



Cartographies of the Body in Pandemic Times

Cartografias do corpo em tempos pandêmicos

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Abstract: Abstract: The Culture/Nature dualism has supplied post-Enlightenment philosophers, scientists and social scientists with a neat way to set limits on the respective concerns of the social and natural sciences, and has enabled the creation of distinctions between “modern” (read “civilised”) and “traditional” (read “primitive”) bodies and ways of being-in-the-world. Yet, when critically exploring issues of embodiment, the influence of the built environment on well-being, climate transitions and/or the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic such distinctions start to become problematic, as eloquently argued in the last three decades by feminist, post-human, new-materialist and political ecological –among others– debates and propositions. Giving continuity to an ongoing dialogue started in 2018 between scholars and activists from Latin America and Europe, we organized the online seminar “Re-assembling the nature-culture-body nexus: practices and epistemologies”. In this two-parts online event was explored how the interrelated domains of health, physical activity, and education can look like from perspectives that de-stabilise established ontological boundaries between nature, culture, the body, and their relationship. This paper is the transcription of the second session, called “Cartographies of the body in pandemic times”, and present the dialogues between Alice del Gabbo, Carla Panico, Gianluca De Fazio, Alexandre Fernandez Vaz and Eduardo Galak, researchers from Brazil, Italy Portugal and Argentina.

Keywords: Body; COVID-19; Education; Physical Activity; Culture.

Resumo: O dualismo Natureza/Cultura forneceu aos filósofos e cientistas sociais pós-iluministas uma maneira clara de estabelecer limites para as respectivas preocupações das ciências sociais e naturais, e tem possibilitado a criação de distinções entre corpos e modos de estar no mundo “modernos” (leia-se “civilizados”) e “tradicionais” (leia-se “primitivos”). No entanto, quando questões pertencentes à incorporação do social são exploradas criticamente, a influência sobre o bem-estar do entorno construído, as transições climáticas e a pandemia de Covid-19 em curso começam a problematizar tais formas, como é argumentado nas últimas três décadas por autores com perspectivas feministas, pós-humanas, novo-materialistas e político-ecológicas, entre outras. Dando continuidade a um diálogo permanente iniciado em 2018 entre acadêmicos e ativistas da América Latina e Europa, organizamos o seminário online “Re-ligando o nexo natureza-cultura-corpo: práticas e epistemologias”. O evento virtual desenvolvido em duas partes explorou como os territórios inter-relacionados de saúde, atividade física e educação podem ser repensados a partir de perspectivas que desestabilizam as fronteiras ontológicas estabelecidas entre natureza, cultura e corpo, e suas possíveis articulações. Este artigo é a transcrição da segunda sessão, denominada “Cartografias do corpo em tempos de pandemia”, e apresenta os diálogos entre Alice del Gabbo, Carla Panico, Gianluca De Fazio, Alexandre Fernandez Vaz e Eduardo Galak, pesquisadores da Itália, Portugal, Brasil e Argentina.

Palavras-chave: Corpo; COVID-19; Educação; Atividade física; Cultura.

Introduction

This paper is the transcription of the second session of the Online Seminar called “Re-assembling the Nature-Culture-Body Nexus: Practices and Epistemologies in Health, Physical Activity and Education”, that took place on September 21st 2020. My name is Eduardo Galak and I’m one of the

organizers of this Second International Seminar, with Nicola de Martini Ugolotti, Antonio Donato, Leonardo Tonelli and Alessandra Bueno, representing Universidad Nacional de La Plata from Argentina, the Bournemouth University from the UK, the Associazione Leib from Italy, and the Universidade de São Paulo from Brazil.

This seminar gives continuity to an ongoing dialogue started in 2018 between scholars and activists from Latin America and Europe. On February 2018, at the Aula Magna di Scienze dell'Educazione de la Università di Bologna, we organized the first seminar, called “Cosa può un corpo? Saperi e Pratiche”. As a result of this first seminar we edited the book “Le pieghe del corpo”, by Mimesis.

Going back to the motivating unresolved question the Spinozean/Deleuzean question “What a body can do?”, this second international conference continues to critically thinking the Nature-Culture-Body Nexus in the domains of Health, Physical Activity and Education. Of course, all of these questions and topics are crossed for the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the lock-down and the so far social consequences.

