

Ecofeminism as decolonial and transindividual ecology

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Abstract: In this essay, I combine decolonial ecofeminism with a philosophy of transindividuality. The latter depicts a form of somatic communism, in which every individuality is conceived as a transindividuality, that is a process of becoming that takes place at the *supra*, *inter* and *infra*-individual level. By questioning all rigid boundaries, along with the hierarchies that they sustain, a transindividual ecology is also a queer ecology.

Keywords: feminism; ecology; coloniality; patriarchy; democracy.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has for a moment shattered the traditional image of the world. While we pondered over the surfaces we touched, the air we breathed, the food we ate, it became evident that our lives not simply depend on that of each other, but also on that of other living and non-living being. This has in my view contributed questioning the methodological individualism, that is the often unspoken assumption according to which the world is given to us as a world of already constituted individualities. But a number of authors have recently questioned such a view, emphasizing that,

properly speaking, there is no individuality which is not also at the same time a form of transindividuality.

In this essay, I would like to rethink the ecofeminism project through this philosophy of transindividuality. In the wake of Etienne Balibar's reading of Spinoza's ethics and of a renewed interest in the philosophy of transindividuality of Gilbert Simondon, a number of authors have been exploring the consequences of such a philosophical move:¹ what happens when individuality is conceived as transindividuality, that is as a process of affective association that situates itself at the *supra*, *inter*, and even *infra*-individual levels?

We can summarize these insights from the philosophy of transindividuality by stating that it depicts a form of "somatic communism," where bodies exist only through other bodies in a constant process of individuation that involves the *inter*- the *supra* but also the *infra*-individual level. It is not by chance that so many philosophers of transindividuality come from the Marxist tradition, with its interest in how life is produced and reproduced through the common circuits of production, which are then hijacked by the institution of private property and the market:² The



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¹ BALIBAR, *Spinoza*; SIMONDON, *L'individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information*, which has become the standard reference for his work. For a discussion of the debates on this shift from individuality to transindividuality, see BALIBAR; MORFINO, *Il transindividuale*.

² Besides footnotes 1, see also: MARCUCCI; PINZOLO, *Strategie della relazione*, and READ, *The politics of transindividuality*.

philosophy of transindividuality enables to identify a form of somatic communism that can indeed be the starting point for thinking about political communism. But it is perhaps also not by chance that we borrow the term “somatic communism” from Paul Preciado, who argues that, given the failure of the Left to redefine emancipation in terms other than in relation to the Western, white, male, patriarchal body, the only way to a global change today is to construct a “planetary somatic communism, a communism of (all) living bodies within and together with the earth”.³ To this call, we should add, following the philosophy of transindividuality, that such a somatic communism is not only an ideal we should strive towards, but also, to a large extent, a reality that has always been there, rooted as it is in the very transindividual nature of all bodies, which are all to some degree, animate.

What happens when we approach ecofeminism through such a lens? Many authors have explored the ontogenesis of gendered and sexed individualities by focusing on the supra-individual forces, as they are shaped by their geo-political contexts, and on the inter-individual relations, as they emerge in the capitalist mode of (re)production. To these levels, the transindividual philosophy adds prism of the infra-level: how does the coming into being of sexed and gendered individuals appear when looked at from the point of view of infra-individual bodies and their intra-actions?

To begin with, this requires reconsidering the very notion of production and

reproduction, or, as we prefer to phrase it, of (re)production, to emphasize that there cannot be the former without the latter. Whereas many authors in the socialist tradition have understood that a capitalist mode of production is impossible without the reproduction of the laborer as a living being, and have therefore addressed the importance of social reproductive work, most have ignored the generative capacity of animals, plants and other living beings, and thus left them out of consideration.⁴ For these thinkers, nature was the mere provider of raw material to be subsumed under the capitalist mode of production, seen as something external to the sphere of society itself. This externalization of nature is one of the background conditions for the functioning of capitalism, and must therefore be at the center of any contemporary rethinking of it.⁵

In this essay, we want to explore how animals, plants, and other living and non-living beings contribute to the (re)production of sexed and gendered individuals. In doing so, we will discuss not only the separation of nature and culture, and the segregation of animals, plants and other living beings from society, but also the very separation between “living” and “non-living matter”, focusing on the transindividual insight that all beings are, to some extent, animate: within such a philosophical perspective, the environment cannot be considered as something external, outside there, but becomes constitutive of our own being, inside here. To put it bluntly, “the

³ PRECIADO, *Counter-sexual manifesto*, p. 13.

⁴ See for instance Michelle Murphy, who remarks that even Karl Marx understood that the labour force needed to be reproduced, and so mentioned women and children as supplementary labour, but completely ignored the generative power of plants and animals as also necessary for reproduction. See MURPHY, *Reproduction*, p. 289.

⁵ On this point and the notion of “background” conditions for capitalism, see FRASER, *Behind Marx’s hidden abode*, pp. 60-66.

environment is us”,⁶ and thus beyond the inside/outside distinction. This move will substantiate our major claim, that when we see through a transindividual philosophy, ecofeminism becomes itself a form of queer ecology, necessarily aimed at questioning the boundaries of any *scala naturae*:

man>woman>slave>animal>plants>
inanimate life.

1. For a de-colonial and de-imperial approach: somatic communism and the capitalist mode of (re)production

What do we mean by “the environment is us”? At a minimal level, this signals the relevance of environmental concerns for our own survival. In the last few decades, there has been an increasing awareness that the reproduction of our lives depends on such common resources as the air we breathe and the water we drink. In November 2015, for instance, we experienced the first truly “global climate strike” – an organized strike that was global not only in the sense that it addressed “global issues” but also in the sense that it took place in different parts of the world more or less at the same time. A significant feature of this strike, and those that followed it, was its anti-capitalist critique: environmental concerns about global warming and the survival of the human species converged with the strike, that is, with a praxis and mode of protest typical of the socialist and anarchist tradition. In a way, those global strikes showed a deep awareness that, to paraphrase Murray Bookchin, the very notion of a domination of nature by Man stems from the very real domination of

human by human,⁷ and that there is therefore no way to tackle the ecological challenge we are facing without addressing the culture of domination and exploitation generated by an economic mode predicated on the endless expansion of profit. Although ecology has now become a buzzword for many capitalist projects, it is pivotal to ask: if one accepts the premises of a capitalist mode of production and ethos, is it ever enough to just make it “green”? Can there be such a thing as a “sustainable” capitalism?

