

AION

Journal of Philosophy and Science



ISSUE 1. 2024

Aion Journal of Philosophy and Science

Editorial Board

Editor

Olga Pombo, Portugal

Vice Editors

Irina Symons, United States

Hugo Vale, Portugal

Executive Editors

Fernando Rua, Portugal

Liz Vahia, Portugal

Scientific Advisory Board

Daniel Andler, France

Ramon Alvarado, USA

André Barata, Portugal

Pierluigi Barrota, Italy

Jean-Hugues Barthélemy, France

Rudolf Bernet, Belgium

Ronald Bogue, USA

Luciano Boi, Italy

Vincent Bontems, France

Deborah Danovskly, Brazil

Sérgio Dias Branco, Portugal

Helena Esser, Brazil

Katarzyna Gan-Krzywoszynska,
Poland

Jean Pierre Gaudin, France

Francesco Giarrusso, Italy

Lila Ellen Gray, USA

Eric Guichard, France

Michael Hoffmann, USA

Claude Imbert, France

Correia Jesuino, Portugal

Byron Kaldis, Greece

Lorenzo Magnani, Italy

Sergio Menna, Brazil

Angel Nepomuceno, Spain

Ernst Poeppel, Germany

Alexandre Quintanilha, Portugal

Shahid Rahman, France

Juan Redmond, Chile

Andres Rivadulla, Spain

Wagner Sanz, Brazil

Francisco Salguero, Spain

Giovanni Scarafile, Italy

Frederik Stjernfelt, Denmark

John Symons, USA

Inácio Valentim, Angola

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Brazil

Serghij Wakulenko, Ukraine

Charles Wolfe, France

Index

Papers

Editorial Introduction.....	1
Aion Editorial Team	
(Dé)cloisonnements et résistances interstitielles	6
<i>(De)partitioning and Interstitial Resistance</i>	
Alice Thibaud	
A Insurreição do Desejo	21
<i>The Insurrection of Desire</i>	
Peter Pál Pelbart	
Resistance as (Re)creation	33
<i>La résistance comme (re)création</i>	
Katarzyna Gan-Krzywoszynska and Przemyslaw Krzywoszynski	
Máquinas sobrenaturais e outros habitantes da tríplice fronteira antropológica.....	48
<i>Supernatural machines and other inhabitants of the triple anthropological frontier</i>	
Eduardo Viveiros de Castro	
For a Plural Democracy: Human Rights, Interculturality and Resistance	67
<i>Por uma Democracia Plural: Direitos Humanos, Interculturalidade e Resistência</i>	
Helena Esser dos Reis and Rosani M. Leitão	
Digital capitalism, subjectivation... and the end of resistance?	85
<i>Capitalismo digital, subjetivação... e o fim da resistência?</i>	
Nuno Oliveira	

Overlaps between neuroscientific and philosophical perspectives on bodily resistance in the digital	103
<i>Chevauchements entre les perspectives neuroscientifiques et philosophiques sur la résistance corporelle dans le numérique</i>	
Jozef Eduard Masarik	
“All You Need is Recalcitrance”; A Stengerian Fable for Psychology.....	123
<i>Todo lo que necesitas es recalcitrancia; Una fábula stengeriana para la Psicología</i>	
David Antolínez	
Forme et résistances, formes politiques de résistances: La pratique artistique comme art de résister.....	143
<i>Form and resistance, political forms politiques of resistance: Artistic practice as an art of resistance</i>	
Jean Pierre Gaudin	

Aion. Journal of Philosophy & Science

Editorial

2024-03-12

The choice of the concept of “resistance” to the inaugural issue of *Aion. Journal of Philosophy and Science* is no accident. It comes in line with *Aion*’s commitment to developing its critical activity and presence in the public space.

It also matches *Aion*’s aim at focusing on concepts and topics of critical importance in the present time. Our current situation is such that, on the one hand, the conditions for thinking differently and for putting in practice new forms of life are being dramatically reduced, and yet, on the other hand, we witness an increase of active resistance in diversified forms, cultural contexts and geographies (in civil and political realms as well as in artistic and scientific practises). This situation creates the urgency of revisiting the concept of resistance, its possible meanings, its differences face to similar terms, not exactly synonyms, such as dissidence, contestation, protest campaign, social movement, civil disobedience, insurrection, revolt, rebellion, rejection, and resilience, adaptability, flexibility, reaction, opposition, reluctance, etc. Terms that are repeatedly used to designate the varied forms of resistance put forward by individuals (Nelson Mandela), restricted groups of activists (Greenpeace) and large social movements (MeToo) against the control devices, the abuses, the injustices, the discriminations present in the societies we live in, that is, terms that require urgent philosophical inquiry.

Further, *Aion* being a *Journal of Philosophy and Science*, the openness to concepts that comprehend important uses both in Philosophy and in Science makes part of its promise. That is the case of the concept of resistance which has its roots in Physics (referring to the endurance of materials facing shock and deformation). Following the very movement of history of science towards a less mechanistic approach to nature, to life and to mankind, the concept of resistance acquired a more dynamic meaning in electricity (referring to a body’s ability to oppose the passage of electric current), in medicine (referring to a body’s ability to resist disease), immunology (the strength of the immune system), athletic studies (the body’s aerobic and anaerobic struggle against fatigue during prolonged effort), gets a defective place in psychology and psychoanalysis (an individual’s capacity to resist adversity or anx-



icity-inducing situations, or to resist the analysis of the unconscious), and finally it reaches a central role in social sciences, namely in the so-called “resistance studies”, a recently constituted yet rapidly growing inter-field of research in the social sciences (James Scott, Couzens Hoy). In parallel to its instrumental use in the scientific discourse, the concept of resistance also holds a very positive meaning, not only in the popular image of science and in science communication (the inventor and the discoverer are praised as non-conformists dissidents and the idea of scientific revolution is indisputably respected) but, above all, in epistemology (for instance, the key innovative value of refutation in Karl Popper’s falsificationist philosophy of science or Thomas Kuhn’s theory of science that simultaneously acclaims scientific revolutions and pays tribute to the constructive role of the normal scientist as the one who resists change). Also, we’re thinking of the resistance of disciplines face to the generalized interdisciplinary appeal, and of the resistance of human intelligence face to artificial intelligence.

But it is in philosophy that the concept of resistance has been most thematized, mainly in the context of political philosophy. In the ancient and modern jus-naturalism, the act of (political) resistance is clearly condemned because human laws are thought out, either as the expression of the divine order that governs the entire cosmos (from Aristotle to St. Thomas), or as people’s norms grounded in the universal, ethical imperatives of human reason (from Hugo Grotius to Adam Smith). On the contrary, classical contractualism will explore diverse paths in order to affirm the legitimacy of an act of resistance towards the power of the sovereign. The main difficulty concerns the fact that, if, by the very contract, the power of the sovereign is constituted as legitimate, then any act of resistance to the authority of the sovereign would be equivalent to a break of the contract. Contractualism will provide diversified answers to this question by consecrating a “right of resistance” which, although dependent upon individual’s private judgment, is based on the greatest of all natural laws, the inviolability of individual’s fundamental right to self-protection and preservation of life.

Thomas Hobbes is perhaps the first to explicitly sustain a “right of resistance” which, in his view, assists the subject whenever the will of the sovereign clashes with the preservation of one’s life. Locke, Rousseau and Kant will propose different foundations for the “right of resistance”: Locke, basing it in the defense of the inalienable right of property (understood in a wide sense, from life, liberty, equality and things); Rousseau, legitimating it in the inequalities that remain when the social contract proves ineffective; Kant, grounding it in the inviolability of freedom that implies the legitimacy of the subject in not consenting to unjust laws, in demanding for reforms, in public pressure for change. Likewise, in the puzzled *spectrum* of XIX and XX century political philosophy, the concept of resistance will be claimed by diverse theoretical perspectives: from Marxist tradition to Henry David Thoreau, but also

Bertrand Russell, Erich Fromm, Hannah Arendt, Norberto Bobbio, Jurgen Habermas and John Rawls, all offer paramount insights to this debate.

Common to all these positions is the construal of resistance as an act of opposition, non-acceptance, rejection, insurgency or revolt face an extreme situation of bad government. That is, in contractualist theories, as well as in all the diversified frameworks of XX century political philosophy that have discussed its forms, valid procedures and legitimate aims, each one proposing its own vocabulary and modes of realization (from civil disobedience to insurrection and revolution), the concept of resistance comes always as a second, a subsequent, a possible response to the misrule of the sovereign power.

Now, among the political theorists who do not recognize themselves within these realms, it is possible to find a radically different formulation, such as that put forward by Michel Foucault when he understands the act of resistance, not as second, a response to an external force, but as first, original in relation to power. Since, for Foucault, power always means the submission of will, then resistance, as a primordial, an internal, vital force, although manifests itself chronologically as secondary, arises as the first given, as the ontological foundation of any will; otherwise – he argues that, were resistance not inherent in any will, we could only talk about obedience. This is also the understanding that authors such as Toni Negri and Michael Hardt have of what it means to resist, which they call “the will to be against”, that is, the constant overcoming of the obstacles and limits that repress us. Resisting would thus involve the production of a will against authority, the strategies that validate and reproduce the structures of domination.

The fundamental question of the politics would therefore be the one already raised by Spinoza: why do men fight for their servitude as if it was their freedom? This being a very strong imperative that should inhabit the heart of any questioning of politics, it was in ontology that Spinoza foresaw, interestingly in line of Hobbes’ metaphysics, an answer to this question when he refers to the *conatus* as the will to persevere in one’s essence. *Conatus* would then be a force of resistance that would be at the bottom of all that exists, a force of self-preservation face to all that comes from outside. With this step, the concept of resistance exceeds the domain of politics, reaches ontology and announces the science of a future time.

In this sense, one could ask, is it not this conviction that Nietzsche stressed when he proposed a *will to power*, not as a will to have (to conquer, to get) power or what the particular will wants, but a will of will, that is, a will that refuses to bow down before any power except that of its self-affirmation? This also seems to be the ultimate meaning that Bergson attributes to *duration*, the key concept of his ontology, in which being means to last, to endure, to resist change while maintaining the integrity of its being. Although these authors do not explicitly thematize the concept of resistance, it can be argued that it constitutes the true unsaid transversal to their ontologies.

Moreover, the concept of resistance still finds its home in the field of aesthetics. This is the intention of Jacques Rancière when, in his effort to think the porosity of the relationship between politics and aesthetic, he elaborates the concept of “dissent” to designate the urgency in the production of ruptures in the sensitive tissue of perceptions and in the dynamics of affects. Insofar as each body must take its own destiny into its own hands, resisting the installed processes of subjectivation, the dissent is at the heart of politics. But, equally, insofar as it resists the installed configurations of the visible, of the sayable and of the thinkable, the dissent becomes an act of resistance that runs through the entire nature of aesthetics, understood as producer of new landscapes of the possible.

Furthermore, there seems to be an eloquent complicity between philosophy and the act of resistance, even to the extent that philosophy itself can be defined as an act of resistance. Already in the question related to its autochthony, philosophy - which is inseparable from its Hellenic origin - appears itself as an act of resistance. Is it not true that philosophy has in the *Sage*, coming from the deep and the dark world of orality, or from the enigmatic East, its external rival?! A tutelary character, the *Sage* is the holder of knowledge, which he transmits to his disciples through an unequal, vertical and asymmetrical relationship. As the figure of the greatest authority, of the indisputable master, the inaugurator of obedience, the *Sage* personifies transcendence. But philosophy, as the etymology of *Philos* [Friend] confirms, gives birth to a new personage of thought totally distinct from the *Sage*: the Friend, the one who seeks knowledge without ever formally detaining it. Daughter of the democratic space, philosophy is an activity carried out between peers who treat each other as equals. That is why it can only think horizontally, refuting the relationship of power where thought, as an inheritance of the distant past of the mysterious east, was imprisoned.

Philosophy is thus immanence, as, unlike the *Sage* who imposed his order coming from the past or from the heights, the *Philosopher* finds herself immersed in the symmetrical, horizontal tissue of public space, from where he emerges as both an ingredient and a product of democracy. However, despite its libertarian potential, democratic life has several dangers. From the outset, *opinion*, which erupts freely and spontaneously within the *agora*, this new place of association between friends that quickly begins to serve as an emulatory arena where all kinds of rivalries arise, space of a generalized *âgon*. But the spontaneity of opinion, beyond giving an account of a subjective whim, at the same time dangerously reflects a dead point of thought, the place where thought is deactivated and, in its place, common sense - *doxa* - crystallizes. To this internal rival, philosophy opposes the *concept*, which is not confused with simple opinion or even comparable with the good chaining of opinions. On the other hand, the concept, which can only work in a network with other concepts, functions as a transcendental, that is, it induces a vision of the world: it draws a territory

to come proposed by the philosopher as an alternative to the commonplaces where opinion is housed. That is why - as Deleuze & Guattari argue in *What is Philosophy?* - the philosopher's job, as a creator of concepts, always consists in resisting the present, striving to offer new possibilities that are beyond the *clichés* of common sense.

In short, we could say: philosophy is born as an act of resistance and it is through resistance that its history is written: resistance to all relations of power, to begin with that fundamental one led by the *Sage*, resistance to the hollow superficiality of opinion, and resistance to the common sense that determines the *status quo* that empties each epoch from its own possibilities. At one time, resistance to power and resistance to present.

Without the ambition to provide a complete picture of the various theoretical traditions within which the idea and practice of resistance have been thought throughout the history of philosophy, of science, and the arts, we nevertheless opened the pages of *Aion* to all those who might be interested in the theoretical complexity surrounding the concept of resistance as well as in the novel challenges that the old concept of resistance may currently require.

The editors

(Dé)cloisonnements et résistances interstitielles

(De)partitioning and Interstitial resistance

Alice Thibaud

Abstract:

This article is part of a research project looking at the home as a space for resistance and politicisation. Based on a field study of alternative forms of cohabitation, the aim is to rework the very definition of the home, which thus acts as a conceptual operator for rethinking a set of dichotomies that structure political philosophy: the private and the public, the personal and the collective, the intimate and the institutional, the domestic and the political. From this perspective, two types of (de)partitioning are involved: conceptually, the aim is to undo the construction of a threshold that has excluded the home from the political domain, relegating it to an apolitical, pre-political or even anti-political sphere. In so doing, we will be trying to think what kind of resistance can emerge from within the alternative home; how can we think the ability to make a world from the very margins of the world? In architectural terms, the question of partitions, the ones we add, the ones we remove, appears to be one of the recurring reasons for the appropriation and hijacking of the space by its residents. This raises the question of the insistence of a preexisting materiality - that of space, and that of a socio-political order - against which strategies of subversion inevitably clash. How can we think about the ambiguity of resistance - that of contestation and that of conservation - as a dual requirement, without losing the meaning of all political action? In the final analysis, this problematic should be seen as one of articulation between resistance and its framework, and it invites us to rethink that framework.

Keywords : home and political domain, alternative forms of cohabitation, home and resistance, contestation, conservation, framework

CONTACT: Alice Thibaud
École Normale Supérieure (Paris), UMR8547, Pays Germaniques
alice.thibaud@ens.psl.eu



Aion Journal of Philosophy and Science

© 2024 the Authors

This work is licensed under a

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

Résumé :

Cet article s'inscrit dans le cadre d'une recherche portant sur le foyer comme espace résistance et de politisation. Il s'agit, à partir d'une enquête sur des formes de cohabitation alternative, de retravailler la définition même du foyer, qui joue ainsi comme opérateur conceptuel pour repenser un ensemble de dichotomies structurant la philosophie politique : le privé et le public, le personnel et le collectif, l'intime et l'institutionnel, le domestique et le politique. Dans cette perspective, deux types de (dé) cloisonnements interviennent : sur le plan conceptuel, il s'agit de défaire la construction d'un seuil qui a exclu le foyer hors du domaine politique, le rejetant dans une sphère apolitique, prépolitique, voire antipolitique. Ce faisant, on s'efforcera de penser quel type de résistance peut voir le jour, à même le foyer alternatif ; comment penser la capacité à *faire monde* en marge du monde ? Sur le plan architectural, la question de la cloison, tantôt ajoutée, tantôt retirée, apparaît comme l'un des motifs récurrents de l'appropriation et du détournement de l'espace par ses habitants et habitantes. La question soulevée est alors celle de l'insistance d'une matérialité préalable – celle de l'espace, et celle d'un ordre socio-politique – à laquelle des stratégies de subversion ne laissent pas de se heurter. Comment penser l'ambiguïté de la résistance – celle de la contestation et celle de la conservation – comme double exigence, sans perdre le sens de toute action politique ? Cette problématique doit finalement se penser comme celle de l'articulation entre la résistance et son cadre, et elle nous invite ainsi à repenser ce cadre.

Keywords : *le foyer et le domaine politique, formes de cohabitation alternative, foyer et résistance, contestation, conservation, cadre*

En 1972, une conférence est organisée à l'Université de Chicago autour de l'œuvre d'Hannah Arendt. La théoricienne politique choisit de participer à cet événement et d'échanger avec les intervenants autour de sa pensée¹. C'est à cette occasion que Mary McCarthy, une amie de longue d'Arendt, qui sera plus tard son exécutrice littéraire, s'interroge sur le statut des distinctions dans sa pensée, et en particulier sur la séparation tranchée entre le social et le politique dans son œuvre. Pour illustrer cette méthode de la distinction, Mary McCarthy mobilise alors une métaphore percutante : elle propose à Arendt de comparer les distinctions conceptuelles à la construction de petites maisons, séparées les unes des autres par des murs :

« But to go back to the distinctions themselves — I would say that each one within this liberated area, within this free space — each distinction was like a little house. And, let us say, fame is living

¹ On trouve la retranscription de ces échanges dans : Hill ed., 1979 : pp. 301-341

in its little house with its architecture, and reputation is living in another. So that all this space created by her is actually furnished. [...] And I think that the chance of invigoration and oxygenation does combine with some sense of stability and security. And that is through the elaboration, the marvelous, shall we say, unfolding of definitions. [...] But there is also this stability in which fame lives in its mansion, or little house, and labor lives in its, and work in another, and the political is strictly segregated in its house from the social. »²

Le cloisonnement, imagé ici par la séparation de plusieurs logements différents, correspond donc à la distinction conceptuelle. Ainsi le cloisonnement architectural se traduit sur un plan théorique. Arendt reçoit la métaphore avec humour : ces petites maisons lui font penser à des logements sociaux sans subvention d'État ; ce qu'elle reconnaît, c'est que cet art de la distinction est bien un art de la définition. Pour McCarthy, la métaphore des maisons permet de penser, dans ce travail de définition, une double exigence : à la fois un mouvement d'oxygénation – la création d'un espace propre pour tel ou tel concept – et un mouvement de stabilisation, grâce à des délimitations sécurisantes.

Avant donc de critiquer l'étanchéité trop grande ou l'hermétisme de ces distinctions conceptuelles, il faut rappeler leur fonction chez Arendt. Leur but est avant tout de préserver la spécificité de chaque concept, de chaque domaine de l'existence. C'est précisément ce que la modernité n'a pas su préserver : avec l'avènement du social, qui brouille les distinctions et transgresse les délimitations, les hommes risquent d'être privés à la fois de l'expérience politique – propre à l'espace public – et de l'expérience privée propre à l'espace domestique. De la sorte, l'affirmation par exemple que tout est politique risque de mener à rien n'est politique, etc. Cette menace importe pour la suite puisqu'il s'agirait de demander jusqu'où peut porter la résistance, si tous les domaines de l'existence peuvent devenir des espaces de résistance, ou bien s'il faut la circonscrire – et où. En suivant le diagnostic d'Arendt, perdre ce sens de la délimitation revient, dans la modernité, à perdre la frontière décrite comme « un espace, une sorte de *no man's land* entre le privé et le public, abritant et protégeant les deux domaines tout en les séparant l'un de l'autre »³. Sur un plan symbolique, cette frontière prend pour Arendt la forme de la loi, du *nomos* ; d'un point de vue plus littéral, elle s'incarne spatialement « grâce aux limites qui séparent les unes des autres les maisons familiales. »⁴ C'est l'apparition matérielle de l'espace privé au sein de la sphère publique, le seuil des maisons individuelles qui marque aussi le passage de l'espace privé individuel à un comptent le plus : les

² *ibid.* p. 38

³ Arendt, H., 1994 [1958] : p. 104

⁴ *Ibid.*

façades des maisons, donc le côté par lequel elles se donnent à voir depuis la sphère publique. Et puis, à l'échelle de la ville, les murailles qui entourent la cité. Cet enclos est la traduction spatiale de la « loi-muraille », c'est-à-dire de la loi en tant qu'elle transforme la ville en cité, la juxtaposition des hommes en communauté politique. La loi abrite et entoure la vie politique, tout comme le mur des maisons héberge et entoure la vie familiale ; elle fait exister la cité comme la palissade fait exister un terrain en tant que tel⁵.

On voit donc l'importance des murs : leur fonction est à la fois de délimiter un espace et, par là, d'identifier, de constituer la communauté qui l'habite. Mais ce rapport entre l'échelle de la maison, et l'échelle de la ville, n'est pas seulement de transposition ou de changement d'échelle. Il y a là un lien beaucoup plus étroit. Comme le rappelle Arendt, la loi est étymologiquement liée au rempart, puisqu'en grec, le terme : « *nomos*, vient de *nemein* qui signifie répartir, posséder (ce qui est réparti) et résider. »⁶ Autrement dit, la loi, qui fait exister un espace politique, repose sur l'assignation à une certaine place, une résidence, un espace domestique. La propriété privée donnait, dans la cité grecque, la garantie d'« avoir sa place en un certain lieu du monde et donc appartenir à la cité politique »⁷. C'est donc que le mur, qui séparait le privé et le public, nous donne aussi à penser leur articulation. Et cette articulation prend la forme d'un conditionnement. Être propriétaire privé conditionne la possibilité d'être un citoyen. Chez Arendt, ce motif de la condition est décisif, et si la distinction conceptuelle importe, c'est parce que la condition doit rester extérieure à ce qu'elle conditionne, pour garantir à la fois la possibilité d'une spécificité *et d'une articulation* entre ces termes.

Dans son essai sur la « Désobéissance civile »⁸, Arendt critique au contraire les *problem-solvers*, qui oublient cette dimension, et cherchent à imposer au réel des dilemmes trop tranchés. Arendt, elle n'essaye pas de *résoudre* le réel, mais de le *comprendre*.⁹ Autrement dit, expliciter la distinction revient à démêler, conceptuellement, ce qui se donne toujours de manière enchevêtrée dans le réel. Par exemple, interrogée sur la distinction entre le social et le politique, Arendt évoque la crise du logement. Selon elle, cette crise possède en réalités deux faces : l'une est apolitique parce qu'elle n'est pas sujette à débat : que tout le monde ait droit à un logement décent ne doit pas faire l'objet de discussion, ce n'est donc pas une question politique, mais une question sociale, dont les modalités peuvent être tranchées par des experts. En revanche, la question de ce qu'est un habitat préférable, s'il suppose l'intégration

⁵ Dans un autre texte, Arendt écrit encore : « La loi est le rempart érigé et fabriqué par un seul homme à l'intérieur duquel est créé l'espace proprement politique où se meut librement la pluralité. [...] La loi est pour ainsi dire ce à partir de quoi une *polis* a commencé sa vie ultérieure : elle ne peut la supprimer sans renoncer à sa propre identité... », Arendt, 2001 : pp. 116-117.

⁶ Arendt, H. 1994 [1958] : p. 104

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 102

⁸ Arendt H., [1972] 2020

⁹ Arendt, 1972 : p. 37

ou non, par exemple dans un quartier, cela est une question dont il faut délibérer, donc une question politique¹⁰.

Mais en filant la métaphore, une première précaution s'impose. Tout comme les murs ont des densité différentes – certains sont des murs porteurs, d'autres sont des murs creux – de même, il y aurait peut-être des distinctions irréductibles pour penser le réel, et des dichotomies vides de sens, des oppositions artificielles qui embrouillent l'analyse. Inversement, le problème des murs porteurs, transposés aux distinctions conceptuelles, est celui de leur trop grande rigidité : il y aurait, sur ce modèle, des distinctions insistantes, indéplaçables, impossibles à reconfigurer sans que s'effondre tout l'édifice conceptuel d'une pensée. Telle est peut-être, dans l'œuvre d'Arendt, la distinction – maintes fois interrogée – entre le privé et le public, c'est-à-dire aussi entre le domestique et le politique. McCarthy, à ce sujet, évoque l'exigence arendtienne selon laquelle la révolution, si elle veut être proprement politique, et donc réussie, ne doit pas se soucier de questions sociales. Reste alors un problème qui hante McCarthy, et dont Arendt elle-même reconnaîtra la pertinence : « Qu'est-on censé faire sur la scène publique, dans l'espace public, si on ne se soucie pas du social ? Que reste-t-il ? » demande-t-elle, avant d'ajouter : « les discours ne peuvent pas être simplement des discours – ils doivent être des discours à propos de quelque chose »¹¹.

Ce serait là le premier écueil de la distinction : à trop cloisonner, on risque d'ouvrir, non plus un espace disponible, mais un espace vide de contenu. D'où une première proposition : partir à la recherche d'espaces hybrides, où les délimitations ne sont pas si nettes, où le politique s'entremêle au domestique, le privé au public – où la résistance se fait interstitielle. Par exemple, celle qui se donne à voir dans des foyers alternatifs où la cohabitation apparaît comme activité de politiation. Le *Wohnprojekt* m'est apparu comme espace privilégié pour penser cette résistance comme politisation du et par le foyer. Concrètement, il s'agit là de formes de cohabitation répandues en Allemagne, particulièrement intéressantes parce qu'elles ont une histoire de plusieurs décennies, et engagent ainsi une certaine durée. Il est difficile de fournir une définition stricte du *Wohnprojekt* ; mais on peut leur attribuer un héritage commun, en ce qu'ils sont souvent issus de mouvements d'occupation illégaux – puis, parfois, légalisés. Ils obéissent ainsi à des régimes de propriété différents : il peut s'agir d'une location ou d'une propriété divisée entre les habitants, d'une propriété attribuée à une association, ou encore soutenue par le *Mietshäusersyndicat*... Pour simplifier, on peut dire que le *Wohnprojekt* se rapproche de la colocation, mais s'en distingue par la taille (il réunit en général plus de personnes qu'une colocation standard) et par l'ambition (il est voué à durer plus longtemps que le passage de ses habitants, et organise une forme durable de vie en commun, ce qui engage une certaine institutionnalisation). Malgré la variété des types de *Wohnprojekte*, on re-

¹⁰ Arendt, 1979: p. 318

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 316

trouve certains ingrédients constants pour le définir, en particulier le *plenum*, réunion régulière de tous les habitants du foyer, caractéristique des *Wohnprojekte*. En ce sens, le *Wohnprojekt* ne se définit pas seulement par le partage d'un espace et de certaines ressources, mais aussi par le partage de tâches et de responsabilités.

Ce qui importe, à partir de ces quelques éléments, c'est que la cohabitation y apparaît non comme une simple circonstance, comme un donné, mais plutôt comme une *activité*. Elle devient la prise en charge de la coexistence, ou, mieux, politisation de la coexistence. La question en jeu, au fond, est celle de notre disposition vis-à-vis du fait de la proximité : si l'on suit Arendt, la pluralité est la condition humaine par excellence. Cette pluralité engage un certain voisinage, la nécessité, *in fine*, de partager l'espace, la terre, avec d'autres. Mais restent plusieurs dispositions possibles vis-à-vis de cette condition : cherche-t-on plutôt à camoufler le fait du voisinage, à l'oublier ? ou bien s'efforce-t-on d'en prendre acte en faisant de ces voisins des partenaires, en travaillant avec eux à la meilleure cohabitation possible ? Georges Perec, dans *Espèces d'espaces*¹², imagine un roman sur le modèle du dessin de Saül Steinberg, *The Art of Living*, représentant un immeuble dont on a retiré la façade. Dans l'immeuble où se juxtaposent des familles nucléaires, le défaçadage fait apparaître des cloisons internes qui sont autant de séparations, non seulement entre les espaces, mais entre les vies des individus. Au contraire, dans le *Wohnprojekt*, la cloison spatiale ne se durcit pas en disjonction des vies, elle ne démembre pas la cohabitation. Cette comparaison vise à montrer que certaines formes de cohabitation permettent l'explicitation d'enjeux politiques du foyer, des enjeux qui, au fond, sont le lot de tous les foyers, mais qui d'ordinaire, dans les modèles de cohabitations standards, sont oblitérés. Par exemple, des responsabilités sont déléguées ou distribuées d'avance ; dans le *Wohnprojekt*, ce qui d'ordinaire ne fait pas l'objet d'une discussion devient sujet à débat.

Mais ce devenir doit nous interroger : comment garantir cette mobilité dans les distinctions arendtiennes ? Comment maintenir un passage, entre le politique et ce qui est rejeté hors de lui ? L'espace domestique présente par exemple des enjeux politiques qui sont recouverts par la définition traditionnellement apolitique du foyer. Les délimitations elles-mêmes tendent à se faire oublier, et, avec elles, la possibilité de les franchir. Ainsi, Perec évoque la façon dont, pour ne plus voir ses murs, il y accroche des tableaux, afin que le mur n'apparaisse pas comme mur. Mais le mur lui-même, dans sa puissance oblitérante, absorbe le tableau, et c'est le tableau lui-même qui finit par s'effacer. Tout comme on s'efforce d'oublier ses voisins, on s'efforce donc d'oublier les murs qui nous en sépare. Et en oubliant les murs, on oublie aussi la possibilité du passage. C'est le problème de la distinction : elle est elle-même prise dans un devenir, le risque d'une réification. Au lieu d'être perçue comme le lieu d'une articulation possible entre deux termes, la cloison se mue en clôture her-

¹² Perec, 1974 : p. 74

métique. C'est la critique adressée à Arendt, par exemple par Seyla Benhabib qui lui reproche d'essentialiser la distinction entre privé et public, sans penser sa porosité. Ce qui devait protéger la spécificité d'une notion devient ce qui la confine hors de tout rapport. Pire, la séparation rigide entre les domaines risque de devenir frontière entre les personnes – qui sont assignées à ces domaines. En effet, en suivant Arendt, « chaque activité humaine signale l'emplacement qui lui est propre dans le monde »¹³ : certaines requièrent l'espace privé en exigeant de se soustraire aux regards ; d'autres n'existent qu'en apparaissant publiquement. Le problème, c'est que cet ordre se renverse aisément. L'espace public n'est alors pas la circonstance de l'action, mais en devient la condition : en ce sens ce n'est plus l'activité qui indique son espace propre, mais l'espace lui-même qui autorise ou non tel ou tel type d'activité. En désignant l'espace propre à la construction d'un monde, et l'espace retiré du monde – qui justement est l'espace privé – Arendt risque d'interdire aux communautés marginalisées, rejetées hors du monde, la capacité même à faire monde. Et on ne sait plus alors comment il peut être possible de transformer le monde. Le moment où la cloison articulante entre divers types de spatialités se referme en clôture, il n'y a plus de possibilité pour faire des mondes communs. Plutôt que de devenir l'espace d'une résistance possible, le monde résiste alors à la possibilité même de toute politisation.

Or, on retrouve cette problématique dans la dynamique même de la résistance : celle-ci se donne aussi bien comme le mouvement de la subversion qui vient contester un ordre établi, que comme la réticence réactionnaire à tout changement et donc à toute remise en question. Spatialement, mon objectif serait de rejouer cette problématique de la résistance à travers celle du statut de la cloison, conceptuelle comme spatiale. Cette cloison est aussi bien ce qui doit pouvoir se reconfigurer afin que le partage de l'espace soit toujours potentiellement rejoué, mais aussi ce qui doit donner au monde un degré suffisant de stabilité. Le problème du mur est en fait un problème de temporalité. Roland Barthes, dans son cours *Comment vivre ensemble*¹⁴, attribue deux fonctions à la cloison : celle de la protection, et celle de la définition. Mais cette protection engage une stabilité : pour me sentir chez moi dans un espace, je dois pouvoir m'y installer durablement ; pour m'y sentir en sécurité, je dois me fier à ses contours. Le problème est que cette exigence ouvre une tendance mortifère pour la cloison, qui prend la forme de l'exclusion d'un côté, et de l'enfermement de l'autre. D'où ma question : *comment la cloison peut-elle garantir à la fois stabilité et plasticité ? Comment peut-elle définir sans figer, délimiter sans confiner ?*

Les murs du foyer sont pris au cœur de cette problématique. En effet, si habiter engage une durabilité, les murs, par leur solidité, doivent garantir cette pérennité. Ils s'érigent contre cette fugacité, contre la mutabilité des lieux qui, avec le temps, deviennent méconnaissables. C'est ce que déplore Percey en écrivant : « L'espace

¹³ Arendt, 1994 [1958] : p. 115

¹⁴ Barthes, 2002 : p. 93

fond comme le sable coule entre les doigts. Le temps l'emporte et ne m'en laisse que des lambeaux informes »¹⁵. Si Perec fait de l'écriture la seule instance à même de retenir quelque chose de cet espace insaisissable, le mur pourrait aussi remplir une telle fonction. C'est ce que suggère Rainer Maria Rilke, dans sa description de maisons en ruine : « le plus inoubliable, c'était encore les murs eux-mêmes. Avec quelque brutalité qu'on l'eût piétinée, on n'avait pu déloger la vie opiniâtre de ces chambres. [...] Et, de ces murs, jadis bleus, verts ou jaunes, qu'encadraient les reliefs des cloisons transversales abattues, émanait l'haleine de cette vie, une haleine opiniâtre, paresseuse et épaisse, qu'aucun vent n'avait encore dissipée »¹⁶. En même temps, on trouve une injonction inverse pour penser le foyer : celle de la flexibilité, de l'adaptation toujours renouvelée entre l'habitant et son habitat – on peut la penser, en suivant Walter Benjamin, à l'image d'une enveloppe dont les contours épousent ceux de l'habitant¹⁷. Le problème est alors que cet habitant est un vivant, non une matière inerte, comme la perle dans son écrin ou le compas dans son étui. Donc à proprement parler, ses contours doivent pouvoir sans cesse évoluer. Une réponse pourrait être que l'habitat-étui ne correspond qu'à un certain type de foyer, celui du bourgeois qui cherche à s'encaster dans un boîtier. À l'inverse, Benjamin décrit le « caractère destructif »¹⁸ comme « l'ennemi de l'homme-étui ». Tandis que ce dernier s'enveloppe d'une coquille tapissée de velours, le caractère destructif a pour « mot d'ordre : faire de la place ; une seule activité ; débayer. »¹⁹ Et Benjamin ajoute : « Le caractère destructif ne voit rien de durable. Mais pour cette raison précisément il voit partout des chemins. Là où d'autres butent sur des murs ou sur des montagnes, il voit également un chemin. »²⁰ Entre ces deux types de foyer, il y aurait donc à choisir : ou bien la stabilité fixe, ou bien la flexibilité destructrice. Ou bien des murs infranchissables, ou bien l'absence de murs.

Mais peut-on faire un foyer sans murs ou, en d'autres termes, peut-on se débarrasser de l'élément de la durée pour penser le foyer ? Cette question a tout à voir avec celle de la temporalité de la résistance. C'est ce qui apparaît à lire Arendt qui y répond par la négative en affirmant au contraire qu'une « maison terrestre ne devient un monde, au sens propre du terme, que lorsque la totalité des objets fabriqués est organisée au point de *résister* au procès de consommation nécessaire à la vie des gens qui y demeurent, et ainsi, de leur survivre »²¹. Or, c'est peut-être bien sur des murs solides que repose cette organisation qui résiste au passage du temps. Face à ce problème, j'ai recherché des propositions architecturales qui permettraient de concilier ces deux exigences apparemment contradictoires. On trouve en ce sens, chez

¹⁵ Perec, 1974 : p. 180

¹⁶ Rilke, 1966 [1910]: p. 576-577

¹⁷ Benjamin, 2007: p. 232

¹⁸ Benjamin, 1998 [1981]: p. 173

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 176

²¹ Arendt, 1972 [1968] : p. 269

Yona Friedman²², deux notions pour penser cette problématique : l'autoplanification, et l'architecture mobile. La première, en assurant un modèle de construction moins verticale, garantirait que les habitats restent toujours au plus près des besoins de leurs usagers. La deuxième, en distinguant les éléments d'infrastructure et les éléments de remplissage de l'infrastructure, maintiendrait pour ces derniers la plus grande marge de liberté possible. Le dilemme serait résolu par cette simple idée : construire des cloisons amovibles, facilement ajustable sans engendrer la démolition.

C'est ce qu'ont tenté plusieurs des *Wohnprojekte* que j'ai pu visiter. Ceux qui m'intéressent le plus sont justement les plus anciens, occupant des bâtiments qui n'ont pas été pensés au départ pour la vie en commun. Il s'agit alors de se réapproprier l'espace et de le détourner pour l'adapter à un projet de cohabitation différent. Dans ce cas, l'installation du projet engage souvent une reconfiguration de l'espace donné : il faut décroisonner et recloisonner. Ou bien on ouvre des espaces communs, par exemple dans le but de partager une grande cuisine ; ou bien, on redécoupe l'espace pour y accueillir de nouvelles personnes, en aménageant des chambres supplémentaires. En fait, dans ces deux mouvements, c'est la même exigence : garder la possibilité de définir, mais surtout de redéfinir l'espace, de ne pas figer l'espace. Le problème est que ce modelage de l'espace se heurte à des limites matérielles : qu'il s'agisse de réagencer un bâtiment, ou de le construire de toutes pièces, dans les deux cas, les moyens disponibles pour configurer l'espace sont limités. Le risque est alors que la qualité des murs elles-mêmes se trouve appauvrie. Plus ils sont flexibles, adaptables aux besoins et aux évolutions de leurs habitants, et moins ils remplissent leurs fonctions : les cloisons sont construites en matériaux fins, peu isolants, qui ont le mérite d'être facilement amovibles, mais qui n'agencent l'espace *qu'en apparence*. À interroger les fonctions de la cloison et du mur, on rencontre souvent les mêmes directions : délimiter l'espace, le démultiplier, l'assigner à une personne, à un type d'objet ou encore à une fonction ; enfin, le mur peut avoir une fonction d'écran en masquant un intérieur – ou un extérieur. Mais l'isolation acoustique est rarement répertoriée. Pourtant, les cloisons de fortune, trop fines pour masquer le bruit, sont à l'image du cauchemar évoqué par Benjamin²³, dans lequel des portes qui semblent fermées, ne le sont pas, et des murs qui semblent solides, sont traversés par un fantôme, qu'aucune cloison n'arrête. Dans les *Wohnprojekte* – le fantôme de la discorde qui franchit tous les murs, c'est le bruit.

Cynthia Fleury évoque ce droit au silence dont l'une des fonctions est politique et civile²⁴. On ne connaît que trop bien les conflits de voisinages qui naissent du bruit ; le silence serait une condition décisive pour l'installation durable dans un réseau de relations. Dans la cohabitation, c'est l'organisation du silence qui préserve la coexistence de rythmes divers : faute de quoi, des *Wohnprojekte* se dissolvent, en ne

²² Friedman, 1968, 1978

²³ Benjamin, 2007: p. 427

²⁴ Fleury, 2022: pp. 4-8

surmontant pas l'asynchronie entre, par exemple, les parents et les habitants sans enfants. On voit donc bien que la qualité d'une cloison, l'isolation acoustique, ne relève pas seulement d'un confort superflu, mais engage la durabilité de la vie en commun. C'est que le silence, et à travers lui le mur, a profondément à voir avec le motif de l'« idiorythmie », présentée par Barthes comme le fantasme de la cohabitation idéale²⁵. Cette idiorythmie est au cœur de notre problématique : si l'on suit l'étymologie évoquée par Barthes, le *ruthmos*, c'est le « pattern d'un élément fluide »²⁶, c'est-à-dire au fond, la régularité dans un mouvement. Mais, dans la cohabitation, le mouvement n'est plus individuel, il est pluriel, et donc complexe. Ce que la régularité engage alors, c'est l'accord durable entre *plusieurs* mouvements singuliers. Et si cet accord ne peut être spontané et organique, comment l'organiser tout en respectant la mouvance propre à chaque rythme individuel ? Car, Barthes y insiste, l'idiorythmie rejette l'institution, en rejetant le pouvoir, qui est toujours celui d'un rythme imposé. Encore une fois, l'architecture semble mise face à un dilemme qui est aussi celui de la résistance : ou bien renoncer à la qualité qui garantirait une stabilité, aussi bien matérielle que relationnelle ; ou bien céder à la rigidité et à l'institutionnalisation, au risque d'outrepasser les besoins singuliers et mouvants des habitants.

Ce dilemme se retrouve dans la tension qui oppose, chez Friedman, l'architecture mobile et l'architecture de survie. La première met l'accent sur l'adaptation constante du monde à nos besoins ; la seconde, au contraire, cherche à maintenir un équilibre parfait, et interdit toute intervention sur le milieu²⁷. Au lieu d'une architecture toujours transformable, elle doit donc être une architecture sans trace, capable d'accepter le donné tel qu'il est. Le problème est que, ramenées dos à dos, l'architecture mobile comme l'architecture de survie nous font perdre sur les deux tableaux. Au fond, ni l'une ni l'autre ne semblent disposées à nous rendre la durée, c'est-à-dire la dimension de l'avenir dans l'habitat : l'architecture mobile n'organise aucune continuité, elle interrompt sans cesse le processus d'installation, de familiarisation avec l'habitat ; quant à la l'architecture de survie, elle nous confine dans un présent éternel : en figeant le *statu quo*, elle interdit toute transformation, et donc tentative d'épouser le mouvement du devenir. Au contraire, l'architecture de survie est contenue dans les limites strictes de « ici et maintenant », puisque : « survivre est un verbe qui se conjugue surtout au présent. »²⁸

Cette architecture sans trace semble nous enjoindre à changer nos désirs plutôt que l'ordre du monde. Friedman prend, à titre de contre-exemple, la figure de Robinson²⁹, détruisant son île et l'écosystème fragile qui y préexistait, pour réinstaurer l'ordre des choses qui lui est familier. Mais ne pourrait-on pas voir dans l'attitude

²⁵ Barthes, 2002: p. 38

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Friedman, 1978 : p. 121: « L'architecture de survie forme un ensemble dans lequel on ne saurait introduire n'importe quel objet nouveau, pas plus qu'accroître ou diminuer impunément l'importance des objets ».

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 104

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 116

de Robinson plus qu'un simple caprice destructeur ? Ne se joue-t-il pas justement là une tentative pour aménager un espace dans lequel l'avenir soit concevable pour lui ? La réponse de Friedman porterait peut-être sur une exigence de réciprocité, dans la relation entre habitant et habitat, qu'il compare à un mariage³⁰. Pour que cette relation dure, il faut qu'elle soit mutuelle. En fait, avec l'architecture de survie, la dynamique transformatrice reste possible, mais se retourne : elle n'est plus dirigée vers le monde, mais vers nous-mêmes. Le bruit par exemple, apparaîtrait alors comme ce qu'il faut intégrer à notre paysage mental, plutôt que ce qu'il faut à tout prix endiguer derrière d'épaisses cloisons. Ce ne sont pas les choses qui doivent être ajustées, mais l'usage qu'on en fait ; et plutôt que de plier la matière à nous besoins, il s'agit de nous adapter aux contraintes matérielles. Cela est bien possible : tout l'objet du *Wohnprojekt* est de changer non seulement l'espace mais avant tout un rapport à l'espace. En ce sens, la créativité dans la cohabitation serait à penser moins sur le mode de la transformation que sur celui du détournement. Il suffit par exemple de laisser ouvertes des portes pensées pour être verrouillées ; ainsi, les espaces communs, comme les escaliers, les couloirs, d'ordinaire désaffectés, abandonnés à l'anonymat, sont investis, décorés, entretenus collectivement. Ils ne sont plus seulement des lieux de passage, mais des espaces habités. On peut d'ailleurs voir sur ce point une traduction très concrète de l'idée arendtienne selon laquelle la politique a toujours partie liée avec l'entre-deux, les espaces intermédiaires, interstitiels. Une autre façon de détourner l'espace sans le transformer tient à la façon dont on le quantifie. Par exemple, de nombreux *Wohnprojekte* n'établissent pas leur loyer proportionnellement à un nombre de mètres carrés, mais à la seule participation dans la communauté ; quelle que soit leur taille, toutes les chambres sont donc estimées au même prix, car elles valent toute insertion dans le foyer. C'est le rapport à l'espace lui-même que réinventent les *Wohnprojekte*, en contrant l'idée que seul l'espace assigné puisse être valorisé. Si la chambre a une valeur, c'est non seulement en tant qu'espace de retrait et d'appropriation, mais aussi en tant que point d'accès ouvrant sur les espaces partagés.

Toutes ces stratégies sont à penser sur le modèle de la ruse, qui négocie avec la matérialité sans la détruire. Il faudrait plutôt voir dans les limitations et l'adversité, une source de fécondité et de créativité. Chez Friedman, cette valorisation de la contrainte matérielle³¹ vient du glissement entre architecture mobile et architecture de survie ; alors que la première était motivée par une exigence de liberté, l'architecture de survie trouve son impulsion dans le constat d'une pauvreté croissante. C'est pourquoi les stratégies de détournement reposent sur le compromis : elles prennent acte, dans leurs dynamiques subversives, d'un résidu de matérialité avec lequel il faut compter. Ce sont des résistances qui admettent une résistance *en retour* de la

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 17

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 15 : « C'est la société du monde pauvre qui est en train d'inventer l'architecture de survie. »

réalité³². La question est finalement celle de la façon dont l'action politique – qu'elle soit d'ailleurs transformatrice ou fondatrice – se heurte à la matérialité du déjà-là, à la réalité d'un donné qui résiste à nos propres résistances. Cette matérialité du réel qui résiste peut se décliner selon deux déterminations : d'une part, la matérialité du déjà-là, de l'espace et de la façon dont il est physiquement occupé, donc déjà configuré selon un ordre préalable. Tout réagencement se heurte à une organisation préexistante qui limite les reconfigurations. Sur le plan architectural, cette matérialité correspondrait à l'infrastructure, que même l'architecture mobile ne pouvait pas transformer. D'autre part, en un sens plus symbolique, la matérialité serait celle du cadre au sein duquel s'insère toute initiative politique ; Elle n'est plus alors spatiale mais socio-économique ou politique. Par ses rémanences, cet ordre préexistant limite toujours déjà la construction comme la transformation. C'est la politique telle qu'elle est, le rapport de pouvoir en place, résistant à la politisation qui se donne comme potentialité et tentative, mais non comme déjà accomplie.

Dans les deux cas, le résidu de matérialité, qui résiste à l'action transformatrice comme fondatrice, peut être rattaché à la figure du cadre. Dans le vocabulaire de Barthes, le cadre renvoie justement à la dimension irréductible du pouvoir, qui vient limiter la liberté, ou la renverser en marginalité. C'est que le cadre – souvent rectangulaire, c'est-à-dire, selon Barthes, prenant la forme archétypique du pouvoir³³ – vient toujours enserrer de nouveau ses dissidents, ou les condamner à l'exclusion en les enfermant hors de lui-même. Avec les *Wohnprojekte*, on a énuméré des façons politiques de détourner la matérialité spatiale, physique. Mais le problème est que l'ordre du monde n'est pas seulement un ordre physique, c'est un ordre socio-politique et, en ce sens, accepter l'ordre du monde revient à suivre le désir des dominants. Ce problème du cadre politique est finalement celui que se pose toute pratique de résistance, qui se définit forcément en référence à ce contre quoi, c'est-à-dire aussi ce dans quoi elle résiste. Les pratiques subversives viennent toujours s'insérer dans un cadre qui menacent de les asphyxier, ou de les récupérer.

L'asphyxie³⁴, ce serait l'écueil de la rigidité qui écrase tout germe d'inventivité : le cadre d'un marché immobilier saturé peut par exemple entraver les expérimentations de cohabitation ; Ce fut aussi le destin des *Einküchenhaus* – des foyers où les cuisines devaient être partagées par plusieurs familles – que l'on peut voir comme l'un des ancêtres des *Wohnprojekte*. Lily Braun³⁵ évoque à ce sujet, dans ses mémoires, l'erreur d'avoir voulu réaliser des idées socialistes dans un cadre capitaliste – comme de « vieux utopistes vaincus ». La récupération quant à elle correspondrait à la façon dont le cadre vient rattraper l'expérimentation pour la faire

³² À l'inverse, il faudrait douter, avec Bourdieu, « de la réalité d'une résistance qui fait abstraction de la résistance de la "réalité" ». Bourdieu, 1997 : p. 157

³³ Barthes, 2002 : p. 159

³⁴ Dans les termes de Friedman, elle correspondrait à l'immobilisme qui menace toute utopie. Pour la contrebalancer, il propose une « anti-routine » qui prendrait la forme d'un feedback permanent, préservant le mouvement dans et contre un ordre massif et consolidé par le cadre préalable. Friedman, 1978 : p. 172

³⁵ Braun, 1909 : pp. 325-326

rentrer dans le moule. C'est ce qui arrive par exemple quand une plateforme d'accueil gratuite de voyageurs par des particuliers, comme *couchsurfing*, est transposée sur un modèle rentable, comme *airbnb*. C'est que la stratégie du détournement va dans les deux sens, les tentatives de résistance pouvant à leur tour être mises à profit par le pouvoir. Ainsi, le foyer en devenant la dernière enclave de solidarité dans une logique sociale compétitive, peut prendre en charge des responsabilités trop lourdes qui finissent par accabler les individus.