This paper presents the second session of the online seminar, called “Cartographies of the body in pandemic times”, with four distinguish interdisciplinary scholars from different parts of the world. First, Alice Del Gobbo, form the Department of Sociology and social research of the Università di Trento, in Italy. Gianluca De Fazio, whom participated at the Bologna seminar on 2018 and is one of the authors of “Le pieghe del corpo”, from the Centro di ricerca in Ecologia filosofica dell'Università di Bologna, Italy, and part of the Laboratorio di ricerca e didattica in ecosofia “Ubi Minor”. Carla Panico, from the Centro de Estudos Sociais at the Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal. And finally, Alexandre Fernandez Vaz, from Núcleo de Estudos e Pesquisas em Educação e Sociedade Contemporânea, at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brazil.

The main idea of the event (and of this paper) is to collectively shape some cartographies of the body in this special, unique pandemic times, and to think together about some epistemological and theoretical points of view, trying to understand in an interdisciplinary way these topics.

The organizers of this seminar chose to divide the seminar in two inter-related parts. In the first part was an exchange of points of view with the panellists, asking them to offer their perspective on some topics. The seminar was streaming live YouTube channel of the Associazione Leib, and audience was able to make questions to the speakers trough the YouTube chat.

Opening this panel discussion, a topic that affects our everyday life: the ongoing Covid 19 and the current pandemic times impacts on social consequences, especially with the lock-down and the social and physical distances recommended from epidemiology specialist.

IN WHAT WAYS THE CURRENT PANDEMIC HAS SO FAR FORCED/ENABLED US TO RETHINK THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BODY/NATURE/CULTURE IN YOUR EPISTEMOLOGICAL POINTS OF VIEW?

Alice Del Gobbo

My perspective on this question is first of all I would like to start from a consideration that is: for me, thinking the body-nature-culture nexus in the context of the pandemic is quite impossible to do without also thinking about the transformation that capitalism is undergoing in this period and also its processes of valorisation. Another thing that I would like to sort of put on the on stage at the start of my answer: I think that the pandemic has been seen as a kind of fracture as an event in the sense of something that was, you know, breaking what has been constructed as a normal flow of events and the normal flow of everyday life in late capitalist society. What I think is that the pandemic and also the crisis that has started with it somehow intensifies rather than changes dynamics that were already in place before, the dynamics of transformation of “capitalist world ecology”, if we want to say it like this. Talking about the body-nature-culture nexus, what I think is that the pandemic really shows the ways in which this link, this nexus, has been changing throughout the history of capitalism and specifically in this moment.

The narrative that we normally put in place regarding the transformation of capital and the ways it extracts values from life has been that the body and nature have been split from culture in this kind of hierarchical dualism in order to make these kind of more bodily, embodied and material aspects of life something to be appropriated, something to be put to work freely, as if they were infinite and free, without remuneration, in the possibility of extracting value in a kind of absolute sense if you want. We have always seen the subject of reproduction, those subjects that were most involved in bodily care reproduction, for example women, indigenous people and also nature in itself, so nonhuman animals for example and in general nature as what was non-valorised and so to be appropriated.

What I think is happening in this moment and was already happening before the pandemic really is that in my opinion the sphere of reproduction in a moment of crisis of capitalism was being valorised if we think for example of the capitalist green economy and the way it puts directly into the valorisation processes non-human nature. If we think about the privatization of welfare, for example, these are all examples of ways in which reproduction, the body, nature are somehow subsumed by what we think is culture and what we think is civilization and society and its working.

What I think is that the pandemic also shows and puts this evidence of the fact that actually nature, culture and the body are one and the same, sort of organic one that that works together and co-emerges, the pandemic really puts us in front of this evidence. Because, you know, the virus is something that is both biological and at the same time has also very kind of social and cultural consequences that are governed on that level on a political level, it has an influence on our lives. However, the risk is that this condition of embroilment, of this blurring of the boundaries becomes kind of a possibility for making the whole of life even more immanent to the processes of capital. There is a risk in the blurring of the boundary between nature and culture here, which is becoming capitalized, making the whole of life work through the dynamics of valorisation.

Even thinking of everyday life, the way it has been more and more conducted through for example digital platforms that are private that it has somehow channelled socialization and reproduction processes in a digital domain that is typically capitalist and seeking for profit. So, on the one hand, I think it is a positive moment to rethink our embeddedness in ecologies and territories and the constitution of our bodies within our cultures but, at the same time, there is this risk, and I guess later we will have also the opportunity to discuss how we can resist this dynamic.

Gianluca de Fazio

In my opinion, Covid-19 highlighted the contradictions of the neoliberal societies, the conflict between individual's freedom and public "health", then, the difficulties of relations between individual citizens and institutions, and what's lacking in public systems destroyed by 30 years of "liberal revolution", as Silvio Berlusconi called it in 1994.