There cannot be any such thing as a “green capitalism”, only its ideological illusion, because there is a systemic contradiction between an economic system based on the unlimited accumulation of capital and a planet in which resources necessary for the reproduction of life are limited. Whereas capital has a self-expanding logic, the globe is only one, and, as climate protesters made it clear: “there is no planet B”.⁸ Otherwise stated, at the very heart of capitalism there is a contradiction between exchange value and use value, a contradiction that creates a “schizophrenic state” for the individuals who live within it: people have to produce goods for markets, and thus goods that have exchange value, such as pesticides and cars, but, in order to survive, they need goods that have use value, such as unpolluted air and water.⁹ This is only one of the many contradictions of capitalism, and only one of those tensions that generate those crises that are typical of this mode of production, but one that is particularly crucial because it directly affects the survival of

⁶ I borrow this expression from ALAIMO, *Bodily natures*, p. 11.

⁷ See BOOKCHIN, *The ecology of freedom*, p. 65. I am using here “Man” in Sylvia Wynter’s sense of the term as an ethno-class, thus adding a feminism perspective which is not central to Bookchin’s argument.

⁸ Sign circulating at the New York City Climate Strike on 20 September 2019.

⁹ MIES, *The myth of catching-up development*, p. 57.

life, in general, and of human life, in particular.

Yet, while addressing such an environmental challenge, we should not forget the other contradictions of the capitalist mode of reproduction, in particular the fact that capitalism needs to externalize its costs on women and colonies. Ecofeminists such as Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies have done an illuminating work in showing how patriarchy and ecological catastrophe go together: the war on women and the war on nature have gone hand in hand from the very beginning of capitalism.¹⁰ This is shown clearly in the international division of labour: women produce more than half of the world's food and provide more than 80% of food needs in food insecure households and regions, but a capitalist mode of production focused on capital accumulation systematically renders this work invisible.¹¹ Since the calculation of the yearly Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of each country, *i.e.*, the total value of the goods and services produced within the geographic boundaries of a country, only takes into account the value subsumed into the market economy, but not the labour done for the subsistence of the laborer, women work is literally hidden in the economics that drive most of the international development agencies and programs nowadays.

The consequence is not only that women, as the performers of that reproductive labour are devalued, which also explains why gender violence is so widespread, but that the natural ecosystems from which women have derived food for millennia are being systematically

destroyed. This is evident in former colonies such as India, where colonizers imported their industrialized farming (monocultures), enabling the production of capitals for the market economy, but at the same time deprived indigenous people of the ecosystems on which their subsistence depended, and thereby also deprived women of their role as biodiversity experts. What multinational corporations such as Monsanto perceive as weeds to eliminate are often gardens that indigenous people used for millennia for their sustenance. In addition, women have historically been biodiversity experts because they knew how to derive food, seeds, and medicines from natural biodiversity: when they are dispossessed of those ecosystems, their labour become much harder and thus even more invisible.¹² Many colonized countries were stripped of their economies of subsistence and ended up in sheer deprivation. But the former is a very different thing from the latter: a subsistence economy, which may appear as (cultural) poverty to the colonizers, is very different from actual poverty and deprivation, that is from a low physical quality of life.¹³ And yet, the imaginal representation of the former lead to the actual creation of the latter.

There is indeed a self-fulfilling logic at the basis of colonialism “civilizing mission” and of neocolonial “development programs”: by deeming certain ways of life as “savage” and “underdeveloped”, industrial farming and monocultures producing capitals for the global market are introduced and justified, thereby destroying the ecosystems from which

¹⁰ Among their early work, see MIES, *Patriarchy and accumulation on a world scale*, and SHIVA, *Staying alive*. The two have also co-authored a very influential volume on ecofeminism, from which many of the following insights derive: MIES; SHIVA, *Ecofeminism*.

¹¹ SHIVA, *Staying alive*, p. xiii.

¹² SHIVA, *Staying alive*, pp. xviii-xx.

¹³ SHIVA, *Staying alive*, p. 9.

indigenous people gleaned their subsistence, and thus creating real misery, while projecting women's unwaged work as non-work, deprived of any value, and thus producing even more misery. From the perspective of the international division of labour, these three processes are inseparable: the displacement of women from socially recognized economic activities is intimately linked with the destruction of natural resources and the categorization of some people as "savages" and "underdeveloped".

When seen in this global perspective, it is evident that patriarchy is not just a pre-modern phenomenon, destined to be swept away by modernization: as the knowledge and agricultures of women are replaced by industrial farming and monocultures, women are less needed and thus less valued. Certainly, this does not mean that patriarchy begins with capitalism: only that the latter has resignified patriarchy where it already existed, or imported it where it did not. The search for *archē*, for one single origin of patriarchy is a misleading one: whether patriarchy derives from early pastoral tribes, such as those that produced Judaism or Christianity, or whether it was introduced by the capitalist mode of production,¹⁴ does not really matter: the oppression of women has many threads, and must therefore be tackled through an anarchafeminist perspective aimed at the abolishment of all forms of oppression and exploitation. And so, the equation of anarchafeminism and ecofeminism is valid in both directions: not only is anarchafeminism by definition ecofeminist, but ecofeminism is,

or should be, anarchafeminist, since it is not possible to address the connubial union between patriarchy and ecological catastrophe without addressing other forms of oppressions, beginning with colonial and the neo-colonial logic of development.¹⁵

Hence the reason why ecofeminists such as Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva have been calling for a movement that addresses ecological challenges through decolonization. When not accompanied by decolonization, apocalyptic theories of the global ecological catastrophe risk revamping the old colonial argument of the "white man's burden". We must not forget that the early days of colonization was accompanied by the Christian theological idea of saving "savages" from damnation as infidels, the later phases by the ideology of the capitalist duty to bring development and modernity to the "underdeveloped" societies: in both cases the science of the time was invoked as the moral reason for the white man's universal duties and call to dictate policies and decisions on the (presumptively inferior) other.¹⁶ Today's invocation of the universal duty to protect humanity from extinction risks turning into yet another form of "white man's burden" argument: globalization without decolonization is just another justification for imperial conquest. And we can already see how this plays out in the many programs of agencies such as World Bank and IMF, which rely on apocalyptic environmental scenarios to justify their duty, and thus their right, to "protect the environment" and therefore impose their policies of "sustainable

¹⁴ For a reconstruction of this debate on the origins of patriarchy search, see for instance ARRUZZA, *Le relazioni pericolose*, pp. 71-89.

¹⁵ While not all ecofeminists make this connection, so we cannot say that ecofeminism has always been explicitly, anarchist, notice that Maria Mies clearly states that feminism is an "anarchic movement". See in particular MIES, *Patriarchy and accumulation on a world scale*, pp. 37-38.

¹⁶ SHIVA, *Decolonizing the North*, p. 264.

development” without any consideration of other form of injustices – both preexisting and thereby caused. We cannot address ecological challenges without a decolonial and deimperial attitude because we otherwise risk reproducing the same “white man burden” dynamics.

