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This issue includes the first instalment of a two-part Care Dossier central to *Krisis* publications this year. The contributions to the Dossier testify to the various forms that "care" can take. It was our aim to take seriously Joan Tronto's (1993) exhortation that we need to extend care beyond the narrow dyad of interpersonal relationships of dependency. Many of the contributions to this issue engage with the extensive body of literature that has emerged from lived experiences of political and social struggles, primarily from feminists (of colour), which put friendship, love, and coalition-building centre stage. Others extend the concept of care beyond human beings, to include non-human entities, as well as our built environment and processes caused by extractive capitalism. Such an approach allows recasting practices of providing and withholding care as material, economic, and political and thus to highlight its intertwining with structural conditions of racism, neo-colonialism, patriarchy, and their particular neo-liberal inflections. While "Care" is central to the articles collected in the Dossier, it also reverberates within the other contributions to this issue.

Rhiannon Lindgren's article "The Limits of Mutual Aid and the Promise of Liberation within Radical Politics of Care" explores the political ambivalences of mutual aid in times of COVID-19 through an in-depth historical comparison of the Black Panther Party with the Wages for Housework campaign. The question of if and how care provides a site of resistance is further examined by Ludovica d'Alessandro in "Careful Cracks: Resistant Practices of Care and Affect-Ability", which articulates a Deleuzian notion of vulnerability that underscores the importance of concrete and diverse bodies. In "Affective Architecture: Encountering Care in Built Environments" Linda Kopitz shows how the deployment of care in contemporary architectural design is entangled with neoliberalism, while also pointing to the political potential of built environments and their imaginary innovation. The themes of the articles that explicitly deal with issues of care resonate with the two articles that are adjacent to direct discussions about care. In her article "Verloren normaliteit? Van het verlangen naar autoriteit naar een Beauvoiraanse ethiek der dubbelzinnigheid," Maren Wehrle interrogates the desire for authority by developing Simone de Beauvoir's notion of ambiguity into a novel account of normalcy. Finally, Matthias Pauwels' article "Staging Uncivility, Or, The Performative Politics of Radical Decolonial Iconoclasm" engages with the Black Lives Matter movement in Belgium and, more broadly, the performativity of protests that take aim at colonial monuments.

This issue also includes two interviews. In her conversation with Tivadar Vervoort and Liesbeth Schoonheim, Estelle Ferrarese elaborates on her recent work on care, vulnerability, and the importance of a social-constructivist, as opposed to an ontological, approach to these concepts. Bram Wiggers interviews Jason Read on transindividuality and the promises of cross-reading Marx and Spinoza. The importance that *Krisis* pays to the diversity of genres of social critique is also evinced in the publication of "Critical Naturalism: A Manifesto." The authors, Federica Gregoratto, Heikki Ikäheimo, Emmanuel Renault, Arvi Särkelä and Italo Testa, see this programmatic text both as a critical intervention in Critical Theory and as an open invitation to further

think collectively. It is in this vein that *Krisis* explicitly welcomes contributions engaging with the manifesto.

This issue ends with five book review essays. Patricia de Vries situates Emma Dowling's *The Care Crisis: What Caused It and How Can We End It?* (2021) in feminist-Marxist debates; and Sue Shon reflects on Mihaela Mihai's *Political Memory and the Aesthetics of Care* (2022) and the promises that "mnemonic care" holds for providing new narratives whjich question official, memorialized histories. Tim Christiaens reviews Adam Kotsko's *Agamben's Philosophical Trajectory* (2020), warning us against a teleological reading of the oeuvre of the theorist of biopolitics. Mark Neocleous' publication on *The Politics of Immunity: Security and the Policing of Bodies,* which maps the cross-disciplinary productivity of the concept of immunity, is critically discussed by Paul Gorby. The book review section concludes with an essay by Maarten van Tunen that engages with Jason Stanley's *How Propaganda Works* (2015) and *How Fascism Works* (2018).

Finally, the concept of "care" serves as a reminder of the - often invisible – labour that goes into the making a journal such as *Krisis*, and our dependency as editors on reviewers, authors, and other contributors. This reliance raises important issues regarding the structural conditions of neoliberal academia which are not unique to *Krisis*. It is also, however, a source of intellectual pleasure; and in the spirit of open access *Krisis* will start releasing a podcast series this Fall that aims to convey this pleasure beyond the confines of the written word.

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The Limits of Mutual Aid and the Promise of Liberation within Radical Politics of Care
Rhiannon Lindgren

Abstract

The present COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated conditions for continued survival, and community-based mutual aid networks have appeared seemingly organically to address such conditions. I argue these networks often fail to recognize capitalism's mediation of caring labor, namely, the processes of survival and reproduction which are consistently undermined and demanded by capital's accumulation. Instead, I propose a politics of care built on insights from the Black Panther Party's and the Wages for Housework campaign's respective responses to a lack of reproductive resources, which emphasize the position of survival struggles as a primary site of anti-capitalist political agitation and mobilization.

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The Limits of Mutual Aid and the Promise of Liberation within Radical Politics of Care
Rhiannon Lindgren

I. COVID-19 and the Category of Care: An Introduction

In 2020, the so-called "Crisis of Care" came to a deadly breaking point with the spread of the novel COVID-19 upper respiratory virus, which at the time of writing has claimed 4.3 million lives globally out of over 203 million confirmed cases (Fraser 2017, 21: Worldometer 2021). In the continuing struggle against COVID-19, the question of care has once again come to the fore of political discussions, arguments, and disagreements about the distribution of resources worldwide. The workers of the world found their basic reproductive necessities, such as food, PPE, hygiene products, and shelter, once again in false scarcity due to capitalism's mismanagement of a crisis. To combat the lack of universal and accessible social services in the United States and many parts of the world, regular people were called to action and worked to establish networks of mutual aid on social media and collaborative virtual platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Slack. These networks came together to provide the very reproductive resources in scarcity, like masks, groceries, money for utility bills, etc. through community fundraising and donations.

This is neither the first nor the last time in history that one's very survival has become a process of political contestation. Consequently, it is no longer tenable to continue to ignore the centrality of care within the larger project of political economy and its resulting strategies of political mobilization. While I acknowledge the tremendous impacts of mutual aid on local communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, this paper seeks to produce a structural assessment regarding the viability of these newly formed networks to contain within them the possibility of a direct, coordinated attack on capital. To do this, I turn to two different historical political movements, which also responded to a lack of reproductive resources and used basic processes of survival as primary sites of political agitation and mobilization. In surveying the activities of the Black Panther Party and the Wages for Housework campaign in the 1960s and '70s, I elucidate histories of survival struggles in order to recontextualize their insights about the possibility of mutual aid as a primary tactic for anti-racist, anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, and feminist political organizing. Ultimately, while survival is a struggle worth politicizing, it would seem that there is not always a guarantee that struggles to survive yield a revolutionary political consciousness. After a brief examination of the continuities and discrepancies between the Black Panther Party (BPP) and the Wages for Housework (WfH) movements,[1] I conclude that only when combined with sustained and multifaceted political education, which intentionally seeks to produce a shared analysis of the current state of our world, does struggling to survive create a shared horizon of revolutionary praxis. Consequently, mutual aid as it appeared during the COVID-19 pandemic is critiqued for its inability to continuously produce such a shared political analysis grounded in a capacious and complex account of class as determined by race, gender, and geographical location. Ultimately, I argue that to create a radical politic of care incapable of being co-opted into further securing

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the conditions for capital's domination, community care needs to be rooted in political education with a multidimensional class analysis in order to transform survival into opposition.

II. Caring Labor and Ambiguity: A Theoretical Note

Sites of life-making can become integral to collective projects of survival under conditions of dehumanization, extraordinary violence, and psychological warfare. Black feminists from within the U.S. context have pointed toward the home and familial relationships as an incredibly powerful site of resistance through which Black people are able to reproduce their own lives in the face of insurmountable odds (Davis 1981; hooks 1990; Threadcraft 2016). In these and many other Black feminist works, the relationship among practices of care, survival, and resistance become articulated as nascent political projects. Yet, the family unit itself is often a primary site of the reproduction of compulsory heterosexuality and hierarchical gender roles which are deeply reliant on gendered divisions of labor, and can itself be a site of acute violence. Consequently, securing survival through the family unit is ambiguous in terms of the scope and the objective of its resistance. The ambiguity of this survival as resistance both within and outside the family unit and its relationship to political praxis is the primary inquiry I make in this paper.

In order to better articulate the framework through which I investigate these terms within the histories of the BPP and the WfH movements, it is essential to connect the ambiguity of survival as resistance to the wider processes of life-making and life-maintenance which could be loosely called social reproduction. The work it takes to create human life, and to protect and nurture that life, whether it be your own life or that of a loved one, is an unending and often thankless "job." Questions regarding the structural relationship between capitalism and human reproduction have been prominent at different points throughout the histories of socialist and feminist critique (Ferguson 2020, 41). According to Sue Ferguson (2020) in *Women and Work: Feminism, Labour, and Social Reproduction*, it was intervention of Lise Vogel's *Marxism and the Oppression of Women* in 1983 which proposed a more robust notion of social reproduction as not solely dependent on the universalization of the housewife figure (111). Current Social Reproduction feminists often take up Vogel's underappreciated work in order to reformulate processes of social reproduction as sites of anti-capitalist, anti-racist, and feminist struggle (Bhattacharya 2017).

Tithi Bhattacharya states that Marxism makes a claim that workers who produce the commodities are the "beating heart" of the capitalist system, but Social Reproduction feminists want to ask, "who produces the worker?" (Pluto Press 2017). I might suggest taking Bhattacharya's question further, by claiming a need to evaluate the processes which produce the working class as a whole. Given practical limitations, I cannot unpack the intricacies of who does or does not belong to the working class; however, it is worth emphasizing at the outset that for Social Reproduction feminists generally, and for my project of articulating a politics of care in particular, class is one part of the matrix of our social order mediated by capital for its continued accumulation. Part of the value of structurally linking the realm of reproduction to that of

production is that it produces an analysis of capitalist logic which no longer reduces all forms of oppression to its "base" economic form. As Nancy Fraser has articulated in her exchange with Michael Dawson on expropriation, we can think of capitalism as "… not an economy but a *social system of domination*" (Fraser 2016, 165). Even though Marx himself underemphasized this reality by focusing primarily on wage-labor exploitation, both Fraser and Dawson argue that the notion of expropriation is particularly essential to understanding capitalism's deep entanglement with racial and gender oppression.

While I cannot elaborate the powerful and productive nuances and debates within the strands of feminist theory Ferguson calls Social Reproduction feminism, it is essential to note two primary contributions which underlie this paper: 1) Reproductive labor, and consequently the survival which it procures, is ambiguous because global capitalism thrives on, and in fact requires, human capacity to labor. When we reproduce ourselves, and by that I mean when we survive even in order to resist, we are also providing capital the means for its continued accumulation. 2) This understanding of class analysis and political economy is inherently multidimensional in order to account for the ways wider social orders impact, and are impacted by, the social and economic order of global capitalism. There are internal debates about the theoretical value of the approach labeled "intersectionality" (McNally 2017; Ferguson 2016), but when evaluating the histories of the BPP and WfH political perspectives, we can think of class as fundamentally constituted by processes of racialization and patriarchal norms about gender and sexuality. The impact of race on the project of survival was a central concern for the BPP organizing efforts toward which we now turn.

III. The Black Panther Party: Survival, Revolution, and Revolt

In her insightful retelling of the history of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, Robyn Spencer's (2016) *The Revolution Has Come: Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland* offers an organizational analysis of the BPP's development. Spencer's extensive archival research supports a close reading of the Party's survival programs and how they were key to the overall Party platform, which guided the political objectives and activities of the BPP. Well-known historian and former Party member, Paul Alkebulan (2007), argues the Party's founding members, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, "were searching for answers to America's seemingly intractable racial problems" (4). Unlike the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and popular Civil Rights leaders, Seale and Newton were uninterested in nonviolent or non-confrontational solutions. In 1966, the Black Panther Party was officially born with the express aim of ending political brutality and the creation of a ten-point program which sought to ameliorate the conditions in which Black communities were suffering (Alkebulan 2007, 5). After a couple years of armed demonstrations emphasizing the necessity of Black self-defense, armed police patrols, and a few violent interactions with the police which left some Party members killed by cops, Newton was arrested in 1967. The national campaign to "Free Huey" followed, mobilizing hundreds of new members, with BPP branches popping up all over the U.S. (Spencer 2016, 56-60). Thereafter, the Party faced a slew of obstacles challenging the efficacy of their organizational practices and tactics.

Spencer presents the tumultuous period of brutal state repression at the hands

of the FBI's counterintelligence program COINTELPRO through an emphasis on its effects for the women Party members (2016, 89). She notes that as radical Black leaders and members were arrested or targeted with unprecedented and intrusive surveillance techniques, women became the foundation of the Party. An informal survey conducted by Bobby Seale stated that in 1969 women made up two-thirds of the Party at the time (Cleaver 2001, 125). When Newton's conviction for killing an Oakland police officer was overturned in 1970, he was released on bail and circulated an open letter formally commenting on the necessity of support for both the Women's and Gay Liberation Movements (Spencer 2016, 96). Given the financial pressures of consistently rotating bail funds needed to get their comrades out of prison, Spencer notes that many Panthers lived collectively and divisions of labor around housework were often contested and contradicted Newton's claim of formal gender equality (105). She carefully concludes that, "[i]nternal debates around sexuality, gender politics, and leadership simmered under the surface because many [Party members] viewed them as deferrable at a time of political instability" (105). Alternatively, the internal debates which took center stage within the Party revolved around leadership, militarism, and Party loyalty.

In the period of restructuring between 1971 and 1974, the Party's survival programs became an "organizational priority" around which the Panthers rebuilt themselves in the wake of continued state repression (Spencer 2016, 116). While the Free Breakfast for Children Program has received a lot of mainstream attention, one of the most successful and longest running BPP survival programs was the Oakland Community Learning Center (OCLC) which began in 1971. Spencer claims that having such a solid program grounded in the community actually opened the doors for new survival programs to emerge when specific needs were identified. Quoting a taped interview with Ericka Huggins, Huggins recalls, "a number of new programs have developed just by having the school here…" and then goes on to link the Seniors against a Fearful Environment program with the creation of a welfare referral system. This demonstrates the wholistic and intergenerational organizing that was able to happen because of the Center (119). The OCLC was completely tuition free until 1977 after a failed campaign to elect Bobby Seale as Mayor and Elaine Brown on City Council left the Party in financial deficits, and participants were asked to pay up to $35 a month (Spencer 2016, 186). Internal Party reports from this time indicate that the level of "political work," such as door-to-door organizing and follow-up with participants in the survival programs, was significantly decreased. The Oakland BPP chapter found it difficult to do "any of the other activities that are done to hold the previously established networks and to build new face to face relationships with people on the precinct level" (156).

To highlight some of the radical political theory which might have undergirded or resulted from engagement with Party's politics, I now turn to the work of two influential political prisoners associated with the BPP and the struggle for Black liberation: Assata Shakur and George Jackson. It is clear that big names in the BPP leadership such as Bobby Seale, Huey Newton, Elaine Brown, and David Hillard deeply determined the principles and frameworks under which the Party operated. In highlighting a perspective from below, that of rank-and-file members and former members, I seek to highlight "imprisoned intellectuals" who represent the effects of a critical engagement

with the BPP's revolutionary framework (James 2003, xiv). Firstly, in reviewing George Jackson and his understanding of the development of political consciousness, struggles to survive are sutured to a revolutionary project and politic. Secondly, Assata Shakur's autobiography reveals some notable limitations of the BPP around political education from the perspective of a Black revolutionary woman who decided to leave the Party to pursue a different path toward Black liberation.

George Jackson's (1972) *Blood in My Eye*, is a collection of essays and letters written during his incarceration and finished mere days before his murder in August of 1971. It offers a searing critique of the fascistic "Amerikan"[2] state while simultaneously producing a wealth of concrete suggestions regarding political, organizational tactics and frameworks through which Black people can fight against the State (ix). Jackson's reflections on the dialectical movement between survival, or meeting "on the ground needs", and a revolutionary political education, highlight some of the aspects of political organizing that the BPP struggled with in the latter part of the Party's existence. His writings identify the need for "dual power," which seeks to create a sustainable alternative for community control within Black communities (113). Before creating the autonomous infrastructure necessary for community control, it is important to create a more livable life for working class Black communities. For Jackson, the conditions of revolutionary consciousness are crucially proceeded by the condition of a full stomach, free medical care, and a safe place for children and adults to rest their heads. He quotes Newton on the survival programs in a "Letter to a Comrade★", stating that, "the survival programs satisfy the deep needs of the community but they are not solutions to our problems. That is why we call them survival programs, meaning survival pending revolution" (Jackson 1972, 70). Jackson goes onto claim that the survival programs "fill a very real vacuum" already existing within Black communities where people are living in appalling conditions without having basic bodily needs met, such as food and shelter (70). He argues that this will demonstrate to working class Black people what it means to organize around their needs, calling this the introduction of the "people's government" (71-72). For Jackson at the time of his writing, the BPP was the strongest political apparatus which existed outside of the liberal façade of electoral politics.

Jackson (1972) contends that the subsequent step to meeting the needs of the people is having the vanguard lead the people in the construction of its own autonomous people's government – a vanguard Jackson explicitly states will be the Black Panther Party (74). Jackson writes that:

> Consciousness grows in spirals. Growth implies feeding and being fed. We feed consciousness by feeding people, addressing ourselves to their needs, the basic and social needs, working, organizing toward a united national left. *After the people have created something that they are willing to defend,* a wealth of new ideals and an autonomous subsistence infrastructure, then they are ready to be brought into "open" conflict with the ruling class and its supports (84).

The key of Jackson's call to "feed" our consciousness is not only to nourish the physical body, but to then put that nourished body to work. Work in this context cannot mean wage labor for the capitalist, but instead refers to the creation of the autonomous

infrastructure which seeks firstly to meet unmet needs, and secondly to build a political consciousness within Black communities through creating alternatives together (76-77). Although Jackson does not clearly enumerate what the people's government will look like, or under which guiding principles it will operate, he juxtaposes it against the process of withdrawal. He argues that after the revolution has "failed," retreat is not a practical way to rebuild resistance. Instead, Jackson uplifts Newton's concept of the Black commune, which he sees as one way the revolutionary class could construct "a political, social, and economic infrastructure, capable of filling the vacuum that has been left by the establishment ruling class…" (122). Clearly, the people's government is intended to meet unmet needs "on at least a subsistence level," but it also involves creating conditions for autonomy from within the contradictory position of what Jackson calls the "Black Colony" (122).

When the bulk of the money made through the Party became directed toward electoral campaigns and the security for high-ranking officials, the survival programs lost the emphasis of building face-to-face relationships with the people. The clinics still offered free medical and dental services, but there was no follow-up or invitation for further Party involvement after the services were procured (Spencer 2016, 159). While stomachs might have been fed and illnesses abated, the construction of autonomous community structures waned. This is particularly evident when the main Party activities were voters' registration drives during the 1977 Brown/Seale election campaign. Is electoral politics an infrastructure of Black autonomy that people will be, as Jackson notes, willing to defend? The BPP's relationship to the people in Black communities is not static throughout its history. On my reading, the ultimate downfall of the BPP came largely in part from the highly successful counterrevolutionary campaign of COINTELPRO that separated the BPP from the people it sought to serve out of security concerns. Additionally, the focus on political projects of legitimacy, such as electoral politics, threatened to institutionalize and de-fang a revolutionary force whose original intension was to jeopardize the stability of the Amerikan empire. This tension appears in Assata Shakur's autobiography *ASSATA*. In it, she recalls a riveting personal history of her involvement with the Black Liberation Movement which led to her capture and imprisonment by the state for seven years before escaping to Cuba (Davis 2003, 64). Her favorite time in the BPP was spent working with the Free Breakfast Program as she described the work to be an "absolute delight" (Shakur 1987, 219). Alternatively, Shakur found the education requirements for building the internal Party consciousness to be incomplete.

Although the major reasons for Shakur's departure from the Party were due to internal conflicts between Newton and other longtime members, she found the political education program to be inadequate to its task. She describes the political education (or PE) program as having three levels: one for community members, one for official BPP members of a cadre, and one for the highest level of leadership in the Party (Shakur 1987, 232). Interestingly enough, the community classes which focused on the Party's ten-point program and "general objectives and philosophies of the BPP" were the most engaging (221). Her experience with the cadre PE classes was noticeably worse. She recalls that, "[m]ost of the time whoever was giving the class discussed what we were studying and explained it, but without giving the underlying issues or putting it in any

historical context" (221). Shakur bemoans the fact that even though they could recite quotes from Mao's *Little Red Book*, many cadre members still thought the US Civil War was fought to free the slaves. She notes that, "to a lot of Panthers, however, struggle consisted of only two aspects: picking up the gun and serving the people" (221). To be clear, Shakur was not principally opposed to the use of armed force in revolutionary struggle, which is attested by her connection to the Black Liberation Army, but that for her the picking up of the gun is part of a history of Black peoples struggling within the U.S. and around the world to liberate themselves and their people. Contextualizing that history and one's place within it is of the upmost importance.

Without centering the construction of multifaceted political analyses, different BPP chapters sometimes found difficulty sustaining the growth of the political consciousness of the wider Black community in which they were embedded. Despite having known several members with keen political insight, Shakur observes that there was not an organized attempt to spread that consciousness throughout the Party in general. Additionally, those best at organizing were often the busiest and had little time to teach their prowess to comrades. Shakur hypothesizes this deficiency was bred simultaneously from exponential Party growth in a short period of time, combined with the brutal state repression which was a feature of the BPP's existence "almost from its inception" (Shakur 1987, 222). Understandably, it would be difficult for the vanguard elements, as Jackson suggests, to feed a political consciousness to the people that the Party has not sufficiently fed to its members. There is, again, an unfortunate separation between the important work of meeting unmet needs, and the growth of a wide and complex shared political analysis necessary to unite a group of people constantly under attack from capital and its agents of safeguard within the State.

The activities of the Black Panther Party impacted a whole generation of young people, especially young Black people, in their struggle for Black liberation. The history of the BPP demonstrates an unwavering commitment to its community and the transformation of their daily experiences. To politicize the very survival of marginalized populations, which capital seeks to simultaneously exploit and destroy, makes the maintenance of such lives – the caring labors that one's community performs to ensure their existence in a world determined to obliterate them – a revolutionary act. And yet, bare survival, with only a daily reproduction of our bodily and human needs, is not enough to levy a strong opposition to the capitalist, and perhaps following Jackson's analysis, fascist Amerikan state. When survival is politicized, there are important and sometimes unspoken gendered divisions of labor which become exacerbated, and the BPP encountered difficulty appropriately integrating an account of such divisions into their political activities. In order to unpack the political consequences of these sexual and gendered divisions of labor, I turn toward the international Wages for Housework movement of the 1970s which sought to politicize "women's work" as an integral part of a feminist class politic.

IV. Wages Against Housework: "We Can't Afford to Work for Love"

In the 2017 volume, *The New York Wages for Housework Committee: History, Theory, and Documents*, Silvia Federici and co-editor Arlene Austin, reprint key documents, posters, and internal memos from the New York Wages for Housework Committee based on

Federici's personal archive. The book is thus an incomplete history with many pieces of documentation missing (Federici 2017, 11). Even with this lacuna, the archival material which details the demands and political framework of the Committee combined with Federici's retrospective commentaries offer a unique glimpse into a highly marginalized and vilified movement within the larger Women's Liberation Movement during the 1960s & '70s. After outlining both its theoretical foundation and the resulting tactics, I consider more specifically the appearance and activities of the autonomous Black Women for Wages for Housework group. This group's activities, as well as Selma James's work, the leader in the WfH London chapter, emphasizes the differential impact of race, class, and sex on women's work. Not only did WfH politicize the monotonous and daily reproductive labor of millions of women, but they saw refusal of this labor as a key to any winning strategy toward an anti-capitalist and feminist revolutionary project.

The international movement for Wages for Housework began in 1972 in Padova, Italy at a not-so-serendipitous meeting of four women all hailing from different countries. This meeting was partially due to the recent publication and circulation of an essay "Women and the Subversion of the Community", as well as the lived experiences of frustration with developing radical and feminist alternatives to more "traditional communist parties" (Federici 2017, 18). Foundational documents such as the 1972 "Statement of the International Feminist Collective" and the 1974 "Theses on Wages for Housework", detail arguments about the marginalization of the wageless worker. Such arguments were in efforts against the inclination of other socialist feminists who argue that women formed a "sex class" of their own outside of socioeconomic status. Instead, WfH feminists claimed that what divides unwaged workers from waged workers is "power, not class" (Federici 2017, 31). Instead of abandoning class analysis, the WfH feminists openly called for a redefinition of "class" itself since the traditional Marxian definition seemed to elide not only wageless women workers, but those col-onized peoples in the capitalist periphery. The WfH collective writes, "[c]lass struggle and feminism for us are one and the same thing, feminism expressing the rebellion of that section of the class without whom the class struggle cannot be generalised, broadened, and deepened" (30). Accordingly, a class struggle which chooses to forgo agitating around the struggles of women, actually undermines itself since the struggle cannot be universalized nor expanded without radicalizing and incorporating women's paid and unpaid labor.

In their landmark 1972 essay "Women and the Subversion of the Community," Dalla Costa and James (2019) articulate housework, or the unwaged caring labor unevenly foisted upon women, as the hidden basis through which the exploitation of the wage is secured.[3] The primary method of this obfuscation includes rendering the work being done by women in the household a "personal service outside of capital," (Dalla Costa and James 2019, 23) or, as much of the WfH pamphlets and posters allege, "a labor of love" (Federici 2017, 43). The authors detail the ways in which women are bereaved of what small pleasures may be afforded under the capitalist mode of organization: their sexuality is co-opted to ensure the reproduction of labor power broadly; they are isolated in their homes and share no space with other houseworkers with whom they may at least commiserate; their children are being indoctrinated and

subjugated by the educational system; and any bargaining power that the waged worker may gain from technological innovations is lost on the housewife as her work, even with a dishwasher, never seems to be complete (Dalla Costa and James 2019, 20-26). By arguing that the unwaged work of the housewife – and the authors emphasize that the working-class housewife is the figure under investigation at present (18) – actually secures the "freedom" of the waged worker, Dalla Costa and James are able to importantly argue that the exploitation of women is conditioned not merely by individual men, i.e. their husbands, but the entire capitalist class as a whole.

Additionally, the authors challenge Marxian political economy even further by claiming that the unwaged work which secures the freedom of the waged worker is in fact productive, which is to say, it creates surplus value.[4] The authors argue that given the historical institutionalization of familial relations under developing capitalism, it is clear that the only person "liberated" from reproductive work within the unit of the hetero-nuclear family is the man. This is not because he does not need to be clothed, fed, washed, and emotionally engaged, but because he is not structurally coerced to perform such labor on himself or anyone else. Instead, Dalla Costa and James (2019) state that unwaged housework is not a superstructural phenomenon, meaning historically contingent and malleable to capital's accumulation, but in fact represents a key dependency within the base structure of capitalistic exploitation (30). If we fail to grasp the family unit as an elemental unit for the creation of surplus value, "then we will be moving in a limping [sic] revolution – one that will always perpetuate and *aggravate a basic contradiction in the class struggle, and a contradiction that is functional to capitalist development*" (Dalla Costa and James 2019, 20). Instead of agitating this division against the ruling class, the male-dominated left exacerbates this unequal internal division of labor as non-essential and secondary to wage-labor exploitation, which actually prevents class struggle from broader realization.

Given this account of the labor women perform and the explicit theorization of class as a majorly influential but not completely reductive aspect of woman's oppression, WfH's political framework was perhaps rather unique at the time of their organizing. Even though they were a small group, they faced immense backlash from both within and outside of the feminist movement. Both the "white male left" and the liberal feminist movement saw the demand for wages as deterrent to the kind of "equality" they sought, i.e. equal opportunity employment and exploitation (Lopez 2012, 8). However, naming wages as the primary goal of the movement was certainly limiting. Instead of creating a process in which women struggle against the conditions of their care work, the understanding of their struggle became entangled with ideological valuations of time and money. Such capitalist ideology is central to the false narrative that wage-labor occurs on the "free" market as an exchange between "equals." It was unclear to those outside of the movement that WfH sought to abolish the conditions under which such work is performed, as opposed to (the ultimately futile task of) making women's work valuable under the rubric of capitalism.

Aiming to unmask the material distinctions from the ideological functions behind so-called "cultural" differences, Selma James (2012) contends that the inner-class divisions are conditioned by capitalist organization, which is to say that the internal

dynamics of homophobia, racism, and sexism within the working class fundamentally benefit capital's continued accumulation (95). As stated in "Women and the Subversion of the Community," there is a structural and not contingent relationship between such systems of domination and capital's social organization. For James (2012), the "White left" claims that cultural differences, or identarian distinctions, should be worked out separately from class struggle, as if trying to think them through a class analytic creates confusion (95-96). But in fact, those very "cultural" differences which make material impacts in our daily lives are actually how a class is dis-unified, disorganized, but also reproduced. The very process of reproduction demanded by capital relies upon sexism, homophobia, and racism and then in turn reifies those logics of oppression. James argues that "[t]hese power relations within the working class weaken us in the power struggle between the classes. They are the particularized forms of indirect rule, one section of the class colonizing another and through capital imposing its will on us all" (James 2012, 96-97). From this view, the cultural differences which beget actual material differences in living conditions, divisions of labor, length and viability of life become recognized not as a struggle of one "culture" over another, but as a struggle of all exploited and dominated members of the "world proletariat" against the ruling classes (Federici 2020, 111). In this process, James and her comrades internationally hoped that taking class struggle out of the factory into the home would not make class struggle obsolete, but widen and multiply it.

In 1975, a group of Black women led by Margaret Prescod and Wilmette Brown created an autonomous group within the WfH global campaign entitled Black Women for Wages for Housework (BWfWfH). They were inspired both by the WfH political position and the immense government budget cuts to crucial social services in New York City during 1975. Excerpts of their literature are reprinted in Federici's collection and a (1980) Falling Wall Press pamphlet entitled *Black Women: Bringing it All Home* which reprints a speech Margaret Prescod gave during a 1977 WfH meeting. These sources show the particularity of Black women's reproductive struggles against the State and its determinant qualities of racism, surveillance, and sexual violence. In the inaugural issue of their journal, *Safire*, BWfWfH defends the rights of French sex workers on strike by rallying against their vilification for "demanding money for the work that all women are expected to do for free" (Federici 2017, 122). Unsurprisingly, this is not only a nuanced and pro-worker account of sex workers at a time when mainstream feminism was having so-called "Porn Wars" (Salucci, 2021), but also a link to the disproportionate exploitation of Black women's sexual labor during chattel slavery. The BWfWfH group become integral in identifying the ways in which Black and white women's sexual and domestic labor have historically been unequal, and the group emphasized the important racial dimensions to the struggle for Welfare Rights during the 1970s.

In a 1997 speech, Prescod highlights the figure of the mammy during chattel slavery and the double function of her labor to both secure the reproduction of the master and his white family, while also using this position of proximity to pilfer the masters' resources and struggle against the very reproductive work being imposed. Using examples of the mammy "taking wages" from her master in the form of food, clothing, or books to help educate herself and other slaves, Prescod (1980) contends that "we can

see that within the housework of the Black woman in the time of slavery two things were going on: the utilization of that woman to reproduce the master and his family, and at the same time that woman making a struggle against that work, to destroy that work" (16). The service of so-called sexual favors is also central to Prescod's analysis of all the different sites at which the mammy's reproductive labor is exploited, even "[…] labor is exploited, even after the formal abolition […]" after the formal abolition of slavery in the West Indies (16). She then powerfully argues that the reproductive labor which was forced upon the mammy was used as the basis for an incredible accumulation of wealth in the U.S., concluding that Black women in particular are owed a renumeration for the generations of their unfree and coerced labor, both agricultural and reproductive.

V. Congruencies, Discontinues, and a Radical Re-reading of Mutual Aid

The double function of the Black woman's labor during chattel slavery denotes an important structural element to reproductive or care labor in general. The ambiguity of reproductive labor, that is its both generative and restrictive features, can make it a site of both resistance and domination. If one is interested in mobilizing reproductive labor within a larger emancipatory politics to create care work as a site of anti-capitalist struggle, how can we tell when survival is oppositional to capital and when it is compliant? This question orients the final section of this paper, which seeks to integrate the insights offered from the WfH and BPP histories of struggle toward an analysis of the proliferation of mutual aid projects during COVID-19. Both of these movements offered a clear evaluation that the wider social conditions under racialized and patriarchal capitalism were the causes of their suffering while simultaneously politicizing everyday efforts to survive. During COVID-19, efforts to survive became increasingly difficult and as a response practices of mutual aid emerged, including food and clothing drives, grocery deliveries, community fundraising for bills or rent on the internet using Venmo, CashApp, or GoFundMe, and many other online platforms. It would be impractical to attempt to survey all these practices in detail. Instead, I focus on the seemingly organic and non-governmental organizations which were created largely from online communities such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Through referral to a brief study done on thirty-two mutual aid organizers who used these methods in the United Kingdom during the height of the COVID-19 governmental lockdown orders, and Dean Spade's book (2020), *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During this Crisis (And the Next)*, I consider the value of mutual aid as an organizing strategy for a radical politics of care.

Dean Spade is an organizer, academic, and lawyer whose lifework has been dedicated to building a movement for "queer and trans liberation based in racial and economic justice" (Spade, 2021). As a committed abolitionist and anarchist, he has been deeply involved in anti-racist prison activism which includes collaboration with Critical Resistance, an organization working to facilitate political organizing inside and outside the prison walls. Spade is committed to anti-capitalist and anti-colonial organizing as a foundational aspect of community members meeting unmet needs. While the book builds upon previously published work, it specifically caters to the increased development of such networks in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Spade argues that mutual aid both meets unmet needs while mobilizing people to fight back

against the social and political conditions which create and perpetuate such dangerous living environments. Spade (2020) claims that, "[g]etting support at a place that sees the systems, not the people suffering in them, as the problem can help people move from shame to anger and defiance. Mutual aid exposes the failures of the current system and shows an alternative" (13). He is clear that the target of the mutual aid organizer is not the individual in need, but instead the systems of domination which maintain untenable living and working conditions (12). Spade argues that community members engaged in mutual aid are able to reject the liberal charity model through which individuals are evaluated as worthy or unworthy of assistance (47-38).

The emphasis on the institutions which create and sustain unsafe living and working conditions for a large portion of the world's population makes mutual aid an integral part of revolutionary resistance for Spade. Moving people out of the shroud of shame caused by increased precarity also means moving them from a feeling of isolation to a feeling of mutual recognition or collectivity. Even though Spade sees mutual aid as one tactic among many that we can use to combat these systems of exploitation and domination, he finds it to be a particularly useful tactic because it "brings people into coordinated actions *right now*" (42). Some textual examples of strong mutual aid programs include Mutual Aid Disaster Relief which sought to provide mutual aid to Puerto Rico after 2018 Hurricane Maria and the Sylvia Rivera Law Project which provides free legal advice to trans and gender nonconforming people (Spade 2020, 18). The urgency and practicality of getting the resources to people immediately helps to combat "the false separation of politics and injustice from ordinary life" (27).

In the article (2021) "More Than a COVID-19 Response: Sustaining Mutual Aid Groups During and Beyond the Pandemic" in *Frontiers in Psychology*, Maria Fernandes-Jesus et al. interviewed thirty-two organizers about their experiences creating mutual aid projects during the pandemic. These interviews took place over several months with interviewees from England, Wales, Scotland, and North Ireland. Overall, the authors found the following themes most common among the interviewees: a sense of community-building through meeting localized needs over time, building trust through connections to individual and collective organizations, and collective coping strategies which lead to feelings of hope and efficacy (Fernandes-Jesus, et al 2021, 6). Noting that creating trust between the mutual aid group and the community was essential, the authors report that generally there were no criteria of eligibility needed in order to request aid. The authors define this as operating in what Spade calls the "solidarity and not charity" model (8). Even though the participants reported a high hourly commitment – one participant stating to have organized seven days a week for six weeks straight – they also reported a sense of shared identity and supported other organizers with coping strategies (9). There were both positive and negative reviews from participants about working with local governmental institutions. Though the authors highlight the anarchist roots of mutual aid through reference to Spade and Peter Kropotkin, there was no mention of shared political perspective or analyses from the interviews.

It is clear that some of the community projects which Spade calls mutual aid, most notabily the Free Breakfast for Children program by the BPP, did actively reject the larger social conditions which produced abject poverty in Black neighborhoods.

Simultaneously, the BPP identified the United States government and its logic of white supremacy as the perpetrators of violence and harm instead of the suffering populations. However, in this brief review of COVID-19 mutual aid efforts in the U.K., it is less clear to me that organizers used a shared political analysis as that from which to base and perpetuate their projects of mutual aid. Even if some interviewees in "More than COVID-19" had radical political views, it was not enough to become highlighted in the results, nor did it seem that such views brought people to organizing. Most interviewees noted a general feeling of wanting to help those in need (11). The global crisis of COVID-19 demonstrated quite starkly the "disposability" of certain populations in the eyes of the economy and various nation-states, yet this was not explicitly stated by organizers as a motivating factor for their efforts. Some limitations that the authors identify include that "it was particularly difficult to reach politicized groups and groups working in deprived and marginalized areas" (Fernandes-Jesus, et al 2021, 14). While I would concede that mutual aid does bring people into action right now, it does not in all instances produce a shared political analysis which could orient participants toward future endeavors.

Why is shared political analysis so important? In the study referenced above, good-hearted people came together and found community in each other during difficult and isolating times. This, in and of itself, is an individually replenishing and helpful survival strategy; however, without a shared political analysis which understands the intersectional dynamics that produce and exacerbate such crises in the first place, then mere survival will end up supporting capital instead of opposing it. Survival cannot be an individualized moment of moral achievement. I argue that past historical movements which politicized human survival and caring labor, such as the BPP and the WfH campaign, demonstrate this clearly since both movements framed survival as a collective and oppositional effort. Consequently, the very task of surviving became itself a political act. It is imperative to learn from the anti-capitalist struggles of the past in order to forge a way toward a liberatory future. In uplifting survival without a robust feminist and anti-racist class politic, one produces a politic of care that, ultimately, does the work the State refuses to do: namely, reproduce and attend the unmet bodily and psychological needs of the laboring classes. This work is done not in the name of revolution, but through the framework of individual good will. I find that mutual aid could have the potential that Spade identifies in his work, but without a thorough analysis of each mutual aid group's political grounding it may actually work more for the State than against it.

In closing, I suggest that a radical politic of community care able to oppose the avoidable death and harm from COVID-19 must be joined with attempts to create autonomous infrastructure which not only secures survival, but builds political consciousness through radical care work. This can look like passing out groceries after de-escalation trainings; free first-aid training with a brief lesson about global anti-capitalist struggle; free or barter-based childcare collectives in your neighborhood; refusal to do unpaid emotional labor for your boss. These individual practices need to be processed collectively and might offer more potential for developing political consciousness than redistributing scant resources. COVID-19 mutual aid can become transactional when a one-time donation puts little emphasis on the very conditions which produce suffering,

yet still affords the donor a sense of moral righteousness. It is not enough to care for each other out of internal moral obligations. In order to combat the gendered, sexual, and racial divisions of care labor, the very conditions of such work must be rejected. Militancy and confrontation to capital cannot only happen in the streets through public demonstration. It is no longer acceptable to refuse to include caring labor as a part of revolutionary politics. Protest and care work can and should be two parts of the same process which seek to confront capital directly and refuse to do its bidding. In re-amplifying the need for a radical politics of care over and against current mutual aid efforts to combat the disproportionate effect of COVID-19 on the world's workers, paid and unpaid, I revisit histories of anti-racist and feminist struggle to learn the most vital lessons about how to radically reshape our survival and ensure the future of our liberation struggles.

Notes

1   From this point forward, the Black Panther Party will be referred to as BPP or the Party, while the Wages for Housework campaign will be signified by the WfH acronym.

2   In this section in particular, I pay homage to the radical spirit of both Jackson and Assata by the purposeful misspelling of America to "Amerika" which can be found in both texts being reviewed here. This a rhetorical strategy aimed at illuminating the full breadth of the brutal and bloody history of white supremacy propagated by the U.S. state and its human safeguards. As noted in my reading of Assata, truly powerful political consciousness demands a persistent historical contextualization and this misspelling is my attempt to meet her demand within my own analysis.

3   There seems to be some recent dispute over the original authors of this prolific essay, as both James and Dalla Costa had written about in their recent collected volumes. Given that I cannot parse which thinker has the most correct account of events, I have cited both of them as the authors in part to credit them both equally. There is generous use of the first-personal plural perspective, as the pronoun "we" is peppered throughout the essay; by citing both authors, I hope to lend legitimacy to both women as central forces within the international WfH campaign, regardless of any subsequent political disputes.

4   This hotly debated topic within the disparate theoretical accounts which could be called social reproduction feminisms is not a clear cut issue; however, I tend to disagree with the claim that all unwaged reproductive labor directly produces surplus value. And yet, it can be especially difficult to tease out this question with the growing commodification of reproductive activities and the increased tendency for upper class women in the global north to outsource their housework to lower class women in the capitalist periphery. Additionally, people such as a Tithi Bhattacharya argue for an abundant notion of the social reproduction which includes such public institutions as education and healthcare. In such an account, certain groups of waged workers would also be contributing to the overall reproduction of the working and capitalist classes, and as well as to the production of surplus value for capital because their work is waged. Therefore, it is not quite correct to say reproductive labor never yields surplus value, but the question demands detailed contextualization given exactly what kind of reproductive labor is under investigation and the various forms that labor make take.

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Biography

Rhiannon Lindgren is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Oregon. She teaches in the Philosophy and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies departments. Her research primarily focuses on feminist political organizing strategies which seek to confront imperialism, colonialism, and capitalism in order to create a global movement for queer feminist liberation.

Krisis JOURNAL for contemporary philosophy

Careful Cracks: Resistant Practices of Care and *Affect-ability*
Ludovica D'Alessandro

Abstract
Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, several institutional policies and discourses, speaking in tandem with a "health" and "financial crisis", have highlighted what seem to be the consequences of an aporetic disentanglement of capitalist relations of production and reproduction. Indeed, partial halts to economic production in the wake of COVID-19 have become equivalent – through symbolic and material actualisations of vulnerability and care – to a suspension of people's capacity to sustain themselves. This dynamic has thus overshadowed alternatives to the capitalist tie of economic production with social reproduction. Resisting this landscape, local solidarity groups have emerged globally to counter the flattening of reproduction for the perpetuation of the socio-economic status quo by creating networks of mutual aid and support. Learning from these movements, I propose *affect-ability* as a philosophically productive term and tool to conceptualise resistant practices of care, toward underscoring the inherent relationality and vulnerability of bodies as well as its unequal and inequitable effects, while rethinking the notion of care itself from these ontological, political, and ethical premises.

Licence

Careful Cracks: Resistant Practices of Care and *Affect-ability*
Ludovica D'Alessandro

Introduction

Situated in Milan, Northern Italy, during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, I continuously witnessed institutional policies and discourses that arose from the seeming consequences of an aporetic disentanglement of capitalist relations of production and reproduction. Instead of critically considering the contentious and problematic nature of these institutional sites, the main governance techniques during the pandemic have reaffirmed a "There Is No Alternative" logic. Contrary to this backdrop of narratives and policy landscapes, practices of solidarity "from below", such as food and medicine distribution, community childcare, mental health support, and others, have proliferated nationally and globally. In this way, vulnerability and its unequal distribution have come to orient and maintain relations of resistance.

Thinking through these events, I propose *affect-ability* as a philosophically productive term and tool to conceptualise resistant practices of care. In this article, I define and develop an account of affect-ability that is based on every body's ability to affect and be affected. By underscoring the ontological relationality and exposure of bodies, this concept invokes ethical and political accountability for those who become affected and how they become affected. Through articulating bodies as always-already affected and affecting, care work can reproduce or resist current social processes of normalisation, while exposing the connections among ontological, ethical, and political dimensions of care practices.

The "Two Crisis" of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, questions of care, social reproduction, and health have come to the forefront of political debate and organisation. Exposing the lacks, inequalities, and discontinuities in the infrastructures which sustain life, the pandemic has reinforced activist demands against cuts and privatisation of healthcare services, exclusion of care workers from basic labour rights, and shortages in medicine and vaccine distribution across global divides, among other terrains of struggles. Moreover, protests in several countries highlighted that the pandemic has not only affected populations in terms of its immediate effects on health, but it has crucially severed pre-existing structures of inequality and marginalisation.

The conditions which "make life possible" have been under attack more intensely, not only by the risks immediately related to one's health and care necessities, but also by what has been described as a *financial crisis* taking place at the same time as the *health crisis*. Indeed, companies ceasing production temporarily or going bankrupt, uncertainty in the financial market, and shrinkages in the demand of goods have catalysed extremely high rates of job loss, home eviction and debt, thus exacerbating the more "direct" effects of the pandemic. If the nexus between these two crises – one productive and the other reproductive – is hence taken as a given in most hegemonic policies and discourses, I seek to destabilise this causal necessity by asking: why is the possibility to reproduce life thwarted in the moment economic production shrinks, slows down, or stops?

In Europe and in the United States, the current pandemic-induced financial crisis has already resulted in significantly higher falls in Gross Domestic Products (GDP) than those recorded from the financial crisis of 2007-2008. Considering narratives around the latter in its connection to another crisis – the so-called "refugee crisis" in Greece –Anna Carastathis, Aila Spathopoulou, and Myrto Tsilimpounidi observe:

> What needs further unpacking, then, is the interdependency between the dominant understanding of crisis and the implied return to normativity. In most debates about the current crisis, questions about the future are limited to asking when things will return to 'normal'. In other words, the massive social and political shock of the crisis and the destruction of the material conditions it imposes create nostalgia for what existed 'before', an uncritical acceptance of the conditions before the crisis (Carastathis, Spathopoulou, and Tsilimpounidi 2018, 31).

Such mobilisations of the notion of crisis thus go hand-in-hand with a naturalisation of the *status quo*. Translated to today's landscape, I argue that speaking of "financial crisis" as a direct and necessary consequence of the "health crisis" caused by the pandemic may, in fact, hinder the unravelling of the capitalist ties between production and reproduction, which dangerously naturalises the ideology that decreases in economic growth are necessarily equivalent to interruptions in life sustainability.