Debating about lockdown has been a lively activity both in Italy and abroad, opening to many different perspectives. I think, Giorgio Agamben's (2020) take on sanitary despotism is well known throughout the globe, as well as the far-right-no-mask demonstration in Rome not so many days ago, echoing a diffused mood in other European cities.

This pandemic has brought up the importance of the body as a topic, to think about it in relation with its own nature and the "use of the self" as many philosophers call it (Agamben, 2016). In this sense, I would like to remark that it is not only about "our bodies", or simply human bodies, but also the body of the virus, its power of composition with other living beings.

I believe that critics of physical distance have in mind some sort of natural law valid for the individual and limited by State legislation (this is what the idea of sanitary despotism comes down to). On the other hand, supporters of distancing remark instead that there is no freedom of the individual whenever the individual's decisions have to do with community. It's feasible to see that,

today, bodies (locked down and made distant by Covid) are again on the main spot in a theoretical struggle between what's natural and what's civil and/or cultural. This is an ecological problem.

Clearly, regardless of what one may think, it's impossible to ignore that both critics and supporters of the current Covid-containment legislations have their own good reasons and motivations. I believe that, today more than ever, it's crucial to work out ways to avoid naturalizing bodies, an attitude that prevails in the mainstream discussion as can be easily seen. Following Karl Marx, the naturalization of states of things is one of capitalist societies' main goals, in order to hide those relations of force and those conflicts that are within social, political and sanitary decision-making, as Covid has made evident. In this pandemic, we face new forms of capitalist fetishism. It hides struggles and social and cultural inequalities behind a dangerous idea of nature, a naturalized idea of nature, a naturalized idea of our bodies and the body of a virus. In my opinion, this new form of fetishism forces us to re-think the Nature-culture-body nexus.

Carla Panico

I just wanted to share some reflections that actually come from my specific political background, which is the postcolonial studies and intersectional theories just to bring out some specific points that I noticed. Actually, what I do is just to look at the world with three categories that also represent my obsession: the articulation among capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism as a whole system of power and knowledge obviously. I am going to say something that may sound quite morbid but that starts from my own experience of living the pandemic in Southern Europe that is also my context of study, so it is quite specific. I think that we faced a kind of coming back of death inside the European modern, contemporary civilization. I am going to explain why it is connected in my opinion with our purpose of rethinking the body-nature-culture nexus. I think that maybe you know already that several postcolonial scholars have already pointed out better than me how the colonial system of knowledge/power that is based on Euro-centric thinking started basically from a specific way of articulating philosophy that we can synthesize with the Cartesian philosophy.

In other words, when Descartes started to say "I think so I am" is basically the moment when European civilization started to think about a deep separation first of all between mind and body, and on the other side between human thought and a nature that stays away and out the existence of the human beings as a rational entity. Basically, why is it considered to be the foundation of European-colonial way of thinking? Because it has put the European civilization in the situation to be considered as the only rational one: basically we are European because we are right, and we are

right so we can colonize all the others, because we own all the scientific, rational, technological skills that allow us to do that.

On the other side, obviously we started the representation of the world of the others, of the colonized as the reign of irrationality, of the magical thought of religion and superstition. This is quite a fundative segregation of the two parts of the world that is the base of a colonial way of thinking. I think that is important to draw this genealogy because it is not only a historical aspect but I think that we are facing now in our contemporary European society the extreme consequences of this way of constructing European identities. We are now living in a fully-developed capitalist civilization that is absolutely based on the idea of continuous productivity, in the sense that in some way from a colonial point of view we have rational thinking that obviously also implies secularization.

But, on the other hand, we have actually a religion based on the idea of eternal growth and eternal productivities and the necessity also to have an eternally increasing wellness. Why am I arriving at the point of wellness? Because I think that the issue of the body is central in this articulation, in the sense that we are living in a contemporary European Society that is the first one even inside the European history that is based on the hyper-visualization of only what is considered to be a wealthy body. This is quite interesting because a healthy body is defined as healthy more on political, ideological and moral categories than others, in the sense that a healthy body is above all a body that can produce, or can be productive.

Obviously this leads us on the other side to a complete foreclosure of the presence of other bodies that are considered to be not productive because they are sick, because they have disease, because they are not able because they don't stay in the norm of the binaries of gender and so on. I think that during the pandemic we faced the situation when this presence of vulnerable bodies of vulnerable lives that the European society has used to consider as something which simply belonged to the margins, to the people who inhabit the margins, the global ones and internal margins of our cities, of our territories, and suddenly also the hegemonic subject who happens to be white, healthy, masculine, binary and so on, had to face the real possibility of the vulnerability of his own body and the presence of death as something that may happen to us and to the people around us. Basically, I think that it puts in a crisis a specific and quite important aspect of the construction of the European identity that we are not so used to consider, and facing this crisis I think that we discovered that the classical Eurocentric way of thinking has simply no tools, no social, philosophical, theoretical tools to face it.

