, 933). The proliferation of old and new empires in the early decades of the 1900s has therefore generated an extremely confused and compromised political-terminological framework.

“*war noch zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts mit dem Begriff der ‘Großen Macht’ die Vorstellung eines Stabilitätsfaktors innerhalb eines als relativ konstant angesehenen Staatensystems verbunden gewesen, so umfaßte er nun den Willen zu größerer Macht. Denn: Großmächte sind Expansionsstaaten*”. (Faber, 1982, 933)

Referring to Weber (1976), we can assert that while the old empires had been present on the world stage for some time and could find their principle of legitimacy in the exercise of Macht, which was a combination of political and military power, guaranteed by both legal-rational means through established institutions and centralized govern-

ments, as well as traditional means derived from centuries of dominion and control, the emerging powers could not rely on the same support. It is worth noting that leaders like Lenin, Stalin, or Hitler based much of their rise to power on the charismatic element linked to the legitimacy of power. The states they led challenged the old-world order by proposing their own vision of power and the state, openly breaking with tradition and the reality known until then (see also Marzo, 2019).

The combination of these elements has generated a situation of ideological and armed conflict, undoubtedly because, as Faber argues, World Powers inherited from Great Powers the impulse for expansion. Moreover, this expansionist tension is the political translation of the primordial impulse towards recognition that Hegel identifies as the foundation of human nature. According to Fukuyama (2006), this impulse has always involved “a battle to the death for pure prestige”. When humans act in accordance with the thymotic impulse – that is, connected to the idea of the ‘emotional soul’, a concept used by Fukuyama (2006), which he himself borrowed from Socrates and Plato – towards recognition, *Macht* wavers, and the horizontal dimension of power gives way to the purely vertical dimension of *Gewalt*. In this perspective, the twentieth century is well suited to the definition of the “struggle for recognition” (Fukuyama, 2006) as a defining characteristic of the era. During this century, violence (as seen in the two world wars) or the threat of its use (throughout the Cold War) constituted, on one hand, the primary tool in the attempt to establish and assert power by new and different entities. On the other hand, the work of Faber, Meier, and Ilting allows us to interpret the twentieth century as a historical period in which the principles of legitimation and recognition became the new terminological framework for previously known concepts such as ‘expansion’, ‘domination’, and ‘supremacy’.

The World of War

After the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, a widespread narrative emerged, exalting the end of the age of conflicts and the dawn of a new era. During those years, Fukuyama (2006) proclaimed the end of ideological and political evolution of humanity and the advent of a democratic-liberal form of governance that would gradually become the ultimate destination for every nation in the world. This narrative was fuelled by the enthusiasm over the fall of the Berlin Wall and the political changes taking place in various parts of the globe, leading many to believe that the world was now leaving behind the dimension of conflict in favour

of a peaceful global coexistence (Hadas & Holland, 2022). In the same vein, Ferguson (2006a), who unequivocally labelled the 20th century as the “war of the world” century (overtly inspired by H. G. Wells’ novel ‘The War of the Worlds’ from 1898), displays a more optimistic inclination towards the future in the new millennium (“as I write, there are some grounds for cautious optimism”; Ferguson, 2006, 633). However, he goes on to add that the era we are currently experiencing is a second phase of globalization that bears a striking resemblance to the first one, which occurred between the late 1800s and the early 1900s and created conditions for war and the age of hatred (Ferguson, 2006, 643-ff).

First and foremost, the emergence of international organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union has contributed to fuelling the discourse about the end of conflicts. These institutions were created with the objective of promoting peace, security, and cooperation among member States, providing a space for dialogue and diplomacy. However, it is important to acknowledge that certain characteristics of these organizations, such as the right to veto or strategic abstention, are mechanisms that, albeit non-violent, are permeated by a supremacist intent and historically represent a constraint on their effective functioning (Conforti & Focarelli, 2020). Nevertheless, the very presence of these institutions has given the impression that conflicts were now a thing of the past and that the world was mature enough to embrace a culture of peace.

Secondly, globalization itself has played a significant role in promoting this narrative: “after 1945, ‘embedded liberalism’ (Ruggie, 1982) and thus the promotion of a multilateral order of the world trading system became the dominant ideology in the Western world” (Barbieri & Schneider, 1999, 389). In curious contrast to Ferguson’s position, the economic and cultural interconnection between countries, which has resulted in greater mutual dependence, has ultimately made conflict less appealing to many governments. Indeed, the increasing economic interdependence has created shared interests among nations, such as trade and financial stability, thereby incentivizing cooperation and peaceful resolution of disputes (Barbieri & Schneider, 1999, 389).

In this context, the philosophical discourse on power has often been flattened to focus solely on the horizontal dimension of *Macht*, reducing the violence of *Gewalt* to its purely psycho-coercive aspect, and considering open conflict as a relic of past geopolitical struggles. This perspective reflects a downsizing of the philosophical understanding of power and its manifestations and is supported by a range of theories, including the Foucauldian philosophy and, more recently, the works of the South Korean (naturalized German) philosopher Byung-Chul Han.

The philosophy of Michel Foucault has had a significant influence in the postmodern context, introducing the concept of ‘biopolitics’ to describe how power manifests itself in the control of human lives and bodies. Foucault argued that power permeates every aspect of society, from institutions to discourse and power-knowledge relationships. However, the Foucauldian interpretation of power has led to an emphasis on viewing power as a mere dynamic of non-violent domination and control, while excluding or minimizing the aspect of *Gewalt*. From this perspective, power is understood as a set of disciplinary and social control practices operating within institutions such as schools, prisons, or hospitals. It is considered a diffuse power that operates through normalization, regulation, and the production of homogenized subjects (Foucault, 2004).

Similarly, Han has also analysed power in contemporary society in terms of the ‘society of control’ and the ‘society of performance’. According to Han, this society is based on self-control and self-regulation of individuals who voluntarily submit to mechanisms of surveillance and discipline. In this view, power no longer manifests as external repression but as a form of internal domination that expresses itself through the production of compliant subjectivities, driven by anxiety for success and self-expression (Han, 2005; 2014).

The readings proposed by Foucault and Han, which have gained extensive consensus, hold significant epistemological value within the field of ‘philosophy of power’. However, they offer only a partial understanding of the phenomenon, as they lack the dimension of conflict that is inherently present in human history. In this regard, the considerations of Preterossi (2022) are interesting, as he argues that Foucault has developed “*una teoria del potere che vedendolo ovunque non lo determina, facendone qualcosa di inafferrabile. [...] la nuova ipostasi è la governamentalità. Da cui deduce, facendo finta di non farlo, di “indurre” delle pratiche. Una sorta di marxismo senza Marx, post-marxista e a-dialettico*” (Preterossi, 2022, 212).

Today more than ever, it is necessary to recognize that the persistence of an inclination towards *Gewalt* by states has never ceased to be a reality, despite any confident post-1989 narratives. The mere fact that the Cold War did not lead to a Third World War “did not mean that the age of wars was at an end” (Hobsbawm, 1994, 560). Hobsbawm’s statement is particularly well-considered when we take into account events such as the war between Great Britain and Argentina and the Iran-Iraq conflict in the 1980s, as well as the numerous military operations in Europe, Africa, and Asia during the 1990s (*ibid.*). It even appears prophetic in light of the economic crisis of 2008, the crisis of the European integration process, the rise of new global economic powers, and finally, the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.

Indeed, the aggression against Ukraine by Russia transforms Ferguson's words (2006b) – “the old zones of conflict are unlikely to be the new ones” (Ferguson, 2006b, 69) – into a stark warning. Moreover, this aggression, along with the international reaction (from European sanctions against Russia to the arms race of many states, from nuclear threats to Ukraine's request for rapid accession to NATO and the EU), demonstrates that the discourse surrounding power cannot yet do without considering the intricate, profound, and essential relationship between *Macht* and *Gewalt*.

In the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, clear dynamics of violence, armed conflict, and geopolitical plots have emerged that go far beyond the mere exercise of power as discipline and social control. The Russian intervention in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea have demonstrated that power continues to manifest itself today through the use of military force and territorial aggression. This dimension of *Gewalt* cannot simply be relegated to the past or considered as an internal matter of a nation (the detention of coercive forces by individual governments to maintain internal public order - Calise, Lowi & Musella, 2021). The Russo-Ukrainian conflict has had significant regional and global repercussions, involving international relations, international law, and geopolitical dynamics (Karabag & Imre, 2022), much in the same way that the *Weltmächten* identified by Faber produced the kind of global-scale violence that characterized the twentieth century. In fact, “*nei 77 anni che ci separano da Hiroshima e Nagasaki, il pericolo di un conflitto nucleare non è mai stato così grave e incombente come quello corso durante la guerra criminale scatenata dalla Russia contro l'Ucraina*” (Ferrajoli, 2022).

The dichotomy between *Macht* and *Gewalt* allows for the analysis of various aspects of the ongoing conflict and an attempt to understand its complexities. In terms of *Macht*, we can observe at least two levels of legitimacy. On one hand, the Russian government claims legitimate action to protect the interests of the ethnic Russian populations in eastern Ukraine, arguing the necessity of defending the rights and ensuring the security of local Russians (Fortuin, 2022). On the other hand, the Ukrainian government appeals to its legitimate power as the representative of the Ukrainian state and advocates for territorial sovereignty and integrity. In this struggle between states and different claims of legitimate power, reminiscent of the “struggle for recognition” mentioned earlier, forms of *Gewalt* have clearly emerged: the armed nature of the conflict and the devastating consequences for the civilian population in terms of human suffering and territorial destruction; violence and coercion through strategies of misinformation (Khaldarova & Pantti, 2016) that make the ongoing war an innovative model of “information warfare” (*ivi*, 1), wherein the digital realm plays a crucial role as a “technological force multiplier” (Kilkenny, 2021); the reflections of the conflict on international relations at the global

level and the shaping of a multipolar world geopolitical order in which the threat of nuclear recourse becomes an almost daily reality. “As it is known, ever since the first days of war, talks on the use of strategic nuclear weapons have dominated the international media environment” (Quarta, 2022, 344), contributing to the destabilization of the international order as it raised serious concerns regarding global security. This has led to pushes towards new alliances and forms of regional coalition: in response to the Russian threat, Ukraine has sought to strengthen its relations with the West, seeking political and military support from EU and NATO countries (“in recent years, the US have consistently armed and supported Ukraine in different ways”; Baccelli, 2022, 324). At the same time, Russia has attempted to consolidate its ties with other countries that share a similar political and strategic vision, such as Belarus and other members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). According to Ferrajoli, these divisions and alliances will have long-lasting effects on international relations and the global geopolitical framework, leading to cold wars that can trigger potential armed conflicts “*tra democrazie e autocrazie, tra Occidente ed Oriente, tra Paesi ricchi e paesi poveri*” (Profumi, 2022), “*tutto questo in un mondo sempre più armato, diviso e incattivito*” (*ibid.*).

Conclusion

Considering the analysis conducted, the concept of ‘power’ according to the dual aspect of *Macht/Gewalt* proposed in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* assumes crucial importance for a profound understanding of power dynamics both in the twentieth-century context and in the contemporary one. This analysis allows us to move beyond the post-Cold War rhetoric of the end of the era of conflicts and challenges philosophical views that solely focus on the horizontal dimension of power, neglecting its vertical dimension of conflict. In this contribution, the importance of examining the concept of power through the historical-conceptual approach of Koselleck has been highlighted, demonstrating how it can offer a richer and multilevel perspective on both ‘power’ and ‘conflict’.