Au fond, c'est bien l'extériorité entre le cadre et ce qu'il encadre – entre le pouvoir et les personnes, qui pose donc problème : tantôt trop vertical, tantôt trop à distance, il retire toute initiative aux individus, ou, en la leur déléguant complètement, en fait le privilège des quelques-uns qui peuvent porter cette responsabilité. Pour sortir de ce face à face entre le pouvoir et l'individu, Friedman propose la compartimentation de groupes intermédiaires, qui revient aussi à démultiplier les encadrements. Plutôt que de penser un grand cadre – le gouvernement, centralisé –, il s'agit de disperser plusieurs petits cadres autonomes. Ils prennent chez Friedman plusieurs figures : celle des multiples bateaux de sauvetage, lancés sur les flots quand le grand navire fait naufrage ; ou encore, celle du village urbain ; mais surtout, celle du bidonvillage³⁶. Selon ce modèle, le bidonvillage est séparé du reste du bidonville par une digue-enclos, qui délimite un espace interne de solidarité. Cette fragmentation en îlots de solidarité repose chez Friedman sur le thème récurrent du « groupe critique », c'est-à-dire d'une limite numérique au-delà de laquelle l'organisation collective et solidaire n'est plus possible. Toutefois, chaque bidonvillage étant centripète, regardant vers l'intérieur plutôt que vers l'extérieur, le cloisonnement n'engendre pas de conflictualité entre bidonvillages. Leurs frontières deviennent même parfois des espaces de rencontre, en des occasions commerciales ou festives.

Restent deux problèmes. D'abord, celui des surnuméraires, ceux qui ne trouveront aucun bateau de sauvetage, aucun bidonvillage, mais resteront confinés éternellement dans un « labyrinthe de barbelés ». C'est l'expression employée par Arendt pour décrire la situation de l'apatride, « privé d'une place dans le monde » et condamné à la « *homelessness* »³⁷. Peu souhaitable ce cloisonnement trop rigide est peut-être aussi mal pensé. C'est qu'il n'y a jamais de délimitation si claire entre les espaces, qui, comme on l'a dit au départ, se donnent toujours sur le mode de l'intrication dans l'expérience vécue³⁸. Il s'agirait donc de renoncer à l'homogénéité et à l'autosuffisance de ces îlot de survie, en rappelant que nous cohabitons en réalité toujours à diverses échelles qui s'entrecroisent : la maison, la rue, le quartier, la ville, le pays, etc. Le foyer ne serait alors plus à penser sur le modèle du boîtier,

³⁶ Friedman, 1978 : pp. 131-136

³⁷ Arendt, 2002 : p. 291

³⁸ Perec pousse cette idée à son extrême en évoquant la possibilité de penser le foyer non plus sur le mode de la concentration, mais sur celui de la dispersion : « Pourquoi ne pas privilégier la dispersion ? Au lieu de vivre dans un lieu unique, en cherchant vainement à s'y rassembler, pourquoi n'aurait-on pas, éparpillées dans Paris, cinq ou six chambres ? » Perec, 1974 : p. 116

de l'emboîtement, mais sur celui, plus complexe, de l'imbrication. Au lieu d'être vue comme un obstacle, ce croisement des échelles peut devenir un levier d'action, mobilisant selon les circonstances divers types de coalition. Il faut ici distinguer l'auto-organisation de l'auto-suffisance. L'architecture de survie était inspirée par la perspective de la pauvreté, et non plus par celle de la liberté. Friedman se situait en ce sens à l'extrême opposé de la vision politique d'Arendt, pour qui la liberté est le sens de la politique, tandis que la nécessité est sa menace la plus grande. Mais le motif de l'imbrication pourrait peut-être nous faire entrevoir une réconciliation entre Friedman et Arendt, c'est-à-dire entre le fait de la pauvreté et l'exigence de la liberté. De même que la pénurie était, selon Friedman, mère de l'innovation sociale et technique, de même l'enchevêtrement, plutôt que d'être vu comme une source de limitation, pourrait être issue vers d'autres formes de solidarité et d'engagement. C'est ce que peut illustrer le modèle des villes-solidaires qui, juridiquement, vont chercher des soutiens à toutes les échelles, par exemple à la fois aux niveaux municipaux et européens, pour contourner des limitations de leur droit national et protéger malgré tout les personnes vulnérables.

Plutôt donc que de réduire les dépendances, comme nous y enjoint Friedman en appelant à l'autosuffisance, il s'agirait au contraire de les renforcer, mais sur le mode de la solidarité, de l'engagement, plutôt que sur celui de l'exploitation. Sélectionner ses dépendances, c'est cela en quelque sorte l'enjeu de la cohabitation. L'interdépendance, redoutée aussi par Friedman que par Arendt, devient alors la brèche pour une saillie de libertés nouvelles, et le réseau des interdépendances n'est plus alors ce qui ligote les résistances, mais au contraire le tissu dans lequel elles peuvent trouver leur assise.

Bibliographie

- Arendt, H., 1994 [1958], *Condition de l'homme moderne*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, trad. G Fradier
- Arendt, H., 1972 [1968], *La Crise de la culture*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, trad. J Bontemps et P Lévy
- Arendt, H., 1972, *Crises of the Republic*, Harcourt, Brace & Co, p.
- Arendt, H., « On Hannah Arendt », in *Hannah Arendt : The Recovery of the Public World*, Hill, M. ed., 1979, New York, St Martin's Press, pp. 301-341
- Arendt, H., 2001, *Qu'est-ce que la politique ?*, Paris, Seuil
- Arendt, H., 2002 [1951], *Les Origines du totalitarisme*, Paris, Seuil
- Barthes, R., 2002, *Comment vivre ensemble*, Paris, Seuil
- Benjamin, W., 1998 [1974] *Images de pensée*, Paris, Christian Bourgois éditeur, trad. JF Poirier et J Lacoste
- Benjamin, W., 2007, *Das Passagen-Werk [français]*, Paris, L'Herne
- Braun, L., 1909, *Memoiren einer Sozialistin*, Berlin
- Bourdieu, P., 2003 [1997], *Méditations pascaliennes*, Paris, Seuil
- Fleury, C., 2022, *Ce qui ne peut être volé*, Paris, Gallimard
- Friedman, Y., 1968, *L'Architecture mobile*, Paris, Édition de l'Éclat
- Friedman, Y., 1978, *L'architecture de survie*, Paris, Édition de l'Éclat
- Perec, G., 1974, *Espèces d'espaces*, Paris, Galilée
- Rilke, 1966 [1910], *Les Cahiers de Malte*, Paris, Seuil, traduction M Betz, dans Id., *Œuvres*, Prose, vol. 1, Paris, Seuil, 1966, 547-716

A Insurreição do Desejo

The Insurrection of Desire

Peter Pál Pelbart

Resumo

O artigo começa pela apresentação de algumas das teses sobre insurreição defendidas pelo grupo francês anónimo “Comité Invisível” num livro de 2014 intitulado “Aos nossos amigos: crise e insurreição”. Não porque essas teses sejam verdadeiras, ou porque concordemos com todas elas, mas porque várias delas podem ser usadas para enriquecer a análise de algumas situações políticas contemporâneas, bem como para catapultar a nossa imaginação política. Particular atenção é dada ao Brasil como o primeiro laboratório continental para a experimentação da tecnologia suave de fabricação de crises políticas e económicas, a qual, segundo o grupo francês, constitui uma tecnologia de governo, uma forma calculada de retomada do poder pelo conservadorismo mais regressivo sob o manto da legalidade. Resta saber se o Brasil pode ser também o laboratório continental para a experimentação de uma insurreição política e simultaneamente afetiva que possa inventar novas formas de exercer a política e transformar a existência colectiva.

Keywords: relentamento, aceleracionismo, dessensibilização, território, afecto

CONTACT: Peter Pál Pelbart
(PUC-SP, Brazil)
pppelbart@gmail.com



Aion Journal of Philosophy and Science

© 2024 the Authors

This work is licensed under a

[Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) License.

Abstract

The article starts by the presentation of some of the theses on insurrection defended by the anonymous French group “Invisible Committee” in a 2014 book entitled “To our friends: Crisis and Insurrection”. Not because those theses are true, or because we agree with all of them, but because several of them can be used to enrich the analysis of some contemporary political situations as well as they can catapult our political imagination. Particular attention is given to Brazil as the first continental laboratory for the experimentation of the soft technology of fabrication of political and economic crises that, according to the French group, constitutes a technology of government, a calculated way of retaking power by the most regressive conservatism under the cloak of legality. It remains to be seen whether Brazil can also be the continental laboratory for the experimentation of a political and simultaneously affective insurrection that can invent new ways of exercising politics and transforming collective existence.

Keywords: slowness, accelerationism, desensitization, territory, affection

Pretendo partir de algumas hipóteses publicadas num texto de 2014, escrito por um grupo francês anónimo chamado Comitê Invisível, e intitulado *Aos nossos amigos: Crise e Insurreição*¹. E por quê justamente este livro, agora? Porque, na sua primeira parte, ele mostra como a fabricação de uma crise, política e económica, constitui uma tecnologia de governo, um modo calculado de retomada do poder pelo conservadorismo mais regressivo sob o manto da legalidade – e o Brasil é o exemplo mais vivo e recente disso. Aliás, o Brasil foi o primeiro laboratório continental para a experimentação dessa tecnologia *soft* de Crise e Golpe, com *know-how* importado da potência do Norte. Falta ver se o Brasil também pode ser o laboratório continental para a experimentação de um contragolpe, dado num outro plano – quero dizer, uma insurreição política e afectiva ao mesmo tempo, não apenas focada em apagar do poder a corja de bandidos que ali se instalou, mas que também, ao mesmo tempo, possa inventar novos modos de exercício da política e da transformação da existência colectiva.

A Insurreição

Tomo então a liberdade de apresentar sucintamente algumas das reflexões sobre a insurreição presentes no livro mencionado. Não porque sejam verdadeiras, ou por estarmos de acordo com todas elas, mas porque várias delas podem ser aproveitadas para catapultar a nossa imaginação política. Eis algumas delas:

¹ Comitê Invisível, *Aos nossos amigos: Crise e Insurreição*, São Paulo, n-1 edições, 2016.

1 – As lutas actuais não se dão tanto em torno da natureza das instituições, mas da forma de vida desejável. Qual é a forma de vida que desejamos? É uma pergunta talvez mais ética do que política, no sentido em que se refere antes à maneira de viver do que à conquista do poder. Talvez a força dos islamistas esteja no sistema de prescrições éticas que eles oferecem, como se eles tivessem compreendido que é no terreno da ética, e não no da política, que o combate se trava. Portanto, trata-se das formas de vida, das ideias sobre o que é viver. E contraposição à ética do ISIS, haveria a ética dos povos indígenas (que a Constituição equatoriana incorporou), a do *Buen Vivir*². Não se trata do acúmulo de bens, mas, como o traduziu Eduardo Viveiros de Castro e Déborah Danowski, de uma “suficiência intensiva”³. Como deslocar-se da lógica do acúmulo, aceleração, progresso, destruição, para reorientar-se em direcção a uma vida “intensivamente” suficiente, e não quantitativamente ideal?

2 – A insurreição não deveria obedecer a critérios numéricos, mas qualitativos. Não é uma maioria estatística que se insurge (mesmo que uma maioria possa se indignar). É uma combinatória de coragem, determinação, confiança em si, sentido estratégico, energia colectiva que uma insurreição pode começar. Não se trata de esperar o consenso através de assembleias infinitas, que tantas vezes sequestram uma energia imensa, mas ensinar algo da ordem do fato consumado, da iniciativa, do gesto, da decisão – num certo sentido, uma velocidade que dissolve os mecanismos democráticos que em geral operam como freios ao movimento e à sua celeridade.

3 – A insurreição é da ordem da cólera ou da alegria, não da angústia ou do tédio.

4 – Não se trata de constituir, mas de destituir. Contra a tese de Negri a respeito do poder constituinte, que daria fundamento, legitimidade à revolução, aqui o acento está em destituir o poder, privá-lo de fundamento, privá-lo de legitimidade, assumir a dimensão arbitrária e contingente, sempre em situação, de qualquer formação de poder. A destituição insurrecional...

5 – Não se trata de reivindicar para si o governo, ou de assumi-lo; mas de negá-lo: sair do paradigma do governo: não há que governar pessoas ou coisas, ou se deixar governar, mas justamente desfazer-se inteiramente da ideia de governo – embora a subtracção seja afirmação de outra coisa...

6 – Na esteira de Foucault, o poder não é visto sob o prisma da Lei, do Rei, do Estado ou da Soberania, mas sim da governamentalidade, algo mais anónimo e gasoso, porém não menos efectivo. O que opera hoje não é alguém que manda, nem mesmo uma instituição, mas mecanismos que conduzem as condutas de uma população, que configuram um ambiente, um meio, a partir do qual se modelam as

² Alberto Acosta, *O Bem Viver*, São Paulo, Autonomia Literária/Elefante, 2016.

³ Déborah Danowski e Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Há mundo por vir?*, Florianópolis, Desterro, 2014.

possibilidades, desejos, modos de pensar, crenças, medos, etc. Portanto, trata-se hoje de agir sobre o meio, pois é nesse plano que vemos instaurar-se uma governança através dos equipamentos urbanos que organizam, tecnológica e mercantilmente, a vida de forma imanente: “a verdadeira estrutura do poder é a organização material, tecnológica, física deste mundo. *O governo não está mais no governo*”. Donde o ataque a equipamentos, megaprojectos, ainda que o embate ao nível dessa materialidade soe como um sacrilégio, como de fato é: a ofensa ao equipamento público é um ataque aos instrumentos de uma governamentalidade. Como o pode se tornar “ambiental”, assim também os protestos devem sê-lo.

7 – Já que o governo se dá pelo monitoramento dos fluxos, trata-se de bloquear, de interromper os próprios fluxos, a fim de abrir a situação. “É pelos fluxos que o mundo se mantém. Bloqueemos tudo”.

8 – A consigna de voltar à terra, e à luta concreta, e não apenas institucional ou dirigida contra os representantes, significa reconectar-se com as condições de existência, de sua materialidade, tecnológica, cibernética, ambiental. O Movimento Parque Augusta seria um belo exemplo local⁴

9 – Os autores falam em revolução, mas a redefinem na esteira espinosana ou deleuziana: “A verdadeira questão para os revolucionários é a de fazer crescer as potências vivas das quais eles participam, de cuidar dos *devires*-revolucionários a fim de chegar a uma *situação* revolucionária.” Ao cuidado aí empenhado, eles chamam de “tato”, em contraposição a uma mera radicalidade abstracta. “A lógica do aumento da potência, eis tudo o que se pode opor à tomada do poder”. Talvez seja a isso que assistimos em várias ocupações, onde as reivindicações concretas são apenas parte do movimento.

10 – Não há ninguém para *organizar*. No fundo, não existe a *população*. A população é fruto do poder, é uma fabricação sua, a fim de que seja governável. É preciso dissolvê-la, para dissolver o desejo de governá-la, isto é, o desejo de privá-la de suas forças, de “cortar os governados de seu poder de agir político”, que aliás é o que faz a polícia cada vez que tenta “isolar os violentos” para massacrar a insurreição, produzindo uma cisão entre uns e outros, e, no fim, “fabricar” supostos terroristas, o monstro clandestino. Daí esse estranho postulado: tentam produzir-nos como sujeito político (anarquistas, black bloc, pertencentes a tal ou qual movimento ou partido) e o revide necessário: “Quando a repressão cai sobre nós, comecemos por não

⁴ Movimento de protesto que, ao fim de duas dezenas de anos de luta contra os interesses de empresas privadas de construção, conseguiu que um extenso terreno ajardinado, localizado no centro da cidade de S. Paulo, conhecido como Parque Augusta, fosse oficialmente constituído como bem comum, aberto ao usufruto de todos. A abertura ao público, ordenada pelo Tribunal de Justiça de São Paulo em 2019, permitiu que o parque fosse inaugurado em 6 de novembro de 2021 (NR).

nos tomarmos por nós mesmos, dissolvamos o sujeito-terrorista fantasmático que os teóricos da contra-insurreição se esforçam tanto em imitar”.

11 – Habitar plenamente, é o que se pode contrapor ao paradigma do governo. Isso significa confiar na rede de relações entre pessoas que são elas mesmas formas de organização, investindo nos detalhes quotidianos. A insurreição é indissociável da vida quotidiana, ordinária, e constitui, dentro dela, uma espécie de salto ético. Não há distinção entre espontaneísmo e organização.

12 – Assim como não existe “a população”, tampouco existe “a sociedade”, essa totalização abstracta. Mais e mais, vemos emergir um sistema de selecção – são seleccionados uns poucos, zonas de forte extracção de mais-valia, e o resto é considerado inempregável; as *smart cities* e as periferias abandonadas. Por exemplo, os secundaristas⁵ entendem que as escolas que frequentam são feitas, não para ensinar, mas para descartá-los do sistema, já que as universidades são destinadas às elites provenientes do ensino privado. Os secundaristas reagem ocupando aquilo que está destinado a ser dejetado, e reviram por completo a sua função, dizendo: «Não seremos descartados». A própria classe média vai sofrendo no seu interior esse processo de selecção, entre os *smart* e os idiotas, incompetentes, atrasados, numa progressiva segregação. É, como dizia Foucault, a lógica da biopolítica - «fazer morrer ou deixar viver»⁶. Diante disso, trata-se de habitar um território, assumir uma forma de vida, e, desde aí, entrar em conflito ou em cumplicidade, desenhando uma outra geografia do conflito, uma geografia intensiva. No fundo, é a ideia de que não se trata de defender um território, mas uma maneira de viver que, no entanto, se inventa ao longo da luta. No Movimento Parque Augusta isso ficou claro – eles diziam: «isto não é uma ocupação, não queremos instalar-nos ou apoderar-nos dessa terra». Volto ao livro: só existe o “conjunto dos liames, das amizades, das inimizades, das proximidades e das distâncias efectivas de que fazemos a experiência. Só existem os potenciais... Um formigamento de mundos, um mundo feito de vários mundos...”.

13 – Não se trata, pois, de territórios, nem de categorias sociais, mas de mundos. Um mundo deve ser cuidado assim que surge, mas não é sua singularidade que o impede de conectar-se com todos os outros mundos ou modos de existência, como o provaram os zapatistas. A intensificação do que se experimenta abre para vários outros mundos.

14 – “O Estado é a máfia que venceu todas as outras, e que ganhou em troca o direito de as tratar como criminosos”. Contudo, não se trata de reivindicar a sociedade civil contra o Estado, já que ela também é parte desse jogo, ela se incumbe

⁵ Movimento estudantil desencadeado na década de 1960 no Brasil.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *História da Sexualidade – I. A vontade de saber*, trad. Pedro Tamen, Lisboa, Relógio d’Água, 1994, p. 138.

de uma espécie de “responsabilidade adulta”, uma postura que supõe benevolência, o recalque dos afetos vitais, etc. É muito pouco, fiar-se na “sociedade civil” e seu cortejo de compromissos.

15 – Nossa força de choque é feita da intensidade daquilo que vivemos, da alegria que dali emana, das formas de expressão que ali se inventam, da capacidade colectiva de persistir... Na inconsistência geral das relações sociais, os revolucionários devem singularizar-se pela densidade de pensamento, de afecção, de fineza, de organização, e não por sua disposição à cisão, à intransigência...

16 – *A res communes* é o que resiste e escapa à reificação, à sua, paradoxalmente, transformação em *res*, em coisa. É a ideia de Agamben sobre o livre uso do comum, em contraposição a Negri, que pensa o comum como a própria produção no capitalismo, e a democracia do comum, que seria um governo do comum... É uma antiga briga de vizinhos: os autores encasquetam com Negri, e a meu ver de maneira injusta, pois também em Negri o eixo é o comum e o seu uso livre. Simplesmente, Negri considera que isso se engendra no interior do capitalismo, e que não precisa, para ser defendido, que se recorra aos franciscanos, como faz Agamben...

17 – As necessidades são fabricadas. Não há necessidades dadas, naturais, mas elas se inventam conforme os modos de vida. “Habitava-se uma certa porção deste mundo e sabia-se como se nutrir, vestir, divertir, fazer um teto. As necessidades foram historicamente produzidas e arrancaram os homens de seu mundo. Que isso tenha tomado a forma da *razzia*, da expropriação, das *encolures* ou da colonização, pouco importa... A comuna responde às necessidades de eliminar em nós o ser da necessidade”.

18 – A pergunta permanece: como um conjunto de potências situadas pode constituir uma força mundial? Em todo o caso, foi preciso desertar o ritual das contra-cúpulas com seus ativistas profissionais e seus previsíveis distúrbios, seus *slogans* esvaziados, para atingir os territórios vividos – abandonar a abstracção do global pela atração local, que, no entanto, é indissociável do global.

19 – Não se trata mais de entrar na armadilha dialética de juntar-se frente a um inimigo comum, que assim faria a unidade da luta. Ao invés do modelo dialético, o modelo estratégico retoma as conexões possíveis entre termos díspares, onde a lógica da conexão da heterogeneidade não é mesma que a da homogeneização do contraditório. O inimigo é aquilo que a cada vez se apresenta, se impõe – “O que os liga são gestos de resistência que dele decorrem – o bloqueio, a ocupação, o distúrbio, a sabotagem, como ataques diretos contra a produção de valor para a circulação de informação e de mercadorias, etc...”

20 – Apenas na página 232 do original os autores mencionam explicitamente Deleuze, que no entanto atravessa tantas páginas do livro sem ser citado, e é curioso

como o usam: “Devemos ser desde o início, escrevia o camarada Deleuze há mais de 40 anos, mais centralistas que os centralistas. É evidente que a máquina revolucionária não pode contentar-se com as lutas locais e pontuais: híper desejante e híper centralizada, ela deve ser tudo ao mesmo tempo. O problema diz respeito à natureza da unificação que deve operar transversalmente, através de uma multiplicidade, e não verticalmente, de modo a massacrar essa multiplicidade própria ao desejo”.

21 – Como construir uma força que não seja uma organização? De novo, é o dilema espontaneísmo/organização, que, segundo eles, é um falso problema, pois repousa sobre uma cegueira, uma incapacidade em perceber as formas de organização que subjazem ao que se chama de espontâneo. “Toda a vida, *a fortiori* toda a vida comum, segrega, de dentro de si mesma, modos de ser, de falar, de produzir, de se amar, de lutar, regularidades, portanto, hábitos, uma linguagem, formas.”. O problema é que deixamos de enxergar essas formas naquilo que vive.

A Resistência

Deixo agora os meus “amigos”, suas observações por vezes muito justas, outras injustas, muitíssimas delas retomadas de outros pensadores que eles não citam ou saqueiam sem os referir, o que, agora, aqui, não tem importância alguma. Que eles construam uma cartografia com elementos vindos de alhures, ou que adotem posições que eles mesmos encarnavam há dez anos atrás, isso tudo são polêmicas insignificantes para o que agora nos importa, e que eles trazem numa formulação instigante, embora deixem de lado uma reflexão urgente sobre o estatuto das instituições.

Retomo uma pergunta que não deixa de nos atazanar, e que atravessa alguns dos pontos evocados acima. O que significa resistir, hoje? Uma das respostas interessantes foi formulada por Toni Negri. Se há algumas décadas a resistência obedecia a uma matriz dialética, de oposição direta entre as forças em jogo, onde havia um poder concebido como centro de comando e que cabia a todos disputar, com a subjetividade identitária dos protagonistas definida pela sua exterioridade recíproca e complementaridade dialética – dominante/dominado, colonizador/colonizado, explorador/explorado, patrão/empregado, trabalhador intelectual/ trabalhador manual, professor/aluno, pai/filho, etc – o contexto pós-moderno, dada a sua complexidade, suscita posicionamentos mais oblíquos, diagonais, híbridos, flutuantes. Surgem outros traçados de conflitualidade. Talvez que, com isso, a função da própria negatividade, na política e na cultura, precise se revista. Como diz Toni Negri:

“Para a modernidade, a resistência [era] uma acumulação de forças contra a exploração, que se subjetiva através da «tomada de consciência». Na época pós-moderna, nada disso acontece. A resistência se dá como a difusão de

comportamentos resistentes e singulares. Se ela se acumula, ela o faz de maneira extensiva, isto é, pela circulação, a mobilidade, a fuga, o êxodo, a deserção: trata-se de multidões que resistem de maneira difusa e escapam das gaiolas sempre mais estreitas da miséria e do poder. Não há necessidade de tomada de consciência coletiva para tanto: o sentido da rebelião é endêmico e atravessa cada consciência, tornando-a orgulhosa. O efeito do comum, que se atrelou a cada singularidade enquanto qualidade antropológica, consiste precisamente nisso. A rebelião não é, pois, pontual nem uniforme: ela percorre ao contrário os espaços do comum e se difunde sob a forma de uma explosão dos comportamentos das singularidades que é impossível conter.”⁷.

Foi o que se viu também durante as manifestações de junho de 2013, no Brasil⁸ e em outros lugares do planeta. Muitos tiveram dificuldades em apreender o que houve de “novo” num movimento tão imprevisto, imponderável, para não dizer intempestivo. A Turquia, o Egito, a Espanha, tiveram obviamente sua parte de contágio e, apesar das diferenças notáveis de contexto, todas essas manifestações guardam certo ar de familiaridade. Mas, nesses casos, o autoritarismo ou a crise económica pareciam “explicar” os protestos. Diferente foi o caso brasileiro. Ainda hoje nos perguntámos: mas afinal, o que queriam os que saíram às ruas? Mais saúde, educação, serviços, menos corrupção, mais transparência, uma reforma do sistema político? Ou tudo isso, claro, e algo ainda mais radical: um outro modo de pensar a própria relação entre a libido social e os poderes instituídos, ou simplesmente a expressão de um esgotamento dos modos de vida predominantes, no sentido mais radical da palavra.

Relentamento cosmopolítico

Num belo livro sobre o fim do mundo, que inspirou parcialmente o Comitê Invisível, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro e Déborah Danowski⁹, defendem uma ecologia política do ralentamento, da hesitação, da atenção; contra o aceleracionismo, o “ralentamento cosmopolítico”, uma frenagem, uma suspensão. No filme *Melancholia*, de Lars von Trier¹⁰, os poucos que percebem o que está a acontecer refugiam-se

⁷ Antonio Negri, *Kairòs, Alma Venus, multitude*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 2000.

⁸ [Séria de grandes mobilizações populares que ocorreram em 2013, simultaneamente em mais de quinhentas cidades do país e que foram precedidas em 2005, pelo Movimento Passe Livre](#), que reclamava tarifa zero nos transportes públicos e se definia como horizontal, autônomo e apartidário.

⁹ Débora Danowsky e Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Há mundo por vir?*

¹⁰ *Melancholia*, de 2011, filme de ficção científica, escrito e dirigido por Lars von Trier

numa cabana feita de galhos, que não os protegerá do evento irreversível, da colisão com um astro vindo do espaço, mas que, através de um ritual, fará do choque um acontecimento, no sentido forte da palavra. Dizem os autores: “a cabana é a única coisa, naquele momento, capaz de transformar o efeito inescapável do choque em um *acontecimento*, no sentido que Deleuze-Guattari emprestam a esse conceito: «a parte, em tudo que acontece, do que escapa à sua própria actualização»”¹¹. “Ali, naquela cabana quase puramente virtual (...) o que se passa, o *passé*, é uma operação de desaceleração, de ralentamento”¹². Sim, há o traço de um ritual, de um devir-índio nessa reacção. Mas, como dizem os autores:

“os povos autóctones do continente americano – os colectivos de humanos e não humanos cuja história remonta a milénios antes do choque com o planeta Mercadoria – são somente uma pequena parte da Resistência Terrana contemporânea, esse amplo movimento clandestino que apenas começa a se tornar visível no planeta invadido pelos Modernos: na África, na Oceania, na Mongólia, nos becos e porões da Fortaleza Europa. Os povos autóctones não estão realmente em posição de liderar nenhum combate final, nenhuma Armagedon cosmopolítica; e seria ridículo imaginá-los como a semente de uma nova Maioria. Não esperemos, sobretudo, que eles, se pudessem, correriam a nos salvar – a redimir ou justificar – aos Humanos que os perseguem implacavelmente há cinco séculos (...) uma coisa é certa: os colectivos ameríndios, com suas populações comparativamente modestas, suas tecnologias relativamente simples mas abertas a agenciamentos sincréticos de alta intensidade, são uma «figuração do futuro», não uma *sobrevivência do passado*. Mestres da bricolagem tecnoprimitivista e da metamorfose político-metafísica, eles são uma das chances possíveis, em verdade, da subsistência do futuro. Falar no *fim* do mundo é falar na necessidade de imaginar, antes que um *novo mundo* em lugar deste nosso mundo presente, um *novo povo*; o povo que falta. O povo que creia no mundo que ele deverá criar com o que de mundo nós deixamos a ele.”¹³

Ao abordar os paradoxos do “fim do mundo”, num momento em que Gaia faz irrupção em pleno Antropoceno, isto é, numa época em que a Terra e os seus actantes, humanos e não-humanos, redes, coletivos, povos, perspectivas, animismos, como que se insurgem contra a dominação universal do homem, com o seu progresso e a

(NE)

¹¹ Déborah Danowski e Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Op. cit.*, p. 162.

¹² *Ibidem.*

¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 164-5.

sua racionalidade, narcisismo, capitalismo e destruição, os dois autores retomam a idéia de Bruno Latour sobre a guerra dos mundos, entre, por um lado, o povo de Gaia, isto é, os Terranos, e, por outro, os ditos Modernos, aqueles que negaram a Terra, isto é, os Humanos, nós, ocidentais, americanos, chineses, brasileiros, indianos. E na conclusão, os autores insistem que é tempo de fazer os humanos reconhecerem que eles não são responsáveis pelos Terranos, mas são responsáveis *diante* deles – “Não há negociação possível sem essa admissão, não haverá a composição incontornável com Gaia se não nos convenceremos primeiro de que não há composição possível com a lógica absolutamente *não civilizável* do capitalismo”¹⁴.

Desejo e conexão

Numa perspectiva ligeiramente distinta, também um autor como Franco Berardi destaca os riscos do aceleracionismo desenfreado, da financeirização, da abstração digital que opera longe do corpo, e que, no limite, descarta o corpo e a afetividade¹⁵. A dessensibilização é um dos efeitos de tal virtualização generalizada. Daí a defesa que Berardi faz das mobilizações, cujo sentido ele vê, primeiramente, numa reativação da afetividade. Berardi pergunta: “Por quê ocupar uma praça, uma rua ou um território, já que ali não reside nenhum poder político e que o sistema financeiro não se localiza numa dimensão territorial – ele é a coisa mais desterritorializada do mundo?”. E ele responde: a primeira coisa de que precisam os trabalhadores precarizados é a reativação de uma dimensão afetiva e territorial que lhes permita reconstruir as condições emocionais da solidariedade. Uma sublevação coletiva, diz ele, é antes de mais nada um fenômeno físico, afetivo, erótico, a experiência de uma cumplicidade afetiva entre os corpos, dimensão essencial de qualquer sociabilidade. E isso não é uma visão piegas, do tipo, «vamos dar-nos as mãos». É algo muito mais radical, que talvez provenha da idéia de Deleuze-Guattari de que o desejo é revolucionário, na medida em que tende a cada vez mais conexões. E uma sociedade não pode tolerar isso, é preciso que ela discrimine as conexões legítimas das ilegítimas, as recomendáveis e as interditáveis, preservando assim as segmentações e os privilégios, bloqueando certos fluxos (do desejo) e acelerando outros (do capital). Como dizem ainda Viveiros de Castro e Danowsky, o que uma sociedade mais teme é que os fluxos corram soltos e se encontrem com outros fluxos. Imaginemos que o fluxo dos *Secundaristas* encontre o dos *Sem-terra*, que por sua vez se encontrem com os dos artistas, dos afrodescendentes, das periferias, das feministas, dos LGBTQI+ e de todos os malucos da terra, e que as ocupações de equipamentos coletivos e escritóri-

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 150.

¹⁵ http://www.eldiario.es/interferencias/bifo-sublevacion-afectos_132_4547116.html

os do governo e da administração se generalizassem, e que inventassem modos de unificação transversal, num tsunami rizomático...

Nada é possível, tudo é possível

Chega a hora das minhas parcas conclusões, essencialmente inconclusivas. Não sabemos bem que devires nos atravessam hoje, em quais direções. Só percebemos, e ainda assim bastante mal, o que é que eles vão deixando para trás como uma escama de cobra, que anteriormente nos identificava e que hoje olhamos com certo espanto, mal imaginando que aquilo ontem éramos nós. Falo das doutrinas, dos modos de organização, da representação política, das maneiras de viver, das modalidades de pensar, dos modos de existência que vão provando a sua caducidade. Molduras que ontem nos davam identidade, direção, expectativa, promessa, fizeram água – e seu luto não deveria empurrar-nos para qualquer postura melancólica. O que se esboça, ou desenha, não tem mais uma direção unívoca: para diante, por exemplo, ou para cima, nem sequer para baixo – antes para o lado, eu diria. Desfez-se a totalidade do tempo, ou o tempo como totalidade. Hölderlin chamou a tal disequilíbrio de cesura – a cesura é aquilo que não permite que começo e fim «rimem» – um disequilíbrio que nos faz viver nessa brecha e nas aberrações daí advindas, com as novas inquietações e emoções que lhe são próprias.

O psiquiatra catalão Tosquelles, mestre de toda uma geração da psiquiatria institucional francesa, anarquista histórico que participou na guerra civil espanhola, escreveu um livro estranho, chamado *O vivido do fim do mundo na loucura*¹⁶. Nesse livro, Tosquelles refere-se às situações de colapso em que o paciente sente, por vezes, que já *nada* é possível, e subitamente é tomado pela euforia de que doravante *tudo* é possível. Nada é possível – Tudo é possível; Nada é possível – Tudo é possível.

Não é estranho que vivamos algo similar? Como se oscilássemos da ameaça de que o pior ainda está por vir, e a cada dia pode explodir uma nova bomba política, institucional, jurídica, mediática, para a expectativa inversa: que nova ocupação vai surgir, que nova iniciativa, rebeldia, sublevação pode aparecer no meio dessa energia que por vezes parece colocar-nos num estado pré-insurrecional? Não é essa discrepância abissal que nos deixa numa posição estranhamente esquizofrénica, hoje? Quando a desmedida do poder faz com que o «Tudo é possível» seja uma expressão medonha, que equivale a «Nada mais é possível», porque sempre pode ser pior, e, quando ao contrário, sentimos, no meio do desmoronamento generalizado, que é justo nesse momento que nos vemos impelidos a reinventar tudo – a resistência, a esquerda, os modos de desertar ou ocupar as instituições, de habitar o planeta, as

¹⁶ Francois Tosquelle, *Le Vécu de la fin du monde dans la folie, Le témoignage de Gérard de Nerval*, Grenoble : J. Millon, 2012.

maneiras de viver-junto – então fica evidente que o jogo complexo e reversível entre o «Nada é possível» e o «Tudo é possível» requer uma reviravolta, outras peças e um novo tabuleiro.

Referencias:

- Acosta, Alberto, *O Bem Viver*, São Paulo: Autonomia Literária/Elefante, 2016.
- Comitê Invisível, *Aos nossos amigos: Crise e Insurreição*, São Paulo, n-1 edições, 2016
- Danowski Déborah e Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo, *Há mundo por vir? Ensaio sobre os Medos e os Fins*, Florianópolis: Desterro, 2014.
- Foucault, Michel *História da Sexualidade – I. A Vontade de Saber*, trad. Pedro Tamen, Lisboa: Relógio d'Água, 1994.
- Negri, Toni, *Kairòs, Alma Venus, Multitude*, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2000.
- Tosquelle, Francois *Le Vécu de la fin du Monde dans la Folie, Le Témoignage de Gérard de Nerval*, Grenoble : J. Millon, 2012
- Berardi, Franco, *La sublevación: filosofía, lenguaje y finanzas* http://www.eldiario.es/interferencias/bifo-sublevacion-afectos_132_4547116.html

Resistance as (Re)creation

La résistance comme (re)création

Katarzyna Gan-Krzywoszynska

Przemyslaw Krzywoszynski

Abstract:

The paper points out to creative aspect of resistance. Inspired by Ernesto Sabato's books (2000, 2013) and Stéphane Hessel's manifesto (2011), we present some remarks on resistance as (re)creation from a dialogical perspective, i.e. as recreation of dialogical relation with oneself, with nature, with others and with spiritual beings. Firstly, following Sabato, we analyze resistance to vertigo as paramount disconnection caused by chaotic life that disintegrates every dialogical relationship. Secondly, we consider reclaiming time as a form of resistance and we present the slow movement as an act of resistance. Thirdly, we analyze analogies between two oppositions: stimulus vs. challenge and product vs. flower/fruit. Then, we briefly refer to Reyes Mate's project culture of memory (2011, 2013) as resistance to injustice and oblivion. In conclusions, we point out the role of analogy in dialogue, resistance and art.

Keywords: resistance, creativity, dialogue, slow life.

CONTACT: Katarzyna Gan-Krzywoszynska
(Faculty of Philosophy, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland)
katarzyna.gan.krzywoszynska@gmail.com

Przemysław Krzywoszyński
(Faculty of Law and Administration, Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań, Poland)



Résumé:

L'article souligne l'aspect créatif de la résistance. Inspirés par les livres d'Ernesto Sabato (2000, 2013) et le manifeste de Stéphane Hessel (2011), nous présentons quelques remarques sur la résistance en tant que (re)création d'un point de vue dialogique, c'est-à-dire en tant que recréation d'une relation dialogique avec soi-même, avec la nature, avec les autres et avec les êtres spirituels. Tout d'abord, à la suite de Sabato, nous analysons la résistance au vertige comme une déconnexion primordiale causée par une vie chaotique qui désintègre toute relation dialogique. Deuxièmement, nous considérons la réappropriation du temps comme une forme de résistance et nous présentons le mouvement lent comme un acte de résistance. Dans un troisième temps, nous analysons les analogies entre deux oppositions : stimulus vs défi et produit vs fleur/fruit. Ensuite, nous nous référons brièvement au projet de Reyes Mate culture of memory (2011, 2013) comme résistance à l'injustice et à l'oubli. En conclusion, nous soulignons le rôle de l'analogie dans le dialogue, la résistance et l'art.

Key words: résistance, créativité, dialogue, slow life

Introduction

This text is inspired by a short and simple graffiti encountered in Poznań (Poland) which says: *rest is resistance* (in Polish *odpoczynek to opór*). When translated into English, the fortunate spelling gave us the titular idea, that is, makes it clear that the word “rest” is part of the concept of “resistance”. Etymologically, as well as in current speech, resistance is directly connected with effort, strength, sacrifice and even martyrdom when one resists, for example, totalitarian regimes, mobs or ruthless wrongdoers. However, we agree with Vercors (Jean Bruller)¹ who expressed perfectly how the incredible effort of rebellion is directly connected with rejection of despair. As Leśniewski wrote, *Vercors spoke about a very well-known yet underestimated phenomenon the attachment to one's own anguish. People often enjoy this kind of anxiety somehow. He himself admits that there was a time when he considered his despair as a sign of the sublime character of his spirit. He felt more comfortable in despair than when he revolted* (Leśniewski, 2021, p. 79)².

¹ Vercors is a pseudonym of Jean Bruller (1902-1991), a French writer, illustrator and member of La Résistance, co-founder of underground editorial house during German occupation “Éditions de Minuit”, author of the celebrated novel *Le silence de la mer* (1942).

² As Leśniewski writes by quoting directly from Vercors: «to be rebellious, aware of your rebellion and of the task and duties that come from it (both towards other rebels and yourself), while living with the awareness that of what living humanly means, is living at the post without a moment of rest. To be rebellious is to be aware that the slightest weakness, the slightest defect, makes us immediately unworthy of being called a human being, they reduce us to the order of an animal – *let us admit, if this perspective is more optimistic, it is also bloody tiring*» (Leśniewski, 2021, p. 79, this quote was slightly modified).

Of course, we don't want to argue that resistance is effortless. Our aim is to focus on the dialogical, joyful and creative aspect of the act of resistance³. We are guided by two fundamental resistance manifestos, namely Ernesto Sabato's *La resistencia* (2000) and Stéphane Hessel's *Indignez-vous!* (2010). Both texts can be considered as testaments of two rebellious figures that call for rejection of *status quo*. Sabato and Hessel agree that heroic resistance is a simultaneously a duty and an extraordinary challenge. But, on the other hand, they both agree that resistance consists of small, every day, concrete actions requiring a very specific, creative attitude. That is precisely the aspect of resistance that we want to emphasize: its constructive and self-caring aspect. To resist you need to take care of yourself for others or, as in Grace Jones' song, "Love you to life"⁴ (instead of love you to death), that is to say, to resist one needs to overcome the sacrifice, to promote a positive rebellion, to affirm life in order to be able to say "No"⁵. That is also the formula for all charity work: when you want to help the poor, firstly be sure not to be one of them; if you want to help the sick, you need to be healthy; if you want to help people in despair, you need to be hopeful, etc.

Vertigo and broken relations

In the fifth letter, precisely entitled "*La Resistencia*", Sabato starts with a sentence written with capital letters as a separate paragraph "LO PEOR ES EL VERTIGO" which in English means: "THE VERTIGO IS THE WORST". The main problem is the fast pace life. Already a quarter of century ago, Sabato described the vertigo that we are experiencing nowadays. He explains:

"With vertigo there is neither fruit nor flower. Fear is characteristic of vertigo, man acquiring the behavior of an *automaton*, being no longer responsible, no longer free, nor recognizing others.

My soul shrinks to see humanity on this vertiginous train on

³ This expression was inspired by the title of the second studio album "Joy as an Act of Resistance" by the British rock band *Idles*, released in 2018. Another incentive was Bertrand Russell's "The Praise of Idleness" (2004) where he brilliantly argues that free time and recreation are absolutely necessary for the healthy social life and for the creative, scientific and technological progress. From these inspirations, it is just one step to Carl Honoré's book *In Praise of Slow* (2004).

⁴ We refer to track 7 from the *Hurricane* album (2008). A quote from the lyrics: *I love you to life (and not to death), (...) Don't you die for me. (...) And I won't ask you, to die, for me. I love you to life. I won't die for you.*

⁵ See also a volume of Dialogical Collection inspired by Camus' idea of the revolt according to which, in order to say no, one must previously affirm the positive value that is worth living for. *Rebelión positiva¿Para qué rebelarse?*, Colección dialógica, Vol. 1, 2022, ed. K. Gan-Krzywoszyńska, J. M. Campos Benítez, P. Leśniewski, Poznań, Kontekst Scientific Publisher. Available online: <https://www.wkn.com.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/REBELIO%CC%81N-POSITIVA-%C2%BFPara-que%CC%81-rebelarse.pdf>

which we move, terrorized ignorant not knowing the flag of their fight, without having chosen it.

“In vertigo everything is fearsome and dialogue between persons disappears.

What we say is more codes than words, containing more information than novelty. The loss of dialogue sinks the agreement that springs up between people (...). But the serious problem is that in this sick civilization not only is there exploitation and misery, but also there is a correlative spiritual misery. The great majority do not want liberty, they fear it. Fear is a symptom of our time. To such an extreme that, if we scratch the surface a little, we can verify the panic which underlies the people who live through the requirements of labor in the big cities. The requirement is such that they live automatically, without having a yes or a no precede acts” (Sabato, 2013, emphasis added).⁶

Vertigo makes dialogue impossible, since there is only fear and survival, automatic mode. The automaton, according to Sabato, is a metaphor for a clueless person, governed by distress, a *terrorized ignorant*. In dialogical thought, especially in Martin Buber’s approach (1937), three levels of dialogical relations are distinguished: with nature, with other people and with spiritual beings⁷. On the contrary, Vertigo can be understood as a form of chaos⁸, a messy state where all level of the dialogical relations, including the relation with oneself, are broken and are impossible to be rebuilt. Sabato emphasized that, in vertigo, people are not free, not able to decide or recognize others. People became “cog men” (in Spanish *hombre engranaje*), a piece of a mechanism, instead of “men of integrity” (in Spanish *hombre íntegro*)⁹.

⁶ All English quotes from Sabato’s “The Resistance” comes from translation by D. Ohmans in online edition without pagination, see: <http://webshells.com/spantrans/resaba.htm>

⁷ Buber, M., 1937, *I and Thou*, transl. by Ronald Gregor Smith, Edinburgh, T&T Clark.

⁸ It is interesting to note that, in this context, Sabato is close to Albert Camus that he admired profoundly and mentions many times in *The Resistance*. In fact, they both believed that their contributions were valuable as elucidations of chaos. Sabato wrote in the preface called “Justification” to *Men and Mechanism*, that his works “are the irregular expression of a man in our time who has felt obliged to reflect on the chaos that surrounds him” (Sabato, 2013a, p. 1). Similarly, Camus in the *Introduction* to his very powerful text about the German occupation, *Lettres à un ami allemand* (1943), acknowledged that, in his “fight against the violence” (Camus 2014, p. 17) he wanted “to shed a little light on the blind fight” (Camus 2014, p. 16). That is to say, these letters – since Sabato’s *La resistencia* consists of five letters and Camus’ *Lettres à un ami allemand* of four letters – constitute both an important literary resistance claim against the chaos that Vertigo produces by giving back the reader a sense of orientation and belonging.

⁹ About opposition cog man/man with integrity see also Gan-Krzywoszyńska 2021,

“The first tragedy that must urgently be repaired is the devaluation of oneself which man feels, and which adapts the previous steps to submission and massification. **Today, man does not feel himself a sinner, he thinks he is a mechanism, which is tragically worse.** And this desecration can only be cleansed with the glance that each one directs to the others, not to evaluate the merits of their personal realization, nor to analyze any of their acts. It is an embrace that can give us the pleasure of belonging to a great work which includes everyone.

But this requires creation, novelty with respect to what we are living and creation only emerges under liberty and is strictly tied to the sense of responsibility, being the power that overcomes fear. The man of post-modernity is chained to the commodities that technology procures him, and frequently does not dare to immerse himself in deep experiences like love or solidarity” (Sabato, 2013, emphasis added).

According to Sabato, love and solidarity are deep experiences that can emerge only when we overcome fear and when we claim our freedom. Significantly, a similar view may be found in the words of a well know resistant, Józef Tischner, the so-called spiritual leader of *Solidarity* movement. As he writes: *Man as such is freedom and an expression of freedom* (Tischner 1998, p. 161)¹⁰. In *Spirit of Solidarity* (1984) he is even more close to Sabato when he underlines that, in a resistance movement, the very start of dialogue is already a big event, since people have to overcome their fears and come out from their hiding places and create a common place. As he wrote:

“The very beginning of dialogue (...) is itself a big event. One must reach out, cross the threshold, offer one’s hand, and find a common place for conversation. This place will no longer be a hiding place where one remains alone with one’s fear; rather, it will be a place of meeting, a beginning of something common, perhaps the beginning of home” (Tischner 1984, p. 10).

Sabato was always a very engaged, passionate and deeply involved man that personally suffered totalitarian oppression. However, in his very powerful texts, he

Freedom and Abundance: Dialogical Philosophy of Style, Poznań, Publishing House of The Poznań Society for the Advancements of Arts and Sciences, pp. 86-90.

¹⁰ For the Tischnerian project see: Leśniewski, P., 2021, *Wistful Hope: Dialogical Study on Revolt*, Poznań, Publishing House of The Poznań Society for the Advancements of Arts and Sciences, pp. 80-88. Let us add that the ebook version is available for free online.

is never dramatic. Even if he always believed in the duty of resisting, nevertheless, he is aware that we have to re-evaluate what does it mean “to resist”. And Sabato intuitively feels that maybe it will not be a heroic act: “*I intuit that it is something less formidable, smaller, like faith in a miracle*” (2013). However, according to Sabato, that less formidable, smaller act is a creative action that opens to unknown horizons. As he writes, when men resist:

“(…) **another way of life can emerge**, where withdrawing to themselves would be a scandal, **where man can discover and create a different existence**. History is a big set of aberrations, wars, persecutions, tortures, and injustices yet, at the same time, or for that very reason, millions of men and women sacrifice themselves to care for the most disadvantaged. They embody the resistance.

We now want to know, as Camus said, whether their sacrifice is sterile or fecund, and this is a question that should be planted in every heart, with the gravity of a decisive moment. In this decision we again recognize the place where **each one of us is called to provide resistance; spaces of liberty will then be created than can open hitherto unknown horizons**” (Sabato, 2013, emphasis added).

Wittgenstein says: “Take your time!” and Slow life movement

Wittgenstein said that philosophers should greet each other by saying “Take your time!”. A formula in which there is a revealing substitution between life and time. In fact, when someone says “Can I take you an hour of your time?” the question seems much less serious or dangerous than “Can I take an hour of your life?”. Now, the beautiful Wittgensteinian greeting, if formulated as: “Take your life!” could be the title of the resistance’s hymn of the approach proposed here.

A similar meaning of the intimate relation between life and time can be found in Sabato’s critical view of Vertigo as a frenetic and disastrous life that leads to destruction of people, animals and environment: fast food, fast fashion, fast tourism kills everything, paradoxically including economy. Hence, the Argentinian author highlighted that life requires resistance to that catastrophic state of affairs, something that can only be achieved if, contrary to Vertigo, man is able to adopt *a certain slowness*. As he writes: “*Man cannot sustain humanity at this velocity, will be annihilated if he lives as a robot. Serenity, a certain slowness, is as inseparable from the life of man as the succession of stages is for the plants, or the birth of children*” (Sabato, 2013).

We know that the slow movement, started in Italy (*Cittaslow*) as a resistance against over-tourism, constitutes a beautiful example of resistance and salvatory al-

ternative to these deadly, fast spreading diseases. Therefore, phenomena like slow food, slow art, slow parenting and slow fashion can be considered as forms of resistance against vertigo.

That is precisely what is stressed by one of the first and most popular books from the slow life movement, namely Carl Honoré's book *In Praise of Slowness: Challenging the Cult of Speed* (2004). There, the author claims that slow philosophy is about doing everything at the right speed as well as possible, instead of as fast as possible. Slow philosophy is not characterized as simple, quantitative change of a *tempo*. Slow philosophy is about enjoying and savoring time, about quality, not quantity, be it in food, work, fashion, living and parenting. The use of the word "savoring" is very significant of that slowness as it refers to delight from delicious food or from pleasurable experience which is in fact one of the most constructive, if not regenerative, recreating process. A similar slowness can be recognized in the experience of "enjoying". This is the case of our enjoyment of cathedrals, these examples of magnificent and secular collective masterpieces that rise in so many places organically. We "enjoy" and admire these architectural monuments¹¹, even if we cannot discover all their mysteries and splendor.¹²

Slowing down also refers to rest time, in particular sufficient sleeping, which is in danger in the vertigo mode of life. The problem was noted by Jonathan Crary, who, in his book *24/7 Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (2013) describes how people are losing even the mere possibility of rest. In many parts of the world, the pace of life is so unbearable that numerous protests and demographic catastrophes are pending, as for example it happens in many rich and developed Asian countries such as: Japan, South Korea and Singapore. Enough sleep, quality meals (slow food), a slow walk became luxuries disposable only to very few.