Alexandre Fernandez Vaz

The Jewish-Christian civilization, as well as the science, have taught us that human being was born to exercise the domination over nature, either because we are the image of God (God is similar the human being, God is like us), or because reason is the only guide to reach progress, to avoid danger, to escape from fear. The modern program of reason is the science. Science agrees that we do not know everything, but it supposes to have the power to get everything under its rules. “Disenchantment of the world”, so Max Weber. We could say that it is the program of science. Reason has however been protected us in the fight against the forces of nature. Reason *and luck* saved us from disappearing from the earth's surface.

Nevertheless, as Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno (1997) assert, in the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates with disaster calamity.

Enlightenment is the power of liberation from the oppressive forces of what we call *nature*: cold, hunger, violence of animals, winds, volcanos, snow and rain; at the same time which is also the will of destruction, violence, pure domination and making of the other a pure mean. Enlightenment is also, on the other hand and above all, impotence.

The crisis we live now shows that it is impossible to exercise the whole dominance over nature. Humanity is fighting against a virus, something it named as such, but cannot stop it. A virus is however not an enemy, nor a subject, a virus has no interest to kill us. We talk about the invasion of the virus in our bodies, but this is, through anthropomorphization, just a metaphor. Metaphors are currently a bad way to face an illness, we learn it by reading Susan Sontag (1988).

In this sense, we have much more difficulties to face the uncertainty and unpredictability of the future, that is, the very normal life. We have great difficulties to live the contingency. We can than realize perhaps two points: 1) contingency is also a space for the construction of freedom, an openness for the new possibilities and for the imprint of desire; 2) if we cannot dominate a virus, one must ask if it would not be the case of renouncing the illusion that it is possible to dominate a body.

Eduardo Galak

It is important to remark the interdisciplinary points of views, the common points and the theoretical tensions displayed. Also, of course, the social, political and geographical distances expressed. The idea of an intensification of capitalism that Alice and also Carla said, with modern identities and off course, what Alex just talked about bodies and nature domination, and what Gianluca speak as the tensions of individual and collective, all are really interest thoughts for our debates.

Following, continuing to the debate, the second question is a really *easy* topic: “What a body can do”?

What is the transformative power of the body that more-than-human and de-colonial perspectives and epistemologies enable?

Gianluca de Fazio

I apologize for the simplification I am now going to do but I would like to give an example of how capitalist fetishism naturalizes the idea of a pandemic. Covid 19 is a rich country disease instead of Ebola, which is a poor countries disease. I mean that diseases do not have the same effects on a supposed universal “human animal”. The poor country diseases hardly affect the rich countries, but the rich country diseases necessarily affect the poor ones. No symmetry at all.

It is tragic on one hand. However, on the other hand it offers us an important opportunity to rethink both the geopolitical and the neo-colonial power relationships. After all, as J. Diamond wrote, Western colonialism triumphed thanks to steel, guns and... disease (or germs). What I also think is that the spread of a pathogen and the ability that a social group has to cope with a pandemic, change radically the space of action of a body. I believe that such Covid experience unveils a very interesting topic: as we pointed out two years ago in the Bologna seminars, the power of a body is not something “natural”, it is instead a “social”, “institutional” and political power, as many philosophers outlined (Deleuze, Foucault, and others).

The idea of a body as a political power could offers new opportunities in order to think new ways of transnational conflicts: for example, how important will be the anti-Covid vaccine and its worldwide spread? How important will be the vaccine in relation to migratory phenomena?

The powers of bodies that do not matter - to say it in Judith Butler’s words - will have effects in the long run that we cannot predict. In my opinion, as philosophers and social thinkers we could only say that this pandemic has showed that the composition of “human” bodies with the “non-human” (which is a very large and complex category) will be the main political and social goal for

the incoming years. And this also means that the problem of subjectivity will have to find a new theoretical turn...

In my opinion, asking “what a body can do?” also means asking “what a subject can do?”, which relationships can a subject build to live well? What struggles can a subject conduct? What affections can a subject feel?