The term ‘power’ itself is inherently complex and multifaceted, becoming an object of study, debate, and analysis since ancient times. In contemporary studies, the reflection on power requires an evolution that integrates every aspect of the theme, from theories of power as a form of social control to approaches more inherent to conflict theories, aiming to approach the phenomenon as pluralistic and phenomenological as possible. In this context, the distinction between *Macht* and *Gewalt* formulated by Faber, Ilting, and Meier proves to be extremely valuable.

In light of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, the analysis of the *Macht/Gewalt* dichotomy reveals the importance of considering both aspects of power to achieve a profound understanding of the contemporary reality. Despite the post-twentieth-century rhetoric of the end of the era of conflicts and philosophical views that tend to emphasize power in its horizontal dimension, the Russo-Ukrainian conflict clearly demonstrates that violence and armed confrontation persist as tools of dominance and struggle for power.

Furthermore, the critical analysis of power according to the *Macht/Gewalt* dichotomy underscores the interconnectedness between these two dimensions. In actual dynamics, legitimate and institutionalized power (*Macht*) can be supported or threatened by the possibility or effective use of its violent counterpart (*Gewalt*). This provides a conceptual basis for understanding the complex power and conflict relationships in contemporary reality. This critical approach challenges theoretical simplifications that reduce power to a singular dimension and suggests that a comprehensive analysis requires a careful exploration of both aspects of power.

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FACING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: THE NECESSITY TO DECONSTRUCT A MONSTRIFICATION

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ENFRENTARSE AL SIGLO XX: LA NECESIDAD DE DECONSTRUIR UNA MONSTRIFICACIÓN

The events of 1989 represented an important turning point in world politics and world history. The 1990s in fact experienced an increasing flow of studies that stemmed from this period in order to retrospectively analyze the previous hundred years. Many scholars produced a strong monstrification of the Twentieth century, in a debate that looks a lot like a sacrificing and purifying rite: to damn the 20th century in order to purify the humanity that survived it; to monsterify it in order to confine it into a past that can teach us just one lesson: never to return there again. These conceptions have two common features: the identification of totalitarianisms as the core and the evil of the Twentieth century and the comparison between Nazism and Communism. This comparison gained an institutional endorsement on 19 September 2019 with the European Parliament's approval of the controversial *Resolution 2019/2819*, entitled *Importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe* (see Magnani 2020, Focardi, 2020). To argue over this interpretation today seems inevitably conniving, if not also nostalgic and doomed to minoritarianism.

The end of the Second World War had entombed Nazism, so after 1989 many scholars and intellectuals rushed to entomb Communism under the ruins of the Berlin Wall, in the very name of the comparison with the former. The actors of this monstrification process were mainly anti-communist intellectuals and scholars, and one of the books that most influenced this decade was focused on the Communism's crimes in the Twentieth century: *The black book of communism: Crimes, terror, repression*, published in France in 1997 (Courtois, 1999). The comparison is already clear in the title, which is an obvious reference to *The black Book: the ruthless murder of Jews by German-Fascist invaders throughout the temporarily-occupied regions of the Soviet Union and in the death camps of Poland during the war of 1941-1945* by Vasily Grossman and Il'ja Grigor'evič Ėrenburg (Ehrenburg, Ėrenburg & Grossman, 1981). This book described and condemned the Jewish persecution by the Nazis in the Soviet territories occupied by the Third Reich in World War II.

Nowadays to talk about the returns of the Twentieth century means preliminarily questioning what the Twentieth century was: if we accept its monstrous image, any of its returns would in fact only be a bad omen. Nevertheless, to argue for the idea that the Twentieth century was traversed by multiple tragedies but is not reducible solely and exclusively to them is to claim a more complex approach to the legacy it has left us; a legacy which is in fact at the same time composed by its worrying returns (nationalism, war, identity regressions, economic crises, etc.) and its missed returns, that are worrying precisely because they are not happening (rise and claims of working class and subaltern groups, strengthening of democratic institutions, wealth redistribution processes, etc.).

The Twentieth century has been a fundamentally ambiguous century. Political philosophy cannot remove this perturbing character; it must go through it with no reluctance, even because of the historical distancing occurred in the meantime. The Twentieth century's monstrification was deeply rooted in the time it was produced: it arose in a decade that Joseph Stiglitz has called the "roaring nineties" (Stiglitz, 2003), in a political and cultural atmosphere characterized by an unconditional faith over the effects that the global spread of liberal democracy and capitalism would produce. Today the political and cultural atmosphere has profoundly changed, because that faith has revealed to be completely misleading: firstly, the integration within the capitalist system of new world areas has produced further uncertainties and the democratization processes have experienced failures or authoritarian regressions; moreover, in the Western world itself, democracies and capitalism, once described as the model to be universalized, are currently experiencing a deep crisis (see Crouch, 2020, 2004; Streeck, 2014). The monstrification of the Twentieth century was closely related to the faith aroused by the

collapse of the Soviet system; the latter has historically proved to be misleading, so it is a matter of urgency to deconstruct the former. This task must be carried out without nostalgia, but instead with the aim of better acknowledging the ambiguous, and thus not only tragic, legacy of the Twentieth century.

Topic and sources of discussion

In this paper, we will focus on a topic and three books that have strongly contributed to the monstrification of the idea of the Twentieth century. The topic is the new role that masses have gained in politics of the Twentieth century: in fact, it represents an undeniable theoretical and historical precondition to understand the Twentieth century, and its trivialisation or removal is the starting act of any process of monstrification. As we have already pointed out, shared by all Twentieth century monstrifications is the role attributed to totalitarianisms and the comparison between Nazism and communism, which is a highly controversial and debated issue (Kocka, Schiera & Wippermann, 1999). The choice to focus on the masses' breakthrough in the Twentieth century instead of on totalitarianisms is motivated by the aim of exploring what we consider to be the condition of possibility of Twentieth century politics, in which totalitarianism is certainly a tragic and relevant chapter, but not the only one.

We will examine this topic starting from the interpretation proposed in the books of two historians and a philosopher: *The Passing of an Illusion. The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century* by the French historian François Furet, published in 1995, *Reflections on a Ravaged Century* by the English historian Robert Conquest, published in 2000, and finally *Hope And Memory. Reflections on the Twentieth Century* published in 2000 by the Franco-Bulgarian philosopher Tzvetan Todorov¹. After tracing the perspectives of these three scholars, we will trace some alternative hermeneutic possibilities that are considered necessary for an interpretation of the Twentieth century free from any form of indulgence towards the evils that have permeated it, but also from any kind of monstrification.

¹ The year mentioned in this three-book presentation is that of the work's first edition; the books referred to in the references differ in year because they are either their English translation or a later edition.

The tale of three monstrification

Firstly, we need to explain the choice of these three books - two of which are written by historians - for a philosophical-political investigation of the Twentieth century. Studies concerning the Twentieth century as a whole examine a long and complex time period and therefore, even when conducted by historians, need to use an articulated conceptual framework and be characterized by a strong philosophical bearing. It is no coincidence that Conquest, a professional historian, defines his book in the preface as being “in a philosophical sense”, specifying that his one “is not [a] formal political philosophy” because it is the result not only of research but above all of “knowledge, judgement, thought and experience” (Conquest, 2000, xii). The three books are also based on a theoretical understanding of the Twentieth century. The title of Furet’s book is an explicit reference to Sigmund Freud’s *The Future of an Illusion* (Freud, 1961), dedicated by the father of psychoanalysis to the religious phenomenon, described as the expression of an illusion, i.e. of a desire, and not of a knowledge error; the story of the communist idea in the Twentieth century is interpreted by Furet in this light. Conquest, on the other hand, portrays the Twentieth century as the century in which the forces of dogma, as he refers to it, jeopardized the model of the open society; although it is never made explicit, the reference to Popperian theory expressed in *The Open Society and its Enemies* is evident (Popper, 2013). Finally, Todorov identifies a humanism based on Kantian universalism as the political and cultural tradition that was most attacked in the Twentieth century, but at the same time as the only one able to recognize the century’s evils and to resist them.

2.1. Into the world of political gangsterism

The Furet book we start from is not directly concerned with the Twentieth century but, as the subtitle states, with the “Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century”. However, for the French historian, analyzing the latter means at the same time analyzing the former, because the Soviet regime - which for Furet is the core of the twentieth-century communist story - “formed [...] the material reality and the horizon of the century” (Furet, 1995, 7)². Communism is described by the French historian as inseparable

² This quotation comes from the French edition of the book, and its translation has been done by the undersigned who takes on the full authorship. In the English edition, to which we refer in all the other quotations of this paper, this short sentence has been skipped. We quote the entire quotation from the French edition in the interests of exhaustiveness: “Le régime soviétique est sorti à la sauvette du théâtre de l’histoire, où il avait fait une entrée en fanfare. Il a tant constitué la matière et l’horizon du siècle que sa fin sans gloire, après une durée si brève, forme un surprenant- contraste avec l’éclat de son cours” (Furet, 1995, 7).

from a “basic illusion”, that “to conform to the necessary development of historical Reason” (Furet, 2000, ix).

The European Twentieth century begins according to Furet and the other two scholars with the First World War. Referring back to Ortega y Gasset’s *The Revolt of the Masses* (see Ortega y Gasset, 1994) the war is described by Furet as the event that “had tended to make people feel and act identically” (Furet, 2000, 31). That event resurrected the revolutionary passion and made it the pathway through which the masses broke into politics. Revolutionary passion arose with two “political mythologies that have filled the twentieth century” (Furet, 2000, 1): communism and fascism. From the historical perspective of the end of the century, Furet calls them “outmoded, absurd, deplorable, or criminal” ideologies, “very ephemeral, and very evil” (Furet, 2000, 23), “spawned by modern democracy and bent on destroying the hand that fed them”, “hodgepodge of dead ideas” (Furet, 2000, 4). This is why, Furet states, to elaborate their mourning “is precisely what we must do in order to understand the Twentieth century” (Furet, 2000, 2).

The story of communism and fascism unfolds according to Furet in “two long acts” (Furet, 2000, 166) with Lenin and Mussolini first, Stalin and Hitler later. The first act inaugurates the century and establishes the groundwork for the creation of totalitarian regimes, which will happen in the second one; but it is above all the one in which a new eruption of masses into public life happens. Furet highlights that Lenin and Mussolini were politically very similar before the war and that, although the war divided them, they adopted similar strategies to face it: both understood that “to fuse that multiplicity into shared emotions” was the “new secret of democratic politics”, in which “an emotional violence as well as an absence of scruples and an unprecedented brutality of means” (Furet, 2000, 169-170) break in. Both transfer “into the political order the power of numbers” (Furet, 2000, 163), they are the first “guides” of the post-war period, a land that will soon become the “world of political gangsterism” (Furet, 2000, 172). Although they differ in their contents, fascism and Bolshevism hold promises underpinned by “the same ambition and the same ill-being” (Furet, 2000, 175).

This exploration will arrive at its destination with the second act, which occurred a decade later with Hitler’s rise to power in Germany and Stalin’s consolidation of power in the USSR. They realized a historical ineditus: two totalitarian regimes. The relationship between Stalin and Hitler is defined by Furet as an “unvowed kinship” (Furet, 2000, 192). Through their actions, the ideologies acquire a historically unprecedented connotation that consists in the “uncannily narrow constraints they exercised upon the actions of those who professed or followed them” (Furet, 2000, 190). In Germany, the

nation is the only “public sentiment” that survived the war (Furet, 2000, 183). Hitler embraces this sentiment and understands “intuitively” that, especially in the age of the masses, “even the worst tyranny needs the consent of the tyrannized and, if possible, their enthusiasm” (Furet, 2000, 185-186). They both produced a divinization of politics, that is the core and the tragedy of the Twentieth century; they both proposed a vulgarized propaganda that was “the secret of their attraction” (Furet, 2000, 29). Communism and Nazism were two pathologies: pathology of the universal of the former and of the national of the latter. Born as pillars of hope, yet they only caused catastrophes.