For instance, from the point of view of native Americans, awareness of the ecological catastrophe did not begin a century ago, when the first global warming alarms were issued, but rather in 1492, when their ecosystems, lives and cultures were destroyed. By insisting on the novel character of the current global warming ecological catastrophe, with its immanent threat to human lives, the contemporary focus risks erasing the existence of a form of ecological catastrophe that has been going on for at least five centuries, threatening all forms of lives, but with the indigenous people paying the first and highest price. As Kyle Whyte, put it, settler colonialism is a form of ecological domination, because it disrupts indigenous people’s “collective continuance”:¹⁷ it is a form of environmental injustice and catastrophe because it is the process whereby one society tries to establish its collective continuance at the ongoing expenses of another society. And indigenous people have been fighting against that since 1492.

The risk, therefore, with the current neo-colonial policies of IMF and World Bank is that the environmental crisis becomes a justification for the implementation of “sustainable development” policies that privilege the collective continuance of some western affluent societies at the expense of other communities. The idea

of a “sustainable development” is, however, a contradiction in terms: the notion of “development” without further qualifications implies that of an endless, infinite increase of profit, of an ever-growing GDP, whereas that of “sustainability” evokes the idea of limits, of a reproduction of life in a condition where there is “no planet B”. In this sense, capitalism is a perversely utopian economic system, because it always managed to find new planets for exploitation: as the world became saturated with material commodities, capitalism moved to the immaterial world of finance and the tertiary, becoming so abstract that it turned into an image. As visionary Guy Debord put it half a century ago, capital can accumulate to such a level of abstraction that it becomes an image, turning society into a society of the spectacle, and where the notion of spectacle does not simply denote what one sees, but the social relation themselves.¹⁸ Fifty year after Debord’s prediction, financialization has completely fulfilled it, having reached such proportions that most of the wealth produced every year is now immaterial in nature: a pure society of the spectacle in which “speculative communities” navigate uncertainties and anxieties, some literally making profit out of that, and others paying all the price of such speculations, in the form of debts, anxiety and food insecurity.¹⁹ And yet, even the very imaginal world of finances, with its immaterial spectacle of derivatives, endless prediction of new markets to exploits, and yet-more-capital always to come, needs the very material social (re)production work to reproduce laborers, as well as the extraction of natural resources to (re)produce

¹⁷ WHYTE, *Settler colonialism*.

¹⁸ DEBORD, *The society of the spectacle*.

¹⁹ See, in particular, KOMPOROZOS-ATHANASIOU, *Speculative communities*.

electricity and material infrastructures where immaterial data are stored and processed.

Hence, the ecofeminist proposal to move from the notion of a “sustainable development” to that of a “subsistence perspective”,²⁰ that is, to one that abandons the telos of an endless increase of value for the market economy and privileges instead that of life-producing and life-preserving work. Vandana Shiva invokes the notion of a “democracy of all life”,²¹ to point not only to the intrinsic values and right of all species to exist, but also to the fact that no (re)production of human life is possible without the generative power of animals, plants, seeds, and all other life forms. Thus, whereas the myth of the “catching up development” portrays the life-style of urban northern elites as the model for “development” and “good life”, using it to impose its “development” logic, this myth also hides the fact that such life-styles are far from being ideal, and that they favor, in the best scenario, only a tiny minority of extremely wealthy elites.²²

The ecofeminist concept of the “democracy of all life” underscores the systematic link between patriarchy and destruction of natural resources, and thus questions the dichotomy of nature *versus* culture, the idea that nature is something outside there, and not also, and inevitably something inside here. Paradoxically, the romantic celebration of Nature as pristine and immaculate is nothing but the other side of the drive to subject and dominate it, precisely in the same way in which the idealization of the

feminine woman, as a wonder to be admired in her beauty, is nothing but the other side of modern patriarchy – the celebration of immaculate purity is an invitation to disavowal. The transformation of nature into Nature with capital letter went indeed hand in hand with the “death of nature”, that is with the removal of all organic assumptions about the cosmos and the transformation of nature into a system of dead, inert particles, moved by external rather than internal forces.²³ The modern mechanistic view that transformed organic life into quantifiable laws reduced nature to mere material for exchange value, suitable for subsumption into capital.

It would, however, be a mistake to extend this critique of modern mechanicism to a critique of all modern science as such. Ecofeminists such as Vandana Shiva seem, however, at times seem to suggest that road: instead of dismantling only this specific mechanist view of modern science, Vandana Shiva, for instance, seem to criticize modern science in its entirety, opposing it to the “feminine principle”. In her view, whereas modern science necessarily operates with a reductivist logic, nature must be understood as a living and creative process from which we all spring, and is therefore identified with what she calls “the feminine principle”.²⁴ However, by insisting on this identification of women with the feminine principle, on women as “an intimate part of nature”, one reproduces that very essentializing dichotomy between (feminine) women and (masculine) men that is at the core of

²⁰ MIES, *The need for a new vision*, pp. 298-299.

²¹ SHIVA, *Decolonizing the North*, p. 264.

²² MIES, *The myth of catching-up development*.

²³ SHIVA, *Decolonizing the North*, p. 267. Shiva quotes here a passage from Carolyn Merchant’s work on *The death of nature*.

²⁴ SHIVA, *Staying alive*, pp. 40-43.

what Maria Lugones called the “modern/colonial gender system”.²⁵

If women are essentialized as an eternal feminine principle, then they are relegated once again to the natural realm, as they have been for such a long time, and to their own detriment, as such nature has, in its turn, itself been situated in the horizon of death. And what if nature turns out to be not that static realm that enables us to separate the feminine from the masculine, let alone nature from culture? If we understand nature as synonymous with the unique substance and conceive of individualities as transindividualities, then not only the boundaries between nature and culture, but also those between men and women, human and animal, as well as animate and inanimate life, become fluid.

2. Through the prism of a transindividual philosophy: from patriarchy to menocracy

Although ecofeminists such as Mies and Shiva have done pivotal work in providing a philosophico-political framework to address how patriarchy went hand in hand with colonialism and the death of nature, to them we must echo Judith Butler’s admonition: “It is not enough to inquire into how women might become more fully represented in language and politics. Feminist critique ought also to understand how the category of ‘women’, the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structure of power through which emancipation is sought”.²⁶ Otherwise said, while providing a framework for the liberation of women, the ecofeminist identification of women with nature, and

with the feminine principle, risks imprisoning women into the heteronormative and cis-normative matrix that is at the basis of the modern/colonial binary gender system, and that has not proved to be liberatory for women. This not only makes female masculinity, as well as transwomen experiences, invisible, but also transforms the historically contingent modern/colonial gender system into a metaphysical framework from which there is no exit.