Capitalist Reproduction and Counter-social Reproduction

The entanglement of capitalist relations of production and reproduction has been put under profound critical scrutiny by Marxist feminist thinkers attempting to elaborate a unitary analysis of the capitalist system which has converged into *social reproduction theory* (Bezanson and Luxton 2006; Vogel 2013; Bhattacharya 2017). Social reproduction theory aims to sever the ties between "labor dispensed to produce commodities and labor dispensed to produce people" as parts of the same "systemic totality" (Bhattacharya 2017, 2). Thus, this analytical apparatus may help explain how capitalist construction of such a monolithic system – seemingly without exogeneity: as the infamous Thatcherian slogan goes, "There Is No Alternative" – parallels the strategic exclusion and differential inclusion (Mezzadra and Nielsen 2013) of forms of labour traditionally outside wage mediation and/or undertaken in extremely precarious conditions on which the system is actually built, with care and reproductive work being among the most paradigmatic examples.

The marginalisation of reproduction as "unproductive" has often been accompanied, in capitalist societies as well as most of their economic analyses, by a process of feminisation and naturalisation of forms of labour relegated to the domestic sphere. The privatisation of social reproduction is discussed by Isabell Lorey (2015) in relation to contingent historical actualisations of precarity and autonomy. Through European modernity, the male white bourgeois subject is indeed affirmed as an autonomous being able to act "rationally" in the public sphere, as free as he is master of his own capacities to produce and possess (Lorey 2015, 29-30). As further analysed by Denise Ferreira da Silva (2007, 52-3), this process paradoxically proves the postulate, as in John Locke's liberal notion of the body politic, that a white male subject is autonomous from

any external determination even in – and precisely by – its subjection to political rules. Against this backdrop, the kind of risk protection liberal governmentality offers for the white male citizen is fundamentally based

> on the one hand, on the unpaid labour of women in the reproduction area of the private sphere; on the other hand, on the precarity of all those excluded from the nation-state compromise between capital and labour - whether as abnormal, foreign or poor - as well as those living under extreme conditions of exploitation in the colonies (Lorey 2015, 36).

Therefore, liberal articulations of autonomy are heavily premised on violently unequal regimes of precarity enabled by the naturalisation of free reproductive labour, as well as through systems of colonial exploitation and racialisation. How is it then possible to practice and account for autonomous forms of reproduction and care which – even temporarily – interrupt and/or resist the ties among capitalist, patriarchal and colonial regimes of production and exploitation?

The reproduction of relations that are resistant to the capitalist *status quo* has been defined by Helen Hester as "counter-social reproduction – that is, as *social reproduction against the reproduction of the social as it stands*" (2018, 64). Counter-social reproduction exceeds and resists the reproduction of labour-power; it is rather tied to shaping communities and infrastructures of care for marginalised lives and bodies. As argued by Silvia Federici on a similar distinction between the two dimensions of reproduction (2008), establishing what could, following Hester, be described as a form of "counter-care" is fundamental for the sustenance of social movements themselves. For instance, in thinking about the tradition of working-class mutual aid, Federici claims that, by radically re-composing care as a terrain of struggle, movements have been building, in parallel, collective forms of reproduction crucial to their own perpetuation (2008, 8). Reclaiming this "counter" dimension of reproduction, then, is itself an act of resistance – exploding capitalist monolithic logic by an autonomous socialisation of one of its pillars – and of care for resistance, essentially sustaining struggling communities.

Returning to the notion of crisis, counter-social reproduction may well constitute a crisis by means of its inherent interruption of capitalist gears, creating a crack which then opens space for another meaning of the word "crisis": an open-ended moment of affirmative redefinition and social action. As framed by Carastathis, Spathopoulou, and Tsilimpounidi:

> The question becomes how we can move from the state of emergency (crisis, precarity, displacement) to a state of transition (critique, resistance, occupation), and then to one of emergence (solidarity networks, different social formations, alternative economies) (Carastathis, Spathopoulou, and Tsilimpounidi 2018, 33).

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, several moments of "emergence" have indeed occurred: solidarity networks unfolding from below, such as those in Northern Italy which proliferated concretely in food and medicine distribution, mental health hotline, legal support, and itinerant theatre performances, among others. These solidarity groups took action in support of the psycho-physical health of communities, as well

as in response to the socio-economic effects of the pandemic, thereby caring for the consequences of what, under capitalism, is an entangled health and financial crisis. These moments of emergence broke the causal necessity between the two precisely by reclaiming reproduction as a terrain of struggle and by creating caring and careful relations that exceed economic growth. Through these networks, I witnessed processes of political organisation that attempt to build communities that move *from and away from* unequal regimes of precarity and marginalisation. Learning from them, I now turn to unpack the ontological, political, and ethical premises on which forms of care as counter-reproduction can be built.

From the Power to Be Affected to Affect-ability

Affect-ability is a philosophically productive term and tool to rethink the concept of care in its resistant dimensions. By affect-ability I mean every body's ability to affect and be affected, which gestures towards a theory of bodies as inherently vulnerable, exposed and in-relation, both affected and affecting in non-neutral fields of power across unequal and inequitable regimes.

Let me first discuss the ontological aspects of this concept. A starting point for my conceptualisation of affect-ability is Gilles Deleuze's expression "*power to be affected*" [my italics], presented in the philosopher's reworking of Michel Foucault's theory of power (1988, 71). Moving from a Spinozian conception of affects, Deleuze argues that any exercise of power manifests itself as an affect (1988, 71). Against this backdrop, a power relation is a relation between forces, where forces are defined precisely by their power to affect and be affected: for instance, if to incite and to produce constitute active affects, then to be incited, or to be induced to produce, constitutes reactive affects (1988, 71). Reactive affects are, for Deleuze, not simply passive – the flipside of active affects – but rather *relational*, as there is an irreducible element which resides in the encounter between forces consisting in the "force affected [...] capacity for resistance" (1988, 71). In this Deleuzian account, the possibility of resistance then constitutes a third power of force – next to its power to affect and be affected – which stems from the encounter between active and reactive affects in relation to "a transformative outside" from which new sets of force relations can emerge (1988, 86).

Therefore, if the capacity to be affected, accordingly to Baruch Spinoza, made every body a possible vessel for increases and decreases of power, this capacity, in the Deleuzian reading, fundamentally turns into a form of power itself. Moreover, if forces are defined by their power to affect and be affected, force itself is inherently subject to exposure, and this exposure – or ontological susceptibility – establishes the relational potential of resistance: encounters of active and reactive affects can either result in the molecular constitution of a resistant outside, or be fixed within a particular set of reactive forces. For this reason, I consider this conceptualisation significant for theorising how care and reproduction can resist or reproduce specific processes of normalisation.

Looking more closely at the relationship between resistance and the capacity to affect or be affected, we can see that it performs two main and significant gestures: this relationship *problematises the active/passive binarism*, while affirming *resistance as "primary"*. Considering the first point in Deleuze's description of the "power to be affected",

the possibility of resistance is catalysed precisely by the relationality immanent to any affective encounter, in which active and passive poles are not predetermined or distinguished, but only temporarily produced within specific phenomena. As further explained by Vinciane Despret (2013, 38), relating forces with affects invites renewed articulation of agency. In this context, there is no unidirectional movement or linear causality, but – as in Deleuze's understanding of affects as relational – agents are activated precisely by being acted upon, affecting by letting themselves be affected and conferring to others the power to affect us. The second crucial aspect of Deleuze's account of power that affirms affect-ability is that resistance "comes first" and can be regarded as "primary" in regard to power relations (Deleuze 1988, 89). Here, resistance functions as the inexhaustible and creative potentiality that continuously composes new diagrams of power by being in relation with the outside from which mutation and change emerge (1988, 90). These considerations articulate a reading of resistance as a state of becoming: always-already in-relation but never completely exhausted or reducible to a particular set of power relations. Thus, resistance cannot be accounted for solely in terms of subversion or contraposition to a norm, but becomes the possibility for new configurations which exceed existing power stratifications and destabilise previous categorisations. This understanding of resistance starts precisely from what is "exogenous" to capitalist relations, thereby avoiding the production of merely reactive discourse and practices which remain confined to pervasive and monolithic capitalist logic.

The *power* to be affected, then, allows for resistance to be theorised as a phenomenon where spheres of activity and passivity collapse, where affecting and being affected cannot be disjointed or distinguished as separate temporal moments, and where an ontological relationality and indeterminacy undergird and enable encounter. However, I would also like to confirm being affected and affecting as an *ability* – indeed, as *affect-ability* – instead of exclusively a power, in order to emphasise the ambivalent, normative, and opaque embodied dimensions of this capacity. Afterall, the power to affect and be affected is always-already situated in contexts which are not neutral, empty, or transparent. Presenting a similar critique in *Biopolitics of Feeling*, Kyla Schuller contends that any theory of affect which does not "interrogate how representations of affective capacity function as a key vector of racialization" remains within the same "biopolitical imaginary" that has first produced those hierarchies (2018, 15). To account for the production of these hierarchies, Schuller extensively explicates how the notion of "impressibility" – the capacity of internal responsiveness to external stimuli – has spawned, in nineteenth-century racial thought, an "animacy hierarchy," assigning to racialised bodies "the impaired state of throwing off affects but being incapable of being affected by impressions themselves" (2018, 13). In contrast to this "unimpressibility", the European subject was represented as having the capacity to absorb external stimuli that functioned for his own development and process of self-reflection.

The hierarchical dimension produced through this kind of relational ontology is also highlighted in Ferreira da Silva's theory on the constitution of self-determination for the white male subject, in which the transparency of the European subject is strictly tied to the "writing of the others of Europe in affectability" (2007, 134). This condition is defined by Ferreira da Silva as that "of being subjected to both natural (in the scientific

and lay sense) conditions and to others' power" (2007, XV). As Schuller's reflections on Ferreira da Silva's theory highlight, these two seemingly contradictory accounts of racialisation could actually describe two temporally adjacent aspects of the same process: what Ferreira da Silva calls "affectability" becomes, in fact, the precondition for Schuller's description of "unimpressibility" as the "lack" of "the self-constituting capacity of autopoesis" which in nineteenth-century racial thought marked the racialised person as "easily moved and yet unable to retain the effects of those movements" (2018, 218, n.9). In line with this argument, Schuller also writes that "[a]ffective capacity depends on its definitional opposite, debility, for theoretical solidity" (2018, 13); hence, affect-ability relies on a normative outside to sustain and produce its internal effects.

For all these reasons, I argue that affect-ability has an inherently indeterminate ontological character which is nevertheless tied to its actualisation in specific bio/geopolitical fields; this necessitates an account of its constitutive exclusions, such as the figure of debility mentioned by Schuller. The notion of "debility" has been greatly discussed by theorist Jasbir K. Puar in *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (2017), where the term was attentively analysed "as a needed disruption (but also expose it as a collaborator) of the category of disability and as a triangulation of the ability/disability binary" (2017, XV) by foregrounding a biopolitical consideration on mass and long-term debilitation of racialised bodies. In "Prognosis time: Towards a geopolitics of affect, debility and capacity" (2009), Puar also defines debility as the opposite of affective capacity, where the latter is always in "steady tension," since bodies' encounters with "social, cultural, and capitalist infrastructures" often render affective capacity simultaneously "exploitative and exploited" (2009, 162). As affect-able bodies move – or don't move – within infrastructures which can capacitate as well as debilitate them, the same reliance on affective capacity as a mode of resistance must be problematised, also in view of what counts as a "political act" and/or "political space" in the first place, as well as how to establish an ethical account of affective hierarchies. Accordingly, I now turn to the political and ethical implications of the notion of affect-ability in the thinking and rethinking of care practices.

From Affect-ability to Resistant Practices of Care

By highlighting how "compulsory able-bodiedness" may generate exceptionalism-driven accounts of political subversion and resistance (Puar 2009, 165), Puar seems to question, in a similar spirit as Johanna Hedva, Hannah Arendt's understanding of the political as "any action that is performed in public" (Hedva 2016, 2). As Hedva contends, "if being present in public is what is required to be political, then whole swathes of the population can be deemed a-political – simply because they are not physically able to get their bodies into the street" (2016, 2). According to Hedva, it is precisely this normative logic which erases the differential in/accessibility of public spaces, especially for those bodies made sick by "regimes of oppression – particularly our current regime of neoliberal, white-supremacist, imperial-capitalist, cis-hetero-patriarchy" and thus carry "the historical trauma of this" (Hedva 2016, 7). Therefore, the indeterminacy inherent to "affect-ability" aims at reflecting the ambivalence of embodiment in relation to power, where affective capacity and debility are always already co-present and

unequally modulated, and where the problematisation of agency, as identified by Hedva for instance, can and should be accompanied by an account of the normative aspects and effects of affect as ability. Furthermore, the recentring of affective experience allows for a theorisation of politics as constituted by and through ordinary bodily enactments, resisting and reproducing specific relations of power by virtue of their affect-ability. This line of thought is indeed parallel to, and positioned within, a feminist tradition which aims to destabilise the political by bringing forth daily experienced forms of vulnerability – allegedly "private" "corpo-affective" (Górska 2016) events – as "not only already political but as transforming our understandings of what counts as political" (Cvetkovich 2012, 110). Drawing from feminist theory and activism, I would argue that this troubling of what counts as a "political act" and "political space" enables a critique of power which ties together its ontological, ethical, and political dimensions via an analysis of how quotidian bodies come to affect and be affected by different sets of forces. What kinds of relations are resisted and/or reproduced when we move from an understanding of bodies as affect-able: that is, as inherently vulnerable but unequally exposed to the workings of power?

Looking again at practices of care and mutual solidarity, they can be considered forms of politics which do not reproduce but resist the *status quo* while, at the same time, enabling for life in the present. Indeed, if liberal and neoliberal articulations of autonomy and dependency have catalysed the othering of reproduction through unequal regimes of precarity and exploitation, counter-social reproduction radically refuses the association of politics with the capacity to act independently in the public sphere. In fact, the exclusion and debilitation of marginalised and oppressed bodies are resisted through the creation of new political communities through solidarity. Thus, resistance in this sense involves the simultaneous material and discursive interruption of capitalist modes of reproduction and the reproduction of resistance itself. For this precise reason, recentring an ontological dimension of vulnerability and relationality – enabled by the conceptualisation of bodies as affect-able – troubles hegemonic understandings of embodiment and performance of the political.

In *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler describes vulnerability as a condition which socially constitutes our bodies as sites of exposure, publicity, and interdependency (Butler 2004, 20). However, this condition is reflected and actualised in unequal regimes of security and protection (Butler 2004, 32). Therefore, thinking of bodies as inherently vulnerable or, as I am suggesting, "affect-able", cannot shy away from ethical considerations of the unequal effects of vulnerability and exposure. Isabell Lorey similarly discusses how the articulation of autonomy in European societies has brought about the warding-off and othering of existential vulnerability, thus prioritising the security of some bodies over and against others (2015). The radical implication generated here and premised on every body's interconnectedness calls for a formulation of ethics that starts at the juncture between ontological vulnerability and its differential affects in capitalist regimes of precarity. As Lorey stated in a talk with Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, Bojana Cvejić, Isabell Lorey, Jasbir K. Puar, and Ana Vujanović, "the ambivalence between the relational difference and the possibilities of what is in common in difference can be a starting point for political arguments" (2012, 172). In fact, the unequal

socio-economic regimes of capitalist societies create the very conditions in which reproduction and production are hard to disentangle: exploited and oppressed bodies are also less secure against the risks imposed by a possible "health crisis". LevFem Collective & Transnational Social Strike Platform, in their recent publication about the struggles around social reproduction taking place during COVID-19 pandemic, remarked that "women, migrants, workers, LGBTQI+" are the "people whose labor is deemed essential, but whose lives are considered disposable" (2021, 10).

Counter-practices of care therefore require a fundamental *response-ability*, a term coined by Donna Haraway (2008; 2016) to introduce a relational practice of accountability for how and whose lives come to matter in an ecology that centres creativity and the making of new relations in an affective encounter; in other words, response-ability is the ability to respond to being affected. Haraway's concept distances "ability" from its unreflexive usage as a normative signifier of successful capacity and recast "the ability to respond is always-already embedded in incapacity – in indifference and in-ability to engage", as argued by Magdalena Górska (2016, 265). This problematisation of the term "ability", as I proposed from the start of this article, is indeed inherent to the concept of affect-ability itself, since its aim is to account for unequal geographies of affective capacity while fostering an ethical response to them. Understood this way, the ability to respond accompanies affect-ability as an ethical practice of learning to be affected, attending to our ontological relationality and otherness, as well as accounting for hierarchical displacements and differential affections, ultimately creating careful cracks where resistant encounters can thrive.

Conclusion

Autonomous rearticulations of care, such as those enacted by social movements during the pandemic, propose an actualisation of "autonomy" resistant to racial and patriarchal imaginaries of freedom through external prescription and individual self-formation. Reflecting and respecting the ability of every body to affect and be affected, these forms of care aim to make connections which enable different and response-able forms of living. In the words of Isabelle Stengers, counter-social reproduction should be premised on "turning interdependency [...] into an active constraint, a constraint that activates feeling, thinking, and imagining" (2017, 398).

For these reasons, the many experiences of mutual aid and solidarity from below practiced during the pandemic continue to foster relations, relationships, and relationalities beyond those mandated and expected effects of crises that have been taken for granted. Against this reactionary and conservative logic, these movements rose from the margins in order to denaturalise the *status quo* which created and enforced the very infrastructures that continue to privilege some bodies over others, thus reproducing hierarchies of vulnerability. Counter-social reproduction therefore holds tremendous radical potential in reshaping community through organisation and socialisation outside capitalist circuits: solidarity groups, such as those born in Italy and globally during the current pandemic, as well as those created long before this pandemic to practice mutual care and sustainment within marginalised communities, expose how an ordinary, accessible, and existential politics of care is inextricably

related to resisting hierarchical ontological and ethical categories. By proposing the lens of affect-ability, I aim to explore how one way to think, imagine, and dream of a responsive and response-able ontology, politics, and ethics of care can.

The political relevance of care has been of wide and profound discussion in different scholarly fields and social movements, all of which have variously highlighted the ambivalent natures, logics, motifs, and radical potentials of care (e.g., Fisher and Tronto 1990; Precarias a la deriva 2006; Mol 2008; Puig de la Bellacasa 2017). My hope throughout this article is to offer another tool to add to the kit which can be used through collective thought and praxis around care. Affect-ability, as I have proposed it here, hints at an ontological dimension of resistance which is inextricably linked to an ethical response to the unequal political effects of vulnerability in community. This precondition for, and process of understanding, care can be resistant to capitalist paradigms of social reproduction aimed at reproducing inequalities and systems of dominance. Because the non-dualistic nature of reality prevents a rigid distinction between these two paradigms of social reproduction and power relations, we can but accept and embrace the thick complexity of embodied experiences and practices. The indeterminacy inherent to the notion of affect-ability itself is thus well-suited to keep these various dimensions and tensions together and alive, which in turn foreground what an ethics and politics of care could look like under these ontological premises.

As affect-able bodies organise, cracks within the present status quo emerge, exposing the resistant and careful politics of daily life.

Notes

1   Focusing on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy, these have encompassed dramatic increases in the levels of "absolute poverty" (at record high considering the last fifteen years), unemployment (only in the month of December 2020 occupation has fallen by more than 100,000 units, the 98% of which were job positions held by women), and homelessness (the ending of the moratorium of evictions imposed during the first sixteen months of the pandemic will result in around 10,000 evictions only in the metropolitan area of Milan). See ISTAT, 2021, "Le Statistiche dell'ISTAT Sulla Povertà. Anno 2020," June 16, https://www.istat.it/it/files/2021/06/REPORT_POVERTA_2020.pdf (last accessed: 28/08/2021); ISTAT, 2021, "Dicembre 2020. Occupati e disoccupati. Dati provvisori," February 1, https://www.istat.it/it/files/2021/02/Occupati-e-disoccupati_dicembre_2020.pdf (last accessed: 28/08/2021); Ministero dell'Interno, 2020, "Procedure di rilascio di immobili ad uso abitativo (INT 00004)," September 14, last modified: 23/08/2021, http://ucs.interno.gov.it/ucs/contenuti/Procedure_di_rilascio_di_immobili_ad_uso_abitativo_int_00004-7734141.htm (last accessed: 31/08/2021), with reference to the data of 2020.

2   See, for instance, CONSOB, "La crisi da COVID-19: dalla crisi sanitaria alla crisi economica" [author's translation: "COVID-19 crisis: from health crisis to financial crisis"], at https://www.consob.it/web/investor-education/crisi-sanitaria-economica (last accessed: 26/08/2021). Notably, if the above-mentioned consequences of the financial crisis are considered as necessary consequences of the pandemic, nonetheless, parallel discourses highlight how this financial crisis is different, for example, from the one of 2007-2008 as it is of "exogenous" origin to the financial market (see, for instance, Giuseppe Capuano [head of the Italian Ministry of Economic Development], 2020, "Coronavirus, crisi economiche a confronto" [author's translation: "Coronavirus: financial crises in comparison"], March 8, https://www.startmag.it/economia/crisi-economiche-a-confronto/ [last accessed: 26/08/2021]). Hence, it could be argued the relation of capitalist economic system with its "outside" is differentially produced and posited when it comes to determining the origins and effects of the "crises".

3   This theory is partly premised on the work of feminists from the International Wages Against Housework Committees in the '70s, highlighting reproduction as a gender-specific site of both oppression and exploitation with the function to reproduce capitalist social and labour regimes (Dalla Costa and James 1975; Federici 2012).

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4 Contemporary actualisations of social reproduction in the Global North have foreseen partial reshufflings of Fordist models of heteronormative domesticity. However, shifts in socio-economic paradigms are also to be understood in continuity with the perpetuation of structures of dominance and oppression (Lorey 2015, 68-69). Indeed, fragmentary and class-specific changes in the "bread-winner" model are nonetheless accompanied by a reinforcing of colonial lines of power in the definition of regimes of precarity in the labour of care (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2014). In fact, migration regulations foster the production of internal/external borders in a labour market greatly "supplied by cheap migrant labour" from care and domestic workers who are mostly excluded from "any social benefits, unemployment and health insurance" (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2014, 195). Thus, social reproduction is still greatly articulated alongside those lines of power which are structural to the constitution of the capitalist system.

5 For more comprehensive accounts of experiences of solidarity across different countries during the pandemic see also Sitrin and Colective Sembrar (2020), and the abovementioned LevFem (2021).

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Biography

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Affective Architecture: Encountering Care in Built Environments
Linda Kopitz

Abstract
Between urban sprawl and a return to the rural, between technological advancements and historical preservation, built environments become a productive sphere to explore imaginations of a shared future on a changing planet. At the same time, contemporary architectural writing increasingly appears to extend further than considerations of environmental care – particularly in relation to spaces and places frequently criticized for their "uncaring" neoliberal politics. This article will argue that architecture is increasingly infused and saturated with affective connotations of care. Approaching global examples critically allows for a further exploration of the interdependency between spaces, places, and communities that care. In this understanding, care becomes, quite literally, structural.

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Introduction

Between urban sprawl and a return to the rural (cf. Taylor 2023), between technological advancements and historical preservation, built environments become a productive sphere to explore imaginations of a shared future on a changing planet. At the same time, contemporary architectural design increasingly appears to extend further than considerations of environmental care, particularly in relation to spaces and places frequently criticized for their "uncaring" neoliberal politics. The starting point for this article was precisely a space like this: a photograph[1] of a room with the floor and walls covered in blue fabric, empty except for three white lounge chairs in the shape and (presumed) softness of a pillowy cloud, and two white floor lamps, standing delicately on wooden legs. Eliciting ideas of sleepiness and calmness and serenity, the room appears to keep the bustle of the outside world out with long, white, flowing curtains. Somewhat surprisingly, this room is one of the offices of a German tech start-up specializing in safety and security systems – superimposing the exploitative aspects of a 24/7 start-up-culture with the connotations of serenity of the bedroom as the presumably most private room within the home.[2] Blurring the boundaries between relaxation and efficiency, mindfulness and productivity under a larger schema of caring values, this layering of connotations is neither accidental nor – as I will argue here – unique. If "space and its making are *political*" (Gámez and Rogers 2008, 22, emphasis in original), a deeper engagement with the architectural process, from the initial idea to the built structure, is paramount to understanding the social, political, and cultural connotations of space-making.

As both concept and practice, "care" is as interdisciplinary as it is intangible – traversing practical concerns in healthcare to philosophical approaches and political discussions, from caring for the (human) bodies directly around us to caring about more abstract concepts like the environment or the world at large. Tracing care in architecture allows us to think differently about not just what care means but also where care can be located. Here, I am following an understanding of care as both an imaginary and a practice – or, as the members of the Care Collective phrase it: "Care is our individual and common ability to provide the political, social, material, and emotional conditions that allow the vast majority of people and living creatures on this planet to thrive – along with the planet itself" (2020, 6). In the absence of one universal definition of care, approaching care as a constantly shifting and changing imaginary, an "ability", allows for an engagement with possibility and, for the purposes of this article, with architecture as a site of becoming.

If "architecture can creatively and critically invest in the potentiality of spaces yet to come" (Frichot and Loo 2013, 3), paying attention to the concept of care in the process of designing and building also has the potential to ultimately create more caring spaces. Drawing on award-winning examples ranging from the workspace re-imagined as "hub and home" to governmental buildings (re-designed to "radiate transparency"), I argue in this article that architectural design is increasingly infused and saturated with affective connotations of care by: 1) blurring the boundaries between corporate and

the private; 2) emphasizing nature and natural materials in built environments; and 3) highlighting the embodied experience of spaces.[3] At the same time, the potential of architectural writing to both ground the intangibility of care on the one hand, and strategically employ care as a rhetoric – a 'care-washing'– of neoliberal processes on the other, highlights the ambivalences in these processes. As Frichot and Loo suggest: "Architecture invests in words, or all the things that can be said and written about a built (or unbuilt and speculative) form, as much as it engages in its seemingly central task, which is to design, form and construct indisputably material edifices, spaces and objects" (2013, 4). To affirm this understanding of architecture as embedded in practices of not just place-making but simultaneous meaning-making, I draw on examples from across the globe, consciously blending the boundaries between different projects to trace how the notion of care, intermingling with other values like openness, dialogue, and transparency, has been employed in the framing of a Taiwanese meatpacking factory as much as the Swiss headquarters of a luxury brand, in a judicial building in Singapore just as in a German start-up company.

By intentionally establishing connections between not only different types of buildings and different architectural approaches but also different geographical regions and different requirements, I aim to emphasize the underlying notion of care that has become prevalent in architectural practices over recent years. What might at first glance come across as a random selection of examples actually follows an algorithmic logic that doubles as the methodological process for this article: the diverse projects and contexts cited here are all categorized under "Commercial & Offices" (which quite strikingly also includes institutional buildings) on the curated architecture platform *Architecture Daily*[4], thus collectively reveal the prevalence of care as valorisation in both corporate and public architecture. Approaching these examples from a critical media studies perspective – taking into account the visuals, as well as how they are described and embedded into the website – teases out conceptions and contradictions in the architectural inscription of care. Activating Hays's understanding of architecture as a "specific kind of imagination – an intimate blend of sensing, imaging, and conceptualizing" (2010, 357), the methodological approach to these examples is similarly an exploration of the play between thinking about and sensing through built environments. The repetitive format of these marketing materials – following the same (or at least highly similar) structure and bound by the expectations and affordances of the same website – foregrounds the connections between these seemingly accidental examples.

It is important to note that, while the examples discussed here might qualify as responses to Gámez and Rogers's "call for an architecture of change" (2008), they neither necessarily or intentionally, nor actively or convincingly, offer alternative approaches to contemporary questions. While acknowledging that "architecture as product and process is always embedded in social dynamics" (2010, xi), Till similarly points out that the engagement of (most) architects with these dynamics remains somewhat lacking. Authorship also plays a relevant role in this context: as marketing materials, these texts and images are carefully selected, curated and structured to tell a specific story about the concept-becoming-concrete. The disclaimer "text description provided by the architects", prominently positioned at the top of each page, further underlines this

conscious interpretation of design by the architects who quite literally construct these meanings. Prompted through the restrictive and recurring, established and expected format of *Architecture Daily* to put the "unspoken" conditions of architectural design into actual words, the complex positions of practitioners that are "clearly complicated by [architecture's] dual role as art *and* industry" (Jobst 2013, 73, emphasis in original) become tangible. Tronto famously argues that "using care as a critical concept will require a fundamental reorientation of the disciplines of architecture and urban planning" (2019, 26). How, then, can we move from an "Architecture of Change" to an "Architecture of Care" – and more specifically one encompassing the political, social, material, and emotional conditions of care as mentioned above? Tronto's answer to this question is the call for an architecture willing and able to share the "responsibilities of caring for our world" (2019, 28). In this article, I elaborate on this answer by suggesting that shifting the emphasis from *caring for* to *caring through* and *caring in* can expand the direction and scope of care as both a concept and a practice.

Despite the architectural projects discussed here being framed in *Architecture Daily* through their outstanding excellence, there is an undeniable similarity in these (re)designs: there is an undercurrent of genericness that resembles what Koolhaas (1998) has described as the "generic city", albeit on a smaller scale. Yet, it is precisely the common prevalence of an explicit and implicit discourse of care that makes these examples a productive starting point to demonstrate how architecture not only shapes the conditions of a space spatially, but also our understanding of that space figuratively. Moving from the physical setting – and the absence of physical boundaries therein – of a *caring space* in the first section "Hub/Home", via the *caring materiality* of natural building materials in the second section "Material/Intangible", to the negotiation of embodied *caring connections* in the third section "Emptiness/Encounter", this article aims to challenge our understanding of the capacity of buildings.

1. Hub/Home: Traversing Boundaries between the Corporate and the Private

While situating the animating concern for their book "The Room of One's Own", Aureli and Tattara argue that "the separation between house and workspace is in decline as production unfolds everywhere" (2016). At the same time, it should be noted that this unfolding of production *everywhere* is not a unidirectional move: while we mostly talk about the blurring of clear boundaries between work/life as it comes to work entering the private sphere, the opposite also appears to be true. With the affectively charged imaginary of the "home" – in the sense of the private, but also the safe and the serene – infusing the workplace in the examples discussed here, the unique affordances of the "home" simultaneously become embedded in the neoliberal logic of productivity. If "architecture, as both process and form, can be understood as the result of a multiplicity of desires – for shelter, security, privacy and boundary control; for status, identity and reputation; for profit, authority and political power; for change or stability; for order or chaos" (Dovey 2013, 134) – the negotiation of these desires in the design of corporate buildings becomes particularly interesting. Positioning the neoliberal workplace as a caring space through the affective connotations of the home, as I argue in this section, underlines an understanding of architectural writing as embedded in processes of meaning-making.

With a "spatial organization where limits between workspaces and common areas are diffused", the offices of the informatics company iGarpe-GPISoft in San Javier, Spain[5] are exemplary of this understanding. Structurally, the building organizes both open spaces, partially separated seating areas and closed office – with "closed" meaning separated by wood-framed glass here – around an open atrium to establish "direct relationships between the team". A collaborative, balanced work life becomes not an attitude or approach achieved through and embedded in corporate culture, but rather an architectural challenge to be achieved with open floor plans rather than through managerial decisions. Going even further, the common areas of the Spanish informatics office are specifically "conceptually considered as domestic spaces", enveloping moments of relaxation within structures of productivity, private conversations within the corporate context. The new building of the T-HAM PABP meat processing factory, located in Southern Taiwan,[6] the largest one in the country, similarly states an intention to "upgrade the working environment of their factory workers and their daily working experience" as one of the main animating concerns in the architectural process – albeit in fourth place, preceded by priorities to increase productivity, expand production capacities, and maintain corporate standards. In what might be one of the least-caring industries imaginable – both in environmental impact and labor conditions – the reconceptualization of the factory to be "neither a shed, nor a fridge-like box" highlights an attention to the well-being of employees inside as much as to the (public) perception from the outside. The light-filled spaces for social interaction in the front of the building in addition to access to the rooftop has not only "made the factory workers' daily experience much more pleasant".

Here, again, the link between design and desire becomes imminent. As Ballantyne argues, "most buildings most of the time are commissioned with the expectation that one's current needs will be better accommodated than they were before the move into the new building" (2013, 194). While there certainly is an expanding dialogue between design as a practice and as a form of resistance to social, political, and environmental issues,[7] the emphasis on care as governing principle and guiding value becomes undermined by a near constant linking between "better motivation and improved product quality" here. In neoliberal logic, "happy" workers will be willing to stay longer in these enhanced working environments – both in terms of working hours as in professional career duration – and channel the architecturally augmented "motivation" into their labor. Following Tronto's suggestion that "even if caring needs are recognized, they are often in conflict with each other" (2019, 30), the negotiation of the dimensions and hierarchies of care through architectural writing become particularly interesting. If "neoliberalism is uncaring by design" (The Care Collective 2020, 10), it is interesting to see how design itself attempts to re-inscribe caring values into clearly neoliberalist processes. Notably, this also extends from a spatial organization to other, seemingly purely aesthetic choices.

Writing about Luis Barragán's emotional approach to architecture, Van den Bergh points out an "architectural mise en scène of space and light, material and color, of smell and sound, movement and time" (2006, 1). Strategically using the same strategies that are also used in more private contexts – warm lighting to create an atmosphere

of calmness, for instance – blurs the lines between the private and the corporate even further. Using their own architectural and design practice as a case study in humanistic architecture, Richard Mazuch and Rona Stephen conclude that "visual monotony can contribute to physiological and emotional stress" (2005, 50). Interestingly, the color palettes in the examples here consciously break this visual monotony, effectively shifting the attention from a potentially monotonous work to a visually stimulating environment. These aesthetic choices, meant to "regulate privacy and assure comfort" (as in the iGarpe-GPISoft offices) and raise "the morale and pride in the workforce" (as in the T-HAM PABP factory) are also strategic choices embedded in existing power dynamics. While undoubtedly adding another layer to the problematic absence of recognition of domestic work, the blurring between these spheres within both the home and the workplace also blends the ideologies connected to these spaces under a neoliberal umbrella. If the "domestic space as a space of retreat and intimacy unburdened by working relationships" (Dogma 2016) is (re)situated in the sphere of productivity, the separation between work/life becomes even more challenging than already assumed. This emphasis on care could also be understood as a dual defense against critical concerns raised about "social exclusivity in the design and production of the built environment" (Jenkins 2010, 19) on the one hand, and about exploitative work practices on the other. This ambivalence further points to a necessary carefulness when reading care in built environments, highlighting the importance of the context and contextualization of these examples.

If socio-cultural concerns – from politics and economics to desire – indeed constitute architecture's "perennial sites of negotiation" (Grosz 2001, xvi), an exploration of the implicit and explicit emphasis placed on care within presumably "uncaring" spheres becomes paramount for a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between the built environment and the bodies moving in and through it. Clearly, the shift of the connotations of "home" from the private to the private *sector* is cause for concern. At the same time, there is a recursive element within the discourses presented here: these examples partially reverberate the modernist architectural conviction that fundamental social and political change can be implemented (solely) by design. The contradiction that Gámez and Rogers see "between the goal of social change and those of market capitalism and institutionalized power" (2008, 20) could arguably be transferred from modernist architecture to the present, from urban architecture to corporate architecture. With a quite optimistic tone, Bell suggests that for communities and individuals, the process of designing the built environment has the potential to "solve their struggles by reshaping their existence" (2008, 14). This approach to understanding architecture as a proactive strategy in tackling social, cultural, political, and environmental issues resonates with a framing of architectural choices as "creating a kind work environment"[8] or embodying "autonomy, freedom, solidarity".[9] Traversing the boundaries between the corporate and the private, then, also traverses the complicated line separating a re-imagination of the workplace from a mere "care-washing". Caught between the promise of care and the premise of capitalism, contemporary architectural writing appears to perform a bridging between these contradictory demands by inscribing values into structures – and, quite notably, the materials used to build them.

2. Material/Intangible: Tracing Care in Built Environments

Existing research on the connection between architecture and wellbeing frequently focuses on the architectural and interior design of (mental) health facilities.[10] Consequently, the role of architecture in these spaces is reduced to a supporting one for clinical practitioners in a top-down hierarchy that re-inscribes existing power discrepancies between patients and healthcare professionals. Instead, this article consciously stays away from both private residences and healthcare facilities to trace the affective potential of care in buildings where care is not conventionally a primary consideration. Conceptualized as "the feel and emotional resonance of place" (Duff 2013, 217), this approach also connects and intersects with Birdsall et al.'s exploration of how "values" are mediated and experienced through the senses in urban, public spaces (2021). Speaking about the shifting paradigms in architecture from the 1980s to now, Hayes argues for an "ontology of the atmospheric—of the only vaguely defined, articulated, and indeed perceptible, which is nevertheless everywhere present in its effects" (2010, 358). The "atmospheric", then, closely relates to the ideas of affective dimensions of care as an architectural value proposed here. This section proposes that materiality plays a decisive role in conjuring these caring, atmospheric spaces – particularly through the emphasis on natural building materials.

A case in point: the *Swatch and Omega Campus* in Biel, Switzerland,[11] encompassing the headquarters, factory, and museum of the renowned watch manufacturer, is one of the largest hybrid mass timber structures worldwide. The choice of timber as the main building material is contextualized by the architects as simultaneously caring for the environment – as the material "holds much promise for the future" – and for the well-being of employees – as "wood environments are known to contribute to greater occupant happiness". Underneath this reasoning, however, there appears to be yet another logic: while the use of wood is framed as a vehicle for care on the one hand, they are framed as an incentive for productivity on the other. What architect Luis Barragán poignantly referred to as "emotional architecture" (see Bergh 2006) strives for deeper sensory resonance, which could also be understood as a step away from a more technology-driven approach to both the design process and its results. Interestingly, technology also moves into the background in most of the descriptions – almost as if highlighting smart technologies and smart materials is diametrically opposed to the emphasis on the natural, the pure, the caring. The previously mentioned Taiwanese meat processing factory, for instance, is covered in textured tiles made from clay mimicking "the fertile agricultural lands of this southern county" – a typical Taiwanese cladding material evoking a sense of heritage and continuation of tradition, a sense of the "known" in an accelerated, globalized industry. Not coincidentally, the natural material also helps to maintain the building's internal temperature, which is of the highest importance to ensure an adherence to the strict quality standards of producing exportable meat products. This dual function of natural materials in providing comfort while at the same time enhancing productivity can also be traced in other examples. Instead of an intangible and immaterial atmosphere, then, the focus is squarely placed on organic material as embodiment of care. Common to these examples is their introduction of natural elements, both in building materials and interior design, while at the same time

opposing the growth and uncontrollability of nature with clearly designated "natural" areas. In doing so, the design draws on the calming effects of nature experiences (as for instance Franco et al. 2017 have discussed), while at the same time entrapping these experiences within the spatially planned structure of the built environment.

Transferring ideas about the rural idyll to the urban sphere, the integration of plants within these corporate architectures resembles what Boer has called "scripted environments" (2018). A similar aesthetic – a ground floor quite literally grounding plants, which extend into a vertically open floor plan – can be found across the examples categorized in *Architecture Daily*, from the offices of the Spanish electronic and informatics company discussed earlier to the administrative spheres of the Chinese Guangming Public Service Platform. Harting et al.'s terminology of "urban nature" "admits the presence of nature even in those human environments that some consider the antithesis of the natural" (2014, 208). In what is – somewhat optimistically – called a "garden" in these architectural instances, the plants are not potted but still spatially distanced from the rest of the space: placed in strategically located cutouts of the floor paneling, centering the looming and lush palm trees as the middle point of an open atrium or dividing paths with a succulent-laden barrier, this "natural" presence within the "urban" remains nonetheless somewhat separate. Franco et al. (2017) emphasize the multi-sensory aspect of nature experiences, which in turn links the well-being of nature with the importance of not just vision, but all senses. If "perhaps touch is not just skin contact with things, but the very life of things in the mind" (McLuhan 1994, 108), the haptic could be assumed to play an integral role in creating the experience of (the benefits of) nature within the built environment. In the examples discussed here, the integration of natural materials as well as organic bodies nevertheless remains restricted to the visual: out of (physical) reach, the natural needs to be "felt" rather than "touched", it appears. Through the shifting and changing charge of both materials and spaces created with and by these materials, the "feel" of nature can interestingly also be found outside of notably green and/or natural buildings.

With its imposing walls of curved aluminum panels and glass, the Guangming Public Service Platform,[12] a dual office and administration building in Shenzhen, China, does not immediately evoke connotations of nature and the natural from the outside. Nonetheless, framed quite poetically as resembling a "vessel floating on the mountain", the perforated material not only lets fresh air into atrium spaces, but also creates intricate, flower-like patterns from the inside. DeLanda proposes thinking about form and structure not as something imposed from the outside, but rather "as something that comes from within the materials, a form that we tease out of those materials as we allow them to have their say in the structure we create" (2004, 21). Despite the material hardness of both glass and aluminum plates in this example, the built structure teases a softness out of them, allowing the building to become a flowing, breathing counterpoint to the stillness of the skyscrapers around it. This understanding requires an openness to both the affordance of the materials in themselves and their connectivity or, in the words of Hale, "connecting, not cutting off; cultivating and following the flows of force rather than imposing upon space the sentence of a closed or even 'finished' object for static contemplation or inhabitation" (2013, 127).

This is precisely what I mean by *tracing* care in built environments: with an emphasis on natural materials, particularly wood and stone, and flowing forms, particularly circles and waves, the examples discussed here insist on care as something that leaves traces, which in turn accumulate to affectively charge the spaces created with and through these materials. In "The Cultural Politics of Emotion", Ahmed begins with the suggestion that "bodies take the shape of the very contact they have with objects and others" (2004, 1). Following this understanding, charging the built environment with "care" has the potential to envelop the bodies within these spheres and spaces with(in) care. This also underlines how the caring connotations of the home, as discussed in the previous section, can become entangled with the affective materiality of nature through the (re)imagination of conventionally non-caring spaces. As an intangible, almost infectious, force, care appears to move from the building materials to the built structure, infusing the open space between these materials and structures as well as affecting the bodies moving around and within them. Shifting our attention from what is there to what is *not* there – the human body – the following section further complicates an understanding of care as simultaneously grounded yet intangible.

3. Emptiness/Encounters: On the Absence of the Body

"Architecture and urbanism are always concerned with the future" (2019, 12), Fitz and Krasny write in the introduction to *Critical Care*. Fundamental in (literally) building the future, architecture is at the same time also concerned with the imagination of more livable futures – for our environments, but also our own bodies, our own selves. Whereas the discursive negotiation of natural building materials and their relation to both sustainable and affective experience, as discussed above, is more concerned with the former, the positioning and movement of the human body within such charged spaces should not be overlooked. Between a striking emptiness and the promise of more meaningful encounters, this section explores how the absence of the body adds a further political dimension to the architectural imagination of caring spaces. Replacing the clear lines of the "cubicle office" or the "assembly line", the design of the examples discussed in this article quite literally opens up new conceptions of how public and private infrastructures "work". At the same time, the emphasis on transparency and visibility could also be understood as a perversion of the panopticon as a "socio-spatial diagram of one-way visibility wherein practices and subjectivities are produced to meet the anonymous gaze of authority" (Dovey 2013,137), particularly in the corporate/public settings discussed here. Rather than an unidirectional visibility, the control through an invisible authority becomes dispersed to everyone in the room as well as to the room itself – again juxtaposing previously discussed senses of privacy and serenity.

Framed in clear contrast to historical perceptions of the juridical complex and its architectural embodiment, the Singapore State Courts,[13] which comprise district and magistrate courts in fifty-three vertically stacked courtrooms and fifty-four hearing chambers, extend this idea of openness: the design eschews a reflecting facade in favor of a series of open terraces, naturally completed with lush planted gardens, and "the court tower as a result appears light, open, and welcoming". Yet, precisely by performing an architectural openness, these spaces remain highly structured and streamlined,

especially with regards to the implicit potential for interaction. The spatial division of the Singapore State Courts into two separate towers – the one in the front accommodating the courtrooms and the one in the back the juridical offices – is specifically designed to "not only bring light deep into the building but help keep the circulation of the judges, persons-in-custody, and the public separate". Following the understanding that "architecture is always and everywhere implicated in practices of power" (Dovey 2013, 133), the structural inscription of different spheres underneath a layer of welcoming openness keeps the existing practices of power in place.

The Huis van Albrandswaard,[14] the office building of the Dutch municipality of Albrandswaard, similarly plays with the idea of interaction through spatial connectivity: "The cafeteria for the civil servants is merged with the sports cafeteria of the connecting gym. This encourages more interaction between council members and citizens". However, this architectural choice ultimately does not encourage dialogue, but rather a sense of mirroring by portraying civil servants as "just like us" while not actually providing meaningful access to mutual civic exchange. Interestingly, the municipal building is one of the rare examples of a featured project depicting people within the photographs, and yet only underlines this point: the only (human) body featured in the selection of thirteen photographs is a municipality employee. Framed and half concealed by the walls of a towering wooden cubicle, the employee, already small within the vast openness of the room itself, is looking down at a laptop screen opposite an empty chair, evoking connotations of an inaccessible, impersonal bureaucratic apparatus more than an interactive sphere. Although open spaces can be a potential critique on the crowdedness and business of modern life – recalling "silence as an architectural form all its own" (Hays 1984, 22) – the silence in this image rather detaches the building from the life both inside and outside its walls. Assuming that creating caring spaces for communities is only possible through discourse, the absence of an engagement with the existing dynamics, particularly within governmental buildings, is striking.

Writing on the urban as increasingly post-political sphere, Boer argues that "inhabitants are treated as consumers rather than citizens, who also need to work increasingly efficiently, which fuels the demand for smooth, friction-free urban spaces" (2018). This notion of a friction-free sphere can also be applied to the examples discussed here: in the absence of interaction, of encounters, of engagement, the productive and potentially disruptive possibility of friction is also undermined in favor of a smooth, continuous progression of existing processes. Provocatively, one might even ask whether this quietness might allude to the "ideal" of a society that does not disagree with existing power structures and dynamics. Expanding on Dovey's proposition of understanding buildings as an "assemblage of socio-spatial flows and intersections" (2013, 131), the architectural choices discussed here can be read as conscious attempts to direct these flows and shape these intersections towards continuation rather than interaction, towards docility rather than possibility. While there are certainly aesthetic reasons for purely architecturally focused photography, the tension between the visuals of empty spaces and the discourses of a public sphere for encounter and interaction is palpable.