Carla Panico

I admit that it was a really hard question. I don't know if I'm going to properly answer because I want to share some reflections that the question suggested to me, and maybe I'm going a little bit out of what is supposed, but I would like to ask where “more” as not so much as the scholars, but more starting from my experience as an activist. Because speaking about the theme of social transformation that we used to associate to the power of bodies I thought about a conference that I heard some years ago by Gladys Tzul Tzul (2017), who is a Mayan theorist and activist, and she was talking about the issue of social transformation and above all, the issue of revolution. She said that we used to have a specific way to imagine the revolution that is quite masculine and Eurocentric because it is the idea that the revolution is the moment when we destroy everything that has already been there and we build something completely new. She said from this idea of building something completely new from scratch, the point is that the attention is every time on the subject of the revolution in the sense that there's a subject who happens to usually be masculine and white, who leads the revolution and everything that is built from scratch is partially his personal heritage, it is his own value. She said that, on the contrary, as an indigenous woman from Southern America.

I have a completely different idea of social transformation, where it is more important to what is conservative than what disappears. It is never something about completely destroying the world we're living in, but to transform knowing well that the energy never gets lost and that never gets completely lost. I think that we are all sensitive to this kind of image of social transformation even because of the Zapatista theory that many times references this idea of transformation. So, I was thinking about this because I was asking myself what kind of body is the subject of this kind of Eurocentric revolution, Gladys was talking about and it's a masculine body, it is a white body, and is also an able body that we are used to normalize as the normal body but it is obviously not, it's a privilege: it is a body with a specific privilege of health. So, I think starting from the pandemic I think that maybe something also a little bit provocative, but from the point of view of the social movement I think that the pandemic forced us for the first time also to ask ourselves how we can practice social transformation when we cannot taken for granted the presence of our body in space.

So, it is not only about what a body can do, but what can we do when our bodies are in a specific position of presence and absence. This is quite specific because it is not a common situation, or it is a common experience but obviously it is not the same situation for everybody because obviously the pandemic showed us how we are different bodies who are differently exposed to the disease. Obviously, we can think about the bodies of the old people, but, for example, I was really impressed by an article from the New York Times that said that during the lockdown in the State of New York it was possible to see only white young men just walking. It was because for example black people or non-white people in USA know really well that they have a generally difficult access to the health system. So it is not only about, you know, as Gianluca was saying, the nature of our bodies, but it is more about socialization. Our bodies are differently exposed to the disease also because of the way it is socialized.

Another point in this sense that made me thinking a lot too, as was work from a specific collective of disability activists from South Korea who created a really interesting network of solidarity during the pandemic and also of theoretical production, because they had this idea, this claim that actually as people with disabilities they are more used to this situation. Basically, what they say is that the pandemic makes general our specific experience of the absence-presence so our bodies in the (public) space and so also in the political space.

I think it was super interesting because it makes me think about a text from an American feminist that is called “The sick woman theory”. This was a text that started from the point of view of assuming the sick body of a woman, so of a marginalized body, as an epistemological point of view to imagine new forms of political transformation, because she speaks as an activist, but as an activist whose body is not always available to be present in the space. I think this is quite interesting because maybe it is also something that we are forced to rethink in this moment is the same relationship that we use sometimes to naturalize between the bodies and the political transformation. Maybe it was a good time to think about other kind of activism that we are also forced to experiment in this time of forced immobility on a global level and we are forced to stay in our homes because of pandemic.

Alexandre Fernandez Vaz

I think the question can be reformulated: What a body have to renounce? It is really important to have the capacity to say no.

If reason is power and impotence, freedom and domination, however paradoxical it may seem – and it is nothing more than that, an apparent paradox – we have no other chance in the

confrontation of the pandemic times. Without science and reason, we are under obscurantism, mad and its arbitrariness, pure subjectivism, post-truth. This is a very important topic in Brazil.

A bet on the reason is the possibility of a universal ethic that puts the right to life as an unquestionable condition for everyone. The crisis also shows us how important it is to consider science as a patrimony, a heritage of humanity, and how it is a central point of politics, and not – or should not be – just of the capitalist form of life. A critical defence of Enlightenment must have a place, much more now than never.

Many years ago, Walter Benjamin (1969) wrote the following:

Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin, which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of culture, which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And, just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another (Thesis 7, p. 256, Fernandez Vaz translation).

The guides for the ethical-political decisions are to be constructed by ourselves. Everyone has the right to life, freedom, justice, happiness; there are no lives with more right to others do.