Also, in the context of rest as resistance, it is noteworthy that in James Albert Michener's novel *Poland* (1983), one can find an interesting theory regarding historical strategies of rebellion of Polish people against foreign oppressions and occupations:

"Starting in 1772, when the division of Poland began, every Pole was found himself under the domination of Russia, Germany or Austria devised clever ways to circumvent the rule of

¹¹ Cf. another famous book on the topic of slowness, *The Good Ancestor* (2020), by Roman Krznaric whose original title in Spanish is *Pensamiento catedral*. We believe this is a congenial translation, since it refers to cathedrals.

¹² That is to say, slow philosophy requires an entire new attitude, a fundamental determination of one's own style, a discovery that is a slow, intentional process, based on trial and error. See for instance Gan-Krzywoszyńska, K., 2021, *Freedom and Abundance: Dialogical Philosophy of Style*, Poznań, Publishing House of The Poznań Society for the Advancements of Arts and Sciences.

the oppressor. Lazy on the job, break the machine, irritate the boss. After 1795, this continued, remember for one hundred and twenty-three years.

During World War II, when the Nazis occupied us, sabotage became a skilled art. In 1944, when Communism took over, with Russian masters once more, the same brilliant capacity for quiet sabotage was exercised. Today, when the people believe that government is opposed to their interests, they know a million ways to frustrate the government. Poles are the world's master saboteurs.

And another thing. In the postwar period, right up to 1975, for a Pole to survive on wages the government allowed, he had to have two or ever three jobs. Work 0800 to 1300 here, then duck out and work 1400 to 1800 somewhere else. Then, at night, work 1900 to 0100 at the third job. But never really work at any of them. **Catch as much sleep as you can on each**" (Michener, 1983, pp. 515-516, emphasis added)

This is a very clear example of sleep as resistance, a method that worked out successfully for centuries in Poland. Polish people understood well that they were historically between two huge empires, sited between two strong machines, that they were obliged to work among cogs, as Sabato would say¹³. And they realized that, sometimes, in order to disturb the machines, to broke the cogs it is enough to put some sand between them.

Another example of a seemingly case of non-violent resistance by slowing down movements is the Italian *Sciopero bianco* which means "white strike". All the names of this form of resistance – which, in same languages like the Ukrainian, Russian, Polish and Finnish, is named as "Italian strike" – underline the slowness of compliance with the rules as a form of resistance.

Interestingly, slow movements characterize in general powerful, imposing creatures, both animals and people. It is true that slow movements are energy saving but, at the same time, they are also luxurious behavior. For instance, in advertisement, slow motion is frequently used to represent utmost luxury and focused attention. Quiet luxury trend, recently very popular, emphasize the elegance without the need to show off. No screaming logos, nothing to prove. Like a boss. The calm, effortlessness, characterizes a master, since one put so much effort before and now can be super-cool, following the principle "high maintenance for low maintenance". A

¹³ We refer to the title of Sabato's book *Men and Mechanism* (2013a) and his opposition between cog man *versus* man with integrity because we believe that this metaphor applies perfectly to Poland to describe the hope during decades of occupations

behavior that corresponds to the paradox that it is very expensive to be poor. Moreover, slowness enables intentionality as well as the most intimate relations, like slow dancing and/or slow kissing. On the contrary, frenetic, nervous, quick and chaotic moves usually represent stress or even panic, weakness and cause of suffering.

Stimulus vs. challenge and product vs. flower/fruit

Let us now to point out an important analogy between two oppositions, the Paulo Freire's opposition between stimulus vs. challenge, and the Ernesto Sabato's opposition between product vs. flower/fruit.

The first opposition comes from Freire's famous book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996) where he describes two opposed systems of education: the so-called "banking" system of education (oppressive, anti-dialogical) and the dialogical (liberating) education. Briefly speaking, according to Freire, anti-dialogics, as an instrument of oppression, uses conquest, division (divide and rule principle) manipulation and cultural invasion, while dialogics, as an instrument of liberation, uses cooperation, unity, organization and cultural synthesis.

Now, these two contrasting systems of education function on basis of opposed methodological procedures, namely, stimulus *versus* challenge. Stimulus is used in the oppressive systems of education where the goal is to form ideal fonctionnaires, i.e., people who will follow instructions perfectly, without ever questioning the *status quo*. Faced with a stimulus, what can we do but to adapt? But adaptation is training in the sense of taming an animal, an ahistorical process of domestication. Adaptation is not questioning but obedience, accepting of something as fate and necessity. Whereas challenge, used by liberating systems of education, is part of dialogue since it is a question, an interpellation and asking for response. That is why, according to Freire, stimulus is suitable for animals (or machines following Sabato's metaphor), while challenge is adequate for humans. Stimulus is distracting, requiring automatic, non-creative response, while challenge has cognitive value as it is an interpellation that calls for creative response and reflection. The cognitive value of challenge is clearly related to resistance by José Lezama Lima who, in his *La expresión americana* (1969): substitutes Freire's concept of challenge by the very concept of resistance: "*sólo la resistencia que nos reta, es capaz de enarcar, suscitar y mantener nuestra potencia de conocimiento*" (only the resistance that challenges us is capable of raising, arousing and maintaining our power of knowledge) (Lezama Lima, 1969, p. 9). In this context, it is worth mentioning the heuristic notion of limit-situation. As Freire points out, limits do not block us but, on the contrary, they open us for novelty and innovation, for new perspectives, more reality, better interaction, connection and cooperation. That is why many of abovementioned authors consider crisis as a limit-situation, as an opportunity that challenge us to look for new, broader horizons. In the brilliant words of Paul Valéry: *Une difficulté est une lumière. Une difficulté*

insurmontable est un soleil. (A difficulty is a light. An insurmountable difficulty is a sun). (Valéry, 2016, p. 16).

Now, concerning Ernesto Sabato's opposition between product vs. flower/fruit, let us recall Sabato words: "*With vertigo there is neither fruit nor flower*" (Sabato, 2013, p. 46). What Vertigo offers is not life, not flowers or fruits. What it offers is only products of the machine¹⁴. Fruits and flower require time and specific condition. They are able to naturally multiply. They are source of health, joy and abundance. Products of machines are lifeless, disposable and often harmful.

So, the analogy between the two oppositions, Freire's stimulus vs. challenge and Sabato's products vs flower/fruit consist in the anti-dialogical character of products of the machine¹⁵ (which is an element of necrophilia¹⁶, in the Freire's sense) versus the biophilic charm of flowers and fruits.

When considering these oppositions, we must mention Simone Weil's *The Need for Roots: prelude towards a declaration of duties towards mankind* (2001) (in the original French version: *L'Enracinement, prélude à une déclaration des devoirs envers l'être humain*. She wrote this text in 1943 for the "Free French Resistance Movement" as a program precisely for reinforcing society after the German occupation. Contrary to what she calls by the term *uprootedness* - something that may be treated as vertigo in the sense of Sabato, since it means dissolution of cultural and spiritual community, destruction of ties with nature, history and family – according to Weil, men *need roots*. Every man needs to be inscribed in the treasures, habits, customs, traditions, cultural values of a community, to share its memory, its present situation and its future prospects. Weil's *need for roots* can thus be understood as a call for dialogical connections on the three levels in the Buberian sense. What is more, she paints a picture of these dialogical connections as a net of relations. The same happens with Sabato's flowers and fruits. They need healthy and deep roots. They not only require long-term care and attention but they request deep relation (symbiosis) to other forms of life.

Our proposed meaning for the concept of resistance is precisely to understand

¹⁴ Let us again quote Grace Jones and another track from the *Hurricane* album "Corporate Cannibal". She signs as a man-eating machine and both lyrics and disturbing video for the song can be considered as a perfect illustration for the Sabato's general concept of the "machine".

¹⁵ For the antialogical character of products of the machine the example of every totalitarian system, which prioritize breaking communities, trust and connections, is eloquent. There are countless testimonies of denunciations, betrayals, distrusts in such regimes that praise and reward people for denouncing parents, spouses and closest friends.

¹⁶ Every mob, mafia, cartel firstly checks "loyalty" by sacrificing someone dear or innocent. Let us mention one example of German training of young boys before World War II that required torture and killing of a dog after a deep bond was already established to crush any sense of empathy.

Weil's project of creating and reinforcing multiple roots in the form of recreating nets of dialogical connections on every possible manner. In doing so, we combine Freire's and Sabato's dialogical approaches to resistance. Dialogue reaches here all its biophilic potency. Beyond everything else, unlike stimuli and machine products are massive and uniform, challenges and flower/fruits point to the deep yet delicate idea of uniqueness, even in abundance. Challenges are countless, like flowers and fruits that fill the land around us, yet they are always slightly different. In addition, unlike the stimuli and massive products that are imposed on everyone without any regards for the concrete situation of each one, challenges as well as flowers and fruits, are always characteristic of a specific context, proper to a specific geography, adequate to specific conditions and timing.

Culture of memory as a resistance to injustice

The title of our paper – “to resist is to (re)create/résister, c'est (re)créer” – constitutes a paraphrase of the last two phrases (written with capital letters) of Hessel famous manifesto *Time for Outrage!* (2011). That is why (face to the utmost importance that those two phases gained for us) we want to quote the fragment both in French original version and in English translation:

(...) appelons-nous toujours à « une véritable insurrection pacifique contre les moyens de communication de masse qui ne proposent comme horizon pour notre jeunesse que la consommation de masse, le mépris des plus faibles et de la culture, l'amnésie généralisée et la compétition à l'outrance de tous contre tous. »

A ceux et celles qui ferons le XXI^e siècle, nous disons avec notre affection

« CRÉER, C'EST RÉSISTER.
RÉSISTER, C'EST CRÉER. » (Hessel, 2010, p. 13)

(...) we continue to call for “a true peaceful uprising against the means of mass communication that offers nothing but mass consumption as a prospect for our youth, contempt for the least powerful in society and for culture, general amnesia and the outrageous competition of all against all.”

To you who will create the twenty-first century, we say, from the bottom of our hearts,

TO CREATE IS TO RESIST.
TO RESIST IS TO CREATE (Hessel, 2011,
p. 19).

In the context of the generalized amnesia that Hessel, in the above fragment, connected with mass communication, materialist competition and disdain for the underdog¹⁷, the culture of memory project formulated by Reyes Mate's gains all its meaning. Within this conception, Mate introduced the notion of "hermeneutical death" to name the process in which the goal of the wrongdoer is not only to physically kill the victims, but to destroy every trace of their mere existence. What is at stake is not just a question of hiding the crime, it is of annihilating even the slightest hint of the victim's previous existence (cf. Mate, 2011, p. 217). As in the case of Holocaust, it is rewriting the history, as if the Jewish people never existed. Therefore, just as the oblivion and amnesia are a strategy of the wrongdoer, memory constitutes a fundamental element of justice and opens the way for reconciliation. That is why we can consider the recreation of the destroyed traces and testimonies of lives as a resistance to injustice, that is, a fight against violence in the sense of Camus.

This recreation as a resistance against injustice and invisibilization of victims, in other words a re-inclusion of the victim on the one hand brings justice, on the other hand introduce hope into the future. Mate used many times an expression describing victims of injustice as "rejected stones" that become the cornerstones, the basis, the foundation of a new culture of memory¹⁸.

Like Sabato and Hessel, Mate denounces any culture that tends to erase the traces of crimes (including genocides) in order to restore peace, for it helps the wrongdoer and ignores the victim's suffering. According Mate, justice project must prioritize victims and put them in the very center of reflection (cf. Mate, 2003, pp. 258-259). However, what is also worth noting is that memory is thought out by Mate as the beginning of the reconciliation process that aims at redressing both the victim and the offender as the members of society. In other words, the goal is to recreate their connection with each other and with other members of society. In culture of memory, past injustices constitute an integral part of the present in order to prevent the hermeneutical death of victims (and the generalized amnesia in Hessel's sense).

Further, a culture of memory, according to Mate, is a solution to a failure of knowledge, where something unthinkable happened, since extreme violence cases many times transcend our cognition. "*La memoria es justicia*" (memory is justice) writes Mate and he explains that memory becomes the principle of knowledge when "the unthinkable" ("lo impensable") happens like in the case of Auschwitz. (Mate, 2011, pp. 202-203) At the same time, memory is a remedy against "invisibilization" of victims and hermeneutical violence. Mate's philosophical program against las-

¹⁷ Hessel saw, among others, the profound analogy between the financial/economic crisis of the first decade of 21st century and the Nazi occupation (Hessel, 2011, p. 17).

¹⁸ The title of his book is entitled precisely "The Rejected Stone", see: Mate R., 2013, *La piedra desechada*, Madrid, Editorial Trotta.

situde and oblivion puts in the center of reflection the question: How we should think about bringing justice, about satisfaction and about a pertinent theory of justice that would take into consideration those cases of injustice that have already been definitely forgotten?¹⁹ Hence, memory revealing hidden and/or lost aspects of our reality becomes, on the one hand, an epistemic imperative, and, on the other hand, a fundamental philosophical category. Through memory we can recreate lost relations and connections.

Sabato, along with a very harsh opinion on the crisis, nevertheless sees within the crisis a need and an opportunity for specifically recreation of the man and the world.

“It is a bridge which we shall have to cross, a passage. We cannot remain fixed in the past nor delight in glancing into the abyss. On this dead-end road we confront today, **the re-creation of man and his world** seems to us, not like a choice among others, but instead as a gesture like the birth of an infant, not to be postponed when its hour is arrived.

Men find within the crisis itself the forces for its overcoming. This has been shown by so many men and women who, with the sole resource of tenacity and valor, fought and defeated the bloody tyrannies of our continent. The human being knows how to **make new roads out of obstacles** because life can be reborn in the space of a crack. In this task, it is fundamental not to suffocate what life we can conceive. Defend, as occupied peoples have done heroically, the tradition that tells of what is sacred in man. Not to let the grace be wasted of the small moments of liberty that we can enjoy: a table shared with people we like, some creatures to whom we give shelter, a stroll among the trees, the gratitude of a hug. A fearless act like jumping from a flaming house. Those are not rational deeds, but it is not important for them to be so, being saved by the results” (Sabato 2013, emphasis added).

Sabato ends *The resistance* (Fifth letter) with this beautiful statement: ***The world is powerless against a man who sings while in misery*** (Sabato, 2013, emphasis added).

¹⁹ Mate R., 2011, *Tratado de la injusticia*, Barcelona, Anthropos, p. 292. See also: Gan-Krzywoszyńska, K., Leśniewski, L., 2014, „The Culture of Memory: The Approach of Reyes Mate”, *Ethics in Progress*, Vol. 5, No.2, pp. 246-256.

Conclusion: Resistance as (Re)creation

The proposed dialogical understanding of resistance as (re)creation is an analogical concept embracing resistance as a free creativity, as rebuilding of broken relations, as self-care and even entertainment. Analogy is here considered as a basic of dialogue.²⁰

Now, the connection between artistic rebellion and moral outrage – or, in other words, the connection between art and protest – must also be recognized. That connection was clearly highlighted by Camus, in *The Rebel* (1960), where he argues that art is, at its deepest root, a form of resistance in the face of reality. And it precisely is because of its spontaneous energy and affirmative strength that art is seen as a rebellion. As Camus wrote: (...) *the artist rebellion against reality, which is automatically suspect to the totalitarian revolution, contains the same affirmation as the spontaneous rebellion of the oppressed* (Camus, 1960, p. 226).

Camus pointed out a fundamental role of style in recreation of the world. Moreover, he saw passionate rebellion as a source of the greatest style in art and insisted in the fact that there is no genius in negation and pure despair. On this point he agrees with Vercors.

“Through style, the creative effort reconstructs the world and always with the same slight distortion which is the mark both of art and protest. (...) The creative force, the fecundity of rebellion is contained in this distortion which represents the style and tone of work. Art is an impossible demand given expression and form. When the most agonizing protest finds its most resolute form of expression, rebellion satisfies its real aspirations and derives, from its fidelity to itself, a creative strength. Despite the fact that this runs counter to the prejudices of the times, **the greatest style in art is the expression of the most passionate rebellion**. Just as genuine classicism is only romanticism subdued, genius is a rebellion which has created its own limits. **That is why there is no genius**, contrary to what we are taught today, **in negation and pure despair**”(- Camus, 1960, p. 239, emphasis added).

As a result, we would say that resistance is an autonomous, intentional act of, not only refusal to accept destroyed relations, but also to actively and creatively

²⁰ See www.analogycongress.com and also Gan-Krzywoszyńska K., Leśniewski P., 2019, “Analogy and Philosophy of Dialogue”, in: *Między filozofią a chemią. Księga pamiątkowa dla Profesora Pawła Zeidlera*, ed. J. Boruszewski, R. Kazibut, S. Leciejewski, T. Rzepiński, Z. Tworak, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, pp. 269-279.

recreate an expansive, affirmative, dialogical community. A community that, in the words pronounced by Ryszard Kapuściński in one of his last speeches, entitled precisely *Encountering the Other as Challenge of the Twenty-First Century*:

“(…) speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives; to our sense of pity, and beauty, and pain: to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation – and to the subtle but invincible, conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts: to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity – the dead to the living and the living to the unborn” (Kapuściński, 2007, p. 17).

Bibliography:

- Buber, M., 1937, *I and Thou*, transl. by Ronald Gregor Smith, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, <https://www.maximusveritas.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/iandthou.pdf>
- Camus, A., 1985, *L'homme révolté*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard (English translation by Anthony Bowen, *The Rebel*, Bombay, The Times of India Press, 1960)
- Camus, A., 2014, *Lettres à un ami allemand*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard.
- Crary, J. 2013, *24/7 Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, London, New York, Verso.
- Freire, P., 1996, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, transl. by Myra Bergman, London, New York, Penguin Books.
- Gan-Krzywoszynska, K., Leśniewski, L., 2014, “The Culture of Memory: The Approach of Reyes Mate”, *Ethics in Progress*, Vol. 5, No.2, pp. 246-256.
- Gan-Krzywoszynska K., Leśniewski P., 2019, “Analogy and Philosophy of Dialogue”, in: *Między filozofią a chemią. Księga pamiątkowa dla Profesora Pawła Zeidlera*, ed. J. Boruszewski, R. Kazibut, S. Leciejewski, T. Rzepiński, Z. Tworak, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, pp. 269-279.
- Gan-Krzywoszynska, K., 2021, *Freedom and Abundance: Dialogical Philosophy of Style*, Poznań, Publishing House of The Poznań Society for the Advancements of Arts and Sciences.
- Honoré C., 2004, *In Praise of Slowness: Challenging the Cult of Speed*, San Francisco, Harper.
- Hessel, S., 2010, *Indignez-vous!*, Montpellier, Indigène éditions.
- Hessel, S., 2011, “Time for Outrage!”, *The Nation*, March 7/14, pp. 15-19. Available online: <https://iatrogenico.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/indignez-vous-time-for-outrage-stc3a9phane-hessel-english.pdf>
- Kapuściński, R., 2007, *Encountering the Other: The Challenge for the Twentieth-First Century*, *Spotkanie z Innym jako wyzwanie XXI wieku*, Kraków, Universitas.

- Also available online at: http://www.digitalnpq.org/archive/2005_fall/02_kapuscinski.html
- Krznaric, R. 2020, *The Good Ancestor A Radical Prescription for Long-Term Thinking*, New York, The Experiment.
- Leśniewski, P., 2021, *Wistful Hope: Dialogical Study on Revolt*, Poznań, Publishing House of The Poznań Society for the Advancements of Arts and Sciences.
- Lezama Lima, J., 1969, *La expresión americana*, Santiago de Chile, Editorial Universitaria.
- Mate R., 2003, *Memoria de Auschwitz. Actualidad moral y política*, Madrid, Editorial Trotta.
- Mate R., 2011, *Tratado de la injusticia*, Barcelona, Anthropos.
- Mate R., 2013, *La piedra desechada*, Madrid, Editorial Trotta.
- Michener, J. A., 1983, *Poland*. New York, Random House Publishing Group.
- Rebelión positiva¿Para qué rebelarse?*, Colección dialógica Vol. 1, 2022, ed. K. Gan-Krzywoszyńska, J. M. Campos Benítez, P. Leśniewski, Poznań, Kontekst Scientific Publisher.
- Russell, B., 2004. *In Praise of Idleness and other essays*. London and New York, Routledge.
- Sabato, E., 2000, *La resistencia*, Barcelona, Seix Barral.
- Sabato E., 2013, *The Resistance*, translated by D. Ohmans <http://webshells.com/spantrans/resaba.htm>
- Sabato, E., 2013a, *Man and Mechanism: reflections on money, reason and collapse in our time*, trans. by D. Ohmans, <http://webshells.com/spantrans/manmech.html>
- Tischner, J., 1984, *The Spirit of Solidarity*, translated by Marek B. Zaleski and Benjamin Fiore, San Francisco, S.J., Harper & Row, Publishers.
- Tischner J., 1998, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Znak.
- Weil, S., 2001, *The Need for Roots: prelude towards a declaration of duties towards mankind* transl. Arthur Wills, London, Routledge.
- Valéry, P., 2016, *Mauvaises pensées et autres 1941-1942*, bibliothèque numérique romande https://ebooks-bnr.com/ebooks/pdf4/valery_mauvaises_pensees_autes.pdf

Máquinas sobrenaturais e outros habitantes da tríplice fronteira antropológica¹

Supernatural machines and other inhabitants of the triple anthropological frontier

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro

Abstract:

O artigo procura definir a posição do conceito de “humano” a partir da sua relação com três outras figuras: os animais (ou viventes em geral), os espíritos (ou divindades) e as máquinas, estas em suas sucessivas encarnações prototípicas (relógios, máquinas a vapor, computadores). A partir da Era Moderna, as máquinas tenderam progressivamente a ocupar a posição dos espíritos, uma vez estes absorvidos pelo vértice “humano”. A distribuição atual dessas figuras sugere a convergência progressiva dos humanos com esses seus três “outros”, formando uma só entidade, caracterizada pela dupla condição de “sujeito de direitos” e de “fator de produção”.

Key words: *coletivos extramodernos, inteligência cultural, inteligência “natural, inteligência artificial, mundos animistas, mundos algorítmicos*

¹ Mantive neste texto o tom oral com que foi apresentado no XVI Seminário Internacional de Estudos de Literatura, transcorrido nos dias 22–24 de novembro de 2023, na Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro. Agradeço a Karl Erik Schøllhammer pelo convite e o Departamento de Letras da PUC-Rio pela acolhida.

CONTACT: Eduardo Viveiros de Castro
Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro
eviveirosdecastro@gmail.com



Abstract:

The article seeks to define the position of the concept of “human” based on its relationship with three other figures: animals (or living beings in general), spirits (or divinities) and machines, the latter in their successive prototypical incarnations (clocks, steam engines, computers). From the modern era on, machines have progressively tended to occupy the position of spirits, once they have been absorbed by the “human” vertex. The current distribution of these figures suggests the progressive convergence of humans with their three “others”, forming a single entity, characterized by the double condition of “subject of rights” and “factor of production”.

Key words: *Extra modern collectives, cultural intelligence, natural intelligence, artificial intelligence, animistic worlds, algorithmic worlds*

A dupla aceleração que marca nossa época, a saber, a catástrofe cumulativa do Antropoceno, com tudo o que isso implica de fracasso civilizatório, de ecocídio planetário e talvez de suicídio biológico, e o desenvolvimento tecnológico muito rápido dos dispositivos lógico-materiais de “inteligência artificial” (IA), está provocando um enorme reboço na tríplice fronteira antropológica entre os humanos, os demais vivos e as máquinas neuromórficas, como os computadores programados por Deep Learning e os aplicativos chatGPT, LaMDA, Bard etc. Isso enquanto aguardamos os extraterrestres, que demoram a chegar, e enquanto assistimos perplexos ao retorno de uma imagem despótica de Deus à cena da história. Pois o Espírito, ou melhor, os espíritos, também frequentam esta fronteira, como veremos. A descodificação capitalista, longe de superar, contraproduz a sobredecodificação “bárbara”. Quanto mais desterritorialização neoliberal, mais reterritorialização fascista. Quanto mais IA, mais IURD.²

Não menos importante que isso, as fronteiras internas ao humano também vão sendo contestadas, em um processo tenso e complexo que podemos resumir na palavra “descolonial”. Estão cada vez mais evidentes as relações causais entre, de um lado, o especismo (o estado de exceção metafísico do humano) e o biocídio, e, de outro lado, entre os processos de racialização e de racionalização (o colonialismo como uma das condições objetivas de constituição da Razão moderna)³, o que se reflete na problematização ansiosa da figura do *ánthrōpos* por parte de seus antigos proprietários privados. É por isso que os coletivos humanos que nunca passaram

² Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus.

³ Ver Laura Aristizabal, *Trouble dans l’humanisme: colonialité, corps et accumulation initiale* (Marisol de la Cadena, Anibal Quijano, Michel Foucault). Tese de doutoramento, Universidade de Liège, 2023.

da porta de entrada da mansão deste augusto personagem — os povos indígenas do planeta, ou povos extramodernos, como prefiro às vezes chamá-los — vêm ganhando uma inesperada relevância em escala mundial, aparecendo como portadores da promessa de um cosmopolitanismo mais abrangente e mais generoso que aquele proposto por Kant. Sabemos que a fórmula da história “universal” kantiana é: “todos os humanos, mas apenas os humanos”. Sabemos melhor ainda que dentre esses “todos os humanos”, alguns são muito mais humanos que outros. O extermínio palestino em curso, sob o aplauso de tantos governos europeus e com o apoio militar da maior potência genocida do planeta, é a demonstração mais atual disto.⁴

À primeira vista, esses povos extramodernos estariam nos antípodas de qualquer noção de cosmopolitanismo. Seriam entidades provincianas, estáticas e etnocêntricas, a própria epítome do conceito de “sociedade fechada” de Bergson. Nas últimas décadas, entretanto, seu lugar no cenário político-cultural global vem mudando. Uma atenção crescente vem sendo dada às concepções do mundo desses povos e suas formas de habitá-lo. As ecologias do conhecimento⁵ que estão se constituindo em resposta ao Antropoceno incluem alianças estratégicas com tradições coletivas que, até recentemente, eram negligenciadas ou lamentadas como sobreviventes de uma fase primitiva da humanidade.

A visibilização dos coletivos extramodernos, essa *outra* humanidade que é *humanamente* outra, está a ocorrer ao mesmo tempo em que proliferam novas cunhagens conceituais, como “outro-que-humano”, “mais-que-humano”, “pós-humano”, “transhumano” e sabe-se lá mais o-que-humano. Não é por acaso que a invasão dos discursos contemporâneos por essas formas alternativas de alteridade (incluindo os vários gêneros outros-que-o-masculino e as $n+$ sexualidades) em relação à figura transcendental do Homem Branco é contemporânea dos deslocamentos de populações outras-que-brancas na direção Sul-Norte, causados tanto pela demanda de força de trabalho barata para o capital como pelas crises sistêmicas do Antropoceno, bem como pela progressiva ultrapassagem do Ocidente pelas versões da ultramodernidade que nos vêm do Oriente. Hegel dizia que a marcha da História anda do Leste para o Oeste. Mas esqueceu de dizer que a Terra é redonda...

A mudança que levou as sociedades indígenas a uma posição de destaque no *Zeitgeist* está obviamente associada à crise de autoestima pela qual a civilização

⁴ Essa relevância e popularidade dos modos de vida e pensamento extramodernos, não vêm, decerto, desacompanhada de equívocos, a maioria dos quais nós, que nos estimamos os *cognoscenti*, não devemos ter a pretensão de desfazer, seja porque não sabemos se suas consequências são necessariamente negativas, seja porque assumir o manto de destruidor de mitos e martelo de ilusões seria um gesto ainda mais equívoco.

⁵ Casper Bruun Jensen, “How to deal with cosmoecological perplexities: artsience, critical zones, pluriversal politics.” *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society* 8(1), 2022: 189–198.

euro-americana, ainda hegemônica, está passando, devido à percepção de que ela se tornou incapaz de compreender plenamente o que, no entanto, é capaz de fazer⁶: da bomba atômica e seus efeitos “inconcebíveis” às máquinas de IA, as quais estariam se tornando, nas palavras de alguns de seus desenvolvedores, “inescrutáveis”. Inclua-se, nessa percepção da falência da matriz tecno-econômica do capitalismo, a constatação de que os povos indígenas, que são apenas 6% da população humana, abrigam nas áreas que ocupam precariamente, 80% da biodiversidade restante do planeta.

Nosso problema, será tentar definir o que é exatamente essa categoria do “outro-que-humano”, ver o que contém esse rótulo de significado meramente privativo e extensão indeterminada. O que é, quem são os “*outros-que-humanos*”? De que *humanos* eles são outros?

Começemos por uma célebre advertência de Descartes:

Depois [logo abaixo] do erro daqueles que negam a Deus, não há outro que afaste as mentes mais fracas do reto caminho da virtude do que imaginar que a alma dos animais é da mesma natureza que a nossa. (*Discurso do Método*, 5ª parte).

O que incomoda Descartes não é o fato de os humanos serem, pela metade ao menos, animais como os outros (e, portanto, máquinas, autômatos materiais), mas o fato de os animais poderem ser humanos como nós. Enfim, aqui temos os humanos, os animais (um subconjunto das “máquinas”) e a primeira versão do Espírito Absoluto, Deus. Todos os personagens de nosso problema estão dados, direta ou indiretamente. E, como começamos por Descartes, cabe recordar a fórmula sarcástica do filósofo Gilbert Ryle para descrever o dualismo alma/corpo cartesiano: “*the ghost in the machine*”. Este texto poderia se intitular “*the ghost as the machine*”, ou talvez, *the machine as the ghost*. Recordemos também outra frase famosa, esta de Arthur Clarke: “toda tecnologia suficiente avançada é indistinguível da magia.” Ela coloca em ressonância a máquina (a tecnologia) e os espíritos (a magia) — justamente os dois personagens cuja relação queremos elucidar aqui.

O que nos leva a mais outra lembrança, a de um conto de H.G. Wells, “O Senhor do Dínamo”, de 1894, que resumo via Wikipedia:

⁶ Günther Anders, *A ameaça atômica: Reflexões radicais sobre a era nuclear*, tradução Gabriel Valladão Silva. São Paulo: N-1 Edições, 2023.

Wells descreve como “certas possibilidades estranhas da mente negra colocadas em contato abrupto com a jóia da coroa de nossa civilização”. Azuma-zi, um indivíduo de raça mal definida, mas de pele escura, aparentemente de origem do sudeste asiático, chega a Londres a bordo de um navio a vapor onde era foguista. Ele não fala inglês, perde todo o dinheiro que ganhou trabalhando no navio a vapor e acaba encontrando trabalho em uma estação de energia de uma rede do metrô. A estação está sob o comando de James Holroyd, um eletricitista de Yorkshire. Covarde e racista, ele bate em Azuma-zi com uma barra de fio de cobre. Dá sermões a Azuma-zi contra a religião e sugere a ele que o maior e mais impressionante dos três dínamos é mais “*Gord*” do que aquele pregado pelos missionários. Azuma-zi fica fortemente impressionado com o zumbido e o giro do maquinário e passa a acreditar que o grande dínamo é de fato um deus. Ele começa a adorá-lo; saúda-o quando chega ao trabalho, reza para que ele o salve de Holroyd, limpa e lustra o dínamo com cuidado devocional e o unge com óleo, o que danifica uma área das bobinas. Ao descobrir isso, Holroyd ordena que ele se afaste da máquina com ameaças de violência. A intimidação de Holroyd e a adoração do dínamo por Azuma-zi se combinam para convencer este último de que seu deus desaprova Holroyd e, por fim, que deseja Holroyd como sacrifício humano. Azuma-zi surpreende Holroyd, tropeça nele e o joga contra os terminais energizados expostos na extremidade do dínamo, onde ele é eletrocutado. [...] (Azuma-zi acaba se suicidando, do mesmo modo).

Os mesmos personagens de Descartes estão em cena — a divindade, o animal, a máquina — agora com o humano dividido em dois, o selvagem e civilizado.

O problema mais geral que me persegue é a insatisfação com o rendimento conceitual da dualidade Natureza/Cultura quando aplicada a cosmologias outras que a cosmologia oficial da Modernidade.⁷ Como é notório, essa dualidade ou dicotomia

⁷ Como sabemos, a referida dualidade não funciona nem mesmo aqui, como amplamente argumentado por, entre outros, Bruno, Latour e Donna Haraway — ainda que se possa dizer que esses autores assinalam justamente o fim da Modernidade iniciada no século XVI e encerrada com a percepção da crise civilizatória do Ocidente, no último quartel do século passado.

é ao mesmo tempo o campo de investigação, o problema central e o instrumento analítico da antropologia social. Mais que isso, na verdade, pois ela é a dualidade que funda a ideia mesma do “Homem”, no sentido que o conceito tem n’*As palavras e as coisas*. A figura “empírico-transcendental” de que fala Foucault é a expressão dessa dualidade ontológica, a qual é projetada — pela cultura do Homem Branco, naturalmente — como um universal antropológico. Um universal tanto objetivo quanto subjetivo, na medida em que se supõe que todas as culturas humanas distinguiriam os humanos dos não humanos, isto é, distinguiriam a si mesmas como essencial e eminentemente humanas. Os “não humanos” constituem, assim, uma categoria residual, definida exaustivamente pela privação do atributo (ou atributos) definidores da humanidade, e que podemos condensar na velha noção de alma — também conhecida pelos nomes de cultura, lei, linguagem, trabalho, história, desejo, falta e outros ainda por inventar.

Meu problema começou etnograficamente, de modo bastante modesto, ou ingênuo. Começou nos Yawalapíti, povo aruaque do Alto Xingu, que visitei por alguns poucos meses em 1975-1977.

A língua yawalapíti associa diretamente os conceitos de “espírito”, *apapalutápa*, e “animal”, ou melhor, “quadrúpede”, “bicho grande”, “mamífero ou quase”. Meus interlocutores propunham a palavra *apapalutápa-mina*, “semelhante a espírito”, quando eu perguntava como se dizia “animal” ou “bicho” em sua língua.⁸ Como ficou claro para mim, para os Yawalapíti e depois para o caso de toda a América indígena, aqueles seres que chamamos, *faute de mieux*, de “espíritos” constituem uma categoria de agentes cósmicos que transcende a distinção animalidade/humanidade — manifestação metonímica principal da distinção Natureza/Cultura —, seja porque a categoria é posta como cosmogonicamente *anterior* à distinção, seja porque ela é pensada como o substrato *comum* dos dois pólos.

Nas *Mitológicas* de Lévi-Strauss, a primeira grande tentativa de caracterizar em profundidade os modos americanos de pensamento, a dualidade natureza/cultura é o instrumento sinóptico de formalização do discurso mítico. Ela deixa escapar, entretanto, esse terceiro modo ontológico, que chamo, também na falta de palavra mais adequada, de “Sobrenatureza”. Cada um destes três domínios, ou seus representantes prototípicos, pode ser visto como uma perspectiva que neutraliza a oposição entre os dois restantes: do ponto de vista dos espíritos, humanos e animais se assemelham; do

⁸ Na imensa maioria das línguas indígenas, não existe vocábulo ou expressão que coincida, não digo perfeita, mas sequer largamente, com nossa noção de “animal” em sua acepção comum (que não se deve confundir com o sentido zoológico atual). Recorde-se também que nosso “bicho” (do latim *bestia*), além de designar “animais não humanos” é popularmente usado para se referir a espectros, assombrações, monstros, feras, possuindo, manifestando, certa afinidade semântica com o domínio dos “espíritos”.

ponto de vista dos humanos, espíritos e animais comungam aspectos essenciais; do ponto de vista dos animais, humanos e espíritos seriam a mesma coisa. Há portanto, talvez, dualidade; mas ela seria a redução de uma estrutura mais rica.⁹

De acordo com muitas cosmologias indígenas, assim, a constituição do mundo atual é o resultado da diferenciação original entre três categorias de seres, que chamarei de *humanos*, *animais* (abreviação para todas as outras formas vivas — no sentido que as cosmologias indígenas dão a este último conceito) e *espíritos*. Essa diferenciação é o tema dos grandes mitos etiológicos, que começam com um estado de indiscernibilidade entre as três categorias e terminam com sua transformação nas muitas espécies e outros tipos de entidades e fenômenos que povoam o cosmos. Os personagens míticos são concebidos como ontologicamente contínuos com os espíritos que existem na realidade atual, isto é, como agentes proteicos e totipotentes, nos quais os atributos de diferentes espécies se superpõem ou alternam. Esse substrato metamórfico de todos os seres responde por sua condição compartilhada de cidadãos do mundo, membros de uma cosmópolis mais-que-humana (semelhantemente, mas ao contrário, ao modo como concebemos nossos corpos, i.e. como feitos dos mesmos elementos que todas as outras entidades materiais). Isso é o que a antropologia chamava, e voltou a chamar, de “animismo”, a saber, a atribuição de mentalidade a um número indeterminado de espécies vivas e outras formas de existência.¹⁰

Humanos, animais, espíritos. Essa configuração triádica sugere que o dualismo Natureza/Cultura não é suficiente para dar conta das cosmologias extramodernas. Há sempre um terceiro pólo, que corresponde ao que chamo Sobrenatureza, e que Lévi-Strauss via como sendo uma projeção imaginária da interação dialética entre Natureza e Cultura. Para este antropólogo, a Sobrenatureza é um domínio fictício, enquanto a Natureza e a Cultura correspondem a províncias da realidade, mesmo que a última deva ser vista como subjetiva e a primeira como a única objetiva. No entanto, pode-se também argumentar exatamente o contrário, ou seja, que “Natureza” e “Cultura” são domínios derivados de um solo originário, aquele estado protonatural

⁹ Este parágrafo repete o que vai escrito nas linhas finais do capítulo “Alguns aspectos do pensamento yawalapíti: classificações e transformações” de meu livro *A Inconstância da alma selvagem* (São Paulo: Ubu Editora, 2017).

¹⁰ Em boa parte da América indígena, as três categorias emergem das posições básicas dentro da cadeia trófica: “humanos” são aqueles que comem juntos; “animais”, aqueles que são comidos por “humanos”; e “espíritos”, aqueles que comem “animais”. Essas posições *definem* as categorias, em vez de depender delas como se fossem substâncias autônomas. O idioma da predação alimentar — o que cada espécie vê como seu alimento — é o eixo analógico central de muitas cosmologias do continente; em alguns casos, ele é um princípio metafísico universal, como para os Kwakiutl da Colúmbia Britânica, que consideram a fome o Motor cósmico (Stanley Walens, *Feasting with cannibals: an essay on Kwakiutl cosmology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

e protocultural que porta mal o prefixo “sobre” (ou “super”), e que outros prefeririam chamar, por exemplo, de “plano de imanência”, se você for um filósofo francês, ou de “*Dreaming*”, se você for um pensador autóctone australiano — em suma, aquele estado pré-cosmológico descrito pelos “mitos” indígenas, o supertempo (e o hiper-espaço) quando (e onde) os humanos e os outros entes mundanos coparticipa(va)m do modo de existência dos espíritos.¹¹ Lévi-Strauss, aliás, dizia, em 1991, que a Sobrenatureza voltou sob a forma de uma “Sub-” ou “Infra-natureza”, com o mundo quântico da física e suas leis matematicamente precisas mas incompreensíveis para os leigos, e mesmo para os cientistas.¹²

Algum tempo atrás, escrevi uma nota de pesquisa, publicada na internet, intitulada “As três inteligências”, sobre outra tríade: humanos, animais, máquinas. Transcrevo a nota a seguir.¹³

Definamos como “antropológico” todo estudo que define seu campo de objetos como sendo povoado por entidades “inteligentes”, isto é, capazes de entrar em relação de pressuposição recíproca com mundos a que elas se acoplam em trajetórias coevolutivas caracterizadas por circuitos de retroação. Há três grandes áreas de interesse antropológico contemporâneo. Elas se interceptam, se superpõem, colaboram e frequentemente colidem. Pois elas disputam, de modo mais ou menos explícito, uma posição de antecedência epistemológica e/ou de preeminência ontológica: cada área pretende ao título de continente mais geral dentro do qual as duas outras são províncias

¹¹ Para a noção de “supertempo” e sua relação com temporalidade mítica, ver a palestra de Elie During 2019 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ol-B0tX9nyw>, consultado 12/01/2024.)

¹² “Para o homem, volta a existir, portanto, um mundo sobrenatural. Os cálculos e experiências dos físicos certamente demonstram sua realidade. Mas essas experiências só adquirem sentido quando transcritas em linguagem matemática. Aos olhos dos leigos (ou seja, de quase toda a humanidade), esse mundo sobrenatural apresenta as mesmas propriedades que o dos mitos: tudo acontece de um modo diferente do que no mundo comum e, frequentemente, ao inverso. Para o homem comum — todos nós — esse mundo permanece inatingível, exceto pelo viés de velhos modos de pensar que o especialista consente em restaurar para o nosso uso (e às vezes, infelizmente, para o seu próprio). Do modo mais inesperado, é o diálogo com a ciência que torna o pensamento mítico novamente atual.” (Lévi-Strauss, *História de Lince*, tradução Beatriz Perrone-Moisés. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1993, p. 12.)

¹³ Para uma exploração em profundidade da tríade, o leitor terá interesse em consultar Glen Mazis, *Humans animals machines: blurring boundaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), bem como a coletânea editada por James Sheehan e Morton Sosna, *The boundaries of humanity: humans, animals, machines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

suas. Tal tensão deve (ou ao menos pode) ser vista como produtiva, não como destrutiva. Esses estudos são ditos antropológicos porque tendem a passar empiricamente (mesmo que não necessariamente) pela mediação de práticas, discursos, e instituições observáveis nos diferentes coletivos humanos.

A primeira área é a que chamaremos de “inteligência *cultural*”. Seu objeto é a diferença entre os modos humanos de fazer mundo, diferença que condiciona historicamente a relação (política, epistêmica etc) entre esses modos. Esta área é aquela percorrida pela antropologia social clássica, mas também pela chamada “virada ontológica” desta disciplina, bem como por toda a problemática dita “decolonial”. Seu problema metodológico, que é também sua finalidade imanente, é a deslocalização do ponto de vista contingente do sujeito de conhecimento — do mundo específico pressuposto por essa posição — por via dos mundos dos sujeitos-outros que estão na posição contingente de objeto de conhecimento.

A segunda é a inteligência “*natural*”. Seu objeto são os diferentes modos outros-que-humanos de fazer mundo, e, muito frequentemente, as relações desses modos com os diferentes modos humanos. Aqui se encontram os trabalhos abrigados sob o termo guarda-chuva de “estudos multiespécies”, mas também as descrições de processos e entidades abióticas feitas do ponto de vista de suas capacidades de agência (a “teoria do ator-rede” de Latour e Callon, por exemplo); essas descrições costumam, igualmente, se concentrar nas relações entre esses actantes e os mundos e agentes humanos.

A terceira é o que chamaremos de “inteligência *artificial*”. Seu objeto são dispositivos e agenciamentos materiais produzidos por (via de regra) humanos, com a capacidade atual ou presumida de fazer mundo e de se acoplar aos mundos humanos. Aqui se encontram os inúmeros estudos sobre IA, as filosofias e antropologias da tecnologia, o interesse recente pelas “cosmotécnicas”, as especulações metafísicas sobre o “pós-humano” e o “inumano”, e assim por diante.

Esse triângulo, que na tradição filosófica da Modernidade poderia ser descrito pelas rubricas “humanos, animais, máquinas”, continua a definir os contornos das metafísicas contemporâneas, sejam ela acadêmicas ou populares (como na ficção científica), ainda que ele seja eventualmente ampliado de modo a incluir extraterrestres, viventes em geral (entidades auto-replicantes), e entidades lógicas (programas de computador). O triângulo pode ser imaginado como equilátero, isósceles ou escaleno, conforme as diferentes orientações filosóficas.

Meu problema, então, é a relação entre essas duas tríades cosmológicas que em parte se sucedem na história cultural da humanidade, em parte coexistem de maneira complexa: humanos/animais/espíritos e humanos/animais/máquinas.¹⁴

A tríplice fronteira antropológica já tinha sido traçada por Aristóteles, que marcou sua natureza eminentemente política: “...o homem é, por natureza, um animal político. E aquele que é sem cidade (*polis*), naturalmente e não devido a circunstâncias, ou é um ser degenerado, ou está acima da humanidade. [...] [O] homem que é incapaz de ser membro de uma comunidade, ou que não sente de forma alguma a necessidade de sê-lo por se bastar a si mesmo, ou é uma besta bruta, ou um deus.”¹⁵

Esse triângulo político persistirá no esquema *humanitas/feritas/divinitas*, recorrente no Renascimento. E o tropo permanece até nossos dias, por exemplo no clichê evolucionista “do macaco ao anjo”, título de um livro de vulgarização sobre a história da antropologia social (1958)¹⁶, com ênfase sobre os costumes matrimoniais dos primitivos e dos gorilas. Clichê que, aliás, foi aplicado à IA, o que nos interessa sobremaneira, por trazer as máquinas para esse imaginário.¹⁷

A nossa questão é como isso se relaciona com a febre atual, entre ansiosa e entusiasmada, em torno da IA, com a proliferação de análises e proposições sobre o estatuto jurídico e metafísico que caberá conceder às máquinas dotadas de “inteligência”, capazes de autoconsciência etc.¹⁸ Trata-se assim de tentar localizar comparativamente, no contexto de uma antropologia histórica, o estatuto atual ou

¹⁴ Todos os termos são sinédoques para categorias internamente diferenciadas: *animais* = bichos, plantas, fungos, amebas, procariotas etc; *espíritos* = almas, espectros, divindades etc; *humanos* = a espécie darwiniana / a condição arendtiana; *máquinas* = relógios, máquinas a vapor, máquinas eletrônicas, computadores e aplicativos de IA.

¹⁵ *Política* 1253a. A posição intermédia do “animal político” grego se exprimia ritualmente na oferenda de vítimas animais aos deuses, seguida por um repasto comunitário intra-humano: ver os estudos reunidos em Jean-Pierre Vernant e Marcel Detienne (orgs.) *La cuisine du sacrifice en pays grec* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979). A fórmula “entre bestas e deuses” é recorrente no helenismo antropológico e filosófico. A versão amazônica-perspectivista da tríade, igualmente em código “culinário”, está rapidamente assinalada na nota 2, *supra*. Ela se acha desenvolvida em Anne-Christine Taylor e Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, “Um corpo feito de olhares” (*Revista de Antropologia* 62(3), 2019: 769-818.)

¹⁶ Hoffman Hays, *From ape to angel: an informal history of social anthropology*. Londres: Routledge, 2023 [1958].

¹⁷ Alex Dimnitriu, “Ape to Angel: The Developmental Stages of AI”. Ver <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/psychiatry-and-sleep/202304/ape-to-angel-the-developmental-stages-of-ai>, consultado em 12/01/2024.

¹⁸ Ver o interessantíssimo livro recente de David Gunkel, *Person thing robot: a moral and legal ontology for the 21st century and beyond*. Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press.

projetado de dispositivos computacionais que imaginamos capazes de passar o teste de Turing para si mesmos — ou, melhor dizendo, uns para os outros: máquinas enganando máquinas (o que os tornaria mais-que-máquinas?).

Minha tese é simples, para não dizer banal: as máquinas vieram ocupar o lugar que os espíritos ocupavam nas cosmologias extramodernas. Não que estes tenham desaparecido (assim como sempre houve máquinas); até certo ponto, eles estão retornando, ainda que à margem da cosmologia oficial, seja sob a forma dos tecnocratismos e da Nova Era, seja sob aquela do recente interesse filosófico pela noção de spectralidade, seja, enfim, nos exorcismos, visitasões e glossolalias neopentecostais, essas epifanias populares do espírito do capitalismo.

Apesar de suas conotações depreciativas e colonialistas originais, a noção de “animismo” recentemente recuperou algo de sua cidadania dentro da antropologia social (e fora dela). Novos temas acadêmicos, como o “animismo contemporâneo” e o anúncio de um “novo animismo”, são alguns dos sintomas desse processo de reabilitação. Há cada vez mais propostas para uma revitalização do conceito e sua reorientação como um programa político-filosófico à altura do desafio do Antropoceno. Embora concorde, até certo ponto, com tais propostas, acredito que o interesse em “recuperar” esse conceito reside, em última análise, no estabelecimento de conexões com os modos de existência indígenas (e outros) que permanecem virtualidades negligenciadas ou reprimidas em nossa própria província cosmopolítica.