In this context, it is relevant to place these architectural photographs at a specific phase of the architectural process. Instead of "render ghosts" (Bridle 2014), virtual

inhabitants of rendered and (yet) unbuilt spaces, the examples discussed here leave us with just the architecture, just the building, just the physical specifications of an unoccupied space. As Palacios puts it: "Render ghosts will not survive and will disappear without leaving traces. An empty space is waiting for us to occupy it. We will take their place" (2013). The architectural photographs discussed here, then, appear to capture the in-between of virtual renderings – filled with rendered ghosts – and the actual "life" in and of these buildings. In this sense, these projects have moved beyond the imaginary space between existence and non-existence, assuring us that these spaces do not need to be filled with the eerie humanity of render ghosts to manifest their potential as a caring space. In the absence of either virtualized or real interactions, the emphasis on care as an intangible yet ever-present affective force within these spaces becomes particularly remarkable. Detached from the speed of construction and capitalism, these architectural photos present a specific moment in time in which the aesthetic represents the utopian ideal of the architects *writing* these designs. Expanding on Ahmed's exploration of "how emotions circulate between bodies, examining how they 'stick' as well as move" (2004, 4), we might understand buildings as a type of body as well – a material and ideological body, holding the potential to (quite directly) influence the positioning, the stillness, and the movement of other bodies. If emotions can "stick" to this architectural body as well, then grounding the intangible idea of care in specific materials and design elements through a language of transparency and dialogue can infuse the space as a whole with its affective force even in the absence of (human) bodies. Just like the presence of render ghosts in virtual renderings, their absence in the photography of completed buildings, the very emptiness of these built structures, holds potential – a potential to re-imagine social, urban, political spheres in a different way.

4. Conclusion

In the afterword to their overview of architectural theory, Hays and Sykes propose a similarly atmospheric thinking about architectural thought and practice as involving not just (techno)logical decision-making, but affective dimensions as well: "Writing the new architecture means writing with the body as much as the mind, apprehending the atmospheric and the ecological as feeling and affect as well as thought – folding and refolding the situation, thickening and articulating it into narrative structures, squeezing it to yield its social precipitate" (2010, 359). "Writing" architecture, here, should be understood as the writing both *of* and *about* the design, as in the examples raised in this article. The blurring of boundaries between the corporate and the private – work and life – through both aesthetics and argumentation is exemplary of this duality. On the one hand, the idea of a private sphere distanced from the expectations and pressure of work is enveloped within the corporate setting through spatial (for instance the integration of secluded-yet-visible areas) and material choices (with a particular emphasis on softness). Focused on materiality, the architectural writing of the sensory resonance of care – in wood and in plants, through organic materials and flowing structures – opens our minds to how an abstract concept such as care can be grounded. On the other hand, the affective potential of these choices appears not to be self-evident, as the architectural descriptions still need to explicitly point out the atmospheric

experience of a kind, caring sphere. Although not explicitly referenced by Sykes and Hays, the link to the Deleuzian fold situates this dual process of "writing architecture" as a multi-sensorial dialogue between the building and the body. Similarly, Grosz urges us – again at the intersection between architecture and philosophy – to "explore the possibilities of becoming, the virtualities latent in building, the capacity of buildings to link with and make other series deflect and transform while being transformed in the process" (2001, 73). This attention to possibility also draws a connection between the blurred boundaries of *caring space* discussed in the first section "Hub/Home", the *caring materiality* of natural materials as both sustainable and affective choices in the second section "Material/Intangible", and the negotiation of embodied *caring connections* in the third section "Emptiness/Encounter" of this article.

Expanding the directionality of care from a *caring for* to a *caring through* materiality, the idea of embedding *caring in* built environments becomes a possibility here, thus transforming our understanding of the capacity of buildings. At the same time, the immediate linking between dimensions of care and themes of productivity and performance, efficiency and docility, complicates this potential for an "architecture of change" (Gámez and Rogers 2008, 22). As "valuation can be seen as both production and performance of values" (Birdsall et al. 2021, 351), exploring how the idea of "care" is employed in the framing of architectural design projects also broadens existing discussions of urban (re)development. If "value assessments are often articulated through performative means", as Birdsall et al. (2021, 351) propose, the performance of care becomes at the same time value-driven and value-driving. In this regard, both the framing of architecture and the architecture itself can be understood as modes of expression to ascertain *care as a value* embedded in the architectural process and its result. Ballantyne states – almost matter-of-factly – that "it is inevitable that there are interactions between buildings and people. It is the point of building" (2013, 183). Yet, the interaction between corporate buildings and the people moving in and through them remains somewhat vague or absent in architectural writing, therefore reinserting "the point of building" towards neoliberal logics in what could be seen as a corporate "carewashing" (The Care Collective 2020) of sorts.

As "segmented assemblages resonate with other assemblages at similar and different scales" (Dovey 2013, 135), the examples discussed here should nonetheless be understood as situated within their respective urban environments and their practices of power. Following an understanding of the city itself as "a (collective) body-prosthesis or boundary that enframes, protects, and houses while at the same time taking its own forms and functions from the (imaginary) bodies it constitutes" (Grosz 2001, 49), the interrelation of the body, the building, and the city in a complex entanglement of affordances and limitations becomes even more notable. Frichot and Loo suggest that "architecture has renewed its investment in social concerns and a politics of space, becoming increasingly open to new and vibrant material understandings of a fragile world that is intricately and globally interconnected" (2013, 5). However, it remains to be seen whether this "renewed investment" becomes more than lip service instigated by the aforementioned difficult positioning of architecture between art and industry, between calls for community practices and commercial interests. At the same time, the

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potential of architecture as both theory and practice to create a more caring, more transparent, more connected world in and through the built environment should not be underestimated. Approaching existing and emerging architectural projects critically allows for further exploration of the interdependency between spaces, places, and "communities that care" (The Care Collective 2020, 50). In this understanding, care becomes, quite literally, structural.

Notes

1   More images of the office (re)design – created by CSMM for Bosch Security and Safety Things GmbH – are available here: https://www.cs-mm.com/en/projects/bosch-sast

2   Less optimistically, one might also draw a connection between this fabric-covered room and the inescapability of a padded cell.

3   As an important disclaimer: I do not mean to suggest that architecture has not "cared" in the past, but rather aim to highlight the crucial distinction between caring as an architectural practice (by architects) and the inscription of caring values into built environments (through architectural writing).

4   See https://www.archdaily.com/search/projects/categories/commercial-and-offices?ad_medium=filters

5   See https://www.archdaily.com/910454/igarpe-gpisoft-offices-martin-lejarraga-architecture-office

6   See https://www.archdaily.com/921310/t-ham-pabp-factory-wzwx-architecture-group

7   For a further discussion of this, see for instance Bell (2008) and Fitz et al. (2019).

8   …as the combination of materials, textures and interior aims to achieve in the iGarpe-GPISoft offices.

9   … as the reinterpretation of the brutalist architecture of the Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux in Toronto, Canada, promises. See https://www.archdaily.com/912327/expansion-of-the-headquarters-of-the-csn-bgla-plus-neuf-consortium

10   See for instance Connellan et al. (2013).

11   See https://www.archdaily.com/926166/swatch-and-omega-campus-shigeru-ban-architects

12   See https://www.archdaily.com/956371/guangming-public-service-platform-zhubo-design

13   See https://www.archdaily.com/964357/singapore-state-courts-serie-architects-plus-multiply-architects

14   See https://www.archdaily.com/965978/huis-van-albrandswaard-gortemaker-algra-feenstra

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Verloren normaliteit? Van het verlangen naar autoriteit naar een beauvoiraanse ethiek der dubbelzinnigheid
Maren Wehrle

Abstract

Autoriteit lijkt niet langer belangrijk als men complexe moderne democratische samen-levingen wil analyseren. Tegelijkertijd kan men een toenemend verlangen naar autoriteit in het sociale en politieke leven waarnemen, een verlangen naar oriëntatie en sturing. Dit artikel onderzoekt hoe autoriteit en gender met elkaar verweven zijn en hoe dit tot uiting komt in de huidige crisis van de normaliteit. De paper laat zien waarom een terugkeer naar een premoderne autoriteit deze crisis niet kan oplossen. Om een nieuwe normaliteit te co-creëren moet men de dubbelzinnigheid van het bestaan accepteren en beseffen dat vrijheid altijd relationeel is (zie Simone de Beauvoir).

Lost Normality? From the desire for authority towards a Beauvoirian ethics of ambiguity

Maren Wehrle

Abstract

The authority of a souverain no longer seems important if one wants to analyse complex modern democratic societies. At the same time, one can observe an increasing desire for authority in social and political life, a longing for orientation and guidance. This paper wants to investigate how authority and gender are intertwined, and how this is expressed in the current crisis of normality. The paper shows why a return to authority cannot solve this crisis. In order to co-create a new normality, one needs to accept the ambiguity of existence and the relational character of freedom (see Simone de Beauvoir).

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Verloren normaliteit? Van het verlangen naar autoriteit naar een beauvoiraanse ethiek der dubbelzinnigheid
Maren Wehrle

1. Introductie: Autoriteit en (gender)normaliteit

Vandaag de dag speelt het begrip autoriteit nauwelijks nog een rol in wetenschappelijk onderzoek, of het nu gaat om historisch, sociologisch, psychologisch of filosofisch onderzoek. Autoriteit als persoonsgebonden vorm van macht lijkt niet meer van belang als men complexe, d.w.z. genetwerkte, geglobaliseerde, geïnstitutionaliseerde en gevirtualiseerde, moderne democratische samenlevingen wil analyseren. Tegelijkertijd, of juist daardoor, kan men echter een toenemend verlangen naar autoriteit waarnemen in het sociale en politieke leven, of in ieder geval een verlangen naar oriëntatie, advies, begeleiding en leiderschap.

In geglobaliseerde en competitieve samenlevingen zijn tastbare soevereinen verdwenen: in plaats daarvan zijn we allemaal entrepreneur van onszelf en onze eigen soeverein. Dit lijkt echter tot een paradox te leiden: hoewel aan de ene kant alles kan worden toegeschreven aan de onzichtbare hand van de markt, vallen we tegelijk terug op de eigen handen, op onze eigen verantwoordelijkheid. Hierdoor neemt de behoefte aan advies en kennis toe, die ons kunnen helpen bij de vereiste zelfoptimalisatie en -regulering. Maar wie heeft het nodige overzicht en het privilege, de financiële middelen en tijd, om op basis van alle feiten en kennis tot een wel overdachte keuze, een onderbouwd oordeel of besluit te komen?

In deze context van eigen verantwoordelijkheid groeit het verlangen naar leiderschap of een autoriteit die verantwoordelijk kan worden gehouden voor de economische en politieke processen die men deels als willekeurig en ondoorzichtig ervaart. Naar een autoriteit die orde en normaliteit herstelt; naar een autoriteit die te vertrouwen is, die zegt wat er gezegd moet worden en doet wat er gedaan moet worden. Als reactie op een complexe en gedifferentieerde realiteit zien we daarom aan de ene kant een groeiende behoefte aan kennis en advies van deskundigen, om de toenemende massa aan gegevens en feiten kwalitatief te kunnen afwegen. Aan de andere kant is er een toenemende scepsis ten aanzien van de neutraliteit en objectiviteit van deze feiten en? een gebrek aan vertrouwen in de experts die deze feiten genereren en interpreteren. Het gaat hier niet zo zeer om de betreffende feiten en dingen zelf, maar om de persoon die deze kennis of expertise representeert. Mensen zijn op zoek naar een eenduidige boodschap belichaamd door een betrouwbare autoriteit, die zij kunnen volgen.

Dat deze comeback van autoriteit gepaard gaat met traditionele genderrslachtsollen is iets wat we zowel in educatieve of levensgidsen (zie bijv. Jordan Peterson's *12 Rules*), als in maatschappelijke debatten over veiligheid tegenkomen (Bueb 2006). Het staat ook centraal in de programma's van (meestal maar niet uitsluitend) nieuwe conservatieve en rechtse partijen en stromingen. De comeback van autoriteit gaat vaak gepaard met oproepen tot discipline, stabiliteit, hardheid, nationaliteit, traditionele waarden en traditionele genderrollen. Dit is bepaald niet nieuw, maar herkenbaar.

De opkomst van verlangens naar autoriteit en een strikte binaire geslachtsorde kunnen we beter begrijpen aan de hand van het werk van Simone de Beauvoir. In haar

Pleidooi voor een moraal der dubbelzinnigheid (orig. 1947) laat ze zien hoe het ontkennen van de ambiguïteit van het menselijke bestaan – als passief én actief, geest en lichaam, subject en object, vrij en gedetermineerd – bijdraagt aan de ontwikkeling van het kwaad. Maar pas in de toepassing van deze existentiële ethiek op een concreet geval van onderdrukking, de situatie van vrouwen in de 1940er jaren in Frankrijk in *De Tweede Sekse* (orig. 1949), wordt duidelijk, hoe het ene – het verlangen naar een sterke, onster-felijke, onfeilbare autoriteit – met het andere – het verlangen naar een strikt binaire geslachtsorde – samenhangt. Beauvoirs definitie van de ambiguïteit van het menselijke bestaan is daarbij zelf dubbel. Aan de ene kant, is ambiguïteit een ontologisch kenmerk dat alle (mogelijke) mensen gemeen hebben. Aan de andere kant is de realisering of ervaring van deze existentiële ambiguïteit altijd concreet en historisch gesitueerd. Haar analyse is dus ook een analyse van de problemen en uitdagingen van de moderne tijd, waarin deze ambiguïteit bijzonder duidelijk wordt (Keltner 2006, 201).

Haar inzichten en existentiële ethiek, zo wil ik in deze bijdrage laten zien, zijn nog steeds, of weer, belangrijk en behulpzaam om de situatie van hedendaagse Westerse maatschappijen te begrijpen. Niet enkel dictatoriale regimes maar ook liberaal-kapital-istische machts- en regeringsvormen worden gekenmerkt door een ontkenning of een negatie van de ambiguïteit van het menselijke bestaan. In liberale westerse maatsch-appijen heerst evenzeer een ideaalbeeld van 'de mens' als rationeel, jong, innovatief, ondernemend, vrij in zijn keuzes, krachtdadig en autonoom, terwijl kwetsbaarheid, veroudering, en alle soorten van passiviteit en afhankelijkheid als afwijking of zwakte worden begrepen. Een maatschappij die een beeld van de rationele, sterke en autonome mens als norm hanteert, kan gemakkelijk het bestuur en de sociale verantwoordelijkheid die daarmee gepaard gaan, uitbesteden aan haar burgers. Maar in tijden van globale crisis en versnelling van technologische, maatschappelijke, economische ontwikkeling breekt de onderliggende ambiguïteit bij elke gelegenheid door – in de woorden van Beauvoir "de waarheid van leven en dood, van mijn eenzaamheid en mijn gebondenheid aan de wereld, van mijn vrijheid en mijn slavernij, van de nietigheid en de unieke betekenis van ieder mens afzonderlijk en van alle mensen tezamen" (Beauvoir 2018, 10–11). Dit kan een existentiële angst veroorzaken in de vorm van een verlangen naar een oude normaliteit, die een interne terugslag (*backlash*) van de liberale waarden teweeg zou kunnen brengen.

Deze 'terugslag' komt vandaag de dag tot uiting, zo durf ik te stellen, in het ver-langen van sommigen naar de terugkeer van een soeverein of leider. Het verlangen naar orde en gezag is vaak een nostalgische roep om een 'sterke man', een Poetin, Erdogan, Bolsonaro of Trump, die in tijden van crisis leiderschap belooft. Het verlangen naar zo›n 'premoderne autoriteit' is moeilijk te verzoenen met democratische liberale ideeën, en hun vertegenwoordigers, zoals Trump, Bolsonaro, Poetin of Erdogan, staan daar dan ook uitdrukkelijk tegenover. Zij positioneren zich tegenover feiten, empirisme of statis-tieken en afstandelijke intellectuelen. Elk individu en iedere groepering wil gezien en gehoord worden: een gezagsdrager, die de macht op een directe manier belichaamt en zo de verantwoordelijkheid voor de staat en zijn burgers in zijn persoon bundelt, kan als mogelijk antwoord op deze behoefte worden gezien. De eigen verantwoordelijkheid en ieders risico kunnen zo worden overgedragen aan een soeverein en opgaan in een

hoger doel, wat het individuele leven binnen alle mogelijkheden en onzekerheden een duidelijke zin geeft.[1] De roep om een sterke leider gaat meestal gepaard met het verlangen naar duidelijke regels, oriëntatie en vermindering van complexiteit, wat wordt nagestreefd door terug te keren naar vertrouwde tradities en oude gewoontes. De vage angst voor een onbeheersbare wereld komt tot uiting in een verzet tegen de ontbinding van traditionele gezins- en nationale structuren. Dit verzet heeft de verdediging van de eigen – als bedreigd waargenomen – identiteit als doel en gaat vaak gepaard met de afkeuring van de aanspraak op diversiteit en de gelijkheid van minderheden. Het nieuwe verlangen naar autoriteit is, luidt daarom mijn hypothese, dus verbonden met de zorg voor een verloren normaliteit die wordt of werd gekenmerkt door onder meer een duidelijke genderorde.

In wat volgt zal ik eerst ingaan op de gendercodering van gezag, de onderbewuste bestendigheid ervan en het daaruit voortvloeiende autoriteitsdilemma van de vrouw. Vervolgens zal ik samen met Sara Ahmed de heropleving van oude, voornamelijk mannelijke autoriteiten in vermeende crisistijden onderzoeken. Ten slotte presenteer ik Simone de Beauvoirs ethiek der dubbelzinnigheid als een mogelijk nieuw perspectief op het verlangen naar autoriteit en normaliteit. Haar aanpak, ben ik van mening, maakt duidelijk waarom zowel een terugkeer naar de oude genderorde en premoderne vormen van gezag alsook het liberaal-kapitalistische mensbeeld geen passende antwoorden kunnen bieden op de uitdagingen van een complexe en steeds meer verbonden wereld. Beide samenlevingsmodellen houden onvoldoende rekening met de ambiguïteit van het menselijk bestaan. Zij kunnen dus geen positief beeld schetsen van de menselijke vrijheid waarin deze wordt verzoend met kwetsbaarheid, socialiteit en onderlinge afhankelijkheid en verantwoordelijkheid.

2. Autoriteit, geslacht en de crisis van de normaliteit

In het hiernavolgende beargumenteer ik dat 'premoderne autoriteit', d.w.z. een autoriteit die gebonden is aan een persoon en dus ook aan het geslacht, terugkeert in een geïdealiseerde of gepopulariseerde vorm, 1) omdat macht en autoriteit niet langer tastbaar en dus minder aanvechtbaar zijn en dit resulteert in een toenemend besef van de kwetsbaarheid van de menselijke existentie en de complexiteit van de wereld, en 2) omdat de traditionele autoriteiten een herstel van de orde en de normaliteit beloven, wat zich vooral manifesteert in een ondubbelzinnige, d.w.z. binaire geslachtsorde.

Autoriteit en geslacht zijn in dit opzicht op twee manieren met elkaar verstrengeld. Ten eerste heeft autoriteit zelf genderconnotaties: ze is gebaseerd op zowel traditionele ideale mannelijke kenmerken als op concrete voorbeelden [van mannelijke autoriteit] uit het verleden. Ten tweede omdat een binaire geslachtsorde rechtstreeks verband houdt met dit premoderne concept van autoriteit. Een binaire geslachtsorde dient net als het premoderne gezagsconcept om orde en stabiliteit te waarborgen. Beide stellen vanaf het begin identiteiten, taken en verantwoordelijkheden vast die de keuze en de verantwoordelijkheid van twee groepen afbakenen en beperken.

2.1. Mannelijke autoriteiten

De Latijnse termen *auctoritas* en *auctor* verwijzen met een impliciete vanzelfsprekendheid

naar mannen: naar oprichters van een imperium, auteurs en scheppers van grote filosofische en literaire werken, uitvinders en ontdekkers. Hetzelfde geldt voor de *patrias* als hoofd van familie en staat, en voor de economische leiders van nu: Autoriteit is in deze westerse context altijd al, op enkele uitzonderingen na, historisch, traditioneel en functioneel geassocieerd geweest met specifieke mannen of zelfs gelijkgesteld met 'mannelijkheid' op zich.

Vrouwen komen helemaal niet voor in deze geschiedenis en in de wetenschappelijke literatuur over autoriteit, of alleen als een speciaal geval. Al in zijn oorsprong en betekenis verwijst de term autoriteit naar attributen die een mannelijke connotatie hebben in traditionele, religieuze en symbolische termen, zoals activiteit, productiviteit, kracht, hardheid, mannelijkheid of rationaliteit. Dit staat in contrast met het passieve, het gevormde, het zachtaardige, het milde, de natuur en de irrationaliteit – attributen die aan het vrouwelijke worden toegeschreven (Beauvoir 2000; Lloyd 1993).

In de moderniteit is de traditionele vorm van gezag, gelegitimeerd door religieuze traditie of erfelijkheid, steeds meer vervangen door andere vormen van gezag die formeel of functioneel bepaald en rationeel gelegitimeerd zijn, d.w.z. door passende kennis, deskundigheid of prestatie. Ondanks of juist vanwege ontwikkelingen als juridische gelijkheid en de toenemende educatieve voorsprong van vrouwen[2], en door het verlies van betekenis van traditionele vormen van gezag, is het hierboven genoemde ‚nieuwe' verlangen naar autoriteit vooral gericht op oude, van oudsher mannelijke vormen van autoriteit.

Traditionele vormen van gezag zijn, in vergelijking met moderne vormen, sterker gebonden aan de persoon in kwestie, en minder aan diens prestaties of bewezen kennis. Dit komt overeen met wat Max Weber een charismatische vorm van autoriteit noemt, die steunt op bijzondere karaktertrekken en een bepaalde uitstraling die volgelingen in de ban houden. Traditionele autoriteitsbeelden zijn enerzijds gekoppeld aan concrete mannelijke rolmodellen uit de geschiedenis, de media of de eigen (herinnerde) ervaring, en anderzijds gekoppeld aan een bepaald autoritair charisma. Het is echter niet zo dat mannen van nature autoriteit hebben en dat vrouwen dit charisma niet of slechts in bijzondere gevallen hebben, zoals nog vaak op een pseudowetenschappelijke manier wordt beweerd. Dit vermeende charisma is geen puur individueel, biologisch, ahistorisch of magisch talent, maar bestaat eerder uit het verwerven van kennis, houdingen en gedrag dat relevant is op een bepaald moment, een zogenoemd cultureel kapitaal, dat iemand in een bepaalde tijd invloed en erkenning geeft.[3] Een dergelijke charismatische autoriteit van het oude type vertegenwoordigt niet langer een onafhankelijke vorm van heerschappij, maar is nog steeds relevant in relatie tot andere vormen van autoriteit. Autoriteiten zijn namelijk nooit volledig en permanent gelegitimeerd door formele of functionele criteria, positie of ambt, maar altijd afhankelijk van de erkenning van de betreffende persoon. Uiteindelijk is het niet voldoende om alleen maar autoriteit te hebben in de vorm van een ambt; autoriteit moet ook worden ingevuld en voortdurend worden bijgewerkt door de persoon om als zodanig te worden erkend en dus bevestigd. Autoriteit is dus niet alleen formeel of functioneel gelegitimeerd, maar afhankelijk van de erkenning, interpretatie en legitimatie ervan door anderen – en dus inherent relationeel.[4]

Dit geldt des te meer omdat de officiële autoriteit (als ambtsdrager) een noodzakelijkerwijs asymmetrische sociale of politieke relatie veronderstelt waarin één lid meer autoriteit, verantwoordelijkheid en macht heeft, en asymmetrie hierin vaak zelfs gewild en nodig is (cf. Sennett 1980). Dus hoe meer traditioneel mannelijke verwachtingen en autoriteitsconcepten (nog steeds of opnieuw) effectief zijn, hoe meer deze ook de evaluatie van formele en functionele autoriteiten zullen bepalen en beïnvloeden. In dit opzicht hebben de traditionele noties van autoriteit een lange houdbaarheid; ze hebben lange tijd generatieve tradities en media en dus ook de eigen (vroegere) ervaring bepaald. Hoewel de realiteit en de machtsverhoudingen blijvend zijn veranderd, werken de oude, door gender getinte associaties vaak onderbewust door.

Algemene en dagelijkse evaluaties van autoriteit worden dus meestal impliciet gekleurd door traditionele normatieve schema's die verder teruggaan in de tijd. Deze normatieve schema's zijn verder meestal gekoppeld aan ideeën van mannelijkheid of rolmodellen van concrete mannen die deze normen representeren. Hoe minder genderneutraal de autoriteitsposities binnen de respectieve instellingen zijn (d.w.z. expliciet 'mannelijk'), des te meer ze een traditioneel autoritair charisma, houding of persoonlijkheid eisen (Lovell 2003, 3; Guthoff 2013, 188 e.v.). Op dezelfde manier krijgen instellingen met een 'mannelijk' karakter als geheel meestal nog steeds méér autoriteit en dus méér waarde toegekend dan zogenaamd 'vrouwelijke' gebieden als (vooral basis-) onderwijs en zorg, zoals te zien is in de media-aanwezigheid en de bezoldiging van deze gebieden.[5]

2.2.   Het autoriteitsdilemma van vrouwen

Vormen en functies van autoriteit zijn zowel in algemene als in officiële zin veranderd, met name wat betreft de vroegere genderspecifieke taakverdeling van arbeid en macht. Tegelijkertijd lijkt het traditionele autoriteitstype, de persoon of instelling die autoriteit uitstraalt of bezit, deze verandering op sommige gebieden subliminaal te hebben overleefd. Ook vandaag de dag gebeurt het nog dat bij het beschrijven, beoordelen en bekritiseren van vrouwen als gezaghebbende personen, de focus in eerste instantie niet ligt op hun functie, kennis of prestaties maar op hun uiterlijk of privébelangen, d.w.z. (gebrek aan) aantrekkelijkheid, zogenaamd vrouwelijk gedrag of zelfs hun relatiestatus. Hier zijn tal van voorbeelden van, van verslaggeving over topsporters tot vrouwelijke politici en ceo's. Deze (ongewenste) nadruk op allesbehalve hun professionele vermogens zou kunnen verklaren waarom vrouwen ondervertegenwoordigd zijn in zelfs de moderne vormen van autoriteit. We hebben het hier wellicht te maken met vormen van autoriteit die eigenlijk als rationeel gelegitimeerd gelden, die formele regels en een objectieve standaard volgen ('officiële autoriteit') en worden gekarakteriseerd door hun functionaliteit (gezag qua deskundigheid, kennis en ervaring), maar waarin onderbewuste, oude ideeën over gender en autoriteit doorwerken. Deze traditionele nadruk op uiterlijk en privézaken kan mogelijk ook verklaren waarom vrouwen, zelfs wanneer zij deze functies uitoefenen, relatief minder autoriteit wordt toegekend – en waarom gebieden die gekenmerkt worden door een 'vrouwelijke' vorm van autoriteit (Großmaß 2017) niet als echte autoriteit worden aangewezen en erkend.[6]

Verborgen onder de oppervlakte van gelijkheid, vrijheid en moderniteit ligt

het oude autoriteitsdilemma van vrouwen, dat Simone de Beauvoir beschreef in *De tweede sekse*.[7] Het is de afbakening van 'het vrouwelijke', dat 'mannelijkheid' en de bijbehorende traditionele vormen van autoriteit definieert. Als vrouwen (of mannen) zich 'vrouwelijk' tonen in de klassieke zin, wordt dit geïnterpreteerd als onbeduidend en dubieus. Maar als ze zich te mannelijk tonen, wordt hun vrouw-zijn ontkend, of worden ze gezien als een (slechte) mannenkopie die losbandig en niet soeverein is.[8] Terwijl bij mannen van middelbare leeftijd in autoriteitsfuncties, zoals bijvoorbeeld rechters, een mannelijke socialisatie lonend is omdat deze nog steeds samenvalt met hun professionele rol en de daarmee verbonden autoriteit, moeten vrouwen van dezelfde leeftijd zich expliciet verhouden tot het omgaan met hun genderrol (Tomsich and Guy 2014, 473; Stievers 2002).

In traditioneel mannelijk-autoritaire beroepen kunnen vrouwen autoriteit dus (nog) niet vanzelfsprekend of automatisch uitoefenen zoals mannen dat meestal doen. Dit heeft echter niet alleen negatieve gevolgen: afstand nemen van de professionele rol en, daarmee samenhangend, reflecteren op de eigen genderrol en de ervaren discrepantie tussen beide rollen, kan ook een motivatie zijn om deze expliciet aan te pakken en te veranderen.

2.3. De (vermeende) crisis van de (gender)normaliteit

Met name in tijden van crisis heeft men de neiging beslissingen en acties volgens oude gendernormen te beoordelen.[9] Zo wordt Angela Merkels 'vrouwelijke zwakte' en 'empathie' verantwoordelijk gemaakt voor haar vermeende fouten in het vluchtelingenbeleid. Het is dus haar gebrek aan hardheid die de natie verzwakt: door de natie niet te verdedigen tegen de veronderstelde invasie van vluchtelingen brengt ze de integriteit en identiteit van de natie in gevaar. De oude vrouwelijke en mannelijke connotaties zijn duidelijk zichtbaar in de corresponderende retoriek van andere politici en media. Is een vrouw ongeschikt om de natie te beschermen tegen penetratie door indringers? Zelfs als deze retoriek niet noodzakelijkerwijs van toepassing is of toegepast wordt op een concrete vrouw of man – bijvoorbeeld, Theresa May heeft wél een tijd de mannelijke autoriteit vertegenwoordigd, die met 'hardheid' de Brexit doorzette – zijn de zinnen die gebruikt worden om de vluchtelings- en economische crises te beschrijven nog steeds duidelijk gegenderd (zwak vs. sterk, passief vs. actief, binnen vs. buiten, penetratie, invasie, overstroming van een kwetsbaar landelijk lichaam).

In dit soort politieke discoursen wordt een emotionele reactie (angst en boosheid) opgewekt, waarbij letterlijk een crisis wordt opgeroepen en daarmee de noodzaak van een autoritaire reactie, zoals Sara Ahmed laat zien in haar boek *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004). Ahmed noemt als voorbeeld de uitroep van het Britse Nationale Front: "Britain is Dying: How long are you just going to watch?" (Ahmed 2004, 12). Het persoonlijk en emotioneel aanspreken van een 'jij' leidt tot een solidariteit en creëert zo een 'wij' wat wordt aangevallen en nu moet worden verdedigd door een sterke vertegenwoordiger.

De lange levensduur van premoderne autoritaire structuren en de heropleving ervan hangt dus nauw samen met de genderassociaties en de emoties die ze opwekken. Volgens Ahmed is deze koppeling met emoties de enige manier om te verklaren waarom

we deze structuren en normen niet alleen absorberen en belichamen door socialisatie, maar er ook actief in investeren om onze sociale identiteit te kunnen behouden. Een dergelijke investering, die meestal niet bewust of expliciet plaatsvindt, toont zich als de natie een voorwerp van liefde wordt: een formeel teken van burgerschap wordt zo geassocieerd met de mogelijkheid van verlies, letsel of zelfs de dood. Zulke verhalen (narratieven) binden burgers op twee manieren aan 'hun' natie: enerzijds door de gemeenschappelijke afwijzing van een buitenstaander of haat jegens anderen en vreemden, en anderzijds door de daaruit voortvloeiende verbondenheid met de eigen groep en een interne solidariteit. Volgens Ahmed is dit wat normaliteit en stabiliteit oplevert en tegelijkertijd de crisis van deze normaliteit postuleert, waarin de betreffende burgers om deze natie rouwen (als verleden of verloren):

> The emotion of hate works to animate the ordinary subject, to bring that fantasy to life, precisely by constituting the ordinary as in crisis, and the ordinary person as the *real victim*. The ordinary becomes that which is *already* under threat by the imagined others whose proximity becomes a crime against person as well as place (Ahmed 2004, 43).

Wat Ahmed hier duidelijk maakt is dat normaliteit wordt neergezet als een statische en zuivere, pure toestand, die altijd in gevaar is en moet worden beschermd en behouden. Hier wordt een illusie van normaliteit, eenduidigheid en essentie op het niveau van een natie gecreëerd, die de interne ambiguïteit en dynamiek van geografie en migratie in haar ontwikkeling en de daarmee gepaarde constante culturele en sociale verandering negeert. De natie is in deze zin eeuwig, of beter: valt bijna buiten de tijd – het is een vaste plek met een eenduidige definitie van wie erbij hoort en wie niet. Tegelijkertijd is ze daarmee ook constant in gevaar, en hier wordt de dimensie van gender bijzonder duidelijk. Van zowel binnen- als buitenaf wordt de natie bedreigd, en beide gevaren hebben een genderdimensie.

Normaliteit moet niet alleen extern worden verdedigd, ook de interne familiestructuur moet stabiel blijven. Sociale of privénormaliteit is direct verbonden met de nationale normaliteit; het gezin als de "kern van de natie"[10] wordt gewaarborgd door de binaire geslachtsorde en de daarmee samenhangende klassieke rol- en arbeidsverdeling. Deze genderorde belooft een duidelijke verdeling en identiteit. Het definieert wat mannelijke of vrouwelijke kenmerken en taken zijn en structureert daarmee de werkelijkheid. Volgens de klassieke genderorde zijn vrouwen van nature zachtaardig, zorgzaam en emotioneel en zijn ze dus verantwoordelijk voor de privésfeer, de zorg en verzorging van de kinderen, het huis of het vaderland, of voor zorgende activiteiten in de bredere zin van het woord, zoals zorg, diensten of onderwijs. Mannen daarentegen zijn idealiter assertief, sterk, dominant en rationeel en zijn daarom geschikt voor publieke activiteiten, hard of risicovol werk of managementposities.

Deze genderorde spiegelt zich ook in de cultureel gevormde emotionele reacties op zogenaamde 'indringers', die de normaliteit en zuiverheid van de natie zouden bedreigen. De natie wordt hier als vrouw/vrouwelijk gedacht als iets wat men moet beschermen, waar men kan 'indringen' en wat men kan veroveren en penetreren. Een dergelijke orde met haar illusie van eenduidigheid en eeuwigheid wordt dus van buiten

maar ook van binnenuit bedreigd door diverse, dat wil zeggen, andere en nieuwe familie- en relatiemodellen. Met name in tijden van crisis valt men dus graag terug op één oude en vertrouwde geslachtsorde, dit geldt zowel voor conservatieve alsook voor uitgesproken liberaal of progressief georiënteerde personen: in tegenstelling tot de publiekelijk verkondigde liberale overtuigingen, hebben ook hier traditionele taakverdelingen en impliciete overtuigingen in vorm van gewoontes in de dagelijkse praktijk vaak de overhand.[11]

3. Autoriteit en orde vs. ambiguïteit en vrijheid

Beauvoir beargumenteert in haar *Tweede sekse* dat zogenaamd vrouwelijke taken en de vrouwelijke levenssfeer vooral door immanentie, en mannelijke taken en projecten door transcendentie gekenmerkt zijn. Immanentie wordt daarbij geassocieerd met zorgende, decorerende of behoudende taken in het privédomein, het thuis, terwijl transcendente taken doelen op de actieve toekomstige vorming van de publieke, sociale en politieke wereld. Deze strikte taak-, rol-, ruimte- en tijdsverdeling voorkomt dus in zekere dat mensen de ambiguïteit van hun existentie onder ogen zien: door deze orde hoeven mannen zich niet overmatig bezig te houden met hun sterfelijkheid, materialiteit en kwetsbaarheid, en vrouwen kunnen noch de volledige verantwoordelijkheid nemen voor hun eigen situatie en daden, noch voor politieke en maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen.

Beauvoir verbindt hier het idee van de ambiguïteit van elke existentie met het concept van vrijheid en verantwoordelijkheid. In een patriarchale maar ook in een liberaal-kapitalistische maatschappij kan volgens haar een dergelijke vrijheid niet voldoende verwerkelijkt worden. Vrijheid (en daarmee ook verantwoordelijkheid) is iets wat volgens haar a) op onze concrete situering stoelt (zowel biologisch, materieel, economisch alsook cultureel, discursief), b) kwetsbaarheid, sterfelijkheid en afhankelijkheid van de wereld/anderen insluit, en c) altijd al intersubjectief, dat wil zeggen, relationeel is. Vrijheid is bij Beauvoir dus altijd ook een acceptatie van fundamentele ambiguïteit en intersubjectiviteit, dat is, wederzijdse menselijke betrokkenheid en afhankelijkheid.

3.1. Ambiguïteit en Situering

Beauvoirs begrip van ambiguïteit wordt meestal in verband gebracht met de ontologie van Sartre en Heidegger (cf. Gothlin 2006; Keltner 2006). Hier illustreert ambiguïteit de temporele spanning tussen feitelijkheid en transcendentie, tussen dat wat we nu zijn, en dat wat we op het punt staan te worden. In die zin wordt het menselijk bestaan opgevat als een project of wording, eerder dan als een vooraf bepaalde substantie of essentie: in het bestaan projecteert men zich voortdurend in de richting van een toekomst, en verenigt daarbij verleden en heden in het doen. In Sartres interpretatie leidt dit tot de beroemde existentiële imperatief dat de existentie altijd voor de essentie komt. Het menselijk wezen wordt dus juist gekenmerkt door een 'gebrek aan zijn', daarom zijn we gedwongen om onszelf zijn en dus zin te geven, dat wil zeggen, moeten wij zelf ons essentie bepalen door middel van onze projecten.

Beauvoirs beroemde zin 'als vrouw word je niet geboren, maar vrouw word je', moet dan ook tegen deze achtergrond worden gelezen. Er bestaat geen essentie van de

vrouw, enkel concreet gesitueerde existerende 'vrouwen', wier herhaalde praktijken en projecten het zijn en de zin van 'vrouw/vrouwelijk' bepalen. Echter, in tegenstelling tot Sartre, legt Beauvoir hier de focus niet zozeer op de vrije keuze van projecten, maar beklemtoont ze het belang van de gesitueerdheid van elke existentie. Hier sluit ze aan bij het concept van situatie en situering zoals door Merleau-Ponty ontwikkeld in de *Fenomenologie van de waarneming* (cf. McWeeny 2017; Wilkerson 2017). Situering betekent daarbij zowel dat je concreet gesitueerd bent, dat wil zeggen, in een situatie wordt geboren en door deze situatie bepaald wordt, alsook dat je in-situatie bent, dat je je deze situatie actief moet toe-eigenen of eigen moet maken.

Beauvoirs aandacht voor het 'worden' is dus geen typisch voorbeeld van het existentialisme van Sartre, dat het 'worden' ziet in het licht van absolute vrijheid, of van de verwezenlijking van een vrij gekozen en individueel project. Haar nadruk ligt veeleer op de invloed van concrete situaties die een dergelijke 'ontologische vrijheid' ofwel beperken ofwel mogelijk maken. Beauvoir sluit zich aan bij Merleau-Ponty door te stellen dat elke vrijheid noodzakelijkerwijs een gesitueerde vrijheid moet zijn, dat wil zeggen, beperkt maar ook gemotiveerd door de historische, materiële en sociale situatie waarin men zich bevindt. Beauvoir maakt dit idee van gesitueerde vrijheid echter concreet door het toe te passen op de beschrijving van bestaande historische subjecten (in *De tweede sekse*: vrouwen) en hun situatie. Daarmee neemt zij het inzicht van gesitueerdheid serieuzer dan Merleau-Ponty zelf wanneer zij zich kritisch afvraagt of belichaamd zijn en concreet gesitueerd zijn voor alle bestaande mensen hetzelfde betekent. Wat als een situatie vooral gekenmerkt wordt door overheersing, onderdrukking of beperking? Wat als ervaringen uit het verleden en materiële omstandigheden niet motiverend of faciliterend werken, maar beperkend of zelfs gewelddadig?

Beauvoir wijst daarmee op het feit dat, hoewel alle bestaande mensen een algemeen gevoel van ambiguïteit en kwetsbaarheid delen, ambiguïteit niet hetzelfde betekent voor de bevoorrechten als voor de onderdrukten (vgl. Card 2006, 15). De les die we van Beauvoir kunnen leren is dat concrete situaties onze vrijheid van handelen kunnen beperken, en wel op verschillende manieren. Zo zijn de grenzen voor sommigen veel strenger dan voor anderen. Dit geldt bijvoorbeeld voor vrouwen in een patriarchale samenleving, voor onderdrukte minderheden, en voor mensen op een bepaalde leeftijd in tegenstelling tot mensen in de 'bloei van hun leven' (zoals Beauvoir benadrukt in *De ouderdom*). In deze gevallen zijn de vrijheid en de mogelijkheden om te handelen en te kiezen niet absoluut, maar relatief ten opzichte van de concrete situatie. Daarbij speelt ook gewoonte een centrale rol. Beauvoir en Merleau-Ponty vatten gewoonte daarbij niet op als een loutere automatische of mechanische herhaling, maar als een performativiteit, waardoor mensen hun omgeving letterlijk bewonen en integreren via herhaalde handelingen. In dergelijke processen worden iemands lichaam en karakter ontwikkeld en verwerft men praktische betekenissen en vaardigheden. Hier houdt situering op een externe conditie te zijn, maar wordt letterlijk belichaamd. Dit is waar Beauvoir op wijst in *De Tweede Sekse*, wanneer zij beschrijft hoe het karakter van vrouwen wordt gevormd door hun situatie en repetitieve en ‚immanente' dagelijkse taken. In dit proces van verwerving is men zowel passief als actief, gevormd en vormend. Dit maakt situering enerzijds tot een permanente, anonieme en bepalende kracht, maar

impliceert anderzijds mogelijkheden tot verandering en de verwezenlijking van een concrete gesitueerde vrijheid.

Vrouwen worden daarom ook niet louter passief of van buitenaf tot vrouw gemaakt (in tegenstelling tot wat de vaak gebruikte Nederlandse vertaling suggereert). Daarom kiest Beauvoir voor de formulering 'se faire object', wanneer zij de wording van vrouwen in een patriarchale samenleving beschrijft (cf. McWeeny 2017, 218). Vrouwen worden door hun situatie gedwongen en in het object-zijn geduwd, maar aan de andere kant moeten ze ook meedoen om zichzelf tot object voor anderen te maken. De situatie kadert of bepaalt dus de manier waarop de toegewezen seksen hun subject- of objectrol moeten realiseren. Terwijl vrouwen zichzelf dus tot object maken, wordt mannen gesuggereerd zichzelf tot subject te maken (se faire subject) door andere mensen in bezit te nemen en hun eigen kwetsbaarheid en afhankelijkheid te ontkennen (zie McWeeny 2017, 219: "by extending his subjectivity to the bodies of others and denying his vulnerability, relational, and passive aspects")

3.2. Ambiguïteit en vrijheid

Beauvoir beschrijft de situatie van vrouwen in een patriarchale samenleving als één van onderdrukking. Tegelijkertijd legt ze uit waarom de vorming van vrijheid en verantwoordelijkheid voor zowel vrouwen áls mannen niet mogelijk is binnen een dergelijke asymmetrische genderorde. Met een dergelijke orde, stelt Beauvoir, moet de dubbelzinnigheid van ons bestaan – d.w.z. het feit dat we subject en object, transcendentie en immanentie, activiteit en passiviteit, cultuur en natuur verenigen – worden opgelost door één van de twee polen toe te kennen aan een van de twee gefixeerde geslachten (Vintges 2017, 75). Voor Beauvoir is het patriarchaat dus een maatschappelijke organisatie, waarin de existentiële ambiguïteit, die verwijst naar het hele menselijke bestaan, wordt verraden door te trachten deze te overwinnen en te zuiveren door middel van een binaire en dualistische opvatting. Alleen door de passieve, materiële, kwetsbare, sterfelijke en objectieve kant van het bestaan uit te besteden aan vrouwen, kunnen mannen op hun beurt de illusie overeind houden dat zij volledig actieve, universele, rationele, machtige en bijna onsterfelijke subjecten zijn. Voor Beauvoir is dit een daad van kwade trouw, waarbij beide, mannen en vrouwen, falen in het concreet realiseren van hun ontologische vrijheid en dus in het nemen van verantwoordelijkheid daarvoor. Vrouwen handelen te kwader trouw wanneer zij hun relatieve, zij het beperkte, handelingsmogelijkheden niet benutten, maar in plaats daarvan een situatie bevestigen waarin zij van verantwoordelijkheid worden ontzien. Mannen worden van kwade trouw beschuldigd, wanneer zij het andere geslacht gebruiken om hun eigen ambiguïteit voor zichzelf te verbergen (Vintges 2006, 145). Om hun ontologische vrijheid te kunnen verwezenlijken en een authentieke relatie met elkaar aan te gaan, moeten vrouwen dus de positie van de ander verwerpen en hun subjectrol op zich nemen, terwijl mannen hun contingente lichamelijke bestaan moeten aanvaarden. (Vintges 2006, 145). Beauvoir spreekt hier geen normatief oordeel uit, alsof het altijd slecht is om object voor een ander te zijn of kwetsbaar (en actief, rationeel of sterk zijn altijd goed). Het is ook geen pleidooi van een omwisseling van deze toeschrijvingen, maar voor een herkenning van de dubbelzinnigheid (ambiguïteit) van onze existentie

Je existentiële ambiguïteit ontkennen betekent voor Beauvoir dus je vrijheid en verantwoordelijkheid ontkennen. Dit geldt zowel voor elk individu als voor de maatschappij in haar geheel. Dit benadrukt Beauvoir in haar boek over ouderdom (1947), waar zij laat zien, dat dezelfde categorisering en discriminatie waar vrouwen mee te maken hebben, geldt voor oude mensen, die in de moderne westerse kapitalistische samenlevingen ook als 'ander' worden gedefinieerd. Een maatschappelijk systeem dat het ideaal van een jonge, rationele, sterke, krachtige en goed presterende man als norm probeert te stellen, terwijl alle anderen als afwijkend worden gedefinieerd, is dus volgens Beauvoir een maatschappij die een verwerkelijking van de 'ontologische vrijheid' voor iedereen concreet onmogelijk maakt. Beauvoirs argument kan dus ook worden toegepast op de Westerse (neo)liberaal-kapitalistische logica, die zich richt op prestaties, optimalisatie en vooruitgang en die een ideaaltypisch rationeel, vrij en efficiënt subject postuleert. Het enige verschil met het conservatieve patriarchaat is dat de ongewenste aspecten van het bestaan hier niet langer worden toegeschreven aan de vrouwelijke helft van de mensheid, maar in het algemeen aan de verliezers van de concurrentie. Kwetsbaarheid daarentegen wordt niet langer gedefinieerd en gelegitimeerd door het geslacht alleen, maar representeert nu het persoonlijke falen van elk individu.