This does not mean that feminism should abandon femininity. As Jack Halberstam notes, it means that femininity must be rethought in the context of “trans* feminism”—an expression where “the asterisk modifies the meaning of transitivity, by refusing to situate transition in relation to a destination, a final form, a specific shape, or an established configuration of desire and identity”.²⁷ The trans* can thus become a name for not-yet determined forms of difference, and the refusal of an identity politics predicated upon separating out of many kinds of experience that actually blend together, intersect and mix, and thus for a refusal to seal women into the eternally feminine principle and men into the eternally masculine one.²⁸ Paradoxically, if we follow this transindividual perspective, then feminism can be enriched, rather than feel threatened, by “femininity” and by the femininities of women who were not born female. Whereas there have been separatist feminists, who denied access to their spaces to non-female born women, in a trans*feminist perspective, feminism becomes capacious enough to recognize how femininity is co-constructed and co-

²⁵ LUGONES, *Towards a decolonial feminism*.

²⁶ BUTLER, *Gender trouble*, p. 2.

²⁷ HALBERSTAM, *Trans*, p. 4.

²⁸ HALBERSTAM, *Trans*, p. 5.

inhabited across bodies that are male and female, trans and cis, and thus through variegated sexualities and genders.²⁹ Far from abandoning femininity, a trans* perspective can actually rescue its meaning from notions of weakness and dependence imposed on it by centuries of patriarchy.³⁰

This co-inhabitation becomes even more evident if we focus not only on interactions between human beings, but also on the infra-actions within them. Whereas transindividuality does not necessarily mean transgender, a philosophical framework that explores the ontogenesis of individualities through the supra-, inter- and infra-individual level, throws a different light on gender transition, too: far from being an anomaly, or deviation from a supposed norm, transitioning becomes one of the infinite possible modes of ontogenesis, that is, of coming into being as individuated being.

In cases such as those described by Beatriz Preciado, transitioning can also be the site of political experimentation and resistance to the modern/colonial gender system: the experience of one single person transition from female to male by taking testosterone can for instance become the magnifying glass to perceive the infinite network of affective links created by what Preciado terms the current “pharmaco-pornographic regime”. Preciado’s *Testo Junkie*, which carries out such a political experiment, is thus not simply partly a memoir of a transition and partly an essay on the late capitalist mode of (re)production, but an attempt to show that one cannot exist without the other:³¹ not just transgender bodies, but all bodies in general are co-

originated with other bodies situated at the infra-, inter- and supra- individual level. As Beatriz Preciado wrote while becoming Paul Preciado:

I’m not interested in my emotions insomuch as their being mine, belonging only, uniquely to me. I’m not interested in their individual aspects, only in how they are traversed by what isn’t mine, in what emanates from our planet’s history, the evolution of the living species, the flux of economics, remnants of technological innovations, preparations for wars, the trafficking of organic slaves and commodities, the creation of hierarchies, institutions of punishments and repression, networks of communications and surveillance, the random overlapping of market research groups, techniques and blocs of opinion, the biochemical transformation of feeling, the production and distribution of pornographic images.³²

As this long list of transindividual processes already suggests, the framework of this political experiment is that of post-Fordism. The passage from a Fordist mode of production, centered on the mechanical production of goods, to a post-Fordist one, centered on financialization, services, and knowledge, has disclosed new markets for capitalism, increasingly turning it into a form of biocapitalism, that is, a mode of production that infiltrated the intimate processes of (re)production to such a molecular and intimate level that it became one and the same thing with life (*bios*) itself. As the new hormonal and molecular discoveries in the field of chemistry and medicine entered society, the production of psychosomatic affective states has become a central piece of contemporary cognitive capitalism and its mode of (re)production. Thus, whereas the disciplinary regimes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries inaugurated a new biopolitics, through the invention of

²⁹ On the history of the conflict between separatist feminisms and gender variant folks in the US, see HALBERSTAM, *Trans*, pp. 107-112.

³⁰ On this point, see HALBERSTAM, *Trans*, pp. 119-120, who draws from SERRANO, *Whipping girl*.

³¹ PRECIADO, *Testo junkie*.

³² PRECIADO, *Testo junkie*, pp. 13-14.

“sex” as nature, the systematic mapping of sexual difference on anatomical dimorphism, and the consequent invention of the category of “homosexuals”, the “pharmaco-pornographic regime” that currently dominates the Western sexual epistemology is centered on the production of subjectivities through the dual prism of pornographic images and hormonal and biomolecular management of bodies.³³ The “pharmaco” is thus inseparable from the “pornographic” because the manipulation of molecules goes hand in hand with that of neurotransmitters as two sides of the same coin.

Rather than “pharmaco-pornographic”, we prefer to speak of a “pharmaco-imaginal” regime, to underline the fact that images can be more or less pornographic, but that they relentlessly work to produce a certain type of subjectivity—whether they circulate on pornographic sites, social medias, or the culture industry more in general.³⁴ If the means whereby power was exercised in the classical model of sovereignty was the sword, and in the disciplinary regimes were the state apparatuses, today’s technologies of the body operate with soft viscous technologies such as telecommunications, endocrinology, genetic engineering, biotechnologies, molecules that can be incorporated and penetrate daily life in a level unimaginable before: from a cell phone to the bio-engineering of food production.

As Preciado put is:

the real stakes of capitalism today is the pharmacopornographic control of subjectivity, whose products are serotonin, techno-blood

and blood products, testosterones, antacids, cortisone, techno-sperm, antibiotics, estradiol, techno-milk, alcohol and tobacco, morphine, insulin, cocaine, living human eggs, citrate and sildenafil (Viagra), and the entire material and virtual complex participating in the production of mental and psychosomatic states of excitation, relaxation, and discharge, as well as those of omnipotence and total control.³⁵

Within the West, the turning point of this shift was clearly the end of the Second World War. Helped by wartime technological advancements, major developments in science and technologies in the 1950s lead to the discovery of the pill and other hormonal treatments that enabled the separation of sex and heterosexuality from reproduction, while the first plastic surgeries allowed bodies to be changed in their morphology in ways unimaginable before. It is also around that time that pornography started featuring in popular culture and “gender” was invented as a biotech industrial artifact. The first person to employ the grammatical category of gender as a diagnostic tool was John Money, a child psychologist, using the term in 1955 as a tool to diagnose the problems he encountered in treating “hermaphrodites” and “intersex babies”.³⁶ The invention of the category of gender is thus far from being the creation of a feminist agenda, but fully belongs to the biotechnological discourse that appeared in the US medical and therapeutic industries in the 1950s, and peaked during the Cold War, “just like canned food, computers, plastic chairs, nuclear energy, television, credit cards, disposable ballpoints pens, bar codes,

³³ PRECIADO, *Testo junkie*, p. 77.

³⁴ It has been analyzed such a connubial of bio-politics and imaginal production of subjectivities and desire, in BOTTICI, *Imaginal politics*.

³⁵ PRECIADO, *Testo junkie*, p. 39.