2.2. Facing an archaic mass infantility

Robert Conquest describes the Twentieth century as the time where “humanity has been savaged and trampled by rogue ideologies” (Conquest, 2000, xi) that challenged the survival of civilization. The attack of these “mental aberrations” (Conquest, 2002, 3) was directed against the open society, born in England through the gradual aggregation of small communities, “the traditional basis of the nation, which was thus created from below rather than from above” (Conquest, 2002, 23).

Conquest calls this model a civic and consensual one, based on the importance of the balance between State and citizen, and the latter’s preference accorded to compromise rather than conflict. Indeed, a politically apathetic majority among the population – above all regarding the most dividing and controversial issues – is a “condition for a working democracy” (Conquest, 2002, 31), a factor that allows it to develop gradually. This political order is based on the idea that “the human being is both social and individual”, that this weak balance must be protected through an approach defined by the English historian as “the nonideology of moderation” (Conquest, 2002, 19). This is made possible as ideas are conceived as servants and not as masters of human beings.

Twentieth century fanaticisms have instead transformed politics into a “mania” (Conquest, 2002, 31). They were based on the “archaic idea that Utopia can be constructed on earth” (Conquest, 2002, 3), on the rejection of gradual change and the demand for radical change. Revolutionaries are described by the English historian as unfit to face “the complexity of reality” (Conquest, 2002, 3); they have “something infantile or childish” and seek in their support of “causes’ [...] an excuse for behaving badly” (Conquest, 2002, 7). The most extremist political conceptions based on ideas are compared by Conquest to a “real ailment”, an “ideitis”. Nevertheless, he states that even “a milder, but still potentially dangerous, form of the affliction” – an “ideosis” – can occur when critical thinking is lacking and ideas as absolute as simplistic spread (Conquest, 2002, 13).

The two “forces of ‘dogma’” (Conquest, 2002, xii) that “poisoned the minds of the twentieth century” (Conquest, 2002, 57) are identified by Conquest in communism and nationalism. Their main innovation compared to past despotisms lies in their “mass democratic facade”: both claimed “the individual’s allegiance” to the collective dimension. Using Leonard Schapiro’s words, Conquest in fact defines totalitarianism as a phenomenon that arose in “the emergence of mass society” (Conquest, 2002, 81-82). Conquest describes Marxism as “the most pervasive and most tenacious” antagonist of the civic order (Conquest, 2002, 34); it is characterized by an uncritical and fideistic anchorage to its doctrine, strengthened precisely by its relationship with the masses: “it was also a matter of becoming one with the masses – the proletariat – or with the movement itself”, leading to a “sort of renunciation of individuality” that occurred mainly in “weak personalit[ies] using others as support” (Conquest, 2002, 40). Fascism, on the other hand, originated in Italy with Mussolini who was the first in mobilizing masses into the name of nation and not of class. However, only with Nazism the nation was “defined by ethnic dogma” and “the healthy feeling of patriotism was distorted into a raging racialism transcending civilized morality”. In both totalitarianisms the “identification with the masses” was “a mental generalization”, but also and above all “a psychological mechanism” (Conquest, 2002, 63-64).

2.3. An antimodern opposition to the rising tide of individualism

While in Furet’s and Conquest’s books totalitarianism is described as a feature or a consequence characterizing the protagonists of the Twentieth century, in Tzvetan Todorov’s view totalitarianism is the main protagonist of the century: “an unprecedented political system”, a new “evil”, whose arrival represents “the central event” of the European Twentieth century (Todorov, 2003, 2).

Todorov’s interpretation of totalitarianism is marked by a strong culturalist bias: the adjective ‘totalitarian’ before qualifying political regimes in fact qualifies doctrines, and Todorov proposes a genealogy of them which are unrelated to the analysis of all political, economic and social change. Totalitarian doctrines are defined as “instances of utopianism”, which in turn is derived from Christian millenarianism (Todorov, 2003, 19). Utopianism – dissociating itself from theological concerns – “seeks to bring utopia to the real world” and to “install perfection in the here and now” (Todorov, 2003, 19). However, totalitarianism arises at the point in which Utopianism intersects with Scientism, a doctrine stating that “the real world” can be both known “entirely

and without residue by the human mind” (Todorov, 2003, 19-20) and modified through technology. Scientism – which is incompatible with tolerance as it is based on the idea that “errors are many, but the truth is one” (Todorov, 2003, 21) – is not the destiny of modernity, because other equally modern doctrines oppose it: especially the “humanists”, “the philosophers of democracy” (Todorov, 2003, 24). Scientism relies on the “universality of reason”, i.e. the idea that “solutions devised by science are by definition appropriate for all men”. Humanists, on the other hand, Todorov states, postulate the “universality of the human”, that is the idea that “all human beings have the same rights” (Todorov, 2003, 24) and that, with an explicit Kantian reference, “are not to be reduced to mere means” (Todorov, 2003, 26). The difference between democracy and totalitarianism is striking in Todorov’s view even in the way they relate to a core feature of the human condition: the importance of the search for meaning, of what Todorov calls the “human need for transcendence” (Todorov, 2003, 32). Totalitarianisms offer a communitarian “hope of plenitude, harmony and happiness” (Todorov, 2003, 18), while democracy, on the other hand, removes this need from the public sphere and allows it to bring “inner light to the lives of all” (Todorov, 2003, 32) in the private sphere.

The primacy that totalitarianisms assign to the “interests of the group above those of the person and social values above individual ones” (Todorov, 2003, 41) is classified by Todorov as an antimodern remain. The beginning of the 20th century is marked in Todorov’s view by the “rising tide of individualism”, which totalitarianisms are opposed to: in fact, they support the idea of an “organic community” (Todorov, 2003, 45) and are antithetical to the affirmation of the individual human being as the “ultimate aim of our action” (Todorov, 2003, 42). The massification of society is not a condition of possibility of totalitarianism, but a product of it. In particular, it is a product of communism which, in real life and beyond propaganda proclamations, “ended up producing ‘masses’ made by juxtaposed individuals, devoid of any positive public allegiance” (Todorov, 2003, 42).

This story of the “greatest evil” (Todorov, 2003, 3) of the Twentieth century that is totalitarianism is alternated in Todorov’s book by chapters dedicated to Vasilij Grossman, Margarete Buber-Neumann, David Rousset, Primo Levi, Romain Gary and Germaine Tillion: humanists who showed it was possible to travel through the Twentieth century, acknowledge its great evils and resist them. Therefore, the sole light in the Twentieth century darkness does not lie in a different way of conceiving and organizing masses, but in a few biographical stories.

2.4. The problematic focus of the Twentieth century's irruption of masses

Furet portrays the break-through of the masses into Twentieth century politics without unravelling an essential ambiguity: on the one hand he described this phenomenon as a watershed that marked the opening of a new political era; on the other hand, he described this process as immediately pathological. The break-through of the “power of number” into the political order and the transformation of this latter into the “world of political gangsterism” are at the same time described by the French historian using two contradictory frames: *i*) the break-through has an autonomous status, which is a precondition that only later (albeit quickly) becomes pathological; *ii*) these two phenomena are immediately overlapped, considered as synonymous.

This ambiguity is resolved by pathologizing the breakthrough of the masses in Conquest's book. Indeed, the English historian celebrates the strength of English democracy as the consummation of a gradual process, wherein masses were slowly integrated into a State under construction; in fact, he identifies the presence of an apathetic majority as a positive element for the development of a democratic political regime. In the Twentieth century, however, according to Conquest, politics took on collective and mass dimensions because it turned into a mania: a trend strengthened by the influence of ideologies, by their archaic and childish Utopianism. When this mania conquered power, it jeopardized the survival of civilization.

Todorov, on the other hand, completely dismisses the breakthrough of the masses in his analysis of the Twentieth century, which is in fact characterized in its beginnings by nothing more than the “rising tide of individualism”. The collective dimension is an antimodern and organicist by-product of totalitarianism. In fact, Todorov approaches the issue of the search for meaning and describes a democratic solution to it as confined to the purely private sphere. He disregards that in the Twentieth century the search for meaning always has both an individual and a collective dimension, private and public indissolubly tied together; that is, he disregards that the search for meaning is also a political question. According to the Franco-Bulgarian philosopher, if the search for meaning somehow comes into contact with the public and collective sphere it inevitably becomes totalitarian.

On the track of a different tale

The arrival of masses in the public sphere is a phenomenon simultaneous to modernity itself. This transformation can be observed from a variety of perspectives. In the introduction to that landmark work on modern social-political concepts represented by the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Reinhart Koselleck highlights how from the Eighteenth century onwards an extremely important process began: “the circle of those involved” in the use of the social-political terminology – up to then elitist and narrow – gradually “has expanded by leaps and bounds”, increasing “the number of the lower classes consciously entering the political linguistic sphere” (Koselleck, 1972, xvi). In the aftermath of the French Revolution, the debate about the extension of political rights involving Benjamin Constant, Alexis de Tocqueville, Jhon Stuart Mill and other authoritative minds of the time, is representative of the degree to which the eruption of the power of numbers into the political order had already taken place and was already being debated. This is why the Twentieth century cannot simply be defined as the age of the masses: without further qualification, this definition does not allow us to distinguish it from the Nineteenth century.

Therefore, where is the Twentieth century peculiarity with respect to the question of the masses? Giovanni Arrighi, Terence H. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein in *Anti-systemic movements* describe the Bolshevik revolution, the inaugural event of the Twentieth century, as the consummation of the lesson that the anti-systemic movements had learnt after the defeat of the 1984 *Springtime of the Peoples*, which had already been a mass event. That defeat had manifested the complexity of radically transforming the system through “spontaneous’ uprisings” that crashed against the States’ ability to “control the masses” and the powerful strata to “control the states”. Hence the anti-systemic movements, and the labour movement *in primis*, gained the awareness that the only road to radical transformation was that of “counterorganization - both politically and culturally”, of the formation of “bureaucratically organized anti-systemic movements with relatively clear middle-term objectives”, and of a clear political strategy, namely “that of seeking the intermediate goal of obtaining state power [...] as the indispensable way-station on the road to transforming society and the world” (Arrighi, Hopkins & Wallerstein, 1989, 98-99).

The Twentieth century is thus opened not with the breakthrough of the masses into public sphere, but with the radicality and efficiency of the challenge to the monopoly of the masses’ organization: new protagonists were now engaged in the masses’ organization, challenging the monopoly held by the bourgeois State and capitalism, forcing them to reform in order to respond to the challenge. This happened in the aftermath of

the burdensome task that the States had demanded to the masses in Europe through the most extreme effort to organize them: a war whose conclusion left a widespread memory of the exhausting nature of that effort. It was the beginning of a crisis concerning that monopoly and its legitimacy.