Alice del Gobbo

I would like to start from the experience of bodies in the pandemic to answer this question. Because we lived in our bodies the fact of being locked down and see our bodily habits reshaped around as we were saying you know, the dispositives of digital capital and also within relationships that have shown with even more force their violence. For instance, in the case of women who experience domestic violence, the increased domestic violence during the pandemic. So, the experience of the body during the pandemic has been that of somehow being even more inserted within dispositives of bio-power, necro-power, the capacity that, as we were already mentioning earlier, the capacity that institutions and society in general had to decide who counted what bodies counted and what bodies did not and so could be disposed of or left or left dying for instance.

We have experienced all of this, but also bodies have in some ways they have spoken in their non-linguistic ways. So for instance they have shown a number of signs of distress, so panic attacks, anxiety but also the desire for instance to simply go out to meet people, to love. I guess, during the lockdown phase we saw bodies that, on one hand, were strictly controlled by apparatuses that were a kind of mixture and interpenetration of capitalist control and apparatuses of governance of various kinds that we can identify with the State. At the same time, what looked evident to me was that bodies were also always resisting this control. So going back to what I was saying earlier also, I think that during the pandemic during this moment of extreme control of this extreme and almost inescapable placing of bodies in the places that were meant for them that were decided for them by others, we also had very strong expressions of resistance which I guess talk about the irreducibility of bodies to any kind of strictly defined social order. I guess this is the first thing, what a body can do and what does, what always does is expressing irreducibility, singularity, unwillingness to be defined within strict boundaries.

Yet at the same time I think it is important to underline that what happened was that the fact of being in a pandemic, of being fragile, of being exposed to contagion meant that this narrative of resistance of singularity, of force, of willingness of expression could not be articulated in that masculine, white, able way of self-expression, of an expression of an ego. Instead, I think what really became evident was a kind of potency of fragility in making evident the centrality of relationally, of the fact that any form of well-being, of happiness, of life can only be constructed with others and in the care for others. I think the pandemic has opened new spaces of thinking that it can also be framed within a kind of more-than-human perspective, de-colonial perspective as a space of expression, but also an expression that is also always careful for the other and responsible for the other. So, kind of against an approach of domination and self-affirmation and towards a common construction.

Eduardo Galak

Thank you all for your comments about this *easy* topic of “What a body can do”. It is important to point out these confusions between physical and social distances we are living today as Carla spoke, the challenge of thinking the universal “human animal” as Gianluce explained, Alex speaking about the idea of civilization and barbarism as a way to interpret the body and nature nexus, and Alice for putting this idea of using fragilities of the body as potentialities, I think it is a really great challenge.

Finally, a last question, a topic related to your specific epistemological works about points of view on modernity and critical sociological perspectives, coloniality and postcoloniality, ecology and philosophical ecology.

WHAT TOOLS FOR PRAXIS CAN MORE-THAN-HUMAN PERSPECTIVES PROVIDE IN YOUR EPISTEMOLOGICAL POINTS OF VIEW TO CRITICALLY ENGAGE AND UNSETTLE CURRENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF MODERNITY, (POST)COLONIALITY AND ECOLOGY, AND SO ON, SO ON?

Carla Panico

I think that in some ways all the theoretical perspectives that we are using in this debate, the ecological, the feminist, the de-colonial one and so on, are all perspectives that already posed the issue of the provincialisation of the human subject. I think that this is something that we all have in common. But specifically, thinking about the more than human perspective during the pandemic I think that I also see some specific danger in the way that this kind of perspective became so famous also during the lockdown. For example, I was thinking about this debate on the “rewildening”, so the coming back of wild animals in the city that where there was not the same human presence and so on. But I think that, if we don't mix this this perspective with the other ones, the risk that I see is that this perspective can be a little bit self-apologetic in some way, in the sense that I'm not so sure that you know having a claim like we are the virus, we, the human beings, are the virus of our nature. That is obviously also true, but at the same time that is obvious that it can cancel many differences of power among human beings and among different bodies.

This may be quite trivial but what I actually want to point out is that I think that we should think the more-than-human perspective thinking about the fact that a specific anthropocentric way to organize the world and to think about the nexus among body, nature and culture is something that is not part of the human nature. In my opinion, this is a specific consequence of a specific articulation of power among colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy. So, basically all the perspectives like the de-colonial one, the feminist one, the political ecologist one are all perspectives that just refused this way of thinking the world and organizing the world.