3.3. Op weg naar een ethiek der dubbelzinnigheid

Volgens Beauvoir (zoals bij Sartre) is elke menselijke existentie per definitie vrij. Maar in welke mate deze potentiële vrijheid kan worden verwerkelijkt is afhankelijk van de concrete situering van de existentie, alsook van de wil en daden van het individu. Men moet zichzelf concreet vrij-willen, en deze concrete wil kenmerkt volgens Beauvoir de overgang van een algemeen potentieel voor vrijheid (ontologische vrijheid) naar een ethisch gerealiseerde (concrete en gesitueerde) vrijheid (Beauvoir 2018, 30–36; cf. Wilkerson 2017, 225; cf. Petterson 2015).

Drie dingen zijn dus cruciaal voor Beauvoir's opvatting over een ethiek die gebaseerd is op ambiguïteit en vrijheid. *Ten eerste* zijn vrijheid willen en ethisch handelen, één en hetzelfde. Om vrijheid ethisch te realiseren, moet mens hun eigen (en andermans) ambiguïteit omarmen. *Ten tweede*, wij zijn niet ondanks, maar juist dankzij onze ambiguïteit in staat onze vrijheid concreet te verwezenlijken. Hoewel elk menselijk bestaan zowel vrij als gesitueerd is (ontologische voorwaarden), kan ieder kiezen (binnen diens concrete mogelijkheden) hoe die de situatie beleeft en of die diens vrijheid naar behoren wil opnemen (of liever verwerpen of ontkennen).[12] *Ten derde* betekent dit, dat als wij ethisch onze vrijheid willen verwezenlijken, wij de ontologische vrijheid van anderen moeten erkennen, en praktisch (ethisch) ondersteunen.

Vrijheid kan dus nooit alléén worden gerealiseerd, maar slechts in samenhang met anderen. Elke actie is verweven met en afhankelijk van de acties of reacties van anderen; elke persoon moet rekening houden met, en antwoorden aan, anderen. Projecten en acties zijn gebaseerd op bestaande (infra-)structuren, ideeën en acties, d.w.z. omstandigheden die er al zijn, net zozeer als op materiële en spirituele omstandigheden die we aan anderen te danken hebben. Beauvoir laat geen ruimte voor twijfel: vrijheid is geen egoïsme, geen onafhankelijkheid, niet 'ik kan doen wat ik wil'. Integendeel, een dergelijke houding zou zelfs gevaarlijk zijn, want om dergelijke privileges te verkrijgen,

moet men zich ofwel onderwerpen aan een invloedrijke autoriteit (die deze privileges mogelijk maakt en waarborgt), ofwel zelf een dergelijke autoriteit worden, waarmee de ambiguïteit van het bestaan weer ontkend zou worden. Hoe dan ook, zelfs in een ogenschijnlijke 'vogelvrije' houding komt een diepe afhankelijkheid van anderen aan het licht, die onze vrijheid überhaupt mogelijk maakt (Beauvoir 2018, 63 e.v.).

Dit betekent a) dat ons gesitueerd bestaan altijd verbonden is met anderen, en er dus altijd al een onderlinge responsiviteit bestaat, en b) dat dit loutere potentieel concreet gerealiseerd moet worden als ethische vrijheid, dat wil zeggen, een vrijheid die opzettelijk de vrijheid van anderen respecteert en ondersteunt. Vrijheid vereist dus concreet wederzijdse erkenning: geen enkele existentie kan zich volgens Beauvoir volwaardig ontplooien "wanneer zij zich tot zichzelf beperkt en niet appelleert aan de existentie van anderen" (Beauvoir 2018, 74). Te kwader trouw leven verwijst dus niet alleen naar individuen die hun eigen vrijheid ontkennen, maar ook naar hen die de vrijheid van anderen ontkennen. Dat we anderen nodig hebben om onze betekenissen en projecten te erkennen, te ondersteunen of voort te zetten, is het stukje van de puzzel dat Sartre heeft gemist: "Willen dat er zijn is betekent immers ook willen dat er mensen bestaan door wie en voor wie de wereld is begiftigd met menselijke betekenissen. Men kan de wereld slechts ontdekken op basis van een door de andere mensen ontdekte wereld" (Beauvoir 2018, 77–78). Om een dergelijke erkenning, legitimatie en generativiteit te kunnen verlenen, moeten die anderen zelf vrij zijn: "Ieder mens heeft de vrijheid van anderen nodig en in zekere zin wil hij deze ook altijd, zelfs al is hij een tiran. Het probleem is alleen dat de mens dikwijls de consequenties van dit willen niet te goeder trouw aanvaardt. Toch is het alleen de vrijheid van de ander die verhindert dat elk van ons verstart in de absurditeit van de feitelijkheid" (Beauvoir 2018, 78). Daarom is het niet voldoende, zoals Barbara S. Andrew beklemtoont: "[T]o make meaning in front of slavish devotees, for their recognition is not valuable because it is not free" (Andrew 2006, 36).

Om de wereld op een zinvolle manier te kunnen ontsluiten, hebben we dus anderen nodig. Beauvoir is de eerste existentialistische filosoof die dit schijnbaar eenvoudige punt expliciet maakt. Met een zijschop naar Hegel en Sartre benadrukt zij dat de ander niet alleen de wereld van mij afneemt en mijn vrijheid beperkt, maar ook deze wereld (inclusief mijzelf als deel van deze wereld) aan mij geeft. Het aanvankelijke gevoel van haat is dus naïef, "de afgunst raakt onmiddellijk met zichzelf in conflict", want "als ik werkelijk alles was, zou er niets naast mij bestaan; de wereld zou leeg zijn, er zou niets zijn om te bezitten en ook ik zelf zou niets zijn (Beauvoir 2018, 77). Het feit dat wij ons in een historische wereld bevinden en dat wij deze wereld vanuit ons beperkte perspectief slechts gedeeltelijk kunnen onthullen, betekent dat andere subjecten nodig zijn om de wereld met en voor ons te onthullen. Bovendien heeft het hele begrip 'project' een noodzakelijke intersubjectieve dimensie: "Elk project wordt bepaald door zijn wisselwerking met andere projecten" (78). Dus om onszelf te kunnen realiseren door ons in onze projecten te overstijgen, moeten we een beroep doen op anderen: om deze projecten als zinvol te erkennen, om eraan deel te nemen, ze te steunen of ze over te nemen, voorbij ons eindige bestaan. Vrijheid is dus altijd verbonden met de vrijheid van anderen: "[Z]ichzelf vrij willen betekent echter ook alle anderen vrij te willen" (79).

Dit betekent niet dat ik de vrijheid van de ander wil uit eigenbelang. Beauvoir wil veeleer benadrukken dat elke individuele vrijheid existentieel verbonden is met de vrijheid van alle anderen. Door mijn vrijheid te willen, moet ik dus tegelijkertijd de vrijheid van anderen willen: Als de andere subjecten niet vrij (of volwaardig subject) zouden zijn, zou dat betekenen dat mijn wereld (die zich openbaart door en met anderen) en mijn projecten (erkend door, overlappend met, afhankelijk van anderen) leeg of waardeloos zouden zijn. Alleen een vrij wezen kan mij mijn wereld, dat wil zeggen de betekenis, erkenning en vrijheid schenken waarvan ik afhankelijk ben. De wereld heeft alleen waarde en betekenis voor mij, en kan dus enkel als *normaal worden ervaren*, als het ook een wereld is voor anderen; en vrijheid is enkel betekenisvol als er anderen zijn om deze vrijheid te erkennen (cf. Card 2006, 25).

Zo'n realisatie van relationele vrijheid gebeurt echter niet zonder conflict. Beauvoir lost de spanning tussen mij en de ander niet op, maar benadrukt beide: dat we als individueel bestaan ontologisch gescheiden zijn, verschillende verlangens, projecten of situatie hebben, en dat we op velerlei manieren met de ander verbonden zijn. Concreet betekent dit dat ik niet tegelijkertijd de vrijheid van allen kan willen. Ik moet beslissen welke vrijheid ik op een bepaald moment wil steunen, en dat kan ten koste gaan van of zelfs in strijd zijn met de vrijheid van andere subjecten. Hier raken ethische beslissingen verstrengeld met geschiedenis en politiek: men moet met een historische beschouwing en politieke argumenten komen, waarom een bepaalde groep subjecten op dit moment de steun van de vrijheid meer nodig heeft dan anderen of zelfs ten koste van anderen. Een dergelijke beslissing moet dus noodzakelijkerwijs betrekking hebben op en een weerspiegeling zijn van de concrete historische, sociale, economische en politieke situatie van subjecten en kan niet worden genomen op grond van universele beginselen of een categorisch imperatief. In tegenstelling tot een liberale sociale filosofie die enkel stoelt op individuele vrijheid en rationele keuzes, neemt deze relationele ethiek de concrete situering van mensen (als mogelijk makend en beperkend) serieus; en in tegenstelling tot het communitarisme, houdt ze niet enkel rekening met een abstract begrip van gemeenschap, maar met concrete intersubjectieve interacties, relaties en verhoudingen, en mogelijke spanningen en conflicten.

4.   Conclusie: Naar een nieuwe normaliteit

Wanneer we nadenken over autoriteit en het verlangen naar normaliteit, is de aanpak van Beauvoir nuttig, omdat deze de nadruk legt op de concrete sociale en historische situatie van individuen en de beperkingen die daarmee gepaard gaan. Verder pleit ze voor structurele en politieke veranderingen die individuen (in haar geval vrouwen) in staat stellen om hun situatie te overstijgen en zichzelf te bepalen. Tegelijkertijd maakt ze duidelijk dat vrijheid en afhankelijkheid, activiteit en passiviteit, dominantie en kwetsbaarheid altijd bij elkaar horen en dat we rekening moeten houden met interpersoonlijke, sociale en politiek-institutionele aspecten, waar voortdurend over moet worden onderhandeld. Vrijheid kan dus nooit − ook niet vanuit een geprivilegieerde situatie − alleen de vrijheid van het individu zijn, maar is gegrondvest op de vrijheid van anderen en moet met of in confrontatie met hen worden gerealiseerd. Een dergelijk collectief geleefde "relationele vrijheid of autonomie"[13] is niet mogelijk in premoderne vormen

van autoriteit en heerschappij of binnen vaste asymmetrische genderorden, noch in een radicaal liberaal-kapitalistische regeringsvorm: beide houden geen rekening met de verschillende (sociale, culturele, economische) situaties van individuen en ontkennen de kwetsbaarheid en afhankelijkheid van de mens. Aan de ene kant ontkennen ze de kwetsbaarheid van de autoriteiten of (met Beauvoir) van de mannen in het betreffende systeem; aan de andere kant negeren ze de kwetsbaarheid van ieder individu, zoals blijkt uit het kapitalistische basisprincipe van optimalisatie waarbij iedereen als enige verantwoordelijk is voor het succes of het falen van zijn of haar leven.

Het vasthouden aan of het heropbouwen van traditionele genderorden en het daarmee gepaard gaande verlangen naar premoderne autoriteit belooft stabiliteit, veiligheid en duidelijkheid in snelle en genetwerkte tijden. Tegelijkertijd wordt duidelijk dat het vasthouden aan dergelijke ordes een echte ontmoeting en vrije samenwerking tussen mensen verhindert. Alleen als we elkaar respecteren als echte anderen, in onze eigenheid en kwetsbaarheid, onze gelijkwaardigheid maar ook in het verschil, kunnen we zoiets als een "relationele autonomie" (Petterson 2017, 169 e.v.) tot stand brengen. Dit is niet alleen relevant op het interpersoonlijke niveau van de directe interactie, maar ook op sociaal-politiek, d.w.z. structureel of institutioneel niveau. Zowel de poging van neoliberale regeringen om elk individu als een volledig autonoom subject te postuleren, als de tegenaanval om de controle en de interpretatieve soevereiniteit over te dragen aan een sterke soeverein, zijn een ontkenning van de dubbelzinnigheid van het menselijk bestaan.[14] Beide alternatieven bevorderen manieren van leven waarbij mensen hun dubbelzinnigheid niet onder ogen zien en hun intersubjectieve verantwoordelijkheid niet accepteren.

Hoe begrijpelijk het verlangen ook is naar een premoderne autoriteit, die de macht (weer) tastbaar maakt in de vorm van een persoon (die zijn mannetje staat) – het leidt niet tot de gehoopte erkenning van de eigen situatie, persoon of groep, noch tot een gezamenlijk ontworpen en gedeelde normaliteit. Normaliteit of orde zijn geen toestanden die eenvoudigweg kunnen worden bewaard of vastgelegd, hoezeer ze ook emotioneel gepresenteerd worden. Herkenning is altijd afhankelijk van wederzijds respect voor de vrijheid van de ander; normaliteit komt pas tot stand als mensen deze normaliteit samen creëren, dat wil zeggen als ze dezelfde normen en waarden erkennen, leven, bekritiseren en ook voortdurend aanpassen en veranderen in al hun ambiguïteit. Normaliteit (en ook vrijheid) zijn dus net zo kwetsbaar en dynamisch als menselijke identiteiten. Het antwoord op de onbestemde angst en bezorgdheid over de complexiteit, diversiteit en globaliteit kan daarom niet een terugkeer zijn naar de premoderne autoriteiten en de daarmee gepaard gaande, vooraf bepaalde geslachts-, gezins- en nationale orden. Juist in deze complexiteit en globaliteit wordt duidelijk dat autonomie en kwetsbaarheid, vrijheid en intersubjectiviteit wederzijds afhankelijk zijn. Er kan geen sprake zijn van een tegenstelling tussen het subject en het andere, tussen de autonomie van het individu en de zorgen van de gemeenschap: de twee 'polen' zijn noodzakelijkerwijs met elkaar verbonden.

Met Beauvoir kunnen we hier een ander begrip van normaliteit vinden, tegenover het begrip van normaliteit dat door pre-moderne autoriteit wordt gebezigd. Niet een begrip van normaliteit dat enkel is gericht op het behouden van het oude,

maar een normaliteit die gericht is op de toekomst, waar mensen enkel samen – met en soms tegen elkaar – aan een duurzame en voor iedere leefbare vorm van normaliteit kunnen bouwen. Normaliteit die niet is gebaseerd op genderverschil en ontkenning van ambiguïteit, maar juist een begrip van normaliteit waarin de wereld alleen als normaal kan worden ervaren wanneer die wereld er ook is voor anderen.

Menselijke vrijheid wordt altijd gesitueerd en geconditioneerd door anderen, het wordt alleen met en door hen gerealiseerd. Noch de idee van een radicaal liberalisme dat de illusie van absolute vrijheid aanhangt en de verantwoordelijkheid alleen aan het individu overdraagt, noch het verlangen naar een pre-moderne autoriteit of orde dat de vrijheid en de verantwoordelijkheid van het individu ontkent, is in staat deze menselijke ambiguïteit onder ogen te zien. Beauvoir maakt duidelijk dat autonomie altijd al relationeel is geweest, het is als het ware een tijdelijke lening die altijd te danken is aan anderen (ouders, verzorgers) en soms ook ten koste gaat van anderen (onderdrukking). Als kind, in ziekte en ouderdom hebben we nog niet of niet meer onze autonomie. Hier wordt relationaliteit als afhankelijkheid dan ook pijnlijk duidelijk. Dat dit relationele aspect überhaupt publiek zo succesvol kon worden genegeerd, tenminste door de machtige en daarbij vaak mannelijke helft van de mensheid, berust er juist op dat alle zorgende functies zich stilletjes buiten het toneel afspelen. Enkel door middel van deze taakverdeling, het outsourcen van existentiële feiten zoals lichamelijke kwetsbaarheid en sterfelijkheid, door middel van traditionele gender- en andere machtsrelaties, kan aan de illusie van een absolute autonomie en autoriteit worden vastgehouden. Maar net als autonomie is ook autoriteit een tijdelijke lening die berust op de steun, het werk en het vertrouwen van anderen. In dit verband moet *autoriteit* dan ook *in het meervoud* worden gezien, d.w.z. als een tijdelijke asymmetrische leiderspositie, een overgedragen verantwoordelijkheid voor een project of een gebied, die iedereen met de juiste kennis en ervaring op zich moet kunnen nemen. Autoriteit is noodzakelijk, maar slechts voor een beperkte tijd of op duidelijk afgeperkte gebieden en functies. De taak van autoriteiten is om anderen voor te bereiden op het gebruik van hun vrijheid; om hen met specifieke ervaring, kennis of competentie doelgericht te helpen hun vrijheid zo zelfbepaald en tegelijkertijd zo verantwoord mogelijk uit te oefenen: "Want een vrijheid wil zichzelf slechts waarachtig wanneer zij zichzelf wil als onbeperkte beweging via de vrijheid van anderen" (Beauvoir 2018, 98).

Notes

1   Van Oenen (2018) beschrijft dit fenomeen als als interactieve metaalmoeheid.

2   Dit geldt alleen voor de westerse wereld, waartoe ik mij in het kader van dit artikel zal beperken. Natuurlijk wordt de toekenning van autoriteit ook sterk beïnvloed door factoren als sociale klasse en culturele achtergrond, waar ik hieronder niet verder op in kan gaan.

3   Terwijl Webers 'natuurlijke' charisma een buitengewone heerschappij rechtvaardigt, keert Bourdieu de oorzaak-gevolgrelatie om: charisma, dat alledaagse symbolische kansen op macht mogelijk maakt, wordt alleen gegenereerd door geaccumuleerd cultureel kapitaal (Kraemer 2002: 185).

4   Volgens Sennett is het een poging om de voorwaarden van de macht te interpreteren, om ze betekenis te geven door een beeld te schetsen van kracht en superioriteit (Sennett 1980).

5   Domeinen waar meer vrouwen werken zijn nog steeds gedevalueerd in termen van status en beloning, zie Walby (2011: 114 e.v.); wereldwijd kunnen we nu spreken van een feminisering, d.w.z. precarisering van het werk, waarbij privégebieden zoals de thuiszorg worden gekapitaliseerd en uitbesteed (Oksala 2016: 123).

6   Bijv. bij vergelijkbare prestaties, bijvoorbeeld wanneer vrouwelijke rechters of professoren lager ingeschaald of slechter beoordeeld worden dan hun mannelijke collega's; zie Tomsich & Guy (2014), Sprague & Massoni (2005).

7   Zo ging in het verleden het traditionele mannelijk-worden heel natuurlijk en vanzelfsprekend gepaard met autonomie, activiteit en het streven naar autoriteit, terwijl de overname en belichaming van autoriteit bij vrouwen, "het feit dat ze een autonome activiteit bezit", in tegenspraak was met hun vrouwelijkheid (Beauvoir 2000: 834). De beschrijvingen van Beauvoir beperken zich tot een bepaalde klasse of intellectueel milieu, en het proces om vrouw te worden en het gebruik van verworven vrouwelijkheid verschilt qua sociale klasse en achtergrond. Skeggs beschrijft bijvoorbeeld de 'investering' van vrouwen uit de arbeidersklasse in hun specifieke vrouwelijkheid, die meestal hun enige mogelijkheid is om zich te bevrijden van hun marginale sociale status; zie Skeggs (1997); Hennessy (1992).

8   Vrouwen in een gezaghebbende functie worden niet vanzelfsprekend als autoriteit geaccepteerd, betoogde Beauvoir: het ontbreekt haar aan de "ronde goedmoedigheid" die zo aantrekkelijk is bij de dokter die "zeker van zichzelf is" (Beauvoir 2000: 852). Een soortgelijke dynamiek was duidelijk te zien in de vorige Amerikaanse verkiezingscampagne: Hillary Clinton's vrouw-zijn of vrouwelijkheid was een centraal thema, bijvoorbeeld als een verheven of bedrogen vrouw of met oog op haar vermeende zwakte: "She 'doesn't have the stamina" (Trump); aan de andere kant werd ze beschreven als een ondoorzichtige, emotioneel koude meesteres van Amerikas militaire en economische macht. De retoriek van Trump refereert aan oude verhandelingen over mannelijkheid, waarin een antisemitisch idee van de vrouwelijke, onthechte, verwijfde en corrupte intellectueel tegenover de eerlijke en sterke man van het volk staat.

9   De coronacrisis lijkt hier op het eerste gezicht een uitzondering te zijn. Op het tweede gezicht wordt echter duidelijk dat ook hier een indeling in typisch vrouwelijke (zorgzaam, voorzichtig, angstig) en mannelijke (dapper, avontuurlijk) karaktereigenschappen plaats vindt.

10   Aldus de verwoording van het programma voor de Bundestagsverkiezing van de AfD 2013 in Duitsland, zie Kemper (2014).

11   Zie bvb. deze statistiek van de *The New York Times* waaruit blijkt dat jongere mannen niet meer huishoudelijke taken op zich nemen dan oudere generaties: https://www-nytimes-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/interactive/2021/uri/embeddedinteractive/0e9e8cec-1815-5b22-91d3-541b6b1332c8

12   In het *Pleidooi voor een moraal der dubbelzinnigheid* beschrijft Beauvoir in dit verband verschillende psychologische 'typen' van bestaan die op verschillende manieren aan de verwezenlijking van hun vrijheid ontkomen. Hun gemeenschappelijk kenmerk is hun onverschilligheid ten opzichte van hun bestaan. Zij willen zich aan hun vrijheid onttrekken, bijvoorbeeld door te proberen alle waarden van het bestaan te verwerpen (nihilist), hun vrijheid en verantwoordelijkheid over te dragen aan een groep, hogere zaak of ideologie (ernstig mens) of door hun ambiguïteit en dus de vrijheid van anderen te ontkennen (avonturier).

13   In deze context betekent dit een autonomie die van begin af mogelijk gemaakt is door en met anderen. Binnen de feministische filosofie is er een debat in hoeverre dit compatibel is met een individualistisch of liberale notie van autonomie, zie Mackenzie & Stoljar (2000); Westlund (2009); Rössler (2002).

14   Relationele autonomie en de wederzijdse erkenning van gelijkheid en verschil kunnen ook tot uitdrukking komen in collectieve acties en demonstraties, zoals in het voorbeeld van een collectieve vergadering van 'lichamen' dat Judith Butler in haar performatieve theorie van bijeenkomst *(performative theory of assembly)* beschrijft. Gezamenlijk vestigen de respectievelijke individuen de aandacht op zichzelf en hun zorgen door hun onzekerheid en kwetsbaarheid op een fysiek actieve manier te gebruiken als demonstratiemiddel, om zo een zichtbaarheid te creëren voor hun bestaan, het belang van hun behoeften (Butler 2015).

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Krisis JOURNAL for contemporary philosophy

Staging Uncivility, Or, The Performative Politics of Radical Decolonial Iconoclasm
Matthias Pauwels

Abstract
This article reflects on the deployment of crude and destructive modes of iconoclasm in contemporary decolonial and anti-racist struggles, as exemplified by the campaign against Belgium's colonialist patrimony in June 2020. Through a consideration of sympathetic and internal critiques of such modes, I postulate a tensional interplay, within the said struggles, between two opposing approaches focused on the performance of civility and uncivility respectively. While the first is grounded in Rancière's theory of emancipatory politics, arguments by Benjamin, Žižek, Jameson and especially Fanon are deployed to elucidate the rationale, modus operandi and efficacy of the more controversial second approach.

Travelling Activism from #BlackLivesMatter to #LeopoldMustFall[1]

One of the remarkable aspects of globalisation is that activist movements and campaigns travel globally from one locale to another, generating transnational ructions overnight – a phenomenon that one might denote with the term travelling activism, as a variation on Edward Said's "travelling theory" (1983, 226-47). The anti-racist protests in the US in the wake of the death-by-police-brutality of George Floyd at the end of May 2020 are a case in point. Under the banner of Black Lives Matter, these protests spread almost instantly over the globe, intersecting with unresolved issues of anti-black racism and colonialism in many places. This confirms a characteristic feature of contemporary social struggles noted by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, namely, the way in which they tend to "leap vertically and touch immediately on the global level" (2001, 54-5).

In Belgium, the 2020 Black Lives Matter campaign once again turned the country's troubled colonial past and the related, residual racist attitudes and practices into burning issues, instigating a radical challenge to the blatant silence and inaction on these matters. In addition to anti-racist Black Lives Matter rallies, which occasionally escalated into rioting and looting, there was a widespread iconoclastic assault on the country's colonialist public patrimony, especially that glorifying King Leopold II.[2] Statues, plaques and street names commemorating Belgium's highly problematic second king were spray-painted with crass slogans, paint-bombed, smeared with cement, hit with sledgehammers and toppled.[3] The symbolic revenge thus inflicted had been a long time coming and clearly provided a much-needed release of the pent-up anger and frustration among several generations of Belgo-Congolese.

This was not the first time that Belgium's colonialist heritage was contested.[4] In 2004, an anonymous collective chopped off the hand of a bronze statue of a Congolese child in the city of Ostend.[5] Part of a larger configuration of sculptures centred around an equestrian statue of Leopold II, the statue depicts one of a group of Congolese slaves which, as the inscription states, "express their gratitude to Leopold II [described as their "ingenious protector"] for having freed them from enslavement by the Arabs". The collective lambasted the monument's blatant hypocrisy as Leopold II's henchmen treated the Congolese as slaves on his rubber plantations, meting out cruel punishments to ensure productivity, such as chopping off hands and arms. By mutilating the statue, the collective's professed aim was to make the sculpture more historically accurate.[6] In 2008, activist-philosopher Théophile de Giraud had mounted an equestrian statue of Leopold II on Brussels' Throne Square, defacing it with red paint – symbolising the bloodshed during Leopold II's reign – and staging a lynching. The same statue was daubed with red paint in 2013 and 2015.[7] In 2017, photographs of abuses during Belgian colonialism were pasted on a statue of Leopold II in Mons, and in January 2018 the Citizen's Association for a Decolonial Public Space removed a bust of Leopold II in Duden Park in Forest.[8]

Although the recent Black Lives Matter protests were the immediate incentive

of the surge in decolonial contestations of Belgium's patrimony, their inspiration and roots can thus be traced back further in time. However, the worldwide outrage over the umpteenth instance of racially driven police brutality in the US no doubt contributed to the unprecedented urgency, scope, and intensity of the contestations. It might also partly explain why, this time around, the campaign of decolonial iconoclasm was quite efficacious, resulting in some short-term victories, its impact magnified, no doubt, by global moral and political pressures as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement. On a national level, politicians voted in favour of establishing a parliamentary committee on Belgium's colonial past. It also led the current king Philippe to officially express his personal regrets for Belgium's colonial misdeeds, although stopping short of issuing an apology, which would have been more consequential in terms of reparations to the Congolese people. More generally, media debates ensued on the persistence of racism – blatant and covert – in Belgian society with regard to job opportunities, housing, education, or stop-and-search practices by the police.[9] All this came about in a matter of weeks.

On a local level, iconoclastic acts against colonialist monuments often led to their removal – even if mostly to prevent further damage – which can be seen as a victory for decolonial activists. However, if the dominant way in which the local authorities in question proposed to remedy the contested nature of colonialist monuments in the long term is anything to go by, it remains to be seen if this feat will not prove to be merely temporary. Such proposals displayed an insufficient awareness of the offensiveness of the monuments as well as the gravity of their contestation, with authorities mostly emphasising the need for providing more factual information and a proper contextualisation, for instance by adding a critical commentary. Surely such a minimalist approach is inadequate as textual accompaniments cannot possibly undo the visual impact of colonialist statues in the public space. Such discursive additions are likely to have the same dubious status as the proverbial fine print in a contract, and will do little to trouble the white Belgians public enjoyment of their colonialist past. As such, it merely enables them to continue to have their colonialist cake and eat it.

To Hell with Your Documents of Barbarism!

While shocking to the average white Belgian, the crude and destructive means of contestation were not unanimously approved of even among those sympathetic to the decolonial cause, and became a matter of debate. A commonly held position in this regard was well expressed by a previous Brussels mayor in response to the aforementioned theft of a bust of Leopold II in 2018. Although understanding the motivations behind the action, the previous mayor regretted the resort to what he described as "Taliban behaviour", as well as a "rather primal vandalism […] under the cover of humanism" (Belga 2018).[10] An extremist, intolerant, and barbaric type of behaviour is thus attributed to radical decolonial iconoclasts, blemishing and delegitimising a justified cause.

On a first approach, the choice for crude, "barbaric" methods of contestation can in fact be found to be highly pertinent. One can take heed here of Walter Benjamin's verdict, in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (2007, 253-64) on

the status of a nation's "cultural treasures" or "documents of civilisation", as part of his historical–materialist reflections on culture. Benjamin (2007, 256) regards such treasures as the "spoils" of a nation's past conquests that are "carried along" in the "triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate." Of their origins, Benjamin (ibid.) says that they cannot be contemplated "without horror", leading him to famously claim that "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism", or again, that no such document is "free of barbarism".

In Belgium's post-colonial context, Benjamin's statements concerning the intimate connections between civilisation and barbarism – although not specifically related to colonialism – gain extra force and significance. It is difficult not to regard the cultural heritage memorialising and glorifying a nation's colonial past as anything but highly problematic documents of barbarism, as the spoils and sublimated insignia of colonisation built on the suffering and toil of generations of Congolese people. To be sure, the barbaric roots of colonialist monuments are carefully obfuscated by a mystifying, euphemistic discourse that shamelessly lauds the colonising nation for its civilising efforts abroad.

A Benjaminian demystification of colonialist monuments as documents of barbarism allows one to counter criticisms of the rudimentary methods of radical decolonial iconoclasts. The latter can be seen to merely reciprocate and match the barbaric nature of Belgium's colonialist endeavour, conform to a tit-for-tat logic. It should be clear that if anyone comported themselves as brutes and savages it was the colonisers themselves, and not the contemporary decolonial iconoclasts, as some contend.

Moreover, Benjamin's claims of a relation of complicity between today's rulers and their predecessors – or, as he puts it, "those who conquered before them" (ibid.) – offer a firm rejoinder to criticisms of the recent spate of decolonial activism as being mere symbolic politics or yesteryear's struggles. It was not uncommon, for instance, to hear white Belgians dryly remark that they do not understand all this fuss about colonialist monuments, downplaying the latter's contentiousness by regarding them as relics of a long gone past. It was emphasised that it has "after all" been sixty years since Congo's independence and over 110 years since the end of Leopold II's reign over Congo. It should be clear, however, that Leopold II's colonialist venture gave Belgium a vital head start in securing a strategic spot in the then emerging global world order, enabling it – up to this very day – to punch above its weight as a tiny country of eleven-and-a-half million people. It has made Belgium deeply complicit in the founding of a state of "global apartheid", as Patrick Bond (2004) calls it, established through Western countries' colonialist and imperialist drives which resulted in the massive disparities in wealth, opportunities, and rights between those in the West and the Global South that persist to this day.

More specifically in relation to on-going contestations of colonialist patrimony, the "spoils" of Leopold II's colonial enterprise allowed the Belgian capital of Brussels to position itself as a thriving, modern, Paris-style metropole by adorning its public spaces in imperialistic splendour with grand boulevards, triumphal arches, and monu-mental statues. This urban–architectural capital no doubt played an important role in

later establishing Brussels as the seat of powerful transnational institutions such as the EU or NATO.

The spate of iconoclasm against Belgium's "documents of barbarism" is thus more than a narrow, belated manifestation of symbolic politics. It is a contestation of much broader economic and political processes of oppression and exploitation of the "wretched of the earth", to use Frantz Fanon's famous expression (1963), that have been unrelentingly wreaking havoc for many centuries all over the world. Rather than inoperative time capsules of merely antiquarian interest, colonialist monuments are emblematic of problematical geopolitical processes, and of the accompanying mindset of those that enforced or benefited from them. As Joëlle Sambi Nzeba of the Belgian #BlackLivesMatter movement declared, "These monuments are present not just in public space, but also in people's mentalities" (Thamm 2020).

"We Are Better Than This"

Behind the aforementioned objections against resorting to basic and violent means of cultural contestation, one can identify the fundamental structure of what might be called the sympathetic critique of radical decolonial iconoclasm, whereby the latter is regarded as "understandable yet deplorable". It concerns a type of critique that understands or supports the decolonial or anti-racist cause, yet takes issue with the means deployed to further it, which are condoned at best, but more often condemned. This sympathetic critique will be found to underlie other key objections to the recent campaign of decolonial iconoclasm in Belgium, which will be discussed in what follows.

From a cultural-political perspective, discussions and disagreements regarding different forms of cultural contestation and their legitimacy, efficacy, strategic value, appropriateness, or performativity, are of key importance. In this article I critically assess some paradigmatic instances of the aforementioned sympathetic critique. In doing so, I offer possible interpretations and defences of radical decolonial iconoclasm which act as a counterweight to such critiques, and thereby enable a more nuanced and balanced appreciation.

Most interestingly, objections against the deployment of extreme, destructive means of cultural contestation were also raised from within the decolonial and anti-racist movements themselves. In a remarkable action, members of the Belgian Youth Against Racism (BYAR) removed the red paint poured by decolonial activists on a bust of king Baudouin, the last Belgian king to have ruled over Congo before its independence.[11] They thus dramatised their call to fellow activists to stop defacing and damaging monuments. BYAR spokesperson Aimé Schrauwen motivated the action as follows: "It is important for us to demonstrate that minorities in the country are better than this, and that we merely ask for equal rights […] like all Belgians, which includes an accurate narration of history.[12]

Here, one thus has a grouping of decolonial, anti-racist activists attempting to undo the presumed reputational damage done to minority groups and, the Belgian-Congolese population in particular by iconoclastic acts of fellow activists. Although not explicitly stated by BYAR, one could take such acts to confirm prevailing racist stereotypes concerning people of colour among white Belgians, such as being hot-headed,

overtly sensitive, demanding preferential treatment, or reacting in a violent and illegal way. In contrast, the disciplined, painstaking manner in which BYAR members removed the sticky paint from the statue, as well as the placid, collected tone in which the above statement was delivered, was well-chosen to disprove such biases. It seemed geared towards demonstrating that decolonial and anti-racist activists – and black communities and other ethnic minorities in Belgium – are entirely reasonable human beings who pose only modest demands such as being treated like anyone else.

Similar pleas were made, at the time, within the Black Lives Matter movements in the US. In response to the oftentimes violent protests involving looting and arson, prominent figures advocated the adoption of non-violent, serene, and dignified modes of protest. To be sure, incidents of vandalism, damage, or destruction of property and plunder were covered disproportionally in the mainstream US media, thereby manipulating the public into thinking that such modes of protest were all-pervasive, which was not the case.

Formulated more generally, the question can be asked, however, of whether decolonial contestation through crude acts of iconoclasm does not run the risk of hardening stubborn racist-colonialist biases. If so, such acts, despite their short-term gains, might engender significant adverse side-effects, including scaring off sections of the population which, although having been largely incognisant of, or indifferent to, colonialist issues up until now, might have come to sympathise with the decolonial cause.

Such a potential backlash can be detected in an extreme form in the predictable protest against recent decolonial activism by the far right, as happened in London, for instance, around the same time as the events in Belgium. A protest march was organised in response to contestations of colonial-era monuments in the UK in which, most spectacularly, a statue of the slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol was toppled, vandalised, and thrown into a dock.[13] Right-wing groups subsequently saw it as their patriotic duty to defend the mementos of their nation's past imperialist-colonialist glory against attacks by the proverbial barbarians at the gate. Such a right-wing counteroffensive is deeply contradictory and hilarious for sure, as the honour of British civilisation is defended by a raucous rabble of hooligans – not exactly Britain's finest – who seem over-eager to start a riot and engage the police in a fist fight. As such, decolonial contestations might seem to have degenerated into a clash of "uncivilisations" – to modify Samuel Huntington's infamous phrase – with decolonial "vandals" at one extreme, far-right skinheads at another.

Sublimate Your Black Rage

Another type of sympathetic criticism of radical decolonial iconoclasm can be detected in a commentary piece by Marc Reynebeau (2020) in which the necessity of "destroying" statues of Leopold II is queried, while suggesting it to be more "interesting" to "chop off his hand". Somewhat similar to the aforementioned action in Ostend, this would deliver a witty, poetic kind of decolonial justice on Leopold II, inflicting on him – post-mortem and symbolically – the same horrid punishment of dismemberment that was notoriously imposed by his henchmen to punish "unproductive" Congolese workers, enforce docility, and create a reign of terror.

Other than in the BYAR's case, the issue here is not so much the acceptability of iconoclasm as a mode of decolonial activism, but rather its plain, indiscriminate, and overzealous deployment. Or again, one objects to iconoclasm as simply geared towards damaging or removing the targeted objects, which is dismissed as uninteresting and dull. In this second kind of sympathetic critique one can detect a call to activists to practice iconoclasm in a more precise, refined, and creative way, in line with, say, the Situationist art practices of the 1960s with their trademark misappropriation and repurposing of existing objects so as to subvert their original meaning and function. In the case of Reynebeau's suggestion, the removal of a hand on a Leopold II statue would suffice to radically change its status and function from a device for glorifying colonialism into its countermonument.

The fact, moreover, that such minimalist subversions do not themselves effect or prompt the removal of the monuments – as often happens in extreme cases of iconoclasm – could be levelled as a key argument in its favour. If colonialist statues are removed, so is the evidence of past colonialist misdeeds, allowing their perpetrators to get off lightly, being spared the deserved public humiliation that would be their fate if they were kept in their place in slightly mutilated form. In the latter instance, they would serve as a constant, inconvenient testimony to Belgium's scandalous colonial past and the continuation of racist and neocolonial attitudes in the present. Or again, they would act as permanent reminders to white Belgians of the sins of their forefathers, and the dubious historical roots of their privilege, both within Belgium and globally. For those at the receiving end, the subverted colonialist monuments could function as a proverbial moral shot in the arm, as a source of support in their daily struggle against colonialism and racism, or as levers for decolonising Belgian minds and society.

Pleas for more refined modes of decolonial iconoclasm can also be interpreted as an enjoinment towards activists to sublimate their outrage in the psychoanalytical sense of expressing one's immediate, gut feelings in more elevated, thoughtful, and imaginative ways. Apart from making decolonial iconoclasm more socially acceptable, such a sublimated mode might also be taken to elicit more delicate, rich, and enduring forms of decolonial enjoyment, as opposed to the instant emotional relief and adrenaline rush of simple acts of disfiguration or destruction. Over and above considerations of strategy or efficacy, specific cultural preferences and prejudices can be seen to underlie such pleas. Restrained, cerebral, and artistic iconoclastic gestures – and the concomitant subtle delight – are implicitly posited as superior and preferable, both strategically and aesthetically, to the supposedly base, spontaneous, and philistine actions and pleasures of "vandal-activists" toppling or sledgehammering away at a colonialist statue.

An implicit hierarchisation of activist modes of contestation is thus upheld based on assumptions regarding taste that are neither self-evident nor innocent in a postcolonial context. One of the basic operations of colonialism can be described through Jacques Rancière's (1999, 2004) key concept of the "distribution of the sensible".[14] This concept refers to the differentiation and classification of groups of human beings based on the assumption of their different sensible capacities. The latter can range from those considered to be most developed, refined, and rational, to those regarded as less so, even entailing, in some instances, the denial of specifically human forms of sensibility

to certain groups. For Rancière, the latter fate befell the slaves or so-called barbarians in ancient societies, but one can just as well think of the status of the enslaved and colonised non-European people since the so-called Age of Discovery. A base, animal type of sensibility was attributed to these populations, being thought to be receptive mainly to physical pain and sensual pleasure. Such distinctions, hierarchies, and exclusions on the level of sensible and aesthetic capacities have played a key role in legitimating the colonial project, particularly its pretence at being a civilising mission.

The sympathetic critique of the crudity of decolonial methods of contestation, and the implicit plea for more refined ones, can be seen to inadvertently endorse the same colonialist "division of the sensible". It thereby risks appearing as a misguided, patronising attempt to aesthetically educate and uplift decolonial activists. The clever or "culturally correct" forms of decolonial iconoclasm that are often proposed as an alternative to its straightforward applications might, in any case, be a tall order for those whose lives are negatively impacted by systemic racism and neocolonialism. Its proponents seem to wrongly gauge the current mood of acute outrage in the wake of blatant incidents of racist violence in the US, making the suggestions somewhat of a mismatch.

Staging Civility…

Considering the aforementioned internal and sympathetic critiques, the question poses itself of how decolonial contestation through blunt iconoclastic acts is to be assessed. That is to say, in other than the somewhat condescending terms of an "understandable yet deplorable" fit of "primal" rage on the part of decolonial activists who supposedly lose their self-composure and dignity, discarding all strategic considerations or concerns about public perception. Or again, how can radical decolonial iconoclasm be understood more positively, as a legitimate and efficacious strategy in its own right, rather than merely something to be condoned? Apart from the earlier defence in Benjaminian terms, what other defences could be levelled? And furthermore, if extreme forms of decolonial iconoclasm can thus be defended, how should one understand and mediate the disagreement between decolonial "vandal-activists" and their internal and sympathetic critics concerning the most appropriate means of contestation?

In order to address these questions, I cast this disagreement in terms of a tensional interplay between two opposing approaches to decolonial and anti-racist struggles, each with its own rationale, modus operandi, and efficacy. I do not contend here that activists consciously adopt these approaches. Rather, they are hypothetical-theoretical constructions and interpretative devices that, if nothing else, may serve some purpose in focusing, furthering, or boosting the debate on the means and ends of decolonial activism.

First, I interpret the sympathetic and internal critiques discussed earlier in terms of a more general approach towards oppositional, emancipatory politics as theoretically articulated in Rancière's political work (1999, 2007). In relation to a particular distribution of the sensible, and the hierarchies and inequalities posited and perpetuated by it, Rancière argues that oppressed groups contest this distribution by demonstrating what it denies, namely, their equal intelligence, sensibility, or morality. Such demonstrations of equality by the oppressed are identified as central to emancipatory struggles. Rancière offers paradigmatic instances of such demonstrations in different contexts and

with regard to different problematics – e.g. class, sex, race, citizenship – and different, oppressed subjects such as the Greek demos, the Roman slaves or plebs, workers and women in nineteenth-century France, as well as "people of colour" (1992, 59). What is found to be a similar, central component in the struggle of these diverse groups against their exclusion or marginalisation is how they disprove the ruling assumptions concerning their inferior human status by acting and presenting themselves as their oppressors' equals. Since this happens in a context in which such equality is firmly denied, unthinkable even, such "disprovals" have a highly performative character in Rancière's theory, in the sense of acting out the equality that is demanded. Hence, Peter Hallward's (2006) formulaic characterisation of Rancière's emancipatory politics in terms of the "staging [of] equality".

BYAR's concerted effort to demonstrate that the Belgo-Congolese and other minority groups in Belgium are "better" than the crude iconoclastic attacks on monuments or the looting of shops, can be understood in such Rancièrean terms of proving the civility and dignity of the said groups and, by extension, their equal humanity in a racist, neocolonialist context. The action seems designed to signal that despite being discriminated against, minorities are not therefore vindictive and keen to strike back by violating the majority group's patrimony, or by intimidating them through violent protest. On the contrary, minorities communicate that despite enduring racial discrimination, they do not pose exorbitant demands, but only reasonable ones, such as being treated equally, and neither do they expect any exceptional treatment, such as being exempted from laws against the destruction of public property. Recommendations of more refined methods of decolonial contestation, such as Reynebeau's, can also be seen to conform to a Rancièrean politics of equality-civility-dignity. In the face of the outrageous persistence of racism and colonialism, activists are encouraged to contain their spontaneous emotive responses of anger and vengeance, and express the latter in more restrained, clever ways, thereby demonstrating a high degree of culturedness and self-composure.

Key to this politics of civility is thus the refusal to lower oneself to the racists level and get embroiled into the logic of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth", for instance by retaliating and answering racist violence with commensurate anti-racist violence. Or, as argued earlier with Benjamin, by reciprocating the monumentalised barbarism of Belgium's colonialist run with a live barbarism. In contrast, by keeping one's composure and conducting oneself as a reasonable, civil being in the face of blatant racism, black activists demonstrate that they are all but the inferior human, or even animal-like beings that racist ideologies make them out to be, displaying an almost super-human capacity of self-restraint.

Fact that the BYAR's action is directed, to an important degree, to fellow activists – thereby seemingly taking the moral high ground over their "unruly" or "short-fused" colleagues by literally "cleaning up their mess" – illustrates a further, key aspect of Rancière's theory of emancipatory politics emphasised by Todd May (2009: 113-4). Namely, that demonstrations by the oppressed of their equality or civility are not only geared towards the oppressor – in this context, the racial adversary or ex-colonisers – but also function, importantly, as "self-demonstration[s]" (May 2009:

114). Appropriating and excelling in modes of sensibility of which an oppressed group is considered to be incapable, is thus also seen to serve as "a proof given to oneself" (Rancière 2007, 48) or to one's own grouping.

… Or Uncivility?

The sympathetic and internal critiques of the recent decolonial protests in Belgium can thus be seen to be undergirded by a Rancière-style performative politics of civility. Within such a conceptual framework, the rudimentary iconoclasm and resort to looting must appear as self-defeating in terms of fighting racism because of reinforcing persistent racist biases of the white majority, instead of disproving the underlying racial "division of the sensible".

However, the decolonial and anti-racist protests in can be seen to be driven precisely by a sense of disillusion with such a politics of equality and civility, by frustration at not being treated equally despite all one's distinctions and accomplishments. At Black Lives Matter rallies, a commonly voiced complaint was that the Belgo-Congolese have to perform twice as well as their white counterparts in order to prove their equal worth, whether academically or professionally. Black activists deplored the unwarranted burden that is thereby placed on them. Understandably, the resulting frustration, stress, and fatigue can bring Belgo-Congolese to the extreme point of altogether abandoning efforts to try and prove the seemingly unprovable – i.e. one's equal humanity – even if momentarily. In demonstrative acts of destructive iconoclasm or looting by activists, one can see such a suspension of the politics of civility played out and staged. The underlying rationale seems to be that if white-Belgian society keeps on treating its black citizens as inferior human beings despite all proof to the contrary, then they will stop behaving at their best and do away with all civilities.

Inversely to the anti-racist or, decolonial politics of civility, and premised on a more realistic sense of how black people are consistently treated as inferior human beings no matter how many times they have proven to be the racist's equal if not superior, one can thus postulate another, strand of such politics, characterised by the staging of uncivility. The latter can be seen to be driven by the sobering insight that racism is, ultimately, not a matter of proof or logic, but of power and irrational biases, and that racists are neither genuinely interested nor susceptible to proof of black people's equal humanity. Based on this, one no longer bothers to offer such proof and stops playing the racists or colonisers "civilisation game", which is denounced as a fraud and a ruse. For one thing, the colonisers' or racists' civilisation is clearly structurally tainted by barbarism in line with Benjamin's aforementioned claims. For another, the civilisation game can be found to be stacked in favour of the racists or (ex-)colonisers, with any success achieved by black people being devalued and undercut by the fact of race.