In a letter addressed to the poet and literary critic George Ivask in April 1934, the Russian poet Marina Cvetaeva defined the Twentieth century as the “century of the organized masses, which are no longer a natural element” (Cvetaeva, 2020)³. In the following lines, she proposed a differentiation between masses organized “from below” and masses organized in the sense of “regulated”, “ordered”, actually ordinary and lacking in organicity”, that is organized from above and conformist. Cvetaeva wrote this grave and pessimistic letter in the years of strengthening Stalinist power, which she had already collided with because of cultural and stylistic dissensions and biographical-political events. She would pay a very high price for this. Indeed, she perceives in the Twentieth century’s organized masses only hetero-direction and conformism, and that is the reason why she wrote “I hate my century”. In these lines, however, there is a priceless insight transcending the boundaries of the author’s single, tragic biography: masses of the Twentieth century lose all apparent naturality, on the one hand because there are so many conflicting actors engaged in organizing them; on the other hand, because this organization may take place either from above or from below.

The Twentieth century was a tragic century because it showed that these two options are not alternatives to each other. It showed that a process of organization from below can quickly turn into a process of organization from above, and that a path of emancipation can often produce new oligarchies. Roberto Michels, in his *Political Parties*, analyses the mass political party: he described this process not as a perturbing potentiality but as an inevitable destiny, decreed by an “iron law” (see Michels, 1958). Antonio Gramsci, on the other hand, was aware of the magnitude of the question of mass organization and its constitutive ambiguity⁴. His prison writings are precisely an effort to formulate a conceptual framework that allows the analysis of this change. The concept of hegemony theorizes the duality of power – which is both force and consent – and raises the question of political, social and economic organization and

³ This letter is published in the Italian book *Deserti luoghi: lettere 1925-1941*, edited by Serena Vitale. It is the result of research on archival documents of Cvetaeva’s production and of integrations to previous editions published in other languages. The quotations proposed in this paper are therefore translations from this Italian edition. The undersigned takes on the full authorship.

⁴ The interpretation of Gramscian thought proposed in the paper is based on the idea that the conceptualisation of the new mass dimension undertaken by politics is the key element of prison writings. It is formulated in Michele Filippini’s *Una politica di massa. Antonio Gramsci e la rivoluzione della società* (see Filippini, 2015), a comprehensive analysis of Gramscian thought which we refer to.

its legitimization in mass societies; the Modern Prince – the founder of States who can no longer be a single individual but an “organism”, a “complex element of society in which a collective will [...] begins to take concrete form” (Gramsci, 1971, 129) – is the theorization of the need for mass organization to transform the political order; at the same time the notes concerning the relationship between “leaders and led” within the mass political party and the risks that this could produce oligarchic tendencies through the bureaucratic centralism reveal Gramsci’s awareness of the ambiguity of all processes of mass organization (Gramsci, 1971, 144); this perspective also emerges in his focus on Fordism, in which Gramsci perceives a renewal of capitalism in the organization of the human masses within the production processes. On the one hand, this may transform man into a ‘trained gorilla’ and, on the other, activate new processes of working class subjectivation from below. In the *Notebooks*, extensive attention is paid also to intellectuals, not because of a romantic idea that is completely foreign to Gramsci’s thought, but because they exercise the “function of organising social hegemony and state domination” (Gramsci, 1971, 12-13). Gramsci captures first-hand in its fullness, contradictions and potentialities to the full extent of the transformation that opened the Twentieth century. In one of the writings in which Stuart Hall analysed Thatcherism using Gramscian concepts, he wrote: “one of the most important things that Gramsci has done for us is to give us a profoundly expanded conception of what politics itself is like, and thus also of power and authority”, a conception necessary to understand the Twentieth century. And indeed, this very aspect of prison writings, Hall wrote in the late 1980s, is “the point where Gramsci’s world meets ours” (Hall, 1988, 168), that is the point where Gramsci describes some milestones that will be ongoing throughout the Twentieth century.

The eruption of the organized masses and the struggle for their organization is thus a precondition of the entire Twentieth century politics. It was the precondition for totalitarianism as well, but it did not cease with totalitarianism. In fact, in the aftermath of the Second World War, in the Western European countries the question of the masses’ organization did not disappear with Nazi-fascism, but rather remained at the core of politics. Because of the recent memory of the masses’ tragic support for Nazi-fascism and of the organized demands of the labour movement and the parties that represented it, the organization of the masses acquired a shape able to combine freedom and equality, political participation and redistribution of wealth, new rights and consolidation of democratic institutions. That whole phenomenon was the greatest in disproving Michels’ prophecy, because it produced real emancipation; it combined organization of the masses from below and from above, without

ever allowing the latter to completely suppress the former. If we deny to the outbreak of the organized masses the status of an inaugural process of the Twentieth century, either by monstrifying it or by removing it, it is almost impossible to understand what happened in Western Europe after the Second World War. That experience cannot be replicated in the same shape today because it was the product of so many other political, geopolitical, geo-economic and social preconditions that are not present in the contemporary world; so, there is no point in thinking of it nostalgically. Nevertheless, it is a chapter that can hardly be classified as marginal in Twentieth century politics.

The organization of the masses happened during the Twentieth century in completely different shapes: the totalitarian integration within the State; the constitutional democracies that gain their legitimacy through the presence of mass political parties; the welfare systems that organize responses to human vulnerabilities; the extermination camps, in which organization is put out to serve a criminal project; the mass production that marked the beginning of the century and the organization of mass consumption that instead characterised its second half; the liberation movements that allowed peoples to free themselves from the colonial yoke and new forms of economic colonialism.

Even neoliberalism is no exception to this pattern. It has become hegemonic in Western countries since the 1980s, directing its polemical rants against a State defined as paternalistic and omnipresent in every aspect of organized social life. Nevertheless, it has as part of its theoretical basis in the overcoming of *laissez-faire*, according to the idea that the market order is not something that the masses adhere to spontaneously, but rather something that must be produced and organized (see Ferrara, 2021, 22-8).

Conclusion

The organization of the masses from above is a Twentieth century legacy that is still more alive than ever and it cannot return because it never left us. Even the spread of social media, which is accompanied by the rhetoric of disintermediation, has become a way through which algorithms, and those who own them, organize the user masses (see Di Chio, 2022). It is the attempts to organize masses from below, to challenge the monopoly of the neoliberal state, transnational organizations and of a profoundly renewed capitalism, which instead are either absent or terribly weak, unlike in the Twentieth century. Instead, what is absent or terribly weak, unlike what happened the Twentieth century, is something different: the attempts to organize masses from below, to challenge the monopoly of the neoliberal state, transnational organizations,

and of a profoundly renewed capitalism. The epilogue of the many Twentieth-century efforts to contest that monopoly, which either failed or experienced dramatic reversals, has made Michels' iron law of oligarchy even more ironclad in Western public consciousness. The integral monstrification of the Twentieth century is a huge burden on the way to the return of the Twentieth century's most progressive and emancipatory, but by no means a-problematic, legacy. Contributing to deconstructing it means contributing to the removal of the aforementioned burden.

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THE VOID AT THE CORE: REPOLITICISING THE CONCEPT OF INSTITUTION

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EL VACÍO EN EL NÚCLEO: REPOLITIZAR EL CONCEPTO DE INSTITUCIÓN

Introduction

Gilles Lipovetsky has defined the late-modern age, the age of emptiness, identifying in it the demise of a way of conceiving the world based on faith in the future and progress. Postmodern society means, in this sense, the contraction of social and individual time; the exhaustion of the modernist impulse towards the future, disenchantment and the monotony of emptiness (Lipovetsky, 1983). But does the emptiness of contemporary really represent (only) the monotonous rest of a loss? Is it just the disenchantment resulting from the disappearing of given certainties? Or can we somehow read this legacy of the modernity's last phase as a break free from nostalgia for a lost future? Perhaps

this re-emergence of emptiness is also the re-emergence of a repressed. Although perturbing, it may indicate the direction towards a new future, which will may be no longer certain, but precisely for this reason more authentic: an authentical a-going to be. After all, the very creative power of the modern was born from the relationship with the void offered by the fall of religious transcendence. From the dissolution of the classical, the baroque dimension of modernity, was called upon to find new forms and a new unity.

We might say that what characterizes modern experience is the repeated attempt to *mise-en-forme* of an emerging plurality, which resists its own reduction. Indeed, it is precisely the persistence of such attempts that makes this irreducibility evident. Rediscovered at the origins of the modern age, along the season of the Reform and the Counter-reform, the conflict within the social order appears to be the constant of this historical experience, which has been characterized by an ambivalent relationship with transcendence: on the one hand, the search for unity and certainty which were lost in the fall; on the other hand, the awareness that any rediscovered unity could only be the artifice of a society called upon to re-found its own institutions, to put its own conflict back in order; to come to terms with emptiness, precisely in the constant search for fullness.

Today we are dealing with a new loss of certainty. The theological-political wavers for the openness and decentralization offered by new geopolitics sets, cyberspace and extra-planetary dimensions. The violent reappearance of profoundly identity-driven – often conservative when not openly racist – xenophobic and homophobic instances is the fearful response to this openness, to the new emergence of the void, of the broken foundation of history (Brown, 2008). Since it is denied as much by the *reductio ad unum* of the State as by the apparent inclusiveness of neoliberal capitalism, the conflict is manifesting itself in violent clashes and immunizing communitarianism. Then, we have to come to terms with the original emptiness of modern thought, in order to make that constitutive conflict re-emerge. To come to terms again with the void that runs through the modern era and re-explodes in the contemporary implies to problematize the institution, questioning its forms to the point of bringing out its dynamic, problematic, productive dimension: in a word, its political dimension.

In order to do that, I propose a path that starts from the reading of the concept of institution offered by Santi Romano (1917), in order to make its descriptive core interact on the one hand (on a theoretical-legal level) with the later Hartian theory of ordering, and on the other (on a philosophical-political level) with the idea of democratic revolution as *aniconic* power, which Lefort (1972; 1986) develops from Machiavelli's dualism.

Insitution as a whole

As has been observed (Bobbio, 1965; Catania, 2008) the limit of Romano's theory is its excessive static nature. In pursuing an obsession with order, Romano seems to ignore the charge of tension that constitutively runs through the legal system, as well as the society it intends to regulate. Simplifying, we could say that if law is defined as a social *datum*, its definition is resolved in Romano in a double equation: law = institution = social organization. This double equation ends up resulting in the flattening of legal reality on effectiveness. Law would thus always and only be a presupposed order, a registration of the factual *datum*.

Nevertheless, the first part of this equation remains interesting (as, moreover, several voices suggest), provided, however, that we reconsider the second part, operating on it a sort of atomic split. In other words, if institution is a good way of defining the specific reality that is the law, both institution and law cannot simply be resolved in the datum of the social order, on pain of excluding a whole plane of reality.

As is well known, Romano starts from the identification between the legal system and the social order, in an attempt to overcome the conception of the system as a set of norms, and therefore the norm as the identifying and defining element of law: «La c.d. obiettività dell'ordinamento giuridico non può circoscriversi e limitarsi alle norme giuridiche [...] ». This is because it:

«parte sempre da un momento anteriore, logicamente e materialmente, alle norme, e [...] arriva a dei momenti che non si possono identificare e confondere con quelli della posizione delle norme stesse. Il ché equivale a dire che queste sono o possono essere una parte dell'ordinamento giuridico, ma sono ben lontane dall'esaurlirlo». (Romano, 1917, 22-23)

The same can be said of the sanction. According to the author, with perhaps a somewhat forced and paradoxical argument, if the sanction were the defining element of law, a *regressio ad infinitum* would occur on a theoretical level, since the legitimacy of any sanction would end up lying in the possibility of sanctioning its non-implementation by the entity obliged to do so.