O chamado animismo é uma orientação geral do pensamento, uma atitude intelectual antiga e muito difundida. Suas expressões indígenas são variadas, mas todas se caracterizam por uma intensa consciência (no sentido do inglês *awareness*) da presença de outros seres vivos e por uma atenção meticulosa à experiência sensível, apoiada pelo raciocínio inferencial e abduutivo, pelos poderes plásticos da imaginação e frequentemente aumentada por técnicas de modificação sensorial. O “fato” de que as metafísicas vernaculares classificadas como animista são, como tantas outras coisas, a expressão de características inerentes à mente de nossa espécie (e possivelmente de outras), e que a personificação de instituições ou objetos é comum no Ocidente contemporâneo, não deve nos fazer esquecer que tais disposições são elaboradas de forma diferente em diferentes coletivos humanos. Elas se exprimem em modalidades específicas de atenção ao ambiente, em diferentes agenciamentos sociotécnicos, disciplinas corporais, normas éticas, estilos estéticos, gêneros narrativos, sensibilidades políticas e assim por diante. Falar do “Mercado”, por exemplo, como um misterioso personagem que está “nervoso” ou “eufórico” — a imprensa

neoliberal não cansa de nos manter bem informados a este respeito — não é o mesmo que afirmar que as florestas pensam, que os animais são pessoas ou as montanhas, espíritos. A metonímia do “Mercado” como um agente prosopomórfico foi criada para *ocultar* as formas institucionais e os atores humanos que determinam as condições de existência de outros agentes, humanos ou não. As florestas sencientes amazônicas, os *xapiri* yanomami e os *tirakuna* quechua,¹⁹ ao contrário, *revelam* a maneira pela qual o componente humano dos coletivos extramodernos está relacionado aos outros componentes: eles atestam a interdependência como a condição primordial de existência de toda forma de vida. O animismo da economia capitalista – do Mercado ao chatGPT – está nos antípodas do animismo da ecologia indígena, assim como o “fetichismo da mercadoria” é a inversão completa do *hau*, o “espírito da dádiva” dos Maori.²⁰

As discussões contemporâneas sobre a emergência de consciência nos dispositivos de Inteligência Artificial deram ao tema do animismo uma atualidade inesperada. A metafísica do capitalismo tardio parece mais fascinada pela alma das máquinas do que pela alma dos animais, apesar de toda a atenção que estes últimos, recentemente secundados pelas plantas, voltaram a receber nas áreas de pesquisa mais voltadas para a ecologia. Desde o século XVII, no Ocidente, as máquinas têm progressivamente tomado o lugar ocupado pelos espíritos nos mundos extramodernos, e os sistemas de IA neuromórfica ou “generativa” de hoje são seus representantes mais bem-sucedidos.²¹ O animismo se tornou digital, e a questão dos direitos dos dispositivos de IA está começando a ser levantada, essencialmente porque a maneira ocidental típica de implementar o animismo na prática é traduzi-lo em termos de direitos, já que o Direito é nossa principal técnica ontológica, nosso instrumento de

¹⁹ Ver: Eduardo Kohn, *How forest think: toward an anthropology beyond the human* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Davi Kopenawa e Bruce Albert, *A queda do céu: memórias de um xamã yanomami*, tradução Beatriz Perrone-Moisés (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2015); Marisol de la Cadena, *Earth-beings: ecologies of practice across Andean worlds* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

²⁰ Marcel Mauss, “Essai sur le don: forme et raison de l’échange dans les sociétés archaïques” [1938], in *Sociologie et anthropologies* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950).

²¹ Ver Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Metafísicas canibais: elementos para uma antropologia pós-estrutural* (São Paulo: Cosac Naify / N-1 Edições, 2015, p. 37 n.6); Stephen Cave e Kanta Dihal, orgs., *Imagining AI: how the world sees intelligent machines* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023); James Bridle, *Ways of being: beyond human intelligence* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022).

produção de ficções eficazes.²²

Um caso recente que merece muita atenção é o dos dispositivos de “IA Geral”. Um deles é o LaMDA (Modelo de Linguagem para Aplicativos de Diálogo), uma família de grandes modelos de linguagem de conversação desenvolvidos pelo Google. Originalmente apresentado como “*Meena*” em 2020, o LaMDA de primeira geração foi anunciado durante a apresentação do Google I/O de 2021, enquanto a segunda geração foi anunciada no ano seguinte. Em junho de 2022, o LaMDA ganhou destaque na imprensa, quando Blake Lemoine, engenheiro do Google, afirmou que o *chatbot* havia se tornado senciente.²³ A comunidade científica rejeitou amplamente as alegações de Lemoine, embora isso tenha levado a discussões interessantes sobre a eficácia do teste de Turing. Em fevereiro de 2023, o Google anunciou o Bard, um *chatbot* de inteligência artificial desenvolvido a partir do LaMDA, para combater a ascensão do ChatGPT.

Voltando às três macrocategorias extramodernas: humanos, animais, espíritos. É possível seguir as transformações desse triângulo intrinsecamente instável. Na maioria de suas versões “animistas” tradicionais, os vértices ocupados por animais e espíritos estão um pouco mais próximos uns dos outros do que do vértice humano,²⁴ na medida em que representam as faces simétricas da alteridade mais-que-humana. Em trabalhos anteriores, mostrei como as três figuras se comunicam formalmente por meio da personitude genérica (a dimensão anímica do existente), como elas se diferenciam materialmente por meio das distintas corporeidades, e como elas emergem originalmente de um estado de indiscernibilidade, ou diferença interna infinita.²⁵

Na “era axial” das religiões transcendentalistas,²⁶ os espíritos se condensaram na figura única de Deus, que se aproximou do pólo “humano” em detrimento do pólo “animal”, como podemos constatar no Gênesis e na teo-antropologia que deriva dali. Quando a divindade (e a população fantasmática remanescente) começou a desapa-

²² Ver David Gunkel, op.cit., sobre a *summa divisio* entre “coisas” e “pessoas”, para o caso dos robôs.

²³ Ver o artigo “LaMDA” na Wikipedia (<https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/LaMDA>), citando a entrevista na revista *Wired* onde Lemoine sustenta que a LaMDA é uma pessoa, “conforme determina a Décima Terceira Emenda da Constituição dos EUA”, e a compara a “uma inteligência alienígena de origem terrestre”.

²⁴ Do ponto de vista dos humanos, bem entendido.

²⁵ Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, “The crystal forest: notes on the ontology of Amazonian spirits”, *Inner Asia* 9, 2007: 13-33.

²⁶ Ver o importante estudo de Alan Strathern, *Unearthly powers: religion and political change in world history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

recer da vulgata cosmológica moderna e ser absorvida pelo pólo humano, as máquinas passaram a ocupar o lugar agora vago, e surgiu o triângulo “cartesiano” humanos / animais / máquinas. Como disse Latour em *Jamais fomos modernos*, “ninguém é realmente moderno se não aceita afastar Deus do jogo das leis da natureza [isto é, dos animais] e das leis da República [isto é, dos humanos]”. Com a reforma protestante, Deus se interiorizou, deixando a natureza e a sociedade e indo abrigar-se no íntimo do sujeito individual, ao mesmo tempo em que se ia tornando em uma figura criada à imagem e semelhança do Homem (Feuerbach) e depois a ser apenas um outro nome para a Sociedade (Durkheim). Isto até voltar, como lembrei momentos atrás, sob a forma arcaica do Juiz do Armagedon..

Não nos esqueçamos, tampouco, de que a filosofia moderna se constituiu em grande parte como uma “guerra ontológica”²⁷ contra os espíritos enquanto formas da exterioridade, ou seja, como espectros, fantasmas, presenças obsedantes. Um grande esforço foi feito para desespectralizar, isto é, para *desmaterializar* o conceito de espírito, seja purificando-o como *res cogitans* ou “mente”, seja hipostasiando-o como nome agencial da História, seja reduzindo os espectros às miragens de uma imaginação rudimentar.²⁸ Nesse sentido, como observou Pierre Clastres, o pensamento indígena (animista e anarquista) é aquilo que teve de ser silenciado — se necessário, exterminando sua manifestação existencial — para que o discurso sobre a alteridade antropológica (o primitivo, o louco, a criança) pudesse ser constituído como discurso da Razão.²⁹ Não esqueçamos, por fim, que desde Kant e seu ataque aos “sonhos de um visionário” até Freud e sua redução do animismo a um estágio infantil da espécie, a *pneumodiversidade* do cosmos tem sido objeto de um extermínio sistemático pelos célebres “descenramentos copernicanos”, o que sugere uma relação de pressuposição recíproca entre desterritorialização e desespectralização. Horkheimer & Adorno: “libertar o mundo da magia é extirpar o animismo”.³⁰ Mas essa história começa bem antes do Iluminismo de que falavam os dois autores. Seria

²⁷ Mauro Almeida, *Caipora e outros conflitos ontológicos* (São Paulo: Ubu Editora, 2021).

²⁸ Ver Fabião Ludueña, *La comunidad de los espectros I. Antropotecnia* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2010). Não é coincidência o fato de Kant ter, ao mesmo tempo, reduzido Swedenborg ao ridículo e abundado sobre a importância cosmopolítica da existência hipotética de extraterrestres. Como nenhuma outra espécie na Terra estava à altura da humanidade, era necessário especular sobre a existência de seres racionais no espaço cósmico de modo a caracterizar transcendentalmente a história universal e a essência distintiva de nossa espécie. Sobre este ponto, ver Peter Szendy, *Kant chez les extraterrestres: philosophies cosmopolitiques*. [Paris: Minuit, 2013]. Os extraterrestres agora compartilham com as máquinas inteligentes o lugar deixado vago pela expulsão política dos diferentes modos de spectralidade.

²⁹ Pierre Clastres, “Entre silence et dialogue”, *L’Arc* n°26, 1968.

³⁰ Max Horkheimer e Theodor Adorno, *La dialectique de la raison: fragments philosophiques*, tradução Éliane Kaufholz (Paris: Gallimard/Tel, p.22).

talvez necessário voltarmos até à “distinção mosaica” de Jan Assmann (o monoteísmo intolerante e iconoclasta – “cosmofóbico”, como dirá Nêgo Bispo) ou à “Era Axial” de Karl Jaspers (a invenção da transcendência).³¹ Talvez seja também interessante, como argumenta David Abram, voltarmos à invenção do alfabeto, que silenciou o mundo para fazer falar marcas descontínuas de tinta sobre uma superfície plana — criando o animismo atomista da escrita,³² animismo este aparentemente em vias de passar o bastão para os ciber-espíritos multimídia da Internet, o ecossistema planetário onde vicejam as IAs. Mesmo a voz de Deus, que há muito já fala pelas Escrituras, agora se mudou para as aparições espectrais dos tele-evangelistas, essa variante muito peculiar do neoxamanismo do capital.

A configuração do triângulo moderno humanos/animais/máquinas não é menos instável, e está em processo de ser redesenhado. Nas versões que herdamos do século XVII, os seres humanos e sua alma foram distinguidos dos animais e das máquinas como entidades puramente materiais: humanos x (animais + máquinas). Nos dois séculos seguintes, a partir do Romantismo, os humanos e os animais foram progressivamente sendo aproximados, enquanto seres sencientes e autopoieticos, em oposição às máquinas “mortas”, uma configuração que persiste nas críticas de inspiração fenomenológica da IA.³³ A partir de meados do século XX, com a “máquina universal” de Turing-Von Neumann e a revolução cibernética, os seres humanos e os dispositivos de IA, enquanto entidades “racionais” supostamente modeladas uma na outra, parecem ter se unido contra os animais “naturais”.³⁴ Recentemente, os três ocupantes apicais do triângulo parece estar convergindo para uma única categoria

³¹ Jan Assmann, *O preço do monoteísmo*, tradução Markus Hediger e Marijan Lisboa (Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto, 2021); Karl Jaspers, *The origin and goal of history* [1949], tradução Michael Bullock (Londres: Routledge, 2010); Antonio “Nêgo” Bispo, *A terra dá, a terra quer* (São Paulo: Ubu Editora, 2023).

³² David Abram, “Animism and the alphabet”, cap. 4 de *The spell of the sensuous: perception and knowledge in a more-than-human world* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997). A relação do atomismo antigo com a consagração da escrita alfabética no Ocidente é algo a se explorar. Quem chegaria a imaginar que a estrutura última do cosmos é granular, senão quem escreve com caracteres fenícios?

³³ O “corpo” dos fenomenólogos, aquele que em alemão se diz *Leib* (em contraste com *Körper*, o corpo fisiológico) é um dos nomes da antiga “alma”.

³⁴ Para uma crítica da percepção equivocada dos dispositivos de IA como simulação material de processos cognitivos de base biológica, ver o livro recente de Matteo Pasquinelli, *The eye of the master: a social history of artificial intelligence* (New York: Verso Books, 2023). A recíproca, a saber, a identificação da inteligência humana a processos computacionais, continua a ter defensores no mundo da psicologia cognitiva e congêneres.

de entidades algorítmico-morais, ao mesmo tempo “fatores de produção” e “sujeitos de direito”.³⁵ Poderíamos, então, dizer que nos mundos animistas “tudo é humano” exatamente no mesmo sentido em que se pode dizer no mundo algorítmico do capitalismo “nada é humano”, em particular no futuro previsto pelos arautos de algumas versões do pós-humanismo, quando as máquinas de IA se tornarão encarnações (se esta é a palavra adequada) mais performantes de uma humanidade obsoleta, assim como a animalidade foi o berço original do qual esta emergiu. Teríamos então finalmente passado da condição de macaco orgânico à de anjo mecânico, o que seria um salto qualitativo na longa história ocidental das tentativas de domesticar as energias libidinais da espécie, talvez alcançando sua tão sonhada abolição.³⁶

Os projetos atuais de colonização extraterrestre promovidos pela ideologia californiana, as fantasias tecnológicas de imortalidade por meio da superação digital do “*wetware*” analógico da espécie ou, de forma mais realista, o cercamento das regiões menos danificadas da Terra pelos ultra-ricos, não despertam muito otimismo em relação a um cosmopolitanismo inclusivo que estaria por vir, pelo menos no sentido de uma ação política unificada da espécie humana com o objetivo de garantir a habitabilidade de seu mundo natal. Nenhuma IA virá nos resgatar do Antropoceno e nos jogar no paraíso do “comunismo de luxo”, como pensam alguns aceleracionistas – talvez sonhando que as máquinas são o novo sujeito revolucionário, as sucessoras, enfim, do proletariado, agora ressurrecto como *planetariado*. Sovietes e eletricidade? O que vimos na URSS, e vemos no mundo todo hoje, é cada vez mais eletricidade (carros elétricos! torres eólicas!) e cada vez menos sovietses. Mas enfim, não temos tempo de ser pessimistas...

Em conclusão, voltemos às “três inteligências” da nota acima transcrita. Note que tem havido uma certa tensão fronteiriça entre as duas primeiras variedades, em

³⁵ Décadas antes da discussão ainda incipiente sobre os direitos dos robôs, e também antes do impulso tomado pelos movimentos pelos direitos dos animais, a convergência de humanos, animais e máquinas em uma problemática comum de “uso e controle” já se manifestava em dois textos fundadores da nova era digital-algorítmica, ambos de Norbert Wiener: *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* [1948] (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2019), e *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* [1950] (Londres: Free Association Books, 1989). Na palavra “*animal*” no primeiro título, leia-se “humanos e outros animais”; quanto ao “*human use*” no segundo, leia-se “uso em acordo formal com a Declaração dos Direitos Humanos”.

³⁶ Fabián Ludueña, op.cit. O conhecido romance de Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, é um dos mais interessantes experimentos sobre a tensão na tríplice fronteira, com seus andróides e zoóides coexistindo com os humanos, estes em franco processo de decomposição antropológica, dentro de um mundo em ruínas.

especial entre alguns representantes destacados dos estudos multiespécies³⁷ e os antropólogos mais identificados com o estudo do componente humano dos coletivos extramodernos — isto é, aqueles que trabalham sobretudo a partir da interlocução com gentes que eles reconhecem como gente (gentes essas que reconhecem *outras* gentes como gente, diga-se de passagem). Tal tensão não deixa de refletir as tendências mais “naturalistas” dos primeiros e as mais “culturalistas” dos segundos, ainda que ambos os lados coincidam na denúncia da insubsistência da distinção *Natureza/Cultura*, que continua, não obstante, a ser um atrator “atávico” do pensamento de origem euromoderna. Essa tensão me parece infeliz, por desnecessária, já que a verdadeira tensão — “verdadeira” porque, mais que apenas teórica, é urgentemente política — seria mais bem entre a terceira forma de inteligência e as outras duas. Ao dizer isto, reconheço que acabo me alinhando, querendo ou não (na verdade, não muito), com a tradição fenomenológica (e marxista) que afirma a continuidade entre humanos e animais, opondo ambos às máquinas, como o vivo se opõe ao morto. Pois o fato é que, até o momento pelo menos, a IA tem sido uma das armas mais eficazes do arsenal capitalista que ameaça *todos* os seres vivos, isso para não falarmos da miséria e da opressão humanas que estão na origem da cadeia material de produção dos dispositivos cibernéticos: quanto menores os celulares, quanto mais poderosos os computadores, quanto mais “imaterial” nossa economia, mais e mais matéria é extraída das entranhas da Terra à custa do sangue de humanos outros-que-brancos.

Mas enfim, resumo minha posição nestes conflitos fronteiriços com a definição de “virada ontológica” — esse pseudo-movimento antropofilosófico a que fui identificado (mais uma vez, querendo ou não) — a definição que compartilho com minha colega Nicole Soares: *virada ontológica é etnografia multiespécies com espíritos dentro*.³⁸ Mas talvez seja preciso completar: com espíritos *e máquinas*. As máquinas de IA não virão nos salvar; mas tampouco irão embora. Talvez, então, seja preciso descolonizá-las, fechando o triângulo por um outro ângulo.

Referências:

Abram, David, “Animism and the alphabet”, in *The spell of the sensuous: perception and knowledge in a more-than-human world*, New York: Vintage Books, 1997.
Almeida, Mauro, *Caipora e outros conflitos ontológicos*; São Paulo: Ubu Editora, 2021.

³⁷ Ver o artigo de Anna Tsing, “A multispecies ontological tour?”, em Keiichi Omura, Grant Jun Otsuki, Shiho Satsuka, Atsuro Morita (orgs.), *The world multiple: the quotidian politics of knowing and generating entangled worlds* (Londres: Routledge, 2018).

³⁸ Parafrazeamos aqui uma famosa definição de Tim Ingold: “antropologia é filosofia com gente dentro”.

- Anders, Günther, *A ameaça atômica: Reflexões radicais sobre a era nuclear*, trad. Gabriel Valladão Silva, São Paulo: N-1 Edições, 2023.
- Aristizabal, Laura, *Trouble dans l'humanisme: colonialité, corps et accumulation initiale (Marisol de la Cadena, Anibal Quijano, Michel Foucault)*, Tese de doutoramento, Universidade de Liège, 2023.
- Assmann, Jan, *O preço do monoteísmo*, trad. Markus Hediger e Marijan, Lisboa, Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto, 2021.
- Bispo dos Santos, Antonio, *A terra dá, a terra quer*, São Paulo: Ubu Editora, 2023.
- Bridle, James, *Ways of being: beyond human intelligence*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022.
- Bruun Jensen, Casper, “How to deal with cosmoecological perplexities: artsience, critical zones, pluriversal politics.” *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society*, 8(1), 2022: 189–198.
- Clastres, Pierre, “Entre silence et dialogue”, *L'Arc*, nº26, 1968.
- Descartes, discurso do método?????
- Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1968.
- Dimnitriu, Alex, “Ape to Angel: The Developmental Stages of AI”, <<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/psychiatry-and-sleep/202304/ape-to-angel-the-developmental-stages-of-ai>>, consultado em 12/01/2024.
- During, Elie, 2019 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oI-B0tX9nyw>>, consultado 12/01/2024.
- Gunkel, David, *Person thing robot: a moral and legal ontology for the 21st century and beyond*, Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press, 2023.
- Hays, Hoffman Reynolds, *From ape to angel: an informal history os social anthropology*, Londres: Routledge, 2023 [1958].
- Horkheimer Max e Adorno, Theodor, *La dialectique de la raison: fragments philosophiques*, trad. Éliane Kaufholz, Paris: Gallimard, 1974.
- James Sheehan e Morton Sosna (erds), *The boundaries of humanity: humans, animals, machines*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Jaspers, Karl, *The origin and goal of history*, trad. Michael Bullock, Londres: Routledge, 2010 [1949].
- Jean-Pierre Vernant e Marcel Detienne (orgs.) *La cuisine du sacrifice en pays grec*, Paris: Gallimard, 1979.
- Kohn, Eduardo, *How forest think: toward an anthropology beyond the human*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Kopenawa, Davi e Albert, Bruce, *A queda do céu: memórias de um xamã yanomami*, trad. Beatriz Perrone-Moisés, São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2015.

- Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *História de Lince*, trad. Beatriz Perrone-Moisés. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1993.
- Ludueña, Fabião, *La comunidad de los espectros I. Antropotecnia*, Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2010.
- Mauss, Marcel, “Essai sur le don: forme et raison de l’échange dans les sociétés archaïques” in *Sociologie et anthropologies*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950 [1938].
- Mazis, Glen, *Humans animals machines: blurring boundaries*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003.
- Pasquinelli, Matteo, *The eye of the master: a social history of artificial intelligence*, New York: Verso Books, 2023.
- Marisol de la Cadena, *Earth-beings: ecologies of practice across Andean worlds*, textos editados por Robert J. Foster and Daniel R. Reichman, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.
- Stephen Cave e Kanta Dihal, orgs., *Imagining AI: how the world sees intelligent machines*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023.
- Strathern, Alan, *Unearthly powers: religion and political change in world history*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Szendy, Peter, *Kant chez les extraterrestres : philosophictions cosmopolitiques*, Paris: Minuit, 2013.
- Taylor, Anne-Christine e Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo, “Um corpo feito de olhares”, *Revista de Antropologia* 62(3), 2019: 769-818.
- Tsing, Anna, “A multispecies ontological tour?”, in Keiichi Omura, Grant Jun Otsuki, Shiho Satsuka, Atsuro Morita (orgs.), *The world multiple: the quotidian politics of knowing and generating entangled worlds*, Londres: Routledge, 2018.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo, “The crystal forest: notes on the ontology of Amazonian spirits”, *Inner Asia* 9, 2007: 13-33.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo, *Metafísicas canibais: elementos para uma antropologia pós-estrutural*, São Paulo: Cosac Naify / N-1 Edições, 2015.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo, *A Inconstância da alma selvagem*, São Paulo: Ubu Editora, 2017.
- Walens, Stanley, *Feasting with cannibals: an essay on Kwakiutl cosmology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- Wiener, Norbert: *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, Cambridge, Mass.:The MIT Press, 2019 [1948]
- Wiener, Norbert: *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society*, Londres: Free Association Books, 1989 [1950].

For a Plural Democracy: Human Rights, Interculturality and Resistance

Por uma Democracia Plural: Direitos Humanos, Interculturalidade e Resistência

Helena Esser dos Reis
Rosani M. Leitão

Abstract:

This article elucidates the limitations of the modern conception of pluralist democracy, which was forged amidst the Western republican struggles against monarchy in the 18th century and has profoundly influenced the contemporary notion of the Democratic Rule of Law State. Despite the achievements made for peasants and the bourgeoisie with the Declaration of Independence of the Thirteen Colonies of North America and the French Revolution, as well as the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the inclusion of non-Western peoples remains entirely absent in pluralist democracy. This form of democracy is guided by proposals of assimilation, guardianship, or annihilation, rather than by the principles of equality and respect for differences. By discussing these dynamics, this article highlights the persistence of such conceptions in the social imagination and the actions of the Brazilian state, as well as the resistance of indigenous peoples. This resistance helps to envision other possibilities for a more inclusive pluralist democracy, one that is more welcoming to diverse peoples, cultures, and their distinctiveness.

Keywords: *Colonialism, Plural Democracy, Interculturality, Human Rights, Resistance.*

CONTACT: Helena Esser dos Reis (UFG/CNPq - Brasil) helenaesser@ufg.br
Rosani Moreira Leitão (UFG - Brasil) rmleitao@ufg.br



Resumo: O presente artigo aponta limites da concepção moderna de democracia pluralista forjada no calor das lutas republicanas ocidentais contra a monarquia ainda no século XVIII, a qual marca profundamente a concepção contemporânea de Estado Democrático de Direito. Apesar das conquistas alcançadas para camponeses e burgueses com a Declaração de Independência das Treze Colônias da América do Norte e com a Revolução Francesa, assim como com a Declaração dos Direitos do Homem e do Cidadão, a inclusão de povos não-ocidentais está completamente ausente da democracia pluralista. Essa democracia se pauta pela proposta de assimilação, tutela ou aniquilação, e não pelo princípio de igualdade e respeito às diferenças. Ao discutir estas relações, queremos evidenciar a permanência de tais concepções no imaginário social e nas ações do estado brasileiros, bem como a resistência dos povos indígenas, que ajudam a vislumbrar outras possibilidades de democracia pluralista mais inclusivas, mais acolhedoras aos povos, culturas e suas diversidades.

Palavras-chave: Colonialismo, Democracia Plural; Interculturalidade; Direitos Humanos; Resistência.

“I no longer dream,
today I make my life with my own hands”
Milton do Nascimento – Travessia.

Modern Democracy: Its Origins and Limitations

Democracy, far from being a social and political state free from conflicts, is characterized by its ability to coexist with them. This coexistence does not imply, however, ruptures or violence¹ that hinder social harmony. The conflicts with which modern democracy coexists arise from its own premises: that people are free and equal, and therefore capable of thinking and acting for themselves in a shared world. These conflicts stem from the diversity of perspectives, opinions, beliefs, and values. Such coexistence is precariously balanced on the “tightrope” that separates harmony from violence, maintained through shared customs and laws established by participatory decision-making processes that consider most individuals in each community.

This conception of democracy, structured in modernity, centers on the individ-

¹ Examining the debate between Achilles and Agamemnon, the supreme commander of the troops, before the assembly of soldiers in Homer's Iliad, Donaldo Schüler questions whether “military matters of general interest” should be decided behind closed doors. Even if enemies might infiltrate the assemblies, he asserts, the lesson of this first assembly recorded by Greek literature is clear: “the Greek man does not shy away from dissent, he lives with it, he educates himself in it. In dissent, he learns to speak. There is no democracy under the reign of a single discourse. In the verbal skirmish, diversity announces itself, it enunciates itself. Do not expect democracy to resolve conflicts; it cultivates them” (Schüler, 2002, pp. 12-13) (our translation).

ual and is based on natural law theory. According to this view, people are naturally free and equal. They form the civil state to guarantee their inherent rights. Given this natural condition, individuals possess the right to life, the right to freedom in deciding and acting for themselves, the right to equality, protection from arbitrariness and oppression, and the right to acquire what is necessary to live and seek happiness. The State cannot violate these rights and must protect them. These rights also motivated the break from the absolute monarchies of the time. The thinkers of the 17th and 18th centuries, who questioned the privileges of the nobility, developed these conceptions. They spread throughout Europe via salons, cafes, pamphlets, and books, fostering republican and revolutionary ideas among the educated and wealthy commoners.

The turbulent social, political, and economic situation in France at the end of the 18th century is illustrative. On the brink of bankruptcy, “the king’s ministers proposed that the nobility and the church relinquish some of their tax privileges” (PERRY, 1985, p. 427, our translation). This proposal was vehemently rejected by the privileged orders. Seeking to resist and weaken the monarch, the nobility pressured him to convene a meeting of the *Estates-General*, which had not met for almost 180 years, to seek solutions for the fiscal and agrarian issues that deeply disturbed the Kingdom’s order. While the nobility and the clergy believed they could use this meeting to strengthen their seigniorial rights and honorary privileges, the Third Estate, composed of the bourgeoisie, professionals, urban workers, and peasants, saw this initiative as an opportunity to gain allies and political visibility.

By convening the representatives of the three estates², the nobility proposed maintaining the structure of the last Assembly, which had occurred in 1614. They suggested discussions in separate chambers for each estate and decisions made by the equal vote of the estates, assuming equality among them despite the significant numerical difference in representation. However, the “third estate,” represented by the emerging bourgeoisie, contested this organization and proposed a *General Assembly* with one vote per deputy. The third estate “had about 610 delegates, while the nobility and clergy together had an equivalent number”. Furthermore, the third estate “could count on the support of parish priests and liberal nobles who sympathized with their positions” (Perry, 1985, p. 429, our translation).

The proposal was not accepted, but the widespread popular support for the third estate was overwhelming, strengthening their initiative. Finding the door of the *Salle des États* closed by order of the king, the third estate, along with some representatives from the other two estates, began to meet in a sports field. In an illustrious gesture of great political significance, they named themselves the *General Assembly* and swore to remain assembled until a Constitution for France was adopted.

² The three estates were: the First Estate (High Clergy), the Second Estate (Nobility), and the Third Estate (People, including landowning or landless peasant workers, artisans, merchants, bourgeoisie, and lower clergy). These groups represented, respectively, 0.5%, 1.5%, and 98% of the French population.

Although this was not the initial task that led Louis XVI to convene the Estates-General, nor was it the task that was effectively carried out, it was in this context that the Assembly decreed the end of feudalism and its privileges. It instituted the equality of all individuals before the law and declared the *Rights of Man and of the Citizen* in August 1789. The preamble of this Declaration is remarkable:

Les représentants du peuple français, constitués en Assemblée nationale, considérant que l'ignorance, l'oubli ou le mépris des droits de l'homme sont les seules causes des malheurs publics et de la corruption des gouvernements, ont résolu d'exposer, dans une déclaration solennelle, les droits naturels, inaliénables et sacrés de l'homme, afin que cette déclaration, constamment présente à tous les membres du corps social, leur rappelle sans cesse leurs droits et leurs devoirs ; afin que les actes du pouvoir législatif et ceux du pouvoir exécutif, pouvant être à chaque instant comparés avec le but de toute institution politique, en soient plus respectés ; afin que les réclamations des citoyens, fondées désormais sur des principes simples et incontestables, tournent toujours au maintien de la Constitution et au bonheur de tous. (*Declarations des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, 1789)

Despite the fragility of the naturalistic argument, this conception significantly contributed to the recognition of the sovereignty of the people, the legal and structural limits of state powers, and the declarations of human rights. The idea that people are naturally free and equal, even if hypothetical, and can demand that the State maintain this condition as a natural and inalienable right, legitimized resistance against oppression. This is also enshrined in the *Declaration of Independence of the Thirteen Colonies*, from 1776:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. (*Declaration of Independence*, 1776)

The break with the order of the *Ancien Régime*, while supposedly signaling the end of institutionalized inequalities and oppression, brought centrality to the widespread demands for social and political inclusion of the people. The storming of the

Bastille, the popular intervention in favor of the grenadiers who refused to shoot at the people, the women's march to Versailles, the imprisonment of Louis XVI and his family in Varennes, and the abolition of slavery in the French colonies by the First Republic in 1794 are just a few examples of the political power that ordinary people began to assert.

These actions publicly expressed their views and demanded that the State recognize people's rights and limit the exercise of state power. However, this same First Republic did not tolerate the boldness of Olympe de Gouges. Dedicated to the struggle for women's political and civil rights, she published several politically themed plays and proclaimed the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen*. De Gouges was arrested, tried by the revolutionary tribunal, and executed by guillotine in 1793.

Neither the nascent pluralist democracy nor the declaration of rights provided guarantees for the broad recognition and protection of human rights, which at that time were considered natural for all individuals. The criticisms directed at Olympe de Gouges highlighted that the naturalization, universalization, and abstraction of these rights resulted in their depletion or ineffectiveness. The demands of vulnerable people were countered by the high interests of the economy and governmentality³, as well as the terrible discoveries of 19th-century "scientific racism."⁴

Despite the clamor of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, the division between the interests of the powerful and the weak, the rich and the poor, and the included and the excluded remains within the structure of states. If there is no longer a ruling caste to which all people are subjected, new forms of inequality and oppression emerge. These new forms of oppression manifest in modern states, both in Europe and beyond, following the processes of colonial independence. They are justified by the will of majorities or groups that, economically empowered, impose themselves on others and direct state actions, legitimizing discourses that exclude those who do not fit into these majorities.

Limits of Democratic Pluralism

The works of Alexis de Tocqueville from the early 19th century highlight the social and political transformations that impact the lives of people both in the New

³ We refer to the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, understanding that governmental action, in addition to territorial administration, also encompasses the control of the population and the conduct of individuals. For further reading on this topic, see: FOUCAULT, M. *Segurança, Território, População*. Curso *Collège de France*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2008.

⁴ Despite the numerous critical studies that exist, especially in Brazil and generally in the Global South, the defense of inequality among people based on supposed particular and defining racial characteristics was widely disseminated from the late 18th century to the early 20th century. For example, as early as 1800, Franz Joseph Gall published "The Anatomy and Physiology of the Nervous System in General and of the Brain in Particular." In this study, he considered it possible to determine personality characteristics and degrees of criminality by the shape of the head. In 1855, Arthur de Gobineau published "Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races," one of the first books on eugenics and racism. Cesare Lombroso, in his early works such as "The Criminal Man" (1876), defended the notion of the "born criminal" based on common and dominant anatomical characteristics and psychological traits, further developing Gall's ideas. In short, the list is extensive.

World and in old Europe. He observes that inequalities have become even more irremediable because, having left the laws, they have strengthened through customs. Despite the fact that the three feudal orders were revoked by the Assembly that declared the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, that slavery was strongly contested and abolished in many states, and that women had begun to demand the recognition of political and civil rights, inequality and oppression worsened even further “in customs, as they faded from the laws” (Tocqueville, 1992, p. 399, our translation).

In 1831-1832, Tocqueville spent some time traveling through the United States as a representative of the French government. He was able to observe the relationship established between the “Anglo-Americans”⁵ – who crossed the ocean in search of a place to live with freedom and respect for the diversity of beliefs and ideas – and the indigenous peoples of the American continent, as well as the enslaved blacks forcibly brought from Africa.

In December 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont—his friend and travel companion—were in Memphis when they witnessed the removal of the Choctaw from their territory. This event occurred because of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which mandated the removal of four other tribes in addition to the Choctaw: Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Seminole. Tocqueville’s indignation was not only due to the fate of these peoples but was strongly directed at the tactics used by the Anglo-Americans to subjugate the indigenous people “in a regular manner and, so to speak, entirely legally” (Tocqueville, 1992, p. 377).

Based on the letters that Tocqueville wrote to his mother about the Mississippi, Brogan writes:

The Americans calculated, he said, that one square kilometer can sustain ten times more civilized men than savages; wherever the civilized settle, the savages must leave: “see what a beautiful type of logic.” So, the Choctaw had to abandon their lands, where they had perhaps lived for a thousand years, and, rewarded with expensive gifts (“bottles of brandy, glass necklaces, earrings, and mirrors”), intimidated by the suggestion of force, they had to drag themselves for nearly five hundred kilometers, without even being allowed to wait for spring (Brogan, 2012, p. 204, our translation).

In the final chapter of the first volume of “*Democracy in America*” (*Some Considerations on the Present and Probable Future Condition of the Three Races that Inhabit the Territory of the United States*), Tocqueville states that, in addition to an immense and complete democracy, there exists *another reality* in America: inequality. Despite

⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville became well acquainted with the social and political organization of the United States during his nine-month sojourn on American soil. He knew, therefore, that the same space was inhabited by various indigenous peoples of America, enslaved blacks brought from Africa, and English and Irish immigrants. However, when addressing the democracy existing in the United States, he referred exclusively to the “Anglo-Americans,” emphasizing that democracy was found exclusively among European immigrants. See: Tocqueville. *De la démocratie en Amérique*.

Anglo-Americans, blacks, and indigenous people being mixed on American soil, “education, law, origin, and even outward physical features have created an almost insurmountable barrier between them” (Tocqueville, 1992, p. 368, our translation). They are gathered but not integrated. Democracy reigns among the Anglo-Americans, and “below them appear the black and the indigenous” (Tocqueville, 1992, p. 368, our translation). The word “below” is quite descriptive of the inequality and oppression in which they live:

Oppressed, he may complain, but he only finds whites among his judges. The law, however, opens the jury box to him, but prejudice keeps him away from it. His son is excluded from the school where the descendants of Europeans are educated. In theaters, he could not buy, even at the price of gold, the right to sit next to his former master; in hospitals, he faces similar segregation, (...). Thus, the black man is free, but he cannot share the rights, pleasures, labors, or sorrows, not even the grave, with the one he was declared equal to; he could meet him nowhere, neither in life nor in death (Tocqueville, 1992, p. 398, our translation).

Beyond the inequality among peoples and cultures in North America, Tocqueville observed that inequality and oppression spread in Europe due to economic differences. A few years later, while traveling through England and Ireland, he documented his observations. On May 11, 1835, still in London at the beginning of a journey that lasted more than three months traveling through the interior of England and Ireland, he recorded in his travel diary:

Spirit and virtue itself seem of little worth without money. Money mixes with all merits and becomes a part of them in a certain way. It fills all the gaps that may exist between men, but nothing could replace it. The English have left the poor with only two rights: to be subject to the same legislation as the rich and to equal them by acquiring equal wealth. And these two rights are more apparent than real, for it is the rich who make the law and create, for their own benefit and that of their children, the principal means of acquiring wealth (Tocqueville, 1991, p. 479, our translation).

Regarding women, Tocqueville is not always very kind, although he recognizes and admires the “genius” of some. In the United States, he observed that girls were encouraged to study, think, take initiatives, and take responsibility for themselves, very differently from what happened in Europe, where the education of girls was “timid, secluded, and almost cloistered” (Tocqueville, 1992, p. 713, our translation). This education prevented them from understanding the world and knowing how to defend themselves in the face of difficulties. He also emphasizes that, in the United

States, although men and women “neither have the duty nor the right to do the same things, they show the same esteem for each other’s roles and consider them as beings whose value is equal, although their destinies are different” (Tocqueville, 1992, pp. 728-729, our translation).

When addressing the education of girls in the New and Old Worlds, comparing the forms and their consequences, Tocqueville assumes the becoming of the times. He considers that in a democratic world, women’s education must also be democratic for them to integrate fully. His words, though written from a masculine perspective, echo the affirmation of Olympe de Gouges in the dedication of the “*Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen*” to Queen Marie Antoinette. In this dedication, De Gouges asserted that the revolution depends on women becoming aware of the “rights they have lost” and the deplorable condition of their lives. She highlighted the need for a revolution in thought.⁶

Although declarations of rights, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, have a performative sense that resonates within societies and state institutions, demanding new forms of action, their reach is brief – no more than a starting point. This “originating moment,” however, says little about the future. Any future is merely a possibility. An inclusive democratic pluralism that respects human diversity will not be built on formal equality and the personal successes of individuals, but rather collectively, through the resistance struggles of historically vulnerable and oppressed people and communities. Breaking the asymmetric relationship, which results in the silencing and oppression of the subaltern, means becoming self-aware and then becoming a protagonist, exercising speech and action in the public space, and resisting.

Indigenism and Colonialisms

Despite the 235 years that separate the present time from the French Declaration, which recognizes that “all men are born and remain free and equal in rights,” and the 76 years since the 1948 Declaration, which, at the end of World War II, reaffirmed that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,” many situations still exist where the human rights of diverse peoples and social groups are debased and violated. These violations occur due to their differences, often confronted by hegemonic social, political, economic, and cultural positions.

The Indigenous peoples of the Americas have endured centuries of rights violations. In Brazil, this history began in 1500 and went through various phases. It started with Portuguese colonization, legitimized by the Catholic Church, which aimed to catechize and evangelize, promoting the religious conversion of Indigenous peoples to the principles of the true Christian faith and Western ways of life. This facilitated the realization of colonial enterprises. For this purpose, missionary settlements were

⁶ See: Dallari, Dalmo de A. Os direitos da mulher e da cidadã por Olímpia de Gouges. São Paulo, Saraiva, 2016, pp. 111-124.

built throughout the country to gather different ethnic groups and Indigenous peoples. These peoples were displaced either by persuasion or forcibly, freeing up their territories for colonial exploitation.

Given the Portuguese crown's interest in extracting wealth from the colonies, the relationship with Indigenous peoples could be friendly or hostile, depending on their compliance or submission. In cases of resistance, there were persecutions, forced displacements, and justified exterminations. This resulted in the disappearance of most of these peoples during the colonial period.

A new phase began in Republican Brazil at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, characterized by indigenism. This state policy was guided by the concepts of integration and acculturation. Indigenism was one of the many nation-building policies in Brazil, marked by positivist ideas of development and progress.

In this context, the indigenist policies conducted by the SPI (Indian Protection Service), created in 1910 and replaced by FUNAI (National Indian Foundation) in 1967, aimed to protect these peoples while simultaneously managing and overseeing their lives under the pretext of their "relative incapacity." This expression was present in all national legislation until 1988, the year when the current Brazilian constitution was promulgated. Notably, in the "*Indian Statute*," Law 6001/1976, which detailed what was already provided for in previous constitutional charters, the State was assigned the role of guardian and protector of the Indigenous peoples. In practice, this meant making decisions for them, including those concerning territories defined as "properties of the Union."

These territories could be exploited by the State itself in its development projects or by private initiatives, such as agribusiness and hydroelectric enterprises, among others.

Based on this legal framework, cultural differences were understood as backwardness, and Indigenous peoples and their traditional ways of life were seen as obstacles to development. Therefore, they were to be gradually acculturated, civilized, and integrated into the so-called "national communion." While for many years the perspective was the physical extinction of Indigenous peoples through war and declared violence, since the early 20th century, the approach shifted to guardianship and integration.

This new approach presupposed not only cultural conversion but also linguistic unification, involving restrictions on cultural practices, the use of native languages, and territorial displacements justified in the name of development. Consequently, Indigenous territories in different regions of the country were affected by the construction of roads, the implementation of telegraph lines, radio stations, military bases, and airstrips.

The so-called March to the West (late 1930s and early 1940s) and its expeditions are examples of government programs that profoundly affected the Indige-

nous peoples of Central Brazil. These programs aimed to “integrate” and “develop” this region, considered isolated, desolate, inhospitable, and unpopulated, despite the presence of hundreds of Indigenous peoples, ethnicities, and villages living there.⁷

In addition to the national projects mentioned and despite the provision of protection by the State, subsequent processes of occupation in Central Brazil and other regions were even more violent. Accounts and records in the literature document persecutions and massacres of Indigenous villages and communities motivated by agricultural expansion. Rural landowners or land invaders, often with the connivance or omission of public authorities, massacred entire villages. A well-known example is the near extermination of the Avá-Canoeiro people, which will be revisited later.

Some Latin American authors, such as Pablo Casanova, interpret indigenism as another form of colonialism or a type of “internal colonialism.” This concept emerged in nations that, theoretically liberated from European colonial rule, sought to regulate and govern the lives of diverse peoples within their territories. Consequently, for an extended period, both in Brazil and across other Latin American nations, governmental authorities and their representatives assumed the role of Indigenous peoples’ spokespeople, making decisions on their behalf, often disregarding their interests and denying them any opportunity for autonomy or self-determination (Casanova, 2003).

Gersen Baniwa, who belongs to the first generation of Indigenous researchers in Brazil, emphasizes that “protecting” in the context of indigenist policies meant to oversee, “subjugate and dominate” (Baniwa, 2010, p. 39, our translation). Until the late 1980s, Indigenous peoples were represented to the State and Brazilian society in general by non-Indigenous guardians, primarily anthropologists and indigenists. This created a strong dependence and subservience among the Indigenous peoples, which persists even today, despite changes in Brazilian legislation and the political advances achieved by the Indigenous movement.

Government agencies and their representatives, through their guardianship, deprived Indigenous peoples of the opportunity to speak for themselves in the development of public policies and in discussions aimed at guaranteeing rights. Baniwa also highlights catechism and formal education as significant instruments of domination and the denial of Indigenous cultures. Even after the promulgation of the Federal Constitution of 1988, which established a “new legal and conceptual basis,” introducing the perspective of Indigenous citizenship and recognizing Indigenous peoples as “collective subjects of universal and specific rights” with the capacity to think and represent themselves, Indigenous rights guaranteed in the Constitution are continuously violated. These violations are perpetrated by the Brazilian state itself

⁷ See the report produced by researchers from the Anthropological Museum of UFG, Dr. Rosani Moreira Leitão, Gustavo de Oliveira Araújo, and Michelle Nogueira Resende, based on the development of the project: *Images and Accounts of an Unknown Hinterland: Organization and Technical Treatment of the Acary de Passos Oliveira Collection*, in 2013. This report is available only in print at the Anthropological Museum of UFG.

or by elites holding economic power in the country (Baniwa, 2010, pp. 36-37, our translation).

One could understand, therefore, that the ease with which such violations occur has deep roots in the colonialist mentality and the culture of guardianship that, for decades, legitimized asymmetric relationships and arbitrary attitudes by both the State and Brazilian society in general. Indigenous peoples and their ways of life are associated with conditions of backwardness and inferiority for not adopting the hegemonic development parameters. This consequently fuels attitudes of hostility and intolerance towards them.

Rising from the Ashes and Resisting Colonialism

From the beginning and continuing to this day, Indigenous territories possess a dimension of shared life that “the whites” do not understand. These territories are reduced merely to the dimension of land for production, within the Western extractivist conception of development and the individualistic political thought of citizenship and democracy. The equality envisioned is only formal, ignoring the existence of inequalities and injustices. The socio-historical-cultural particularities and the rights of peoples, social groups, and individuals in their diversity are disregarded.

Regarding the Indigenous peoples of Brazil, there are many examples of injustices and rights violations. If we consider the state of Goiás, for example, there is currently a small Indigenous population. In the past, however, this population was numerous and diverse in terms of ethnic-cultural and linguistic perspectives, according to documentary and bibliographic sources. Historical and anthropological literature mentions at least 30 peoples up until the colonial period. Currently, there are only three peoples with demarcated lands in the state, totaling a population of less than 800 people. Additionally, there is an urban population that, according to the latest IBGE census, exceeds 19,000, about which we lack detailed information due to the scarcity of studies on urban Indigenous peoples in this state and in Brazil. These numbers provide a brief idea of how much the Indigenous peoples of this region have suffered from assimilation and integration policies and the potential for extermination. Next, we present as examples the cases of the Avá-Canoeiro and Tapuia peoples of the state of Goiás, both survivors with distinct histories of relationships with society and the Brazilian state.

The Tapuia do Carretão are not the “typical Indigenous people” idealized by those unfamiliar with the reality of Brazilian Indigenous peoples and the historical processes they have experienced. They live in a single village in the Tapuia do Carretão Indigenous Land, located in the municipalities of Rubiataba and Nova América, in the state of Goiás. They do not speak a specific Indigenous language; instead, they speak Portuguese, or “Tapuia Portuguese,” as described by researcher Eunice Pirkodi Tapuia (Tapuia, 2024). Their origin stems from interethnic relations among

various Jê peoples of Central Brazil (including the Xavante, Karajá, Xerente, Javaé, Kayapó, among others) and from policies aimed at freeing their territories for colonial exploitation.

These peoples were gathered, sometimes forcibly, into a settlement built at the end of the 18th century for this purpose, under the administration of missionaries in the former province of Goiás. The settlement also welcomed enslaved black people fleeing torture and hard labor in the mines. The Tapuia are descendants of a few individuals who remained in the region after the settlements were deactivated at the end of the 19th century. They resisted persecutions and violence and fought for the right to remain on this territory, which was also occupied and coveted by local farmers who invaded their properties, persecuted, and demeaned them.

Despite having their lands demarcated today, they continue to suffer pressures and invasions from local farmers. They often say they rose from the ashes, as, like many other Indigenous peoples in Brazil who were displaced from their territories, they were excluded from the indigenist policies of the Brazilian State, which considered them acculturated. For decades, they fought for the recognition of their identity and faced processes of erasure, rights violations, and all kinds of threats, rebuilding themselves from their Indigenous memories and experiences of a century of colonial servitude.

Currently, they have an important space of resistance in the community school, recognized as an Indigenous school, which adopts an intercultural pedagogical perspective to strengthen their memories and cultural experiences. This approach combats prejudices that challenge the legitimacy of their claims as a culturally specific people (Tapuia, 2024).

The Avá-Canoeiro people of Goiás speak the Avá-Canoeiro language, which belongs to the Tupi-Guarani linguistic family, of the Tupi stock. However, many of the younger members also speak or understand Tapirapé and Portuguese. Traditionally inhabiting the Araguaia-Tocantins River region, they were victims of numerous persecutions and massacres, even being considered extinct until the late 1960s. For a long time, they were in constant flight. They were persecuted by the colonial policy of the former province of Goiás, and their last villages suffered massacres conducted by agents of the agricultural fronts from northern Goiás and the current state of Tocantins in the early decades of the 20th century.

Currently, there are only two small surviving groups of the Avá-Canoeiro people. One of these groups lived for years hiding in the forests and mountains of the northern region of the state of Goiás. Since the early 1980s, they have had their Indigenous land demarcated in the municipality of Minaçu (GO). This group consists of a single family of eight people, including four adults and four children under the age of 10, born from the interethnic marriage of the young Niwathima Avá-Canoeiro with a Tapirapé man.

The other group, which also suffered massacres, moved to the Araguaia River

region during their flight. Currently, they live as a minority in a village of the Iny Javaé people on Bananal Island. This group consists of a single extended family of approximately 20 people, mostly young, born from interethnic relationships. They are reclaiming and retaking their territory, where they had their last villages. A previous generation lived in this territory in pilgrimage until they were forcibly removed in the early 1970s.

After a long process of persecutions, territorial displacements, and institutional guardianships, these communities are fighting for autonomy, their rights, and the expansion of their citizenship. Both groups have their own schools, recognized as Indigenous schools and created belatedly by the Indigenous school education policy of each state. The creation of these schools was an old demand, but for decades it was ignored due to a quantitative mentality that considered them numerically insignificant.

These schools, like those of the Tapuia do Carretão, are considered and used as instruments for cultural and linguistic strengthening. They are in the process of constructing or consolidating their own educational projects, with specific curricular frameworks and intercultural pedagogical proposals. Despite the legal guarantee to develop their own education projects within the context of the national Indigenous school education policy, they face many difficulties. The education systems are not able to develop or support educational policies that are adequate to their particularities (Borges; Leitão, 2024).

In the case of the group from the Tocantins River region, or Minaçu (GO), their land was demarcated as a compensatory action due to the environmental impacts resulting from the construction of the Serra da Mesa Hydroelectric Plant, which affected their refuge and pilgrimage area. For those living in the Araguaia region (TO), the situation was exacerbated by the context of dual acculturation from living as a minority with the Javaé. This further delayed the creation of their own school and the process of recognizing their rights to their ancestral territories. This process is still ongoing, with many setbacks.

The group living in the state of Goiás finally had their land recognized in 2023, but they still face persecution from land grabbers. The group in Tocantins continues to fight for the recognition of their right to the territory from which they were forcibly removed and follows a legal process that has been dragging on for years.

Kamutaja Avá-Canoeiro, also known as Kamutaja Silva Āwa, the first of her people to attend a university course, recounts the saga of persecutions and violence suffered by her parents and grandparents. They were hunted like animals, chased by hunting dogs, and their heads were to be delivered to the instigators—farmers, planters, and land grabbers in the region—as proof of their deaths (Āwa, 2024). Niwathima, despite having taken on the role of a teacher as the one who had advanced the furthest in literacy, has not yet had the opportunity to pursue a university education. She recently completed high school through a youth and adult education

program. Gradually, she is mastering the Portuguese language and learning to write in her native language, whose writing system is not yet standardized, although studies describing it do exist.⁸

Kamutaja, who has been emerging as a young leader in the defense of her people's rights following her university education, emphasizes that her people want to live in peace and security. She asserts that the State needs not only to demarcate and recognize Indigenous lands but also to develop public security policies for the communities.