The latter was commonly argued by Black Lives Matter activists in the US in the wake of Floyd's murder. Namely, that it does not matter whether a black person is, say, highly educated or economically or professionally successful, the mere fact of being black trumps all possible achievements and distinctions. It makes him/her/they as vulnerable as any other, less accomplished black person to being treated as a second-rate citizen by the police, for instance. In a racist society, race thus functions as the great

leveller, reducing every black person to the lowest common denominator of the racists anti-black stereotypes. Again, the anger and despair with this enduring injustice – i.e. the fact that one's race functions as the bottom-line in determining one's humanity and achievements – can easily be seen to cause anti-racist activists to switch from a politics based on staging one's civility, to one geared towards the staging of uncivility.

Postulating a performative politics of uncivility as a counterpoint to a Rancièrean politics of equality-civility, and interpreting demonstrative acts of crude decolonial iconoclasm on the basis of such a politics, might allow one to gauge the possible, underlying rationale and logic of the resort to such acts and other forms of violent protest.[15] Moreover, it might, allow for a more proper and positive assessment of radical decolonial iconoclasm, that goes beyond evaluations in terms of a deplorable lapse of self-composure on the part of activists, causing them to smash things up in total disregard of strategic considerations or a possible public backlash and, as such, something to be avoided or minimised. Instead, such acts become intelligible and reasonable as components of an activist approach with its own efficacy and rightful place and time in decolonial, anti-racist struggles.

The Paradoxical Efficacy of Performing Uncivility

How now should the efficacy of performances of uncivility in furthering anti-racist, decolonial struggles be assessed, especially in light of the aforementioned concerns about confirming deep-seated biases and, the related, counterproductive effects, with the ends being undermined by the means? Against such instrumentalist objections, one could level Fredric Jameson's argument concerning the kind of "pure", or "excessive" violence that Slavoj Žižek (2006, 380-81), in reference to Fanon's thoughts on the close connection between decolonisation and violence, has affirmed as "unavoidable" in "revolutionary" situations, and to be valued as a "liberating end in itself" beyond, utilitarian or strategic calculations.[16] In specifying the value of such violence, Jameson contends that even if "it has no intrinsic value, it is a sign of the authenticity of the revolutionary process, of the fact that this process is actually disturbing the existing relations" (Žižek 2006, 381). In other words, the demonstrative suspension of, or irreverence toward, strategic, means-end considerations in violent acts of protest is here taken to be the "message" and a key, intrinsic part of decolonial struggles. One thus encounters a paradoxical mode of efficacy attributed to the very discarding of any thinking in terms of efficacy. Or again it concerns, a form of protest whose strategic and performative value lies in the wilful suspension of all strategic thinking.

In a similar vein, the brutal assault on Belgium's colonialist patrimony sends out a clear signal that nothing less than a final reckoning with colonialism and racism will be accepted this time around, with no more delays or half-measures. It does so in a way that more restrained, creative forms of cultural contestation – such as the one proposed by Reynebeau for instance – do not. Against the internal and sympathetic critics, it can thus be objected that one cannot have the decolonial ends without the violent or destructive means and the possible reputational fall-out. It can further be understood how demonstrative acts of uncivility function to an important degree as self-demonstrations, – apart from provoking the racial adversary – in line with the earlier point concerning the

staging of civility. Such acts – say, decolonial activists smashing up a colonial statue – can similarly be regarded as a way to communicate to fellow activists and community members that one resolutely rejects the racial adversaries civilisation game.

More specific to the context of decolonial struggle, another explanation for the efficacy of the staging of uncivility could be deduced from Fanon's essay "On National Culture" (1961, 197-224) written during the first wave of African peoples' liberation struggles from the 1950s onward. Remarkably, this efficacy is attributed here to the confirmation of racist stereotypes, which makes for an equally, if not more para-doxical logic of, efficacy compared to the Žižekian-Jamesonian account. At one point, Fanon (2004: 158) reflects on a phase that, based on his observations, many colonised intellectuals and artists go through in their quest for an effective way to contribute to their people's struggle for liberation. This comes after an initial period in which many colonised artists and intellectuals assimilated the colonisers culture – one might say, in an attempt to demonstrate their equality and civility, and conform to the first mode of decolonial politics distinguished earlier. In a second phase, an about-turn is seen to take place in which the colonial culture is rejected and colonised intellectuals rediscover and assert their own, native culture. Fanon notes, however, that this does not always concern the native culture's highest civilisational achievements. In their initial focus on the latter, colonised intellectuals would still experience a sense of alienation from the common people whose everyday struggles to survive under conditions of colonialism made them far less splendid and heroic in comparison, if not downright miserable. In a final attempt to become one with the people, some colonised intellectuals are said to give up all idealised notions of their people and adopt their far less glorious, often "wretched" ways of life. Of this attempt, Fanon (ibid.) says that it "sometimes means […] wanting to be a 'nigger,' not an exceptional 'nigger,' but a real 'nigger,' a 'dirty nigger,' the sort defined by the white man." Fanon's word choices might be shocking, yet he here merely quotes the colonisers' racist terminology.

Within the first round of decolonial struggles, one thus encounters a strategy in which colonised artists and intellectuals, in their desire to unite with their impover-ished people, adopt some of the latter's manners and values which, as they undoubtedly know, confirm the colonisers' racist-colonialist stereotypes. My main interest here is how Fanon describes the subversive effects of such this peculiar self-positioning on the colonisers and the colonial enterprise as a whole. Although not intended as such, Fanon observes that the adoption of the perceived, uncivilised, "barbaric" ways of the native culture by the educated, cultured elite among the colonised has a damaging psychological impact on the colonisers. The latter are said to experience this as a scandal and an affront, signalling their failure at "civilising" the colonised – or at least, its most "evolved" artistic-intellectual echelons – and at convincing them of the superiority of, Western European, culture. As Fanon (ibid.) puts it, "Once the colonists, who had relished their victory over these assimilated intellectuals, realise that these men thought saved have begun to merge with the 'nigger scum,' the entire system loses its bearings." He further says that it is experienced as a "setback for the colonial enterprise", as a demonstration of the "pointlessness and superficiality of the work accomplished" and as a "radical condemnation of the method of the [colonial] regime" (ibid.).

Fanon also observes how this demoralising effect on the coloniser in turn has an invigorating effect on the colonised. The more the colonisers are dismayed and dispirited by what to them cannot but appear as an inexplicable regression to an inferior, primitive way of life, the more the colonised are said to be "strengthened" in their "determination" to fight colonialism (ibid.). As Fanon phrases it, "the uproar it causes justifies his [the colonised intellectual's] abdication [of the colonisers civilisation] and encourages him to persevere" (ibid.).

The Psychopolitics of Chopping Off One's White Wings

Considering these subversive and morale-boosting effects, and apart from the original motivation of becoming one with the common people among the colonised, one could see how the adoption of their "uncivilised" ways and, thereby, the self-confirmation of the colonisers' racist-colonialist stereotypes, might acquire a performative dimension and provocative purpose. It might become a way for the colonised to demonstrate to the colonisers how far they are willing to go in rejecting the latter's culture and civilisation, namely to the extreme point of knowingly degrading themselves in the colonisers' eyes. If Fanon (2004, 158) describes this move in terms of colonised intellectuals becoming "unrecognizable [for the colonisers], and […] cut[ting] off those wings that before they had allowed to grow", there is a clear suggestion of such a provocative effect and intent. The demonstrative "clipping" of one's white "wings" or tearing off of one's "white mask" by the colonised and, inversely, the adoption of a way of life and type of behaviour that one knows will only confirm the colonisers worst racist stereotypes, thus comes to function as a strategy to shock the colonisers and provoke the above-mentioned feelings of despair and disillusion.

From this remarkable passage of a canonical text in the decolonial corpus, the paradoxical efficacy of the staging of uncivility in decolonial and anti-racist struggles can be deduced. To be sure, there are key historical and contextual differences to take into account in transposing Fanon's observations and insights from the first wave of struggles by colonised peoples for national liberation after the Second World War, to twenty-first century postcolonial Belgium. Still, the resort to crude iconoclasm and violence by members of a long-standing minority in Belgian society, which I have interpreted in terms of the staging of uncivility, can be seen to exert similar psychopolitical effects on the ex/neo-colonialist nation. It is ideally suited to inflict a narcissistic injury on the (neo)colonialist-racist adversary. Colonialist heritage is clearly designed to self-congratulate the colonising nation for its so-called civilising mission, which is often unapologetically and shamelessly stated in inscriptions.[17] The brutal assaults on these monuments visualise in spectacular fashion the blunt, ex post facto rejection of the colonising nation's claim to superiority by its supposed beneficiaries or "converts", exposing this claim as a farce. This forces the post/ex-colonialist nation to reckon not only with its failure to "win over" the "hearts and minds" of descendants of its previous colony's population, but also with the illegitimate nature of its colonial endeavour to begin with – what Fanon called the "method" of colonialism. This refers to the claim that, one cannot "civilise" people in an uncivilised, oppressive, and offensive manner, by treating them as structurally inferior or as eternal novices to the colonial culture.

Bold acts of decolonial iconoclasm thus offer a firm rejoinder to the often heard sentiment among some white Belgians, especially those that have lived or worked in the colony, that Belgium's colonial legacy is not entirely negative and that valuable things were also achieved. By basically giving (post)colonial Belgian society the middle-finger and saying 'To hell with your culture', radical decolonial iconoclasts send out the unmistakable message that nothing good can ever come of any project that is enforced through violent, illegitimate means, partially good intentions notwithstanding.

Several arguments can thus be advanced in defence of straightforward, destructive iconoclasm – understood more generally in terms of the staging of uncivility – as a legitimate and efficacious form of decolonial contestation. It engenders specific effects that are key to the decolonisation cause balancing out potentially unfavourable side-effects in terms of public imaging. Over and above the obvious aim of inflicting damage to monuments or removing them, such acts fulfil other strategic functions and evoke less straightforward meanings, some of which were specified in this article. In addition to Jameson's point that they signal the decolonial movements' authentic or radical character, they stage the rejection of a post/ex-colonising nation's alleged civilising efforts by its former "beneficiaries" and their descendants as indicated by Fanon. Rather than discarding crude iconoclasm as counterproductive or detrimental to the decolonial or anti-racist cause by confirming stubborn stereotypes, as some maintain, its necessary functions and paradoxical efficacy must be acknowledged.

How then, in closing, should one assess the disagreements and reservations with regard to the deployment of extreme iconoclasm or other forms of violent protest, as voiced by sympathetic critics and fellow decolonial activists alike? Or again, how should the relation between what I have called the performative politics of civility and uncivility be conceived? Despite their opposing rationales and modi operandi, the two approaches are not necessarily incompatible and they may complement each other in important ways. On the one hand, continuous frustration, exhaustion even, with the politics of civility may result in the suspension of civilities, which might pressurise the racial adversary into conceding to black people's claim to equal humanity. On the other hand, the staging of uncivility may only be sustainable for a limited period of time as the reduction to the racial adversary's stereotypes might come to be experienced as self-depreciatory. In order to counterbalance this, recourse might be taken, in turn, to the politics of civility. A recurrent chronological sequence and oscillation between the politics of civility and uncivility could thus be postulated, with a proper function and moment for each. Moreover, despite my somewhat dialectical presentation, the two types of decolonial, anti-racist politics might, in reality, function as the extreme poles of a spectrum of activist means and strategies with different degrees of both types.

However, the relation between both politics always seems to be an uneasy and perhaps unacknowledged one, evidenced by the aforementioned internal debates regarding crude acts of decolonial iconoclasm, or regarding the resort to looting and arson in the US context. From the perspective of the politics of civility, such actions and behaviour must always appear self-defeating and self-denigrating, its "perpetrators" undergoing an unfortunate process of desublimation, blindly giving in to their most base impulses for violation and retaliation, and, as such, "letting the racists win".

Inversely, from the perspective of the politics of uncivility, performances of civility will no doubt come off as hopelessly naïve, harmless, and upright. And yet, despite their tensional, agonistic relation, the two approaches might not be able to do entirely without one another. Each could be seen to need the other to compensate for the inherent limitations of its own logic of resistance, which makes it neither possible nor desirable to choose one over the other, lest one reduces the efficacy of the struggle against racism and (neo)colonialism as a whole.

Notes

1 The hashtag #LeopoldMustFall was first used in 2016 by student-activists at London's Queen Mary University fighting for the removal of a plaque commemorating Leopold II (QM Pan-African Society 2018).

2 One occasion of looting occurred in Brussels' Louise district on June 7, 2020.

3 For a classic exposé on the horrid acts committed in the Congo Free State during its reign by King Leopold II, see Adam Hochschild (1998).

4 For a comprehensive overview and in-depth treatment of the problematics of colonialist monuments in public space in Belgium, as well as different and changing attitudes and approaches towards these, see Stanard 2019.

5 The Flemish-Dutch name of the collective is De stoeten Ostendenaere, which can be translated as the "naughty or brave resident of Ostend". The sculptural ensemble is called the "Ruiterstandbeeld Leopold II".

6 The collective also made the return of the bronze hand conditional on adding a panel to the monument offering accurate historical information concerning the horrendous practices in Congo, including historical pictures of mutilated Congolese people.

7 In the second instance, this was part of protests against planned celebrations of Leopold II's urbanist legacy centred on the equestrian statue on the Throne Square.

8 The original French name of the collective is Association citoyenne pour un espace public décolonial.

9 Excellent studies on the challenges faced by Belgo-Congolese and other minorities are Mazzocchetti 2012 and Demart 2013.

10 The ascription of vandalism to acts of decolonial iconoclasm is consistent with a key distinction made in the scholarship on iconoclasm. As Dario Gamboni summarises it, "Whereas the use of 'iconoclasm' and 'iconoclast' is compatible with neutrality and even […] with approval, 'vandalism' and 'vandal' are always stigmatizing [sic], and imply blindness, ignorance, stupidity, baseness or lack of taste" (1997, 18). The key criterion for using the term iconoclasm instead of vandalism, further, is the "reckoned presence […] of a motive" (Gamboni 1997, 18) that can be religious or, in case of decolonial activism, political in nature. Since the article's aim is to interrogate critiques of decolonial iconoclasm in terms of vandalism, I mainly use the term "radical decolonial iconoclasm" to denote the straightforward, crude and destructive forms of decolonial iconoclasm under discussion. In the few cases where I refer to such forms in the problematic terms of decolonial vandalism, I use scare quotes.

11 The statue in question is located in the public park in front of the Cathedral of St. Michael and St. Gudula in the centre of Brussels. The action of BYAR took place on June 12, 2020.

12 On the 7 pm news bulletin on the Flemish public broadcaster VRT on June 12, 2020. Own translation.

13 The protests against the statue took place on June 7, 2020, the right-wing protests on June 13, 2020.

14 "Le partage du sensible" in the original French.

15 Although acts of destructive iconoclasm and extreme forms of protest such as looting or arson within anti-racist protests can be seen as instantiations of the same performative politics of uncivility, there are also significant differences that complicate their assessment. One such difference is that in the former case public property, while in the latter case it often concerns private or commercial property is targeted, thereby inflicting damages on parties that are not directly party to the conflict. Also, in the case of iconoclasm against colonialist heritage, the choice of the targets as well as the motivations are rather clear (i.e. decolonial contestation). In contrast, in the case of looting for instance, the targets are mostly contingent and other motives play a role such as discontent over structural socio-economic deprivation, if also, most likely, a certain degree of opportunism.

16 Jameson conveyed this point in a private conversation with Žižek, as indicated in an earlier version of this passage (2004, 118).

17 Think, for example, of the inscription underneath a bust of Leopold II in Auderghem, which reads "A tribute to those who brought civilisation to the Congo" (my translation from the French).

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Biography

Matthias Pauwels is a post-doctoral researcher at North-West University's School of Philosophy. His doctoral thesis critically investigated Jacques Rancière's work on aesthetics and politics (2015). His current research focuses on socially engaged art practices, popular protest movements, and radical decolonial politics in contemporary South Africa. Some of the results have been published in the academic journals *Cultural Politics*, the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, *De Arte,* and *Theoria,* as well as the volume *African Somaesthetics: Cultures, Feminisms, Politics* (Brill, 2020). Pauwels' earlier publications in cultural-political theory include the monograph *Too Active to Act: Cultural Activism after the End of History* (Valiz, 2010) and the volume *Cultural Activism Today: The Art of Over-Identification* (Episode, 2007).

The Politics of Vulnerability and Care:
An Interview with Estelle Ferrarese

Estelle Ferrarese, Liesbeth Schoonheim & Tivadar Vervoort

Abstract

In this interview, Estelle Ferrarese elaborates on her account of vulnerability and care to highlight its political and social, as opposed to its ethical, dimensions. Drawing on, amongst others, Adorno, Tronto, Castell, and Laugier, she argues that vulnerability and care should not be understood ontologically, as an antropological exposure of the body, but rather socially, as the normative expectations and material conditions under which care work takes place. Situating her approach in anglophone and francophone discussions on vulnerability and precarity, she discusses her approach to normative expectations and how it informs her account of vulnerability of living at the mercy of someone else's agency, as well as the politicization of vulnerability. She also discusses the political implications of her account of vulnerability and care with regard to a range of contemporary issues, such as the Men's Right Movement, the posthuman turn and the Antropocene, and mutual aid and the neoliberalization of the welfare state.

Keywords

Care, Vulnurability, Welfare State, Care Ethics, Mutual Aid, Critical Theory

Krisis

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Liesbeth Schoonheim & Tivadar Vervoort: In your work (2016a; 2016b), you sketch various genealogies of the concept of vulnerability. You refer to the American strand of Butler's notion of grievable lives, which of course builds on a Levinasian notion of ethics, but interestingly you also refer to a French strand that starts from the sociological analysis by Robert Castel. Precarity, in this latter approach, indicates a process (rather than a social position) that is shared by the precariously employed and unemployed, that is, by the poor and the middle class. How would you position yourself in this genealogy? And in addition to that, keeping in mind the topic of this special issue, could you elaborate on your understanding of how vulnerability relates to care?

Estelle Ferrarese: At some point, maybe about seven-eight years ago, the very idea of vulnerability was all over, and a lot of people were trying to deal with this concept. So, I wanted to figure out where it came from and why it was so important at that time to think in terms of vulnerability. More specifically, I tried to identify the different lines of thought that had produced this focus. My aim was both theoretical and political.

In addition to the lines you mentioned, there is a very old, Christian account of vulnerability, to which I did not want to be bound. The history of vulnerability within this tradition is actually very rich. But it also explains why there is so much reluctance when it comes to vulnerability: although this concept has been met with success, it is also met with some kind of allergy, especially from people from the left. My assumption was that it was mostly because of this Christian past that the concept of vulnerability was considered to be totally apolitical. With the figure of a merciful God who becomes man, *inasmuch as he* assumes a vulnerable flesh sensitive to suffering, it casts vulnerability as an anthropological feature. I wanted to address this issue. My aim was to identify and to build on lines of thought where vulnerability was always-already political, where the term does not only refer to a shared ontological precariousness, but to the exposure to threats that are socially determined. This social determination encompasses our bodies, that is, even when we talk about bodily vulnerability, there is something which is social. And this socially determined vulnerability is not limited to a gradual difference between bodies, where some of us are much more exposed due to, for instance, disability or race-based violence. The historical and social texture of vulnerability is not limited to an ordering of bodies – some are more exposed than others because of a collective and institutional past and present. This texture characterizes each singular body. We should not understand our bodies as immutable, and instead our biology is completely historical and socially determined, technologized, and so on. This, more thoroughly social, account can be found in Adorno. In other words, I was looking for these approaches that conceptualized vulnerability in terms that were free from traces of ontology.

And I found some interesting possibilities. None of them completely satisfied me. This is why I try to borrow from different threads. One of them, of course, was Butler's, especially because they were at the time trying to conceive of a politics of

vulnerability that would arise from bodies (Butler 2013 [1997]; 2016 [2009]). But I was not convinced by what they proposed. Another possibility was care ethics. And as it happens, I started to engage a lot with representatives of this tradition in France in the mid-2010s. For some reason, there was a renewal of the idea of care in France, which took place almost twenty or fifteen years after all the developments in the States around Joan Tronto and others (Tronto 1993; Held 2006).

This was a group of several feminist thinkers around Sandra Laugier, who came, strangely enough, from an analytical background, primarily Wittgensteinean scholarship. They tried to think through, Laugier especially, what care means in terms of ordinary life (Laugier 2020; Paperman and Laugier 2020 [2006]; Molinier, Laugier, and Paperman 2009). And they started to invite me a lot to their workshops because I was using this idea of vulnerability. In my discussions with them, I was assessing what I could accept from care ethics and what I would need to abandon. So that was the second, big trend with which I engaged. There are elements of care ethics that I found really valuable, especially in Tronto. But I had a big difficulty with her, and with care ethics more broadly, namely that the issue of capitalism was completely out of sight. While capitalism was not really considered, they were, of course, talking and thinking of care as some kind of work. And hence this work did not seem to be determined by capitalist imperatives, it seemed there was no inherent relationship between the distribution and performance of care on the one hand, and the meaning of the market and of production on the other hand. For me, coming from the Frankfurt School, it was of course not possible to think about work as something that could be thought independently from the capitalist form of life.

And then finally, there is Castel, whom you mentioned and who is a sociologist. As opposed to many of the other theorists that I mentioned before, and who are often in between philosophy and the social sciences, or were completely in philosophy, he was a sociologist who was recognized for his empirical work. In the period I am mentioning, around 2015, he had already passed away, but some ten to fifteen years earlier he had used this idea of vulnerability in regard to the question of poverty. That was his prime focus, and he was arguing that vulnerability should not be thought of as a state but as something that was to be grasped as a certain temporality, as related to time. Vulnerability evolves and is the result of past events and must be envisioned in relation to the future. I found that really interesting. The other thing I found intriguing was the unusual way he was dealing with the idea of risks. When he was talking about groups that are vulnerable to poverty, he was describing risks. He showed that if you have previously been exposed to poverty, you have more chances to become poor again or even become poorer. He would also think of risk in questions, such as, do you still have a strong network of relationships, acquaintances, and family or not? In other words, he was trying to list those different risks, suggesting that if you're losing one asset after the other, then you would become even more vulnerable. What I found most fascinating, however, was that his purpose was not to assess vulnerabilities by calculating risks, which is part of the mathematical way of thinking typical for sociology. His aim was not so much to add one item to another to anticipate a kind of logical development of someone's life; what he was actually trying to think with this idea of vulnerability was some sort of

an existential condition: when you are vulnerable it actually encompasses your way of dealing with the world. It transforms your psyche. It is really a total experience. I learned from Castel that when we talk about risk, we should avoid thinking of that as something that affects you from the outside and makes you the prey of different sociological logics. It's also something that becomes you, and as you become more vulnerable, you embrace your own vulnerability, even if it's against your own will, of course.

This is, in short, the constellation within which I developed my account of vulnerability.

LS&TV: Could you elaborate on your notion of the body as fully socially determined, which is also central to your current research. If we understand you correctly, the issue is not just a social constructivist point, such as Judith Butler's, where the body is situated beyond discourse and yet not accessible except through discourse. New Materialists have criticized this position quite extensively, and brought to our attention specific practices of care as transformation of the body. Some, such as William Connolly, have suggested that an experimental, playful practice of self-care might alter our affective and bodily reactions, which are initially sedimentations of power relationships (Connolly 1997). Would such a notion of care of the self as transformative, corporeal practice have a place in your social-constructivist account?

EF: My point is that the body is not only determined, but it's really constructed. I want to avoid a dualism where a body is perceived as pure biology, that it encounters different social items, where this encounter involves some kind of violence, and modifies an until-then natural core. My point is that actually our bodies are always-already historical and socially framed, shaped, and formed because biology has a history – first of all, a species history but secondly also a personal history. Everything is interwoven from the beginning. For instance, we have bigger bodies then 500 years ago. Most, if not all, of our bodies are technically or medically modified right now: most of us have had surgeries, many of us take hormones on a daily basis, etc. To speak about history of the bodies does not amount to endorsing an evolutionary perspective, it is not a question of envisaging a slow mechanical capitalization of an optimum, on the contrary, it is of how practices and techniques modified the bodies, in ways which can be contradictory. And it does not do any good to try to think of vulnerability as something that would be related to a kind of weakness of the body with a big "B", a body that would be without protection, and where threats that are so-called external would activate or disactivate exposure differently according to the class or the gender you belong to.

So that's my point. But you might be right that there is a way we can experiment with our bodies. The history of individual bodies is also a history of self-care in the Foucauldian sense. The late Foucault talks about self-care as what you owe to yourself and which is related to the body, as the ancient Greeks used to think (Foucault 1986; 2012). So of course, you can modify your own body through some forms of care.

LS&TV: Could we go back to your genealogy and more specifically the position of Butler and Castell? Your combination of these two authors brings to mind Isabell Lorey's

work on precarity. Lorey describes precarization as the neoliberal government of risks, so drawing on a Foucaultian analysis of neoliberalism, but she also builds on Butler's account of precariousness as well as Castel's sociological analysis of precarity and risk. But whereas in your work there seems to be a tension between Butler's work on precariousness and Castel's work of precarity, in Lorey's work these themes are brought together. More specifically, Lorey seems to differ from you in that she claims to follow Butler in understanding precariousness as "the term for a socio-ontological dimension of lives and bodies" rather than "an anthropological constant," or again, "a transhistorical state of being human, but rather a condition inherent to both human and non-human being […] it is always relational and therefore shared with other precarious lives" (Lorey 2007, 11-12). So the question that emerges is that, if we understand precariousness not as an anthropological constant but as a relational account of vulnerability, could such a relational account prevent the abstraction of vulnerability into a trans-historical anthropology? How, and if, can a relational understanding of vulnerability prevent vulnerability becoming an anthropological constant in your account?

EF: That's a good question. What I would like to highlight is that I, for sure, support shifting the idea of vulnerability from a form of ontology to a relational form. However, I am also a bit wary about focusing too much on this idea of relations because the idea of relations brings to the fore the face-to-face model and it makes vulnerability a matter of intersubjectivity: what can happen when someone is in the hands of someone else. Instead, what I try to think is really the fact that this scene of intersubjectivity is shaped by a lot of things, but mostly by normative expectations that make us vulnerable to some set of threats. In other words, it is precisely because there exists some set of normative expectation regarding what should be done on this scene that you are made actually vulnerable. Vulnerability necessarily appears at the same time as a horizon of obligations (fulfilled or not). Maybe this is a totally constructivist way of thinking, but I would say that we cannot use that idea of vulnerability to think about the kind of exposure that one might have experienced in other times. I think that is not the right way to think about vulnerability. It does not acknowledge the fact that vulnerability is instituted. Vulnerability materialises at the level of interactions and social interactions but is instituted by normative expectations which are not mental phenomena but are situated between subjects, and must even be conceived as institutions. And this is something that the focus on the relational does not allow us to think.

LS&TV: Like your work on care and vulnerability, Butler has taken up elements from Adorno's reflections on morality in their reflections on vulnerability. In their Adorno-lectures (Butler 2005, 103), they interpret Adorno's account of humankind as pertaining to "a double movement, one in which we assert moral norms at the same time as we question the authority by which we make that assertion." Still, Butler utilizes notions such as relationality, precariousness, and grievability that seem to define essential characteristics of humankind. You have criticized Butler's work for this tendency, as well as for lacking an account of how the performativity of precariousness would imply an emancipatory politics. Elsewhere, (2016, 152), you suggest that the denial of the

political importance of vulnerability in the literature (which you define, very broadly, from Foucauldians to other post-foundational thinkers such as Rancière and Badiou), unfolds along four themes, of which its "possible anthropological character" is one. You write that "the reaffirmation of the ontological, anthropological, or constitutive status of vulnerability raises problems that are categorical as much as political, that is, are of political pertinence: how could an ineradicable, universal phenomenon pertaining to human nature become the object of a critique, or be the wellspring of emancipation? How does the idea of a fundamental human vulnerability enable us to account for socially produced or configured forms of vulnerability?" (ibid, 153). Could you elaborate on your account of vulnerability (and care) with relation to the anthropological assumptions, and its consequences for a politics of vulnerability? This massive question could perhaps be split into two: firstly, how does your account of care and vulnerability relate to these kinds of anthropological assumptions, and what is your critique of these assumptions?; and secondly, what does this mean for a politics of vulnerability?

My definition of vulnerability is a living at the mercy of someone else's agency. I use this definition first because I think this idea of "mercy" is very important: it stresses the fact that something actually might happen or might not happen, but either way you are still vulnerable. It also encompasses the idea of a power, of a huge power, which is placed upon you, which does not depend on you, while I insist that it doesn't mean that you don't have your own agency.

It just means that on your own you do not have the efficiency or the efficacy to protect yourself from the risk of these threats. All the same, you can have very strong agency in other parts of your life.

Now, as I said before, this idea of living at the mercy has to be understood as something which is determined by normative expectations. And this is where maybe I should mention someone who is also important to my work, and that is Castoriadis, from whom I borrow some ideas, even though he is not at all a theorist of vulnerability. He actually helped me to think about the strength and the density of normative expectations again, which are not only shared beliefs, but something much more important. He has this strong idea of institutions as something that is both instituted and instituting. This is exactly what I have in mind when I talk about normative expectations as institutions. They are instituted in that we receive them and they are in front of us. But at the same time, they are instituting, as they institute the scene of interaction. And they institute the subject, they make us subjects that appear on the intersubjective scene. I mean, we are made of normative expectations and they create us as a subject.

Once you think about vulnerability in these terms, then politics becomes a matter of making normative expectations explicit, making them reflexive, making them the object of debates, of perhaps also conflicts and struggles in a society.

From this observation, you can go both ways. You can say that there are a lot of exposures that should count as vulnerabilities, that should be taken care of by the state, for instance. But you could also see that actually there are some vulnerabilities that should stay under the radar and that should not be addressed because it is okay if they stay in the private sphere. I think I mentioned that during our discussion in Leuven,[1] when I was talking about love. Love is typically a form of vulnerability, where we are

exposed to the other's lack of love for us. This vulnerability is terrible to the point of being a threat to life, as some people commit suicide because they were abandoned by their partners. But at the same time, as a society, we don't want laws ruling the end of a feeling or a relationship, and we don't want the state to take care of this. So, if one thinks about vulnerability as instituted by normative expectations, a politics of vulnerability is about making them explicit, reflexive, and being the objects of debate. I don't necessarily mean the polite and rational, Habermasian, debates, but really making them explicit and then seeing what happens in terms of justifications, critiques, claims, etc. It is about making disagreement possible and visible.

And this may bring us to another point, since once you do that, or rather in the process of doing that, new political subjects might appear. Subjects who transform themselves by the very fact that they are putting forward some claims about the reality, the scope of their exposure and the kind of collective organization it requires. There is no politics without the birth of new political subjects. Here too, when a person or a group excavates and challenges an existing normative expectation, we witness a political transformation which is at the same time self-transformation. I do believe political subjects can emerge from a condition of vulnerability, as opposed to what many authors assume whom I mentioned at the beginning of my talk, such as Rancire or Badiou (Rancière 2006). For Badiou vulnerability enables the substitution of politics for ethics and blocks the path to all emancipatory politics (Badiou, 2001). I would say no, quite the opposite, and stress that being vulnerable is also the *possibility* to make explicit our own normative expectation, or the kind of normative expectations in which we are entangled. Our political agency can be deployed *against, on the basis of* a vulnerability, as emancipation can be a task engendered by *the trial of* vulnerability.

And if I could add a last part to my reflection: there is also a threat inherent to the place of vulnerability in politics; it sometimes seems that the use of the idea of vulnerability would per se suffice to receive some kind of satisfaction for our claims. I mean that vulnerability is such a strong focus in politics and philosophy that the argument "I'm vulnerable" sometimes seems to be enough to prove or to justify some kind of claim. For instance, there is a new masculinism that has now arrived in France, coming from North America. I don't know if you have that in Germany, too, but you probably do. It is evidenced by the struggles of fathers who did not obtain the custody of their kids. Which vocabulary do you think they use? That of vulnerability: they described themselves as vulnerable fathers who are actually at the mercy of unjust states. And it's interesting that they actually use the idea of vulnerability to describe an exposure to very old, patriarchal patterns that would not take into account their love for the kids.

That is why vulnerability not only has a political relevance, but must have one: politics is a matter of disagreement, including strong disagreement. I think that what politics allows is precisely an encounter – which can even be difficult – between different discourses, and this encounter actually, and hopefully, might be necessary to judge and assess all the claims.

That focus on disagreement produces another set of questions, because this raises the whole issue of who is heard by whom in politics on the political scene. And it is tragic for some people who cannot provide the proof of what they are exposed to.

It's very complicated. But I want to stress that we need this movement of explication and conflict when we talk about vulnerability, because of this threat that vulnerability becomes an argument per se. This is why we need politics.

LS&TV: The manner in which you describe how the language of vulnerability almost directly invites a language of reparative justice, and how these can be co-opted by the right, such as the Men's Rights movement, is very instructive. Could you return, however, to your discussion of love? Just to clarify, your position sounds almost Arendtian, in that romantic love entails its own forms of vulnerability, and that it should be kept out of politics and out of the control of the state (Arendt 2013, 242; 2003, 207–8). This is a position, of course, that has been subject to feminist critiques of love, where there is a long history of contesting, interrogating, and fighting the normative expectations of romantic love. Love, we might argue, is always-already under the purview of the state, insofar as they take shape in specific institutions – typically, marriage – that are sanctioned by the state. Or, in a more Bourdieuian sense, we could say that love relationships often take place between people with a similar social capital, which has been converted in one way or another by the state. We might say that the assertion that love is to be kept outside of politics and, perhaps more narrowly, outside of the state, runs counter to the feminist critique of love that has brought about massive changes in civil and criminal law with regard to the institutions in which 'love' takes place, but also to the observation that love is always-already political.

Thank you for raising this question, which is indeed very important. When I was talking about love, I was precisely thinking about the fact that discussing it and the kind of collective organization it legitimates is political. The claim that the state should not address all vulnerabilities arising from love is a political one. I was not saying it is not political at all. Quite the contrary. I was saying let's make this the topic of discussion. And probably – that was my anticipation – most of us would say no, we don't want the prohibition of divorce on the grounds of the pain one can experience in a break-up. But again, that would be the result of a discussion, which means that actually divorce, marriage, partnership, etc., is political. We saw that in a different way in the last ten years all over Europe with the same-sex marriages struggles. So, you and I agree about love. I like very much Adorno's notes on love, which you can find in *Minima Moralia* (§11, 21, 104, 107, 109, 122) precisely because he understands it not as the tumult of an interiority, but as having from the start a content and social effects. He suggests that love is pressing in the direction of something which is outside of the capitalist form of life because it is completely external to any idea of commensurability, and it coincides with some form of truly caring for someone etc. But at the same time, it is something totally bourgeois. It is this hilarious aphorism in *Minima Moralia* where he is discussing divorce. The truth of love is exposed in the pathetic divorce by intellectuals and the way they end up struggling in a very petty way about, you know, furniture and taxes.

So the political texture of love can be observed from different aspects, in addition to feminist theories that have articulated a critique of love. We could think, for instance, about the fact that the chances of loving and being loved are unequally distributed.

Patrick Pharo, a French sociologist, showed in the 1980s how it was complicated for farmers to find love because women didn't want to live this very harsh life anymore – I mean, the life outside on the fields, the absence of vacation, etc. In this sense too, love is thoroughly social and political in the sense that the fact of failing in love is not only a matter of contingency and bad luck, but can be the result of social determinations. We should not reduce love to this pure feeling coming from nowhere that would save us against greediness and violence and hate.

LS&TV: Your recent work centers around the tradition of Frankfurt School Critical Theory on the one hand, and questions around the ethics of care and vulnerability within the feminist tradition on the other. Taken at face value, the two traditions do not seem to have much in common: recently, it has often been pointed out that the writings of the first generation of the Frankfurt School tend to neglect gendered forms of social domination. Or even worse, as far as gender and sexuality are discussed, the recourse of authors like Adorno to Freudian clichés can even be said to reproduce rather than problematize gendered social norms. In *The Fragility of Concern for Others* you develop a fascinating counterweight to these divergences by pointing out that both Adorno's "minimal" morality and contemporary theories of care ethics find a common ground in taking issue with the coldness and suffering that is caused by subsumption of the particular under the general. What implications do these resonances have for emancipatory politics in general, and the tradition of critical theory more specifically?

EF: These two theoretical constellations do have a few things in common. First, they apprehend the body as the level or the reality at which morality should be thought and envisioned. There is this strong idea of the body, of a materialist morality that you have in Adorno, and especially in *Negative Dialectics,* when he says that what is left, after Auschwitz, is only the kind of disgust that the body can experience confronting the possibility of harming someone else. So, in Adorno, you have this corporeal moment that would be the last resource in order to avoid evil. On the other hand, care ethics is all about bodies that actually perform work for other bodies. Moral life is made of the weary bodies of caregivers; the insistent or resistant bodies; the failing, heavy, or repulsive bodies of care receivers; the sexualized bodies of both receivers and givers, etc. Morality is to be understood in its materiality, and taking care of others has to do with something which is very corporeal, even more so than in Adorno.

Secondly, and Adorno might even go further at the theoretical level on this point, both traditions think about morality as something that is impure, which I find very enlightening. Morality and making moral choices is not a matter of a mental experiment that you should and could have by abstracting yourself from the context in order to determine what is just and what is unjust. Both Adorno and care ethics made a great deal of criticizing Kant's model of the categorical imperative and recasting the idea of moral judgment, in its content and form, so that it is not measured by references to general principles.

But more importantly, a judgment or a moral act is not invalidated because it is born in a concrete situation, hindered, or determined, precisely because there is no such

a thing as an abstract moral judgement. For Adorno all the incarnations of morality, i.e. all moral philosophies, but also all forms of moral life, are historical, and bear the mark of a social group. So you can have forms of morality that are determined by a history of violence. Freedom is not the condition of possibility of the moral gesture. Therefore, the fact that certain moral gestures are born in and from a general organization – generated by a reifying totality – of work and affects, is not enough to invalidate them.

And this is the case in the history of care. The point we can make with Adorno, which is not totally explicit in the ethics of care, is the fact that the way you take care of vulnerable others is something which was born in a history of domination of women by men, but also, nowadays, the domination of women, and sometimes men, coming from the Global South by men and women coming from the Global North. So you have this completely unequal, unfair distribution of work and of an affect, which is both the result and the tool of a system of domination. But that does not mean that the normative content of care is wrong. I like that idea very much. In *Negative Dialectics* he says that asking the question of the origin of something is a question of a master, that "the category of origin is 'a category of dominion'. It confirms that a man ranks first because he was there first" (1990, 155). As a master, you are in the position to ask proofs of a purity that suits your interests; the reference to origin reinforces the position of one with a past that is neither shameful nor humble.

So care ethics and critical theory have some orientations in common, but I also think that one can be used in order to highlight a lot of things that are completely dismissed by the other. For instance, Adorno is not a feminist, and the moments when he is most masculinist are precisely the moments when he tries to be a feminist. We find such clichés about women in *Minima Moralia*; also, he is talking about general coldness as a characteristic of our capitalist form of life. He does not see that this coldness is also intertwined with, and articulated by, forms of care that are produced by capitalism. Nor does he see that the care produced by capitalism is gendered, so the logic of gender remains completely out of sight in his analysis. This perspective can come from the background of care ethics.

In the other way, as I mentioned at the beginning, care ethics does not really think about capitalism. In this tradition, work is work, and is not examined as a labor shaped by a particular economy. It thus misses the many ways in which the gender order and the capitalist form of life are intertwined. So I think that you can build some bridges, some of them might be complicated, but I think it is useful to do so.

LS&TV: They are both in dire need of each other.

EF: Absolutely. That's a very good way to put it. Yes.

LS&TV: Your reading of Tronto in The Fragility of Concern for Others stresses the gendered distribution of care as an affect (disposition) and activity, with occasional references to other dimensions of oppression – an emphasis which is legitimately considered the aim of your argument. What I found most striking in Tronto – and what makes her a profoundly political or social theorist – is that she shows how the "morality" of care that

Gilligan essentialized in gendered terms, can actually be found among other groups that have been coerced or expected to take up care work, for instance Black men. Drawing on Black feminism, we could perhaps develop this insight in order to problematize the link between disposition and activity, which is at the heart of the convergence between Adorno and care ethics as being concerned with coldness and suffering. I am thinking in particular of the figure of the Black domestic as the "outsider within", whose care work and close attention to the white psyche enables them and their communities with information crucial to Black survival (Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks). Could you elaborate on the possible implications of this critique for your analysis?

EF: I was very much influenced by bell hooks, even though I do not use her work at all in the book on Adorno. And I totally agree that the unequal distribution of care work relies on an unequal distribution of affects. Capitalism, including in its (post-)colonial logic and in its gendered dimension, produces the subjectivations it needs. It is not only that you are supposed to perform the gesture, you are also expected *to feel*, to experience the moral feeling allegedly behind this gesture.

Someone with whom I discussed a lot in France is Caroline Ibos, a sociologist who worked on nannies that bourgeois Parisian women hire to take care of their kids. Her field work shows the disappointment of these bourgeois women when they realize that their nanny was actually only driven by money, for instance because the nanny left and went back to West-Africa without further notice (in France many nannies come from there). They feel betrayed, thinking "how is it possible that she left without considering the wellbeing of my kids?" Despite the fact that the paid work hours have been completed, there is a feeling that the contract has not been fulfilled. So I agree that there is this pressure on affects which might also be the last stage of domination.

At the same time, I would also argue in a different direction. One could also say exactly the opposite, that actually that it is easier for some groups to be good, to be generous. This is something that Adorno talks about in Minima Moralia. When you are rich, it is so easy to be benevolent and refrain from some forms of violence, pettiness, and meanness because your form of life is so smooth that actually you are in the position that allows you to be kind: "Wealth insulates from overt injustice" (Adorno 2005, 186). So, you have this kind of affect that is possible with no effort precisely because you are protected from many kinds of resentment, powerlessness, etc., etc. Maybe we can make things even more complex by saying that, sometimes, experiencing certain moral feelings is the result of a privilege. Tronto sees only one part of the picture because she only talks about the indifference of the privileged. For her, the only result of privilege is indifference. But privilege can also produce some kind of concern, of decency, because you can afford it. There is no price to be paid.

LS&TV: One of the new ways in which Tronto is taken up is through posthuman approaches such as by Puig de la Bellacasa (2017). She explicitly builds on Tronto's suggestion that care "is not restricted to human interaction with others. We include the possibility that caring occurs for objects and for the environment, as well as for others" (Tronto 1993, 103). Care, in Puig de la Bellacasa's reading, is no longer restricted to an

activity carried out by humans and towards humans but operates within and between sympoetic systems. While this account runs the risk of making the concept of care counterintuitively large, it has the great benefit of extending care to some of the most pressing contemporary problems – those connected to extractive capitalism such as the depletion of natural resources and mass extinction. Could you elaborate if and how your notion of vulnerability facilitates such a posthuman turn?

EF: Issues of care were and should be thought in ways that are related to non-humans such as animals, ecological systems, etc. It is striking that most thinkers who use the idea of care, concern, etc. always address it in a way of the question of non-human entities that are entitled to our care; such as Tronto, of course, but it is at the core of a lot of thinking, and again Adorno is an example of that.

I have been a vegetarian for twenty-five years, so I am totally sympathetic with what is going on in the younger generations and with this strong movement in the direction of taking care of what is nonhuman.

Now I developed my account of vulnerability without explicitly dealing with non-human exposures. They would fit with what I propose in as much as I am talking about vulnerability as something that cannot be disconnected from a set of normative expectations, and about politics as having to do with making those normative expectations explicit and rephrasing them. When it comes to the environment or animals we also have normative expectations. But then I am well aware that the usual issue arises: that we are confronted with entities with which we are in a relation of radical asymmetry, meaning that we can discuss our normative expectations, but they cannot.

I am not sure whether you can solve the issue with ethics of care either. There is an inherent violence in the act of care, because caring for someone is also defining what she or he needs. If there is no way to counterbalance what you believe through some kind of explicit claim that would be made by who actually benefits from your care activity, the violent moment of care will always be there. This is inescapable when it comes to environment or animals.

Although he comes from a very different background, I remember that Habermas tried to think what we would all owe to animals in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. He was not convincing at all because he argued that we owe some kind of consideration to animals because they are quasi-human beings that are capable of intersubjectivity and even of a quasi-language. So he tries to give them some kind of rights or entitlements to care because they are similar to us. But I think this is the totally wrong way of putting it. There must be a moment where you think about this entitlement in a way which is completely disconnected to what makes them possibly similar to us. At least theorists of care are not trying to avoid or disguise the problem of asymmetry.

Now how can you really engage in an activity of care without these radical movements of violent authority? I don't know. I really don't know. In France Bruno Latour advocates a parliament of things. But this parliament of things only works if there are some spokespersons, and politically speaking we know what spokespersons usually have made of the claims of the ones they are supposed to defend.

LS&TV: We indeed could deploy a similar move as Habermas does, starting from the observation that there is this specific form of inter-species intersubjectivity in attending to needs. That step can be made quite easily, to say that there are some forms of normative expectations between so-called higher developed animals. But what Puig de la Bellacasa does is more radical. She takes Tronto's definition fairly literally, understanding any activity, including the activities of worms and of fungi, as care. So, she not only addresses the care of humans towards nature but also the care that is exerted by nonhuman nature. It is really interesting in its radicality, as it questions the conjunction of affect and activity and opens up the concept of care. Still, we end up with the same problem that you highlighted with reference to Latour: it is not so clear anymore what the concept means and entails politically.

EF: In some reflections on capitalism, in particular in Jason Moore's work, something similar is done in terms of work instead of care: we are invited to think about and measure the work which is performed by forests, inasmuch as that they clean the air, that they make our environment breathable. Or the work which is performed by bees insofar as they reproduce flowers and things like that. So there is the idea that what should be named "work" is not limited to what humans can perform. But that does not encompass the question of affect that you just mentioned. I don't think you can claim that bees have some kind of affect, at least when they take pollen from one flower and bring it to another. Even if something like an affect is involved, it is probably not directed towards human beings.

In order to act as a spokesperson, we might need to make a kind of mental and theoretical adjustment to translate what is done by non-human entities into categories that are human. Talking about care and work when it comes to some kind of non-human activities might help us in order to think about what we owe non-humans. But that does not solve the political problem of the very existence of a spokesperson, because in the end the only ones who speak – who discuss normative expectations – are us.