It is more on this point in my opinion than from the point of view of generalization of the criticism to the presence of the human being in the world. I think that the point is that obviously at the moment the system of organizing and thinking the world that I have several times mentioned is so hegemonic that we are used to think, that it is just the only one that is possible to imagine but this is not true that's the point. All the kind of critical perspective that we studied that we embody basically you know in our lives are perspectives that are based on the idea that we can always trace

the genealogy of these powers and it means that these systems of power can be read inside history. Therefore, they come from somewhere they are not eternal they are not the only possible, they can end and above all that this system of power is so hegemonic because it managed to destroy the other ones. So, obviously, it's not my standpoint here to mention or to explain the other non-European non-Eurocentric cosmogonies of the world like the several ones that exist among for example indigenous people and continue to exist, but they are radical perspectives, not used to be anthropocentric. I think about this because I think that looking also at recent times and with an eye on social movements that are also an issue that is so important to me. I think that it is not for chance that we have so strong ecological movements that are led by women or carried on from ecofeminist perspectives. On the other side, there are really strong forms of re-appropriation of their own territory by indigenous communities, you know, because we have also the problem to decolonise sometimes our own look to ecological struggles. I think that is quite interesting that you know an indigenous person, an indigenous chief in a community in Brazil, not so long ago (in talking) about the ecological global crisis and specifically in Brazil, that is also organized by fascist the government, he said I'm not worried for us we have been resisting to all of these for years and years and years. I'm worried for the white people because they're not used to it. So, maybe I just want to say this, that I think that the more-than-human perspective this something that should be inside our perspective that is always a part of a de-colonial struggle and that's structurally part of a feminist struggle and an ecologist struggle from obviously an intersectional point of view, but also because it's something then make us think a lot more on how to de-construct a system of power and the system of imaging the world that is always presented as the only possible.

Alexandre Fernandez Vaz

Massimo Canevacci (2020) invites in a short book to think about a non-anthropocentric anthropology, an anthropology to understand the way we live now:

In any case, digital favours a connective subject with ubiquitous and transiting identities rather than a collective self with a fixed and compact territorial identity. Fortunately, I add... (...) I would like to outline a non-anthropocentric anthropology based on some simple principles: public citizenship, subjective connectivity, nature/culture co-evolution. Humans are no longer the centre of the whole cosmos but co-live together with other animal, vegetable, mineral, thing and even divine beings (pos. 68, Fernandez Vaz translation).

Talking about his own experience, he asseverates: “And I felt, I feel paradoxically, my current loneliness as a source of unlimited connections. A not solitary solitude, indeed, connective, enigmatic and above all tender...” (CANEVACCI, 2020, pos. 138, my translation). Canevacci’s position calls into a very modern topic, an illustrated belief, whose expression can be found, among others, by Karl Marx. The German philosopher writes very clearly in a footnote of *Capital: Critique of Political Economy*: “Peter only relates to himself as a human through his relation to another human, Paul, in whom he recognizes his likeness. With this, however, Paul also becomes from head to toe, is his physical form as Paul, the form of appearance the human species for Peter.” (MARX, 1992, p. 144, *modified translation by author*). The crisis generated by the presence of Covid-19 aggravates the social contradictions. A virus does not generate a crisis because of the simple fact that a crisis is a political, than, a human problem. Contrary to what is often said, the epidemic does not equal everyone, there is a very precise class trail in this fact. The lower economic strata of the population are more exposed because, under other reasons, they carry degenerative diseases. It must be remembered that people in Brazil still die of tuberculosis, a disease whose etiology has been known since the nineteenth century. It is important to think about body in class struggle movement.

Massimo Canevacci continues his invitation:

Things-of-the-virus become viral, paying homage to the author I love most and his text who had the ability to face and discuss moral values in transition during exile, indeed, the many exiles in which Adorno found himself live. The minimum dimension derives from the declared refusal to develop a maximal thought or theory, so less if dialectical or synthetic.” (pos. 73, Fernandez Vaz translation).

The urgency of an impulse for diversity of bodies is forward; for the right of existence of all bodies, which is not the right of pure lived life, but of qualified, political life. Speaking bodies. In the same context, the idea that the body can be managed like a company, this indelible mark of neoliberalism must be discredited. Instead of management, desire.

Massimo Canevacci has talked about *Minima Moralia: reflections from/on a damaged life*. In that beautiful book, Adorno writes a precisely synthesis:

Politics that are still seriously concerned with such a society ought not, therefore, propound the abstract equality of men even as an idea. Instead, they should point to the bad equality today,

the identity of those with interests in films and in weapons, and conceive the better state as one in which people could be different without fear (ADORNO, 2005, pos. 153).

Alice del Gobbo

I will start from something that has also come out in this discussion before and that is that in modernity what we have thought about as liberation was constructed on the basis of the splitting of society of humanity and nature. Once this split was produced and nature constructed as the realm of necessity, it became what makes men, and I use this word on purpose, not free. So the process of becoming free was based on the domination of nature and of all the forces that were not men.