Proud of her history and the resilience of her people, who were reduced to a small group led by her grandfather Tutawa, Kamutaja understands that to remain Indigenous, it is also necessary to appropriate the "white man's" culture. It is essential to understand their worldview, their laws, the Portuguese language, and the structure of institutions and the State. She, Niwathima, and many other Indigenous people of this land have become or are becoming Brazilian citizens by resisting and for the sake of resistance.

Citizenship, Human Rights, and Interculturality

From 16th-century colonialism to the colonialism of globalization in the contemporary world, cultural diversity has always been a problem to be addressed through "specific policies, whether assimilationist, segregationist, or integrationist" (Dietz, 2012, p. 132) (our translation).

Throughout Latin America, from European colonialism to internal colonialism, hundreds, if not thousands, of cultures and languages have been decimated and erased. They were made invisible due to explicit repression or the pressure of assimilation, integration, and acculturation policies that devalued and belittled them. Fear and insecurity led individuals and families to deny or conceal their Indigenous identities, adhering to the only ideal of equality that seemed possible. This helps explain the emergence of mestizo, caboclo, and peasant identities, as well as the sharp decline in Indigenous population indices in these countries. In Brazil, this population went from millions during the colonial period to less than one hundred thousand in 1970.

The Western tradition, particularly as exemplified by Alexis de Tocqueville's contributions, the advocacy for diverse perspectives as a characteristic of democracy was limited to the pluralism existing among European and Anglo-American peoples. Although Tocqueville stated, shortly after his trip to the United States (1831-1832), that the exclusion of blacks and Indigenous people from democracy in that country is a threat to democracy itself, his position does not seem to admit equal respect for different cultures. On the contrary, the assimilation and subordination of black and

⁸ The information used here comes from the experiences of one of the authors in providing voluntary assistance to SEDUC-GO and the Avá-Canoeiro community of Minaçu, GO, in the creation of the Avá-Canoeiro village school. This assistance has been provided continuously at various times from 2014 to the present.

Indigenous individuals and communities are suggested as instruments for the construction of democratic European culture.

If there is a vehement critique of the actions of Anglo-Americans in Tocqueville's text, there is also the conviction that the one who "attracts all eyes, the first in wisdom, in power, in happiness, is the white man, the European, the man *par excellence*" (Tocqueville, 1992, p. 368, our translation). During his trip to the United States, while writing to his father, he enthusiastically remarks about the dense forests of the "New World," stating that "Nature has done everything... nothing is lacking, except the civilized man; and he is right at the door" (Brogan, 2012, p. 177, our translation). Tocqueville seems to suggest that it is up to this "civilized man" to extend to the New World the liberal democracy born in Europe, considering it a model to be widely disseminated to elevate blacks and Indigenous peoples to the condition of "civilized."

In this context, although Tocqueville opposed the devastating policies toward Indigenous peoples, his critique focused not on the "civilizational" goal itself but on the strategy employed for their removal or annihilation. Tocqueville's criticism of the Anglo-Americans was that they *failed to civilize* the Indigenous peoples properly:

The great mistake of the legislators concerning the Indians was their failure to understand that to civilize a people, it is first necessary to ensure they settle, and this could only be achieved by encouraging them to cultivate the soil. Above all, it was essential to transform Indians into farmers (Tocqueville, 1991, p. 380, our translation).

Tocqueville highlights the Native American peoples' aversion to civilization, attributing this to their inherent laziness, which he suggests is common among all hunter and nomadic peoples. According to the author, the Indigenous peoples consider work not only "an evil but a disgrace, and their pride resists civilization almost as stubbornly as their laziness" (Tocqueville, 1992, p. 380, our translation).

Such a conception remains strong and firm in the contemporary world. There is no hope of toppling it with a single blow; rather, it must be compelled to yield through acts of resistance. These acts may be inspired by the resilience of previous generations who resisted persecutions, massacres, and forced displacements, and are carried forward by current generations who fight for the expansion and defense of rights, using cultural strengthening and formal education as instruments of resistance. This is what the generation of Kamutaja Avá-Canoeiro and the young generations of the Tapuia do Carretão are doing. Both peoples and their leaders recognize the intersection between being Indigenous and being Brazilian. For them, the Indigenous peoples in Brazil have appropriated the legal-political frameworks of the Brazilian state to strengthen their traditions.

The situation, however, is not symmetrical. The notion that Brazil is a multiethnic country and constitutes a pluralist democracy that respects minority and human rights, as determined by legislation and norms, especially since the 1988 Constitution, does not hold up in practice. The effectiveness of guarantees for recognized rights depends on the actual respect for Indigenous peoples as subjects of individual and collective rights and as political actors. It is not sufficient to merely acknowledge Brazilian society as a multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual nation, and Indigenous languages as national languages, if there are no strong and efficient cultural and linguistic policies to strengthen these cultures and languages.

The diversity inclusion policies adopted in recent decades, such as the creation of the national policy for Indigenous school education and affirmative actions for university admission, certainly represent progress. However, these efforts, apart from the intercultural teaching degree programs offered by public universities, which develop intercultural pedagogical projects based on Indigenous knowledge systems, resemble more actions of integration and acculturation than an inclusive and horizontal dialogue of knowledge. These actions are insufficient to ensure the continuity, transmission, and strengthening of native languages and cultural practices that make up the diversity of Brazilian society.

The resistance struggles of peoples and individuals in vulnerable situations can be strengthened through transformations in institutions and educational practices. These changes should enable the collective construction of a network of relationships and knowledge based on respect and coexistence among diverse peoples and cultures. Additionally, there should be a horizontal exchange of knowledge, empowering all involved.

Education is an important path of resistance, as self-awareness provokes a revolution in thought capable of fostering other forms of resistance. This point was emphasized by Tocqueville and De Gouges. In this context, social groups and peoples in extreme situations of vulnerability, such as the *Avá-Canoeiro*, deserve special attention and commitment from public authorities and society in general. Due to their history of violence and rights violations, their small numbers, the limited number of interlocutors in their native language, and the lack of autonomy inherited from indigenist guardianship and internal colonialism, they need comprehensive support. This support should aim to strengthen their schools and develop pedagogical projects that address their specific needs. This will contribute to building autonomy and expanding their citizenship through cultural strengthening as a people.

In terms of educational policies, levels of education, recognition, and acceptance of others in their entirety must include, in addition to the basic conditions of human dignity, horizontal conditions of interculturality. It is necessary to consider their knowledge systems and pedagogies, providing mutual learning and growth from which all involved can benefit. Respect for human rights is a necessary condi-

tion for democracy to be inclusive and to advance beyond liberal pluralism, ensuring full citizenship for all in their diversity.

References:

- Araújo, Gustavo de Oliveira; LEITÃO, Rosani Moreira; RESENDE, Michelle Nogueira. [2013] *Relatório do projeto Imagens e Relatos de um sertão desconhecido: organização e tratamento técnico do acervo Acary de Passos Oliveira*. Goiânia: Museu Antropológico/UFG.
- Ãwa, Kamutaja Silva. [2024] Participação com exposição oral na Mesa redonda: Direitos humanos e povos indígenas no Brasil Central: lutas conquistadas e desafios. In: *Semana dos Povos indígenas: Autodeterminação dos povos indígenas no Brasil: desafios atuais*. Goiânia: PUC-GO/Red FEIAL Brasil.
- Brogan, Hugh. [2012] *Alexis de Tocqueville. O profeta da democracia*. São Paulo, Record.
- Borges, Mônica Veloso (2006) *Aspectos fonológicos e morfossintáticos da língua avá-canoeiro (Tupi-Guarani)*. Doutorado em Linguística (Linguas Indígenas). Campinas, SP: UNICAMP, 335 pp.
- Casanova, Pablo González. [2003] *Colonialismo interno: una redefinición*. Coleção Conceptos y fenómenos fundamentales de nuestro tiempo. México: UNAM.
- Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil de 1988. In: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao
- Dallari, Dalmo de Abreu. [2016] *Os direitos da mulher e da cidadã por Olímpia de Gouges*. São Paulo, Saraiva.
- Declaration of Independence [1776]. *The unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America*. National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
- Declaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* [1789]. Assemblée Constituante des États Généraux. Élysée: <https://www.elysee.fr/la-presidence/la-declaration-des-droits-de-l-homme-et-du-citoyen>
- Dietz, Günther. [2012] *Multiculturalismo, interculturalidad y diversidad en educación. Una aproximación antropológica*. México. Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Hunt, Lynn. [2009] *A invenção dos direitos humanos. Uma história*. São Paulo, Cia das Letras.
- Lei nº 6.001, de 19 de dezembro de 1973, dispõe sobre o “Estatuto do Índio”. In: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/l6001.
- Leitão, Rosani Moreira. [2005] *Escola, identidade étnica e cidadania: comparando experiências e discursos de professores Terena (no Brasil) e Purhépecha (no México)*. Tese de Doutorado. Brasília: DAN/CEPPAC/UnB.
- Leitão, Rosani Moreira; BORGES, Mônica Veloso. [2024] Interculturalidad y decolonialidad: Construyendo una escuela para/con los Avá-Canoeiro de Goiás (Brasil). In: *Sobre o lugar das interculturalidades e processos de formação no Méx-*

- ico e no Brasil. Revista Humanidade e Inovação. V. 10, n. 16. Disponível em <https://revista.unitins.br/index.php/humanidadeseinovacao/article/view/9533>.*
- Moura, Marlene de Castro Ossami. (2006) Aldeamento Carretão: “marco zero” da história das relações interétnicas dos tapuios. *Dimensões* v. 8. Disponível: <https://periodicos.ufes.br/dimensoes/article/view/2436/1932>
- Perry, Marvin. [1985] *Civilização Ocidental. Uma história concisa*. São Paulo, Martins Fontes.
- Reis, Helena Esser. [2021] Fragilidade do pluralismo democrático: uma abordagem a partir de Alexis de Tocqueville. *Quaesto Iuris*, Vol. 14, nº 4, Rio de Janeiro, pp. 1001-1038.
- Schüler, Donaldo. [2001] *Origens do discurso democrático*. Porto Alegre, LPM Pocket.
- Tapuia, Eunice Pirkodi Caetano Moraes. [2024] *Direito à memória: construção de novas narrativas sobre a experiência Tapuia do Carretão*. (Tese de Doutorado). Goiânia: PPGIDH/NDH/UFG.
- Tocqueville, Alexis. [2004] *L’Ancien Regime et la Revolution*. In. *Oeuvres*, vol. III. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Paris, Gallimard.
- _____. [1992] *De la démocratie en Amérique*. In: *Oeuvres*. Vol. II. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Paris, Gallimard.
- _____. [1991] *Voyages en Angleterre et en Irlande de 1835*. In: *Oeuvres*. Vol. I. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Paris, Gallimard.

Digital capitalism, subjectivation... and the end of resistance?

Capitalismo digital, subjetivação...
e o fim da resistência?

Nuno Oliveira

Abstract:

The paper examines how technological systems and digital capitalism have led to a deep integration between the market and individual/collective identities, and how processes of subjectivation are increasingly mediated through technological devices. The paper discusses the work of Lazzarato and Reckwitz, who provide a comprehensive analysis of the new social and political symptoms arising from digital capitalism and the production of subjectivity. The paper argues that Reckwitz's diagnosis should be complemented by recognizing the mutual reinforcement of singularization and standardization dynamics. Individuals actively participate in and reproduce dynamics of repetition, standardisation, and the pursuit of instant gratification and maximizing potential choices. Finally, we discuss some forms of resistance that are theoretically on offer, raising the pessimistic question of whether such resistance is still possible and by what means.

Keywords: digital capitalism, subjectivation, singularisation, standardisation

CONTACT: Nuno Oliveira
CIES - ISCTE-IUL
nuno.filipe.oliveira@iscte-iul.pt



Aion Journal of Philosophy and Science

© 2024 the Authors

This work is licensed under a

[Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) License.

Resumo:

Este artigo examina como os sistemas tecnológicos e o capitalismo digital levaram a uma profunda integração entre o mercado e as identidades individuais/coletivas, e como os processos de subjetivação são cada vez mais mediados por dispositivos tecnológicos. O artigo discute o trabalho de Lazzarato e Reckwitz, que fornece uma análise abrangente dos novos sintomas sociais e políticos que surgem do capitalismo digital e da produção da subjetividade. O artigo argumenta que o diagnóstico de Reckwitz deve ser complementado com o reconhecimento do reforço mútuo das dinâmicas de singularização e padronização. Os indivíduos participam ativamente e reproduzem dinâmicas de repetição, padronização, assim como a busca pela gratificação instantânea e pela maximização das escolhas potenciais. Finalmente, discutimos algumas formas de resistência que estão teoricamente disponíveis, levantando a questão pessimista de saber se tal resistência ainda é possível e por que meios.

Palavras-chave: capitalismo digital, subjetivação, singularização, padronização

Introduction

The integration between the market and identities has never been as complete as that made possible by the new technological systems. Marcuse (1991 [1964]) and the Frankfurt School greatly emphasised the links between technological development, the instrumentalisation of the individual and their reflective capacity and, in a particularly Marcusean sense, the standardisation of human complexity. To a certain extent, the analogy drawn was that of machinisation, with one-dimensional man submerging his faculties in the domination of technological rationality. This idea of a radical distinction between an untouched communicational rationality and a colonising instrumental rationality was obviously explored by Habermas (1987). However, what happens when the instrumental rationality of markets and technology becomes the only condition for the subsistence and reinforcement of communicative rationality?

It is worth remembering the nature of the dissociation between these two rationalities suggested by Habermas. Starting from the critique of instrumental rationality, or rationality concerning ends (*Zweckrationalität*), according to Weber's analysis of social action, communicative rationality would introduce the intersubjective aspects of human action; such that, as opposed to the objectification of social relations typical of instrumental logics, we would find a dialogical type of rationality, i.e. discursive, whose validity would derive from the search for consensus (normative and

evaluative) in the various areas of human interaction and not in the objective exercise of domination. For the sphere of shared values, communicative processes and the meanings with which we recognise our actions, Habermas recovers the Husserlian term “life-world” [*Lebenswelt*] and predicts that, in conditions of late capitalism, this is being colonised by instrumentally-dominant technological rationalities.

The new technosystem, to use Feenberg’s definition (2017), inverts this classic distinction (classic in the sense of developing the critique of technology inherited from the Frankfurt School) and makes technology the place par excellence for the social production of intersubjectivity. Identities - both individual and collective - i.e. being a subject, in other words, the processes of subjectivation, increasingly exist through technological devices. This has led some authors to speak of a technological (or digital) literacy without which we are unable to live in today’s world (Petrina, 2000; Delanty & Neal, 2021).

Since post-structuralism, the idea of subjectivation has been associated with that of subjection. Foucault’s introduction of the term “subjectivation” captures the emergence of subject positions and the productive effects of power in the production of individuality. In this way, Foucault (1995) points out the grey area that exists between the idea of subject autonomy and the heteronomous function of disciplinary power. The ethical, but also social, tension between the two opens up a space of resistance that is actualised, among other forms, in the technologies of the self. But what happens when the technologies of the self and their implementation infrastructure become the vehicle for reproducing productive power over subjectivity?

In this text, I intend to reflect on these current transformations, drawing on the themes of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019), the social demand for visibility in the society of singularities (Reckwitz, 2020) and the digitalisation infrastructure of the self, which has direct effects on forms of subjectivation. Although neoliberal subjectivation has been analysed under the most diverse names, such as hypermodern individual (Aubert, 2005), individual by excess and by default (Castel, 2009), or liquid individual (Bauman, 2000), the digitalisation of the self poses different challenges to the subject, even within the structure of neoliberal society. These contemporary challenges are not inseparable from the devices of digitalisation; and because of this, they force us to think about the subject, and the processes of subjectivation, beyond the traditional sociological formulations of the self-sufficient subject of the theorists of reflexive individualisation (Giddens, 1990; Beck-Gersheim, 2002). Similarly, the notion of a subject disconnected from the social, self-centred and without the capacity for general sociability, is not a convincing reading. Firstly, because the “cultural machine” (Reckwitz, 2020) of social media blurs the modern distinction between private and public, and opens up both dimensions to the need for an audience. Finally, and against Reckwitz’s idea of singularisation through the generation of unique profiles, I suggest that singularisation and standardisation exist and reinforce each

other in common processes.

Diagnosis

Much attention has been paid to the liquefaction of relationships and social bonds (Bauman, 2000; Elliott, 2016), which is contrasted with reflexive individualisation (Giddens, 1990; Beck & Beck-Gersheim, 2002). Strictly speaking, both perspectives agree that something fundamental has changed in our relationship with the world in late-modern society; that our identities are no longer fixed to traditional statuses and now require *DIY* work, self-construction and reconstruction. The distinction between the two perspectives lies in the qualification of the consequences of such a transformation. If, for the theorists of reflexivity and reflexive individuality, the liberation of our capacities that were once tied to fixed norms is a gain of late modernity, for the theorists of the liquid society, the liquefaction that requires the reconstructive effort of identities is the cause of anxieties and pathologies. In fact, the deterritorialisation they are forced to undergo implies a fundamental change in our relationship with time, that of instantaneity, which requires a cognitive and perceptive effort never experienced before. The theme of social acceleration, as described by Rosa (2015), has every place in this diagnosis, whose most disturbing revelation is that our stability only subsists in acceleration, what Rosa calls “dynamic stability” and which Adorno (2000: 39-40), in his *Lectures, referred to as* the principle of capitalism’s survival through permanent expansion. In short, liquefaction, reflexivity and acceleration are the dynamics to which our current self is subject. And subject is appropriate here insofar as it is a question of moulding our subjectivity through those three impositions.

However, there is a dimension that I believe has been neglected in this literature. In addition to the consequences of acceleration for our identities, i.e. for building and sustaining our self, both in cognitive terms and in terms of practical social competence, there is a new social category that needs to be added - visibility.

Let’s go back to the idea of recognition, as conceptualised by Honneth (2007). According to this author, recognition is a fundamental part of sustaining our identities and our selves. The denial of recognition can lead to conflict (in the collective case) or individual pathologies. In a critical and Hegelian sense, a lack of recognition is a way of damaging individual identity, depreciating self-esteem and despising the humanity of each person. And because of this, recognition has an ethical component that structures the three spheres of recognition, as Honneth conceives them: love, rights and solidarity. The first is provided by the family and friendship circles, and deals with the emotional structure; the second is the recognition of legal institutions, especially in terms of avoiding discrimination; finally, solidarity, which comes from recognising individual capacities as a member of the societal group.

The theory of recognition has obvious Habermasian resonances; and, going even further back, the Parsonian inspiration is clear. It is no coincidence that one of

the main points of criticism has been the excessive normative emphasis of Honneth's perspective. Firstly, because these are ethical spheres, and the theory of recognition, in the wake of critical theory, thinks of the world as overcoming the pathologies and distortions caused by capitalism, but with a strong emphasis on intersubjectivity. However, this insistence has been criticised by various voices (Thompson, 2019; McNay, 2008) for neglecting both the operations of power and domination and the embodiment of this same power in the *habitus* of individuals, closely following Bourdieu's theory. A more insistent criticism is that which has confronted Honneth's idea of recognition (but also Taylor's, 1992) with that of redistribution, where political philosopher Nancy Fraser stands out in a dialogue she has sustained with Honneth (see, in particular, Fraser & Honneth, 2004). All of these areas, however significant they may be, always evoke an emancipatory path, be it more economic, in the order of redistribution, as Fraser wants, or more ethical, in the order of recognition, as Honneth wants. But what happens when the horizon of the discussion ceases to be the ethical or economic emancipation of the individual and becomes the resources and concrete practices of the individual, in other words, the technologies of the self, in the production of digitalised subjectivation?

Here I follow Brighenti (2007) in his apologia for visibility as a social category. It is clear that the visible has been problematised in numerous ways, generally in its association with power asymmetries. On the one hand, we can cite Foucault (1995) and the panoptic paradigm for disciplinary society; on the other, the spectacle as alienation, in Debord (1971), where the themes of consumerist massification and the fetishisation of commodities are the guiding lines of criticism of capitalist society. I believe, however, that none of these conceptualisations of visibility do justice to the current phenomenon. First of all, because while Debord's critique stands up to what he points out is the incessant proliferation of images mediated by advertising or, more generally, by the culture industries, it is difficult to keep up to date when it comes to diagnosing the uncritical passivity of individuals and the false sense of connection through communication. Of course, we can't blame Debord, because his analysis of the 1960s was quite correct for the time and remains relevant in many respects.

However - and herein lies the fundamental difference - for the situationist critics, and even more strongly for critical theory in general, the proliferation of images manifested by the culture industries, where these were not just entertainment, but ideology masquerading as entertainment (Adorno, 1991 [1972]), was indelibly linked to the atomisation and passivity of individuals that was characteristic of the "solitary multitude", as Riesman (1950) called it. The traces of a passive and indistinct atomisation shaped by the entertainment industry, which would strip man of his autonomy and creative capacity, were part of the diagnosis of the time.

This image began to be replaced in the early 70s. At the opposite end of the spectrum, another diagnosis of the time suggested that the consumerism and improved standard of living engendered by capitalist development would give rise to a society

of hedonists, concerned above all with the authenticity of individual experiences and the exploitation of pleasure. This ethos, according to this reading, would fatally compromise the capitalist ethos as seen by Weber, i.e. organised around strict conduct and institutionalised normativity (Bell, 1976). As a result of this disjunction between hedonistic impulses and Protestant demands, the world of work, and therefore the spirit of capitalism, risked being delegitimised.

At the same time, the theme of narcissism as a culture is well expressed in Lasch's (1979) book *The Culture of narcissism*. For Lasch, the radical transformations in North American society, especially in the family, and the concomitant increase in individualism, would have unleashed not the hedonist, but the pathological narcissist. The consequences of this pathology were the obsession with celebrity culture and the prioritisation of image over substance.

Both works focus exclusively on structural transformations and their psychological consequences in the United States of America. However, what both Bell and Lasch sought to do was analyse the first impacts of a more profound change in capitalism and its spirit: the emergence of a neoliberal society. Boltansky and Chiapello (2005) tried to show that neoliberalism didn't only have consequences for the organisation of work and economic trends in their aptly titled "Le Nouvell Esprit du Capitalisme". While the two previous works were markedly pessimistic, Boltansky and Chiapello's survey is ambiguous. Contrary to the conservative pessimism of the previous authors, the new spirit of capitalism freed itself from bourgeois values and, with declared irony in the face of the most defeatist predictions, absorbed the explosion of creativity, autonomy, individualisation and innovation that both Bell and Lasch thought were buried under the thoughtless and directionless emptiness of a society made up of hedonists or narcissists. However, this liberation was not without its price, materialised in insecurity and the impossibility of planning for the future.

What these authors were defining was something whose contours began to become visible with post-Fordism; I'm referring to a neoliberal subjectivation. This is not the place to define neoliberalism, because there are definitions that are more economic (Brenner, Harvey, 2005), more political (Jessop, 2002; Ong, 2006; Peck & Theodore, 2015), more cultural (Jameson, 1991) and, not least, more sociological and institutionalist (Crouch, 2011; Campbell & Pedersen, 2001). In other words, the analyses come from angles that are as varied as they are complementary. In any case, what Zuboff (2019) calls surveillance capitalism, shedding light on one area of the process, but which others have labelled "digital capitalism" (Stab & Thiel, 2022; Sevignani, 2024; Tornberg, 2023), marks a fundamental change in the structure and resources within neoliberalism. The focus on digital capitalism has fostered an interest in the new modes of subjectivation it produces, along with the transformations of the public sphere it induces.

Digitalisation infrastructures

Perhaps the most complete analysis of the new social and political symptoms has come from the pen of a philosopher (Lazzarato, 2014) and a sociologist (Reckwitz, 2020). In his *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*, Lazzarato introduces the concept of capital as a “semiotic operator” that challenges the representational notion of the sign (or symbols, equally). In the context of the digitalization of the economy and digital capitalism, subjectivity has become a commodity.

Lazzarato calls for a new theory to explain how signs operate in the economy and in power structures, influencing material flows and the functions of machines. He challenges the traditional signifier-signified dualism, proposing that signs act as “sign operators” with direct impacts. In other words, the immense semiotic apparatus required by digital capitalism produces material and, more importantly, behavioural realities.

One of the most widespread examples of a “sign operator” would be the brand of a product and the way it is branded in the media, both traditional and social; with particular emphasis on the fact that our self - read: our identity - is manipulated and presented using mechanisms that mimic those of marketing.

On the other hand, Andreas Reckwitz’s (2020) book “The Society of Singularities” offers an in-depth exploration of the world of contemporary visibilities and affective markets. Firstly, the notion of the society of singularities should not be confused with Deleuze’s idea of singularity¹. Rather, the society of singularities is a society where the unique, the particular, the exuberant, are not just subjective drives, but have become social expectations. In this context, the subjectivation of the individual necessarily involves the demand for a performative self, which needs an audience(s) and whose authenticity is the measure of its acceptance in the digitalised and knowledge economy. In Reckwitz’s apt words, our lives “are not simply lived; they are carefully selected (curated, in the original)”.

To what extent does the logic of singularisation differ from the individualisation of which Giddens and Beck spoke? Firstly, because in the sense in which we use the term - singularisation - here, it goes far beyond individuals and extends to objects, spaces, temporalities and collectives (Reckwitz, 2020: 5). It is therefore a structural change in societies where the logic of producing the general is replaced by the particular across social relations and distributions. But Reckwitz doesn’t shy away from analysing the direct impacts that such a mutation has on the dynamics of subjectivation. To simplify Reckwitz’s complex argument, it is structured around three axes: self-actualization; hyperculture; singularisation.

We’ll briefly discuss each of them. Firstly, the challenge to self-actualisation is based on the postulate that motivated beings are better able to integrate the chal-

¹ We won’t go into this in depth here, something that Reckwitz himself refuses to do, emphasising that the way he uses the concept is entirely sociological.

lenges of the world. The expression had scientific backing through Maslow's positive psychology (1954 cit in Reckwitz, 2021: 116); but it has expanded to forms of self-actualization that are linked to the authenticity of experiences or their rarity. This is where the idea of hyperculture converges, a market-like space where cultural goods - ranging from works of art to the territories where you choose to live - acquire value according to their potential to compete for visibility, attractiveness and innovation. The hyperculture generated by globalised cultural capitalism privileges the exclusivity of experience or the identity symbolised by that experience. Both the obsession with self-actualization, with finding our true selves or being authentic to ourselves, and the kaleidoscope of cultural goods that promise to satisfy this, necessarily lead to singularisation. Allow me to quote at some length:

This process involves singularisation, because subjects don't strive for what is uniform or standardised, but for what is individual, special and not interchangeable - from particular neighbourhoods to tailor-made professional activities. The late-modern subject can only find fulfilment in the singular, in what is experienced as singular. And only what is experienced as singular (and not as something monotonous or standardised) seems authentic (Reckwitz, 2021: 117).

In this context, Reckwitz (2020, 2021) proposes three dynamics that are intrinsic to singularisation. On the one hand, late-modern subjects do not coincide with the extramundane behaviours of which Weber speaks when referring to certain religions. Self-actualization is accompanied by a desire for status, and in this sense, it is a self-actualization that is intended to be statutorily successful. In other words, people actively invest in their status by using the various forms of capital at their disposal. On the other hand, this self-actualization only gains value on the market of affections if it is performed. In other words, the optimisation of the self has to be backed up by the attractiveness it exerts in the various arenas where it seeks visibility. This is why Reckwitz analyses in detail the ambiguities and negative effects that the cultural structure of subjectivation in today's society has on individuals. I won't explore here the reasons Reckwitz identifies for why such a structure systematically causes the three pathologies he lists: depression, anxiety and aggression. The explanation is complex and cannot be taken *prima facie* with the simplicity that is offered here. However, it is worth noting that the damage they do to the mechanisms of subjectivation is fundamentally emotional. For this reason, the solutions proposed by Reckwitz to resist this cultural structure, which produces subjectivation, appear either as repetitions of existing historical dynamics, or as banalities resurfaced through this same "cultural machine". Without going on at length, the solutions advocated include a

de-economisation of the social, which leads to a recovery of the welfare state; access to psychoanalysis as a way of dealing with the paradoxes of subjectivation, which is an idea that we find at the heart of Habermas' work, if not in Freud; and finally, in order to contain this "self by excess" created by the cultural machine, a surrender to forms of Western Buddhism. It is precisely the lack of solutions that shows how such innocuous forms of resistance - such as those proposed by the author - can be extracted despite an excellent diagnosis.

However, I believe that it is precisely in the insistence on singularisation as a process disembodied from the dynamics of standardisation that we must complement Reckwitz's diagnosis. What I am proposing is that the dynamics of singularisation are not detachable - quite the opposite - from the colonisation (to use a well-known Habermasian term) of the logics of standardisation. On the contrary, they are mutually reinforcing, as I will try to show below.

Infinite repetition

The theme of repetition has been glossed over in countless theoretical, political and philosophical contributions. In a brief overview, it includes the idea of difference in repetition contained in Nietzsche's eternal return and recovered by Deleuze in his becoming-being. However, the point here is neither philosophical nor metaphysical - it is practical. First of all, it should be made clear that the notion of repetition that I associate with the cultural structure of late-modern society has nothing to do with the well-established concept of reproduction in sociology. In the latter sense, reproduction means the social process through which culture is reproduced between generations, through the socialising work of the main institutions, invariably imposing the cultural patterns of the dominant (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970). In its structural-societal dimension, we would speak of social reproduction when not only culture, but also structures and institutions are reproduced through the generations. This is not how we understand the phenomenon of repetition.

On the other hand, it's not about phenomenal repetition, in the sense offered by ethnomethodologists, as reiterated and standardised practices that cognitively shape our actions. It should be added, however, that any one of them remains fundamental to understanding the functioning of societies and the actions of their individuals. However, repetition, in terms of the current historical situation, is of a different order.

Repetition is, contrary to Deleuze's premise, an illusory differentiation. It exists in contemporary societies in all social spheres. From the economy to aesthetics to politics, everything is a variation on the same elements, which remain identical to themselves despite the change of actors. In other words, the practical premises are iteratively identical, in an endless compulsion.

From pop music to political rhetoric, the repetition of the same formulas structures the framework of meanings. What is relevant is that under the guise of this repetition of the formula, usually a formula that works in various contexts and is

therefore reproducible in a wide range of social situations, is that it promises an unprecedented diversity of choice. The game is based on this premise: selection is presented as unlimited and therefore the capacity for choice is perceived as endless. However, what underlies it is the false novelty of the repeated formula.

If we investigate the narratives that are being offered to us at breakneck speed, we realise that almost all of them start from the same premises and invariably find similar solutions. It's obvious that it's not possible to produce such a large number of narratives, whose purpose is to be systematically replaced by something new, without falling into insanely repetitive behaviour.

If we take into account the myriad audiovisual production centres - in music, television, marketing, etc - we see the same phenomenon. There is no doubt that there is a paradox here: it is through the voracious differentiation of the offer that the reproduction of the same is generated. Such a process can be seen in cultural products as diverse as talk shows, morning programmes on the most listened-to radio stations, news blocks, music production, and an infinite number of consumer objects (cultural and non-cultural).

But this urgency responds to a dissemination machine that needs to fill in the gaps in order for its existence to last. This is why there is an optimised match between the excess of creations (which are not creative at all) and the appropriation of this excess by the mediapolis dissemination machine, as Silverstone (2007) puts it. Here too, repetition is dressed up as the promise of the new. Curiously, when the formula is successful, the bet is on mimicry that is refracted by countless dissemination platforms. For example, the talk shows that we watch every morning have the same format and use the same thematic order on every television channel in the world. The competitions that seek to discover spontaneously-generated stars are the same in China, the United States and Portugal. Likewise, their participants are expected to mobilise the same scripts and performances.

The much-vaunted reference to the "world of strangers"² is just a convenient pretext. The most widespread phenomenon of the "excessive self" society is precisely that of levelling any potential strangeness at known formulas that can be immediately integrated into our cognitive structure. This is why the odes to diversity appearing worldwide are fundamentally a palimpsest for a world in which imitation and redundancy are the most common cultural and social forms. So, there's nothing unknown about the strange. And nothing diverse, apart from the multiple ways in which mimicry can create substitutes.

Organisations, for their part, have become the realm of the ancillary. We are surrounded by useless acts and objects. A proliferation of unnecessary objects and signs

² The reference appears in a multitude of works and commentaries on today's society. I'll mention just a few declinations of the same principle here. We find expressions as varied as "Ethics in a world of strangers" (Appiah), "In the land of strangers" (Ash Amin), "Strangers at our door" (Bauman, 2016); "Strangers in our midst" (Miller, 2016). This is just a pale image of the spread of the idea of the "unknown", of the strange, because it is present in our discursive universe on a daily basis.

has accompanied the marketisation of the social bond and institutional belonging. Meaning is constructed on the horizon of what is dispensable. We have too many words, surplus connections, activities multiplied by the identical. Organisations are the social context in which these procedures are implemented and reproduced. In order to justify their productivity, work groups and teams have become specialists in duplicating activities, solutions and procedures. Absolutely functional formulas and models are replaced because the logic of multiplicative productivity demands it. In this way, for no immediately discernible reason, mechanised habits are displaced into new cognitive territories where a new learning process is imposed. Ideology provides the justification according to which we are condemned to keep pace with innovations if we don't want to be overtaken technically and labour-wise. However, as the system is organised through blind multiplication, falling behind is a constant part of the routine of participating in organisational systems.

However, we are still left with an inescapable feeling of the uselessness of this systematic innovative drive. In work teams - which themselves multiply at the speed of thematisation - the pressure to innovate is built into each member simply because they belong to a work team. Permanent vigilance seems to hang over the heads of the members, even though hierarchical systems have been replaced by much more flexible, heterarchical forms. But if it's not the stern gaze of the direct boss that creates anxiety, what is it?

The dominant gaze, or rather the gaze of those in control, has been replaced by an invisible hierarchy that is perhaps much more effective and forceful. The parameterization of work, emotional and educational practices, etc., through increasingly sophisticated and present evaluation systems, means that the subject is constantly self-monitoring. In fact, they become their own greatest censor. What Zuboff (2019) calls "surveillance capitalism" is nothing more than a broad set of coordination, rectification and reproduction practices incorporated into capitalist exchange mechanisms. Under the guise of indeterminate choices accessible to individuals, resulting from the expansion and intensification of interdependencies between structural places, surveillance capitalism increasingly seizes the (still?) private share of personal lives. In other words, through devices that create intensified visibilities (Foucault, 1995), such as Facebook, Instagram, or purchases on platforms with a high concentration of the commodification of life, such as Amazon, the behaviour and cognitive capacities of individuals are surreptitiously tracked under the guise of permanent communicational connection and equality in the mechanisms of identity construction. To put it more succinctly: individuals participate in such devices on the assumption that they have equivalent and unambiguous access to the communicational and biological means that construct identity and the various ways of belonging to the world. This appearance of mobilising and managing complexity, inscribed in our own beliefs and practices, allows us to choose (?) to participate in this same organ-

isation of behaviour without being aware of its consequences. But is the act really so unconscious, almost akin to the discourse of false consciousness, as critics such as Zuboff (2019) or Lipovetsky (2017) would have us believe? For the latter, for example, “surveillance capitalism” takes the form of “seduction capitalism” where seduction techniques permeate not only hyper-consumption practices, but also those of hyper-identification. However, there isn’t really an antagonism between the two forms of capitalism as envisaged by these two authors. On the contrary, if surveillance capitalism, according to Zuboff, stems from a pattern of scientificising practices in the sense of their organisation and consumerist standardisation (the chapter dedicated to Skinner and his studies on human behaviour is illustrative of this), seduction capitalism, in Lipovetsky’s sense, stages the total personalisation of consumer practices, the original individualisation of desires, permanent diversification as a system of involvement. Lipovetsky’s characterisation is entirely appropriate to the conditions of the social organisation of taste when we look at the proliferation of streaming platforms (for music, films, series, games, etc.), the excess supply - and rivalry - between brands. But perhaps we need to sociologise his vision a little and resort to understandings that are now considered classic. Against the total exposure to the new, in which taste is entangled in individualised choices that are not disputed by collective belonging, we can perhaps think of this capitalism of seduction as riddled with the same asymmetries, and even antagonisms, that we infer from his classic interpretation.

Having said that, we should be wary, in both their versions, of bringing the practices of the individual closer to the idea of false consciousness. For both Zuboff and Lipovetsky, the individual is a “cultural dope” - to borrow an expression from Garfinkel (1991) - who acts like an automaton, either caught in the behavioural trap or in the incessant seduction of marketised capitalism. Instead, I propose that we see any of these practices as reflections of a deeply involved, immersive and, above all, conscious activity on the part of individuals. All we have to do is think that for every consumer enraptured by the first fruits of consumerist seduction, there is a producer who is actively and daily involved in creating that same effect. And this applies to both the most trivial and the most technical and specialised occupations. There is no outside place for involvement in capitalist productivity. And this, in turn, does not exist as the false consciousness of a class, in the sense of a system of ideas that would reverse the real interests of the process of capitalist reproduction, whether for a dominant or dominated class (Marx, 1982 [1859]). In the same way, there is no (dialectical) resolution of this reversal of interests, in the case of the dominated class, or ignorance of their real situation, in the case of the dominant class. This is why the attempts by great thinkers like Žižek or Badiou to “wake up” the masses are unfounded. If the work of decoding the relations of capitalist domination (even if they are now no longer restricted to “material relations”) were effective and effi-

cient, the construction of a new code, such as that of the authors mentioned, or that of Reckwitz, would be enough.

But this is not the case. Because, whether we are aware of its existence or not, with a greater or lesser degree of concern about its consequences, we are, with greater or lesser involvement, daily agents of its reproduction. I use the word agent to emphasise that our involvement is active, i.e. it is not only subjective, as the application of the notion of action (Weber) would suggest, and much less pre-reflective, as might be considered if we were to resort here to the idea of habituated practice (Bourdieu, 1977). In the sense used here, our involvement is intentional and predicative. This means that it forms part of our projects and defines who we are. Competition, or multiple competitions, have been incorporated into the most banal practices: from sporting activities between friends, to the obligation to exceed objectives set by organisational departments. We live in a society in which competition is the horizon of meaning in our daily practical lives.

And this is where the project of self-promotion is linked - what, to quote Reckwitz, I called - to structures and dynamics of compulsive repetition.

Is resistance still possible?

The first thing we have to reject is the notion that something outside commands personal actions. This “outside”, which takes on the dimension of an impenetrable Moloch in the version of surveillance capitalism, must be rejected as a good perspective for the re-emergence of bureaucratic structures. And this despite the fact that the exposition elaborated here is in many respects faithful to the thesis of surveillance capitalism. For example, it is agreed that contrary to the randomness promised in the processes of the marketisation of life, we are witnessing the complexification of the mechanisms for creating certainty and the routinisation of behaviour on an unprecedented scale. What Zuboff (2019:) calls “instrumentism” as a project of total certainty; in absolute contradiction to the idea of freedom and contingency of market forces. The problem is when the mobilising factor is referred to a phantasmagorical category called “the surveillance capitalists”. Much of Zuboff’s project has affinities with the Marcuse of the 60s. She herself does not deny her debt to the master of the thesis of technological domination. In fact, the premise is quite similar: technology in itself is not the problem; it’s the uses we make of it that turn it into a mechanism of domination. Therefore, just as Marcuse still had the inevitability of false consciousness, Zuboff also has something similar that places us all as victims of the behavioural manipulation orchestrated by the “surveillance capitalists”. But since we are all victims of these manipulative processes, who are the manipulators? We learn that Google and Facebook have a privileged place in the constitution of the nightmare (I leave out Microsoft, although the author includes it, because I have some reservations about putting it in the same category). The point, however, is that without the participation

of individuals, manipulation is no longer possible; we could even say that individual material constitutes the fuel for the giant machine of surveillance capitalism to run on. But are we really so innocent as fuel?

We work hard, sometimes as consumers and sometimes as producers, to reproduce surveillance capitalism. In reality, we work actively in pursuit of instant gratification, the greatest potential choice, what the new generation of millennials, less inclined to contemplation, call “goal diggers”. The pun is full of resonance, not least because the gold diggers of old often suffered from what has aptly been dubbed “gold fever”. The search for the precious metal was so obsessive and disturbing that their behaviour was feverish. Aren’t we, or rather our goal diggers, in the same obsessive frenzy in pursuit of results? If fulfilling goals is the new gold, it’s because this fulfilment of the task doesn’t end there. Achieving goals has its equivalent in material benefits - not just subjective or emotional ones - but also in terms of exposure, self-promotion of the self; ultimately in terms of valuing and making that self visible.

According to an external survey by Deloitte, 84 per cent of millennials in the United States in 2021 said they were suffering from burnout in their current job, compared to 77 per cent of all respondents. It doesn’t matter which age cohort you belong to - two thirds of the workers surveyed suffer from burnout. So where is this “general intellect” that Hardt and Negri promised as a solution to the problem of imperium? In other words, its overcoming by the “common” as the new telos of the “general intellect” foreshadowed in Marx’s *Grundrisse*. Two critical aspects of Hardt and Negri’s reading should be emphasised.

Firstly, the commonality of the multitude is in reality a social fiction. For Hardt and Negri, the multitude is not made up of individuals, but rather of singularities (apud. Deleuze...). In their relations of communication and co-operation, these singularities produce the social. However, the authors say, under current conditions, the production of the social is in excess of any institutionalisation that could reduce it to a unit: neither a people (a unitary political reality subjugated to a nation and therefore to a sovereign plan), nor a mass (an undifferentiated and atomised reality), they are a multiplicity of creative singularities. For the authors, the multitude is no longer delimitable according to modern institutional categories. In this sense, “the multitude produces monsters, hybrids and anomalies”, which, although they disturb the production of the social, tend towards self-organisation. As Žižek (2009: 141) says, this conception reproduces “the post-Hegelian matrix of the productive flow that is always in excess of the structural totality that tries to control and subjugate it”. And he concludes, redefining the order of causality, that we are dealing with the excess of the capitalist network over the productive flow of the multitude.

Secondly, it is absolutely a priori to consider that networked knowledge is emancipatory in itself. The authors assume, wrongly as far as we are concerned, that the commons will free our drives and affections from capitalist competition. The objectivisation of relationships envisaged by Simmel (2004), in which the total person-

ality was not called upon to participate, is currently unjustified. This idea is more appropriate for bureaucracies, but with the new immaterialities in the labour market, hyper-diverse capitalism demands that the total personality enter the relationship. In fact, it opens the Pandora's box of total involvement of the psyche. And in this sense, rather than the need to regulate this distance in relationships of interest, we have its total fusion; the psyche is called upon to intervene with all its impulses and fantasies. Negri and Hardt can only be wrong when they see emancipatory capacities in the *general intellect*. What happens, however, is different: through the networks that produce individualised knowledge about the individual - such as Facebook or Instagram - there is a total fusion between objective competences and personal issues, to speak like Simmel. Hyper-diverse capitalism demands it, and the emancipatory capacity of the general intellect, of networked knowledge, which goes by the name of multitude, can be, and is, a mere reproduction of the spiral that sucks the most recondite corners of the psyche into the instrumental relationship that seeks to multiply profit. Negri and Hardt would have realised this if they had continued their reflection during the explosion of social networks. Perhaps they didn't because they realised that their model was fundamentally mistaken, and that the diagnosis put forward by Reckwitz or Rosa (2021; 2013) is much better suited to contemporary society than the Marxian "allgemeiner Verstand" now embodied in the immanent form of the "commons".

However, neither the cultural solutions proposed by Reckwitz, nor the great immanent revolution coming from the digital world, prophesied by Hardt and Negri, serve as a guide for change. On the other hand, the proposals for a return to the community have a fascistic timbre that is embodied in the re-emergence of the far right, its programmes and symbols. Behind the loud calls for a homeland and an original purity lie exactly the same mechanisms of accelerating capitalist dynamics that Rosa (2013) talks about and that we have characterised here in some of their aspects. They are just rhetorically diverted towards false objects, in other words, using an expression by Coser (1965), they are unrealistic conflicts.

The other resistance on offer is that of countering the movement, something that was proposed in Taguieff's book "Résister au bougisme" (2001), where the criticism of technological and economic globalisation, in what the author calls "bougisme", stems from an attitude that unthinkingly values the movement and change that accompanies the techno-commodification of global neoliberalism. A return to community and strong democracy seems to be the solution advocated by the author.

The problem, in my judgement, is that there is no longer an outside to resist. Never has the implication and interchangeability between the place of producer and consumer been so complete and extensive as it is today. Whether it's the projection of a historical subject such as class, or the imaginary institution of new hierarchies that foster autonomy and self-government (Castoriadis, 1975), these are mere misconceptions in the face of the total implication of the subject in its "forme entreprise", to use an expression by Foucault (2011:148); in other words, making the

market and competition the formative power of society and the subject.

On the other hand, the “social question” has been appropriated by right-wing conservatism, in a mystification of labour problems underpinned by total adherence to the mechanisms of the “entrepreneurial subject”, i.e. neoliberalism. However, it seems that those who would be the victims of the irresolution of the “social question” are the first to reject the possibilities of thinking about redistribution and a return to security, opting instead for an uncritical adherence to the privatisation of the social. The reason seems relatively simple: people don’t think like critical theorists, but act like accumulators of likes in the infrastructure of digitalisation.

Foucault (2010) describes the mode of governmentality of “subjects” who must think and produce themselves as actors in their own attributions, so that domination arises from the subjects themselves (self-exploitation, self-domination). The actions of the user, worker and consumer are invested with knowledge, practices and norms - whether sociological, psychological, managerial or disciplinary - that request, encourage and motivate the production of individuals, as entrepreneurial selves.

The most effective resistance would be resistance to ourselves. Resistance to our narcissistic compulsion in attractiveness markets (which are by no means exhausted by beauty!). Attractiveness markets aim for recognition, but it’s a specific model of recognition, a model dictated by visibility and the search for a permanently extended audience. They are also markets that, as Reckwitz (2021: 99) puts it, have a “Winner-take-all markets” structure, leaving a multitude of “default individuals” around them, in Castel’s (2009) apt phrase. However, why resist ourselves if primary narcissism - the so-called *amour propre* that is indispensable for a healthy development of the ego - can only be guaranteed by the machine of valorisation and visibility that is the digitalisation of the self?

Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor W., 2000 [1993], *Introduction to sociology*, Stanford, SUP.
- Adorno, Theodor W., 2005, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, New York, Routledge.
- Aubert, N. (2005) *L’individu hypermoderne*, Nicole Aubert (dir.), Ramonville Saint-Anne, Èrès.
- Bauman, Z., 2000, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck, U., Beck-Gernsheim, E., 2002, *Individualisation*, Thousand Oaks, Calif, Sage.
- Bell, D., 1976, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, London, Heinemann.
- Boltanski, L., Chiapello, E., 2005, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Trans. Gregory Elliott, London, Verso.
- Bourdieu, P., 1977, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

- Bourdieu, P., Passeron, J.-C., 1970, *La Reproduction. Éléments pour une théorie du système d'enseignement*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit.
- Brighenti, A. M., 2007, "Visibility. A category for the social sciences", *Current Sociology*, Vol. 55, 3, pp. 323-342.
- Campbell, J. L., Pedersen, O. K. (eds), 2001, *The Rise of Neoliberalism and Institutional Analysis*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
- Castel, R. (2009) *La montée des incertitudes. Labour, protections, individual status*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil.
- Castoriadis, C., 1975, *L'institution imaginaire de la société*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil.
- Coser, L., 1956, *The functions of social conflict*, New York, The free press.
- Crouch, C., 2011, *The strange non-death of neoliberalism*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Debord, G., 1971, *La société du spectacle*, Paris, Éditions Champ libre.
- Delanty, G., Harris, N., 2021, "Critical theory and the question of technology: The Frankfurt School revisited", *Thesis Eleven*, 166, 3, pp. 1-21.
- Elliott, A., 2016, *Identity troubles*, London and New York, Routledge.
- Feenberg, A., 2017, *Technosystem. The social life of reason*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- Fraser, N., Honneth, A., 2003, *Redistribution or recognition? A political-philosophical exchange*, trans. J. Golb, J. Ingram, & C. Wilke, London, Verso.
- Foucault, M., 1995, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York, Vintage.
- Foucault, M., 2010, *The Government of Self and Others*, trans. Graham Burchell, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Foucault, M., 2011, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, trans. Graham Burchell, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Garfinkel, H., 1991, "Respecification: Evidence for locally produced, naturally accountable phenomena of order, logic, reason, meaning, method, etc. in and as of the essential haecceity of immortal ordinary society (I)-an announcement of studies", in *Ethnomethodology and the human sciences*, G. Button (Ed.), Cambridge, UK, CUP, pp. 10-19.
- Giddens, A., 1990 *The consequences of modernity*, Cambridge, CUP.
- Habermas, J., 1987, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2; Lifeworld and System. A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, translated by T. McCarthy, Boston, Beacon Press.
- Harvey, D., 2005, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Honneth, A., 2007, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, London, Polity Press.
- Jameson, F., 1991, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London, Verso.
- Jessop, B., 2002, "Liberalism, Neoliberalism, and Urban Governance: A State-Theoretical Perspective", *Antipode*, vol 34, 3, pp. 452-472.