³⁶ PRECIADO, *Testo junkie*, p. 99.

inflatable mattresses, or telecommunication satellites”.³⁷

This does not mean that the production of affective-psychosomatic states characteristic of contemporary biocapitalism has supplanted the production of material goods, but rather that it has become the model for other forms of production: from agrarian biotechnologies to the high-tech industries of communications, the techno-management of bodies, whether inter-individual or intra-individual, increasingly accompany the flow of capital.³⁸ Preciado pushes the argument as far as to state that the contemporary transformation of capitalism entails such a mutation of the sex-gender order that we may be approaching the twilight of heterosexuality: if the white heterosexual femininity is above all an economic function referring to a specific position within biopolitical relationships of production and exchange, then we can conjecture that today pharmacopornographic regime may be leading to a post-sexual era, in which all forms of sexuality and production of pleasure will be legitimate and normal(ized), in as far as they are subject to the same molecular and digital technologies.³⁹

This is one possible direction. But, even within our current “pharmaco-imaginal” regime, it is also possible that a surgically adapted, hormonally re-produced compulsory heterosexuality be re-signified, without losing its hegemonic appeal. Whether Preciado is right or not in predicting the twilight of heterosexuality as an institution, we can certainly agree with the deep change

that this process has had on the configuration of the mononuclear family. The invention of plastic contraceptive and hormonal treatment separating heterosexuality from reproduction, and of in-vitro-fertilization techniques, along with the emergence of the two wages household system, have deeply changed the traditional configuration of the family. After the frontal attacks to the family, launched by feminisms of different sorts, as well as by other social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, some have claimed that the family is now back. Even within the LGBTQ+ communities, and thanks to the legalization of same-sex marriage in some western countries, the family seems indeed to be back. Whether are facing the twilight of heterosexuality as an institution or not, this does not seem to have taken with it the institution of the family as a whole.

Firstly, at least in certain affluent countries and cities, there has been an eclipse of the traditional patriarchal family: as the father ceased to be the sole breadwinner in the household, he also ceased to be its uncontested single head. This does not automatically mean more freedom for women: although the model of the two wages household is increasing, it is still the case that women are the main performers of care work, even in such economically egalitarian (leaving aside wage income discrepancies) household.⁴⁰ Phenomena like the so-called “double-shift”, which accumulates the productive work for the wage on top of the reproductive one for (the ideology of) love and places it firmly on women shoulders, are indeed very common: far

³⁷ PRECIADO, *Testo junkie*, p. 99.

³⁸ PRECIADO, *Testo junkie*, p. 40.

³⁹ PRECIADO, *Testo junkie*, p. 122.

⁴⁰ The so-called ‘paygap’ between men and women is a global phenomenon: 2020 statistics say that women are on average paid 63% of what men are paid for the same job (WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, *Global gender gap report 2020*, pp. 12-16).

from leading to more freedom, the entrance into the waged-labour market meant for many women a doubling of their oppression.⁴¹

Secondly, if by patriarch we mean the male head of the family, then we have to conclude that the patriarchal family is under a double attack, both because fathers are no longer the sole “head” of the family, and because they are not necessarily “male.” Same sex marriages and unions, in vitro fertilization, have further challenged the identification between the male and the head of the family, while the growing rates of divorce by choice have questioned traditional stereotypes about “single mothers” – an expression, that, is a contradiction in terms that only makes sense from the point of view of an heteronormative imaginary according to which a mother without the complement companion preferably of the opposite sex is merely “single”. Some have been welcoming this queering of the family, while others indulged in paranoid thinking about a new “fatherless generation,” or even a “fatherless society” that leaves children adrift and in an emotional vacuum.⁴² Whatever direction this reconfiguration of the family will take, we can provisionally conclude that the family is indeed back, but what came back is

certainly very different from what went away.

Although this is a deep change, it has not necessarily been accompanied by decline in the power asymmetries between men and women, as well as those between men and other second sexes. Maybe the patriarch is toppled, maybe the traditional father figure is being challenged, but men are still the “first sex”⁴³ – both in the West and globally. Not only men still occupy most of the positions of power, both economical and political, but they are not the object of the systematic gender violence that is exercised relentlessly on women, effeminate bodies, and nonbinary genders.⁴⁴ In comparison to men, women, two-spirited, third gender, and LGBTQ+ folks, all occupy the position of the “second sex”. We include all of them into the category of “second sex” not to deny existing differences between them, but to point out that in the current predicament they are all excluded from the “first sex”, and that they are thus mainly the object rather than the perpetrators of gender violence.

The eclipse of the traditional patriarchal family is however a significant phenomenon, which requires further thinking, and this is the reason we

⁴¹ On the transformation of the mono-nuclear family in postindustrial society, see FRASER, *Fortunes of feminism*, pp. 111-135. As Fraser notes, post-industrial families are less conventional and more diverse, because so called heterosexuals are marrying less and later, and divorcing more and sooner, while gays and lesbians are pioneering new kinds of domestic arrangements, and women’s employment and solo-mother families are now increasingly common: and yet, women are still far less well-paid than men (FRASER, *Fortunes of feminism*, pp. 112-113).

⁴² See, for instance, these two blog pieces about the “fatherless society” (BLANKENHORN, *Fatherless America*) and the “fatherless generation” (SWORD; ZIMBARDO, *The fatherless generation*). Diagnoses about the eclipse of patriarchy began as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, when women started to enter the waged-labour market and obtain political rights in many western countries. See, for instance, QUINN, *Patriarchy in eclipse*.

⁴³ The implicit reference is the fortunate title of Simone De Beauvoir’s masterpiece, *The second sex*, which remains unfortunately quite timely as women are still largely the second sex to men (BEAUVOIR, *The second sex*).

⁴⁴ According to statistics provided by The United Nations statistics, 35 percent of women worldwide experienced physical or sexual violence (UN WOMEN, *Facts and figures*) while there are 140 missing girls from the global populations, as a consequence of gender violence and gender biased sex-selection (UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND, *Gender-biased sex selection*).

propose adding the concept of “menocracy” to the old term “patriarchy”. “Menocracy” signals that, even in those contexts where there are no more patriarchs, cis-gendered men are still the first sex. Whereas “patriarchy” literally means the rule (*archē*) of the patriarch, the male head of the family, that of “menocracy” points to the power (*cratos*) that men exercise in general over those who do not belong to the first sex/gender – a power that, as we have seen, is political, economic, imaginal, ideological, and ecological. As such, it suggests that even in contexts where the patriarch is no longer in charge of ruling (*archē*), men continue to exercise their power through other means. Menocracy can thrive even where patriarchy seems to be in decline. Given that it is not tied to the concept of the family, “menocracy” is a much more malleable tool to travel across different social and cultural contexts, including those, both inside and outside of the West, where, as we have seen, the family is not gendered at all. If Oyèrónkẹ Oyěwùmí is right that the woman at the heart of much white feminist theory is like a snail, who carries the household wherever she goes, thereby reproducing the assumptions derived from the western mononuclear family,⁴⁵ then moving towards the concept of menocracy is a way to leave some of those assumptions at home and travel more lightly.