LS&TV: In conclusion, could we talk a bit more about how you situate care as a collective, political praxis within the context of the privatization of the welfare state? Emma Dowling, in *The Care Crisis* (Dowling 2022), shows very astutely for the British context how the neoliberal de- and underfunding of public services leads to crises, where care work is increasingly relegated down the "care chain", such that underpaid and unpaid care work is done by those who are marginalized based on residency and citizenship status, ethnicity, race, and gender. Dowling is quite critical of what she calls "care fixes", under which she also subsumes mutual aid projects, suggesting that public refunding is the only desirable solution. Yet there is a longstanding critique of the kind of normalization and coercion exerted by the welfare state, which we find in feminist analyses as well as anarchist-Marxist approaches. In fact, if we look at the discussion of mutual aid by someone like Dean Spade (Spade 2020b; 2020a), mutual aid is a political praxis that generates knowledge of social relations and transforms them from the bottom up. In fact, it might illustrate quite well your understanding of politics as having its own movement and immanent effect, as an "activity of transformation of relations to others and to the

social world, and insofar as the subject of praxis is constantly transformed through the experience in which she is engaged, an experience that she forges but that also forges her" (Ferrarese 2018, 39). Could you position yourself vis-a-vis this discussion?

EF: I come from a French background where the welfare state was and still is quite strong compared to other countries. We tend to think that the State has a burden when it comes to taking charge and taking care of some kind of vulnerabilities, disasters, social threats. And I too regard the State as assuming a primary responsibility to prevent or compensate for the harms individuals might suffer. To put it like Castel, beyond the intersubjective forms of care that render possible the exercise of an autonomy, every individual depends upon a "'social property' made of sufficient rights, resources and protections" (Castel 1991) and which should be offered by the State. Mutual aid can be, to be sure, very efficient. But their responsibility for the care of vulnerabilities is a responsibility by default, which raises if and when the State is deficient. I agree that experiments of mutual aid can be the place of some kind of personal transformation, some way of reorganizing communities and of giving voice to silenced groups. But they might completely jeopardize the whole idea of the welfare state, for two reasons, one is purely political, the other one is moral and cultural. First, forms of self-organization that seek to build their own care system can be counterproductive because they suggest that people can take care of socially produced injustices and social pathologies by themselves. By substituting themselves to it, they make State intervention unnecessary.

Second, there is also a slippery slope vis-à-vis what we owe each other within a political community. When we self-organize, do we still have collective discussions about who should take care of what?

Let me take the counter-example of nursing homes that actually are not real nursing homes, but places where elderly people organize care between each other. I think this is problematic. In a way it is really nice that people take care of each other, but on the other hand, it means that taking care of the elderly is an issue for other elderly. So in a way, they unburden the rest of us of a kind of work and concern that we should also carry.

LS&TV: There seems to be a tension between mutual aid projects that substitute for the state on the one hand, and quite the opposite, namely practices of mutual aid that do not replace the welfare state, but are a place where new forms of community and political consciousness emerge which could formulate demands towards the welfare state. With recourse to Rahel Jaeggi's work, Daniel Loick has called such projects the politics of forms of life (Loick 2017; 2018, Jaeggi 2018). Take, for instance, the care work done within the gay community when the state did not help those suffering from HIV/AIDS. To what extent can forms of care become a political project demanding the transformation of existing institutions? Or to what extent are practices of mutual aid on the contrary depoliticizing these very institutions and no longer demanding anything anymore? Perhaps geographical differences matter a lot. When we look at the US, UK, or even the Netherlands, the neoliberalization of the state is in such a stage that it has reached its apex and not much welfare state is left. Hence, the danger of mutual aid depoliticizing existing institutions seems minimal as the state already retreated from the

realm of care to such an extent that mutual aid projects offer more of a hopeful perspective for reestablishing something of a welfare state from the bottom up. In France, where there is still something of a welfare state, the opposite might be true. Still, I had to think of Édouard Louis' *Qui a tué mon père* (2018) which tells the story of Louis' dad who cannot work while the state already took away so many of his social benefits and forced him to apply for jobs he is physically incapable of doing. I wonder, whether even in France, we can still defend the existing welfare state. Should we instead aim for new projects of social transformation that start out from everyday practices of care? What should be our political wager?

EF: In France too, there is a neoliberalization of the state, and a lot of things that were obvious before are not anymore. I too think, and deplore the fact, that not only Macron, but before him the governments of the past thirty years, including the socialist governments, have dismantled a lot of systems of protections, have considerably impoverished hospitals, schools, universities. Now, compared to other countries, we still have maternity leave and relatively correct nursing homes (although very recently there was a scandal about some of them). We still have non-conditional minimum help benefits. They are very low but do still exist. Universities are still almost free.

But most importantly, the pandemics have changed a few things in the sense that we saw a strong return of the State, both in the good and in the bad way. The way the State did take care of vulnerabilities shifted, and I think we cannot have the same unilateral "neoliberal" reading of the political evolution that we had two years ago. In France, the state suddenly had money for so many things; whereas before it was impossible to get any kind of help and the budget was so constrained, in the last two years, anything was possible. Macron had this strange motto where he said "no matter what it will cost". And a significant part of the population got its normal salary while not being able to work for months and months, thanks to State funds. We were not in the situation of many neoliberal countries where millions of people just lost their jobs from one day to the next.

There is a lot of discussion about where that money was before, but the point here is that there is a strong return of the State. That is not to say that now we are back to a full welfare state (strangely, in the midst of the pandemic, the number of hospital beds continued to decrease), but that focusing on the withdrawal of the State from some spheres of society is to leave out new trends that are just as damaging from the point of view of the care of vulnerable people as from the point of view of gender.

As everyone has noticed, the return of the State could not do much about the gendered distribution of work – quite the opposite. Everyone was forced to stay at home, and everyone (or at least a significant part of the population) was paid, but in the end, care was performed in a very traditional way by women who were burdened with helping the kids with school, cooking, etc.

I would say that there is a strange kind of dialectics here. The return of a quite strong welfare state did not prevent, and in a way triggered, some kind of a neo-traditional distribution of care activities. And it did so not because of a certain neo-paternalism which would have conditioned state aid on certain practices but because it made the household exclusively an economic unit. Women were in a way both forced

and abandoned in their households. As soon as they were no longer in public spaces in the broad sense, such as companies, associations, etc., they lost the protections they used to enjoy thanks to the laws, norms, and public policies that framed their activity in the economic and political spheres, and even in the street. They had strong protection by the State in economic terms, and at the same time, large aspects of their lives were just left to agreements that would happen in households. But those agreements were not agreements, they were just reenactments of very old and oppressive forms of life. Hence, they were both super-protected and totally underprotected. Here again, you can see the limits of any kind of state organization of care as a collective activity as long as normative expectations are not politicized.

LS&TV: This brings us back to the politization of love, maybe not of romantic love but of parental love, which is another taboo that we still have to look at. We might have to distinguish between mutual aid projects that are some kind of neoliberal communitarianism set up by privileged social groups, and those forms of mutual aid which are galvanizing political consciousness. The typical example is the Black Panther Party which started a breakfast for children program that the FBI considered the most dangerous political action in the US. Still, it is often cited as the reason why there is a breakfast program in the US today. So, the very aim of taking up this need was not the collective change of ideas of what needs should be met, or what vulnerability is, but basically an effort to undermine the possibility of political consciousness. Might we say that the vulnerability of kids at the mercy of the Black Panther Party is preferable to the vulnerability towards a state-run program with its own risks, such as breaking up collective consciousness, or the paternalism which Tronto also highlights?

I totally believe that those kinds of non-mixed meetings, practices, and caregiving organizations have the potential to give rise to new claims, and to allow members of these groups to rethink and reformulate their own identities, to define what a threat is for them, etc. – this is what Nancy Fraser called subaltern counterpublics.

But then comes the second moment of your question, because at some point you need to assess between vulnerabilities. You mentioned kids, who might indeed be vulnerable to the way a group performs a certain form of care. How do you assess vulnerabilities? Well, I think there are no criteria. There is not one and only way to have a discussion about that. I don't think that there are ultimate principles that should be found out in order to say: if we go past this threshold, then it is not taking care of some vulnerability anymore, but pure violence or paternalism. It is always a matter, again, of normative expectations and normative expectations cannot be discussed only inside a group, notably because even the normative expectations of the group are shaped by something which is broader than the group, because the group was socialized within a larger political community; but also because claims must go through the trial of disagreement.

In short, I would say that when it comes to politicization, the moment of closure of the group upon mutual aid can only be thought of as a temporary step. It cannot be regarded as an emancipatory horizon. It is the tool, not the end.

Notes

1 Estelle Ferrarese gave a talk at the Institute of Philosophy, KU Leuven on November 18, 2021.

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Thinking Transindividuality along the Spinoza-Marx Encounter: A Conversation
Bram Wiggers and Jason Read

Abstract
Ever since the publication of Read's *The Politics of Transindividuality* (2015), the academic interest in transindividuality has steadily mounted. In this conversation, Bram Wiggers and Jason Read discuss the current state of affairs around the concept of transindividuality. The conversation begins with a definition of transindividuality and discusses what sets the term apart from other philosophies of social individuation. Having defined the concept of transindividuality, the conversation then engages with the question of how transindividuality can be adopted as a means of social-political critique. First, Bram and Jason discuss how transindividuality is evoked but not explicitly mentioned in the social-political critiques of Spinoza and Marx. Secondly, the conversation takes up the social-political critiques of Paolo Virno and Bernard Stiegler who make explicit use of transindividuality. Central to the later parts of the conversation is the complicated interrelation between the political and economic domains of individuation, as well as the tendency of collective modes of representation to be effaced and obscured by (neo-liberal) individualism and the post-Fordist conditions of labor. Overall, the conversation highlights the relevance of transindividuality for social-political philosophical critique.

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Introduction

Gilbert Simondon's concepts are "extremely important; their wealth and originality are striking, when they're not outright inspiring" (Deleuze 2004, 89). These are the words of Gilles Deleuze, who, being no stranger to grand gestures, gives us a sense of the relevance of Simondon's philosophy. Of all the conceptual innovations Simondon makes throughout his *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information*[1] (IL), it is perhaps the concept of transindividuality that stands out the most. In the context of his philosophy of individuation, the term transindividuality is meant to designate the way in which any individual individuation always implies an amplification of its process in terms of the individuation of the collective. Transindividuality, therefore, literally comes to designate the mutually constitutive process of what Simondon aptly calls psycho-social individuation. Outside the context of Simondon's theory of individuation, the concept of transindividuality has been invoked to overcome the duality between the individual atomistic subject and the collective that, at least in political philosophy, has resulted in the impasse between the individualist, contractarian school of thought, and the holist schools of thought. In terms of critical philosophy, Simondon's concept has been appropriated by thinkers such as Étienne Balibar, Bernard Stiegler and Paolo Virno as a tool to critically rethink Marx's analysis of political economy.

In the following conversation – recorded via Zoom on January 6, 2022 – I reflect on these diverse philosophical topics surrounding the notion of transindividuality with Dr. Jason Read, professor of philosophy at the University of Southern Maine and author of *The Politics of Transindividuality*. Published in 2015, the latter work provides, as Balibar states on the cover of the book, a "comprehensive discussion of sources and creative contributions to a renewed Marxist interpretation." What makes the work a remarkable read is that it does not merely proceed from Simondon's original formulation of transindividuality and its invocations in the work of Stiegler and Virno, but also returns to philosophers such as Spinoza, Marx, and Hegel, who for obvious reasons never mentioned the term transindividuality, but who did work around the issue of individuation as well as the relation between the individual and the collective. The result is a book that not only situates the current literature on transindividuality in a systematic manner but also critically engages with the concept of transindividuality by putting the various invocations of transindividuality in conversation with one another. What Read aims to indicate by putting these various readings of transindividuality together is that "the question of collectivity, of transindividuality, is not only simultaneously ontological, political and economic, encompassing the different senses in which things, or people, can be said to be individuated, but it is so in a manner that cannot be neatly, or hierarchically, organized" (2016, 19). Transindividuality as such indicates that individuation is a complex spectacle crossing various domains.

The extensive and thorough nature of Read's work has made the book somewhat of a focal point for any serious engagement with the concept of transindividuality.

For instance, Balibar, whose 1993 lecture *Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality* held in Rijnsburg (possibly) initiated the transindividual reading of Spinoza, refers to Read in his recently published *Spinoza the Transindividual* (2020). In the domain of feminist theory, Read's work has been used by Chiari Bottici in her recent publication *Anarchafeminism* (2021) in which she expands upon the transindividual interpretations of Spinoza provided by Read and Balibar to think through the question "what is a woman?" in pluralist terms. John Robert's *Capitalism and the Limits of Desire* (2021), on the other hand, explicitly adopts Read's Spinozist-Marxist approach to the problem of how capitalism produces (individuates) joyfully submitted subjects. The recent academic interest in transindividuality, however, is not merely confined to critical theorists working roughly in the Spinozist-Marxist domain. With the recent translation of Gilbert Simondon's *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information* (2020) by Taylor Adkins the interest in Simondon's theory of individuation, in general, is on the rise.

Considering these developments, a critical reexamination of *The Politics of Transindividuality* is warranted. In our conversation, we discuss the critical potential of transindividuality, the specific transindividual philosophical practices of Spinoza and Marx, the status of work in today's (neoliberal) capitalist society, and the complicated relation between the political and economic. Overall, our conversation once more highlights the significance of transindividuality as a philosophical tool to critically (re) think political economy.

Bram Wiggers: The concept of transindividuality, especially in the non-French speaking world, is relatively new. Simondon's magnum opus, *Individuation in Light of Notion of Form and Information*, was only recently translated into English (2020). Whenever I try to explicate the notion of transindividuality to people who are unfamiliar with the term, they attempt to connect it to other notions of (social)individuation such as Fanon's sociogenesis or Butler's performativity. Indeed, both deal with problems of social individuation in which there seems to be a sort of two-way movement from the individual toward the collective and the reverse. If we accept that these theories describe a similar idea of transindividuation as Simondon does, then the concept of transindividuality is perhaps not that much of a rupture in the way we think about individuation. What do you think about that?

Jason Read: I think that transindividuality is a name for something that other people have tried to think under different names; I mean the Fanon reference of sociogenesis is certainly one. Whenever the concept is invoked – and as you mentioned it does have a strange history outside of the Francophone world or at least in the Anglo American world where some of the first translated references show up in things like Marcuse's work, but where it really started to show up is in the work of people like Étienne Balibar, Paolo Virno and Bernard Stiegler, etc. – it is often used as a way to avoid a kind of dead-end way of thinking the relation between the individual and the collective in terms of a zero-sum game. Right, the more individuated you are the more you are separated from collective practices and processes, whereas if you are more integrated

into collective practices you are less of an individual. Transindividuality suggests the mutual constitution of the two [individual and collective].

But the escape from this kind of binary of the individual and the collective, like other binaries that we are caught up in – e.g. mind-body, etc. – is often easier said than done. It takes more than just invoking it, it takes a sort of really working through. Often, theories of social relations that attempt to escape the binary end up invoking an intersubjective way of thinking. Intersubjectivity is a relation between constituted subjects that relate to each other through their own individual tastes, desires, affects, etc. Transindividuality, on the other hand, is a relationship between the constitutive elements of individuation, which means that things can be individuated based on a shared transindividual basis but that they can individuate in different ways with respect to that. For example, a pervasive feeling of economic instability or anxiety could be a transindividual condition that can be individuated in different ways; it can be individuated in a right-wing version, a left-wing version, you can stress the nation, one's sense of belonging or you could see it in terms of the worker and globalization. So you see that the same constitutive element can become the basis for different individuations. This is different from intersubjectivity which suggests that there's ultimately a relationship of recognition between already constituted subjects underlying individuation.

BW: Connected to the binary of individual and collective, one of the charges I often get when attempting to explicate the notion of transindividuality is that it appears to be just another theory of compatibilism. We can see how this idea is able to emerge. As you pointed out, there seems to be on the one hand a sort of individuation on the part of the individual that would suggest a form of autonomy, but on the other hand, the individual individuation is equally guided, perhaps even determined, by collective constitutive elements. How would you respond to this charge against transindividuality?

JR: Really, I think that along the lines you mentioned, transindividuality is a different way of engaging with determinism. This comes up quite strongly in Étienne Balibar's pamphlet on transindividuality,[2] in which Balibar stresses that the underlying ontology and physics of transindividuality in the Spinozist sense is one that tries to break from a causality understood in linear terms. Rather, we have to think in terms of multiple intersecting causes. This comes out in a different way in Simondon, who is constantly trying to unpack the various levels and layers of individuation from the physical to the natural,[3] to the psychic, and so on, in order to understand how each level of individuation sets the conditions, in terms of a problematic, for further stages of individuation. As human beings, for instance, shaped by thousands of years of evolution, the incorporation of new habits and desires into our existence continuously sets the problems for further progressive individuations. The tricky thing then is, and this comes up in some of the other Spinoza scholars, especially in that of Chantal Jaquet (2014), that even deviations from ascribed cultural values and norms have to be understood as being determined by the complexity of the collective values and norms from which they deviate.

The Simondonian term for this is metastability. Metastability is a term used to describe the fact that determination (by our economy or culture, etc.) is never linear,

but rather that the determination of processes of individuation is made up of multiple intersecting factors and relations that are each individuated in different ways. So on an ontological level, transindividuality is the attempt to think of a kind of complexity through determination, or rather a determination that is less linear and more about multiple overlapping levels of determination.

BW: Recently, I encountered an article on the notion of the problem in Simondon and Deleuze by Daniela Voss (2020) in which she explicates this complex, transindividual determination by means of the concept of chrono-topology, which describes the idea that the (psychic) individual is a topological structure with a history. This, I believe, is an elegant way to describe Simondon's idea that individuation is the constant reassessment of problems into new solutions – i.e., new (topological) structures. In your book *The Politics of Transindividuality,* you reflect on this complex determination by arguing that each individuation is both produced and producing, constituted and constitutive – i.e., each individual is a solution to a problem but also poses new problems. Transindividuality allows us to think about how the individual is the result of these complex relations of determination and determining.

Moving on to my next question. I think it is striking that the philosophy of individuation of Simondon, which as you point out is mostly an ontological examination of the constitutive elements of various beings, is taken up by thinkers such as Stiegler, Virno, Balibar, and yourself in terms of a critical theory that engages with political economy. Certainly, Simondon does on occasion refer to Spinoza or Marx, but the passage toward a critical theory is not apparent. How do you think this passage was initiated?

JR: I think it connects to two things that I have already briefly mentioned. One is, as you mentioned, that I think that there is a tendency with all new concepts or approaches to maybe overstress the difference with everything that has come before. Simondon definitely does that. The interesting thing about Balibar's approach is that he stresses that once we have this concept, we can see the way in which other philosophers were thinking towards transindividuality without articulating it. As such, we could investigate to what extent there is an unnamed transindividual dimension in, for instance, Spinoza and Marx. On the other hand, and this is the second point, I think that the individual can be understood as both a problem and a solution to problems. In a similar sense, I think that a philosophical concept is both a problem and a solution to a problem. The question of how to connect the ontology of transindividuality to socio-political and economic individuation is a problem that Simondon's thought poses but does not resolve. As a result, you see thinkers such as Balibar, Virno, and Stiegler who, from very different philosophical backgrounds, invoke the concept of transindividuality by each formulating very different responses to the same problem. For them, the problem is to investigate to what extent the concept lends itself, or poses a problem for how we think about politics and economics today.

BW: Can we then understand your *The Politics of Transindividuality* as an attempt to provide a more systematic overview of the various transindividual thoughts?

JR: Yes, in some sense to try to think through the various intersections of these different invocations of transindividuality and to see how they connect as well as what their limitations are. However, I definitely do not consider transindividuality a school of thought in the strong sense, but more a study of a set of interconnected problems and questions.

BW: Let us then turn to the transindividual interpretations of Spinoza and Marx. The way I see it is that when you read transindividuality back into the philosophies of Spinoza and Marx, transindividuality almost seems to become a method rather than a theory of individuation as it had been for Simondon. In a different paper on Spinoza and Marx you call their respective philosophical practices of transindividuality as proceeding on the basis of a preemptive strike. Both Spinoza and Marx take the idea of the free, autonomous individual to be the spontaneous philosophy of man**4** and critically dissect that spontaneous idea by way of transindividuality (Read, 2021). The preemptive strike, therefore, initiates almost something like a genealogy, investigating the conditions under which individuals come to understand themselves (perhaps falsely) as free, autonomous individuals.

JR: Yes, in the sense that I think that it is not enough to simply say that the transindividual is correct and people who think in terms of already constituted individuals [intersubjectivity] are wrong and juxtapose the true to the false. It rather consists in trying to show how individuals come to understand themselves in a particular manner due to the underlying conditions of individuation. This is effectively the project of the *German Ideology*. Marx does not merely aim to indicate why the idealist account of history as a history of different competing and contesting ideas criticizing each other is wrong, he wants to show how the material conditions have led people to misrecognize, in a sort of camera obscura inverted world, and think ideas drive history rather than material conditions. In a related but different sense – Marx is more socio-historical and Spinoza more anthropological – Spinoza wants to understand why we, as individuals, see ourselves as a Kingdom within a Kingdom, why we believe that we are the cause of our desires and why we do not see the relations that constitute our affects and desires. The shared critical dimension of Spinoza's and Marx's transindividuality thus consists in the fact that both attempt to indicate how the perspective of the isolated, autonomous individual is generated from the very transindividual social relations that exist but that are in some sense effaced by the individualist conceptions that they give rise to.

The idea of preemptive strike emerged from the fact that one of the things that I find very interesting is that both Marx's *Capital* and Spinoza's *Ethics* contain possibly the two most famous short texts; the "Commodity Fetishism" chapter in *Capital* and the "Appendix to Part One" of the *Ethics*. These are incredibly important critical texts that have been turned to again and again for theories of ideology, fetishism, reification, and so on. But the other interesting thing about both texts, and this is where the preemptive comes up, is that both Spinoza and Marx are basically saying to their reader: "I know you do not agree with me because I know that you are still thinking in terms of", whether it be in the case of Spinoza the idea of an individual as freely determining a

Kingdom within a Kingdom, or in the case of Marx where it is the idea that commod-
ities inherently possess value. And so both Spinoza and Marx need to write these very
polemical and ahead-of-themselves texts, for neither Spinoza nor Marx at that point
of the texts have worked out either their anthropology or the historical conceptions
necessary for their theories. It is their shared materialism through which they recognize
that our ways of thinking are shaped by our ways of living and that because our ways of
living are such that they in some ways compel us to recognize ourselves as individuals,
that has to be dealt with critically before they can even go on to write the rest of what
it is they are going to write.

BW: One of the ways in which Spinoza and Marx, however, differ is that Marx
is very much bound to a Hegelian teleological understanding of history. Marx at
times appears to be saying that as soon as the material conditions that prevent us
from seeing our true transindividual condition change, we would acquire, in the
form of communism, a recognition of our true transindividual self. Spinoza does
not have this teleological move toward recognition. Balibar argues, for instance,
that Spinoza develops what he refers to as the double constitution of the state,
which is always marked by a certain polarity between reason and imagination.
We can extend this idea of a double constitution to the singular individual.
The constant polarity between reason and the imagination, which is so per-
vasive in our everyday life, blocks any recognition of our true transindividual
condition. Connecting Spinoza to Marx, as you do throughout *The Politics of
Transindividuality*, would therefore be necessary to overcome a teleological reading
of Marx's transindividuality.

JR: Yes, I think you are correct, and in some sense Marx struggled with that teleological
element. On the one hand, Marx was optimistic about the revolutionary movements
happening in Europe at the time, which at times seemed to have made him think that
these illusions would simply dissipate, allowing us to see through them and recognize
our real collective existence. On the other hand, Marx often argues in the opposite
direction, and the commodity fetishism chapter in *Capital* is part of this category, stating
that there is no outside of commodity fetishism. In the *Grundrisse*, for instance, Marx
seems to think that the capitalist society is organized in such a way that we come to see
ourselves as autonomous individuals because the things that we rely on to make our
autonomous existence possible – e.g., the labor of others – are effaced for we simply
see the commodities and not the labor of individuals that produces them. Before we
began, we were talking about how things are going with COVID and I think one of
the things that COVID has done with the ensuing supply chain issues is that people are
beginning to realize that for them to get the products they want on the shelves, they are
dependent upon other people to make that happen. Marx's point is precisely this, that
capitalist relations of exchange guided by the principle of "Freedom, Equality, Property
and Bentham,"[5] this sort of spontaneous philosophy that emerges from capitalist society,
is one in which we do not see our relations with others but only see the products that
are produced through those relations.

This is also why in the book I tried to make a passage from Marx to Simondon to say that the relations of capitalism should be understood as an alienation from the pre-individual and as an exploitation of the transindividual. We are alienated from the pre-individual when we are incapable of grasping the very constitutive elements of our own affects, desires, etc. In relation to capitalism, for instance, we do not recognize how much of our affects and desires are produced for us to desire more products, which is Stiegler's point. The transindividual is exploited in that we are collective not merely because the things that we consume are produced by others, but also in that our labor usually depends upon the existence of others, present or not present, to have any kind of impact or be meaningful at all. But that aspect of production is exploited and, I would also argue with Marx, in some sense effaced at the same time.

BW: I think that Balibar, in the final chapter of *Spinoza the Transindividual* (2020) in which he turns to the transindividual nature of the philosophy of Marx, has a very interesting approach to Marx's understanding of the transindividual relations of capitalism that reflect some of the things we have just discussed. Balibar suggests that Marx is not so much interested in showing how individuals are alienated from social relations due to the capitalist mode of production, but rather that Marx traces how alienation itself can exist *as* constitutive relations. In this sense, commodity fetishism is an alienated form of relation that is constitutive of a particular way of living and acting in the world. In your article on the *Preemptive Strikes* (2021), you describe a similar idea. For Spinoza, the prejudice which states that we are conscious of our appetites but ignorant of the causes of things causes a superstitious belief in God, which in its turn becomes the cause of our collective and individual lives by way of dictating certain norms, habits, and beliefs that are in line with our initially mistaken, superstitious understanding of the world. Marx almost describes a reverse process in which the fetishized relations of capitalism become the cause of a particular self-understanding, namely the idea of the individual laborer as a commodity, which reenters the world of social relations, namely those of consumption and production, as a thing to be bought and sold reifying the appearance of commodity fetishism.

The Spinoza–Marx encounter seems very promising in the way that both, from different philosophical positions, describe the way in which alienated relations can themselves be constitutive of a particular transindividual reality. Nonetheless, it seems to me that Spinoza and Marx do not share a similar understanding of alienation. Marx seems to suggest that alienation implies the total loss of self into something else. Spinoza, who refers to conatus as the very essence of man, on the contrary, does not talk of alienation in terms of a total loss of self, but rather in terms of a variation in the capacity to act, in terms of variations in the degree of power.

JR: Right, you know there is a lot of debate within the community who are interested in the Spinoza–Marx intersection as to whether alienation is one of those concepts that survives the Spinoza–Marx encounter. One of the reasons is that in terms of Spinoza's ontology in which everything is defined by its striving to preserve itself, the idea of a loss of self does not really make any sense. Then there is another, almost reverse way

of looking at it, which is the approach taken by Frédéric Lordon. Lordon argues that if alienation is understood as a loss of autonomy then alienation is itself universal and even constitutive because there is no true autonomy, no kingdom within a kingdom, given that we are ultimately always affected by our relations with others. There is also the perspective taken by Franck Fischbach (2015) who states that read together, Spinoza and Marx suggest that alienation is not, as is often conventionally understood, a loss of subjectivity to an object, but rather the reversal of that, a loss of objectivity into pure subjectivity. Fischbach's point is that Marx's interest in alienation originates primarily in the (capitalist) transformations of human beings who lived in a particular community, interacted with that community, and reproduced themselves in and through social relations toward a capitalist subject who is defined first and foremost as a possessor of labor power and nothing else. As a capitalist worker, you have no way of reproducing your existence other than selling your labor power. Fischbach connects this to the Spinozist idea that the more we see ourselves as a Kingdom within a Kingdom, the more we come to see ourselves as subjects disconnected from the world. For many philosophers, this in fact might be considered the basis of autonomy, but Spinoza sees it as the basis of our subjection. In order to become more active and powerful, it is not a matter of affirming our pure subjectivity, but rather recognizing that our subjectivity is conditioned by our relations with others, the natural world, and so on. In this sense, it is pure subjectivity that is in fact alienation.

Similar to Marx, Bernard Stiegler argues that contemporary capitalism is transforming people from individuals with certain cultural habits and norms into pure consumer power. For Stiegler, just like Marx's laborer who is reduced to pure labor power, the abstract consumer is alienated from social relations and 'know-how' that are the conditions for autonomous individuation. The fundamental difference between contemporary capitalist production/consumption from that which came before can be illustrated by means of an example. Take something relatively simple like learning a song or a (video)game. Before the capitalist era of production and consumption, learning a song was also a condition for being able to produce it. There is a certain passivity and activity, internalization and externalization involved in which the consumer is also a producer – i.e., the individual is sort of two sides of the same relation. However, with the capitalist era of consumption and production, especially with the creation of mass media and so on, we get the transformation where the subject becomes passive and subjective capacities are reduced to pure combined power, that is, pure buying power and pure desires. Just as the reduction of the subject to pure labor power is a form of alienation from the subject's capacities through the isolation and separation from the conditions which produce them, so too the creation of a subject as pure buying power is also an alienation in the realm of non-working life.

BW: It seems to me that a sort of interesting contradiction emerges between the accounts of Marx and Stiegler and it is one that I think we can also find in Simondon. On the one hand, both Spinoza and Marx seem to suggest – which I think is a move that we see recurring in the modern philosophies of nature of, for instance, Haraway and Latour – that by placing the subject back into social relations, fostering a moment

of recognition with the reality of one's social and interconnected existence, alienation can be overcome and the subject regains autonomy. On the other hand, and this is I think the sort of position that Stiegler and Virno take, there might be a moment where the tremendous amount of relations, affects, and forces at play in modern capitalism overload the subject and turn it into a passive receiver. I think it is this sense of overdetermination that you referred to previously as being alienated from the pre-individual. The power of the relations of capitalism to make one desire certain things and not others results in an alienation from the pre-individual capacity to individuate in a different (non-economic) manner and one thus becomes subject to the forces of capitalism. How is it that transindividuality as a concept allows for these rather diverse critical positions?

JR: I think that around the concept of transindividuality there are different ways of understanding its critical potential. One of the ways would be simply to assert that − and I do not want to attribute this to Simondon but he is often read in this way − we are always-already transindividual, it is there in every possible relation, so that there is not really anything to say critically or normatively about different social relations. Then there is the opposite extreme of that, which is Stiegler's idea, who is very adamant in pointing out that we do not live in an atomistic society because we do not have the necessary transindividual conditions to individuate ourselves. In the modern capitalist consumer society, Stiegler argues, it is impossible to say 'I' or 'We'. It is impossible to say 'I' because the very things that make up one's identity are manufactured and marketed, and it is very difficult to say 'We' because there is not really a shared basis for collectivity. One of my go-to examples to clarify this point is driving on the freeway. Driving on the freeway is neither an individuated experience because it is so generic as everyone is doing the same thing, nor is it a collective experience in the sense that the other cars exist as obstacles to you. So on the freeway, there is no 'We' or 'I' and I think that that is how Stiegler sees much of contemporary society. The perspective that I take is neither the one that argues that everything is always-already transindividual nor the sort of disindividuation that Stiegler is describing, but to rather think about this rather paradoxical [Simondonian] idea that we are transindividuated in our own isolation and separation.[6]

BW: This connects nicely to my next question. One of the things you criticize Stiegler for is the way in which Stiegler's understanding of individuation, or rather disindividuation as you just mentioned, of the individual subject is entirely limited to the domain of consumption and production. It thereby seems to be implicated in a reading of Marx that argues that the material base entirely determines the superstructure. Individuation, for Stiegler, is economic individuation and this form of individuation suppresses other forms of individuation, such as the political. By use of Balibar's reading of Spinoza's double constitution of the state you try to stress that the individual is not only individuated in the economic sphere but also in the political domain, or perhaps even between these two domains. You put forward the idea of a short circuit between the economic and the political to clarify the fact that economic relations require political forms of representation in order to be meaningful, and that political forms of individuation are

informed by, and inform, economic forms of individuation. Could you expand on the relation between the economic and political as transindividuation?

JR: Yes, it is something that I have not been thinking about for a while, so I appreciate that you bring it up. One of the things that Balibar does is to focus on proposition IVp37 of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza argues that there are two different ways in which we come into collective life. On the one hand, there is the affect-based way where I want other people to like what I want so that my desires are, so to say, recognized.[7] This is a fundamentally unstable way of constituting a collective because I do not really want you to desire what I desire, because then we are in competition over the same thing, but I also do not want you to *not* desire what I desire because I do not want to be the only person who desires it. The affective constitution of the collective is thus marked by constant, ambivalent social relations of attraction and repulsion. The other side of collective life is grounded in Spinoza's idea that "nothing is more useful to man than man" (Spinoza 1996, IVp18schol), which informs the rational idea that our lives are better when we live collectively. What Balibar stresses is that both the rational and the affective constitution of the collective are always happening, in the sense that they happen alongside each other in a mutually constitutive manner.

Coming back to your question. At times I think that Balibar wants to suggest that, for instance, the nation is the site of imaginary [affective] identification which is part of the reason why national identities are so fixed. You see this best reflected in Balibar's interest in immigration. Part of the issue with immigration is this weird sense in which domestic inhabitants are getting frustrated by immigrants because they do not love the national object of love in the same way that 'locals' love it, the immigrants are perhaps loving it wrong, so that there is always this conflict within the national identity. Contrary to the nation as the site of imaginary identification, Balibar would then argue that the economy is the domain of utility, of "nothing is more useful to a man than man". But then Balibar, as a Marxist, is confronted with the fact that we learn from Marx that the economy is the domain of exploitation, which Spinoza as a less sophisticated economic thinker, simply does not recognize.

I would therefore argue, which reflects the idea of a short circuit that you mentioned, that rather than think that the nation is the domain of imaginary identification and the economy of rational utility, both the nation and the economy have their imaginary and rational components. Balibar develops a similar idea with the figure of the citizen. The citizen is a figure of a kind of equality and collective belonging framed in terms of the nation, so that the citizen is the domain of rational utility and the nation of imaginary identification. But added to that I would also argue that just as there is a rational basis for our economic relations, there is also an imaginary identification in the economy. You see this imaginary identification reflected for instance in the idea of the worker, who in politics is constantly split and divided between *real* worker and *not-real* worker. Especially in contemporary ideology, the capitalist or CEO bizarrely present themselves as the *real* worker, because they are responsible for innovations and creating profits, whereas the 'ordinary' worker is reduced to the status of not-real worker. So in that sense, we should extend upon Balibar's imaginary/rational division between the

nation and the economy in order to think, in a Spinozist manner, of the relation between the imagination and reason as the basis for all social relations, political and economic.

BW: Stressing, as you do, the relation between the economy and the political via the idea of a short circuit seems to me to open up the possibility for political resistance against economic exploitation. This would then offset an overly materialist reading of Marx that argues that only a definitive change in the relations of production would be able to overcome exploitation, effectively foreclosing the possibility of any political resistance. I think such an intervention in Marx, stressing the interrelation between base and superstructure, is very helpful. But if we then look at the cultural analysis of Stiegler, but especially keep in our minds the thesis of Wendy Brown's Undoing the Demos (2015) which argues that neoliberalism is succeeding in its mission to replace homo politicus with homo economicus, can we then still speak of political individuation that could resist the forces of the economy? In other words, is the short circuit not cut short?

JR: Yes, coming back to what we just talked about. Just as Balibar sees political individuation as split between the imaginary identification of the nation, with a certain shared culture, language, and customs, etc., and the rational identification of the citizen, who is a person with certain rights and duties attached to them, I would also argue that on the flip side, the figure of homo economicus is also split between two modes of economic life. There is, on the one hand, the homo economicus side in which we see ourselves in terms of competition, individual investments, and where we strive to maximize utility. But, on the other hand, there is also a collective, perhaps imaginative, dimension in any and all work process. This is something that Marx stressed, namely that the capitalist does not just exploit individual labor power, it exploits the fact that once you get multiple people together their shared labor is always greater than the sum of their parts. He refers to this combined labor power as *Gattungsvermögen,* or species-capacity. Marx is not necessarily very concerned with where this species-capacity comes from, but rather with the fact that there is something that happens when you bring people together that exceeds the simple sum of all isolated workers working independently.

  We can connect this to neoliberalism, which I think attempts to efface and obscure the collective basis of labor itself and see it as a purely individual activity. Which obviously is not correct, for it seems to me that most people when they start a new job have this moment where co-workers will pull you aside saying; 'look I know this is what they are telling you to do, but we figured out this way of doing things which is faster, it is going to be easier this way and you are not going to wear yourself out'. Such informal knowledge sharing between co-workers is not at all a relation of competition, because if we truly had been homo economicus the person who figured out a faster, easier way to do something would hoard it and keep it to themselves. Yet, this collective aspect of labor is exactly what neoliberalism is trying to efface. So Wendy Brown is right to say that homo economicus is an attempt to obscure kinds of political belonging. But homo economicus also has to be understood as an attempt to obscure certain aspects of economic relations. So what is at stake in neoliberalism is not just an attempt to efface the political byways of the economic, but to have effaced the economic understood

as the use of the powers of cooperation by really imposing the market side of the economy on labor relations.

BW: The neoliberal attempt to isolate the individual worker by means of effacing and obscuring the collective side of labor processes has in recent times obviously been aided not merely by the globalization of labor processes and financialization, but also by the growing virtuality of work. When working online from the comfort of one's own home becomes the norm it becomes increasingly hard to recognize the collective processes of labor in which one is involved.

JR: Yes, I think that is true. Marx really understood well that the subject of capital is split. When subjects are in the sphere of exchange, where they are out in the world buying things, subjects see themselves as an individual with their own individual tastes, desires, and needs. But when workers then clock in at work they recognize that there are others who are doing the same thing and so on. In other words, they see a different mode of individuation with a different social existence. Contemporary working conditions have tended to more and more obscure the collective nature of work, in the sense that, as you point out in for instance the COVID pandemic, people are isolated, sitting in front of their screens not seeing the extent to which their labor is dependent upon the labor of others. Marx already saw this tension between two different domains of individuation in capitalism, namely the individuation of the consumer market and the individuation of the working place. I think that, especially in today's capitalist relations, we see that the tension between these two different domains of individuation has lent itself towards one domain becoming predominant – that of the consumer market – whereas the other – the working place – is more or less obscured.

 Although, as we were talking about before, there is a sense in which, due to Covid, we are forced to recognize our dependency on others. That obscured collective individuation then suddenly comes to light and you get something like the great resignation in the US, where people leave their jobs because they are getting to see the extent to which they have been rendered disposable and interchangeable, but also because they see the collective nature of work. Sharing stories such as a restaurant having to close because all the workers just walked out one day, makes it more likely that someone else in another place might resist in this way. So in a sense, the isolation and invisibility of work have to some degree, paradoxically, given way to increased visibility and awareness throughout the Covid pandemic.

BW: The final question that I would like to turn to concerns the notion of colinearization advanced by Frédéric Lordon (2014). The way I understand Lordon is that he attempts to adapt Marx's analysis of capital to the modern, neoliberal capitalist model by confronting Marx with Spinoza's anthropology. Marx's notion of labor exploitation, at least in much of the Western world that outsourced its production chains to African and Asian countries, seems no longer to adequately describe the relation between laborer and capitalist. A lot of workers really enjoy their work and find fulfillment in it. Lordon, therefore, argues that the notion of exploitation has made way for passionate servitude.

Individual laborers' desires are colinearized to that of the capitalist so that the laborer finds joy in being put to work for the desires of the capitalist. Could you expand on this notion of colinearization as a distinctively modern aspect of capitalism? And also, how does the concept of colinearization relate to your notion of the short circuit as relation between the economic and political, as once more there seems to be a threat of the economic overtaking the political when all desires are capitalist desires?

JR: Yes, the notion of colinearization is certainly interesting. Lordon describes colinearization as the moment where the gap between the striving (conatus) of individuals and the striving of the capitalist enterprise is reduced to a minimum. Lordon then maps out this history of colinearization, where the first way that capital got people to do what it wanted them to do was simply through the absence of alternatives, in the sense that you either worked or starved. The second way is the sort of Fordist compromise in which the pains of your labor were being offset by the ability to consume things. Then the third way, which is the neoliberal way, is the sense in which you should realize yourself in your labor. This is exemplified by the slogan "if you love what you do, you never have to work a day in your life".

What I think is odd is that Lordon does not seem to think of the economic and political domain as two separate organizations of affects and striving, for him they are kind of intertwined. However, Lordon does offer an interesting perspective on the relation between the economy and politics by appropriating a Spinozist idea concerning the affective nature of causation. Spinoza argues that we get more angry or happy when someone does something that harms us or benefits us which we understand as freely undertaken, rather than if we understand them to be compelled by necessity. For Spinoza, this idea is part of the way in which we can overcome the power of the affects that dominate our lives. If I understand, for instance, that part of the reason why someone I know is not as friendly and warm to me as I would like them to be is caused by the fact that their parents are even colder, I am more likely to see the necessary causes that determined that person to be that way and therefore less likely to be upset about it. What Lordon does with that distinction is that the economy always presents itself under the modality of necessity, in the sense that, when economic decisions are made they are being made in terms of market statistics, the demands of competition, innovation, etc., and no one is really truly responsible. Politics, on the contrary, is often presented as freely determined. And this is why politicians are more prone to create anger for us and economic figures hardly do so.

I think that this affective distinction between politics and economics is very suggestive and interesting. Although I would add to that, perhaps through Marx, that the economy, like the domain of politics, is a human institution so that we have to talk about the *perception* of necessity and freedom rather than their *actuality.* But nonetheless, I do think that this idea allows us to explain why people are more prone to get angry at things that are perceived to have been freely chosen versus things that are perceived to have been necessary. We can come back to a COVID-related example. For instance, in the US you have this sort of reasoning that, even given the rise of new variants and the increasing caseloads, the economy cannot withstand another lockdown, so that

we have to open up the economy. But the interesting thing of course is that − and this goes back to the idea that our sense of necessity and contingency are themselves shaped by social forces − recent evidence has shown that president Biden and others are completely convinced that if they were to impose new lockdown measures they would basically ruin themselves because these measures would be incredibly unpopular. What is weird about this is that, on the one hand, what is seen to be necessary, namely that the economy has to open, is itself contingent and that what is seen as contingent, namely the imposition of new lockdown measures, is to some extent itself necessary. So here we are talking about the perception of necessity or contingency that determines, in a sense, the likelihood of people getting angry and prone to resistance. I think this affective distinction is certainly an interesting way to think about the division between politics and economics.

BW: I saw that you are publishing a book on Marx in the near future, what can we expect from that?

JR: Yes, well the book is really a sort of collection of essays that I have written over the past 20 years or so. There are some essays on Marx, some on Deleuze, Althusser and others. But I also have a book coming out from Verso on work called *The Double Shift: Marx and Spinoza on the Ideology and Politics of Work* which is my most comprehensive attempt to synthesize a Marx-Spinoza critical perspective. That is going to be coming out probably around late 2022 or early 2023.

Notes

1   Originally published posthumously in French as *L'Individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information* in 2005 as a collection of the two previously, separately published *L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* (1964) and *L'individuation psychique et collective* (1989).

2   Read refers to Balibar's lecture *Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality* held in Rijnsburg for the Spinoza Society in 1993. This lecture was originally published for a small circle in 1997 but has now been reprinted in Balibar's *Spinoza the Transindividual* (2020).

3   Simondon has various terms to describe the individuation of simple, living organisms. He most often refers to living, vital, or natural individuation.

4   The spontaneous philosophy refers almost to a sort of common sense of individuals. It is not necessarily a worked-out idea or ideology, but results from the lived experiences of individuals.

5   This famous quote figures in *Capital: Volume 1,* Part II "The Transformation of Money into Capital", chapter 6 "The Buying and Selling of Labour Power".

6   In his account of psycho-social individuation, Simondon argues that, because the individual cannot possibly individuate the pre-individual entirely within itself, it must amplify its individuation externally in collective modes of representation. The passage toward collective individuation is however not an intersubjective phenomenon, but, and this is Read's point, something that the individual recognizes in its failed endeavor to individuate the pre-individual within itself − this attempt results in the state of anxiety (*angoisse*) (2020, 282–85).

7   Spinoza refers to this affect whereby I want others to want what I want as ambition (1996, IIIp29schol).

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Biographies

Bram Wiggers is a recent graduate of the Research Master Philosophy at the UvA. His areas of interest include social and political philosophy, the history of philosophy, and critical theory. In his Master's thesis, titled *Individuation in Light of Notions of Power and Control: An Interdisciplinary Transindividual Approach to post-Fordist Individuation,* Bram adopts the conceptual vocabulary of transindividuality to assess the conditions of individuation under post-Fordist capitalism using an interdisciplinary approach that aims to connect the economics of post-Fordism to the philosophy of transindividuality. Currently, Bram is working to rewrite chapters of his MA thesis into publishable articles.

Jason Read completed his Ph.D. at the State University of New York at Binghamton in 2001, with a dissertation titled *The Production of Subjectivity: Marx and Contemporary Continental Thought.* His most recently published book, *The Politics of Transindividuality* (2015), engages with the thought of transindividuality and develops its use for social-political critique. His areas of scholarship include social and political philosophy, 19th and 20th century continental philosophy, critical theory, philosophy of history, and Spinoza studies. Currently, Jason is working on two book publications, *The Double Shift: Marx and Spinoza on the Ideology and Politics of Work* (New York: Verso, 2023) and *The Production of Subjectivity: Marx and Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill 2022/Chicago: Haymarket, 2023).

Krisis **JOURNAL for contemporary philosophy**

Critical Naturalism: A Manifesto

Federica Gregoratto, Heikki Ikäheimo, Emmanuel Renault,
Arvi Särkelä and Italo Testa

Abstract:

The Critical Naturalism Manifesto is a common platform put forward as a basis for broad discussions around the problems faced by critical theory today. We are living in a time, e.g. a pandemic time, when present-day challenges exert immense pressure on social critique. This means that models of social critique should not be discussed from the point of view of their normative justification or political effects alone, but also with reference to their ability to tackle contemporary problematic issues (like the dismantlement of the welfare state, the environmental catastrophe, and the sanitary crisis). With this manifesto, we invite varying practices of philosophical, artistic and scientific social critique to take seriously the enormous challenges our societies face with regard to inner and outer nature.