I really agree with what Carla was saying earlier that actually the decolonial, feminist, trans-feminist, more-than-human perspectives and political ecology kind of agree upon is that this splitting is not only not responsive to the reality of living, of life, but it is also something destructive, and that it is something that needs to be overcome. I think that this kind of thought in its different articulations, of course it's not all the same, but what it starts to ask from us as we think about transforming the world is really to change our ideas of what it means to struggle for liberation.

To me, it seems like that, actually, this idea that at the basis of liberation in modernity has always been a kind of core of domination. It has meant that liberation in modernity has been constructed as emancipation – for example, the sort of empowerment of one subject over another subject. However, what we are kind of pushed to do if we adopt more-than-human perspectives is to think about liberation not in terms of domination but in terms of building relations, and I'm going back also to the idea of fragility, to the idea of being open to the other, and of being constitutively open to the other. So, if in some ways we recognize ourselves not as something bounded and essentialized but as something that co-emerges together-with other human beings and non-human beings, what we need to start to think of as we think and practice paths of liberation is the idea of freeing our relations from domination itself.

This also starts from the idea that also very much resonates with what Adorno said that it is impossible to found a project of liberation on domination, because domination of the other, being the other constitutive of myself, is also at the same time domination of myself, so self-domination. So, what tools for praxis come from this? I guess that something that we really need to incorporate in the praxis is the idea of the immanence of transformation, that it is made as we go along building our lives, our everyday lives together with other beings, and also that from this, from the experience from the concrete experience of being there we can politicize the affective, the desiring, the embodied aspects of experience and in some ways understanding what that kind of experience is

pointing to in terms of what life do we want to share and live together and build together, what kind of world do we want.

So starting from the concreteness and embeddedness of experience and of the changing of transforming relations right now and not in a future in an abstract future that maybe does not come and that is in the hands of one subject and not the other. I think also that maybe the decolonial perspective here is very important, it is something about changing our practices of knowledge that are also always practices of relations and constructing relations. Because we have been used to thinking knowledge as a way of mastering somehow something external to our mind which might also be our own body, but knowledge in this new context in the context of true liberation of relations I think might become instead of a tool for domination and mastery and control it might become a tool to work for liberation to become more capable and more responsible when we face the other something also different from us. Changing the practice of knowledge in one sense to deconstruct the dominative categories that we also always take for granted because they have been proposed as the only ones that are capable of describing the world and constructing the world appropriately and at the same time building a new kind of knowledge that is, as I was saying, responsible and careful.

Gianluca de Fazio

Previously, I concluded on the subjectivity (and subjectivity is related to revolution theme). This topic is a very important theoretical challenge for a political philosophy. Well, I am not referring to an idealistic, Kantian and ethnocentric concept of subject, but I mean “processes of subjectification”. Every time I talk about subject, I am talking about subjectification and the main question is: which bodies today can come together and create forms of resistance to current political relationships? To bring attention to the bodies means to shift the focus to the problem of praxis and struggles. Practices and struggles are the object of a political ecology. It is ecology in the strictest sense, that is, the science of relations among living bodies.

In my opinion, here lies the main difference between ecology and environmentalism: environmentalism often hides social conflicts; ecology, instead, puts the struggles at the center of its analysis. I believe that environmentalism without ecology is a green washing of capitalist fetishism. It is necessary to think of ecology as a method to analyze the present: ecology does not take relationships for granted, but like all sciences, it builds its own object of analysis, searches for them, maps them. In my opinion, this is a good definition of ecology: it is a cartographic activity.

Paradoxical as it may seem, ecology is the science that allows us to unmask naturalisms, because ecology aims to overcome Nature/culture dualisms. Ecology aims to study the relationships between living beings, human and non-human, and it does not propose to define what is natural and what is not: there is much more culture in our nature than what the common opinion accepts.

Ecology studies the symbiotic abilities of living beings. This power of living bodies is not divided into the subjective moral maxims and the objective laws of nature, the power of living bodies is not divided in “the starry skies above me and the moral law inside me”, as Kant said.

Ecology becomes an important conceptual tool to map and structure the political challenges of the near future, combining the struggles already underway (feminist, environmentalist and indigenous struggles) with the ability of bodies to live with new and unforeseen forms of life. In my opinion, only the ecological thinking can give feedback on the complexity of the current political configuration. Naturally, the bodies are always involved in an ecological map, with their own powers, their own fragility, and so on. This is the so called social ecology.

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