Another way to do this is by looking at the shifting regimes in sexual epistemology through an emphasis on infra-individual bodies and their infra-actions. As the notion of a “pharmacomaginal regime” suggests, looking at bodies not from the outside, but from the inside, so to speak, enables us to perceive the capacity of affecting and being

affected that even the smallest molecules of matter possess. This produces a very different lens for seeing global inequalities: the difference between the two sides of the modern/colonial gender system thus becomes that between those who have access to the pharmacopornographic regime, and those who are excluded from the fluidity it affords, while paying its highest cost. Besides the exploitation arising from market interactions, there is also the oppression created by the accumulation of toxic waste under the skin, in the very very “hidden abode” of capitalist (re)production. The point is not only that wealthy countries often legally or illegally use poorer countries as trash cans for industrial waste that cannot be processed. More broadly, at the infra-individual level, the asymmetry is that while some bodies get voluntarily intoxicated with testosterone, citalopram, sertraline, and other common substances to produce pleasurable psycho-somatic effects, other bodies get involuntarily intoxicated with sulphur, endosulfan, mancozeb, and other common pesticides that are massively used in industrial farming in the global south.

This infra-individual inequality has often gone unnoticed even in those bio-political approaches that are allegedly focused on the political relevance of life. Whereas a lot of biopolitical theories focused only on the supra-individual and inter-individual levels, thereby reproducing a humanist bias,⁴⁶ a transindividual philosophy adds an emphasis on the infra-individuality that challenges not only anthropocentrism, but any speciesism, and thus any hierarchy between species more generally. The transindividual insight that every being is

⁴⁵ OYĒWÙMÍ, *Conceptualizing gender*, p. 4.

⁴⁶ CHEN, *Animacies*, p. 6.

to some extent animate, which, does not mean that they are all animate in the same way in which humans are, is today reinforced by new materialisms that investigate the capacity of matter, whether organic or not organic, to affect and being affected.⁴⁷ Karen Barad's agential realism is perhaps the contemporary form of new materialism that went the furthest, as it investigates how even at the level of the smallest particles of matter, entities do not precede their inter-actions, such that a new concept of agency that takes into account infra-actions is needed.⁴⁸

The most radical forms of this new materialism literature therefore challenge not only the boundary between nature and culture, but also the boundary between living and non-living matter, which has been the cornerstone of Western metaphysics for a few millennia.⁴⁹ Even most contemporary biopolitical approaches rely on such a "geontopower", in as far as they have mainly investigated how political power has increasingly been concerned with disciplining life, without considering how the very division between life (*bios*) and the non-life of the earth (*geos*) has itself become a mode of governance of both the human and the more than human.⁵⁰ Most western ontologies are indeed "biontologies", being metaphysics that measure all forms of existence by the quality of one form of existence (whether it is *bios*, the qualified biological life, or

zoe, the bare life).⁵¹ Deprived of any interesting place within them, stones become the epitome of the dead matter, just as the stone-age is concomitantly projected as the epitome of barbarism.

The notion of "geontopower" enables us to look at the *scala naturae* from the end of its spectrum. The hierarchy of man>woman>slave>animal>vegetal>inanimate life is indeed constructed according to an "over-representation of Man"⁵² that classifies individualities according to how closely they resemble the top of the scale. It is not by chance that most environmental ethics focuses on animal liberation, with comparatively very little attention paid to plants liberation. Plants mostly enter environmental philosophy when their essential role in reproducing animality is in question, not as beings in their own right and thus deserving a philosophical meditation on their own.⁵³ Dogs and cats respond to our solicitations, so they become more easily extension of human narcissism, whereas plants exhibit a "sovereign indifference" to us, for which they pay with their systematic neglect by most western philosophers.⁵⁴ And yet, they literally make the world, because they constitute 90% of the eucaryote biomass of the planet, thereby constantly transforming and shaping the environment they inhabit, including through their own often incognito traveling. As Emanuele Coccia put it "our world is a vegetal fact well before being

⁴⁷ Examples include Mel Y. CHEN, *Animacies*, which systematically investigates the notion of animacy; BENNET, *Vibrant matter*, which applies the notion of affect to more-than-human bodies, showing that it is a constitutive part of any bodies materiality, or ALAIMO, *Bodily natures*.

⁴⁸ BARAD, *Meeting the universe halfway*.

⁴⁹ See, for instance, COOLE; FROST, *New materialism*. Notice here that some forms of new materialism, such as Braidotti's *Post-humanism* are however deeply entrenched in a vitalistic philosophy that reinforces, instead of questioning, the life versus non-life binary (BRAIDOTTI, *The posthuman*).

⁵⁰ POVINELLI, *Geontologies*, p. 4.

⁵¹ POVINELLI, *Geontologies*, p. 4.

⁵² See WYNTER, *Unsettling the coloniality of being*.

⁵³ Things have started to change recently. See in particular, the COCCIA, *La vie des plantes*.

⁵⁴ COCCIA, *La vie des plantes*, p. 17.

an animal one".⁵⁵ But if plants are too dissimilar from Man to be given extensive attention, then stones and minerals are, not unsurprisingly, barely taken into any epistemological, let alone agential, consideration.

Philosophies inspired by new materialism are now challenging this state of the art, while environmental activities on the ground call for the recognition of the rights of inanimate objects such as rivers, forests and even the entire globe itself. The *pachamama*, a Quinchua and Aimara word for nature, has been recognized as a legal subject of rights by the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution,⁵⁶ while the Whanganui River in New Zealand has been a legal person since 2017.⁵⁷ Recognizing legal personhood to rivers means that they must now be treated as living being. The Māori tribes that live along the Whanganui river have always seen the river as such, since its waters have nourished and blessed the people throughout the 700 years they have lived along its side, but the river's life had been threatened by pollution and so activists called for its legal recognition as the only way to save the river in both its factual and symbolic meaning. When the New Zealand parliament passed the Te Awa Tapua Act, according to the Māori name of the river, a legal framework was set to recognize the rights not simply of the river itself, but of the Te Awa Tapua as a whole, comprising the Whanganui river from the mountains to the sea, incorporating its tributaries as well as all its physical and meta-physical elements.⁵⁸ These are major shifts

towards a truly transindividual ecological awareness.