Not only that. Romano points out how the sanctioning element could not be contained or formulated in a specific manner, and therefore not be contained in any rule, but be immanent and latent in the very gears, in the organic apparatus of the legal system

considered as a whole. It could be a force operating indirectly (Romano, 1917, 24). Thus, the existence of a set of valid norms would not precede but follow that of the legal system. The latter would be the presupposition of the norms, their container and framework. Therefore, it would not be resolved in them. There would be a formal element, which would precede the normative complex, containing it and using it as an instrumental complex: a 'system', of which the norms are no more than instruments, or 'pawns'.

What is this something that precedes, contains and utilizes the norm? Romano starts by identifying three elements that would characterise the legal phenomenon: 'the idea of society', 'the concept of social order', 'the organisation, which advances and surpasses the norms, setting them as its own instruments'. Therefore, what precedes, contains and utilises the norm is the social organisation itself, i.e., the institution considered as an entity, an objective legal order, which is objectively detectable by the observer's gaze. Indeed, for institution Romano means every entity or social body (Romano, 1917, 35).

Now, for a set of social elements to be considered an institution, it must have certain characteristics that make it something more than an ephemeral product of transient social relations. Let us follow the author's words here. Firstly, it must have an objective and concrete existence, and, as far as material, its individuality must be external and visible (Romano, 1917, 35).

Secondly, the institution is a social body or entity, since it is a manifestation of the social, not purely individual, nature of man (Romano, 1917, 36). What is interesting here is the expression 'social body'. This expression is by no means accidental: in perfect coherence with the author's subsequent path, it reveals the unitary and compact vision of the concept of institution, and therefore of law, envisioned by the author¹:

«l'istituzione è un ente chiuso, che può venire in considerazione in sé per sé, appunto perché ha una propria individualità, e infine l'istituzione è un'unità ferma e permanente, che cioè non perde la sua identità, almeno sempre e necessariamente, il mutarsi dei singoli suoi elementi e da ciò deriva la possibilità di considerarla come un corpo a se stante, di non identificarla con ciò che può essere necessario a darle vita, ma che, dando le dita, si amalgama in essa». (Romano, 1917, 37)

¹ It should also be noted how much for Romano the form exceeds on the logical-legal level the material elements of the institution. As he writes: «[...] ciò non vuol dire che sostrato dell'istruzione di base debbono essere sempre di solamente degli uomini fra di loro collegati questa colleganza da luogo ad una forma particolare di dell'istruzione: alcune di esse risultano infatti, fra gli altri loro elementi, da più individui, che possono così coesistere o anche succedersi l'uno all'altro, uniti dei loro interessi comuni o continui, oppure da uno scopo, da una missione che venga da loro perseguita» (Romano, 1917, 36).

It is evident how unity is a fundamental category in the way Romano conceives the institution, society and law, according to his double equation. This is confirmed on several occasions. For example, when the author challenges the idea of law as a legal relationship, at the time supported by authoritative authors such as Cesarini-Sforza (1929), Romano states very clearly that «l'istituzione è unità; il rapporto, giuridico o non giuridico, postula la pluralità» (Romano, 1917, 61). In short, in a relationship the interacting parties agree from different points of view, preserving their difference, their individuality; but as the author writes, individuality is not 'law'.

Extending the reasoning, it is possible to observe Romano's expulsion of conflict from the very idea of law as an institution: since a legal relationship is not resolved in the stable union of its parts (the elements of the substratum) into an organic whole, those parts retain a division, and thus a conflict. That means that they remain parts, and as such divided.

Moreover, thinking the institution in this way, Romano seems to re-propose some features of the States schema of which he wants to get rid of. This re-proposition occurs both on the theoretical level – as a descriptive definition of the concept of law – and on the political level – as an ideological project.

On a theoretical level: if institution is the datum of social organisation, order cannot but appear as a presupposition, as a given. The institution is in itself a concrete fact, recordable as a unity of non-conflicting elements, i.e. undivided. Conflict is ignored, it is not part of the definition. So much so that even a revolutionary organisation is seen in the net of the effervescence, clashes and divergent visions that it bears. Already assimilated to a *pacified* unity, it is opposed in its entirety and from the outside to the predominant unity of the state, with the intention of replacing it entirely (Romano, 1947).

This irenic and unitary approach to the legal system does not fail even in the light of the second part of *The Legal System*, the part devoted to pluralism. In fact, while it is true that different institutions can coexist within the same social context, in various ways and with varying degrees of cooperation and even conflict, each of them remains within itself an already implicitly pacified entity. Conflict, change, social dynamism, disagreement, change, remain outside. Conflict always occurs, at most, between institutions, never in institutions.

On the ideological level: to clarify this point it is appropriate to go back to 1909, that is to the famous Pisan prolusion, *Lo Stato moderno e la sua crisi*. After registering the fatigue of state unity in the face of the proliferation of new intermediate bodies, Romano

suggests the need to recognise them as legal orders, inaugurating the investigation that would lead him to his best-known work. But in doing so, he declares that this recognition is necessary precisely in order to bring those instances, those organisations, back into the more complex and reassuring framework of the state. If on the one hand today's state organisation proves insufficient, by virtue of the need for new organisations, complementary to it but not contrary to it (Romano, 1910), on the other:

«un principio sembra a noi che risulti sempre più esigente e indispensabile: il principio, cioè, di un'organizzazione superiore che unisca, contemperi e armonizzi le organizzazioni minori in cui la prima va specificandosi [...] maggiori saranno i contrasti che dalla specificazione delle forze sociali e dalla loro cresciuta e organizzata potenza deriveranno, più indispensabile apparirà l'affermazione del principio, che il potere pubblico non potrà considerarsi che come indivisibile nella sua spettanza [...]». (Romano, 1910, 38)

The real entity in which this principle will be increasingly affirmed, according to the author, can only be the state, the true personification of that broad and integral collectivity, which a momentary crisis may show in eclipse, but which is destined to acquire ever greater coherence and consistency. Therefore, not only conflict outside the institutions, but possibly not even between institutions, reconciled in the common membership of an organisation, a juridical order, greater and more solid that is the State “stupendous creation of law” (Romano, 1910, 16).

The duality of the norm

Re-reading Santi Romano, Norberto Bobbio suggests a path that it is perhaps worthwhile to attempt today:

«[...] teoria dell'ordinamento e teoria della norma non erano affatto in contrasto fra loro: anzi, solo attraverso un recupero e un approfondimento della teoria normativa, cioè attraverso il riconoscimento dell'importanza delle norme di organizzazione accanto a quelle di condotta, o per usare l'espressione hartiana, delle norme secondarie accanto e oltre le norme primarie, si sarebbe risolta la maggior difficoltà della dottrina istituzionale, derivante dal fatto che il concetto

di diritto era stato definito risolvendolo nel concetto di organizzazione, ma il concetto di organizzazione non era stato ultimamente chiarito. Il concetto di organizzazione era rimasto non chiarito, perché l'unico modo di fare un passo avanti nella sua determinazione era di ricorrere alle norme di secondo grado, cioè a quelle norme che regolano il riconoscimento, la modificazione, la conservazione delle norme di primo grado, e che fanno di un insieme di rapporti intrecciantisi fra individui conviventi un tutto ordinato, appunto un ordinamento, o un sistema, se pure non nel senso di un sistema logico o etico ma nel senso kelseniano del sistema dinamico, mentre era chiaro che le norme che aveva in mente Romano quando respingeva la teoria normativa erano le norme primarie». (Bobbio, 2007, 145-146)

In short, what is missing in Romano's theory is a dynamic dimension, tensive we might say with Alfonso Catania (2007). That is, what the institutionalist equation of The Legal System fails to restore is the constant duality that runs through the life and concept of both law and institution, the relationship between the ontic and deontic planes, between being and having to be, in which social facts are never automatic occurrences, but are supported by a decisional, and therefore polemical, instance, in which factual behaviour is always in relation to the reasons for action. Thus, every real equilibrium, every observable order, is not a pure given but always, at least in part, a problematic, conflictual, political one.

Bobbio seems to suggest that this is caused by a lack of depth in the analysis of the concept of organisation: *the concept of law had been defined by resolving it in the concept of organisation, but the concept of organisation had not been clarified.*

We might perhaps add that this occurs on the basis of a misunderstanding, or at least an oversimplification that involves the main concept of Roman theory: the institution. What I mean is that the concept of institution is a good synonym for law precisely because, just like the legal phenomenon, it does not presuppose order but constitutively contains an ambivalent, even amphibological, dimension.

As Esposito states, institution has a constitutive relationship with the category of 'negation' (Esposito, 2021, 67). In short, institution is an intrinsically and profoundly ambivalent category, and not a unitary one. In some respects, it would have a double bipolarity. The first one lays in the relationship between the noun and verbal form, between *institutio* and *instituere*. The second one derives from the double 'contradictory tonality' that runs through both forms: the first tonality is that of an act of foundation

or establishment of something new that did not exist and which therefore refers back to something that changes. The second tonality refers to a static element, i.e., to an instance of preservation:

«[...] contemporaneamente, la novità istituita, più che un divenire, è uno Stato, un'entità destinata a stare, resistendo alla dissoluzione. In questo senso, paradossalmente, quello istituyente è un movimento che tende a negarsi, vale a dire a creare immobilità». (Esposito, 2021, 68)

In other words, the institution is a dual concept, it refers to a double movement rather than a unity. It is characterised by an internal tension rather than a datitude. Roman institutionalism, despite its happy pluralist precipitate, risks obscuring this tension, due to its realist temptation. Indeed, it is precisely a matter of going beyond the 'real' datum, beyond the 'fact' of organisation, to explore the institution in its making. Indeed, pluralism itself - as a recognition of plurality - raises some questions. In agreement with Deleuze, we could define an institution as an indirect way of satisfying a tendency, through means that do not depend on it. And thus, as an organizational form that finds in functional utility only the smallest part of its explanation. So, Deleuze suggests, it is not enough to say that the institution is useful; we must also ask to whom is it useful?

«A tous ceux qui ont le besoin? Ou bien à quelques-uns (classe privilégiée), ou seulement même à ceux qui font marcher l'institution (bureaucratie)? Le problème sociologique le plus profond consiste donc à chercher quelle est cette autre instance dont dépendent directement les formes sociales de la satisfaction des tendances» (Deleuze, 1953, IX).

To address this question, following the suggestion offered by Bobbio in juxtaposing Romano and Hart seems particularly useful. Indeed, such juxtaposition traces a line that moves from the 'one' towards the 'two'. Rather than the completeness of an already established society, it looks at the dynamic incompleteness of a legal system always to be made, to be recognised. And therefore, to be questioned, problematized, redefined.

That The Concept of Law has a constitutive duality as its pivot seems almost obvious. In introducing a second level of rules, Hart also brings out a second element in the definition of law, which at this point no longer coincides solely with sanction, coercion and

obligation, but is enriched by the dynamic dimension of power. These secondary rules are in fact defined by Hart himself as *power conferring* norms: the dimension of prohibition and obligation is now placed side by side with the dimension of *agency* and *power*. This move allows Hart to introduce one of the most important and most complex - and therefore also most slippery - concepts of his theory: the distinction between external and internal point of view:

«Most of the obscurities and distortions surrounding legal and political concepts arise from the fact that these essentially involve reference to what we have called the internal point of view: the view of those who do not merely record and predict behaviour conforming to rules, but *use* the rules as standards for the appraisal of their own and others' behaviour. This requires more detailed attention in the analysis of legal and political concepts than it has usually received». (Hart, 1961, 98)

Therefore, Hart calls for more attention to be paid to the link between political and legal concepts. Law is to be read as a union of primary and secondary rules, as an instrument with which different actors can behave on the basis of their own positions, needs, visions and interests. The secondary rules can be seen as the lens through which the author is able to detect change in law, its constantly tensive dimension.