Krisis

Critical Naturalism: A Manifesto

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Preamble

This manifesto is an invitation. It invites varying practices of philosophical, artistic, and scientific social critique to take seriously the enormous challenges our societies face with regard to inner and outer nature. It has three parts. The first part consists of the eleven theses of Critical Naturalism. The second part is conceptual. It identifies the historical crises and catastrophes that Critical Naturalism seeks to respond to, dispels the prejudices against naturalism in contemporary critical thought, sketches out the notions of nature and naturalism, and anchors Critical Naturalism in the history of Critical Theory. We understand this history, initially, as that of the Frankfurt School, which must then be expanded and enriched by other approaches to social critique. The last part consists of fragments for models and projects of Critical Naturalism. They are exemplary sketches of the varying ways to practice naturalist social critique. The hope is that the list will be extended by those who want to join us.

Section One: The Theses

1. Nature, whose concept and reality once seemed overcome, returns by force of its own repression as a signature of our present historical situation.

2. Nature spilling over, populations spilling over, hospitals spilling over, climate anxiety spilling over: The symptoms of the repression become unbearable. Yet, catastrophes do not mean social transformation. They can be perpetuated by administration. 2020 might continue.

3. Concepts and theories of nature are not innocent. They participate in bringing the disasters forth and contribute to perpetuating them. A rational response to the current catastrophes must include attempts to grasp both these new realities of life and the dead ways of thinking that sustain them. Such has been Critical Theory's claim. Critical Naturalism carries it into our times.

4. The so-called naturalistic fallacy is hardly a greater peril than global warming, metabolic rift, and zoonotic spillover. On the contrary, a social philosophy which abstracts from nature is a mirror image of the lethal practical illusion of independence from nature.

5. Independence from nature and domination of nature are two sides of the same coin. There is no emancipation without liberation within nature.

6. Most Critical Theory has hitherto only *denaturalized* the social in various ways, the point is also to *renaturalize* it. Relations of domination in society are embodied materially, biologically, technologically, habitually, and institutionally, and so is the resistance to them.

7. Normativist critical theory has reconstructed the norms of social critique, naturalist

critical theory pushes forward. It reconstructs *social life*, especially the relation of societies to their natural environments and constituents, and it understands itself as part and parcel of social transformation.

8. Natural (inter)subjective determinations – drives, impulses, affects – can operate as critical forces of liberation. Even if always socialized, they are not infinitely malleable and they can work against encrusted social norms and structures. Critical Naturalism cares as much for our natural determinations as for our dispositions to redirect them.

9. Nature has contingent and plural histories. It is geared to mutability and variation. Critical Naturalism acknowledges nature as ordered and disordered, in between stability and precariousness. It has a transient character.

10. Traditional naturalism's illusion of the One Nature of the One Science mirrors the destructive tendency of capitalist societies to reduce nature to resource, and it ignores the irreducible plurality of both science and our everyday and aesthetic experiences of nature. It also impoverishes the ethnographic and cultural variety of experiences of nature. This plurality is a resource for naturalistic social critique.

11. Critical Naturalism harbors the utopian drive of reimagining the relationship between nature and society. It calls for articulation of, and experimentation with, human social forms of life that can be *sustained* and freely *affirmed* by their individual members.

Section Two: The Need for Critical Naturalism

Historical diagnoses and theoretical obstacles

We are living in a time when the challenges of the present exert immense pressure on social critique. Notably, this means that models of social critique should not be discussed from the point of view of their normative justification or political effects alone, but also with reference to their ability to tackle contemporary challenges. The dismantlement of the welfare state, the environmental catastrophe, and the healthcare crisis are three of the most pressing issues of our time, and each of them can be addressed separately by specific critical models, but as long as they are addressed separately, the reactions to them are doomed to suffer from political one-sidedness.

A *first historical diagnosis*, concerning the neoliberal attacks against the welfare state, can be articulated within the framework of a theory of social freedom. As Axel Honneth has argued in *Freedom's Right* (Honneth 2015) a welfare state is required to institutionalize the conditions of social freedom. As such, the project of a critical theory of social freedom is clearly relevant. However, this approach is exclusively society-centered, and thus not able to capture what is at stake in the current environmental disaster and care crisis. Moreover, it draws, at least in Honneth's case, on a Durkheimian conception of the social as a *sui generis* reality, a conception that makes it almost impossible to interconnect the social conditions of freedom with the society-nature relationship.

A second way of articulating the critique of the dismantlement of the welfare state is presented by social reproduction theory (SRT), as seen for instance in Nancy

Fraser and Rahel Jaeggi's *Capitalism* (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018) and in the *Feminism for the 99 % Manifesto* (Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser 2019). In a Polanyian way, Neoliberalism is here depicted as an attack on the conditions of *social life*, that is, not only on the welfare state as a condition for social freedom, but on the very conditions of the reproduction of social life. This is important since this attack is indeed experienced everywhere on our planet, and not only in countries where welfare institutions have regulated social reproduction. Indeed, social life cannot reproduce itself without reproducing its relations to natural environments, and without biological reproduction in the sense of procreation of humans by humans. Insofar as the SRT approach considers society-environment relations, it does support ecosocialist and ecofeminist projects. The problem with this approach, however, is that the concept of "reproduction" is defined through the contrast between "productive" and "reproductive" work, and between "societal" and "social reproduction" (where "societal" refers to the reproduction of the capitalist system as a whole, and "social" to the activities, attitudes, emotions, and relationships directly involved in maintaining life; see Brenner and Laslett 1991). What is required today is the overcoming of both these dualistic and schematic distinctions. We must reconstruct the reciprocal impact of productive and reproductive work in novel ways. Furthermore, we must investigate the deep and intimate relationship not only between societal and social dynamics, but also, systematically, between such dynamics and their natural environments (focusing also on how these environments condition societal and social dimensions).

The *second historical diagnosis* concerns the environmental crisis. Here, the tradition of critical theory can attempt an endemic articulation by drawing upon the Marxist notion of "metabolic rift". This concept suggests that the interactions between human societies and their natural environments are analogous with the metabolic processes of animal bodies. According to this approach, the reciprocal transfers between societies and their environments are depicted as metabolic processes that can break down. The result is the destruction of the social forms of life that depend on it. Here, the main issue touches upon the environmental conditions of social life. When societies overuse the resources of their natural environments, or when they eject too much waste into the environment, these can no longer reproduce or reintegrate the waste. On this diagnosis, it is important to consider how the processes of societal reproduction are organized: the dynamics of neoliberal capitalism, as well as the types of consumption associated with contemporary social inequalities, are the main culprits (see Foster 2020; 2021).

However, the problems, in our era of extreme inequalities, exceed those to do with the metabolic exchanges with natural environments. This becomes painfully clear with the *third historical diagnosis*, that of "the era of pandemics". Indeed, the fact that new viruses emerge ever more frequently and that they are becoming ever more dangerous is linked with the contemporary overexploitation of natural environments, as stated by metabolic rift theories (see Malm 2020); yet it is not reducible to that. The temporality of the diagnosis cast in terms of an "era of pandemics" is namely different from that cast in terms of an "environmental crisis": whereas global warming is catastrophic for its medium-term impact on sea level, meteorological disasters, biodiversity, and mass migration, the healthcare crisis creates a state of emergency here and now. The content of this diagnosis is also different from the previous one since it sheds a different light

on society–nature relations: the pandemic makes it painfully evident that despite social-ization human individuals remain natural organisms, belonging to the same realm as all other species. Humans are just as vulnerable to "zoonotic spillover" as other species are. Moreover, the healthcare crisis is intimately linked with the destruction of the welfare state. Dismantling the public health system is a very bad idea in general, but it is even worse under pandemic circumstances, where it leads to outright global emergencies. It is striking how poorly equipped critical theory is for articulating this third diagnosis. Critical theory has rarely been concerned with issues of health in its critical models, and when it has, this has been only in terms of mental health. Even when elaborating on the idea of 'social pathology', pathologies in the literal medical meaning of the term have rarely been given serious consideration.

Most of the proponents of the above-mentioned critical models agree that from a political point of view, the conjunction of these three diagnoses calls for some kind of socialism with an ecological focus as a remedy to the neoliberal destruction of the welfare state, to metabolic rifts, and to the healthcare consequences of environ-mental overexploitation. The contemporary crises deepen not only class inequalities and domination, but also gender and racial inequalities, as well as inequalities between rich countries with *comparatively* efficient healthcare sectors, vaccination capacities, and highly destructive environmental impact on the one hand, and poor countries more vulnerable to crises they are not responsible for on the other. The demand is for a socialism with a feminist, anti-racist, and anti-imperialist focus as well. These political desiderata can of course be articulated in different strategic and programmatic ways. Their justification depends on political arguments as well as on sociological and eco-logical facts rather than philosophical reflection. Nevertheless, philosophical reflection can also play a role, and one of the useful tasks in this respect is to draw together the ontological, anthropological, and social-theoretical implications of the three above mentioned diagnoses in a consistent way that can be informative of, and experimented in, political practice. Critical Naturalism is the label we use to denote this kind of philosophical reflection.

The challenges of our times call for the Critical Naturalist approach. Importantly, they also put in serious doubt a number of accepted assumptions in various strands of contemporary critical social science and philosophy. Let us mention some of the most obvious ones:

Abstract social constructivism. According to abstract social constructivism, health should be analyzed as a social construct. One should avoid referring to it from a critical point of view, as that would mean falling into the traps of biopower. By contrast, Critical Naturalism addresses health as well as the body as *both* social constructs *and* something irreducible to social construction. When biological organisms are transformed into social and cultural agents able to express and address organic problems by means of social norms, these problems do not thereby cease to be biological problems. Critical Naturalism rejects the symmetrical pitfalls of a social constructivism that reduces society to social construction and abstracts from its relatedness to nature on the one hand, and a biological reductionism on the other.

Technologicalism. Some forms of social critique based on abstract constructivist accounts end up conflating criticism with the search for technological solutions. For sure, repurposing technologies for emancipative ends is a valuable strategy for progressive politics. Techno-utopian agendas such as the Accelerationist Manifesto (Williams and Srnicek 2013) have rightly diagnosed the sense of the future having been erased from political imagination in the last decades. However, by not considering the dialectics between society and nature, such positions eventually endorse a form of artificialism in conceiving the role of technology that is both ontologically incoherent and ecologically dangerous. The future is already here, and it is accelerating in a direction that dreams of collective self-mastery through technological acceleration will not account for. The abstract, disembodied character of rationalist social engineering implemented by neoliberalism is precisely part of the problem.

Artificialism. Abstract constructivist models of social emancipation, also shared by posthumanists and accelerationist feminists such as the *Xenofeminist Manifesto* (Cuboniks 2018), conceive of social emancipation as a matter of incrementally bootstrapping ourselves into artificial existence. As such, they are essentially anti-naturalist, believing that we can simply leave nature behind. This is unsustainable already with regard to the ontology of artifacts, which in order to be enacted in the world must be materially embodied, situated in the environment, and adapted to our bodily habits. Social criticism has rightly denounced the ideological nature of commonsense essentialist naturalism, which deems unnatural anyone who does not conform to posited biological or theological norms, and thinks of nature as invariant. However, this does not do away with naturalness. The Xenofeminist slogan "if nature is unjust, change nature" should not be taken *ad absurdum*. Critical Naturalism understands naturalness precisely as something open to change and to plural orders of transformation, or even as what allows change! However, this does not mean that nature can change indefinitely, that it can be manipulated without limits.

Flat ontologism. It is tempting to combat the modern denial of the natural conditions of social and human life by rejecting the society-nature distinction altogether. According to Bruno Latour, the very idea of society depends on such denial. But rejecting the social-natural *divide* should not lead to a rejection of the social-natural *distinction* and to relinquishing the very concepts of nature and society[1]. Such conflation of nature and society ends up missing the critical potential of their relative non-identity. Here again, Critical Naturalism is an attempt to avoid symmetrical pitfalls: society is neither a reality *sui generis*, essentially detached from nature, nor merely a set of specific networks with other natural entities.

Conflation of naturalism with ideology. A powerful source of worries concerning naturalism within contemporary critical social science and philosophy stems from the fact that "naturalism" is conflated with an ideological formation that seeks to justify social inequality and domination by an appeal to nature. The suspicion is that any reference to nature in a context where social critique is at stake runs the risk of involving such ideological

justification. One good example is the famous distinction between "sex" and "gender", understood as a distinction between biological (sex) and social (gender) definitions of human beings. Initially, this distinction had the critical function of distinguishing social norms, which vary historically and geographically, from the biological descriptions of sexual difference. What was at stake was the struggle against the ideological justification of these norms by presenting them as derived from natural differences. In other words, this distinction was initially a critique of ideological naturalism. Judith Butler then famously contended that the biological distinction between the sexes actually also amounts to a normative construction, and thus to ideological naturalism (Butler 1990). However, as feminist biologists teach us (e.g. Fausto-Sterling 2012), studying the nature of our sexual bodies leads us to discover a rich range of possibilities, which goes well beyond the simple gender dualism (cis-male vs. cis-female). Similarly, studying the nature of our sexual desires points us to a rich range of possibilities that goes well beyond the heteronormative regimes. Trans, transitioning, non-binary, third gendered, queer, etc. bodies can be seen both as natural variations and as social, human, interactional projects or, as in a Deweyan sense, *experimentations*. The same goes for gay, lesbian, queer, non-monogamous, polyamorous, kinky, anarchist or otherwise non-conventional forms of sexual, intimate, erotic encounters and relationships.

We are not convinced by arguments for dropping all references to nature in social sciences or social and political philosophy as these would allegedly amount to ideological naturalism. These arguments render any form of naturalism incompatible with the very project of a critical theory of society. On the contrary, there are good reasons to believe that such reference plays a pivotal and inalienable role in contemporary critical theories. Even when gestures and practices of denaturalization are still needed, an understanding of the nature of our bodies can have a role in debunking prejudices, challenging widespread assumptions, and thus contributing to changing norms and structures of oppression. For instance, comparing racialized groups from a biological point of view can be a powerful weapon for dismantling any justification for oppression, discrimination, or even differentiations based on socially constructed notions of "race". On this point – that race does not exist biologically – every social constructionist appears to be a critical naturalist too! Regarding disability and aging, embodied and extended cognition – a broadly naturalist approach, sometimes also critical (see e.g. Gallagher 2020) – can show how institutions, norms, and thus domination are incorporated in bodily habits and skills and create embodied exclusions and inclusions.

Critical Naturalism, as we can see, is critically sensitive to the different issues at stake in domination based on gender, race, and disability. It doesn't come with a pre-packaged solution for all of them. It suggests approaching these areas without the nature-culture and mind-body dualisms that have long blocked critical inquiry.

Nature and Naturalism

If the very notion of Critical Naturalism sounds paradoxical to many, this is not only because of the above-mentioned assumptions and prejudices in critical social science and philosophy. Another reason is a set of conceptual worries about "nature" and "naturalism".

Some of the worries about "nature" relate to the fact that it is thought to be legitimate, for social sciences and philosophy, to focus on what makes contemporary societies irreducible to their natural conditions and components. Society should be thought of independently of nature, so the thinking goes. The validity of this claim depends on a particular way of defining "nature", "society" and "irreducibility".

In ordinary language, the meaning of the term "nature" is often linked to the need to distinguish things: nature-convention (rules and norms), nature-culture, nature-history, nature-artifacts, and nature-nurture. It makes sense to consider all these distinctions intersecting and together comprising the nature-society distinction. Whereas such distinctions work fine in most situated language games, they should not be hypostatized, that is, posited as fixed metaphysical divides. For one thing, there is culture and social life in non-human nature too. And conversely, in some language games it makes sense to describe "human societies" as part of "nature".

The distinction between nature and human society can be understood in two different ways: thinking of nature and society either as two separated realities, or as various aspects of the same reality. Thinking of them as two separate realities is not feasible since it would then hardly be conceivable that human societies have natural elements and conditions. Such a conception also suggests that the nature-society distinction is analogous to another distinction involved in the ordinary uses of the word "nature": the natural-supernatural distinction. Critical Naturalism rejects this outdated metaphysical dualism, i.e., all views that make a *categorical* distinction between natural and supernatural realms of existence.

Critical Naturalism also opposes defining and analyzing societies merely in terms of their allegedly distinctive characteristics (rules, norms, culture, artifacts, nurture), without considering their relations with the naturalness from which they might be distinguished. In other words, Critical Naturalism does not reject all distinctions between nature and convention, nature and history, nature and culture, nature and artifacts, or nature and nurture. Rather it strives to bridge the gap between the distinguished terms and use them critically, conscious of their role in our natural and cultural forms of life. In this respect, what matters is not so much the question as to whether or not, or to what respect and degree, human societies are natural, but rather a twofold fact: firstly, there is a *continuity* between human forms of life and non-human forms of life, as well as between forms of life and non-living natural phenomena; secondly, these continuities are present within human forms of social life.

"Continuity", in this sense, is a concept coined by John Dewey, a naturalist philosopher whose significance for critical theory is now widely acknowledged. Continuity means refusal of both reductionism and dualism. In fact, Critical Naturalism recognizes a plurality of forms of continuity: genetic continuity, relational continuity, and dynamic continuity. Genetic continuity is a point made by evolutionary theory. Living beings have come about through a series of transformations of inanimate beings, and human forms of life are a product of a series of transformations of non-human forms of life.

Relational continuity is a socio-ontological claim: social entities cannot be abstracted from their natural environments, and their relations to these environments

are not only external but also internal. For instance, human labor activities do not only mediate between societies and their natural environments, but also structure social life, shaping both the natural environments and the inner nature of the workers.

Most crucial for critical theory is the third continuity, namely dynamic continuity. According to this idea, continuity also includes constraints on convention, culture, nature, artifacts, and nurture. In present times, it should be all too obvious that healthcare crises would not occur were our biological naturalness not an inescapable constraint on us, or that ecological crises would not occur were our natural environments limitlessly malleable. It should not be provocative to point out that artifacts are produced in conformity with mechanical and chemical laws, and that social individuals whose behavior is mediated by conventions and cultural symbols remain animals subjected to death and disease. And yet it is taken to be controversial to claim that the human body is not a *tabula rasa* where culture leaves its print, or that drives, and psychic defenses are deeply rooted in the history of our species and still produce structuring effects in contemporary culture. Evolutionary naturalism, as well as Freud's drive theory, inflicted wounds to human narcissism by highlighting that humans remain animals. Aligned with technological optimism, social and cultural conservatism, and traditional dualistic thinking, human narcissism has proved to be strong enough to patch over these wounds. Critical Naturalism does not provide first aid for blows to fantasies of human omnipotence. It cares for vulnerable, embodied, interdependent humans in natural and social environments over the long term.

Further worries about "nature" have to do with its widespread association with the ideas of eternal laws of physical phenomena, invariable forms of the living species, reified genus concepts, and unchanging structures of human nature. Thinking of societies in their relation to their natural conditions and constituents would then be incompatible with any project of radical social transformation. But as contemporary physical cosmology shows, the universe is a result of processes. Biology tells us that organic species should not be understood as unchanging structures, but as changing patterns of adaptation to, and adjustment of, changing environments. Contemporary philosophy of science can therefore support a processual naturalism, in which nature is seen as composed of interacting processes generating innovations rather than of phenomena subjected to universal and unchanging regularities (see Dupré 2015; 2018). Critical Naturalism draws lessons from these accounts. It rejects the static conception of nature that identifies nature with a set of unchanging laws and species, and takes nature to involve both stability and precariousness, to be a mixture of necessity and contingency, ever in the making.

Naturalism and critical theory

Critical Naturalism aims to be critical in the sense of the traditions of critical social theory. If one understands critical theory in the broadest sense, these traditions can be specified by a focus on what is going wrong in our societies, and by attempts to participate in shaping social practices. They contrast, firstly, with a traditional conception of theory where the focus is on the "first principles" of knowledge, the definition of the most fundamental traits of reality, or the rationality of the real and an attempt to

discern what is irrational in a specific historical situation. They contrast also with a conception of theory that has its aim in itself, truth being an end in itself, and replaces this with a conception of theory as a tool for making the world less wrong. Within the Frankfurt School tradition, this conception of critical theory was famously articulated in Horkheimer's article "Critical Theory and Traditional Theory", as well as by Marcuse, Adorno, and others. But the conception can be traced back even further to Hegel and Marx, who both historicized philosophical theorizing and emphasized a close and reflective connection between theory and practice. These two moves also played a decisive role for Dewey who claimed that "philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men". Such a conception of critical theory is also illustrated nowadays, outside contemporary contributions rooted in the Frankfurt School tradition, in various branches of critical thought, be they inspired by Foucault (for instance in discussions about biopolitics), by pragmatism (for instance in discussions on racial integration and epistemic injustices; see Anderson 2013; Medina 2013), or by Marx (such as in the metabolic rift theories), or be they feminist theories, theories elaborated in critical race studies, critical disability studies, or critical environmental studies.

In the history of critical theory the type of critical naturalism we are advocating has often played a crucial, even if nowadays neglected, role. Since Hegel is one of the starting points of the traditions of critical theory – both Marx and Dewey having started their intellectual lives as Hegelians, and the Frankfurt School trying to synthesize Hegel, Marx and Freud – it is reasonable to start these brief historical remarks with him. Contemporary critical theories inspired by Hegel[2] generally read him as an anti-naturalist philosopher. They typically emphasize his deconstructions of the theory-practice, individual-society, and moral-politics dualisms, without taking seriously the fact that he also criticized the nature-spirit dualism. Hegel presented this latter criticism from an anthropological as well as a socio-ontological point of view.

From the anthropological point of view, Hegel criticized the mind–body dualism and emphasized that humans have both a "first" and a "second nature": their internal nature is transformed by the process of socialization in the social world which is organized by social norms that are a result of a historical process. A similar anthropology played a decisive role for Dewey, for whom human nature is characterized by a set of plastic impulses, resulting from natural selection and environmental pressure, as well as by habits or second nature, which direct these impulses. Important for the critical naturalist orientation here is the idea that even though impulses are always socially channeled, contradictions can occur between the impulses and the social norms which condition habit formation, and such contradictions can critically contribute to undermining the norms. One finds a similar critical naturalist anthropology in the early Frankfurt School reception of Freud's drive theory. Though the drives are plastic and socially channeled, they are also repressed, and their repression can retroact in various ways on social life, both by contributing to pathological developments (for instance by generating the "authoritarian personalities" analyzed by Adorno) as well as by defining emancipatory potentials (for instance in Marcuse).

From a socio-ontological point of view, Hegel already contended that society should not be analyzed as a normative realm disconnected from external nature and the internal nature of individuals. What defines the sociality of human life is a transformation of the first nature of human organisms into a second nature, which also makes individual and collective freedom compatible. Furthermore, for a society to reproduce itself, it must satisfy the needs of its members via a transformation of external nature operated by a system of division of labor (a "system of needs" in Hegel's terminology). This latter ideal is taken up by Marx who defines work as the "metabolism between man and nature", or "between society and nature", with reference to the possibility of "metabolic rifts". Similar ideas are expressed by Dewey, who defines the economic process as a human transformation of the biological process of mutual adaptation and adjustment of organism and environment. In various ways, the relations between societies and their natural environments are also crucial in the first generation of the Frankfurt School. The reference to these relations is loaded with both negative and utopian dimensions. For instance, in the young Adorno's text "The idea of Natural-History", the notion of second nature has an ontological connotation, expressing the transient and plural character of naturality: "nature" acquires historical contingency. Acknowledging this character makes it possible to give expression to those aspects of fragmentariness and appearance that are proper to the second-natural being of human social life and that are simultaneously concealed and amplified by reification. For Adorno, the key concept for a critical social philosophy that makes this task its own proves to be that of "second nature": it allows us to think of a social concept of nature and a natural concept of history. Here, second nature brings to light that reciprocal reference of nature and history, that contamination between the two poles of the eccentric trajectory of human life which thwarts any attempt both to hold them fast in isolation and to reduce one to the other.

The history of critical theory is a source of inspiration for Critical Naturalism in many other respects as well. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno highlighted that domination of nature results in domination in society. However, they did not consider that the domination of nature could result in the kind of natural feedback effects we are currently experiencing in the form of environmental disasters and public health crises. Alfred Schmidt put emphasis on Marx's theory of the society-nature relation, and on the concept of "metabolism between society and nature" (Schmidt 2013). Schmidt also demanded that Feuerbach's sensuous naturalism be taken seriously by critical theory (Schmidt 1977). A similar point was made by Honneth and Joas (1989) by now four decades ago, before they elaborated their less naturalistic mature programs.

Critical naturalist motives have not played a major role in the recent developments of critical theory. Critical Naturalism is a learning process. It aims to bring these motives back to the fore, in a form adjusted to the challenges of our time. Notably, it must overcome the Eurocentric bias of critical theory and outline diverse, non-reified, multiple, complex ideas and practices of nature and naturalness. Critical Naturalists must practice self-criticism and avoid the traps of colonizing and imperialist dynamics. Critical theorists have already made some resources available for a richer and more inclusive approach to nature: in particular, Adorno's notion of "mimesis", his

critique of identity thinking, and his essayistic and micrological methods (indebted to Walter Benjamin), as well as Dewey's idea of pluralistic, multi-layered and changeable natures, and his fallibilist method of inquiry, are promising starts in this respect. Critical Naturalism's concepts remain to be hybridized, affected, integrated, revised.

Section Three: Fragments

Critical Naturalism is not *a* theory. Like the nature it refers to, and the forms of life it critically engages with, it appears in plural forms. This last section of the Manifesto exemplifies directions of Critical Naturalism by sketching out some of its models and intents in fragmentary form. The list of fragments is open-ended and contains an implicit invitation to grow in number and depth and extend all the way into the fragmentary experience of everyday life.

The task of critical theory

"What is the most central task for critical theory today?" – "Who are we to say? Philosophers always come late. They don't write manifestos. It will be up to the readers of tomorrow to say what was our most important task today." Bad question, right answer. Yet the current catastrophic relationship between nature and culture has rendered the right answer impossible and the bad question necessary. As things stand today, the old answer has become ominous. It might well be that there will be no readers of philosophy tomorrow. To contribute to preventing that from happening, to help achieve natural and cultural conditions, which allow for humanity to survive and to care for its forms of life is, if not the most central, then certainly an imperative task for critical theory today.

Nature, culture and care

Culture means care, it derives from the Latin *colere*. Adorno once remarked that this *colere* originally meant the activity of the peasant, the *agricola*, that is, a certain way of relating to nature, the *care for nature*. The fact that we set different relations to nature, that we have different forms of life, different ways of caring for nature within and without us, means a chance for us, by mutual criticism, to *come to terms with ourselves*, to grow by reconciling ourselves with something different than ourselves. Culture means care of nature. Critique means care of the relationship between culture and nature. Critique must not be thought of as a judgment, but as a coming to terms with oneself and each other as natural and cultural beings. Critique promises a non-violent mode of cultural transformation, the possibility of transforming our lives with care.

It is written in the face of our current form of life that it is failing in this regard. We find ourselves in a new historical constellation of nature/culture: a contradiction between the continuation of our capitalist form of life and the survival of humanity as we know it. And we find ourselves completely unable to react collectively to this enormous challenge ahead of us. The fact that global warming has reached a point of no return means that the ecological disaster that we are facing is not merely a crisis. It is a permanent catastrophe, a mutation of our relationship with the environment, of our culture. We simply have no choice but to permanently alter our relationship with nature.

How should students and teachers of philosophy react? There are two options: we can either ignore the fact that global warming has reached the point of no return, that is, try to suppress the fact that our culture will change, try to, as it were, "engineer" ourselves into a new form of life, or we can go about this change reflectively, react to the disaster creatively, go through our mutation *with care*.

One such attempt at a creative reaction has been to create a completely new vocabulary for nature/culture. Critical Naturalists agree that we need a radically new beginning. However, a radically new beginning does not mean suppressing the past. Such reactions end with implausible and abstract vocabularies that cannot be continued in ordinary language and guide everyday life. They will be either powerless or violent in the face of prevailing habits and customs. Therefore, Critical Naturalists believe that suppressing the past isn't radical at all, it is superficial. Instead, Critical Naturalism proceeds negatively, by a critique of what is given, the prevailing forms of life. Reacting with care means being sensitive to the needs and powers our form of life has developed, it involves redigesting our history from the perspective of the contemporary disasters. No culture can be created from scratch. New forms of life are assembled from old forms of life. We can only react creatively from pre-existing habits by cultivating those habits further and redirecting them from the point of view of the disaster and the objective possibilities at hand.

Niche constructors

As a particular animal species, humans are distinguished by the fact that work is the mediator of their adaptation to their natural environment. Work can fulfill this mediating function only with a division of labor which involves a stock of technical knowledge and norms of cooperation – even in cases where division of labor is structured by social domination. This also means that, from an evolutionary point of view, work plays both productive and reproductive roles: it is both a productive activity of transforming materials into consumption goods that can satisfy our vital needs and make our human forms of life ecologically sustainable, and it is the reproductive activity of educating to social norms and technical knowledge, as well as providing the services required by the cooperative structure of society that has made human forms of life possible.

Productive work consists of uses of natural environments in order to satisfy a set of biological needs, but it also produces transformations in natural environments, turning them into partly artificial ones, which then generate new needs and new uses of natural environments. Representations, including representations of nature, are crucial for orienting productive work and therefore crucial for the quality of the human effect on human environments too. All of this means that, more than any other animal, humans are *niche constructors*. Nowadays, the implications of this anthropological fact are denoted by the term "anthropocene", even if the problem with the anthropocene is not the specificity of human niche construction, but the forms it has taken since the emergence of capitalism.

Work can either sustain, as in foraging societies, or destroy these environments, as under capitalism. The challenge is to transform destructive work into sustaining work without returning to foraging. What is required for tackling this challenge is not only

a critical theory of capitalism – the existing economic system of production for profit rather than for use, and instrumentalization of social cooperation to benefit the rich at the expense of the poor. Additionally, there is a need for a critical theory of our uses of the natural and artificial environments, a reactualized theory of "use value", as well as for a critical theory of the norms of cooperation, a theory that would question the allocation of wages and prestige, something which is currently far from being based on the ecological and social value of the professions. What is demanded is also a critical theory of work that undermines the hegemonic definition of work as a consumption of raw materials, including one's body, rather than as a fruitful use of these material and bodily instrumentalities. In fact, this hegemonic definition provides an ideological justification both for the exploitation of nature and for the exploitation of workers.

Reconstruction and experimentation

When intellectuals no longer have the opportunity to be organic intellectuals of a massive social movement, yet they still want to be sincere, the task remaining for them is chiefly *critical*. Hence, the philosophical industry in critical theory is today mass producing norms and models of social critique, and a great many empirical inquiries from a critical sociological point of view. Although their value should not be underestimated, for naturalist critical theory the various normative, epistemological, and empirical contributions to social critique are not enough. What matters is also the reconstruction of the criticized state of affairs. Our relations to our natural and artificial environments, our drives, our habits of conduct and thought, our systems of institutions, all have to be reconstructed. Working towards these goals requires elaborating new critical models which take into account the ecological, technological, and economic constraints at play in our relations to our natural and artificial environments, as well as the anthropological constraints defined by our psyche and the inertia of our habits, and the sociological constraints bearing on the practice of social transformation. What is required is developing models of social critique that are also models of social experimentation, models that are intimately linked with knowledge of these constraints and with practical imagination of solutions.

Beyond ideological naturalism and ideological antinaturalism

Theorists and theories have a tendency to overshoot. The exaggeration has a tendency to become habitual and unreflective over time and with academic socialization. Critical theory is especially prone to this process of ossification as it comforts itself by the assurance of being "critical" by default: what begins as critique turns easily into dogma. The critique of "naturalism", "essentialism", "naturalistic fallacy" and so on has become an automatic reflex to an extent that it is an obstacle for addressing global warming, metabolic rift, zoonotic spillover, and the myriads of ways in which culture is essentially related to nature. Whereas the evils of social thought implicated in, or explicitly preaching, ideological forms of naturalism are well-known and forever something to be vigilant about, the current situation forces a clear-headed assessment of social thought which abstracts from nature, thereby forming a mirror image and contributing to the lethal practical illusion of independence from nature. All of the original worries concerning naturalism need to be

revisited without prejudice, so as to achieve a perspective which is neither ideologically naturalist, nor ideologically anti-naturalist, but that of Critical Naturalism.

Freedom and life

Freedom is an inescapable ideal for critical and emancipatory thought and action, but the dominant models of freedom are at best inadequate for grasping the constitutive connectedness of humanity with nature, and at worst complicit with the current crisis or ongoing catastrophe. The concept of freedom as autonomy or self-determination is in this regard no less problematic than the simpler concept of negative freedom: it easily lends itself to the hubristic fantasy of independence from nature. Such independence can never be actually given, and practical attempts to bring it about can only take the form of increasingly drastic attempts to dominate nature, to keep its irreducibly independent dynamics and indifference to human concerns at bay and out of mind. The psychoanalytic lesson about the folly of attempts to force internal nature into submission apply even more so in the relation with external nature. So does its lesson about freedom: the abstract concept of freedom as independence or abstraction from what necessarily determines us is self-subversive and destructive when applied in practice. The only real, concrete form of freedom with regard to what we are constitutively related to and thus determined by is reconciliation that acknowledges its otherness but overcomes the hostility in the relationship. It is this unity of difference and unity, or being with oneself in otherness—to use the famous Hegelian formula—that characterizes the ideal of a free relation of a human individual with her body, as well as of a human community with external nature. As processes of life never cease, freedom in this sense is never given once and for all, but is always a task to define the specifications of, and to aspire to. If we fail in this task, we will die out. As Hegel reminds us: the ends of freedom cannot be separate from the ends of life.

Affects and critique

The emotional and affective dimensions of our habits, institutions, norms, and practices are of crucial importance, both for philosophy and for life. Living, social, human and nonhuman beings are shaped and driven by non-cognitive, non- or pre-intentional, non-linguistic, non- or pre-rational affects. Beings try to articulate affects in specific emotions (fear, hope, joy, anger, love, hate, guilt, shame, enthusiasm, etc.). Affective and emotional aspects of individual and collective selves, of their bonds and associations, of their interactions with the environments, are not only a fact – they can also contribute to imaginative, critical, and transformative practice. Critical Naturalism, contrary to most positions in the contemporary landscape of critical theory and social philosophy, tries to understand the imaginative, critical, and transformative dynamics of affects and emotions.

Affective experiences are vague, incomprehensible, uncontrollable, inchoate, confusing, at least in many phases of experience. As such, they can signal a non-alignment between our present and future selves, between given orders (patterns of action, meanings, values, norms) and what these orders could be and become, how habits are disrupted and must be readjusted. But they can also be destructive, harboring anti-social forces. Emotions, for their part, are conscious signs of breaks and disruptions

– they express awareness of how things should not be, or how they could be different.

We are sensual beings in the sense of the young Marx and of Dewey: our task is to explore the critical and transformative powers of the affects and emotions that all our senses generate in non-alienated and non-reified transactions with other human and nonhuman beings, with organic and nonorganic environments.

Natural vulnerability

Affects and emotions reveal the specific and contextual ways in which human (and nonhuman) beings are vulnerable, the extent to which vulnerability is concretely and contextually shared. They indicate possible venues for acknowledging, taking up and organizing socio-natural bonds so that vulnerability can become a possibility for alternative, radical social and political experiments. Affects and emotions reveal how different beings are vulnerable in different ways – also on the basis of socio-natural determinations like sexuality, gender, race, disability, etc. – and indicate ways in which such differences can come to produce, increase, and share knowledge and mutual care, instead of perpetrating and strengthening mechanisms of domination, oppression, and exploitation. The recognition of vulnerability is not giving in to politics of precariousness, tendencies to produce 'victims' and reify the discriminated, misrecognized, and invisible: on the contrary, the recognition of vulnerability supports the critique of these policies and tendencies.

Cherishing the opaque, uncommendable, impulsive, and thus vulnerable sides of our lives calls into question current neoliberal imperatives of self-optimization, "enforced happiness", positive thinking in the face of catastrophes, practices of mindfulness as individual(ized) strategies against systemic and structural problems. We cannot effectively manipulate and control ourselves (our internal nature) in order to obtain the desired goals, we are not merely the object of constant creation and invention. But affects and emotions are not just limits; they also entail positive contents from which we can learn. In this sense, Critical Naturalism can be the metaphysical spring- (or surf)board for new ethical projects (some ideas: ethics of passivity, ethics of ambiguity, ethics of ignorance).

Third natures

The contrasting use of the notions of nature and society, first and second nature, does not refer to metaphysically given, separate, domains of objects, but rather articulates an expressive vocabulary for developing social analysis. Nature and society, first and second nature, are dialectically intertwined place-holder concepts, to be filled pragmatically in relation to different contexts, concepts which disclose certain configurations of experience and action. In this sense their distinction is a dispositive, which needs to be deployed anew in relation to the contexts we need to map, operate within, and critically transform. Hence, the distinction between first and second nature is contextual and positional and has not only descriptive, but also critical and dialectical power. It deploys the perspective from which, from time to time, we can critically re-describe processes of associated life. But the breaking down of given social categories, by the application and determinate negation of the notions of first and second nature, is also future oriented, and has a utopian moment, aimed at a trans-categorial, affirmative re-description of our

forms of life and of their emerging, dynamic, yet undecided orders of possibilities. One could say that third nature is what Critical Naturalism, with the place-holder notions of first and second nature, aims at. The re-configurative task of Critical Naturalism is confronted today, in the face of the ecological catastrophe and the entropic transformations of contemporary landscapes, with the problem of anticipating the future while grasping a third way between primordial nature and reified second nature, wild nature and humans' enslaved nature: the problem of re-imagining natures, through cultural and technological means, and conversely, of reinventing third natures as plural, contingent, hybrid orders. In his essay on *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin raised the question of how we can free ourselves from the historical cage of a given second nature as it has been shaped through a relation – labelled as "first technology" – to naturalness as to an external material to be dominated. Whereas second nature, as it is historically given, is a distorted mirror of human beings' domination over first nature, the utopian moment of Critical Naturalism envisages a third possibility, whose anticipated figure could let us catch a glimpse of a different relation, which goes beyond both the mere naturalization of human beings, and the humanization of nature. Benjamin named "second technology" a different project of our relation to naturalness, whose objective correlative, in the horizon of the future, could be aesthetically anticipated through the figure of third natures. Their traces can be detected in those interstitial, undecided territories Gilles Clement names "third landscapes", which are left over, unattended by human beings and their historical constructions, and appear as undetermined fragments, ciphers of the planetary garden.

Notes

1   As happens in Bruno Latour, in Jason Moore's (2015) monist world ecology, and in Timothy Morton's (2009) ecology without nature.

2   Such as by Judith Butler, Axel Honneth, or Slavoj Zizek.

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Biographies

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The Uncaring Feedback Loop of the Care-Industrial Complex, and Why Things Go On Like This
Patricia de Vries

Review of

Emma Dowling. 2021. *The Care Crisis: What Caused It and How Can We End It.* London/New York: Verso Books.

Keywords

DOI

Licence

The Uncaring Feedback Loop of the Care-Industrial Complex, and Why Things Go On Like This
Patricia de Vries

In *The Care Crisis: What Caused It and How Can We End It* (2021), Emma Dowling – Assistant Professor of Sociology and Social Change at the University of Vienna – has written a compassionate and lucid sociological account of the impact of decades of government entrenchment, austerity, financialisation, and marketisation on social and health care infrastructures.

The Care Crisis focuses on the ongoing care crisis in Britain. Dowling argues that the systematic underfunding of health and social care is long-standing and entrenched. The retrenchment of the state's material responsibility for social welfare resulted from a state-driven social, political, and economic restructuring process that has generated market relations in the care sector through social engineering. Dowling traces this "neoliberal reconfiguration of care" to the 1970s, when the British government opened the door to the outsourcing of public services to corporations (Dowling 2021, 12). This allowed the private sector to profit from social and health care services resulting in the financialisation and commodification of social and health care (10). Moreover, Dowling invokes Margaret Thatcher's infamous assertion, that "there is no such thing as society," (9) to argue that the "neoliberal reconfiguration" also framed "care as a private or personal responsibility" — rather than a social and collectively funded responsibility (9).

The current care crisis is described by Dowling as a growing "gap" between care needs and the recourses made available to meet them (6). More and more people are unable to get the help they need, and those who provide care to others are "unable to do so satisfactorily and under dignified conditions" (6). She delineates how under-resourced, understaffed, and undervalued care infrastructures have brought about a shortage of care facilities, long waiting lists, fragmented community services, and major care deficits.

The Care Crisis delineates the underlying rationale and impact of this growing care gap. Each chapter starts with a short vignette, based on her fieldwork, that gives a glimpse into the oppressive conditions of care work provisions and the rationing of care needs. Addressing paid care work, unpaid care work, and state-provision issues that all play an interrelated part in the care gap, Dowling describes the consequences of a care-industrial complex that operates on a reductive definition of care and imposes a market-centred industry model to increase productivity and cost and time-efficiency — in short: profitability — on fundamentally social, affective, relational, and time-consuming labour. Profit is the end goal, whereas care is costly and often does not yield profit.

Adopting a Marxist feminist approach, and using demographics, statistics, and interviews with people on both the frontlines and, to a lesser extent, the receiving end of care in Britain, *The Care Crisis* argues that the underfunding of care is a by-product of the undervaluing of social reproduction. Reproductive labour is all the usually unpaid labour associated with women and the domestic sphere which makes productive labour possible — think of giving birth and raising children, but also keeping a household running or providing informal care to friends, neighbours, and relatives. For Dowling, care work is an essential aspect of the labour of reproducing society (37). Care is an

inherently "relational and affective" (45) form of work, comprising "all the supporting activities that take place to make, remake, maintain, contain and repair the world we live in and the physical, emotional, and intellectual capacities required to do so" (21). This means that care is "central to the reproduction of society and thus one of its bedrocks, part of a fundamental infrastructure that holds society together. Without care, life could not be sustained" (21). Even though the spheres of production and reproduction "are co-constitutive," they are not considered equal (36). Reproductive work is still widely considered non-work or unskilled work "warranting that it either not be paid at all or paid very little" (36).

Referring to Marxist feminists like Silvia Federici, Dowling further explains that care is fundamental to the historical organisation and development of the capitalist system. Marxist feminists showed that creating surplus value in capitalist economies happens on the backs of unpaid reproductive labour, which is predominantly carried out by women in society.

As the 1970s feminist movement Wages for Housework argued, the home and the community are sites of unpaid reproductive labour; hence, the home and the community are sites of wealth production and labour exploitation (33), and a key source of capital accumulation (200). There is nothing natural about these conditions. Rather they "are politically and economically — and hence historically — conditioned, with all of the gendered, radicalised and classed implications of power relations" (38). Which is to say, what constitutes acceptable care standards is a "profoundly, social, cultural and political matter" (26).

The framework and analysis Dowling presents help to explain and critique the conditions in which care work continues to be "one of the most undervalued and invisibilised activities of all, while those who perform them are some of the most neglected and unsupported people in our societies" (26). This should not surprise anyone living in a capitalist, racialised, and patriarchal culture, given that women do most care work and many of those women are migrants — this goes hand in hand with the devaluation of care work. But it also helps us to understand that the care crisis she observes is a crisis "for those in most need of care" (53).

As we all know, "in an unequal world, no crisis affects everyone equally. To speak of a crisis is thus to ask the question, a crisis for whom?" (6). Dowling refers to demographics and statistics to point to the larger systemic issues of the devaluation of care work expressed in the uneven effect it has had on "lone women pensioners," single mothers, "Black and Minority Ethnic women," refugees, children with disabilities, adults with disabilities or complex mental health issues, jobseekers, the homeless, and those dependent on benefit payments (52).

To speak of a crisis is also to ask: who is picking up the tab for the neoliberal restructuring of the care sector? Unsurprisingly, the disproportionate burden of care work is placed upon women and migrant workers, both paid and unpaid. "Everywhere in the world, without exception, women do significantly more unpaid care work than men" (24). "Women carry out 60 per cent more unpaid domestic and care work than men" (77). Women make up the majority of paid care workers, too: care work "makes up 19.3 per cent of global female employment, and 6.6. per cent of global male employment" (25).

Part of the neoliberal doctrine of care is what Dowling calls "care fixes," which "resolve nothing definitively but merely displace the crisis elsewhere" (15). In different chapters, she discusses these "fixes," such as assistive technologies, gig work, outsourcing and offloading of care, the mobilisation of and dependency on unpaid volunteer networks of community care, informal networks, and free labour of love from friends and family, Social Impact Bonds (SIB), self-quantification, and the industry around self-care.

To pick just one from this list, more and more often, white and middle-class people offload care work onto others – think of nannies, babysitters, domestic workers, and house cleaners. They are "often female, lower-class and quite probably with a migration background" (74). Their conditions leave much to be desired: often below minimum wage, informal, without social security, unemployment and sickness benefits, or pension savings. In this process of offloading care work, "chain reactions" emerge in which women (and some men) from low-wage countries take on the care work of middle-class families at the expense of *their* care work, further entrenching social inequalities (74). The resulting chain reactions change nothing in the unequal distribution of reproductive labour, but merely replace one group of women and some men from the Global North with another group of women and some men from the Global South.

The outsourcing and offloading of care are part of the so-called "management" of the crisis in adult social care (105), which relies on the work of migrant women, often employed by outsourcing companies that compensate below minimum wage. In the chapter 'A Perfect Storm,' Dowling describes the perverse conditions of adult social care provision, a "toxic mix" of "unequal distribution of societal responsibility; the lack of value attributed to the work of caring; austerity and underfunding; and the failures of privatisation and the consequences of marketisation and financialisation" (105). This is epitomised by care providers' treatment of women and migrant care workers, the elderly and vulnerable, and by the consequences of the uncritical use of monitoring and assistance technology for the sake of profitability. The very populations that "bear the destructive consequences of financialised capitalism" are being "recast as a cost to society and a risk, to be managed using calculative instruments aimed at financial returns" (165).

Why does care continue to be undervalued in this way? Dowling argues that legitimacy and justification are partly achieved "through a denial of the structural reasons people need welfare in the first place" (70), and partly a result of what she calls a "displacement effect" (162). Dowling borrows this concept from Stuart Hall, who coined it in the 1970s in the context of the criminalisation of young black men. The displacement effect recasts symptoms of the structural crisis as causes, leaving the systemic problems of the crisis unaddressed (162).