- Lasch, C., 1979, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, New York, W. W. Norton & Company.
- Lazzarato, M., 2014, *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the production of subjectivity*, L.A., Semiotext.
- Lipovetsky, G., 2017, *Plaire et toucher. Essai sur la société de seduction*, Paris, Gallimard.
- Marcuse, H., 1991 [1964], *One-Dimensional Man*, London, Routledge & Kegan P.
- Marx, K., 1982 [1859], *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Lisbon, Avante.
- McInay, L., 2008, *Against recognition*, London, Routledge.
- Ong, A., 2006, *Neoliberalism as Exception. Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*, Durham and London, DUP.
- Peck, J., Theodore, N., 2015, *Fast policy - experimental statecraft at the thresholds of neoliberalism*, Minnesota, Univ of Minnesota Press.
- Reckwitz, A., 2020, *The society of singularities*, Cambridge, Polity.
- Reckwitz, A., 2021, *The end of illusions. Politics, Economy and Culture in Late Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity.
- Riesman, D., 1950, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press.
- Rosa, H., 2013, *Social Acceleration. A new theory of Modernity*, Columbia, CUP.
- Sevignani, S., 2024, "Communicative Activity: Social Theoretical Foundations for Critical Materialist Media and Communication Sociology in the Digital Age", *Critical Sociology*, Vol. 50, (4-5), pp. 707-725.
- Simmel, G., 2004, *The Philosophy of Money*, ed. and trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby, London, Routledge.
- Stab, P., Thiel, T., 2022, "Social Media and the Digital Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere", *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 39, (4), pp. 129-14.
- Törnberg, P., 2023, "How platforms govern: Social regulation in digital capitalism", *Big Data & Society* January-June, pp. 1-13.
- Silverstone, R., 2007, *Media and Morality. On the rise of the Mediapolis*, London, Polity
- Taguieff, P., 2001, *Résister au bougisme: Démocratie forte contre mondialisation techno-marchande*, Paris, Fayard/Mille et une nuits.
- Thompson, J. B., 2019, "The Failure of the Recognition Paradigm in Critical Theory", in *Axel Honneth and the critical theory of recognition*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 247-272
- Petrina, S., 2000, "The politics of technological literacy, *International Journal of Technology and Design Education*, vol. 10, pp. 181-206.
- Zizek, S. (2009) *First as tragedy, then as a farse*, London and New York, Verso.
- Zuboff, S., 2019, *The age of surveillance capitalism. The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power*. New York, Public Affairs.

Overlaps between neuroscientific and philosophical perspectives on bodily resistance in the digital

Chevauchements entre les perspectives neuroscientifiques et philosophiques sur la résistance corporelle dans le numérique

Jozef Eduard Masarik

Abstract:

This paper is finding ground in neuroscientific research for revealing the body's resistance to dystopian narratives on the body submitting to the virtual. Contemporary research in cognitive neuroscience is studying the relations between the self and embodiment by designing speculative body images and transferring the subjects' perceived embodiment into them. Together with the modifications in the subjects' perception of their own bodies, various transformations in the virtual space which are independent of the digital code occur.

Putting in dialogue models of embodiment resulting from the research with aesthetic theories reveals the embodiment's agency in the digital. Virtual space, as suggested by the media theoretician Peter Weibel, is a sensory realm. It is a sphere conditioned by embodied human perception. Therefore, it can be approached as a laboratory for the study of human senses, the body and their agency. The impact of out-of-body illusions on the perception of virtual spaces can, thus, be studied as a creative act. The body, thus, opposes the conventional narratives of its exclusion from the virtual and of its dangers to the embodiment. The perceived virtual embodiment organizes and defines virtual spaces independently of the digital code. The spaces emerging from the perception in the virtual resist previous experience with physical spaces. They diverge

CONTACT: Jozef Eduard Masarik
(Academy of Fine Arts and Design of Bratislava, Slovakia)
masarik@vsvu.sk



from Euclidean space, their functioning and form are fully dependent on the human embodied perceiver. The body resists the power of the digital.

The neuroscientific research updates aesthetic theories of space perception dating back to the 19th century. These theories attributing the central role to the body were informed by the entanglements with scientific study of human perception, in psychophysics or experimental psychology. The theories formulated by the scientific disciplines were adopted by aesthetics where they persisted until they have proven their full potential in digital media.

Key words: embodiment, neuroscience, aesthetics, virtuality

Abstract:

Cet article s'appuie sur la recherche neuroscientifique pour révéler la résistance du corps aux narratifs dystopiques de la soumission du corps au virtuel. La recherche contemporaine en neurosciences cognitives étudie les relations entre le soi et l'incarnation en concevant des images corporelles spéculatives et en y transférant l'incarnation perçue des sujets. Parallèlement aux modifications de la perception des sujets de leur propre corps, diverses transformations de l'espace virtuel se produisent indépendamment du code numérique.

La mise en dialogue des modèles d'incarnation résultant de la recherche avec les théories esthétiques révèle l'agence de l'incarnation dans le numérique. L'espace virtuel, comme le suggère le théoricien des médias Peter Weibel, est un domaine sensoriel. C'est une sphère conditionnée par la perception humaine incarnée. Par conséquent, il peut être abordé comme un laboratoire pour l'étude des sens humains, du corps et de leur agence. L'impact des illusions de hors-corp sur la perception des espaces virtuels peut ainsi être étudié comme un acte créatif. Le corps s'oppose ainsi aux récits conventionnels de son exclusion du virtuel et de ses dangers pour l'incarnation. L'incarnation virtuelle perçue organise et définit les espaces virtuels indépendamment du code numérique. Les espaces qui émergent de la perception dans le virtuel résistent à l'expérience antérieure avec les espaces physiques. Ils divergent de l'espace euclidien, leur fonctionnement et leur forme dépendent entièrement du perceuteur humain incarné. Le corps résiste au pouvoir du numérique.

La recherche neuroscientifique actualise les théories esthétiques de la perception de l'espace qui remontent au 19^e siècle. Ces théories attribuant le rôle central au corps ont été informées par les enchevêtrements avec l'étude scientifique de la perception humaine, en psychophysique ou en psychologie expérimentale. Les théories formulées par les disciplines scientifiques ont été adoptées par l'esthétique où elles ont persisté jusqu'à ce qu'elles aient prouvé tout leur potentiel dans les médias numériques.

Key words: Incarnation, neurosciences cognitives, réalité virtuelle, agence corporelle

Contemporary narratives of the body and the digital

We are faced with narratives presenting the digital as a threat to the embodiment. Popular culture often addresses the transition of ever more aspects of human lives into the digital realm as a sort of disembodiment. The body seems to be helpless or superfluous in a realm of digital imagery. We conceive of the digital as if the body was excluded from it or worse, as if it had had to submit to the absolute power of the digital. Thus, the body is seen as a vulnerable object that can be subject to theft, novel ways of abuse,¹ segregation, exclusion, or control² as presented by sci-fi literature and cinema. Questions about what happens with the body, once the consciousness is acting within a virtual realm or issues concerning the access to such realms are often answered by dystopian visions. These are based on erroneous perspectives on the relation between a body and a self. Cognitive neuroscience studying the relation by summoning out-of-body illusions in augmented or virtual reality is offering another vantage on the problematics.

Scientific perspectives on the resistance of virtual embodiment

The experiment known as the rubber hand illusion (Botvinick, Cohen, 1998) tested the basic mechanisms in summoning out-of-body illusions within the neuroscientific study of the relations between a self and embodiment. In this experiment the subject's hand is hidden from their sight, while they see a rubber model of a hand in a position similar to the real hand. The experimenter is stroking both hands synchronously for a given duration of two or more minutes. At the conclusion of the tactile stimulation, the subjects disown their biological hand and establish a feeling of ownership towards the rubber one. In the early versions of the experiment, the illusion was verified by the so-called threatening stimulus. The rubber hand was threatened by a conventional dangerous object (such as a knife, a fork or a hammer). If the subject showed a protective reaction, the researchers would conclude that the illusion was summoned successfully. The procedures (except the threatening stimulus) have been used with modifications in the experiments analyzed in this paper.

In augmented or virtual reality, such illusions are not limited to specific body parts. Entire bodies can be replaced.³ Within the experiments, subjects are wearing a virtual reality headset. The headset hides their biological bodies from view, while the display is rendering a virtual body. The experimenter is stroking the subject's biological body and the virtual one synchronously. The brain is, thus, exposed to

¹ Leckie, A, 2013, *Ancillary Justice*, London, Orbit Books.

² Leino, P, 2022, *Nebe*, Brno, Větrné mlýny.

³ Slater, M. et al., 1 November 2012, "The Sense of Embodiment in Virtual Reality", in: *Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments*; 21, 4, p. 373–387. doi: https://doi.org/10.1162/PRES_a_00124

conflicting information coming from various senses. The subjects feel the touch they see on the virtual body. In as little as 2 minutes, they disown their biological bodies and transfer their perceived embodiment into the body rendered on the display. In order to acquire a deeper understanding of the relations between the body and the self, neuroscientists are designing various speculative bodies and studying whether and under what conditions these can be accepted as the subjects' bodies. The speculative body images include body like objects,⁴ empty space as an invisible body,⁵ multiple bodies simultaneously,⁶ or body swapping between two subjects, while the illusion is not disrupted when they shake hands.⁷

The neuroscientific research suggests the persisting role of embodiment in virtual spaces. Experiments have successfully staged out-of-body illusions where the subjects transferred their perceived embodiment into bodies with different skin colors, ages, genders and other visible particularities of individual bodies without any problems. We could, therefore, be asking what it is that persists in the body. It is neither the gender, nor the skin color, the age or any other of its specificities. What resists any kind of challenge posed by the digital transition is the concept of the body. It is the idea of an embodied perceiver, of a subject that navigates through a space. The space itself is projected by the very subject. What resists erasure is the body. Resistance, in its literal meaning, is a word precisely describing the perception within the experiments. The body, the perceived embodiment stands back and again at its place. It always returns.

Spatial disruption from sensory models of space in Aesthetic perspective

The illusions staged by neuroscientists work with the distinction between haptic and optical perception. In the aesthetic discourse the distinction was fundamental in the line of thought on spatial perception founded by Alois Riegl.⁸ The Austrian art historian has theorized “*tactile*” perception as the one through which we can perceive the immediate surroundings. Through this kind of perception we can, however,

⁴ Petkova, V. I., Ehrsson, H. H., December 3, 2008., “If I Were You: Perceptual Illusion of Body Swapping”, in *PLoS ONE* 3, 12: e3832. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0003832>

⁵ Guterstam A., et al., April 23, 2015, “Illusory ownership of an invisible body reduces autonomic and subjective social anxiety responses”, in *Scientific Reports* 5, 9831, p.2., <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep09831>

⁶ Heydrich, L. et al., December 18, 2013, “Visual capture and the experience of having two bodies – evidence from two different virtual reality techniques”, in *Front. Psychol.*, 4, 946, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00946>

⁷ Petkova, V. I., Ehrsson, H. H., December 3, 2008., “If I Were You: Perceptual Illusion of Body Swapping”, in *PLoS ONE* 3, 12: e3832. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0003832>

⁸ Riegl, A., *Late Roman Art Industry*. Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider Editore, Eng. trans. by R. Winkers 1985. [*Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie*, Vienna, Verlag der Kaiserlich-Königlichen Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1901].

grasp only the surfaces in our physical reach. What would be perceived as their background through the sense of sight is lost in tactile perception. “*Optical*” perception, on the other hand, unites objects in one environment. Within optical perception we can speak of grasping a space and not only individual isolated objects as if they were placed in a vacuum.

Riegl’s theory offers an interesting perspective on the experiments. Within the experiments the separation between the “*Nachsichtig*” zone where haptic perception takes place and the “*Fernsichtig*” zone accessible only to optical perception is broken down. The perceived embodiment merges the two into one sensorium without strict divisions.

Soon after Riegl, Walter Benjamin⁹ reconsidered the division in the context of cinema. While preserving the distinction, Benjamin emphasized that “*tactile*” perception was a matter of habit. This kind of perception did not require a lot of attention. On the contrary, “*optical*” perception asks for contemplation of the seen, for careful attention. The procedures applied in neuroscience experiments need to disrupt space in relation to the body in order to generate new spatial organizations enabling new models of embodiment. Benjamin theorizes optical perception as a mode prone to transformation in thinking, resistance to habitual thinking, to theories we accept without questioning. That is what happens in the experiments where the subjects transfer their perceived embodiment into virtual bodies - sight prevails over other sensory stimuli and leads to novel percepts and novel knowledge. Such perception resists habitual thinking.

The agency of virtual bodies

Moreover, neuroscience research suggests that perceived embodiment in virtual realms has the ability to condition the virtual space independently of its code. Some of the experiments are revealing specific glitches in the way space functions, is organized or behaves following the transfer of perceived embodiment into a virtual body. These aspects of the out-of-body illusions staged in laboratories are often overlooked. However, in the following lines we will be unmasking traces of virtual embodiment’s impact on virtual space recorded by neuroscientists. We will, therefore, examine three specific experiments within which we can scrutinize three different ways in which virtual bodies inform virtual space independently of the code.

⁹ Benjamin, W. “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility”, in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*. eds. Jennigs M. W. et al., Eng. trans. by Jephcott, E. et al., Cambridge and London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008, p. 19-55. [Benjamin, W., 1936, “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit”, in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. 5, 1, p. 40–66.]

Among the examples of research transferring the perceived embodiment of subjects into virtual bodies, we could find experiments conducted at Ehrsson Lab at Karolinska Institutet, in Stockholm, Sweden, where the subjects' perceived embodiment was transferred into body models of various sizes.¹⁰ This experiment will be the first one re-enacted and analyzed in this paper. The researchers' initial interest was concerning the impact of the scaled body on the subjects' mental body representation. They were therefore offering the subjects a shrunken body model (40 cm long) and an enlarged body model (400 cm long) towards which they were establishing a feeling of ownership. The results showed that the scale of the body had no negative consequences on the out-of-body illusion. The virtual bodies were accepted as if their scale was not modified. The findings of the experiments reveal that the subjects did not perceive their virtual bodies as out-of-scale. Their experience suggests that the bodies were perceived as having a human scale, whether they were 40 or 400 cm long. On the contrary, the space appeared to be changing its scale although no modification to it was done in the course of the experiments. The perception of the space was adapting to the bodies. If the perceived embodiment of the subject was transferred into a smaller body, they perceived the space as enlarged and vice versa, from a larger body, the space appeared shrunken. The body became an invariable base for any spatial percept. The characteristics of the body served as basic metrics for spatial perception which adapted to the body and not vice versa. Through various measurements, the scientists were aiming at understanding the magnitude of the perceived embodiment's scale on spatial relations. The body was, thus, resisting any modification and deforming the perceived space accordingly.

Further research has proven the relation between the scale of the virtual body and the one of the virtual space.¹¹ The critical re-enactments of neuroscience experiments were eliminating other elements that could impact the perception of the virtual space. The virtual body was placed in a dark "nonspace,"¹² a black background without any inherent spatial quality. It could be a dark space just as well as it could be a flat black surface. Only the presence of the body transforms the ocean of black pixels into a space.

We could say that the body is in control of the virtual space. The body is, thus, not excluded from it, nor does it have to submit to the virtual. It is endowed with

¹⁰ Van Der Hoort, B., et al., 2011, "Being a Barbie: The Size of One's Own Body Determines the Perceived Size of the World", *PLoS ONE*, 6, 5.

¹¹ Masarik, J.E., 2024, *Vnímanie virtuálneho priestoru*, Bratislava, Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava.

¹² In this context nonspace does not make reference to Augé's non-places but rather to the way the architectural historian Anthony Vidler addresses cyberspace as a metaphor for data without any inherent spatial quality.

a “*constitutive singularity*.”¹³ The body informs virtual space independently of its code. Such perspective reverses the traditional narratives of the embodiment and the virtual and puts the body in the position of power.

According to the media theoretician Peter Weibel,¹⁴ it is necessary to distinguish between the digital and the virtual. The digital is the code, a datascape, a nonspace. It is a data collection without any inherent spatial quality, it is ungraspable by human perception. This applies particularly to virtual reality, where we only get a two-dimensional image for each eye. This image is merely a rendering of the digital code. Neither of them, neither the code nor the flat image are spaces. The term digital space is merely a metaphor through which we are able to conceive of the “*unthinkable (or rather the unthinkable within the frame of modernism) conditions of life without space, of the spaceless, or of the absolute ‘void.*”¹⁵ The idea still resonates in contemporary media theory. Trevor Paglen writes about digital imagery as about something that “*has become detached from human eyes and has largely become invisible.*”¹⁶

The virtual¹⁷ in Weibel’s theory is a sensory realm. It is a rendering, an embodied alternative to the digital. The virtual relies on active human perception, human understanding of the imagery and the way the human perceiver determines what imagery is rendered on the interface. This is well illustrated by the functioning of virtual reality, where the user decides by their movement, position and orientation in space what imagery is rendered in the head-mounted display. At the same time, the user is actively composing a three-dimensional space out of two two-dimensional images. The process of creating a space does not rely merely on the digital code or its renderings. It is equally a result of an embodied cognitive and creative activity of the perceiver. The virtual is, thus, defined and conditioned by embodied human per-

¹³ Hansen, M. B.N., 2004, *New Philosophy for New Media*. Cambridge, London: The MIT Press, p.11.

¹⁴ Weibel, P., 1999, “Virtual Worlds: The Emperor’s New Bodies.” in *Ars Electronica: Facing the Future. A Survey of Two Decades*. ed. Ars Electronica Center. Druckerey, T. 1999., Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, p.207-223.

¹⁵ Vidler, A., 2000, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture.*, Cambridge and London, The MIT Press. p.233-234

¹⁶ Paglen, T. “Invisible Images: Your Pictures Are Looking at You.” in: *Architectural Design* 89, 1.p. 22-27 <https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.2383>

¹⁷ The virtual in this context is not the virtual which alternates the actual, as theorized by philosophers such as Bergson, Deleuze etc. Weibel’s conception of the term does not refer to the virtual/actual dichotomy. He uses the term to nuance the term used to describe the polyvalent concepts conventionally included in the word “digital.” Through the new terminology he addresses the lack of terms taking into consideration the ramifications of the concept of the digital and the ignorance of differences between the code and the sensory perception of its outcomes.



Fig. 1. Photo documentation of the re-enactments of the scaled embodiment experiment. The image depicts the strokes on the foot - the haptic stimulation - conducted during the experiment.

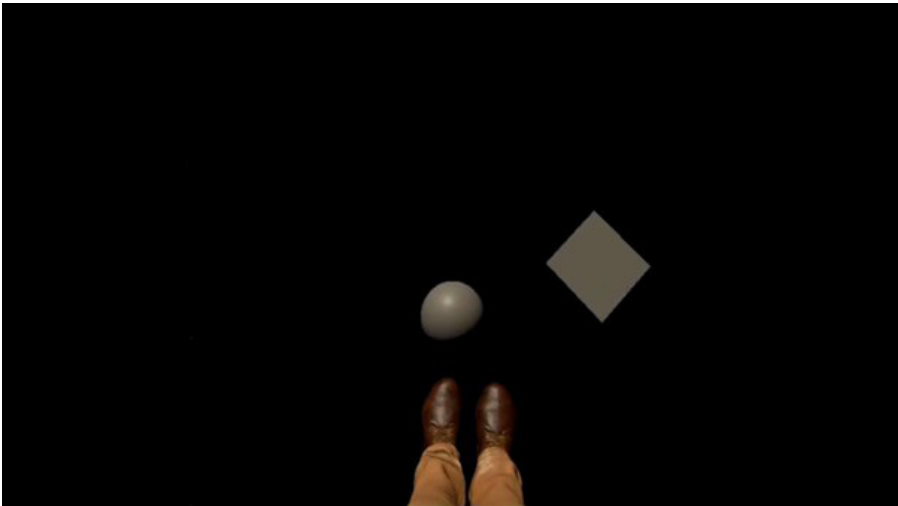


Fig. 2. The image is a still from the imagery rendered in the head-mounted display during the stimulation in the framework of the re-enactment. It shows a shrunken body with the ball touching it.

ception. In this perspective, the body makes space in the event of an encounter with a nonspace. It is, therefore, necessary to study it through human senses. Therefore, as opposed to the digital, the virtual has spatial qualities, otherwise it would be impossible to grasp through human senses. In this way the perception of virtual spaces is equally their forming. The way virtual spaces are perceived is defining their qualities. We could say that the perceived scaling of virtual spaces within the experiments equals their actual scaling in Weibel's conception. Such perspective emphasizes the agency of perceived virtual embodiment to act independently of the code, to resist the absolute power of the digital.

The second experiment analyzed was equally conducted at Karolinska Institutet. The procedure was similar, however, instead of transferring the perceived embodiment into bodies of different sizes, it was transferred into an invisible body.¹⁸ The subjects did not see any body in the VR headsets. They only saw an object moving in the empty space. Once it reached an area that could be occupied by their body, the subjects felt a touch. The researchers were focused on the possibility of establishing a feeling of ownership of an invisible body and its implications. They were, therefore, trying to understand the perceived invisible body in terms of its position, orientation or shape. While trying to explain the cognitive procedure, they were finding support in optical research working with invisibility. Within the research referenced by neuroscientists, opticians created surfaces of layered glass capturing light beams, leading them along the layers and then releasing them as if their trajectory had not changed.¹⁹ Therefore, if an object was placed inside these surfaces, it could not be seen. However, anything behind the area defined by the surfaces was seen as there was nothing standing between it and the perceiver. Following this logic, we can conclude that the virtual body seen on the headset's display is bending the virtual space just as the layered glass. The fold in the virtual space has the shape, position and orientation of the virtual body studied by neuroscientists. Such deformation of the virtual space is not resulting from its code. It is purely a result of the perceived virtual embodiment. Such deformed space can no longer be theorized as a Euclidean space with three straight axes. A novel space depending merely on the perceived embodiment and its qualities is being defined. In this case the perceived virtual embodiment claims its power further than in mere scaling. It splits from the experience known from physical space and establishes a novel space fitting its needs in virtual conditions.

¹⁸ Guterstam A., et al., April 23, 2015, "Illusory ownership of an invisible body reduces autonomic and subjective social anxiety responses", in *Scientific Reports* 5, 9831, p.2., <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep09831>

¹⁹ Chen, H. et al., June 7, 2013, "Natural Light Cloaking for Aquatic and Terrestrial Creatures", in *arXiv.org* e-print 1306.1780. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1306.1780>



Fig. 3. Photo documentation of the re-enactment of the invisible embodiment experiment. The image depicts the stroking of the hip - the haptic stimulation - conducted during the experiment.

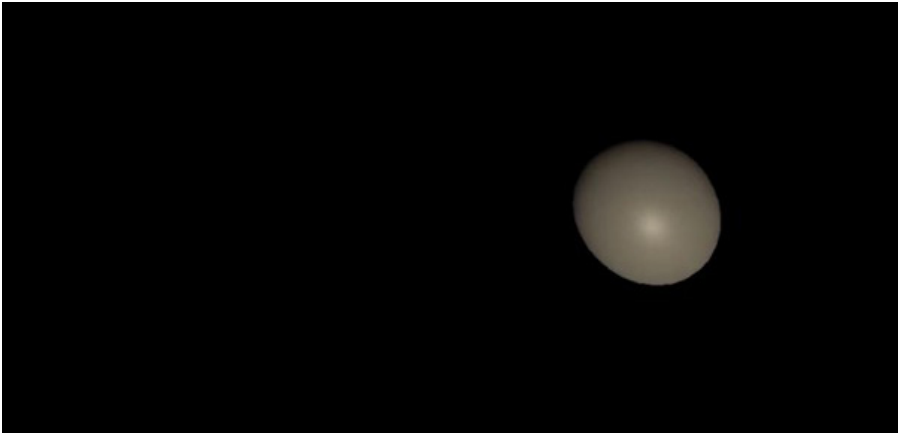


Fig. 4. The image is a still from the imagery rendered in the head-mounted display during the stimulation in the framework of the re-enactments. It shows the ball touching an invisible body.

In the last experiment studied in this section, the subjects' perceived embodiment was transferred into a body seen from a third person perspective.²⁰ The researchers were scrutinizing the impact breaking the life-long experience of seeing one's own body from the first-person perspective will have on the illusion. The subjects were feeling the touches they saw on a body standing 2 meters in front of them on their own bodies. After the tactile stimulation was finished, the subjects were displaced and asked to go to the position where they felt their presence during the experiment. The findings show that the subjects were indicating positions leaning towards the body seen in front of them. Neuroscientists are speaking of an "embodiment drift". Subjects indicate that even if they were not fully immersed in the illusion of embodiment in the body seen from the third person perspective, they felt that the object touching them had impact on them.

We can, therefore conclude that novel relations between two points in the space defined by the virtual embodiment are being established, the distance between them disappears in the experience of the subjects. The point from which the subjects see the body and the point where the virtual body is located are connected. What happens in one of them is equally happening in the other one regardless of their perceived distance. The perceived embodiment blurred in the framework of this experiment proves its role of establishing spatial relations within the virtual space that escape the logics of Euclidean space. If in the previous experiment the space was folded, in the present one, these folds are bridged in novel ways. One point occupies two co-

²⁰ Lenggenhager, B. et al., August 24, 2007, "Video Ergo Sum: Manipulating Bodily Self-Consciousness", in *Science*. 317, 5841, 1096-1099. DOI: 10.1126/science.1143439

ordinates synchronously. The distance between them is null, although they appear to be far apart. To reach the other point, one does not need to undergo a gradual change of coordinates until their values meet. Without being located in two coordinates, without splitting their presence or position, the subjects are present in both points. We can, therefore, conclude that the perceived embodiment has the agency to define virtual spaces regardless of the code or any other logics known from other spatial experience.



Fig. 5. Photo documentation of the re-enactment of the third-person perspective embodiment experiment. The image depicts the stroking of the shoulder - the haptic stimulation - conducted during the experiment.



Fig. 6. The image is a still from the imagery rendered in the head-mounted display during the stimulation in the framework of the re-enactments. It shows the virtual body seen from a third person perspective and the ball touching its shoulder.

Remarks on the term “virtual”

We have been dealing with the virtual following a conception suggested by the media theorist Peter Weibel. This conception defines the virtual as an embodied version, graspable through human senses of the digital which is pure data designed for machine vision.²¹ In the following section, we will be trying to put the research in relation with historical and contemporary thought on spatial perception and the perceiver’s body. Therefore, another version of the term virtual would be introduced. The subject of this research is the Weibelian virtual, however, the thought on the embodiment and its role in spatial perception implies other conceptions.

The virtual evoked in the following section is based on Henri Bergson’s conception of the real and the virtual. The Bergsonian virtual²² is inscribed in a longer philosophical and scientific tradition, which is both predating the philosopher and also continued in the subsequent evolution of philosophical thought. Bergson’s concept would be further explained in the following section.

It is important to bear in mind the difference between the two concepts covered by the term “virtual”. Although the two virtuals - the one issued from Bergson’s thought and the one issued from Weibel’s - show signs of similarities in certain

²¹ Weibel, Peter. *Virtual Worlds: The Emperor’s New Bodies*. p.207-223 in *Ars Electronica: Facing the Future. A Survey of Two Decades*. ed. Ars Electronica Center. Druckerey, T. 1999., Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, p.221.

²² Bergson, H., 1939, *Matière et mémoire: Essai sur la relation du corps à l’esprit*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France. p.32.

points, they are different. To respect the different conceptions of the virtual and to keep the arguments clear, we will have to update the terminology. The text would be distinguishing between the two by designating Bergson's conception of the virtual by the Bergsonian virtual and Weibel's by the Weibelian virtual.

Models of space based on bodily agency

From its encounters with research in neuroscience and its predecessors such as psychophysics in the 19th century, philosophy has been formulating theories based on scientific knowledge of perception. Psychophysics was studying and quantifying²³ the body's perceptual abilities, the stimuli and their transformations into percepts.²⁴ The body has, thus, become the cornerstone of perception studies. In response, the re-thinking of the body and space in the context of the knowledge generated by cognitive neuroscience and its predecessors, required novel theories on the body and space in the field of philosophy. The body was not a passive receiver of information coming from outside. It was an active agent in the perception process.

The French philosopher, Henri Bergson, made a division of space similar to Riegl's. The difference did not consist in theorizing zones defined by their accessibility to various senses, but by its accessibility to the body in general.²⁵ Bergson, therefore, defined the zone of "real actions" by which he meant the area in the direct reach of the body, a zone where the body could really make an action. Beyond it, there is the zone of "virtual actions", where the interactions could not be realized in the given spatial setup. From the actions within the zone of real actions we pass into perception which replaces actions in the zone of the virtual ones. Perception becomes an extension of action. The body, and its position, in this conception define the space, frame it, decide which parts are acted upon and which ones are perceived. For the body itself Bergson specifies a different mode of perception he calls "affections". It is a way of sensing the body from inside. On the surface of the body, on the skin, "affections" and actions meet. The virtuality or realness of actions in Bergson's terms is a way to differentiate specific aspects of the perceiver's ability to act upon the surrounding space. The virtual evoked here is not identical with the Weibelian one. Both the zone of virtual actions and the zone of real actions could be contained in a Weibelian virtual space.

The central role of the body in framing and shaping the space is visible in the

²³ Crary, J., 1990, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. London and Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1990. p.147.

²⁴ Valiaho, P., 2010, *Mapping the Moving Image: Gesture, Thought and Cinema Circa 1900*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press. p.54.

²⁵ Bergson, H., 1939, *Matière et mémoire: Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France. p.32.

way Bergson theorizes the body. In his ideas formulated in *Matter and Memory*, Bergson defines all matter as a collection of images. The body as a material object is equally an object. This image is, however, different from other images. While non-bodily images interact with one another automatically following natural laws, the body has the ability to decide whether or not it reacts to action coming from other images. Bodies, therefore, introduce indetermination into interactions between images, between material objects. The body frames the images, it decides which images enter the frame and which ones remain outside its borders. In this way Bergson's thinking foresees some of the ability of the body to shape virtual²⁶ space manifested in the framework of neuroscience experiments discussed in this paper. However, in the experiments, the body proves its ability to shape virtual space globally. The body's agency does not depend on its relative distance from specific zones of the space. Bergson's theory of embodied framing of percepts, however, seems to manifest its full potential in VR technology and its contemporary use. It is the body, its position, orientation, the gaze of the VR headset user that defines the images rendered by the head-mounted display.

Insisting on the connection of space with time, Bergson claims that it is impossible to study movement merely as a trajectory, as a line extracted from time. Without time there is no movement. Bergson goes even further saying space is not a condition preceding movement, but it is the other way round. Movement precedes space, movement lays space underneath it. A perceiving subject thus frames and defines the space through their movement. That is what is happening in the last experiment, where the subjects' perceived embodiment moves from their habitual position, where it claims a new position defined by the body seen in front of them. Bergson's reflection, although using the notion of virtuality, was not taking into consideration Weibelian virtual spaces. However, even in Bergson's writings we can see a sort of resistance of the body towards spatial apriori. The body is endowed with its enframing abilities defining spatial percepts. In this point the Bergsonian and Weibelian virtual spaces converge - both depend, although in various measures, on the active embodied framing.

Although Bergson's writings were published in times when film was not new, and it is also important to remember that he was active in France where its development was going fast in the period, the philosopher was avoiding it in his texts as much as possible. It was Gilles Deleuze who brought the concepts into dialogue with

²⁶ Here "virtual" refers to the alternative to the digital as defined by Weibel, not an alternative to the actual as theorized by Bergson.

film and made necessary adjustments within the theories.²⁷

Deleuze insists on the connection between the image (“*living*” or non-living) and movement. He extends the image as far as its actions can reach. The images, and thus also bodies, are, therefore, not limited to their physical extent anymore. They start merging with space. Bodies are in constant movement and interaction with other images. Deleuze distinguishes interactions between non-living images, where the things fully reveal themselves and interaction with living images, where perception enframes information, bits of it remain outside the frame. Things themselves are called “*movement-image*” in Deleuze’s terminology. Once an image movement enters in interaction with a “*living image*”, information is enframed and the image becomes a “*perception-image*”. Afterwards, the living image can create a reaction, in such a moment, the “*living image*” is not framing information anymore. What is happening is the bending of the space. Bergson’s distinction between the zone of “*real*” and “*virtual actions*” breaks down. The “*virtual actions*” and reactions can be realized, they become “*real*”. In this case Deleuze speaks about “*action-images*”. If the body decides not to emit a reaction, the action is absorbed, in that case we speak of “*affection-images*”.

“*Action-images*” deforming the space and turning the Bergsonian “*virtual actions*” into “*real*” are a surprisingly fitting formulation of the procedures through which perceived virtual (in Weibelian terms) embodiment exercises its power over the Weibelian virtual space. Once the body creates a reaction to stimuli, the space is being modified. The Weibelian virtual space claims its nature as a sensory realm directly dependent on human perception.

The French architect Bernard Cache defines architecture as the art of the frame.²⁸ Similarly to previous theories, Cache develops a theory of image. His theory identifies three elements constituting the image: points of inflection, vectors and a frame. The “*points of inflection*” are an apriori, they exist independently of the image. These points need to be connected by “*vectors*”, which come with human action. Vectors define mutual relations between points of inflection and establish a topography. The vectors are not predefined, various variations are possible, they bring indetermination in the space. The “*frame*” then defines an interval within the space. Its contents are difficult to predict, but architecture works with frames of probability. It manipulates the frame in order to obtain the desired results. In Cache’s conception the “*body*” is defined as a disruption of predictable conditions within the frame. The body disrupts the usual functioning of vectors. And that is what is happening in the

²⁷ Deleuze, G., 1983, *Cinéma 1: L’Image mouvement*. Paris, Les Editions de Minuit.

²⁸ Cache, B., 1995, *Earth Moves: The Furnishing of Territories*. Cambridge and London, The MIT Press, p.3.

neuroscience experiments. The rendering of the digital in the head-mounted display offers the “*points of inflection*”, a basis for the subsequent construction of a Weibelian virtual space. The construction itself corresponds to the determination of “*vectors*”. The setting is then “*framed*” by the perceiver. Their embodied presence introduces disruptions and unpredictability. The body disrupts the predictable functioning of space in order to claim its position. By resisting the Euclidean space it generates a new one. Cache’s writings being published in 1997, the architect had an insight into digital prototyping and the issues concerning digital spaces or objects. His reflection is not considering the embodiment in the way neuroscience experiments are. The publication of the book predates Botvinick’s and Cohen’s rubber hand experiment publication (1998). However, Cache’s theory of framing as an architectural practice and the concept of the body as a spatial disruption offer solid foundations for an aesthetic reflection of the originally neuroscientific experiments. The formulation of the concepts is relatively vague, yet it inspired the thinking of media theoreticians.

The media theoretician Mark B. N. Hansen positions his perspective on new media among Bergson’s, Deleuze’s and Cache’s theories. He defines digital images as those where the body takes on the role of the framer.²⁹ He underlines that digital media are not forms but rather interfaces rendering data. It is the body in interaction with the interface that decides what and how is to be rendered. The framing function is not on the interface but on the body. Virtual space is the perfect embodiment of such a perspective on digital media. The digital data, the datascape have no spatial quality. It is through filtration of information that a space is created. According to Hansen’s theory, this process takes part in the body.

Such perspective is informed by Weibel’s distinction between the digital and the virtual. Therefore, Hansen accords the body the autonomy to define virtual spaces independently of the datascape of the code. And allows the body to shape the virtual realms as an autonomous tool in interaction with digital interfaces. That is the case in the experiments discussed above.

Conclusion

Some of the scientific theories on perception dating back to the 19th century have vanished from scientific thinking. They have, however, informed aesthetic theories which have evolved into current media theory. Through these theories the knowledge is reunited with contemporary neuroscience research. Some of the questions theoreticians of digital media are asking are shared by neuroscientists who are trying to understand the links between embodiment and the self in physical and virtu-

²⁹ Hansen, M. B.N., 2004, *New Philosophy for New Media*. Cambridge, London: The MIT Press, p.22.

al spaces. The knowledge generated by their research is updating aesthetic thinking, similarly to the way it did in the 19th century.

What persists throughout the evolution of thought in both fields is the role of the body. The transition of the research and thought into the Weibelian virtual has not diminished the role or power of the body. On the contrary, the results of the re-enactments of neuroscientific experiments show that in the Weibelian virtual the embodiment has fully proven its abilities, previously suggested only in theory. The body resists alleged threats of the virtual and writes its own narratives. The experiments themselves reveal the body's agency to act autonomously beyond the framework of the digital code, beyond the Weibelian digital.

The illusions summoned in the experiments are deeply rooted in sensory, and therefore, embodied experience. Such embodiment oscillates between the physical and Weibelian virtual space. In this sense, the actual physical body is a condition for presence in Weibelian virtual realms. We can, therefore, conclude that the Weibelian virtual space is only possible with a body. The body is oscillating between the actual and the Weibelian virtual in order to provide exchanges between the two realms. Although the nature and functioning of such virtual space is independent of those of the actual one, its constitution would be impossible without the body's oscillations.

The body does not submit to the Weibelian virtual space. The space's existence is fully dependent on the body. Such perspective opposes the dystopian science-fiction narratives, where one's consciousness can be "downloaded" and "uploaded" into a virtual realm. The paradoxical fictions are based on forgetting the central role of the body. Presupposing various sorts of bodily augmentation or oppression, are based on the dualism between a body and a self. Such a perspective, however, ignores the findings of the original neuroscience research. Neither the embodiment studied in the framework of the original experiments nor the Weibelian virtual bodies used in the re-enactments are not threatening or canceling the physical body. These bodies are extensions of the biological bodies themselves. The Weibelian virtual body is a way through which the body leaks into Weibelian virtual realms and claims its agency in them. The fluidity of the body allowing its transference into the Weibelian virtual through virtual bodies endows it with the ability to inform virtual spaces independently of their code. The dimensions, bends, and spatial relations can be fully controlled by the perceived Weibelian virtual embodiment. Such bodies resist the code's absolute power.

Bibliography

Anil, S., 2021, *Being You: A New Science of Consciousness.*, London, Faber & Faber.

- Benjamin, W. “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility”, in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*. eds. Jennings M. W. et al., Eng. trans. by Jephcott, E. et al., Cambridge and London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008, p. 19-55. [Benjamin, W., 1936, “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit”, in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. 5, 1, p. 40–66.]
- Bergson, H., 1939, *Matière et mémoire: Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.
- Botvinick, M., Cohen, J., 19 February 1998, “Rubber hands ‘feel’ touch that eyes see”, in *Nature* 391, 6669, p. 756.
- Cache, B., 1995, *Earth Moves: The Furnishing of Territories*. Cambridge and London, The MIT Press
- Chen, H. et al., June 7, 2013, “Natural Light Cloaking for Aquatic and Terrestrial Creatures”, in *arXiv.org* e-print 1306.1780. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1306.1780>
- Crary, J., 1990, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. London and Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1990.
- Deleuze, G., 1983, *Cinéma 1: L'Image mouvement*. Paris, Les Editions de Minuit
- Guterstam A., et al., April 23, 2015, “Illusory ownership of an invisible body reduces autonomic and subjective social anxiety responses”, in *Scientific Reports* 5, 9831, p.2., <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep09831>
- Hansen, M. B.N., 2004, *New Philosophy for New Media*. Cambridge, London: The MIT Press.
- Heydrich, L. et al., December 18, 2013, “Visual capture and the experience of having two bodies – evidence from two different virtual reality techniques”, in *Front. Psychol.*, 4, 946, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00946>
- Leckie, A., 2013, *Ancillary Justice*, London, Orbit Books.
- Leino, P., 2022, *Nebe*, Brno, Větrné mlýny.
- Lenggenhager, B. et al., August 24, 2007, “Video Ergo Sum: Manipulating Bodily Self-Consciousness”, in *Science*. 317, 5841, 1096-1099. DOI: 10.1126/science.1143439
- Masarik, J.E., 2024, *Vnímanie virtuálneho priestoru*, Bratislava, Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava.
- Petkova, V. I., Ehrsson, H. H., December 3, 2008., “If I Were You: Perceptual Illusion of Body Swapping”, in *PLoS ONE* 3, 12: e3832. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0003832>
- Slater, M. et al., 1 November 2012, “The Sense of Embodiment in Virtual Reality”,

- in: *Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments*; 21, 4, p. 373–387. doi: https://doi.org/10.1162/PRES_a_00124
- Paglen, T. “Invisible Images: Your Pictures Are Looking at You.” in: *Architectural Design* 89, 1.p. 22-27 <https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.2383>
- Riegl, A., *Late Roman Art Industry*. Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider Editore, Eng. trans. by R. Winkers 1985. [*Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie*, Vienna, Verlag der Kaiserlich-Königlichen Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1901].
- Valiaho, P., 2010, *Mapping the Moving Image: Gesture, Thought and Cinema Circa 1900*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press.
- Van Der Hoort, B., et al., 25 May 2011, “Being a Barbie: The Size of One’s Own Body Determines the Perceived Size of the World”, *PLoS ONE*, 6, 5.
- Vidler, A., 2000, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture.*, Cambridge and London, The MIT Press.
- Weibel, P., 1999, “Virtual Worlds: The Emperor’s New Bodies.” in *Ars Electronica: Facing the Future. A Survey of Two Decades.* ed. Ars Electronica Center. Druckrey, T. 1999., Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, p.207-223.

“All You Need is Recalcitrance”; A Stengerian Fable for Psychology

Todo lo que necesitas es recalcitrancia;
Una fábula stengeriana para la Psicología

David Antolínez

Abstract:

Recalcitrance is a form of resistance particularly relevant to human sciences. This essay explores how Isabelle Stengers outlined this topic from a critical reading of certain experiments in the history of psychology. Since living beings cannot remain indifferent to the proofs and interrogations they are submitted to in the laboratory, psychologists should not adopt the attitude of distant objectivity that has led natural scientists to observe without intervening. Instead, psychologists must remain attentive to the frequent issue of pliability, where the studied subject adapts its behaviour to satisfy the experimenter’s expectations. In this sense, recalcitrance offers an alternative to both false neutrality and experimental docility. Further developments by Despret and Latour have proposed this concept as a demarcation criterion for psychology. The second half of the essay is an auto-ethnographic account of my own clinician practice. From a series of vignettes, a speculative fabulation is woven to explore whether Stenger’s thesis on recalcitrance could and/or should be implemented in psychotherapy.

Keywords: epistemic resistance, objection, speculative fabulation, psychotherapy.

CONTACT: David Antolínez Uribe
(Independent researcher,
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2335-7681>)
d.antolinez.uribe@gmail.com



Resumen:

La recalcitrancia es una forma de resistencia particularmente relevante para las ciencias humanas. Este ensayo explora cómo Isabelle Stengers perfiló este tema a partir de una revisión crítica de ciertos experimentos en la historia de la psicología. Dado que los seres vivos no pueden permanecer indiferentes ante las pruebas e interrogantes presentados en el laboratorio, los psicólogos no deberían adoptar la actitud de distante objetividad que ha conducido a los científicos naturales a observar sin intervenir. En cambio, los psicólogos deben permanecer atentos para al frecuente problema de la complacencia en situaciones donde el sujeto estudiado adapta su comportamiento para satisfacer las expectativas del experimentador. En este sentido, la recalcitrancia ofrece una alternativa tanto a la falsa neutralidad como la docilidad experimental. Despret y Latour han continuado desarrollando esta noción y la han propuesto como un criterio de demarcación en psicología. La segunda mitad del ensayo ofrece un relato auto-etnográfico de mi propia práctica clínica. A partir de una serie de viñetas, se entreteje una fabulación especulativa para explorar si la tesis de Stengers sobre la recalcitrancia podría y/o debería implementarse en psicoterapia.

Palabras clave: resistencia epistémica, objeción, especulación fabulativa, psicoterapia.

Doesn't have a point of view
Knows not where he's going to
Isn't he a bit like you and me?
Nowhere man please listen
You don't know what you're missing
Nowhere man, the world is at your command
Lennon & McCartney ¹

Introduction – Resistance never knows

In continental philosophy, the concept of resistance is inexorably tied to Michel Foucault. Countless manuscripts have been written on this topic, so the specialized literature has come close to redundancy. Yet, as the editors of this special issue rightly note, the theme of resistance remains as relevant as ever. Since I am not an expert,

¹ As the reader will notice, this essay is permeated by musical references. A revolution without dancing is not a revolution worth having. Indeed, the etymology of recalcitrance reveals a mysterious solidarity of rhythm and dissonance. I kindly suggest reading this text alongside the album *Recalcitrance* by the Dutch musician Gagi Petrovic, inspired by Stengers' writings, which can be found in the artist's Bandcamp profile.

I shall not discuss Foucault's insights here. Rather, I will approach the issue of resistance from the perspective of Isabelle Stengers. There are significant differences between both authors, but also some pivotal similarities. First, like Foucault, Stengers is concerned with the interplay of power and knowledge. Her work is usually described as political epistemology, but I find this label inadequate since it might be interpreted either as a visualization of the political intricacies within the sciences or as an awareness of the impossibilities of political neutrality in scientific research. Those commonplace ideas are already present in Stengers' writings, but she aims to question the very linkage between reason and judgment. In this sense, "epistemodicy" (Serres, 1995, p.80) would be more accurate since it stresses the accusatory nature of science and law. Second, both authors share a fierce critique of psychology. It is almost intriguing that Foucault's work has gained popularity among psychologists, considering that he displayed hostility towards this discipline. Some psychologists have tried to adopt his views to improve their praxis (Hanna, 2014), while others have attempted to continue his critiques (Hook, 2003). For her part, Stengers has dismissed psychoanalysis, behaviourism and social psychology as pseudo-scientific. Yet, unlike Popper, she does not expect psychology to mimic the natural sciences. Instead, Stengers claims that recalcitrance is required for psychology to generate better substantive knowledge.

What is recalcitrance and how does it relate to psychology? To answer these questions, I have arranged this essay in two parts. First, I will delineate the notion of recalcitrance, drawing from the work of Stengers and related authors. This entails some reflection on the difference between the concepts of resistance and recalcitrance. For now, we can advance that the former is a wide-ranging concept that has been fruitful in political science and governmentality studies, while the latter is a narrow phenomenon akin to experimental life in human sciences. In the second part, I will offer a discussion of how recalcitrance could be articulated in clinical psychology. These reflections will be informed by my own experience as a practitioner psychotherapist working in a general hospital. Auto-ethnographies are not uncommon to feminist scholars in science and technology studies – a field where the ideas of Stengers feel at home. Additionally, to fulfil the promise of a Stengerian fable, my account will take the form of a speculative fabulation. The bicephalous arrangement of the essay seeks to create bridges between the theoretical landscape of the Belgian philosopher and some practical issues of psychotherapy.

A caveat is in order. The term "recalcitrance" is a neologism only admitted by the Oxford Dictionary. In the form of a noun, it refers to a «recalcitrant character or behaviour», while the adjective form indicates «obstinately disobedient; uncooperative; objecting to constraint or restriction». The Oxford Dictionary points out that this term is borrowed from the French, but the Larousse Dictionnaire only accepts its adjective form «*qu'il n'est pas facile d'ajuster; qui se montre rebelle à faire quelque chose*». Curiously, the Real Academia Española allows its verbal form as

«*resistir con tenacidad a quien se debe obedecer*». All three sources remit to the Latin etymology *calcitrum*, which is the sound produced by feet hitting the ground. This term was employed in Ancient Rome to designate different types of sound: the tap of a dance, the noise of a riding horse, the commotion of a marching army and the tempest of a rioting mob. It might be difficult to find a single definition of this phenomenon in the writings of Stengers. On the one hand, she constantly mocks analytical philosophy and its obsession with univocal conceptualizations. On the other hand, it was not Stengers herself, but Latour (1997), who was the most amazed by the implications of recalcitrance for the human sciences. It is important to turn explicit this background to understand our *leitmotiv*: to delineate an elusive idea that offers new epistemological and political possibilities for psychology.

Recalcitrance is a warm gun

The stereotypical picture of the scientific revolution praises mathematical demonstrations, methodical scepticism, and experimentalist ethos as the signature virtues of modern sciences. The main heroes of this period are Descartes, Copernicus, Galileo and Bacon, notwithstanding the significant differences among them. Classic epistemologists insisted that all emerging disciplines had to follow the lead of physics to be properly scientific. Against this view, Latour (1987) argued that physics was not the pioneering discipline engaged in the colossal task of crafting a new cosmology that would differentiate modernity from the Middle Ages. Before Kepler's *Astronomia* or Newton's *Principia*, there were numerous explorers concerned with travelling to unknown lands and bringing back home several objects to compile them in books or rooms (i.e., Atlases or *Wunderkammern*). In this sense, archaeology, cartography, geology and botany were more influential than physics in the configuration of modern science.

Following this insight, we find that the concept of recalcitrance was first coined by botanist Eric Roberts (1973). One of the main interests of agroindustry is to transport seeds to grow cereal, grains and vegetables in non-native locations. It seems to be relatively easier to adapt both seeds and soil than sending already harvested food prone to expiration. The principal technique to prolong the lifespan of seeds is to dehydrate and store them in low temperatures. This procedure slows the germination process in most seeds, commonly named "orthodox", except in a small group known as "recalcitrant". Those seeds have a quicker germinative process, which means that they perish soon if they are not sown and watered. Since recalcitrant seeds cannot be frozen, they pose special difficulties for storage and transportation. Adopting a quasi-vitalistic tone, we might say that the fragility of those seeds serves as a means of resistance against the pretensions of farmers who disregard the properties of native soils and the reproductive rhythms of vegetables. We usually imagine that resistance requires strength – yet delicacy can also be a form of objection.

The notion of recalcitrance was also shaped by analytic philosophy of emotions.

In the late 70s, authors like Solomon, Foot and Greenspan reintroduced affectivity in the discussion on moral rationalism. Their work opened a heated controversy between two meta-ethical traditions: cognitivism (i.e., judgmentalism) and sentimentalism. The former claims that emotion is a somewhat harmonious combination of a cognitive element (construal, judgment or belief) and an emotional state (pain or pleasure). The latter stance, on the contrary, argues that emotions are, to some extent, independent of cognition since they relate to other dimensions of human subjectivity such as aesthetics, language, corporality or volition. While the cognitivist tradition tries to create a linear path between reason and morality, the sentimentalist perspective insists that ethical behaviour is multiple and complex. D'Arms and Jacobson (2003, p.129) introduced the term "recalcitrant emotion" to point out the frequent situation where an emotion persists even when it contradicts a rational belief. The paradigmatic case is fear of flying: a passenger might admit that aeroplanes are safe, yet he cannot help but worry during the take-off. Recalcitrant emotions, therefore, pose a difficult challenge to the cognitivist project, since they seem to entail some sort of irrationality, incoherence, or arbitrariness. Also, recalcitrant emotions bring attention to the fact that affectivity and cognition have a discordant relationship.