Thus, the limit of what we have called Romano's institutionalist equation consists in the absence of an adequate consideration of the element of power, which is clear in Hartian normativism. Harts entrusts to the concept of secondary rules the task of explaining legal action; i.e., we might say, the *instituting agency*.

Among other things, this absence leads Romano towards the solution of the origin of the established order in a purely negative key, i.e., to the concept of *ius involontarium*. If this concept valorizes the immanent emergence of the social order from its very factuality, it immediately makes the conflictual charge of immanence disappear, eliminating the voluntarist element at the root.

By denying the will, immanence is immediately transformed into a datum. This datitude of the established order precludes from the solipsistic gaze of the privileged observer the conflictual problematic that works within the institution, constantly producing it and calling it into question, sacrificing and recovering those positions, needs, visions, interests and necessities that instead agitate in the syncretism between Hartian internal and external points of view and in the presence of secondary rules (Catania, 2022).

The empty place of power

On a political level, such elision risks precipitating into what Lefort, borrowing the expression from Merleau-Ponty, calls the *surplomb* gaze: a solipsistic detachment of the observer who claims to embrace the pressing unfolding of history at a glance and from a privileged position (Malinconico, 2020, 49).

Taking up Hart's invitation to pay attention to legal-political concepts, it is perhaps in the direction indicated by Lefort that we can maybe take a further step, in order to unhinge the limit of the legal form as an a-problematic datum, derived from the ontological presupposition of the social order. Perhaps, depoliticizing the concept of institution and, by extension, explaining the dynamism inherent in legal forms, implies to consider the inner duality of the social, the original split that runs through any form of associated life. This entails, however, renouncing any full foundation of transcendence, and turning to cleavage and conflict, in order to find an eternally rethinkable foundation, lacking both the guarantees and the constraints of a metaphysically grounded necessitating vision².

In his attempt to identify the great historical change represented by the democratic revolution, Lefort ends up finding precisely in duality the key to the political. For Lefort, the political is a generating movement, the principle that determines society's representation of itself. However, the latter remains a *quasi-representation*, precisely for the impossibility, on the part of the subjects involved, of reaching that point of *surplomb* that would make it fully intelligible. Thus, in the Lefortian lexicon, the politician establishes society through a process of *mise-en-forme*, *mise-en-sens* and *mise-en-scène* that has its revolutionary turning point in the birth of democracy.

This is why Lefort sees modern democracy as the only regime capable of expressing the gap between the symbolic and the real, thanks to the notion of a power that no one can seize. In fact, the virtue of democracy consists in bringing society back to the test of its institution, for where an empty place looms, there is no possi-

² Since the mid-20th century, the post-foundationalist hypothesis has found precisely in the absence of ultimate ground the interpretive key to a political thought called upon to confront an increasingly widespread pluralism of values, visions and imaginaries. It is important to remember that post-foundationalism is not synonymous with anti-foundationalism, and that the absence of ultimate ground does not imply the absence of any ground. As Marchart summarizes: «The problem is therefore posed not in terms of no foundations (the logic of all-or-nothing), but in terms of contingent foundations. Hence, post-foundationalism does not stop after having assumed the absence of a final ground and so it does not turn into anti-foundationalist nihilism, existentialism or pluralism, all of which would assume the absence of any ground and would result in complete meaninglessness, absolute freedom or total autonomy. Nor does it turn into a sort of post-modern pluralism for which all meta-narratives have equally melted into air, for what is still accepted by post-foundationalism is the necessity for some grounds». (Marchart, 2007, 14).

ble connection between power, law and knowledge, nor is there any possible enunciation of their foundation. The being of the social is subtracted, or rather given in the form of the endless search, and the ultimate criteria of certainty are dissolved. (Lefort, 1981).

It is from his seminal reading of Machiavelli³ that Lefort finds this original social cleavage. As he writes in *Le travail de l'œuvre Machiavel*:

«C'est bien d'une opposition constitutive du politique qu'il faut parler, et irréductible à première vue, non d'une distinction de fait, car ce qui le Grands sont les Grands et que le peuple est le peuple ce n'est pas qu'ils aient par leur fortune, par leur *mœurs*, ou leur fonction un statut distinct associé à des intérêts spécifiques et divergents; c'est Machiavel le dit sans ambages, quel es uns désirent commander et opprimer et les autres ne l'être pas». (Lefort, 1972, 382)

The most obvious reference here is to the well-known Chapter IX of *The Prince*, at the beginning of which Machiavelli introduces the so-called theory of humours. According to the Florentine:

«El principato è causato o dal popolo o da grandi secondo che l'uno o l'altra di queste parte ne ha l'occasione: perché, vedendo e grandi non potere resistere al popolo, cominciano a voltare la reputazione a uno di loro e faannolo principe per potere sotto la sua ombra sfogare il loro appetito; il popolo ancora, vedendo non potere resistere a' grandi, voltare la reputazione a uno e fa lo principe per essere con la sua autorità difeso». (Machiavelli, 1971a, 271)

Machiavelli proposes a radical opposition between different and irreducible desires (we might say instances), which are eternally present within the 'city'. On the one hand the desire for domination, on the other one the desire for freedom; on the one hand the limitless affirmation of the dominant, on the other one the pure negative (the demand not to be oppressed) of the people. Far from disintegrating society, as in identity theories, such a fracture is what grounds the coexistence. A coexistence that therefore cannot be definitively pacified, but only controlled by a prince, who does not coincide

³ Machiavelli's almost obsessive focus on duality resurfaces on every page, starting with the Florentine's style. So much so that Asor Rosa has proposed to call Machiavelli's «dilemmatic logic» (Asor Rosa, 2019): a way of proceeding hinged on the sharp contraposition between two elements that never find synthesis, but require a choice for the continuation of the treatment.

with the 'sovereign', since he is never absolute, never freed from confrontation with the needs of that society he must direct.

Machiavelli returns to the subject in the fifth chapter of the first book of the *Discorsi*, in which he questions where the 'guard of freedom' is more surely placed, either in the 'people' or in the 'great ones' (Machiavelli, 1971b, 87). Lefort sees in these pages a confrontation between the 'liberal democratic thesis' and the 'conservative aristocratic thesis'. The lust for conservation traditionally attributed to the great ones is but a fiction. Since no desire can be fully satisfied, the thirst for power and possessions of the great must be considered insatiable. It is precisely because of this irrepressible desire to dominate that the great cannot be fit to constitute a good guardian of the liberty of a republic⁴.

The laws that shape the republic must therefore take into account the agitation of these two opposing moods:

E però non è cosa che faccia tanto stabile e ferma una republica, quanto ordinare quella in modo che l'alterazione di quegli omori che l'agitano, abbia una via da sfogarsi ordinata dalle leggi». (Machiavelli, 1971b, 87)

The very stability of the republican order derives from the institutional assumption of the original conflict that agitates coexistence. It follows that conflictuality cannot be expelled in the moment of a founding agreement, but must be envisaged as permanent and formalized in a normative-institutional set-up that governs the parties of citizens.

Although in many passages of Machiavelli's work, the figure of the prince seems to stand alone in the task of ordering the republic, the duality of the original conflict runs through it unceasingly. Machiavelli's prince is a set of opposing yet co-existing elements. He must be fox and lion, and before that man and beast, for there are two ways to fight: with laws and with violence. Above all, the prince must rely on two

⁴ Machiavelli's preference for an alliance of the prince with the people is on the other hand clear right from the pages of *The Prince*. Immediately after having established the original division between the great and the people, the author continues: «Colui che viene al principato con lo aiuto de' grandi si mantiene con più difficoltà che quello che diventa con lo aiuto del popolo, perché si trova principe con di molti intorno che gli paiono essere sua equali, e per questo non gli può né comandare né maneggiare a suo modo. Ma colui che arriva al principato con il favore popolare vi si trova solo e ha dintorno o nessuno o pochissimi che non sieno parati a ubbidire. Oltre a questo, non si può con onestà soddisfare a' grandi e senza iniuria di altri, ma si bene al popolo: perché quello del popolo è più onesto fine che quello de' grandi volendo questi opprimere e quello non essere oppresso. Praeterea, del popolo inimico uno principe non si può mai assicurare per essere troppi; de' grandi si può assicurare per essere pochi. El peggio che possa aspettare uno principe dal popolo inimico è lo essere abbaondato da lui; ma da' grandi inimici non solo debbe temere di essere abbandonato, ma etiam che loro li venghino contro; perché sendo in quelli più vedere e più astuzia, avanzano sempre tempo per salvarsi e cercano gradi con quello che sperano che vinca. È necessitato ancora el principe vivere sempre con quello medesimo popolo, ma può bene fare senza quelli medesimi grandi, potendo farne e disfarne ogni di, e torre e dare a sua posta reputazione loro» (Machiavelli, 1971, 271).

distinct and opposing elements: his own virtue, the knowledge of the things of history and discernment, and fortune, chance, the historical and immanent changing of events. Neither all virtue nor all luck therefore, the prince is called upon rather to exercise 'a fortunate cunning'.

It is no coincidence that Machiaveli evokes the figure of the centaur: a hybrid being, who combines animality and humanity, violence and control, Machiavelli's centaur is the prince's master because it is from him that those who order the republic must learn to tame the unstable coexistence of the two souls, of the two humours⁵. The centaur becomes the representation of an order that, in order to last, must take charge of its own internal conflict, using both aspects of its dual nature to tame a reality that is reluctant to any stability. The prince then must have for a tutor someone who is half beast and half man, for he must know how to use both natures, since one without the other is not durable (Machiavelli, 1971a, 18).

This hybridisation refers in turn to an absence: that of a human nature that can guarantee a minimal truth on which to build a peaceful order, albeit through rational artifice⁶. Precisely with regard to the role that the theory of humours plays in Machiavelli, Lefort highlights the fact that Machiavelli does not rely on any anthropological assumptions about human nature:

«Even if this were the case, the positive 'content' of these assumptions would not affect the argument as to the original division, since the latter is construed in merely 'negative' fashion: Lefort observes that the nature of the two humours, and, as a consequence, of the two classes is entirely relational. Their very existence

5 Obviously, the duality of this image stands out even more when compared with that of another mythical beast, used as a political metaphor. Of course, we are speaking about Hobbes' Leviathan. As Galli has pointed out, handing us a true baroque fresco: «Il centauro differisce dal leviatano perché li separa l'Idra furiosa delle guerre civili di religione di religione, che hanno divampato in Europa per quasi un secolo e mezzo, la malinconia della crisi dell'umanesimo, la scoperta del nuovo mondo in America, e la nuova energia ribelle del soggetto protestante» (Galli, 2011, IX).

The importance of the figure of the Centaur in Machiavelli is also highlighted by Roberto Esposito. In the duplicity of this figure, he sees the symbol of the split the forms of modern subjectivity have desperately tried to unify, but they inevitably hid: «Il doppio dà l'immagine della soggettività moderna come forma e come scissione e insieme come prevalere della scissione sulla forma. Niente lo materializza meglio del concetto-simbolo del Centauro, nella raffigurazione mitico-anthropomorfica che ne offre Machiavelli. In esso tutti i contrari – il loro conflitto e la loro complementarità – di cui il testo è carico, riempito, 'formato', si condensano in un emblema di eccezionale forza esplicativa. Diviso, spezzato, tra uomo e bestia, legge e forza, ordine e potenza, il soggetto, per poter 'consistere', per rimandare, differire, negare la necessità della propria finitezza, deve 'finire' come intero, morire in quanto soggetto uomo, incorporare la propria differenza, il proprio altro, la propria in/umanità» (Esposito, 1984, 34).