3. Transindividual ecology as queer ecology

Whereas it is through the prism of quantum theory or Māori cosmologies', there is an increasing awareness not only that all beings are to some extent animate, but also that they are so because of their inter-, supra- and also infra-dependence. An awareness that was already present in the French anarchist geographer Élisée Reclus, who in 1869, embarked on the ambitious project of writing the history of a river, *Histoire d'un ruisseau*, opening the work with the stunning observation that the history of a river is the history of the infinite: what is a river if not the history of all the drops of water that compose it, of all the mineral molecules each transports, of the snow on top of its mountains, of the vapor of the clouds above it, of the sun that make them evaporate, a history of the European mountains, but also that of the African deserts, passing by the fountains in the valleys, the water mills, the vapor in the sky, not less than all the human labor and irrigation systems across the globe?⁵⁹ Like other anarchists, who looked at the world beyond artificial geo-political boundaries, Élisée Reclus could see what methodological individualism hides from sight:

The story of a stream, even one that is born and lost in the moss, is the story of the infinite. [...] All the agents of the atmosphere and of the space, all the cosmic forces have worked in concert to constantly modify the aspect and the position imperceptible droplet; the latter too is a world like the enormous stars which move in the heavens, and its orbit develops

⁵⁵ COCCIA, *La vie des plantes*, p. 21.

⁵⁶ BERROS, *The Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador*.

⁵⁷ ROY, *New Zealand River granted same legal rights as human being*.

⁵⁸ LURGIO, *Saving the Whanganui*.

⁵⁹ RECLUS, *Histoire d'un ruisseau*, p. 7.

from cycle to cycle by a movement without rest.⁶⁰

It is, and we are, a never ending movement of the elements, the planets as well as the smallest particles of matter, but one that also includes the incessant inter- and infra-actions with human history. There is no difference between human and natural history: there is just history. And it is infinite.

From the very different angle of the Anishinaabe philosophies, Kyle Whyte has recently put forward a very similar argument. Whereas the French geographer quoted books and experimental observations, Kyle Whyte quotes oral sources, as convenient to a tradition – the native American one – where thinking often takes place through collective storytelling, discussions, and other oral performances. Whyte introduces the Anishinaabe's concept of interdependence by quoting Chief Ayeeta-pepe-tung's 1871 statement that "he was made of the land", as well as the Anishinaabe's elder Tobasonakwut's saying that "his people were the lake, and the lake was them".⁶¹ As Whyte observes, this statement does not simply mean that they depended on the lake for their survival, but that by living off the lake's waters, fish, animals, and plants, they were literally cell by cell composed of the lake and the lake's islands. This awareness, in turn, implies the recognition of a system of responsibility, as the land then becomes a *emingoyak*, "that which has been given to us", a gift that must be reciprocated.⁶² Instead of owning the land, the latter is an invitation to a seasonal round, that is to a type of governance in which the major social and

economic institutions shift in shape and organization throughout the year, precisely in order to follow change in the land and through the land.⁶³ If the land is not something to be exploited according to a never-ending logic of accumulation, but a gift to be reciprocated, then linear time becomes spiral time, while a migration responding to changes in the environment becomes the best tool to achieve what Kyle Whyte calls "collective continuance". It is "continuance" and it is "collective" because it denotes "a society's capacity to self-determine how to adapt to change in ways that avoid reasonably preventable harms",⁶⁴ and differs from the similar concepts of "continuity", because it emphasizes that survival happens *through* the collective response to change, and not *despite* it. In this sense, the Anishinaabe's notion of collective continuance can, and indeed, does inform a new ecological sensibility, and one that is particularly timely today, as a sensibility that is capable of engendering a sense of responsibility tied to ones' own identity and constitution. In our transindividual terminology, we could say that when Tobasonakwut states that "his people were the lake, the lake was them", they are pointing to the awareness that the two are co-originated, being two sides of the same inter- supra- and infra-dependence that includes both human and other-than-human.

All these developments confirm the transindividual philosophy insight that every being is endowed with the capacity to affect and to being affected, and thus animate to a certain extent. The notion of

⁶⁰ RECLUS, *Histoire d'un ruisseau*, p. 7, translation ours.

⁶¹ WHYTE, *Settler colonialism*, p. 127.

⁶² WHYTE, *Settler colonialism*, p. 127.

⁶³ WHYTE, *Settler colonialism*, p. 130.

⁶⁴ WHYTE, *Settler colonialism*, p. 131.

“affecting”⁶⁵ is indeed central to a transindividual philosophy. Within this framework, “ecology” is thus nothing but co-affectivity, whereas “ecological thinking” is nothing but the thinking of such co-affectivity as co-origination. This move does not collapse ecology into an all-encompassing-organicism, where the whole determines its parts: co-affectivity is co-origination without an *archē*. It is “eco-affectivity”,⁶⁶ understood as the capacity of affecting and of being affected by every single being, without implying any telos nor any hierarchical organizing of such an infinite web of affecting.

The notion of affecting is thus central to a “politics of renaturalization”,⁶⁷ where nature is brought back to the center of philosophico-political thinking, but not as Nature with capital letter, something that is capitalized at the very moment that is alienated from us, and thus rendered exploitable. A transindividual approach to ecology is one *without* Nature,⁶⁸ in that alienated form, but *through* nature, in its meaning of the unique infinite substance. An ontology of transindividuality enables us to both retain and distinguish between different individualities, while according none of them any type of ontological

superiority: stones, not only cats or any other candidate for our “animal chauvinism”,⁶⁹ are to some extent animate. Along with hierarchies, all rigid boundaries between “man” and “woman”, “human” and “animal”, “animals” and “plants”, “life” and “non-life” are also being questioned. A transindividual ecology is indeed a form of ecology where our industrial waste ceases to be outside of nature, and becomes itself a living organism, where the molecules we inhale or englobe become literally constitutive of our being, whether they are alive or not – in sum, it is a queer ecology.

We use the term “queer ecology” not simply to mean a form of ecology that questions the intersections of sex and nature.⁷⁰ Much more broadly, this means a form of ecology that questions the boundaries between the discrete individualities, let alone the hierarchy between them. The term “queer” is here both an adjective and a verb, both a description of the queer nature of most of the living matter and an exhortation to queer the established hierarchies between different forms of being.⁷¹ Thus queer ecology is not (only) the ecology thought and practiced by people who

⁶⁵ Whereas Spinoza distinguishes between “affects” (*affectus*) and “affections” (*affectiones*), understood as modification of the substance, the English literature tends to unify both concepts in the English term “affect”. This is partly due to the fact that “affection” in English means both a bodily condition but mostly the emotional response to individual people and thus the caring for others. Similarly to Latin, Italian language distinguishes between *affetti* and *affezioni*. We use “affecting” to avoid confusion and to emphasize processuality.

⁶⁶ We borrow the expression from OELE, *E-Co-Affectivity*. Notice, however, that Marjolein Oele mainly focuses on interfaces between living being such as skin and placenta.

⁶⁷ This insight comes from Hasana’s Sharp, who emphasized the centrality of this notion in Spinoza’s philosophy (SHARP, *Spinoza and the politics of renaturalization*).