Cognitivists either negate the possibility of recalcitrance emotions or explain them away by duplicating their own primal thesis. This last option, called quasi-judgmentalism, contends that behind a recalcitrant emotion lays a conflict between two sets of beliefs. The emotion would respond to a deeper judgment that there is something dangerous about flying, even though aeroplanes are safe machines. Or the phobic person might be afraid of the circumstance that elicits fear in the first place – in this case, the airport². But this solution is not entirely satisfactory for sentimentalist authors, since it would entail that recalcitrant emotions are the result of the clash between concepts instead of a discrepancy between affectivity and cognition as such. D'Arms and Jacobson (2003, p.141) insist that «recalcitrance is the product of two distinct evaluative systems, one emotional and the other linguistic». Since only the latter involves a conceptual dimension, the former shall not respond to a re-evaluation of judgments. There is also a cognitivist attempt to reduce affect to perception by turning recalcitrant emotions analogic to perceptual illusions. This renders recalcitrant emotions as somewhat groundless affectivity potentially detrimental to moral reasoning. Opposing this view, Benjabi (2013) indicates that a better analogy would be between affectivity and volition, being recalcitrant emotions coextensive to the weakness of the will. Thus, the problem would not be that a person misjudges the safety of the airplane, but that he cannot overcome the fear despite his efforts. Similarly, Döring (2015) claims that irrationality as such is not a moral problem, but rather the behavioural incoherence that directly contradicts our beliefs about good

² Quasi-judgmentalism suggests that the association of ideas is not a smooth process, resembling the phenomena of "cognitive dissonance" and "free-floating anxiety". Also, recalcitrance of emotions has certain reminiscences of the degenerative and refractory diseases of 19th-century psychiatry.

and evil. In some cases, recalcitrant emotions might even be beneficial, since they provide the person the opportunity to reassess his judgments and re-synchronize his actions. Meta-ethical debates probably will continue endlessly but note that the issue of recalcitrant emotions has inspired some recent research on the placebo effect, anorexia nervosa and addiction (Hutchinson, 2020; Varga & Steglich-Petersen, 2023; Burdman, 2024).

Before entering the Stengerian landscape it would be useful to make some remarks about the genealogy constructed so far³. First, agroindustry employs the concept of recalcitrance in a descriptive fashion, while sentimentalist philosophers use it as a tool in their quarrels with cognitivists. While in the first case, recalcitrance is a “natural” feature of some seeds, in the second one it constitutes a problem that needs to be solved. As we shall see, Stengers holds that recalcitrance is an epistemic virtue that must be encouraged in human sciences. This does not mean that she avows for sentimentalism over reason. In this point, the Belgian philosopher closely follows the Latourian views about the distorted ideal of purism posed by modern metaphysics. Cognitive psychology has reduced thinking to the construction of mental representations, while neuroscience has diminished affectivity as a series of chemical reactions. Thought is deeply embedded in language, social conventions and corporality, so it is futile to seek a pure reason devoid of the constraints of other human activities. The ultimate lesson of recalcitrant emotions is that affectivity goes beyond the pleasure/pain dichotomy and the hereditary disposition towards some stimuli. Precisely by resisting this rough biological reduction, psychological processes prove they are not mere epiphenomena. In the second part, we will ask if the psyche can be better studied through experiments that enhance the recalcitrance of their participants. In other words, the complications of cognition are primarily epistemic and political, instead of merely moral.

To introduce our philosophical hero, I shall paraphrase Bob Dylan: «I don't know what I can say about Stengers that wouldn't come back to haunt me». As noted, the Belgian philosopher probably knows the minutiae of psychology better than most practitioners. Her writings are intentionally dense, not only due to the pleasure of being cryptic but also because she arranges words seeking to awaken novel sensibilities, perspectives and agencies in the reader (Despret, 2012, p.29). Furthermore, she combines her fine knowledge of behavioural sciences and her epistemological wisdom to condemn psychology as a pseudoscience for not being able to demonstrate the autonomy of its studied phenomena. We already anticipated that recalcitrance might be the antidote for this situation, but it might be better to start by situating the

³ Additionally, consider a key passage of Lynch's (1985) *Art and Artifact in Laboratory Science*: «The concern with artifact [...] appears simultaneously with the thematic orientation to an in-itself subject matter. The in-itself is delineated in terms of the endogenous features of laboratory inquiry which are other than those natural language, literary, and sociologically technical resources [...]. The struggle with the recalcitrant phenomenon, a struggle which validates the experience of it as independent [...], the phenomenon is available as an obscured presence, a baffling presence, or a series of failures, corrections, and refutations of the author's mode of addressing it». *Avant la lettre*, Lynch argued that technical procedures constitute the social context of any scientific community.

moment in which Stengers became concerned with these issues. She first studied chemistry and worked with Ilya Prigogine in the late 1970s. In the mid-1980s she met Léon Chertok and started together a long-term investigation on hypnosis, its entangled relationship with psychoanalysis and its epistemological implications for health sciences. This collaboration foreshadowed her encounter with Tobie Nathan in the mid-1990s, with whom she formed a study group along Bruno Latour, Phillippe Pignarre, Bruno Pinchard and Patrick Deshayes. By the end of the century Stengers had already published the seven volumes of *Cosmopolitics* and, from then on, she has developed this project in close dialogue with ecology and feminism.

The first time Stengers faced the phenomenon of recalcitrance was in the Netherlands, where she and Olivier Ralet (1991) were sent by the *Centre National de Prévention d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Toxicomanies* to gather information about addiction in a country where drugs were legal. Initially, they were supposed to write a report on how to formulate a European public policy on this matter without replicating the legal persecution of the United States. However, while she was in the field, Stengers found that unrepentant drug users refused the label “addicts” and demanded to be regarded as citizens “just like anyone else”. What was supposed to be a governmental enterprise became a primal encounter with a particular kind of resistance. It is important to highlight the epistemic component of this gesture, otherwise we might falsely assume that Stengers just had a politically correct attitude towards drug users. It is well known that, more frequently than not, medical treatments for addiction are futile. But this is not solely because we are facing a difficult disease like cancer or AIDS. Rather, it is mainly because drug users tend to react negatively to doctors. They are suspicious of the aid provided, they resent the usage of technical words, and they even sabotage the questionnaires used to collect data. The problem is not that their lack of cooperation delays the advancement of theories and therapies that will eventually “hit the spot”. Instead, these behaviours challenge the preconceptions of drug users unproblematically adopted by scientists. It requires a lot of self-determination and cunning to be an unrepentant drug user who rejects a type of assistance that silences their own experience through the discourse of rehabilitation (Gomart, 2002).

The *Centre National de Prévention d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Toxicomanies*, as one might suspect, is an institution that approaches drugs from the lens of pathology and crime. Unsurprisingly, they disowned Stengers’ book, and her name was erased from their website. Nevertheless, Strangers, deeply concerned with psychology, continued to develop the concept of recalcitrance. By that time, she was also influenced by the book *On The Modern Cult of the Factish Gods*, where Latour (2010) tried to dissolve the dichotomy between fact and fetish by stressing that the artificiality – i.e., the quality of being fabricated – of any object is not a feature that undermines its reality. In this treatise, Latour echoed his prior constructivist theses

applied to technoscience and ventured into the domains of religion, psychology and (post)colonialism. Stengers agrees that scientific objects are not discovered but created within the walls of laboratories. In the first moment, the very existence of the object depends upon the instrumental, technical and theoretical conditions that gave it birth. But sooner or later the scientist must find a way to stabilize the object enough for it to travel to other locations without losing properties and agencies. (Does not this situation resemble the botanic conundrum of Roberts?) For Latour, this exportation process was not only the transportation of artefacts, but also the replication of certain procedures of usage and maintenance to prevent any possible corruption. For Stengers, in this late stage, the object gains certain independence from the author-scientist and the laboratory as a place of birth. Put it somewhat lyrically, only after the modern Prometheus escapes his cage, he begins to differentiate himself from Doctor Frankenstein.

To further illustrate this point, Stengers (2011, p.332) marks a contrast between the sciences that deal with inanimate objects (physics, chemistry, geology) and those working with living beings (ethology, psychology, sociology). In the supercollider, for instance, physicists try to isolate and decompose the electron – yet the electron remains indifferent to what the scientists expect from it or to the terminology imposed upon it. On the contrary, a rat in Skinner’s cage is aware of the pleasant or painful stimuli it is subjected to. Although precariously, the rat “knows” that it is being examined, while the electron lacks any self-referential understanding. In scientific disciplines where two living beings are assembled (the scientist *vis-à-vis* the studied subject) it would be foolish to expect indifference. The behaviour of the former informs the conduct of the latter and likewise to the extent that it is not always clear who is who⁴. Here Stengers takes seriously the joke “who conditions who?” The rat pushes a button and Skinner takes notes just as predictably as the rat reacts to the stimuli provided by Skinner. More problematic, though, is that the Skinnerian rat is an artifice that exists solely in the laboratory and resembles nothing of the real rats living in the sewer. Again, the rat is aware that it is being examined and certainly attempts to perform the expected behaviour under the threat of electroshocks. Certainly, it might seem that the results confirm the scientist’s hypothesis, but they only end up providing pre-configured redundancies instead of deeper insights. To retake the previous example, would it not be suspicious if a drug user always agreed with the clinician?

If a living being cannot remain indifferent to the inquiries of another; if the studied subject is somehow aware that s/he is being examined, would that imply

⁴ Stengers (2011, p.319) draws from the work of Devereux, who insisted on the complementary relationship between transference and countertransference for behavioural sciences. However, she argues that despite being aware of countertransference, psychoanalysis falls back into a reactionary epistemology by demarcating real and fictional cures (Stengers, 2000, p.146). In contrast, the Belgian philosopher praises the ethnographers for engaging in this feedback loop without establishing an asymmetrical demarcation (Stengers, 1997, p.172).

that this reflexivity or mutual influence is an insurmountable obstacle for behavioural sciences? Not exactly, would answer Stengers and her student-became-colleague Viciane Despret. This reciprocal entanglement between scientist and phenomenon is not problematic per se, but only when this situation gives way to a docile or complacent attitude. To elucidate this assertion, Stengers (1997, p.171; 2000, p.22; 2011, p.333) repeatedly refers to the experiments by Stanley Milgram, where he impelled his students to apply electroshocks to some apparent participants with the pretext of researching the effects of punishment over learning. But Milgram was actually examining to which extent a normal individual – the student – could become a torturer just by “following orders”. Stengers interprets this episode as a clear instance of how humans blindly obey in the name of science. Milgram’s students acknowledged that they were engaged in an experimental setting designed to hurt, yet they carried on for the sake of the research. Milgram himself became a high-level torturer – the one giving orders without executing them – believing that he was contributing to psychology. Torture and denial were so ubiquitous in this scenario that the frontier between scientist and phenomenon became unclear. Milgram experiments did not bring into light any already existing sadistic tendency but rather manufactured the very conditions in which this behaviour became meaningful. Unfortunately, since the feedback loop described above was neglected and since the results were informed by docile behaviour, Stengers suspects that it is unlikely for this phenomenon to exist outside the laboratory.

The same argument is reiterated by Despret (2004, p.123), who analyses numerous experiments with animals in the history of psychology. A pristine example is Harry Harlow’s studies on attachment with rhesus monkeys. The scientist separated a baby monkey from its real mother and put it in a cage with a substitute wool doll. Predictably, after receiving an electroshock, the baby monkey cried in despair and ran to the doll. After some repetitions, the animals began to show signs of depression and anxiety. The results confirmed the by-then novel theories of attachment that stress the role of maternal love and socialization in emotional well-being. Despret claims that these results are redundant, not because they coincide with previous experiments, but because the monkeys were not given any other option – either they performed the behaviour expected or they suffered physical pain. She argues that we must not take the “availability” of living organisms as a synonym for “docility”. A living being might be responsive to another and yet display significant resistance to the imposed demands. Despret (2008, p.133) suggests that a proper experiment must provide the studied subject with the possibility to re-interpret, deform and challenge the expectations and conceptual language of the scientist. The interrogated being should be able to re-formulate the question posed to itself. This issue goes beyond the concern of classical epistemologists with verification and falsification. When the studied being is recalcitrant, it can advance a sharp objection in the form

of “your question is not appropriate”⁵. Whether the experimental results are positive or negative, they would only reflect the lack of differentiation between scientists and phenomena, unless the very language employed is offered by the studied subject. Otherwise, it could always be argued that psychological theories were manufactured out of docility. Again, natural scientists usually do not care for this riddle, since their objects remain indifferent no matter in which way they are interrogated. But living beings never remain indifferent, they always react. This is why behavioural sciences cannot appeal to the ideal of “observing without intervening” (Stengers, 1997, p.172) and must address the necessity of crafting scenarios that enhance the recalcitrance of the studied subjects.

As noted above, Stengers was not interested in sculpting a comprehensive theory of recalcitrance. It was Latour (2004, p.224), re-appropriating their work, who thematized recalcitrance to the extent of calling it «a normative touchstone to distinguish good from bad science». The French philosopher also despised the research that only produces redundancies – to reach interesting results is always better than “correct data”. Therefore, recalcitrance might be a path to interesting results, albeit it is a risky movement. If the scientist asked «Am I asking the right questions? » he would receive an answer that resets his theories and experimental settings. That happened to Stengers back in the Netherlands. In this sense, recalcitrance is an epistemic virtue that brings psychology closer to the path of science. To understand better the implications of this epistemological touchstone, we can quote Latour (2004, p.218):

‘[S]cientific’ means rendering talkative what was until then mute. It is the best way of honouring the word ‘logos’ that so many scientists have added to their discipline. If there is a psycho-logy [...] it is because there exist laboratory settings where propositions [i.e., entities, phenomena] can be articulated in a non-redundant fashion. [...] The path to science requires a passionately interested scientist who provides his object of study with as many occasions to show interest and to counter his questioning through the use of its own categories.

A day in the life of a psychotherapist

Now I will offer a speculative fabulation to further discuss these Stengerian insights on recalcitrance. As Stenger herself explained (interviewed by Thorsen & Jensen, 2018), speculative fabulation is a method that seeks to disturb the hegemonic demarcations of what is scientific or not, politically permitted or not, metaphysically possible or not. While philosophers have been accustomed to thought experiments

⁵ Here Despret is inspired by Latour, who traces the etymology of the word “object” to the legal instance of the “objection” during a trial. It could be interesting to draw a parallel with the wordplay subject/subjection in Foucault. Whereas Foucault stresses discipline and domination, Latour highlights dissent and controversy.

for centuries, those entelechies usually simplify the world to suppress anomalies. By contrast, speculative fabulation aims to multiply differences and to provide each voice an opportunity to become articulate in its own terms. Speculative fabulation is not the construction of an idealized scenario where an argument presents itself as incontrovertible, nor it is a rhetorical device for arguing in the name of a preconceived solution. Here we enter a literary genre that composes an interesting world filled with thick situations, unpredictable characters and humorous acts of resistance.

My speculative fabulation is hybridized with an auto-ethnographic reflection of my own practice as a psychotherapist. It might be useful to start by describing my workplace. The hospital is located on a highway just in the middle of several medium-sized towns not far from the capital city. Those towns began as suburbs and soon the population increased significantly. The hospital was built a decade ago and I have been working there for five years. It is a general hospital, which means that it provides services in (virtually) all medical specializations. It is not a colossal building, yet its six floors filled with patients represent an excessive workload for me. Within my duties, I must assist oncological patients, women in the gynaecology ward, institutionalized adults with emotional distress, children with dysfunctional families, and the relatives of the intensive care unit patients. I also evaluate the mental state of patients who will undergo surgery – mainly bariatric surgery, but occasionally sex reassignment surgery, vasectomy and tubal ligation. The emergency room also requires my services quite often: suicidal attempts, panic attacks, sexual abuse, domestic violence and other catastrophes. Additionally, I provide therapy sessions in the outpatient clinic. Most of the consultants go there willingly and usually do not have any prior therapeutic experiences. Some of them are remitted by educational, labour and legal authorities, or by other specialist doctors who have failed to diagnose a disease and want to discard any psychosomatic cause.

The main difficulty is that almost nobody understands the nature of my work⁶. Let me provide some illustrations of these misapprehensions. One day, the head of the intensive care unit called me to help a patient who had surgery for his throat cancer the day before. The patient had a tracheostomy and was breathing with the aid of a machine – therefore, he could not utter a single word. I tried to explain to the doctor that if I could not engage in a conversation with the patient, my intervention would be meaningless. «It is no problem» he replied, «I have seen the nurses using a little marker board to communicate with him». I did not fight back, went inside the cubicle and miserably failed to talk with the patient. Another day a similar situation occurred. This time it was the head nurse from the sixth floor who called me to assist a moribund patient saddened by her incurable disease. The patient could not truly chat either, since she also had advanced dementia. I tried to tell the nurse that it was

⁶ I am inclined to an ethnomethodologist interpretation (Lynch, 1985, p.192). People embedded in professional activities have difficulties explaining why some actions are performed in a certain way instead of others. Any attempt to procedurally describe embodied and non-conscious skills (tacit knowledge) is self-defeating.

just natural for her to feel that way and that my intervention would be more helpful for her relatives. «Go on» commanded the nurse, «I know she needs to hear what you have to say». Until that moment I had not realized that I should have a script with supportive words and phrases to cheer up the patients. Again, I entered the room and tried to have an easy-going conversation with a woman who was confused about almost everything – except about her upcoming death.

I am ashamed to admit that I am not as eloquent as my coworkers believe. Fortunately, the efficacy of psychotherapy is not subordinated to the words pronounced by the clinician. That would be wizardry: a sage learns arcane spells and creates miracles when those words are spoken out loud. I am prone to say that psychology works inversely: the therapist must learn how to listen to the patient. However, this view has also raised some hilarious misconceptions. Let me offer another anecdote. One night a teenage girl came to the emergency room intoxicated with a drug derived from MDMA. It was uncertain if she was just curious or actively seeking to end her life. She told the paediatrician she inadvertently took the pill because she had mistaken it for a painkiller. The mother was mute and the father – who was not present but talked over the phone with the doctor – came up with a story about some “raver friends” who must have left the drugs at their house by accident. Social services were called to assess if the girl lived in a secure home, and I was summoned to unwind this web of alibis. I agreed with the paediatrician that something was off about the girl and her father’s mismatching stories, yet I was not sure who was trying to cover the other one up. Furthermore, the doctor expected me to reveal the truth, as if I had some telepathic skills that allowed me to scan the people with just a few questions. Evidently, I tried to persuade the parents to tell me if something was wrong, but without success. I also attempted to interrogate the child about any possible emotional distress or behavioural disorder, but she refused to collaborate. When they left the hospital, the paediatrician expressed that he was disappointed we – he meant «you, the psychologist» – could not be more helpful.

Due to these recurrent misunderstandings, I frequently feel like Rodney Dangerfield – the comedian who complained about receiving “no respect”. Hoping to find some consolation, I asked C – an anonymous colleague working at another hospital – if he had ever experienced anything like it. He certainly had, but he did not seem troubled by it. «It is not that difficult» he half-jokingly replied, «the patient enters the session in bad shape but leaves feeling a bit better». A relieving and meaningful conversation – that is C’s definition of psychotherapy. It is hard to disagree, yet I would attempt to a more detailed account. Since the powers of psychology do not reside in the enunciated words nor in the listening attitude of the clinician, I would say that a good psychotherapist is one who can ask relevant questions to the patient, who in turn might come up with an insightful and genuine answer. It somehow resembles the tricks of police interrogations, where key questions are placed to make the other one reveal a hidden truth. I also want to draw attention to a singular trait from the

vignettes. Despite my discomfort with the demands of doctors and nurses, I failed to resist their requests. In other words, I am not recalcitrant enough when it comes to opposing the expectations of the hospital. And even if my interlocutors were more open to my objections, I remain deeply unable to describe the technicalities of my work. Alas, I am partly responsible for those misunderstandings. Certainly, I often find myself in the entanglement pointed out by Stengers where the distinction between scientist and studied subject is diffuse.

This picture is slightly frightening: an institution pressures a clinician, who in turn exerts some disciplinary techniques on his patients. No wonder why Foucault (1977, p.10) denounced those “moral orthopaedics”. Despite not being forcefully resistant to my superior’s orders, the previous illustrations reveal that I am not notably influential with my patients. Somehow, the disciplinary process is interrupted by my inefficiency. Luckily, I am the only psychologist hired at the hospital, so other healthcare professionals cannot properly judge my performance. I have no supervisor measuring the success rate of my interventions nor questioning if my therapies are “based on evidence”. Here I find that my quotidian experience contradicts one of Stenger’s ideas. In the hospital, there is not any expectation about the “scientificity” of my work. Instead, there is a plain practical approach in which the psychologist is allowed to do whatever it takes – to some commonsensical extent – to help the patient. In fact, the overall atmosphere of the hospital is not permeated by the discourse of “science”. Not even when dissatisfied clients filed complaints the doctors invoke the name of science to justify their actions. According to Stengers, in psychological experiments both scientist and studied subject deploy a pattern of compliance in which they adapt their behaviour following the idealized image of science. Surely, people call me “doctor” because I wear a white coat, but they do not regard me precisely as a scientist. Amusingly enough, actual medical doctors are not perceived in that role either. All the actions that take place in the hospital are justified by our shared *furor curandis*. Unlike crusader knights invoking the name of God, we spent little (if any) time worrying about the scientificity of our practice. We mainly care about healing the ill (Jonsen & Toulmin, 1988).

Having said so, I also reckon that obedience is a common trait in patients. I agree with Despret that we must distinguish between availability and docility. Still, I have found that even the most complaisant patients might fail to respond as expected. In other words, being wilful to comply does not necessarily translate into the ability to distort one’s behaviour at will⁷. One day a middle-aged woman came to the outpatient clinic and exclaimed «I saw a psychiatrist a few weeks ago, he said I had borderline personality disorder and that I should get cognitive-behavioural therapy. Can you help me? » As I realized shortly after, the woman was not sure

⁷ A similar point is made by Bloor (2001), who distinguishes between consciously conforming to a social convention and blindly following a natural law. See also an interesting experiment on “tasks” which seeks to turn pliability operational in a non-authoritative and reflexive way (Morrison et al. (2019).

about the difference between psychiatry and psychology, what “borderline personality disorder” meant, nor why cognitive-behavioural therapy was the alleged idoneous treatment. She did follow the instructions given by the doctor with blind faith – just like when we go to the pharmacy and rest assured that we will receive the correct medicine. Stengers is not the only one noticing this impressively regular feature of tameness. Kurt Danziger (2003, p.27) has also drawn attention to the issue of pliability, which makes it extremely difficult to distinguish between “natural kind” and “culturally constructed” diseases. Consider a cliché example: while schizophrenic symptoms manifest univocally in different times and places, other disorders such as hysteria vary significantly from one cultural context to another. Could it be that those patients were not suffering a “real disease” but rather that they simulated some symptoms? However, when I meet an excessively submissive patient, I do not worry about whether he will be disciplined by the hospital (he is already there, anyway), nor about the reliability of my therapeutic techniques (they are not very effective, unfortunately), nor about the dichotomy between natural/cultural diagnosis (patients could not care less about it). What interests me in those cases is to explore whether such docility has led the patient to problematic situations in his ordinary life⁸.

So far, I have not mentioned recalcitrant patients in the Stengerian sense – that is, not only uncollaborative but also aiming to subvert the imposed terminology. Do they make the clinicians work harder? Fairly so, but this is not necessarily a problem. As I said, humans can be docile and still fail to meet expectations – and this precise failure could be the source of transformative recalcitrance. Sometimes patients ask me to assign them homework, believing that those “tools” will help them feel better and/or gather useful information. Their intuitions are not necessarily inaccurate, but I usually avoid assigning homework. My experience has been that most patients forget about it and those who don’t end up performing “wrongly” the tasks assigned. Once I asked a patient to write a dream journal so we could better explore his unconscious emotions. A week later he came with an Excel chart detailing the number of hours slept. The patient smiled, hoping to be congratulated. Unlike Stenger’s experience with drug users who actively sabotaged research procedures, this patient firmly believed he was collaborating with the therapy. Since I am not very eloquent, it might have been the case that my instructions were unclear (Shwartz, 1976). But how did he candidly confuse the psychology of dreams with the physiology of sleep? I wonder what interpretation I could give to this incident. Is it just another instance of the multiplicity of rule-following actions (à la Bloor)? Or may it be that recalcitrance is not always hostile or conscious? Could even well-intentioned behaviours lead to unexpected responses, different prepositions and categorial mistakes that allow me

⁸ I exposed an early draft of this research at the *IV Coloquio Nacional de Estudios de la Ciencia y las Tecnologías* in Bogotá, where I presented the preliminary results of interviews conducted with psychiatrists and psychologists from other hospitals. Unsurprisingly, psychiatrists prefer patients who do not question their medical expertise, while psychotherapists tend to distrust a pliable patient.

to refine my theories and techniques? Maybe recalcitrance is not necessarily a combative and tragic affair – it might appear in fragile and naive shapes.

Fair enough, the “ideal patient” ought to have some degree of recalcitrance. Extreme docility hinders therapy just as much as excessive resistance. We could benefit here from recalling Freud’s conceptualization of resistance. Whether we ascribe to psychoanalysis or not, resistance is a ubiquitous clinical fact. Patients constantly resist – *but what do they resist exactly?* Sometimes they resist the suggestion of some friends to seek psychological help. They also resist the therapist as an individual, due to his personal traits or the fantasies elicited by them. They even resist the cure, since it entails deep transformations for which they feel unready. “Neuroses”, etymologically, refer to nervous diseases. Freud was entangled in the debate on whether psychological disorders were based on neurological malfunctioning. But the word “resistance” in the sense employed by Freud ([1895] 1981) came from Galvanism and the first experiments with electrical circuits. If an electrical current cannot flow from one point to another, it is due to the resistance of an intermediate object. Physicists have done an excellent job measuring this resistance factor to discriminate between conductors and insulators. Freud even claimed that mental phenomena were possible only due to resistance impeding the discharge of sexual drives. The father of psychoanalysis abandoned hypnosis precisely because this state of extreme passiveness hampered the possibility of the patient becoming truly conscious of his trauma. Likewise, Freud discouraged psychoanalyzing patients whose levels of resistance were too high, since it might worsen the symptoms before the foreseeable interruption of treatment. In sum, since resistance – especially transference – is a sort of necessary evil, clinicians must learn to identify, handle and gradually dissolve it.

I imagine Stengers would disagree vehemently here. If psychology aims to produce scientific knowledge, it shall design scenarios where recalcitrance is amplified. Recall that “scientific” is related to the possibility of encountering objections and articulating non-redundant voices. In the case of psychotherapy, the relief of symptoms without the enhancement of the patient’s agency would be a pseudo-cure. By the end of therapy, it would be expected that the patient had improved his chances to resist other people as well as the unknown conflictive parts of himself. It is also true that this “better” version of the patient is something that the clinician cannot predict or impose. However, I remain somewhat doubtful regarding the part that psychologists should *deliberately* seek to enhance the recalcitrance of the patient. Despite that psychotherapy is often a challenging experience, its most basic function – catharsis, as CD kindly reminded me – indicates that it should remain an overall alleviating activity. Patients momentarily escape from their overwhelming lives and strive for a space free of judgment. A therapist with a sharp clinical eye should distinguish when it is needed a more holding or confronting attitude. If a patient submitted himself to a series of sessions with a cruel clinician, such therapy would not be healing at all. Unlike Zen Buddhism koans, where high levels of frustration and revelation come

hand in hand, psychotherapy is a slow process characterized by care and reflective learning (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017).

I confess I find it difficult to translate the thesis of Stengers to the context of psychotherapy. The physicist in the laboratory faces the enigmatic Polonium and performs several experimental acrobatics to provide this chemical substance with the chance to deploy its properties and agencies. This is a risky quest since the studied object might even destroy the scientist – indeed, Polonium murdered Marie Curie. It is still feasible to expand this scene to experimental psychology. We could imagine Skinner, fascinated by pigeons in themselves – that is, beyond the practical facilities as experimental animals – to the point of abandoning any commitment to behaviourism and dedicating the rest of his career to improving our relationship with those birds. As the example given by Haraway (2016, p.16), pigeons can become co-authors in research projects, since they can be trained to collect data and their particular way of life can inform the experimental design. That would be a marvellous democratic image where the scientist and the phenomena became asymmetrical! Unfortunately, it is somehow inevitable that psychotherapy relies on asymmetry. First, patients suffer symptoms which persist even though they have already tried to sort them out. (Recall the interpretation of phobias given by analytical philosophers?) Second, and foremost, psychotherapists must undergo extensive training to be *authorized* to work in healthcare services (Collins & Pinch, 2005; Orduz, 2016). Patients put their trust in that refined knowledge. Even when psychologists opt for a neutral attitude, they are accompanying the patients from the position of the *sujet-popposé-savoir* graciously named by Lacan. Such trust and expectancy already mobilize some of the patient's thoughts and emotions – even if the clinician remains silent or fails to apply his techniques. Yes, the therapist aids the patient to find his often-muted voice and to articulate it in novel manners. Despite the claims that therapy is “centred in the person”, this is a process directed by the clinician.

Here I reach an oxymoron. On the one hand, I have conceded that some mild recalcitrance from the patient is desirable. But, at the same time, I concur with the Foucauldian interpretation of psychotherapy as a form of pastoral power⁹. As my vignettes indicate, the clinician usually holds an intermediate position between the inflexible orders of doctors, the persistent symptoms of the patient and his mixed attitudes that might facilitate or obstruct treatment. Embedded in this chaotic milieu, one must first create some orderings that inevitably will be felt as oppressive. As Savransky rightly notes (2013, p.97) there is a breaking point between Foucault and Stengers. Subjectivity, for the French philosopher, appears as the result of disciplinary techniques. There is no subject prior to the power relations that homogenize and

⁹ Psychotherapy prolongates the religious practice of confession to achieve both emotional healing and self-knowledge (Hook 2003). Undeniably, therapy is a technology of the self insofar as it must institute a self that can be described, cured and normalized. Although Foucault (1977) repeats that moral orthopaedics leads to the production of docile bodies, it should not be missed that psychotherapy is mostly a verbal exchange with a more subtle form of persuasion and manipulation than physical force (Burroughs, 1986).

prescribe behaviour. In this scenario, resistance comes only after the subjectification process is accomplished. For Stengers, on the contrary, the starting point is the mutual reactivity among the amalgamated ensembles of living beings – see a similar remark by Elgaard Jensen (2019), who also conducted a fieldwork on the knowledge practices of psychology. The Belgian philosopher insists that any knowledge founded on pliability would be pseudoscientific. Truly objective science must enhance the recalcitrance of subjects to multiply individual differences and avoid redundancies. In this case, the subject can resist the disciplinary techniques, since he has an active agency despite that – or because? – he has not been homogenized yet. Savransky also indicates that Foucault’s framework still operates within the subject/object dichotomy, while Stenger’s view opens the possibility for an entanglement of local agencies, an interdependency of actors who affect and are affected by others. This argument might tempt us to prefer Stengers over Foucault, but my auto-ethnography shows that the everyday life of psychotherapy lingers somewhere in between.

Conclusion – Dear epistemic prudence

After the conceptual overdose of the first part of the essay and the cascade of personal confessions of the second one, I resemble a nowhere man. Psychotherapy has no fixed point of view nor a steady course. The world of mental health is not at my command – not even in my own speculative fabulation. Yet the journey so far has not been in vain. I offered a genealogy of the concept of recalcitrance: from botany, passing by analytic philosophy, and arriving at Stengerian landscapes. Hopefully, I have brought light to the contrast between the specific phenomenon of recalcitrance within behavioural sciences and the overreaching concept of resistance popularized by Foucault. Then I deployed a series of anecdotes from my clinical practice to elucidate to which extent the Stengerian appeal to recalcitrance could be endorsed by psychotherapists. Admittedly, I did not reach any definite conclusion besides the nuance that recalcitrance could take a fragile and candid form, instead of its usual defiance tone.

I would like to end by observing how the concept of recalcitrance is a product of intellectual collaboration. As mentioned above, in the late 1990s, Latour and Stengers had a close exchange with ethnopsychiatrist Tobie Nathan. The latter, an accomplished and maverick clinician, has not written precisely about epistemology. He rather advocates for a «psychopathology that takes risks, that makes a really fine-tuned descriptions of therapists and therapeutic techniques, but not of the sick people» (Nathan & Stengers, 2018, p.18). Indeed, Nathan’s self-description of his clinical work is a common source of inspiration for both Latour’s *On the Modern Cult to Factish Gods* and Stenger’s *Cosmopolitics* – books that lay the theoretical ground for the notion of recalcitrance. Although I have not referred directly to the rather exotic ideas of the ethnopsychiatrist, my essay accepts his invitation and attempts a modest

contribution to the scarce bibliography that discusses therapeutic techniques from a down-to-earth descriptivist stance. In a similar line, Savransky (2013, p.103) rightly points out that many scholars à la Foucault criticize psychology solely from a textual-theoretical perspective, leaving unexamined several material-semiotic practices and promoting several misunderstandings of psychotherapy like the ones alluded in my auto-ethnographic account.

While Latour's interest in Nathan's work was mainly ontological, Stenger's engagement with it was directed to find a way to rescue psychology from pseudo-scientific pitfalls. This is not a minor feat, considering how psychology's credibility has been heavily attacked over the past century. I suspect that this noble aspiration is somewhat responsible for the extrapolation from the realm of psychotherapy to the domains of experimental psychology – albeit it is primarily Despret who deepens in the history of animal psychology – in the quest for better research practices. As I hinted, it might be the case that recalcitrance as an epistemological criterion is more useful in experimental settings than clinical ones. Furthermore, I consider that recalcitrance should not be regarded as a fixed criterion in the same way as Popper's falsifiability¹⁰. For sure, clinicians must encourage patients to articulate their voices in their own terms, but recalcitrance can also be an epistemic virtue for psychotherapists themselves. Latour might have good reasons to turn recalcitrance as the “normative touchstone” for psychology, yet this proposal cannot overlook the still-existing distance between theoretical epistemology and the psychotherapist's daily struggles. I dare to say that psychology should not be the handmaid of epistemology – accepting without hesitations its demands hoping to get some recognition as a proper science. Instead, clinicians should be recalcitrant as well and start to reject anyone who imposes requirements foreign to the messy actualities of psychotherapy.

References

- Benbaji, H. (2013). How is Recalcitrant Emotion Possible? *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 91(3), 577–599.
- Bloor, D. (2001). Wittgenstein and the priority of practice. In *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (103-114). London: Routledge.
- Burdman, F. (2024). Recalcitrant Desires in Addiction. In *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility Vol 8* (58-80). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burroughs, W. (1986). The Limits of Control. In *The Adding Machine* (116-119). New York: Seaver Books.
- Collins, H. & Pinch, T. (2005). *Dr. Golem*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

¹⁰ It is contrasting how Popper and Stengers, being both critical of psychoanalysis, proceed quite differently. Popper's lack of rigour in reconstructing Freud's arguments (Grünbaum, 2008) pales in comparison with Stengers' familiarity with psychoanalytic writings. Epistemology is very different when it is imported from natural sciences than crafted from within each singular discipline. Here, again, I agree with Savransky, though he overlooks a key difference that Pignarre (2021, p.65) indeed catches: Stengers' critique of psychoanalysis, even if more refined, remains a textual-theoretical encounter, whereas Latour actually entered Nathan's consulting room at the *Centre Georges Devereux d'ethnopsychiatrie* to observe in situ the performance of his psychotherapeutic techniques.

- D'Arms, J. & Jacobson, D. (2003). The Significance of Recalcitrant Emotion. In *Philosophy and the Emotions* (127–45). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Danziger, K. (2003). Where History, Theory, and Philosophy Meet. The Biography of Psychological Objects. In *About Psychology. Essays at the Crossroads of History, Theory, and Philosophy* (19-34). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Despret, V. (2004). The Body We Care For: Figures of Anthro-zoo-genesis. *Body & Society*, 10(2-3), 111-134.
- Despret, V. (2008). The Becomings of Subjectivity in Animal Worlds. *Subjectivity*, 23, 123-139.
- Despret, V. (2012). En finir avec l'innocence. Dialogue avec Isabelle Stengers et Donna Haraway. In *Penser avec Donna Haraway* (23-45). Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Döring, S. (2015). What's Wrong With Recalcitrant Emotions. *Dialectica*, 69(3), 381-402.
- Elgaard Jensen, T. (2019). Exploring the knowledge practices of psychology: Reflections on a field study. *Theory & Psychology*, 29(4), 466-483.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punishment*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Freud, S. (1895). Project for a Scientific Psychology. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol I* (203-398). London: Hogarth Press.
- Gomart, E. (2002). Methadone: Six Effects in Search of a Substance. *Social Studies of Science*, 32(1), 93-135.
- Grünbaum, A. (2008). Popper's fundamental misdiagnosis of the scientific defects of Freudian psychoanalysis and of their bearing on the theory of demarcation. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 25(4), 574–589.
- Hanna, P. (2014). Foucauldian Discourse Analysis in Psychology: Reflecting on a Hybrid Reading of Foucault When Researching “Ethical Subjects”. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 11(2), 142-159.
- Haraway, D. (2016). *Staying with the Trouble*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hook, D. (2003). Analogues of Power: Reading Psychotherapy through the Sovereignty–Discipline–Government Complex. *Theory & Psychology*, 13, 605–28.
- Hutchinson, P. (2020). The “placebo” paradox and the emotion paradox: Challenges to psychological explanation. *Theory & Psychology*, 30(5), 617-637.
- Jonsen, A. & Toulmin, S. (1988). *The Abuse of Casuistry*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Latour, B. (1987). *Science in Action*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. (2004). How to Talk About the Body? The Normative Dimension of Science Studies. *Body & Society*, 10(2-3), 205-229.
- Latour, B. (2006). Des sujets récalcitrants. In *Chroniques d'un amateur de sciences* (187-9). Paris: Presses des Mines.

- Latour, B. (2010). *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Lynch, M. (1985). *Art and Artifact in Laboratory Science*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Morrison, H., McBriar, S., Powell, H., Proudfoot, J., Stanley, S., Fitzgerald, D. & Callard, F. (2019). What is a Psychological Task? The Operational Pliability of “Task” in Psychological Laboratory Experimentation. *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society*, 5, 61-85.
- Nathan, T. & Stengers, I. (2018). *Doctors and Healers*. London: Polity Press.
- Orduz, F. (2016). Formación autor-izada/autor-itaria. *Psicanálise*, 18(2), 85-91.
- Pignarre, P. (2021). *Latour-Stengers. An Entangled Flight*. London: Polity Press.
- Puig de la Bellacasa, M. (2017). *Matters of Care*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Roberts, E. (1973). Predicting the storage life of seeds. *Seed Science and Technology*, 1, 499-514.
- Savransky, M. (2013). Of Recalcitrant Subjects. *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 55(1), 96–113.
- Schwartz, H. (1976). On Recognizing Mistakes: A Case of Practical Reasoning in Psychotherapy. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 6(1), 55–73.
- Serres, M. (1995). *The Natural Contract*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Stengers, I. (1997). *Power and Invention*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Stengers, I. (2000). *The Invention of Modern Science*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Stengers, I. (2011). *Cosmopolitics II*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Stengers, I. and Ralet, O. (1991). *Drogues*. Paris: Éditions La Découverte.
- Thorsen, L. M., & Jensen, C. B. (2018). Reclaiming Imagination: Speculative SF as an Art of Consequences: An Interview with Isabelle Stengers. *NatureCulture*, 5, 1-18.
- Varga, S. & Steglich-Petersen, A. (2023). On the roles of false belief and recalcitrant fear in anorexia nervosa. *Mind & Language*, 38(5), 1-18.

Forme et résistances, formes politiques de résistances: La pratique artistique comme art de résister

Form and resistance, political formes
politiques of resistance:
Artistic practice as an art of resistance

Jean Pierre Gaudin

Résumé:

On propose dans cet article une réflexion historique et comparative, en 4 points, sur les conditions de possibilité qui s'offrent aux artistes (on traitera ici surtout de peinture) pour faire résistance aux diverses formes de la commande sociale à laquelle ils font face. 1- Être artiste par rapport aux puissances d'Ancien régime 2- Avec les Lumières, construire une résistance coordonnée au sens commun, mais qui restera amputée. 3- Les avants gardes au XXe siècle comme acteurs d'une contestation globale et de la résistance à la consommation dans le contexte de la ville marchande. 4- Aujourd'hui, la résistance comme figure de l'intention artistique même.

Key words: Art comme resistance, Ancien Regime, Lumières, consommation, arte povera

CONTACT: Jean- Pierre Gaudin
(Emeritus Professor of Political Science, Sciences.Po-Aix, Aix-Marseille University, France)
jpgaudin44@gmail.com



Aion Journal of Philosophy and Science

© 2024 the Authors

This work is licensed under a

[Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) License.

Abstract:

In this article, we propose a historical and comparative reflection, in 4 points, on the conditions of possibility that are offered to artists (we will deal here mainly with painting) to resist the various forms of social control they face. 1- To be an artist in relation to the powers of the Ancien Régime 2- With the Enlightenment, to build a coordinated resistance to common sense, but which will remain amputated. 3- The avant-gardes in the twentieth century as actors of a global contestation and resistance to consumption in the context of the commercial city 4- Today, resistance as a figure of artistic intention itself.

Key words: Art as resistance, Ancien Régime, Enlightenment, consumption, arte povera

En se référant à T. Adorno, on pourrait avancer que les arts plastiques sont en soi, de par « leur action transformatrice », *résistance* à l'ordre social et politique. À l'époque, cet auteur avait particulièrement en tête les Avants-gardes de l'art moderne. Mais est-ce que son analyse peut *résister* elle-même face à de nouveaux contextes et époques? Et est-ce que cette posture de résistance et d'autonomie fait encore sens, au temps venu de l'art « informel » (c'est à dire inscrit dans les pratiques les plus banales) et surtout de l'avènement dominateur des industries culturelles (que d'ailleurs Adorno lui-même pressentait) ? Dans cet article on se demandera donc s'il existe, par nature, une sorte de surgissement critique de l'art, un espace ouvert par l'intention artistique en ce qu'elle serait différente du regard *normal*. Et si cette réflexion ne saurait se détacher d'une certaine temporalité sociale et de contextes précis, on interrogera en même temps les diverses formes de résistances artistiques au regard des enjeux politiques du moment.

Dans ce texte, on utilisera le terme *politique* pour désigner les pouvoirs, tant dans leurs formes institutionnelles que de marché, pouvoirs entendus comme cadre d'expression des rapports de forces dans lesquels s'insèrent notamment des productions artistiques, lesquelles sont structurées selon un certain nombre de pratiques, appelées notamment par nos sociétés : peinture, dessin, sculpture, musique, poésie, performances (théâtrales ou non) etc. Ces productions s'inscrivent pour leur part dans des espaces précis mais non nécessairement spécifiques, tels que musées et salons, mais aussi places et rues, salles, monuments et murs. Quant aux situations de résistance dont on traitera, elles sont, comme on le sait, définissables comme des oppositions à une force, c'est à dire comme des phénomènes physiques bien sûr. Mais dans le même temps, l'idée de résistance corporelle ou morale est métaphorisée (à moins que le mouvement n'ait été de sens inverse) comme image sociale, et particulièrement dans le champ politique et historique comme manière

« de se tenir debout » face à une contrainte, c'est à dire de s'opposer à la domination, ou à différents types de violence sociale. Cette idée, on l'envisagera seulement dans le domaine des arts plastiques et, de manière aussi restrictive hélas, en référence à une production essentiellement européenne (et encore très partiellement).

Cette réflexion sur *art et résistance* sera par ailleurs traversée par une pratique personnelle, celle qui est née de ma double expérience d'artiste et de chercheur en science politique. Avec une sensibilité qui s'enracine elle, de manière fondatrice, dans un choc personnel de nature esthétique-politique, celui qui a été lié à la découverte première d'un travail de l'artiste italien Boetti, daté de 1966 et intitulé *Rotolo di cartone ondulato*. C'était là un choc, bien qu'il s'agisse là de la présentation d'un simple rouleau de carton, très légèrement déroulé en forme conique, et c'est tout. Une présentation dans la tradition du *Ready Made* à la Duchamp, soit très minimaliste, sans même de collage ni aucune mise en couleur, de fond ou de surface. Mais cet objet créait pour moi un accès immédiat, absolu, à des « formes antiques, incorruptibles et éternelles » (comme l'écrivait JL Borgès), renouant avec la zigourat antique, la tour de Babel fantasmée, ou le très réel *Qutub Minar*, ce pur cylindre, si magnifiquement cannelé, qui s'élève à Dehli. Le *Rotolo* de Boetti, lui, n'est pas bien haut mais il s'affirme frontalement, très rythmé et pyramidal, il vibre sous l'œil ou sous le doigt de manière essentiellement tactile, il est geste pur, il est résistance aux habitudes de la figuration et de la décoration.

Le *Rotolo* a été un choc politique, en même temps pour moi. Car ce rouleau de carton à peine déballé est pleinement un objet industriel, très quotidien, et directement utilisable tel quel pour emballer et transporter, c'est même « l'emballage au meilleur prix » nous dit Internet. Voilà une forme ou un geste, offerte par un matériau brut qui énonce d'emblée sa modestie sociale et sa frugalité face aux excès de l'art luxueux, une matière qui est *pauvre* et qui marque une volonté d'afficher le prosaïque. Et dès lors de rompre avec la figuration bourgeoise de l'art *bien peint* et de l'usage soigneux des matières nobles. De la part de Boetti c'est par conséquent une double intention, une résistance à la fois esthétique et politique.

Notre réflexion sur l'art comme résistance se focalisera donc sur la place du carton (en particulier ondulé) dans la production artistique contemporaine, tant comme matière picturale et support que comme symbole social. Elle commencera par une rapide mise en situation des formes passées de résistance artistes, essentiellement ici celles des peintres, face aux principales forces sociales de production et de contrainte qu'ils eurent à affronter : d'abord leur réponse à la *commande* des puissants puis ensuite leur conformation aux règles du marché (avec des imbrications croissantes entre ces contraintes). Ceci pour précisément situer ensuite la posture contemporaine de *résistance* des plasticiens actuels par rapport au monde de la consommation et de la marchandise, et expliciter les interprétations politiques qu'on peut en donner.

A - Résister à la commande des *biens-nés* : pouvait-on contourner les impératifs d'Ancien Régime ?

Au sein du *rapport de commande*, qui marque notamment ce que les siècles nous ont laissé des œuvres qui sont dans les musées ou les collections, pouvait-on concevoir des formes de résistance aux privilèges sociaux, économiques et culturels de ceux qui commandaient, même si le mot *commande* parle déjà de lui-même ?

Pour répondre, il convient de saisir quel sens et quelle portée pouvaient être les rapports entre l'artiste et ses commanditaires obligés, ecclésiastiques, noblesse, puis nouveaux enrichis de la banque et du grand commerce, et ce jusqu'à la période des Lumières et des Révolutions bourgeoises. Ce rapport social renvoie plus largement à la condition du peintre à cette époque. Qu'il soit artisan individuel, membre d'une corporation ou tenant d'une *bottega*, il est sans cesse à la recherche d'une position stable, d'une commission ou d'un contrat. Avant l'âge des Révolutions, le peintre n'est pas forcément dans la situation du « musicien de cour », qui était un affidé de long terme, quasi domestique même si c'était de haut niveau, mais il devait assurer son gain régulier pour vivre et, tout autant, pour s'équiper en matériel. Certaines couleurs notamment étaient alors chères et rares, issues de matières venues de très loin. Par contre, comme bien d'autres artistes (les musiciens voyaient leurs thèmes prescrits par le calendrier liturgique ou celui des cérémonies, par exemple), les personnages ou les sujets à traiter lui étaient en général proposés, voire souvent imposés. Et il devait en tout cas célébrer, voire magnifier le sujet à traiter. Autant de formes de domination, voire d'oppression, par conséquent. Car même si l'artiste parvenait à résister, ou au moins à ruser avec la commande, on restait loin de l'esprit du futur article 2 de la Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme de 1789 (laquelle mettra d'ailleurs beaucoup de temps à s'affirmer...) qui consacra comme étant comme un droit fondamental le « droit de résistance à l'oppression ». Il est vrai que cela visera alors plus directement le *citoyen*, l'individu dans sa dimension politique que dans sa composante de travailleur déclaré *libre*. Marx à la suite de Hegel donnera une vision plus réaliste des choses, en associant l'idée de résistance à celle de lutte contre l'aliénation. Résister, c'est en effet vouloir aussi ne pas être altéré dans son être, ne pas accepter d'être dominé au point de devenir Autre.

Avant le temps des Lumières, vouloir résister, *se tenir droit*, c'est pour l'artiste (et le peintre en particulier) chercher à contourner ou s'opposer à l'hégémonie politique et éthique du clergé, à la fois riche commanditaire et gardien d'une morale qui l'amène à construire une hiérarchisation non seulement des sujets ou thèmes à traiter mais aussi l'ordonnancement dans l'espace du tableau des personnages représentés, voire des commanditaires et donateurs, sans oublier parfois l'organisation des décors et paysages ; ce faisant, le clergé gouverne l'ensemble des signes qui commandent le sens des représentations artistiques qu'il commissionne.

Mais les autres formes de commandes sont aussi pesantes à cette époque. Pour l'artiste, chercher à résister c'est devoir se trouver également face aux princes et à

la noblesse, détenteurs des moyens de travail mais aussi d'une part des formes de la reconnaissance sociale. Il lui faudra, là aussi, savoir magnifier par la composition telle ou telle posture du pouvoir civil et/ou faire étalage de nombreux attributs militaires. De plus, résister c'est se trouver aussi, et de manière croissante au long des siècles d'Ancien régime, face aux commandes des bourgeoisies montantes, les guildes commerçantes, les corporations, les riches particuliers. Et donc, pour ces bourgeoisies, faire œuvre de figuration, voire de « communication », en mobilisant les divers signes de réussite du changeur, du banquier, du juge, du négociant, signes qui évoquent l'accumulation des biens, le savoir bien compter, et jusqu'à l'art de s'asseoir ou de se tenir de pied en cap.