6 The reference to a universal anthropology is precisely what Hobbes will use more than a century later to argue for his own rational laws of nature, and with them the need for the molar entity of the Leviathan-State (Hobbes, 1651).

is based on their confrontation. Resolve this original confrontation and, together with society, the identity of the two classes will disappear, since they exist only by virtue of their mutual confrontation». (Marchart, 2007, 100)

If even human nature cannot guarantee institutional construction, the only hope for (relative) order remains the ability to take on that same original negative: to include that duality at the very core of the social order. Freedom and domination, law and power, form and *dynamis*, law and politics, form a series of inseparable dyads that revolve around a place of power that remains empty.

Then, for Lefort the political is the 'photographing'. That is to say, political is the process of in-forming the conflict. But this shaping can only occur by virtue of the existence of a 'photographer', namely power, that 'other place' that acts as a symbolic mediator of the conflict. (Malinconico, 2020, 292).

Yet, the *mise-en-scène* and the *mise-en-forme* of power obscure that original conflict from which the image of its own order emerges, showing the phantom of a social body united to its leader, perfectly whole and undivided: a social body which is identical to itself. The phantom of identity secured until the disappearance of the *ancient regime* by the transcendent foundation of religious matrix, according to Lefort is given in modernity by ideologies. It is ideology, as the *mise-en-scène* of power, that in-forms conflict according to a given image. It follows that what distinguishes democracy from other forms of ideology (including totalitarianism) «is the fact that democracy does not occults general condition of the absence of a positive ground, but it institutionally recognizes and discursively actualizes it» (Marchart, 2007, 107).

This is indeed a relevant difference, which introduces into the core of the *mise-en-scène* of power the perturbing novelty of democratic *incertitude*: the subsistence of power as an *aniconic absence*, and the consequent establishment of a permanent conflict.

In other words, what Lefort sees in democracy is an *aniconic* power, in which the ordering role of the symbolic is not overcome, but can only act through its ontological indeterminacy. The throne remains at the core of representation, but as a void, as an empty place. It is this very emptiness that constantly founds coexistence, through the political. Eternally re-appropriable and disputable, the symbolic order of institutions represents itself without hiding the empty and conflicting background from which it emerges. By revealing itself as originally conflictual, the democratic *mise-en-scène* opens itself up to the possibilities of the instituting. Bound to law by the Roman

equation to, but split from within between being and doing, between ontic and de-ontic, between its luminous and its obscure side, the institution also brings out the tension of the law that is glimpsed in the syncretic vision of *internal* and *external point of view* (Catania, 2008), unmasking its inescapable political background.

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RESEÑA

Il diritto come metodo e la scienza algoritmica.

Una critica a partire da bobbio e scarpelli.

By Angela Condello, ETS, Pisa, 2022

LA CIENCIA ALGORÍTMICA A PRUEBA DE LA TEORÍA GENERAL DEL DERECHO

Dante Valitutti

Università degli Studi di Salerno

El libro aquí comentado (Condello, 2022) sitúa en el centro de su discurso una cuestión de absoluta relevancia en el presente que vivimos: ¿la revolución tecnológica impulsada por el uso preponderante de algoritmos en las prácticas jurídicas (Carleo 2019) cuestiona radicalmente (o no) el derecho entendido como método? Una pregunta que no debería parecer peregrina (o abusada por ser ‘frecuentada’ por tantos) precisamente porque el autor del libro comentado nos invita a mirar el Derecho exactamente como un método: en definitiva, la tesis del volumen es que el Derecho o es un método o no lo es. Pues bien, es precisamente en esta ecuación absoluta (Derecho=método), en su radicalidad, donde ‘revive’ una parte importante de la tradición histórico-jurídica italiana. Un mérito indudable – uno de tantos – de las páginas que reseñamos, por tanto, es precisamente el de haber revivido, en la discusión actual, esa tradición. ¿De qué estamos hablando? De esa particular línea de pensamiento de la teoría general del derecho italiano que pertenece a autores como Bobbio, Scarpelli y Carnelutti. En particular, los dos primeros son vistos como referencias respecto al análisis realizado: en otras palabras, tanto Bobbio (1950) como Scarpelli (1955), en su matriz justeórica, que es la de la filosofía jurídica analítica y la teoría general del derecho de orientación positivista, son tomados como piedras de toque para poner de relieve toda la diferencia que se produce entre una ciencia del derecho fundada en algoritmos y otra, en cambio, firmemente anclada en su canon tradicional (positivista y analítico). Por un lado, por tanto, tenemos una tesis determinada, la pronunciada al

principio, a saber, que la revolución tecnológica del presente, marcada por el uso masivo de algoritmos, cuestiona radicalmente precisamente el método tradicional del derecho; por otro, la idea de que es precisamente la ciencia algorítmica la que, basándose en los datos como fundamento de su funcionamiento, cuestiona radicalmente aquellas especificidades del lenguaje normativo puestas de relieve por aquella tradición de pensamiento – Scarpelli y Bobbio – mencionada en primer lugar. Así, tal y como se afirma (Condello, 2022, 25), si la transición digital, tal y como se plantea a sí misma, conduce a un cambio inevitable en la forma de ver el Derecho, el autor se afana en subrayar cómo el propio Derecho se encuentra, debido a su determinada ontología (y epistemología), estrechamente ligado a una retahíla de conceptos que resultan en su mayoría ineludibles para su propia comprensión. En resumen, a pesar de la presión constante de la tecnología, no puede haber derecho, como se ha dicho, sin que nos sea dado a través de un método determinado y este método, observamos, rechaza la calculabilidad abstractora de la tecnología (algorítmica). Haciendo referencia a esto y entrando directamente en la estructura del volumen, en la primera parte del mismo (Condello, 2022, 26) el discurso se desarrolla a través de la articulación de una serie de conceptos considerados como los arquitrabes del razonamiento jurídico: en este sentido encontramos los términos de *ius*, *lex* y *directum* considerados como los «principales campos semánticos de lo jurídico». De ahí que el propio Derecho sea considerado precisamente como una interconexión entre estos términos. Parece evidente, pues, la referencia en este último caso a la tradición especulativa de la teoría general del derecho con una orientación analítica. Pero sigamos con la cuestión del método. En las páginas de este volumen se explica claramente cómo el método es un camino orientado a un fin: en esencia, el método (del derecho) se toma como una etapa transitoria ineludible para llegar a alguna forma de autenticación de la verdad en el campo jurídico. Si, pues, como se afirma, los algoritmos desplazan la acción directora (que afecta a los objetivos generales de un sistema jurídico) del hombre al ordenador, siempre es bueno recordar que el Derecho es, y sigue siendo, ante todo, «la ciencia del hombre para el hombre». No es casualidad, por tanto, que al referirse al Derecho (y a su método), sean precisamente los autores de referencia del libro, los citados Bobbio y Scarpelli, quienes hablen de una «ciencia del hombre para el hombre». Con ambos, pues, se intenta poner de relieve lo que parece ser la sustancia ontológica (y epistemológica) de la ciencia jurídica: una ciencia en la que existe una constante negociación sobre el significado de los términos; para abreviar, la ciencia del derecho se ve íntimamente ligada a la interpretación y, por ello, se muestra como

una ciencia no monológica (como parece ser la ciencia algorítmica) sino dialógica. Por tanto, no es la 'deducción' sino la 'argumentación' el canon metodológico determinado que hace, si se quiere, de la ciencia del derecho un *unicum* en el campo de las ciencias (humanas y naturales). Pero hay más: asumir el carácter dialógico/argumentativo de la ciencia jurídica como su canon fundamental 'no es suficiente' para la autora, subraya, de hecho, en la estela de Scarpelli, que la ciencia del derecho también puede ser vista, específicamente, como una política del derecho. En otras palabras, si la ciencia jurídica participa cada vez en la constitución de su objeto, tendrá siempre un carácter performativo (y por tanto político, de orientación hacia los fines generales del sistema) y es precisamente en esta dirección en la que puede enmarcarse como una «ciencia del lenguaje que dirige la acción humana». Ciencia política, ciencia dialógica, ciencia antropológica: en los adjetivos que acabamos de enumerar encontramos, por tanto, el sentido de un discurso (sobre la ciencia jurídica y su método) que recorre todo el volumen. Podemos decir, por tanto, que este discurso conoce un punto fijo definido: decir que la ciencia jurídica es una ciencia dialógica fundada en la argumentación de quienes participan en ella (como estudiosos o, mejor, como intérpretes) significa también, de hecho, ilustrar al lector sobre el riesgo de que su obliteración, es decir, una negación de los valores intrínsecos del estatuto de la ciencia del derecho (entendida como ciencia dialógica) determine de hecho una negación del derecho mismo. En definitiva, parece claro que la insistencia en el papel del método en la configuración de una ciencia (jurídica) autónoma, tal y como se expresa en el volumen, equivale también a poner de relieve el riesgo que entraña el uso de algoritmos, a saber, el de una neutralización del lenguaje jurídico tal y como se conoce hasta ahora. Por lo tanto, si el derecho equivale a su método y si, por esta misma razón, no hay posibilidad de un derecho sin que exista la posibilidad de un método intrínsecamente ligado a él, parece más que justo que el autor nos advierta de que cualquier intento de privar al derecho del papel del método equivale a un fuerte cuestionamiento del propio derecho. En definitiva, no hay derecho si no hay método, y éste se basa ineludiblemente en un modelo discursivo. Esta consideración se consolida en el análisis en el paso de la primera a la segunda (Condello, 2022, 89 y ss.) hasta la tercera parte (Condello, 2022, 231 y ss.) que concluye el volumen, dedicada, respectivamente, la segunda a una relectura de los autores considerados como deidades tutelares de la obra, a saber, los citados Bobbio y Scarpelli, la tercera a una valoración casuístico-jurisprudencial que refuerza las promesas de la obra, a saber, la consideración de la sentencia como una sucesión de actos lingüísticos y el dato de la naturaleza dialógica

de la ciencia del derecho. Con esto en mente, permítaseme, para concluir, subrayar una vez más el valor de este volumen, que sabe situarse con autoridad en el campo de la medio-jurisprudencia, es decir, en el campo del estudio de los presupuestos y fines de la ciencia jurídica. Y ésta es una tarea indispensable para la filosofía del derecho, también hoy, especialmente hoy: la de iluminar el camino a quienes ejercen los estudios jurídicos por profesión (o por mero interés especulativo), sobre todo cuando están de algún modo «contaminados» con la fuerza del exterior.

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SOBRE LA REVISTA

Soft Power es una revista que nace del trabajo conjunto de estudiosos del sur de Europa y de América Latina, con el objetivo de solicitar la investigación sobre el nuevo paradigma de poder gubernamental, que hoy organiza el mundo, con especial atención a la zona geopolítica.

En respuesta a la urgente necesidad de repensar las categorías jurídicas y políticas tradicionales de la modernidad, tiene como objetivo el análisis crítico y reflexivo, centrado en resaltar el carácter problemático de actualidad.