⁶⁸ On the notion of an “ecology without nature,” see MORTON, *The ecological thought*, pp. 3-4. Morton is obviously considering only a certain type of nature, that is the alienate nature.

⁶⁹ I take this term from COCCIA, *La vie des plantes*, p. 16.

⁷⁰ For this definition, see MORTIMER-SANDILANDS; ERICKSON, *Queer ecologies*, p. 5.

⁷¹ This is slightly different from Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson’s definition, who writes: “Queer, then, is both noun and verb in this project: ours is an ecology that may begin in the experiences and perceptions of non-heterosexual individuals and communities, but is even more importantly one that calls into question heteronormativity itself as part of its advocacy around issues of nature and environment-and viceversa” (MORTIMER-SANDILANDS; ERICKSON, *Queer ecologies*, p. 5). For them “queer ecology” remains linked to the questioning of heteronormativity, whereas for us it is a questioning of boundaries and established categories more in general.

define themselves as queer, but a questioning of heteronormativity and cisnormativity that is part of a more general attempt at questioning all kind of hierarchies.

Many authors have noticed some affinities between ecology and queer theory, with some even stating that “fully and properly, ecology is queer theory and queer theory is ecology”.⁷² Both queer theory and ecology have a vocation towards questioning established hierarchies, classifications and the rigid boundaries between the inside and the outside. But to question boundaries does not mean to eliminate distinctions, nor to give up individualities: it simply means conceiving them as transindividualities. Thus, whereas Tim Morton’ insights that queer theory is ecology is based on the notion of the mesh, as a “nontotalizable, open-ended concatenation of interrelations that blur and confound boundaries at practically any level”,⁷³ a transindividual philosophy frames queer ecology as one that examines boundaries and topples hierarchies while maintaining distinctions. The reason for this is easy to see: if ecological thinking means that boundaries are confounded at “practically any level”, and that we are thereby invited to “becoming open, radically open—open forever, without the possibility of closing again”⁷⁴, then not only do we end up in a night where all cows equally look grey, but also open the door for the idea that anything is therefore up for grabs by anybody. This is not only a caricature of a queer theory, but also a theoretico-political dangerous move that potentially justifies violence against queer bodies. To question

boundaries does not mean to state that one is “open forever”.

Although Morton’ understanding of queer ecology problematically brings it to a terrain where most queer people may actually be uncomfortable, it still points to a possible tension within queer theory itself: how to rethink the questioning of boundaries without ending up in a blind mesh where everything is available for grabbing? The notion of transindividuality can here be very useful, precisely to point out that emphasizing the inter –, supra –, and even infra-dependence of every being does not mean abandoning individualities and distinctions. It means conceiving every individuality as trans-individuality as the result of a process of affecting and being affected that takes place at multiple levels, as one that individualizes, so to speak, in single concrete formations in different spaces and times. It is a social ontology that enables us to perceive what happens beyond the threshold of somebody else’s skin, but also one that does not invite us to violate that threshold if uninvited.

If, from constitutional law to queer theory, from quantum physics to indigenous philosophies, there is a growing awareness that we are individual because we are transindividual, the question emerges of why it is so hard to perceive transindividuality before, after and inside individuality. The individualist ideology that accompanies modernity is certainly a part of the answer. The conditions of modern life tend to separate us from all that would enable the perception of such transindividuality: the air we breathe is taken largely for granted as plants only appear as

⁷² MORTON, *Queer ecology*, p. 281.

⁷³ MORTON, *Queer ecology*, p. 281. For a longer discussion of the “mesh,” see also MORTON, *The ecological thought*, pp. 28-38.

⁷⁴ This is the expression used as “opening moves” in MORTON, *The ecological thought*, p. 8.

accidental adornments in our cities, despite the fact that they literally constitute the breath of the world. There is a logic of alienation that governs capitalist modernity, which goes hand in hand with a logic of separation and classification.⁷⁵

The classification of eros into different forms of sexualities went indeed hand in hand with the classifications of people around the globe according to their phenotypes, and of the different life species according to modern taxonomies. It is indeed revealing that, historically, the rise of evolutionary thought in the wake of Charles Darwin generally coincided with the rise of sexological thought in the wake of Richard von Krafft-Ebing' classification of sexual pathologies: "new forms of biological and environmental knowledge jostled with new ideas about sex, and their commingling has had lasting effect".⁷⁶ Sex became a matter of being fit and individual attributes could be evaluated based on their apparent adaptiveness to an organism reproductive capacity.⁷⁷ It is not by chance that the invention and medicalization of homosexuality arose at the same time as eugenics and scientific racism:⁷⁸ as we have seen, all express the same obsession with the control of (re)production. Whereas cultural attitudes towards eros varied before modernity, with the emergence of the modern colonial gender system, the pathologization of homosexuality and

transgenderism became structurally functional to the maintenance of the "man-on-top binary gender system".⁷⁹

The development of the modern/colonial gender system is indeed inseparable from the modern/colonial drive to name, classify, and discipline both the life of the various populations and the life of the different species. In as much as pastoralism, and thus the habit of matching domesticated animals for the sake of reproduction makes us blind to the queer nature of most of life-reproduction, by falsely projecting heterosexuality as the norm,⁸⁰ so the modern/colonial drive towards classification and disciplining of the different life species makes us blind to our transindividual nature. Equally making us forget that, if it is true that property is theft, then, we must conclude that we steal not only from other humans, but also from the generative capacity of the more-than-human.⁸¹

In all and every single breath of ours, we literally only exist through others.⁸² The other is not only Other human beings, without whom we certainly would not exist, but also other Others, that is the other-than-human: including the plants that provide us oxygen and the toxic waste molecules that circulate in our bodies. To care for ourselves means to care for the world: "*la cura del mondo*", there cannot be the former without the latter, and viceversa.⁸³

⁷⁵ On the concept of alienation and its contemporary relevance, see JAEGGI, *Alienation*.

⁷⁶ MORTIMER-SANDILANDS; BRUCE ERICKSON, *Queer ecologies*, p. 7.

⁷⁷ MORTIMER-SANDILANDS; BRUCE ERICKSON, *Queer ecologies*, p. 10.

⁷⁸ JONES, *Eros and the mechanisms of eco-defense*, p. 99.

⁷⁹ JONES, *Eros and the mechanisms of eco-defense*, p. 178.

⁸⁰ JONES, *Eros and the mechanisms of eco-defense*, p. 178.

⁸¹ In a beautiful passage quoting Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Verter writes: "Throughout our lives we have been thieves. We have been stealing things that exists naturally – in and belonging to nature – , namely the conditions (*sankhara*). We have plundered them and taken them to be our selves and our possessions" (VERTER, *The flow of the breath*, pp. 236-237).

⁸² VERTER, *The flow of the breath*, p. 228. And also COCCIA, *La vie des plantes*, p. 21.

⁸³ PULCINI, *La cura del mondo*.

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