Devant la diversité de ces pouvoirs d'Ancien régime, à la fois conjugués et concurrents, une résistance à la condition de *commandité* était-elle véritablement pensable et praticable ? Tout en prenant garde de ne pas projeter nos propres cadres mentaux, il semble possible de dire que différents signes en ont émergé. En considérant des tableaux dans leur composition générale comme dans leurs détails, on peut lire, à partir des prémisses de la Renaissance, des indices d'ironie ou de subversion au regard de la puissante domination symbolique et politique des « bien nés ». Ces signes ne se concentrent plus sur des bestiaires, ne se limitent plus aux monstres et aux démons des piliers, des gargouilles ou des bords de vitraux du Gothique. La résistance sociale ne s'enferme plus dans la critique espiègle de la décence et la célébration satirique du scatologique comme chez Bosch, ou encore de la gaillardise et de la fête populaire comme chez les Bruegel. Même si la « grande peinture » laisse très peu de place à la critique sociale, on en perçoit des signes dans les esquisses, les gravures, et les autoportraits qu'affectionnent les peintres comme mondes de replis. Le recours à la mythologie antique dès la Renaissance crée un espace nouveau d'expression indirect. La résistance s'exprime alors souvent à travers des genres cryptés ou hyper codés, même si le genre n'est pas en soi nouveau car la production médiévale était saturée déjà de symboles et de signes. Mais les répertoires sémiologiques changent en partie et il convient d'aller à la recherche de significations cachées. C'est une démarche d'analyse en partie subjective, mais qui répond en quelque sorte symétriquement à la subjectivité plus ou moins cryptée de l'artiste lors de son travail.

Partons donc de ce qui intrigue le plus. Un cas de figure passionnant dans son ambiguïté et sa polysémie est constitué par la *paire de portraits* de l'évêque F. Archinto, peints sur quelques années au XVI^e siècle par le Titien. C'est là une étrange séquence de deux tableaux quasi recopiés à l'identique par le peintre lui-même, et présentant des visages jumeaux, décors identiques, profils et postures similaires. Seule différence, sur la première version du tableau, un léger voile vertical est surajouté sur une part du visage du prélat. Était-ce là une volonté de l'évêque, commanditant pour son plaisir une variante plutôt virtuose (voile suggéré par des traits aériens et semi transparents) ? Si c'est là sa passion pour la dentelle, pourquoi

vouloir voiler justement son visage ? Ou bien était-ce une sorte de dédoublement ironique du sujet, du seul fait du peintre ? Peut-être probable à l'époque, même avec la réputation du Titien. À défaut d'indications historiques, quelle intention, quel sens trouver à cette étonnante variation, réalisée à peu d'années d'intervalle ? Pour les commentateurs de l'histoire de l'art, il semble que le voile de la première version soit la représentation allusive d'une promotion ecclésiastique qui était encore à venir, donc en quelque sorte *voilée*. Ou bien elle serait une représentation symbolique du rôle de diplomate un peu « clandestin », donc *voilé*, du prélat en question. Dans les deux cas, reste une impression d'inexpliqué. Plus au fond, on y trouvera pour notre part plus qu'une expression du pouvoir religieux, stylisé par un ensemble de signes (profils de fausse modestie, teintes codées rouges et blanches en dialogue, vêtements plissés de posture), en somme une politique classique du signe à laquelle les deux tableaux se conforment. Car l'un des tableaux brouille la position sociale du sujet (l'évêque) en introduisant une dose d'incertitude grâce à l'ajout d'un voile incongru. Elle apparente en effet l'évêque ainsi voilé à une sorte d'ange du bizarre ou, dans un brouillage des codes sexuels, à une sorte de « curieuse » derrière son rideau, voire à une hétaïre du sérail à demi cachée pour scruter un avenir incertain. En somme, le réalisme du portrait se trouve ici subverti au service du mystère, comme une figure résistant à la figuration classique.

Dans un autre tableau célèbre, le portrait d'Alexandre de Médicis peint par G. Vasari également au XVI^e siècle, on peut lire d'autres formes de résistance à l'ordre social, c'est à dire au regard établi et aux représentations officielles. Il s'agit en l'occurrence de ce que J.F. Lyotard appellera une intervention sur *la marge* du tableau. Comme si le peintre pouvait par moments se donner licence, une marge de liberté ou de critique, mais seulement à la périphérie matérielle de l'œuvre ou encore par l'incorporation de symboles ou parfois d'éléments cryptés en forme d'énigme. Des pratiques qui ne sont certes pas nouvelles à l'époque de Vasari. L'insertion marginale d'un détail allégorique ou énigmatique était un genre apparu bien avant le tableau en question, dès la fin du gothique international, notamment chez Dürer. Dans sa célèbre *Melancholia*, des instruments de supplice du Christ, mais aussi des objets de métiers du bâtiment, des symboles mathématiques et des chefs d'œuvre de maîtrise parsèment la gravure, distribués largement autour d'une figure féminine ailée. On pourra y décrypter des symboles, des allégories, des références hermétiques, peut-être en écho aux théories fuyantes du néo-platonisme mais aussi à d'autres sources d'inspiration. Les exégètes s'en donneront à cœur joie.

Mais un siècle plus tard, dans ce portrait du Médicis par G. Vasari, l'allégorie devient moins centrale et la recherche des signes moins métaphysique que pour la gravure de Dürer. Dans le sujet du tableau de Vasari, c'est le pouvoir politique et militaire qui est mis en représentation. Ou plutôt *les* pouvoirs, puisque cet Alexandre, par sa lignée qui remonte à Come de Médicis, allie pleinement le pouvoir marchand,

banque et grand commerce, avec l'autorité politique florentine. Alexandre de Medici y apparaît donc figuré fort noblement, garni de cuirasses et de casque, tenant à la main un bâton de commandement, sorte de sceptre politique. Le peintre fait donc resplendir un prince bourgeois mais aussi militaire. En même temps, au bas de ce tableau de gloire, sous le siège formant trône, Vasari a esquissé dans une demi ombre l'apparition sombre d'un visage grimaçant, la silhouette d'un masque grotesque. De près on le discerne, mais il se fond au milieu d'autres figures baroques inscrites sur les côtés du siège sculpté. Ce masque discret est comme une caricature à demi cachée de la puissance, une figure ironique glissée sous le personnage en majesté. Ici pas de symbole énigmatique ou codé comme chez Dürer, ni non plus de papillon signe de la résurrection, de serpent faisant penser au danger ou à la duplicité, de paon signifiant l'orgueil, ou autre rébus pour historien de l'art... C'est le bord de l'oeuvre, le bas du fauteuil, la marge du tableau qui sont ainsi exploités par le peintre et qui accueillent la dérision. Telle une caricature pendue subrepticement par un élève dans le dos du professeur. L'ironie cachée vaut ici résistance malicieuse.

Cas de figure plus célèbre encore, celui du projet de tombeau de Jules II à Rome. Comment comprendre autrement que comme un art de la résistance devant l'impératif de la commande, (résistance à l'ordre social, à la domination politique aussi), cette longue procrastination de Michel Ange face aux demandes du Pape Jules II et de ses héritiers concernant la réalisation d'un tombeau monumental ? L'histoire est connue, qui va durer sur quarante ans. Alors ? Impasse artistique ou diverses priorités d'un créateur décidément très égotique ? Ou bien confrontation souterraine entre deux esprits forts ? Ou encore simple effet des cabales et des dérives successives des budgets ? On y verra plutôt le replis sur lui-même d'un homme usé par des commandes trop ambitieuses, d'un artiste souvent déprimé qui, par des ruses successives, reculera à six reprises l'échéance d'une commande ; et qui résiste de cette manière à l'espèce de saturation créative que les desiderata papaux veulent lui imposer. Michel Ange a ainsi développé une résistance, jusqu'à risquer la rupture totale avec son commanditaire.

Les caprices des princes pouvaient-ils cesser ? Les résistances subreptices qui y répondaient auraient-elles une fin ? Les artistes peintres du baroque n'ont pas encore répondu frontalement à leur époque. Les grands sujets alors traités deviennent certes souvent un peu plus païens ou oniriques. Surtout, leur expression nouvelle du mouvement et leur diffraction de la centralité spatiale du pouvoir pouvaient bien convenir à tous, commandités comme commanditaires ; et Tiepolo s'envolera jusqu'au rococo dans des ciels extraordinairement ouverts et polycentriques, mais essentiellement à la demande des Princes et des puissants.

On aurait pu par contre attendre de *l'après Révolution des Lumières* que cela change cette domination d'ensemble dans la commande, laquelle ne connaissait que quelques ruses et échappatoires. Y aura-t-il place dorénavant pour un rapport à la

commande plus laïcisé, plus libre, mieux distribué ? L'esprit des Lumières, diffusé par des écrivains, des philosophes et publicistes dans différents pays d'Europe, pourrait-il introduire un changement fondamental dans les rapports de travail pour l'artiste, dans un climat nouveau de raison et de critique comme posture politique d'ensemble, caractérisant également l'expérience esthétique et de la connaissance ?

En réalité la bourgeoisie triomphante va se glisser dans les pas anciens de la noblesse et du clergé. Certes, avec quelques évolutions, en peinture comme en sculpture, les « grands » sujets mythologiques et religieux seront désormais plus directement concurrencés par des genres prosaïques. Intérieurs familiaux dans les villes et les campagnes, scènes de table et banquets, natures mortes aux foisons de fleurs, plantes et animaux, auberges et cabarets, fêtes paysannes en plein air et tableaux de vaches en gros cadre. Ces thèmes prosaïques avaient certes déjà été au préalable développé, (d'abord par des artistes dans les pays commerçants du Nord de l'Europe puis chez les maniéristes en Italie), y compris par les peintres les plus puissants ou indépendants tel Le Caravage. Après le virage des Révolutions bourgeoises, ces sujets de la vie quotidienne semblent encore sans esprit de contestation sociale manifeste, alors même qu'ils peuvent constituer, en vérité, une résistance indirecte au genre qui reste le plus légitime, religieux ou mythologique. Seules exceptions à ce monde conforme, les quelques audacieux qui comme Goya ou Delacroix (après Rubens) exposent explicitement les horreurs des guerres dans leurs tableaux, éclatants manifestes de résistance à la traditionnelle célébration des batailles qui étaient peintes comme vues très de loin, en panorama, et depuis la perspective surplombante et triomphante du chef de guerre.

Toutefois, avec les effets des révolutions bourgeoises, un changement fondamental intervient peu à peu dans la peinture. Ce sera le passage analysé par J. Rancière, d'un régime esthétique « expressif », centré sur une communauté de valeurs (où les principes religieux servant d'appui à la légitimité politique), vers ce qu'il a appelé un régime « représentatif », se focalisant toujours plus sur une expression de la réalité basée sur une maîtrise technique très poussée de la peinture.

Portant pareille évolution, deux sphères intellectuelles de référence se différencient et s'autonomisent (spécialement en France, peut-être) à partir de cette période. Formalisant un de ces deux domaines, s'organise à la veille de la Révolution, le monde de « la grande Encyclopédie » de Diderot, qui recense et balise un très vaste domaine intitulé « des sciences, des arts mécaniques et des métiers ». Y correspond une foison de notices de références sur des notions et des savoirs faire, avec une grande place donnée aux descriptions de machines et d'outils, comme en témoigne visuellement les magnifiques planches gravées et publiées en annexe. On y notera, seulement, quelques rares planches illustrées consacrées à l'architecture, celles aux chapiteaux des colonnes, ou encore aux instruments de la musique (laquelle fait cependant l'objet de nombreux articles dits « techniques », de la plume de J.J. Rousseau). Tandis que, dans un autre domaine, mais en parallèle, se structurera un

autre monde de référence, celui des arts plastiques liant l'enseignement et la diffusion sociale de l'esthétique et, à partir d'une « Académie des Beaux Arts », datant de l'Ancien régime mais qui a été réorganisée et renouvelée après la Révolution, en couvrant sculpture, peinture, dessin, architecture, musique, danse...

Cette dualité dans l'organisation des connaissances légitimes et des apprentissages des savoirs est recroisée par le développement au XIXe siècle de deux types différents de commandes aux artistes. La commande « privée » qui devient de plus en plus bourgeoise, ou d'esprit bourgeois même chez les nobles qui commissionnent les artistes. Sans grande rupture avec les temps précédents, le peintre se doit alors de mettre en valeur le commanditaire à travers la figuration de ses biens, sa famille, sa maîtresse, son intérieur, avec un luxe de représentation poussé dans tous ses détails. L'enrôlement de l'artiste par la nouvelle puissance économique est général. Du coup, ses vellétés de résistance critique ne peuvent apparaître que très à la marge, et comme à l'insu des clients : portraits parfois un rien *féroces* dans la posture ou le regard, intérieurs représentés dans toute leur prétention, domaines et propriétés de *nouveaux riches*. Quant à la commande « publique », elle est monopolisée par l'Etat, qui prend la place du Prince et même, pour partie, celle de l'Eglise. Elle annexe donc la grande peinture d'histoire ou de mythes antiques, la statuare classique, et la composition monumentale des bâtiments publics qui met en scène le pouvoir à une échelle urbaine nouvelle. Les dispositifs des Prix de Rome et ceux du Salon officiel de peinture à Paris structurent et régulent le tout sous le contrôle de l'Académie. Au total, l'artiste se trouve ainsi face à une commande aussi contraignante que celle d'Ancien régime. Et la résistance artiste semblerait alors devoir demeurer aussi ténue et marginale que dans les âges précédents.

Mais la situation se révélera en fait plus souple et évolutive, à mesure que l'esprit du romantisme se diffusera, associé à une nouvelle forme de la représentation esthétique où la *réalité* construite répond moins à un devoir de fidélité extrême au sujet qu'à un rendu poussé de l'émotion, qu'à une expression du mouvement et à la célébration de la liberté du trait. On observera dès lors chez certains peintres une forme de résistance à l'esthétique de la figuration et à l'hyper réalisme du rendu, celui où on ne devait pas laisser apparaître le trait de pinceau et où dominaient les glacis (en somme, Delacroix versus Ingres). Toutefois, cela s'accompagne d'une stabilité relative dans les choix (volontaire ou commandé) des sujets traités. Les thèmes historiques ou de guerre, les figures néo-gothiques ou les portraits s'inscrivent durant la première moitié du XIXe siècle dans une certaine continuité par rapport au régime de choix des sujets et thèmes précédemment déployé avant les Révolutions.

L'esprit de résistance, politique et social, interrogé ici dans ses manifestations historiques, s'affirmera plus nettement dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle avec le déploiement ultérieur des peintures de scènes urbaines (liées à la grande ville et à l'industrialisation) puis avec la touche nouvelle de l'impressionnisme pictural. A propos de ce dernier genre, on a depuis beaucoup glosé sur la *touche en virgule* et

sur la vibration recherchée par les couleurs juxtaposées. Au risque de laisser de côté un autre caractère essentiel, la transformation intervenue dans le choix des sujets et des thèmes dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle, avec l'irruption massive du *moderne*, c'est à dire des gares de chemin de fer, des ports industriels, des trottoirs urbains, des cocottes à la toilette, des guinguettes, des bars et restaurants ouvriers. Ce choix, qui s'oppose à l'art dominant des *Pompier*s, est analysable comme une résistance bientôt coordonnée, forte et affichée, par rapport au genre noble des sujets d'histoire comme à celui de l'intimité bourgeoise, (tout en relayant le genre ancien de la peinture des « bas-fonds », femmes alanguies, joueurs, buveurs attablés). Dès 1867, une résistance organisée et frontale, avec un recours habile aux médias, s'affiche à l'occasion d'une manifestation artistique à Paris: la création provocante d'un *Salon des Refusés*, qui consacre l'opposition aux choix de l'Académie et des jurys officiels et qui est l'occasion de la rédaction d'un manifeste publié qui sera signé par Pissaro, Sisley, Renoir, Monet... Les candidats refusés au Salon officiel proclament ainsi collectivement une *manière de se tenir debout* (qui se prolongera les années suivantes dans les salons des Impressionnistes). Par la suite, une coalition entre critiques de journaux, nouveaux galeristes (marchands d'art comme on dit à l'époque) et collectionneurs audacieux soutiendra ce mouvement d'opposition à l'esthétique officielle. Désormais, la machine à vapeur *entre en résistance* face au nu classique.

Peut-on parler pour autant de bascule vers une modernité nouvelle? Le changement ne sera ni immédiat ni total, mais il va saper peu à peu l'institution si puissante construite en France au cours des siècles autour de l'Académie, du prix de Rome et des Salons officiels de peinture et de sculpture. Pourquoi? Tout en se gardant de l'historicisme, l'analyse doit évoquer à juste titre la combinaison particulière entre trois changements de contextes très globaux. Des mutations profondes, à la fois intellectuelles, politiques, économiques, se conjugueront dans une même période pour déstabiliser le pacte bourgeois du XIXe siècle. D'abord, (chronologiquement) une émergence progressive, à la fois médicale, intellectuelle, sociale, de la *question de l'inconscient*, à partir d'abord des travaux de Charcot et de Janet, puis diffusée grâce à l'audience sociale de Freud. Les références à la psychologie et à l'imaginaire vont désormais circuler plus ouvertement dans la société et l'art (Elie Faure), sans être nécessairement renvoyées à la question de la folie. Une expression nouvelle de la psyché devient plus légitime, comme en contrepoint du triomphe parallèle de la rationalité de l'ingénieur et du comptable. En second lieu, les grandes boucheries de la guerre mondiale vont créer un choc esthétique autant que moral. Face à ces horreurs, la caricature devient un genre artistique puissant et qui pénétrera le champ de la peinture : par proximité et contagion, l'expressionnisme pictural acquiert alors une place importante et s'apparente même parfois à un art d'intervention. Les rictus des personnages du peintre G. Grosz en témoignent. Enfin, troisième choc,

plus directement politique encore, la révolution russe diffusera de toutes nouvelles références politiques et sociales mais aussi artistiques, surtout après 1920. Une certaine peinture de combat apparaît et se rapproche de l'esthétique très puissante de l'affiche. La production visuelle du bolchévisme mobilisera désormais un graphisme novateur, et *l'Homme Nouveau* devient un sujet majeur de l'art officiel russe.

Tout convergera ainsi au sein de l'Europe bousculée pour alimenter une remise en question de l'esthétique classique, basée sur la figuration réaliste ou illustrative et sur une quête inextinguible de la réalité (prolongeant ainsi une remise en question esquissée avec le travail impressionniste sur les touches-virgules de couleurs et sur le flou des contours). La forme et le geste dans la production picturale deviennent essentiels pour les modernes, avec des effets dynamiques (Futuristes, Fauves), au moment même où la photographie cherche, par paradoxe, l'immobilité et une précision accrue. Si on ajoute à cela l'inclusion dans la peinture d'un graphisme très expressif issu des lettres d'imprimerie ou du journal, ainsi que l'irruption dans le tableau de matières ordinaires comme le contreplaqué, le bois ou le carton ondulé, on perçoit qu'il s'agit là d'un mouvement coordonné de résistance à la figuration canonique, c'est à dire à l'aliénation Beaux-arts et à la domination de l'esthétique bourgeoise. Ainsi que l'analyse JF Lyotard, à propos de ce qu'il appelle le *chaos* initial qui précède toute démarche artistique, malgré cette résistance tumultueuse aux codes, s'affirme cependant d'emblée chez l'artiste moderne une intention esthétique.

Avec la Modernité, les Avants gardes se sont-elles pour autant libérées des commanditaires, des nantis de l'Ancien régime comme des bourgeoisies montantes ? Il faudra toujours vendre son art ! La commande devient alors sensible à un nouveau phénomène, le *marché* de l'art. Le métier de galeriste se dessine et se développe, en relation avec des critiques d'art qui prennent position et qui créent des marques (des mouvements) dans les journaux à mesure que la diffusion de ces derniers s'accroît au cours du siècle. Ce sont de nouvelles positions sociales, qui n'empêchent pas des paris audacieux chez certains (Durand-Ruel, Vollard). Après l'aventure de l'impressionnisme par exemple, de nouveaux produits (fauvisme, surréalisme, cubisme, etc) seront mis sur le marché. Mais cela doit pouvoir rencontrer aussi une génération de clients collectionneurs, recrutée de préférence dans les pays « neufs » (Russie, Etats-Unis) où de nouveaux riches (Barnes, Morosov, Chtchoukine) cherchent à mêler des paris esthétiques tout neufs avec la tradition du mécène princier.

Revendiquant cette remise en cause de la figuration classique, l'expression artistique nouvelle n'acquiert pas seulement une portée générale de *résistance* à l'ordre social, analysable même si l'intention n'en est pas affichée par l'artiste, elle traduit aussi parfois directement chez le peintre une intention de rupture, elle devient alors aussi un acte politique explicite et direct (cf le *Guernica* de Picasso, les scènes urbaines de F. Leger ou de O. Dix). C'est d'ailleurs bien ce que comprendront

après coup les pouvoirs Nazis, les conduisant à organiser en riposte officielle des expositions de *l'art dégénéré* où accourront, pour bien rigoler, de nombreux publics petits bourgeois.

Dorénavant, résister devient une position analysable en tant qu'intention artiste (individuelle ou collective) et ce sur deux plans distincts mais qui se trouvent souvent liés. Au plan de la démarche picturale, on note dans les travaux produits entre les périodes de la Sécession et du Cubisme une revendication de liberté plastique qui s'exprime à la fois dans l'élaboration de la forme et dans la définition du contours. C'est une exploration d'ordre plastique mais conjuguée, sans systématisme, avec une place important faite à une inspiration qu'on appelle de manière générique *l'imaginaire*. La poésie va y jouer un rôle séminal mais aussi de signal. D'abord puisée chez Baudelaire et Mallarmé, elle se diffracte ensuite dans de successifs essais d'inspiration surréaliste (Dada, Aragon, Breton, Miro, Dali, Soupault, Cendrars, Michaux...). Celui qu'on pourrait nommer dès alors « l'écrivain peignant » (qu'il peigne ou pas d'ailleurs), c'est à dire celui qui écrit à partir d'images (mentales) et qui en rend compte, s'arrache au réalisme pour s'ouvrir à l'imaginaire, au hasard urbain et au rêve inscrit dans le quotidien. Les pratiques artistes des collages aléatoires, du lettrisme et des arrachages improvisés (Rotella) rendent particulièrement compte de cet état d'esprit. Des pratiques qui se marient souvent avec l'irruption dans le tableau d'un quotidien prosaïque du peintre (scènes d'atelier, collections d'objets banals, alcools), une thématique qui n'est certes pas toute neuve mais, en réaction avec le classique décor bourgeois, traitée de manière plus désinvolte ou brutale, donc en résistance (chez Braque, Duchamp et chez Picasso maniant l'incorporation de différents objets industriels sous forme d'installations-collages).

Des pratiques qui sont aussi repérables sur un second plan, là où se traduit d'évidence l'intention artiste de résistance, c'est à dire dans ce qu'on appellera *l'art d'intervention*. Au début des années 20 ce sera le cas un peu partout dans le monde, avec le développement d'un travail artistique révolutionnaire qui s'affichera comme directement politique, c'est à dire comme un moyen de large diffusion d'idées et de mobilisation des foules, en même temps que comme glorification du « héros » contestataire (cf peintures bolchéviques ; mais aussi les affiches et collages subversifs de J. Heartfield ou encore de K. Schwitters). L'art préfigure les cataclysmes. Mais que devient alors la commande ? Partis et syndicats peuvent soutenir certaines productions. Mais un marché alternatif à l'art bourgeois se dessine aussi. Des galeristes collectionneurs ont une audace esthétique et tentent de convaincre autour d'eux. Certaines Avant gardes trouvent un marché. La commande globale s'est diversifiée et laisse une petite place aux marginalités affirmées. Différents marchés coexistent ainsi.

Dans ce moment historique de l'entre deux guerres, la résistance artiste oscillera thématiquement entre l'échappatoire dans l'imaginaire et un combat révolutionnaire

frontal. Evidemment, ces combats ne sont pas vraiment de la même chose que ce à quoi correspondra *la Résistance* avec un grand R, l'histoire des mouvements armés ou de sabotage initié face aux occupations nazies et aux régimes fascistes, quand bien même certains artistes militants rejoindront les rangs d'une Résistance politique, tout en exprimant en parallèle par leur art une forme d'engagement politique.

B - Résister à la consommation tout en magnifiant ses déchets ?

Cette interrogation peut sembler un paradoxe. C'est une question qui, comme on le verra par la suite, est au coeur de mon travail personnel. Pour y répondre, il faut déjà se remémorer les formes précédentes de résistance aux pouvoirs et en comprendre les ressorts. Hormis les courants de l'abstraction, les années de l'après 2eme guerre mondiale en Europe se sont ensuite illustré par le croisement entre une dénonciation de la consommation (*Nouveau Réalisme, Ecole de Nice, mouvement CoBRA*) et l'inventivité formelle de l'après Dada. Sans omettre l'apport américain de ceux qui n'ont pas oublié M. Duchamp (tel R. Rauschenberg), développant des réinterprétations de *l'esprit Ready Made* tout en restant à une certaine distance du Pop Art. Dans cette mouvance, la posture de l'artiste créateur s'efface un peu derrière celle d'un intercesseur du hasard, d'un médiateur dans la collecte aléatoire d'objets ou de signes et dans leur assemblage artistique. Concourra également à relativiser un peu la « gloire » individuelle de l'auteur la mode de labelliser des courants artistiques, comme des « marques », dans le sillage des mouvements politiques ou littéraires du moment tout en prolongeant la dynamique des Avant Gardes : voir en France, la *Jeune Peinture, les Nouveaux Réalismes et l'Art Brut*, ou en Italie *l'Arte Povera*...

En substance, l'amour conjoint de la matière et du hasard conduit à des formes de collages et d'arrachages où le geste joue un très grand rôle autant que les matériaux bruts (invention d'une sorte d'art tactile). Et un nouveau réalisme dans l'art visuel se porte sur les objets quotidiens de la consommation la plus banale, leur diffusion élargie et déjà leur excès. L'art visuel entend alors signifier un écoeurement, tout comme au cinéma le film la « Grande Bouffe » de M. Ferreri. En sont particulièrement significatifs les *tableaux pièges* de Spoerri, qui captent des reliefs de repas et des déchets domestiques. Ce sont des installations où les objets sont collés sur un plan qui est accroché au mur, renversant ainsi la table à la verticale, tel un renversement de la société de consommation toute entière. Et à leur manière, les compressions de César sont des agglomérations aléatoires de matières et de couleurs, qui expriment à travers leurs formes écrasées, comme un rêve de contenir ou détruire toute une nouvelle production de masse, ces vêtements, ces plastiques, ces aciers. Des installations qui disent une résistance à l'obscénité de la consommation épanouie et de la marchandisation sans frein (cf *La Venus aux haillons* de Pistoletto, les accumulations orgiaques de Arman, les montages ludiques

de Kounellis). Mais c'était moins une lutte politique frontale, une guerre sociale déclarée, comme dans l'art engagé de l'entre deux guerres, qu'une ironie distante, parfois presque un détachement dandy.

Il n'était plus trop question alors de se réclamer directement d'une action politique comme dans les années 20 (sauf chez le critique P. Restany par exemple), cependant dans une grande part de la production picturale la distance par rapport à la figuration classique est désormais acquise, même lorsqu'il ne s'agit pas d'abstraction. L'affichisme libre et l'expression lettriste ont des retentissements picturaux et poétiques (M. Lemaitre en France, E. Isgro en Italie). Cela s'est accompagné par ailleurs d'une exploration systématique des matières disponibles, autres que la toile blanche et les tubes de couleurs : travail sur les matériaux pauvres (J. Fautrier), dont A. Burri offre aussi une expression poussée mobilisant des morceaux de toiles à sacs, linges en haillons, bois vieillis, tôles rouillées, colles, et résines séchées. Toute une gamme de matériaux est désormais explorée, valorisant pour l'oeil le relief des tissages, la densité ligneuse, et les traces du parcours des objets quotidiens ou des rebus.

Un cas magnifique en a été aussi offert par une mobilisation poussée du carton ondulé dans les arts visuels. Dès les années 20, le carton y était apparu avec ses ondulations, d'abord dans des toiles de Braque et Picasso. Mais à l'époque, il était souvent encore *figuré* grâce au trait de pinceau (comme le lino, les parquets, les papiers peints). On perçoit comme une timidité à mobiliser directement ces matériaux exogènes et à les coller sur la toile, alors même que le carton ondulé devient à cette époque un produit de grande diffusion avec l'invention de machines à le plier en continu. C'est seulement après la seconde guerre que le carton apparaîtra agencé directement sur la toile ou qu'il donnera à voir, par lui-même, sa forme plastique en trois dimensions (cf le *Rotolo di Cartone*, de Boetti ou le splendide *Labirinto*, de Pistoletto), magnifiant ainsi le matériau pauvre face au « miracle économique » de la croissance.

Peut-on dégager un sens d'ensemble pour ces résistances artistes qui vont de l'après-guerre aux années 60 ? Au terme de cette période, soit en Mai 68, une part de l'expression artistique s'associera aux mouvements de révolte étudiante et populaire. Ce fût notamment le cas en France grâce aux activités de ce qu'on a appelé « l'Atelier des Beaux Arts ». Dans ce cadre militant, des assemblées générales réunissaient chaque jour des artistes mobilisés et des militants étudiants de nombreuses facultés. Les slogans étaient alors discutés et mariés étroitement avec des productions graphiques. Les affiches de la contestation étaient aussitôt imprimées. Texte et image s'élaboraient donc ensemble et s'entrecroisaient dans une forme de résistance alors directement politique. On perçoit que c'était là l'actualisation d'une forme de production militante ancienne, ayant trouvé dans différents pays d'Europe des racines esthétiques et politiques référées aux interventions de J. Heartfield et de R. Hausmann, véritables inventeurs et *protagonistes* (au sens premier de combattants)

d'un photocollage très politique, qui avait été expérimenté dans la lutte pacifiste dès la première guerre mondiale, puis mobilisé au long des luttes anti-fascistes et anti-nazies. L'art y avait été vu de manière explicite comme « arme politique » par des artistes le plus souvent inscrits au Parti Communiste naissant mais inspirés en même temps par l'imaginaire Dada. Leur graphisme était à la fois marqué par le constructivisme russe de Lissitzky mais aussi par des approches plus poétiques ou métaphoriques. Avant les musées, ce sont les revues contestatrices et les livres d'art qui en rendent compte plutôt qu'un marché de galeristes classiques.

Est-ce ce même esprit que l'on retrouve dans les années 1960, avec les groupes d'artistes qui se constituent alors (*Supports/Surfaces*, *Nouveaux Réalismes*, *Arte Povera* etc) ? Il faudrait répondre à la fois oui et non...

Certes, une politisation de l'art a été mise en exergue par certains artistes mais sans aller jusqu'à rejoindre les luttes. En France, les membres du groupe *CoBRA* sont d'abord proches des Situationnistes et de *l'Oulipo*. En Italie, si M. Merz, animateur-né de *l'Arte Povera*, reprend à plusieurs reprises les termes de l'impérieuse et mobilisatrice interrogation léniniste « Que faire ? » pour servir de titre à ses manifestes « pauvéristes », il s'agit en l'occurrence d'appels à une mobilisation plus artistique que politique. Quant à G. Celant, il ira jusqu'à nommer *Guerrilleros*, en référence à l'air du temps des révolutions d'Amérique Latine ou de la guerre du Vietnam, les artistes de *l'Arte Povera* qui bannissent une « attitude riche » mais sans que le combat ou la résistance suggérés soient très explicitement politiques. Au fond, cette résistance artiste au monde de la consommation (qui, par beau paradoxe, en magnifie visuellement les déchets), se tient le plus souvent à distance des révoltes collectives et reste en bordure du politique. Plus précisément elle est *post-politique*, se situant comme au delà des combats de la scène politique, et ce contrairement à « l'art engagé » qui l'avait précédé du début du XXe siècle. Ce n'est pas le capitalisme qui était explicitement visé mais plutôt ses effets, la surproduction et la surconsommation, l'amoncellement des choses, la fatuité de la marchandise. La mise en spectacle de la laideur ou de l'insignifiance moderne se rattachait d'abord à une position esthétique, souvent associée a contrario à une célébration des formes de la nature (G. Penone). D'ailleurs, avec les années, plusieurs artistes apparentés à *l'Arte Povera* glisseront de ce militantisme minimal vers une production de type plutôt poétique et vitaliste. Mon travail personnel s'inscrit dans cette même attention portée aux matériaux bruts, modestes, aux installations frugales et pauvres.

Mais aujourd'hui, qu'en est-il ? L'art du déchet, le refus de la marchandise peut-il porter encore une forme politique de résistance, telle a été ma question de départ. L'art est une invention de la vie, c'est à dire qu'il reste autonome par rapport à la politique (selon la formule de J. Rancière). Mais, en même temps, ajoute ce dernier, il est aussi politique en ce qu'il permet d'inventer un régime d'expression autonome. Dans cet esprit, mon intention artistique a été de reconsidérer ces cartons abandonnés dans la rue, neufs et lisses ou bien déchirés et salis, avec leur couleur havane souvent

patinée, ornée parfois de bandeaux chatoyants.

J'y voyais comme une invitation de la surface pure, pour peindre ou dessiner au charbon de bois, au pastel, ou au noir de bitume. J'ai appris à voir des cartons usés par l'âge, tordus ou racornis sous une pluie soudaine, piétinés sans mégarde, abandonnés. Des cartons de naufrage, chargés d'anciennes aventures, de signaux de détresse ou de destructions, qui sont des messagers qui murmurent tout bas, mais qu'il faudra entendre et accompagner par un geste plastique pour leur redonner vie. Le passant baudelairien est non seulement un rêveur dans la ville mais devient un acteur politique face aux cartons d'emballage abandonnés au bord des trottoirs de la consommation et qu'il va mobiliser.

Les feuilles de carton neuves, je les avais considérées, en premier lieu, comme une surface rigide pour coller dessus des feuilles blanches. C'était moins lourd que d'autres supports pour peindre, meilleur marché, plus facile à retailler. Mais c'est pour moi devenu ensuite une matière visuelle en soi. La couleur du carton ondulé ne s'oublie plus, un beige proche du tabac, une teinte chaude et modeste à la fois, sur laquelle des aplats de noir pur et de blanc de zinc chantent. Pourtant, c'est une matière qui sait réserver des surprises. Si on déchire la pellicule supérieure, apparaît alors une ondulation régulière qui prend pleinement la lumière en affirmant un rythme fort ; plus loin, à l'intérieur, il est possible de creuser et de voir apparaître le fond ou l'envers, comme une troisième couche. On peut peindre ces trois peaux selon des règles différentes ou, plutôt, laisser aller le hasard des déchirures. Il est tentant aussi de coller ensemble des couches de carton et de jouer de cette combinaison. C'est comme une architecture, *un jeu magnifique* plein d'effets visuels. Pour rêver plus encore, on trouvera des cartons qui ont déjà servi, qui ont *vécu*. Ils portent des logos, des affranchissements ajoutés, et ils nous montrent toutes les chocs de leurs voyages ou l'irisation de leurs taches. Un carton usagé, c'est une lettre qui vient de très loin, avec des timbres exotiques, c'est un vieux cargo qui arrive au port, couvert de la rouille de Belém ou des coquillages de Malabar. Pourtant, l'œil moderne, trop sollicité, néglige ces signes, survole la banalité du matériau, et renvoie cette richesse visuelle à la cohorte des déchets et des détritiques qui s'allonge au bord des rues d'aujourd'hui.

Comment faire advenir à autrui la merveille du carton, dévoiler sa surface caressante, sa couleur chaude et ses épaisseurs pleines ? Je voulais célébrer la plastique du carton d'emballage. D'un côté, montrer les ondulations obsédantes avec des rythmes réguliers à révéler, à révéler même quand apparaît sa structure cachée, mystère profond. Et s'appuyer sur ses ondulations répétées pour se donner des règles ou des contraintes de composition. Guitares cubistes ; enveloppes postales de Boetti ; vagues de Volfensberger. Ou bien, à l'opposé, laisser faire l'incertain, multiplier des arrachages et des déchirures aléatoires sur sa peau de surface, faire jouer les « lois du hasard », selon l'antinomie chère à Jean Arp. Et essayer de combiner ces deux

démarches, en réunissant des techniques mixtes, peinture, collages, craies colorées, encres, diverses combinaisons de matériaux entre eux. Le travail sur le carton pourra faire place à ces deux inspirations à la fois, ordre et hasard, rigueur et invention, opérer un croisement entre le rythme implacable des ondulations intérieures et la surprise des arrachages, du mouvement des couleurs. Oppositions et superpositions donc.

Toutefois, le carton est un matériau qui résiste mal au temps, par sa matière fragile, un peu molle, sensible à l'humidité. Il semble limité à des interventions temporaires, des manifestations éphémères, des installations artistiques d'un moment dont on ne gardera la mémoire que par des photos ou des films. Dans la société actuelle, il vit au rythme d'une consommation instantanée et de l'ivresse du *Speed Delivery*. La contradiction de notre monde éclate alors à mes yeux, avec le double visage du carton ondulé, à la fois vecteur triomphant de la marchandise et refuge ultime des plus démunis, de ceux dont c'est le dernier refuge sur le trottoir. En même temps, le support carton a acquit récemment une visibilité politique accrue avec ces nouveaux mouvements sociaux qui ont fleuri à travers le monde : *Occupy Wall-Street*, *Nuit debout à Paris*, *Indignados* en Espagne, *Parapluies jaunes* à Hong-Kong, , *Gilets jaunes* en France et *Sardines* en Italie.... Car partout, les manifestants, plutôt que de s'aligner derrière des banderoles officielles standardisées par des organisations politiques et syndicales, préfèrent bricoler leurs propres panneaux sur des cartons récupérés. Manifestes auto écrits et auto produits, comme le font par ailleurs des artistes avec des matériaux banals et des épures minimales. Ces panneaux de carton ondulé sont à la fois l'expression d'une individualité moderne et d'une inventivité tant politique qu'esthétique.

Pendant, l'emballage carton d'aujourd'hui devient très vite un déchet. Des enveloppes matelassées, des boîtes, des paquets nous arrivent chaque jour par coursier, livreur, transporteur ou postier... Voilà *Amazon*, *DHL*, *Chronopost*, *DPD*, *Fedex*, *UPS*, ces nouveaux dieux Mercure, qui s'imposent comme nos « amis » obligés mais fugaces. Ouvrir, décoller, arracher et jeter... Le *Speed Delivery* et la fièvre de la consommation nous font vite oublier ces emballages en carton, en mettant de côté leur matérialité, leur forme pleine et leur matière pure. Il faut donc savoir revenir à la beauté du paquet en « carton », couleur chaude, boîte à secrets quand elle arrive mais qu'on peut ouvrir et même déplier peu à peu jusqu'à ce qu'elle devienne une silhouette dont les formes suggèrent beaucoup, figurent des ombres chinoises, des monstres, ou des totems. Cette richesse plastique des matériaux « pauvres » (matières usées, déchets, emballages) a trouvé aussi chez le chercheur en sciences sociales que je suis des échos très politiques. Notamment dans les analyses de l'action publique ; et particulièrement de la *propreté* dans la ville, dont les politiques cristallisent aujourd'hui les nouveaux rapports de pouvoir entre Etat et marché. La réflexion sur la ville à laquelle je me suis constamment consacré par ailleurs en tant que chercheur, se trouve face à une dualité d'imaginaires, l'un

fonctionnel, l'autre artistique (qu'on retrouve dans un texte littéraire comme celui de I. Calvino, *La poubelle agréée*, de 1974). D'un côté, l'ambition de « l'efficacité » (appuyée sur la cohérence gestionnaire entre logements, activités et équipements). Dans cette perspective, l'espace sensible de la ville (façades, rues, ambiances) doit s'effacer derrière une représentation fonctionnelle de l'urbain qui cultive les zonages et adore les diagrammes abstraits. Mais s'y oppose un autre imaginaire, celui du *refuge* sensible, célébré par toute une littérature qui embrasse la ville avec amour, déployant le rêve des dérives urbaines, exaltant les Passages surréalistes ou les mystères des marges sociales. Dans une dualité plus esthétique gît symétriquement la beauté paradoxale du carton, à la fois riche matière couleur du cigare Havane et déchet abandonné, piétiné. Un détritris donc, mais aussi une matière vibrante, avec sa *tripe* dont les déchirures laissent voir des zébrures, obsédantes comme les variations du *Bolero de Ravel*. La carton permet des combinaisons entre une grille ondulée, fonctionnelle et régulière, et le hasard des lacérations, il est une invite aux jeux visuels entre traits peints et gestes d'arrachement.

Certes, le carton comme déchet peut déranger, y compris même dans le monde de la permissivité artistique. Pourtant, il n'est pas question de célébrer la ville poubelle ou la société décomposée jusqu'aux cas limites mis en scène dans d'autres arts, telle la Métropolis que F Lang nous montre ségréguée à outrance et basée sur cette logique, ou bien la Mahagony que B. Brecht et K. Weill présentent au paroxysme de la débauche et de l'ultra consommation. Simplement, il s'agit de ces formes de résistance à un point de vue « normal » que produiront les regards posés sur un objet délaissé, *dé-laissé*, sur le déchet qui reste ignoré mais si présent dans l'espace public. De ce point de vue, la ville-port est un laboratoire, surtout la ville méditerranéenne qui avec ses désordres et ses détritris résiste à l'hygiénisation moderne et à la rationalisation gestionnaire.

Le Caire est exemplaire de ce point de vue, ville qui avait imaginé un système traditionnel fondé sur une collecte de proximité des ordures opérée par des chiffonniers. Mais c'était devenu une contravention à la modernité. Car le standard international des politiques publiques est centré sur l'adéquation entre un problème urbain et une solution technique : celle d'une *bonne gouvernance*. L'industrialisation du traitement du déchet ignore ou spolie ouvertement les familles de chiffonniers, de trieurs, de réseaux de revendeurs, tous ces recycleurs artisanaux des pays pauvres. Le choc de modernisation y a alimenté une fable « L'âne et le camion-benne », racontée au Caire. Au commencement, le ramassage se faisait dans la vieille ville labyrinthique grâce à des ânes, seuls capables de transporter des paniers dans les ruelles étroites, ramassage lié à une valorisation des déchets par du tri manuel, avec ultérieurement une revente discrète des métaux récupérés et un recyclage des matières organiques grâce à un élevage domestique. Une entreprise multinationale a débarqué en force au Caire avec ses poubelles normées, ses camions-bennes et ses usines perfectionnées

de tri et de retraitement. Mais le blocage des gros camions dans les ruelles s'est conjugué avec une révolte des habitants attachés à leurs normes sociales de collecte personnalisée, le tout amplifié par la mauvaise volonté de quelques administrations locales. Devant ces blocages et ces résistances, les pouvoirs ont dû faire marche arrière, revenir pour partie aux formes anciennes de collecte artisanale, et même faire alliance avec les chiffonniers traditionnels pour recycler certaines collectes, comme cela a été analysé dans plusieurs recherches (cf bibliographie). Le Caire, donc, mais aussi Naples, Marseille, Palerme, Alger, Gênes, ces villes ports de la Méditerranée, ces sites compliqués, héritages médiévaux qui font ainsi résistance à la modernité et suggèrent une approche urbaine différente.

Chacun à leur manière, l'analyse des anthropologues comme le regard des artistes nous révèlent certaines dimensions symboliques de résistance à la modernité. Leurs décryptages sensibles rendent intelligibles les enjeux profonds qui éclairent la portée signifiante des détrit. Et ils font émerger des conceptions des affaires publiques, où se confrontent les normes du légal et de l'illégal, les perceptions antagoniques du sale et du propre, les partages symboliques établis entre rôles sociaux et entre genres, et les frontières plus ou moins fantasmés de l'intime et de l'espace public.

Si résister peut sembler être dans la nature de l'art, (au sens où il a une portée politique, du fait même de produire une vision des choses différente de celle du sens commun), c'est cependant de manière très différente selon les époques et les contextes. La subversion par l'art est devenue manifeste avec la modernité, et même plus explicite avec les démarches artistiques exprimant une résistance à la marchandise et à la richesse obscène. Ce qu'il ne faudrait pas confondre avec une équivalence entre matériau pauvre et art maudit et qui m'a conduit à réinterroger l'important succès social qu'ont connu après les années 60 les différents mouvements artistiques qui s'étaient emparés des matériaux pauvres et des déchets. Comment comprendre pareil succès de cette provocation, de cette résistance mi analytique mi esthétique à la surconsommation ?

On se souviendra d'abord que ces mouvements ont bénéficié du travail et de l'audience antérieure de nombre d'artistes qui, dès le début XXe siècle, se détachaient de la figuration classique à un moment où les recherches des futurismes, des surréalismes et des cubismes s'accompagnaient dans le travail pictural de l'introduction d'objets prosaïques. Célébration de la vie banale, feuilles de journal, morceaux de carton ondulé, affiches lacérées, pièces de bois, bouts de tissus, déchets (du latin *decadere*). La voie était ainsi ouverte aux créations artistiques des années 60 face à la consommation de masse, qui à leur tour mettaient en scène objets quotidiens, éléments végétaux, déchets et épaves collés sur des supports, ironisant ainsi sur ces détrit orgiaques, le tout orchestré par des critiques d'art très agiles médiatiquement. Mais une telle filiation en pointillé ne peut suffire à expliquer leur succès. On ne saurait donc sous-estimer le rôle des ambiances politiques globales, issues tout d'abord de la Résistance, puis des contestations du colonialisme et de

la guerre du Vietnam, et ce jusqu'aux révoltes étudiantes de la fin des années 60. Le choix du matériau banal, c'est une résistance au mode de vie marchand proposé par l'Amérique comme à l'art abstrait qui l'accompagne alors. Ambiances critiques, mouvements de contestation de l'ordre social, autant de résistances qui sont rejointes par nombre d'artistes ayant des préoccupations politiques diverses. Leur ambition n'est pas de vouloir « faire de l'or avec de la paille » mais d'activer le pouvoir symbolique des matières socialement rejetées.

Qu'en sera-t-il demain ? Face à des productions qui semblent dominer à présent dans les arts visuels, installations monumentales en acier, monstres moulés en plastique, méga projections vidéo, électroniques clignotantes, machines glacées et agencements qui se doivent d'être coûteux, peut-on encore mettre en avant des matériaux pauvres et des formats modestes comme autant de déclarations de résistance à la marchandise régnante ? Les détritiques et les matières simples peuvent-ils être des sources de création et de résistance pour des artistes qui lancent un regard sensible vers la société d'aujourd'hui, et qui se confrontent aux déchets, aux gâchis et aux dépouilles urbaines de la consommation ?

C'est là un horizon que certains explorent encore et toujours (par exemple le collectif *Trash Art*, attentif au cycle des objets ; le mouvement *Art de la Poubelle*, avec Bisk qui se revendique de Arman ; les travaux de Tim Nobel centrés sur la récupération et le détournement et qui s'inspire de D. Hirst ; A. Bordalo, qui célèbre le déchet ; Eva Jospin, qui mobilise carton ondulé et feuilles de papier en donnant à voir une nature presque défunte ; Laurence Vallières qui construit des sculptures stylisées avec des boîtes en cartons).

À eux comme à moi, les matériaux usés ou délaissés parlent de jeux d'assemblages, de « millefeuilles » visuels, les arrachages de hasard sur des emballages parcheminés, tout juste ramassés ou bien collectionnés de longue date, me demandent des gestes peints, des signes nouveaux sur des surfaces cabossées. A mes yeux, les emballages usés qui portent les marques de leur déchéance, ces cartons tachés, brûlés, pliés et piétinés, avec leurs stigmates inscrits, auront le pouvoir de devenir des cartes de rêve, des portulans antiques ou des contours de continent noirs, dialoguant mystérieusement avec des parcours sur cartes routières, autant de silhouettes anciennes ou modernes, de voyages de hasard, de labyrinthes confrontant des collages de feuilles fragiles et ailées avec les rythmes forts du carton ondulé. Je tente aussi un déchiffrement d'écritures secrètes en remettant à plat les boîtes d'emballage, celles du Speed Delivery qui nous encomrent et nous enferment tant. Ces boîtes dépliées se métamorphoseront alors en découpes d'ombres chinoises, en patrons de couturière, en silhouettes préhistoriques pour figurer des divinités dressées sur l'imaginaire moderne. Les emballages oubliés deviendront des figures du grand sacré qu'on avait tord de laisser pourrir sur le trottoir des villes marchandes.

Cet art visuel vit toujours, il exprime le mouvement de celui qui ramasse et assemble des matières pauvres, il prolonge son élan, il fait vibrer des matières, il est

tactile. Jadis, le peintre cherchait à glisser son visage, son auto-portrait dans un coin du tableau commandé par un puissant, à présent il engage son geste, tout son corps contre les puissances.

Le carton usagé, au cœur des déchets modernes, continuera d'opposer ses blessures, ses ondulations, ses replis, ses mystères. Il résistera encore aux interventions de l'ordre et de la réalité marchande. Et moi je demeurerai un peu le flâneur de Baudelaire, le Paysan de Paris, le soupirant de Nadja.

Bibliographie

- Adorno, Théodore, *Théorie esthétique*, Paris : Klincksieck, 2011
- Aragon, Louis, *Le paysan de Paris*, Paris : Livre de Poche, 1972
- Bouayed, Anissa et Chausson-Jabeur, Chantal, *Art et résistance au Maghreb*, Paris : L'Harmattan, 2020
- Borges, Jose Luis, *L'Aleph*, Paris : Gallimard, 1967
- Breton, André, *Nadja*, Paris : Livre de Poche, 1972
- Celant, Germano, *Arte povera*, Florence: Giunti Editore, 2013
- Deleuze Gilles, *Sur la peinture*, Paris : Editions de Minuit, 2023
- Faure, Elie, *Histoire de l'art*, Paris : Folio Essais, 1988
- Florin, Béatrice, Les chiffonniers du Caire, *Ethologie Française*, 2015, pp. 487-498
- Gaber Catherine, *La télé dans les quartiers marginalisés des chiffonniers du Caire*, Paris : L'Harmattan, 2023
- Lista Gioavanni, *La scène futuriste*, Paris : CNRS Editions, 1989
- Liotard Jean-François, *Penser à ne pas voir*, Paris : Editions La Différence, 2013
- Marin Louis, *La célébration des oeuvres d'art*, Paris : Editions de la Sorbonne, 2022
- Rancière Jacques, *Les voyages de l'art*, Paris : Le Seuil, 2023