Soft Power es publicada semestralmente. Asume un lenguaje interdisciplinario para garantizar la pluralidad de puntos de vista sobre el enfoque temático elegido, dando espacio a las contribuciones de filósofos políticos y del derecho, politólogos e historiadores del pensamiento político, pero también economistas y sociólogos.

La revista también tiene una sección, un *forum* de discusión, que le abre paso a la lectura de un libro de gran resonancia y analiza su tema desde diferentes perspectivas.

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

Soft Power is a review born from the joint work of scholars of the South Europe-Latin America, with the aim of hastening the research on the new paradigm of governmental power, which organizes the world with particular attention to that geopolitical area. Responding to the urgency of a rethinking of the traditional legal and political categories of modernity, it intends its analysis as critical as reflective, focused as it is onto highlighting problems of the present time.

Soft Power is published semi-annually. It adopts an interdisciplinary language to ensure the plurality of perspectives on the theme proposed from time to time, giving room to the contributions of political and law philosophers, political scientists and historians of political thought, as well as economists and sociologists.

The review also has a section, a discussion forum, that moving from the reading of a book of great resonance and importance, and it analyzes its topic from different perspectives.

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- El texto irá en letra Times New Roman tamaño 12, a espacio 1,5 líneas; las notas de pie de página irán en letra Times New Roman tamaño 10 a espacio sencillo.
- En la primera página debe figurar el título centrado y en mayúsculas. Más abajo se escribirán, también centrados, el nombre y apellido del autor o autores, así

como el centro o la institución a la que está(n) adscrito(s). En seguida debe figurar un resumen (*abstract*) con una extensión de entre 100 y 150 palabras y una lista de palabras clave (*keywords*) de 3 a 5 términos. Tanto el título como el resumen y la lista de palabras clave deben tener una versión en español y otra en inglés, para facilitar su inclusión en las bases de datos internacionales y en los repertorios bibliográficos.

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En el texto: (Hart, 1961, 15)

Referencia al final de cada artículo:

Hart, H. L. A. (1961). *The Concept of Law*. London: Oxford University Press.

Si el libro tiene más de una edición o volúmenes o se cita algún tomo (t.) o volumen (vol./vols.) en particular, la referencia es la siguiente:

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Basadre, J. (1983). *Historia de la República*. 7.^a ed., t. 11. Lima: Editorial Universitaria.

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 En el texto: (Rosenau, 2004, 19).
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 Rosenau, J. N. (1992). Governance, Order, and Chang in World Politics. En J. N. Rosenau & E. O. Czempiel (Eds.), *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (1-29). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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- **Justa revisión:** Los revisores deben evaluar los manuscritos de manera objetiva, justa y profesional. Los revisores deben evitar prejuicios personales en sus comentarios y evaluaciones, y deben expresar sus opiniones claramente con argumentos de apoyo. Los revisores deben proporcionar revisiones fundamentadas y justas. Estos deben evitar ataques personales y no deben incluir ninguna opinión que sea difamatoria, inexacta, engañosa, obscena, escandalosa, ilegal o de cualquier otra forma objetable, o que infrinja los derechos de autor de cualquier otra persona, derecho de privacidad u otros derechos.
- **Confidencialidad:** La información relativa a los manuscritos presentados por los autores debe ser confidencial y será tratada como información privilegiada. Los revisores no deben discutir del manuscrito con cualquier persona que no sea el editor, ni deben discutir cualquier información del manuscrito sin permiso.
- **Certificación de las fuentes:** Los revisores de los manuscritos deben asegurarse de que los autores hayan señalado todas las fuentes de datos utilizadas en la

investigación. Cualquier tipo de similitud o coincidencia entre los manuscritos considerados con cualquier otro documento publicado de los cuales los revisores tienen conocimiento personal debe ser inmediatamente comunicada al Editor.

- **Puntualidad:** En el caso de que el revisor perciba que no es posible para él/ella completar la revisión del manuscrito en el plazo estipulado, debe comunicar esta información al Editor, de manera tal que el manuscrito pueda ser enviado a otro revisor.
- **Derecho de rechazo:** Los revisores deben negarse a revisar los manuscritos: a) cuando el autor ha formulado observaciones escritas sobre el manuscrito o sobre su versión anterior; b) cuando aparecen conflictos de interés que resulten de relaciones de colaboración, financieras, institucionales, personales o conexiones de otro tipo con cualquiera de las empresas, instituciones o personas ligadas a los artículos.
- **Quejas:** Cualquier queja relativa a la revista debe, en primera instancia, ser dirigida al Editor de *Soft Power*.

Deberes de los autores

- **Originalidad:** Los autores deben garantizar que ninguna parte de su trabajo es una copia de cualquier otro trabajo, ya sea escrito por ellos mismos u otros, y que el trabajo es original y no ha sido previamente publicado en su totalidad o en parte sustancial.
- **La autoría del artículo:** La autoría se limita a aquellos que han dado una contribución significativa a la concepción, diseño, ejecución o interpretación del estudio presentado. Otros que han hecho una contribución significativa deben estar inscritos como coautores. El autor debe asegurarse de que todos los coautores hayan avalado la versión definitiva del documento y acordado su publicación final.
- **El plagio y autoplagio:** El trabajo en el manuscrito debe estar libre de cualquier plagio, falsificación, fabricaciones u omisión de material significativo. El plagio y el autoplagio representan un comportamiento editorial poco ético y son inaceptables. *Soft Power* se reserva el derecho de evaluar los problemas de plagio y redundancia en una base de datos, caso por caso.

- **Reconocimiento de las fuentes y de los conflictos de intereses:** El autor debe indicar explícitamente todas las fuentes que han apoyado la investigación y también declarar cualquier conflicto de interés.
- **Puntualidad:** Los autores deben ser puntuales con la revisión de sus manuscritos. Si un autor no puede cumplir con el plazo establecido, debe escribir a los correos vgiordano@unisa.it o softpower.journal@gmail.com tan pronto como sea posible para determinar la posibilidad de prorrogar la entrega del artículo o su retirada del proceso de revisión.

El Código de Ética de la revista *Soft Power* se basa principalmente en las siguientes fuentes en línea:

- COPE - Committee on Publication Ethics, 2011. Code of conduct and best practice guidelines for journal editors. Accessed February 2014.
- Ethical-Guidelines, 2011. Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, 2011. Accessed February 2014.

CODE OF ETHICS

The prevention of publication malpractice is one of the most important responsibilities of the Editorial Board. This Code describes *Soft Power's* policies for ensuring the ethical treatment of all participants in the peer review and publication process. Editors, Reviewers and Authors are encouraged to study these guidelines and address any questions or concerns to the vgiordano@unisa.it or softpower.journal@gmail.com.

These guidelines apply to manuscripts submitted to *Soft Power* starting January, 1, 2014, and may be revised at any time by the Editorial Board.

Duties of Editor

The Editor is responsible for the content of the journal and for ensuring the integrity of all work that is published in it.

- **Publication decisions:** The Editor has the right to make the final decision on whether to accept or reject a manuscript with reference to the significance, originality, and clarity of the manuscript and its relevance to the journal.
- **Review of manuscripts:** *Soft Power* follows a double-blind review process, whereby Authors do not know Reviewers and vice versa. The Editor is responsible for securing timely, independent and anonymous peer review from suitably qualified reviewers who have no disqualifying competing interests, of all manuscripts submitted to the journal. The Editor is responsible for ensuring that the journal has access to an adequate number of competent reviewers.
- **Fair Review:** The Editor and their editorial staff must ensure that each manuscript received by *Soft Power* is reviewed for its intellectual content without regard to sex, gender, race, religion, citizenship, etc. of the authors.
- **Confidentiality of submitted material:** The Editor and the editorial staff will ensure that systems are in place to ensure the confidentiality and protection from misuse of material submitted to the journal while under review and the protection of authors' and reviewers' identities and will themselves take all reasonable steps to preserve the confidentiality of authors' and reviewers' identities.

- **Disclosure:** The Editor should ensure that submitted manuscripts are processed in a confidential manner, and that no content of the manuscripts will be disclosed to anyone other than the corresponding author, reviewers, as appropriate.
- **Conflicts of interest:** The Editor should excuse themselves from considering a manuscript in which they have a real or potential conflict of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, financial or other relationships or connections with any of the Authors, companies or institutions connected to the manuscript.
- **Authority:** The Editor must have ultimate authority and responsibility for the Journal. The Editor should respect the Journal's constituents (Readers, Authors, Reviewers, Editorial Staff), and work to ensure the honesty and integrity of the Journal's contents and continuous improvement in journal quality.

Duties of reviewers

- **Fair reviews:** Reviewers should evaluate manuscripts objectively, fairly and professionally. Reviewers should avoid personal biases in their comments and judgments and they should express their views clearly with supporting arguments. Reviewers must provide substantiated and fair reviews. These must avoid personal attack, and not include any material that is defamatory, inaccurate, libelous, misleading, obscene, scandalous, unlawful, or otherwise objectionable, or that infringes any other person's copyright, right of privacy, or other rights.
- **Confidentiality:** Information regarding manuscripts submitted by authors should be kept confidential and be treated as privileged information. Reviewers should not discuss the manuscript with anyone other than the Editor, nor should they discuss any information from the manuscript without permission.
- **Acknowledgement of Sources:** Manuscript reviewers must ensure that authors have acknowledged all sources of data used in the research. Any kind of similarity or overlap between the manuscripts under consideration or with any other published paper of which reviewer has personal knowledge must be immediately brought to the Editor's notice.
- **Timeliness:** In the event that a reviewer feels it is not possible for him/her to complete review of manuscript within stipulated time then this information must be communicated to the Editor/Guest Editor, so that the manuscript could be sent to another reviewer.

- **Right of refusal:** Reviewers should refuse to review manuscripts: a) where they have provided written comments on the manuscript or an earlier version to the Author, b) in which they have any conflicts of interest resulting from collaborative, financial, institutional, personal, or other relationships or connections with any of the companies, institutions, or people connected to the papers.
- **Complain:** Any complaint relating to the journal should, in the first instance be directed towards the Editor of *Soft Power*.

Duties of Authors

- **Originality:** Authors must ensure that no part of their work is copied from any other work, either authored by themselves or others and that the work is original and has not previously been published in whole or substantial part.
- **Authorship of the paper:** Authorship should be limited to those who have made a significant contribution to conception, design, execution or interpretation of the reported study. Others who have made significant contribution must be listed as co-authors. The author should ensure that all co-authors have affirmed the final version of the paper and have agreed on its final publication.
- **Plagiarism and self-plagiarism:** All work in the manuscript should be free of any plagiarism, falsification, fabrications, or omission of significant material. Plagiarism and self-plagiarism constitute unethical publishing behavior and are unacceptable. *Soft Power* reserves the right to evaluate issues of plagiarism and redundancy on a case-by-case basis.
- **Acknowledgement of Sources and Conflict(s) of interests:** The author should indicate explicitly all sources that have supported the research and also declare any conflict(s) of interest.
- **Timeliness:** Authors should be prompt with their manuscript revisions. If an Author cannot meet the deadline given, the Author should contact to vgiordano@unisa.it or softpower.journal@gmail.com as soon as possible to determine whether a longer time period or withdrawal from the review process should be chosen.

The Code of Ethics of *Soft Power* draws heavily from the following on-line sources:

- COPE – Committee on Publication Ethics, 2011. Code of conduct and best practice guidelines for journal editors. Accessed February, 2014.
- Ethical-Guidelines, 2011. Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, 2011. Accessed February, 2014.