According to Dowling, the causes of the care crisis are "growing poverty and inequality" (92), underfunding and the "privatising of gains and socialising of risks" (163). Yet social care recipients suffer from the social stigma that blames and shames them for their care needs, while political, economic, and social inequalities disappear from view. Depleted public funding, privatisation, and the logic of business models ensnare social and health care infrastructures at their roots (139). Care becomes commodified, and access to it is more and more dependent on what people can afford, leaving the most vulnerable to their own (limited) devices, and deepening care deficits and inequalities.

This creates an *uncaring feedback loop.*

How can we break out of this self-reinforcing loop? Chief among the possible remedies for the care crisis Dowling explores in the final chapters of her book is the need for "transforming the social, economic and political structures that create social disadvantage" (156). This necessary "transformation of the structural conditions for care" will only happen if care has "a different status" and is organised "as a social and material practice — at the level of institutions and the everyday" (193). This requires "allocating more time, money and social capacities" and "elevating its undervalued political and ethical status" (195). More concretely, she proposes to "definancialise care," to democratise it, and liberate it from free trade agreements (196). Care work, she argues, should be "better paid, with better working conditions, better training, more resources and improved technological support that enables better caring" (197). It also needs to "be met with public investment in infrastructures such as childcare, education, healthcare, eldercare, and community service" (199) and by the redistribution of care delivery through creating collectively owned forms of care provision. The care crisis, Dowling contends, demands a "struggle for a better future" (8). This struggle requires reclaiming "the means to care from the prerogatives of profitability" (206).

Dowling's call is urgent in an ongoing global pandemic and a mammoth task for capitalist systems that care about profit above anything else. I don't think many people on the left would disagree with Dowling's astute analysis. But can her suggestions for repair and reform succeed in getting a foot in the door?

Under capitalism, valuation is expressed in money and profit, but does this mean that money is part of the solution for reversing the underlying political decisions, measures, and infrastructures that have led to this worrying care crisis? Dowling's proposals raise the question: *can* one *reform* an infrastructure that was parasitic from the get-go and never worked to begin with? Phrased differently: what are the implications if indeed care and capitalism are fundamentally at odds with each other? How can we extricate care from the credo that time is money?

More pragmatically: How could we incentivise – or reverse engineer – states, corporate investors, and care providers to take the material and social responsibility to help reduce poverty and social and health inequality, without exploiting (migrant) women? The World Health Organisation estimates a projected shortfall of 18 million health workers by 2030, mostly in low- and lower-middle-income countries, but every country will be affected. In The Netherlands, new projections predict a shortage of 135,000 care workers by 2030, particularly in hospitals and nursing homes. It is easy to predict who will be affected the most. What changes are needed to make women and migrant workers less vulnerable to parasites — what factors affect the host–parasite relationship? How do we elevate its status and the conditions of care work? To throw the cat among the pigeons: what about a men's quota regulation in paid care work: enforced, inalienable quotas to mitigate gender, class, and ethnic disparities and accelerate the achievement of balanced participation in paid care work? We need to start somewhere.

Biography

Patricia de Vries works as research professor at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy. She has published in *Big Data & Society, Rhizomes, nY, De Reactor, Press & Fold, Amsterdam Book Review*, and has written on art and philosophy for the art gallery MU in Eindhoven, Centraal Museum in Utrecht, Maxxi Museum in Rome, and the digital art center Chronus in Shanghai.

Art's Work in Mnemonic Care
Sue Shon

Review of

Mihai, Mihaela. 2022. *Political Memory and the Aesthetics of Care: The Art of Complicity and Resistance.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Keywords

DOI

Licence

Art's Work in Mnemonic Care
Sue Shon

The *Krisis* two-part special issue on care arrives in a phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in which the Global North forges a "return to normal," that is, to pre-pandemic social and political orders which were already in crisis, and also to revamped processes of neoliberal globalization playing out in nationalist spaces. Borders closed (except to capital); governments prioritized national economy over workers in healthcare, factories, warehouses, and other frontlines; global north nations hoarded vaccines and healthcare resources; anti-Indigenous, anti-Black, anti-Asian, anti-migrant, xenophobic and ableist violence reinvented itself within, and traveled across, borders; militarized, right-wing, and imperial nationalisms resurged around the world, with the February 24, 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine becoming the latest most visible manifestation.

As the pandemic laid bare devastating structural violence, perhaps the imperative to "return to normal" could be understood as the writing of a globalized memory that obscures the more than six million dead to COVID-19 worldwide. *Political Memory and the Aesthetics of Care* by Mihaela Mihai, published in January 2022, invites a reading against the backdrop of these reproductions and restructurings. While the book does not explicitly discuss our current context, it gestures to ways of understanding the struggle over how we remember the forms of violence of the past two years and how we tell stories about them.

Political Memory and the Aesthetics of Care reckons with the un/accountability of systemic violence in the formation of official public memory. Perhaps the most powerful forms of remembering include the nation narrative, constituted by simplistic understandings of action that authorize the nation form as an outcome of revolution and decolonization or as a transition to justice. As Mihai emphasizes, national refoundation and institutional memory-making projects—unable to narrate the constitutive violence of the nation form—cast history in terms of victim/perpetrator figures and erase the widespread complicity with violence that exceeds the logics of agency and a victim-perpetrator dyad. This erasure not only renders invisible the work and the economies of systemic political violence, but also places state violence and complicity with it outside of official memory, absolving accountability for the very violence that made the nation's formation and a national temporality possible.

This erasure is complementary to an exceptionalized and canonized political vision expressed in terms of heroic resister figures. In effect, the complexity of political violence is narrated as simple antagonisms among victims, perpetrators, and resisters, where the resisters represent a unified, purified political vision. The official and public privileging of "resistance" singularizes political possibility and erases interlocuters, activities, and visions that demonstrate political plurality, collectivity, and unassimilability. Fixed in place by the official account, the "absolute hero colonizes political memory," closing the community's "hermeneutical space" which ultimately reproduces "the very practices and relationships—economic, political, and cultural—that led to violence in the first place" (7). Mihai argues that the official disavowal of complicity and official exclusion of alternative or competing memories constitute a "double erasure" that the book seeks to expose.

The first chapter, "Tracing the Double Erasure," defines the concept and traces the moves of the double erasure. This chapter exposes the temporality of systemic violence that plays out in the remembering and telling of history. In underscoring the continuities and genealogies of violence, Mihai exposes how the official public imagining of a clean break from the preceding order marks the start of a distinct national timespace and a new history. This temporal, historical, and juridical reimagining of violence as outside of the "new" order consequently occludes the structural and relational nature of violence. It also avails individualistic, moralistic, and punitive frameworks for responding to systemic violence. These limited frameworks affirm the historical casting of characters of victim, perpetrator, and hero.

The rest of the chapter puts complicity and resistance into context and argues complicity and resistance must be understood as relation. With careful attention to Pierre Bourdieu's accounts of socialization, Mihai's "alternative social-ontological sketch" maps the relational powers of habitus (generated in social/ized positionality, including gender, race, sexuality), individual inter/actions sourced by practical sense emergent in and by unconscious, internalized social ordering (including statist structures of social ordering), and doxa or societal common sense which normativize what counts as truth, "including official truths about its history and its agents" (33). Mihai stresses that individuals' positions in the making of history are constrained to official temporal frameworks, as:

> position is not fixed but changes over time, reflecting changes in both the context and the agents themselves. Individuals' sense of time, their capacity to build on the past to imagine a future and to invest emotionally in that future are interrelated aspects of their socially embedded experience, which have repercussions on how they navigate the muddy waters of systemic wrongdoing, in more complicit or more resistant ways. This highlights the need to think about the temporality of action—that is, the ways in which the past and the future are brought together in the habitus (34).

Mihai therefore breaks down a completely different understanding of action: action must be understood beyond terms of individual agency. Action is situated in ideological, racialized, gendered, classed habitus and in doxastic power of nationalist memory production, circulation, and reproduction in ways that validate existing orders of race, gender, and class. Therefore, a focus on systemic political involvement and complicity with violence would reveal "fissures in the national doxa and recuperate the heretic, counterhegemonic common sense that have historically challenged it" (38).

Chapter two, "The Aesthetics of Care," theorizes artwork as a response to, and a strategy of, a political memory that works against doxastic power and hegemonic sense-making. Mihai's methods for exposing the fissures in the national doxa and recuperating unassimilable sense and sensing reckons with what I interpret as the *archives* of official memory. Lisa Lowe has argued that the organization of institutional archives—archives that mediate what Mihai poses as official memory—works to resolve the contradictions and uncertainties of state capacity. For Lowe and others, the archive is conceptualized as the terrain and the framework that politicizes and spatializes

erasure, silence, absence. *Political Memory and the Aesthetics of Care* constructs and offers a counter-archive of works by artists, activists, historians, and social scientists that hesitate, interrupt, and thus politicize anew temporality, sense, and memory. Mihai's archival selections include artworks that speak to the double erasure, de–heroify nationalist versions of history, and create hermeneutical space in response to violence, for the sake of community.

In this effort, Mihai builds on Alia Al-Saji's concept of affective hesitation to theorize the capacity for revising memory in hegemonic common sense. Mihai foregrounds how this imaginative capacity can be accessed by the work of art; "artworks can play a transformative role to the extent that they trigger affective but also cognitive, emotional, and moral hesitations" (52). Hesitation can interrupt and politicize the individual's practical sense and habits of perceiving, remembering, and imagining as the subject faces "epistemic friction," a process Mihai elaborates from the work of José Medina. Epistemic friction can develop in the hesitation opened up by the artwork, and friction enables the imagination to "prosthetically include previously disconsonant instances—of victimhood, complicity, or resistance, within our repertoire of hermeneutical resources, which we actualize practically in time" (53). Accordingly, the *work* of art for Mihai is in the operations of prosthesis and also in "seductive sabotage" or the pleasure that is part of the art experience—which might sabotage habits and habitus.

Mihai argues that her archive of artworks—films and novels produced in the wake, and in reflection, of systemic violence—complicate the complicity/resistance dyad, reframe heroic action beyond the terms that serve national doxa, carve out temporalities, experiences, vulnerabilities, and rationales that remain unaccounted for in nation narratives, and offer alternative visions of the past. This archive might be understood as a counter-archive to nationalized public memory. Mihai's knowledge production and reflection might be understood as practice in community. In constructing this archive, Mihai works as "curator" in the original sense of the word: care-taker.

The rest of the book takes care, curates, and, in effect, archives films and novels that "pluralize a community's space of meaning" (57). Mihai offers a care ethics that always–already integrates interdependency and relationality, which opposes liberal philosophical models that privilege the subject in accounts of sociality. Care ethics necessitate the framing of violence through relationality. In relationality, the memorialization of resistance (and complicity) no longer makes sense. Caring therefore is relational practice and practice in relationship: "we begin to care in the act of caring" (59). As practice, caring works against instituted and systemic suffering, oppression, exclusion, and assimilation. Thus care ethics oppose "socialized misremembering," which accepts official memory, and the nation narratives that regulate common sense, and instead offers hermeneutical space in which seeing, thinking, and feeling otherwise become possible.

The final three chapters of the book tackle three global sites reckoning with the temporality of official memory's double erasures: France, Romania, and South Africa. Mihai takes care to expose the double erasures, summarizes the memorialized official story, and presents an archive that counters the story to restore what has been erased across the three sites. She looks to fiction and film by Louis Malle, Jacques Laurent, Patrick Modiano, Brigitte Friang, Marguerite Duras, and Alain Resnais in post–war

France; Norman Manea, Dan Pița, Herta Müller, Călin Peter Netzer, and Corneliu Porumboiu in Romania following nearly a quarter century of Nicolae Ceaușescu's dictatorship; and Zoë Wicomb, Achmat Dangor, Tatamkhulu Afrika, John Kani, Ivan Vladislavić, and Ralph Ziman in post-apartheid settler colonial South Africa. As Mihai provides views over nationalist memory in France, Romania and South Africa, the analyses in each and across these sites and chapters also provide tools for deconstructing doxa and for curating and creating archives of heretic political visions at other sites of systemic political violence around the globe.

Mihai's theory of the double erasure and its functionality can be used to analyze a variety of contexts around the globe. This is her most impactful contribution to the fields of political theory, philosophy, history, and historiography. Therefore I am curious how the book situates the temporality of the double erasure in relation to classic and recent theories of nation time and historical narrativity. Mihai qualifies her care and contributions within the scope of political theorization of systemic violence; her aesthetic investigations demonstrate the capacities of artistic care as located in refusenik artistic production (i.e. the artwork–object). Yet there are some missed opportunities to engage with intellectual comrades in Asian American Studies, Black Studies, queer and trans theory, and abolitionist feminist theory who reimagine the care of reading, hearing, and seeing erasures, silences, and absences in the archives by politicizing the "where" and the "how" meaningfulness gets located in the work of art.

Most importantly, Mihai's book shows us how to understand action differently. In the present moment, as we struggle against the writing of political memory within enclosed perceptual experiences and hermeneutics, we might draw from Mihai's theorization of mnemonic care. This would require careful attention to coalition–based politics of care that emerged in the internationalist George Floyd uprisings of 2020, especially agents, actions, solidarities, and successes that escape existing languages, including that of national frames; ephemeral, intangible ground–level mutual aid efforts that confront state abandonment of Black, Indigenous, migrant, woman, queer, trans, and poor and working–class populations; and abolitionist critiques including art and aesthetic practices against the normalization of systemic state–sponsored violence in carceral society.

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Biography

Dr. Sue Shon is Assistant Professor of Critical and Cultural Studies at Emily Carr University of Art and Design. She researches and teaches critical race and ethnic studies and comparative diasporic literatures and visual cultures. She is working on a book project, *Racial Sense and the Making of Aesthetic Modernity*, which tells the story of how race acquired a visual feel due to constraints in the language of modern human perception.

Krisis **JOURNAL for contemporary philosophy**

A Thousand Agambens to Replace the One We Have
Tim Christiaens

Review of

Keywords

DOI

Licence

A Thousand Agambens to Replace the One We Have
Tim Christiaens

Whoever has read a Giorgio Agamben chapter or essay has probably wondered about one of his peculiar stylistic habits: he often writes disconnected paragraphs on widely diverging topics. On a single page, he mixes a philological remark about Aristotle, criticisms of Hobbes, and Benjaminian musings about divine violence. Nonetheless, readers are always struck by the intuition that these disparate paragraphs evoke a unified argument. They never doubt that these statements have a single clear message, however disconnected their topics. Agamben freely associates across the history of Western thought, yet every statement forms a microcosm bearing the signature of the entire chapter. Readers themselves are consequently tasked with reconstructing the underlying idea that animates these diverse remarks. They take on the role of psychoanalysts decoding the sentences as symptoms of an implicit apparatus pulling the strings from behind a curtain of words. This temptation to decipher an *arché*-text behind Agamben's explicit discourse has convinced many interpreters to look for a single philosophical problematic not only in Agamben's essays or chapters, but also in his overall philosophical oeuvre. Leland De La Durantaye, for instance, argues that Agamben's philosophical trajectory is one singular sustained meditation on potentiality (De La Durantaye 2009). He argues that Agamben journeys through metaphysics, political philosophy, and linguistics to ultimately come to terms with what it means for a human subject to have the potential to do something and to have that potential taken away from them when they are reduced to the status of bare life. Sergei Prozorov, on the other hand, reads Agamben's itinerary as a persistent attempt to escape sovereign politics (Prozorov 2014). In this reading, even books on arcane topics in animal biology or theology serve to reflect upon the political opportunities to escape the power of the State. Agamben himself has encouraged such readings by often presenting his oeuvre as if it were motivated by a single purpose. In the epilogue of *The Use of Bodies,* for instance, he writes that he wanted to "call into question the place and the very originary structure of politics, in order to bring to light the *arcanum imperii*"(Agamben 2015, 263). After all, one does not write a multiple-book project spanning 20 years and 9 books if one does not believe to be engaged in a single philosophical inquiry.

Such readings have become troublesome during the last few years due to the Corona Pandemic. Agamben has become notorious for his criticisms of governmental policies like lockdowns, vaccination requirements, and social distancing.[1] There are clear similarities between Agamben's opposition to these policies and his critique of modern biopolitics in books like *Homo Sacer,* so one cannot simply dismiss Agamben's controversial political interventions as somehow unrelated to his overall philosophy. There is no way of distinguishing clearly between Agamben the philosopher and Agamben the person in this debate. It is thus tempting to re-read Agamben's entire oeuvre as a prefiguration of his political missteps today. If Agamben's critique of modern biopolitics leads to wrongheaded opinions today was Agamben's approach then not absurd all along? The pandemic subsequently becomes the new *arché*-text for the interpretation of Agamben's philosophical development (cf. Bratton 2021). The downside of

this approach is that other, more interesting potential readings of Agamben's oeuvre are marginalized in favour of one master narrative.

Adam Kotsko's *Agamben's Philosophical Trajectory,* however, takes aim at this monolithic interpretive strategy. He even chooses not to mention the Coronavirus Pandemic to avoid such kind of distractions. The aforementioned reading strategy ignores the multifarious shifts and turns in Agamben's philosophical career and even in the "Homo Sacer"-project itself. Agamben frequently changed his mind about the ordering of the books in the overall project, often rephrased earlier arguments to fit newer concerns, and he even added chapters to *Stasis* and *The Use of Bodies* at the very end, when the project was published separately in an omnibus edition. These are not signs of a man who, with the publication of *Homo Sacer* in 1995, knew exactly how the project would end in 2014. Nor is it very likely that Agamben would have already developed his entire philosophy from the start of his career, as some claim. Many concepts vanish or are rearticulated over the course of a career that spans more than 50 years. Whoever reads about Aristotle's distinction between potentiality and act in *The Man without Content,* Agamben's first book, will not recognize the "official" Agambenian interpretation from almost 30 years later. Concepts central to his thought at some point, like "Voice", "whatever being", or "testimony", simply disappear in later books.

Kotsko chooses a different approach to writing an overview of Agamben's oeuvre. His concern does not rest on the discernment of a single philosophical apparatus animating all of Agamben's individual writings. Other interpreters tend to reduce Agamben's books to steps in a uniform argument about a single problematic, like potentiality, anti-sovereign politics, or pandemic biopolitics. But, if this were truly possible, then why would Agamben ever have written more than one book? If all his texts amount to the same argument anyway, it seems that Agamben could have spared himself the trouble of publishing almost 40 books. Kotsko, on the contrary, has read all books in chronological order and simply reports his findings without striving toward a unified message. Aided by personal conversations with Agamben, he carefully tracks the multiple thought processes, the promising hypotheses, and creative conclusions, but also the mistakes, hesitations, and inconsistencies across Agamben's texts to highlight the discontinuities. Kotsko's meticulous reading dismantles all hope of finding a single *arché*-text in Agamben. He rather divides Agamben's philosophical trajectory roughly into four periods, though he emphasizes that there is never any hard break akin to a Heideggerian *Kehre.* Old thoughts or assumptions never truly disappear, but become rearticulated into new contexts. Likewise, concepts that seem to be new are often already signaled in earlier texts without being fully elaborated upon.

In the first phase, between the 1960s and '80s, Agamben is an almost aggressively apolitical thinker interested in art and linguistics. If one would stop reading before the '90s, there would be no way of guessing that Agamben would become one of the most famous political theorists today. He was entirely enveloped in philosophy of art and the establishment of a so-called "general science of the human" built on a critique of structuralist linguistics. According to Agamben, the structuralist definition of language as a system of signs ignored that language actualizes itself only through human beings actually speaking that language. This created, for Agamben, a productive rift in language

itself between the fixities of its signifying system and its incarnation in human speech. Agamben believed, in that stage of his career, that (political) philosophy had ignored this rift and that poetry was a superior medium for reflecting on humanity's linguistic condition. Only in the 1990s did Agamben enter a second stage of his philosophical itinerary with a turn to the political. Though he previously had held the politics of his time in dire contempt, his friendships with Guy Debord and Jean-Luc Nancy, together with his worries about the emergence of refugee camps in Italy after the Yugoslav Civil War, convinced him to start studying politics. He fears that the state of exception is the ultimate truth of modern biopolitical government: once the State apparatus and the survival of the population is put under pressure, governments tend to suspend democratic participation and the Rule of Law. Ultimately, the State itself and its violent response to social disruption paradoxically becomes the main threat to people's survival. Here, Agamben embarks on the "Homo Sacer"-project that would define the rest of his career. This is also the period where Agamben reaches the peak of his fame with books like *Homo Sacer, State of Exception,* and *The Time that Remains.*

In a third phase, at the end of the 2000s, Agamben turns increasingly to the history of Christian theology. He becomes convinced that an adequate critique of Western modernity must reckon with the latter's roots in medieval Christianity. In books like *The Kingdom and the Glory, Opus Dei,* and *The Highest Poverty,* Agamben stresses the ways Christianity has given rise to modern capitalist government. This strategy allows Agamben not only to critique of (neo)liberal economics as secularized theology, but also to incorporate Foucault's newly published governmentality lectures and to finally articulate the link between his own critique of modernity and that of Debord, which was explicitly promised in the introduction to *Homo Sacer.* He argues that Debord's pessimistic analysis of the modern public sphere as a big capitalist spectacle was pre-figured in the way the medieval Church supported its popular legitimacy through strict rituals and grandiose iconography. Just like the Church kept up the illusion of an authoritative God through rituals that cunningly suggested God's glory without ever having to prove it, the State and capitalism sustain their legitimacy through the illusion of public debate and ceremonial displays of power. This is also the period that Agamben starts reflecting more thoroughly on his philosophical method, mainly in *The Signature of All Things. Homo Sacer* had given rise to multiple misunderstandings about the way Agamben formulated his political philosophy, so Agamben felt he needed to clarify the contours of his basic methodological concepts like "paradigm", "signature", and "archaeology". In phase four, which spans from when Agamben started working on *The Use of Bodies* to today, he has increasingly looked back on his philosophical life with more autobiographical writings, like his autoritratto, and books that discuss the fundamentals of his oeuvre or return to his earliest interests, like *What is Philosophy?* or *Adventure.* Now that the "Homo Sacer"-project is finished, Agamben has taken the opportunity to reflect on his philosophical career and to delve into some side-projects that he failed to incorporate in earlier volumes. Though Kotsko does not mention them, Agamben's Corona essays can also be understood as a late side-project where Agamben tries to come to terms with his own legacy. And one can rightly be skeptical about whether this Agamben succeeds at living up to his former self (Esposito 2020).

Kotsko discourages the reader to decipher a single master narrative hidden in all of Agamben's works. The entire oeuvre is rather a multitude of attempts to engage with manifold, different topics. Agamben has tried to balance his own personal creative insights with adequately responding to the challenges of his days, and both have shifted over the years. However, that does not mean all of Agamben's works are simply stand-alone pieces with no internal consistency. Agamben frequently recapitulates and rearticulates old ideas to put them to work in new contexts. He is, above all, interested in the so-called "Entwicklungsfähigkeit" of philosophical concepts. He takes concepts from their original contexts and puts them together to generate developmental capacities that were not present in the original context. By, for instance, confronting Foucault's analysis of biopolitics with Carl Schmitt's theory of sovereignty in *Homo Sacer,* Agamben managed to produce reflections that were only vaguely present in both of these authors' own texts. The aim has always been to experiment with the inherent productivity of concepts, which means Agamben has never been the master of his own discourse, but has rather been following where the concepts' developmental capacities led him.

Kotsko calls for a similar approach to Agamben's own concepts: "I aim […] to prepare the ground for a thousand Agambens to bloom – in their own enigmatic, idiosyncratic, and fascinating ways" (Kotsko 2020, 13). In reading Agamben's oeuvre – or any philosophical text for that matter – the audience actively reconstructs the text's developmental capacities. This constitutes a creative encounter that cannot be simply replicated for everyone in exactly the same way. Each reader must uniquely gauge the potential of the text. Every singular encounter with Agamben's writings can give rise to a new Agamben that is not necessarily compatible to all other readings. This implies, for instance, that Agamben's particular response to the Corona Pandemic is not necessarily the only "Agambenian" response imaginable. Other readings of his work can be provided with other outcomes. To mention just one example, one could use his concept of "bare life" not to criticize lockdowns, but rather to criticize the precarization of essential workers. While many middle-class families have been working from home in relative comfort, working-class individuals have had to expose themselves to the risk of infection to keep themselves financially afloat (cf. Butler & Yance 2020, De Cauwer & Christiaens 2021). To use a Foucaultian metaphor, Kotsko repurposes Agamben's philosophy as a conceptual toolbox with which the philosophers of the future can build new theoretical edifices. Kotsko himself suggests to redirect Agambenian thought to issues of race, gender, or environmentalism, but one can readily imagine even more *Entwicklungsfähigkeiten* for Agamben, like digital ethics, neo-fascist populism, or financialization. As the Corona Pandemic has demonstrated, a single Agamben can be deeply flawed, but a 1000 Agambens might be up to the task of prying open the *arcana imperii* of contemporary politics.

There is, however, one serious risk in Kotsko's strategy that his book leaves untouched. Though I agree with his proposal to repurpose Agamben's oeuvre as a polyvalent toolbox, I doubt whether Kotsko has adequately identified his intellectual opponent. It might be true that, in the past, many Agamben scholars have organized his thought under a single header. The same trend can be found in the earliest introductions to Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, or Michel Foucault. Many

secondary literatures on "new" thinkers go through a phase of scholars presenting the philosophers' thought as a uniform project. Once this overview has been established, however, critics emphasize the uniqueness of particular books or discontinuities in a philosopher's development. Especially when archives open up and collected works are being published, scholars leave the general narrative behind to focus on the particulars. With Agamben as well, the last few years have predominantly seen publications on particular themes in Agamben's overall oeuvre rather than general overviews. Though such attention to detail delivers fascinating new insights, there is also a looming danger of reducing the writings of these thinkers to stand-alone museum pieces that communicate nothing but their mere useless presence. Like a Greek vase in a museum only presented in order to be admired and catalogued but never used, philosophical concepts can suffer from sclerotic museification as well. Instead of putting philosophers like Wittgenstein or Foucault to use as conceptual toolboxes, scholars subsequently argue over whether the word "game" has the same meaning in two different aphorisms of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* or they merely list the 14 different meanings of the word "norm" in Foucault's lectures from January 1974 to February 1975. These concepts are withdrawn from the sphere of general use and put on a pedestal to be admired, described, and categorized. Such detailed philological scrutiny is essential to proper philosophical research, but if the underlying concepts lose their connection to the world they describe, the whole endeavour becomes pointless. Agamben himself is no stranger to the minutiae of philology, but he has also been the victim of a professorial class that endlessly complains about his creative readings not being "true" to authors' original intentions. Agamben's interpretations of impotentiality in Aristotle, boredom in Heidegger, or bare life in Benjamin might not have been entirely up to date with contemporary philological research, but they have withheld these philosophers from becoming useless museum pieces in an entirely self-referential hall of the Western Canon. *Philosophical Investigations, Discipline and Punish,* or *Homo Sacer* have been written to reflect on the human condition, not to be archived in a sterile history of the philosophy curriculum. By defending the chronological reading of Agamben with a focus on the discontinuities, Kotsko might encourage the blossoming of a 1000 Agambens reflecting on issues of race, gender, or the environment, but he might likewise be playing in the hands of the museum curators who want to keep the 1000 Agambens safe behind protective glass. The emphasis on discontinuity should thus be coupled on an equally vocal emphasis on use over curation. Though Kotsko himself explicitly makes this connection, it is up to future Agamben scholarship to keep this project alive.

Notes

1   See Agamben (2021). Some of the initial responses are collected in Castrillón & Marchevsky (2021).

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Biography

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Krisis

Critiquing Immunity, Critiquing Security
Paul Gorby

Review of

Keywords

DOI

Licence

Krisis
JOURNAL
for contemporary
philosophy

Critiquing Immunity, Critiquing Security
Paul Gorby

Mark Neocleous' *The Politics of Immunity: Security and the Policing of Bodies* is a book about the body and the body politic, about how the discourses, the metaphors, and the fictions of one tend to influence the other, and how our political obsession with immunity gives rise to autoimmune disorders at the societal level. If, as immunologist Frank Macfarlane Burnet claimed, immunology is more a question of philosophy than biology, then Neocleous demonstrates that it is very much a question of *political* philosophy.

To call this work interdisciplinary is a noticeable understatement, since it covers, alongside political and philosophical debates, literature in biology, immunology, psychoanalysis, thermodynamics, and international law. The broad spectrum of research that Neocleous draws upon for his arguments should put to bed any concerns that this book is a 'cash-in' on the COVID-19 pandemic. Far from being simply another attempt to rapidly produce something which can appeal to a broad audience interested in the politics of the pandemic, this book is clearly the outcome of a long-term research agenda.

While the COVID-19 pandemic is mentioned only occasionally in *The Politics of Immunity*, its critique of the dual notions of immunity and security, which Neocleous identifies as being at the heart of modern politics, is deeply relevant for how we ought to think about pandemic and post-pandemic politics. As this book demonstrates time and again, the scientific search for immunity has significant political consequences, and the politics of security influences the science of immunity. "Descriptions of viruses now read like they have been penned by security intellectuals while descriptions of terrorism read like they have been penned by virologists." (17). It is no coincidence, Neocleous writes, that the UK organisation for collecting and analysing COVID infection data – the Joint Biosecurity Centre – is modelled on the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, sharing senior staff and adapting the same "levels of threat" model used to assess terrorism. Given the contemporary relevance of the politics of immunity and security, this book will appeal to a broad audience as well as academics working on the issues and themes Neocleous delves into.

The first chapter confronts various scientific theories of the cell, which turn out to have deeply political implications. The chapter begins with a discussion of the militarised language of much biological and immunological research, which treats the body and its immunity as a site of never-ending war. While there has been significant pushback against this discourse of cellular immunity as warfare, Neocleous points out that "even those seeking to imagine immunity without recourse to the trope of militarized violence fall back on other tropes of violent powers of elimination" (52). Many biological thinkers critical of the discourse of war turn instead to a discourse of policing, reflective of a "liberal position which is happy to critique war and its tropes but less comfortable with a *critique of security*" (42). The imagery of police–cells engaging in "immunological surveillance" (46) in the search for "illegal aliens" (48) within the body remains prominent within scientific discourse and popular understandings of the body.

This conception of cellular war and cellular policing is important because it naturalises the prevailing ideas of war power and police power, making them seem

inherent to human beings as biological entities. For much early work on immunology, the cell was the elementary part of the body, which meant it was used to explain human biology and in turn the human as such. The common understanding of the cell as an individual and independent entity within the "society" of the body both reflected and helped to cement "bourgeois ideals of self-contained and self-regulating units" (66) within political society. The cell was also a security concept, as we can see from its non–biological meaning: an enclosed room within a prison. "The cell was being consolidated as a political site of enclosure and confinement, training and discipline, at the very moment of its discovery and rise in the realm of physiology" (74).

The second chapter follows on from this by discussing the idea of an immune Self, an idea which once again blurs the line between scientific and political theory. The idea of a clear and detectable distinction between Self and non–Self is a key assumption in immunology, one which Neocleous criticises as "imprecise, nebulous, and […] atheoretical" (87). Despite significant criticisms of the idea from within immunological research, it "retains its place at the heart of the immunological imagination" (92) at least in part because it confirms our political and philosophical prejudices, reinforcing "a fantasy of agency and will" (ibid.). Moving from early modern philosophers up to the Cold War, Neocleous provides a fascinating and engaging genealogy of the interaction between immunological and securitised discourses of the Self.

Chapter two also considers the political and philosophical implications of auto-immune disorders within the immunity-security paradigm. "Because immunity was imagined as security, the idea that the system could actually harm the very thing it was expected to secure was essentially unimaginable" (112). The political assumptions of immunology, as well as the immunological/security assumptions of politics, significantly hindered scientific research into autoimmune disease, while also stunting the philosophical and political interpretations of immunity, as seen in the writings of Esposito and Derrida. Beyond the political and philosophical discussions of autoimmune disorder, Neocleous captures the significant emotional toll of these illnesses, demonstrating the sense of dread that comes when your immune system turns against you. "In a literal sense, *you do not know who you are*" (121).

This discussion is followed by three chapters on the politics of systems from three different perspectives: the emergence of systems theory, notions of order and entropy within bodies (both human bodies and the body politic), and nervous systems and nervous states. Each of these is, in turn, linked to immunity and securitised politics. The idea of an immune "system" feels so natural to us today that to say that it was "invented" (145) around 1967 feels disconcerting. Nevertheless, there are significant political implications behind the idea of a "system", a concept which now "seems to flow naturally and seems able to attach itself to everything" (148).

Systems theory has its roots in research on biological organisms in the 1920s and 1930s, subsequently being picked up by the RAND corporation in the 1940s with the express purpose of developing a science of war. "The extent to which modern state-craft and the political administration of capitalist modernity operates through modes of quantification, information, codification and standardization can be seen operating here, in the origin of systems theory" (152). Neocleous moves through the numerous areas

of study that systems theory came to influence, including urban planning, economics, political science, and psychology, among others. He notes its importance for thinkers such as Friedrich Hayek and, most notably, Niklas Luhmann. Ultimately, he writes, the lesson of systems theory "is that we cannot and should not seek to control things. Control is an attribute of the System" (189).

Chapter four considers the central fiction of systems theory: self–regulation. Neocleous considers Enlightenment liberalism and bourgeois political economy through the lens of "systems" thinking and the idea of self-regulation. These modes of thought, he argues, "encourage us to imagine society as constituted through a system of natural liberty operating as a vast, orderly, and living system in which economic behaviour and vital need go hand in hand" (226). Chaos, from this perspective, entails the dissolution of ordered structure. This leads to a uniquely accessible discussion of the political and philosophical implications of entropy and thermodynamics. "The laws of thermodynamics and the concept of entropy point to the disorder in any system and the fact that all systems […] come to an end" (236). Thus, entropy has been a point of fear for many political thinkers, who have sought the political equivalent of Maxwell's Demon, an entity capable of violating the law of entropy and thus "able to *govern the system*" (248).

The idea of a political and philosophical fear of entropy and chaos leads us naturally into a discussion of nerves, nervousness, and the nervous system as it relates to immunity and its politics. Once again, systems theory serves as the centre of Neocleous' critique, specifically its anti-Freudian attempt to reduce the idea of nerves to a singular meaning. For systems theory, nerves are simply means of processing and communicating information; the idea of nervousness in the common sense is completely absent. Systems theory ignores the emotional, subjective, and psychological connotations of nerves such that it makes no sense to say that a system feels nervous.

Neocleous provides a strong counterargument to systems theory here, addressing the social and political implications of nervousness, nervous breakdowns, and burnout. He provides an invaluable political reading of the memoirs of Daniel Paul Schreber, restoring the work's original intention as a critique of medical incarceration. The chapter wraps up with a discussion of the idea of a state having a nervous breakdown. Moving beyond the journalistic trope – which only ever casts the Western state on the *verge* of breakdown, but never quite there yet – Neocleous argues that in the excessively nervous state the "security system responds […] by searching for enemies, by finding enemies and by fabricating new enemies" (300). Through this process, he argues, the state, whether Fascist or liberal democratic, can turn self–defence into self–destruction, falling victim to a societal autoimmune disorder.

Finally, the sixth chapter considers immunity as a legal fiction propping up sovereign power, with a particular eye towards the notion of non–combatant immunity in warfare. Here Neocleous engages in a fascinating reconstruction of the genealogy of immunity's political meaning, moving from its origins in Roman law as a term of privilege, through its seldom discussed medieval developments as implying defence and protection, and on to the emergence of the idea of non–combatant immunity in the eighteenth century. Taking up literature in international law and norms surrounding war,

Neocleous demonstrates that the ideal of non-combatant immunity is in fact a fiction, developed at a period in which "no one in their right mind could ever believe that states would adhere to it" (327). Indeed, rather than protecting civilians, the conclusion we are drawn to is that the securitised notion of immunity is primarily concerned with protecting the state's right to exercise violence.

Overall, this book is a remarkable piece of scholarship which contributes to a broad spectrum of literature within and beyond contemporary political thought. However, a noticeable absence from its wide-ranging discussions are the subjects of race and colonialism. While these topics do come up on occasion – as when quarantine is described as having been "a means of managing indigenous peoples" (61) or when colonial wars' status as police operations is deconstructed – they are seldom dwelt upon for long. The points that are raised in relation to race and colonialism are fascinating and would improve the book were they more thoroughly developed, so the brevity with which they are discussed is very disappointing.

Despite this limitation, however, *The Politics of Immunity* will still be of interest to scholars concerned with colonial and neo-colonial violence due to the significant conceptual apparatus it employs. Philosophers and political theorists working in a wide range of research areas will no doubt find significant value in this work, as will more empirically oriented scholars working on political violence and security studies. Ultimately, perhaps the greatest value of this work is that it becomes impossible to unreflexively use certain words and terms which have become completely standard in academic vocabulary. Cell, Self, system, nerve, order, security, and, of course, immunity; the politics underlying these words become clear to the reader such that one cannot read or write them without taking into account the assumptions and implications which Neocleous so astutely highlights in this outstanding work.

Biography

Paul Gorby is a PhD candidate in the School of International Relations at the University of St. Andrews. His thesis develops a critical theory of the dual concepts of police power and vagrancy and applies it to key topics in contemporary political thought, including governmentality, human rights, migration, and constituent power. His work draws on Continental political philosophy, Marxist theory, and the Black radical tradition.

Krisis **JOURNAL for contemporary philosophy**

Propaganda, Politics, Philosophy: A Critical Review Essay on Jason Stanley's *How Propaganda Works* (2015) and *How Fascism Works* (2018)
Maarten van Tunen

Review of

Keywords

DOI

Licence

Propaganda, Politics, Philosophy: A Critical Review Essay on Jason Stanley's *How Propaganda Works* (2015) and *How Fascism Works* (2018)
Maarten van Tunen

Ever since Plato and the Sophists argued about the relations between reason and rhetoric, the topic of political propaganda has been at the heart of the Western philosophical tradition. Today, given the recent profusion of "misinformation" and "fake news", the topic is anything but diminished in importance. In his 2015 book *How Propaganda Works,* Jason Stanley pursues a primarily philosophical investigation of the phenomenon of propaganda in which he integrates a wide range of work from the fields of political philosophy, analytical epistemology, philosophy of language, and the social sciences. The book offers a thought-provoking analysis of how the phenomenon of propaganda interacts with ideology, inequality, and democracy. However, while Stanley succeeds in offering a timely analysis of some of the pressing dangers that contemporary liberal democracies face, his book is less original and deeply ambiguous in its conceptual taxonomy of propaganda.

Despite the relevance of the study of propaganda today, it has received little attention in recent philosophical debates. In the first chapter of his book, Stanley explains this shallow academic state of the art by appealing to a distinction that has become popular in recent moral and political philosophical discourse: the distinction between "ideal" and "non-ideal" theory. The reason for the lack of scholarly philosophical interest in propaganda Stanley locates in the presently flourishing "conception of normative political philosophy" of which the purpose is to describe "the normatively ideal components of an ideal liberal democratic state" (2015, 28). As Stanley notes, there is no propaganda in such an ideal state, where speech behaviour is presumed to be cooperative. It is a consequence of the constraint to ideal theory in mainstream moral and political philosophy – undoubtedly under the influence of John Rawls's resurrection of the field in the 1970s in an explicitly ideal theory fashion – that the topic of political propaganda has disappeared from sight.

Stanley aims to offer a welcome antidote to this tendency: his purpose is to think through what it entails to argue for the central social democratic ideals of freedom and equality in our actually ill-ordered and structurally exploitative (hence "non-ideal") societies. As he rightly recognizes, "political philosophy without social theory involves extreme idealization in the construction of its models" (2015, 31). As such, in Stanley's study of propaganda, it is the explicit aim to descend from the realm of ideal theory to the real-world social and political facts of human speech that is so often propagandistic, manipulative, deceitful, oppressive, or violent. In order to do so, he draws on the work of analytical feminism, which he says "has laid the theoretical basis" (2015, xvi) for the book, and critical race theory, to which he says he likewise owes "an enormous debt" (2015, xix). Stanley's aim to pursue a non-ideal theory makes of the book a praiseworthy initiative and – at least in its aspirations – a valuable intervention in contemporary analytical political philosophy, which indeed largely continues to engage in ideal theory.

Despite this hopeful stage-setting, however, Stanley nonetheless seems to revert to the practice of an ideal way of doing political philosophy in his ensuing analysis.

That is, he does think it is possible "to frame the problem of propaganda in terms of the *transition problem*" (2015, 29) – the problem within ideal political liberalism of "how to move from an actually flawed state guided incompletely by liberal democratic ideals to an ideal liberal democratic state" (2015, 29). This problem, however, only looms for ideal theorists and cannot be understood in inferential terms – this is one of the central claims of Charles Mills in his influential 2005 essay in which he criticizes ideal theory (Mills 2005). So, while Stanley cites approvingly from Mills's influential castigation of ideal theory, he fails to do justice to that very paper when it comes to the issue of the interrelationship between the two approaches. After all, Mills argues that the relationship between ideal and non-ideal theory is *not* inferential (and thus not to be understood in terms of the transition problem). Instead, the revisionist enterprise of non-ideal political philosophy – the project that substantively rethinks what it means to argue for equal rights and freedoms in our structurally oppressive and exploitative historical and political contexts – cannot be satisfied within the domain of ideal theory as an extension of it (Mills 2005, 177).

This fallacy brings to the surface a deep tension in Stanley's overall project. On the one hand, it is his explicit aim to drive his energies towards non-ideal circumstances in which practices of propaganda, manipulation, exclusion, and oppression are pervasive. Yet, on the other hand, in his recourse to ultimately Kantian norms – distilled through Rawls and Habermas – of liberalism and communication to account for the question of why and how propaganda threatens our (nominal) liberal democracies, he turns out to be much more conservative. Stanley subscribes to the traditional philosophical distinction between "objective claims of reason [and] biased and self-serving opinion" (2015, xvi), and he adheres to the "truth-conditional, cognitivist picture" of language in his conceptualization of propaganda (2015, 126). He holds that this picture gives us an elegant account not only of what happens when communication succeeds, but also of what happens when it fails, such as in the case of propagandistic speech. This is what draws Stanley to the Rawlsian appeal to "reasonableness" as a norm that governs "public reason" as a way to account for propaganda in liberal democracies (see chapter 3) and to the Habermasian ideals of deliberative democratic deliberation to explain how perverted language can be used as a propagandistic mechanism (see chapter 4).

It is, of course, true that Rawls rejected philosophical foundationalism in pursuing a liberalism that is "political not metaphysical" and that Habermas put social theory centre stage in the project of political philosophy. Nevertheless, these sources manifest the ambiguity that runs through Stanley's analysis: Rawls and Habermas are clearly ideal theorists. It is well-known that Rawls's central question in *A Theory of Justice* is "what a perfectly just society would be like" (Rawls 1999, 8), and, analogously, Habermas's deliberative conception of democracy is built on the idea of *unobstructed* rational debate between well-informed citizens. This debate takes place in what Habermas has called the "ideal speech situation" in which only "the unforced force of the better argument" (Habermas 2001, 94–95) will prevail. The critique of non-ideal theorists levelled against these constrictions in the study of justice and democratic legitimacy is that they *idealize* actual real-world human political and linguistic behaviour, thereby being counterproductive when it comes to their shared hopes, as politically engaged theorists, to achieve

concrete social justice and actual democratic debate. By forging his account of propaganda on the ideal principles of liberalism and social democracy that undergird the philosophies of Rawls and Habermas, Stanley makes himself vulnerable to the critique of non-ideal theory with which he at least putatively sympathizes. He first applauds the critical principles of non-ideal philosophy, but then regresses to the old-fashioned theoretical apparatus of ideal theory in his analysis of propaganda. Hence my main critique is internal: he fails to practice what he preaches.

This ambiguous theoretical-methodological background has repercussions in Stanley's central analysis of propaganda. Today, this word has a clear pejorative connotation. It may seem as if this moral connotation is exhibited in Stanley's introductory chapter, where he connects it to "manipulation" and "political rhetoric" (2015, 4), as opposed to reasoned argumentation. Likewise, it seems to be in this fashion that he writes that propaganda poses an "obstacle to the realization of liberal democratic ideals" (2015, 19) and that he closes the book by stating his hope that his book will "play some positive role" (2015, 294) in preventing propagandistic subversion of democratic ideals. If one studies Stanley's conceptual typology of propaganda carefully, however, one finds that it does not allow solely for a negative connotation. He characterizes the practice of political propaganda in general terms as *"the employment of a political ideal against itself"* (2015, xiii). But this definition does not say anything about the desirability of the ideal involved. Stanley thus construes a conception of propaganda that is morally neutral, thereby opening up the space for occurrences of *good* as well as *bad* propaganda, and as he later confirms: "my characterization [of propaganda] is perfectly general" (2015, 41).

Suppose one must think of an instance of political propaganda that accords with Stanley's definition. In that case, one will probably come up with something like an invocation of liberal and democratic ideals that are meant to disguise a practice that is, in reality, illiberal and undemocratic: one which appeals to freedom in the service of a goal that tends to undermine freedom covertly, for example. (Stanley gives the example of an appeal to "scientific experts" in order to wrongly suggest that climate science is awash in uncertainty; (2015, 60)). This is what Stanley demarcates as "the most basic problem for democracy raided by propaganda"; that is, "the possibility that the vocabulary of liberal democracy is used to mask an undemocratic reality" (2015, 11). But since Stanley's characterization of propaganda is in itself perfectly general, it allows for propagandistic practices that are corrosive not only of presumably attractive ideals (such as freedom or equality) but also of presumably unattractive ideals (such as obedience or domination).

Stanley surely is aware of this point, and to illustrate it, he narrates how W.E.B. Du Bois calls on propaganda "to win the respect, empathy, and understanding of whites" (2015, 38). Propaganda is understood here as an emotional mechanism that bypasses reason ("rational deliberation" [p. 12], "the rational will" [p. 48], or "autonomous decision" [p. 49]). Additionally, he reproduces an interesting interpretation of John Coltrane's jazz version of the famous Christmas song "My Favorite Things" from the film *The Sound of Music,* which is described as an "iconic cinematic celebration of whiteness" (2015, 64). Stanley writes that "Coltrane takes the song and gives it a powerful subversive twist, presenting a white aesthetic ideal in a fashion that subverts

it to reveal Black experience and Black identity" (2015, 65). According to his own definition, as he acknowledges, this is an instance of propaganda; Coltrane employs the aesthetic ideal of whiteness against itself. As Stanley later writes about this example: "in some sense, this is misleading" (2015, 114) and therefore propagandistic. This shows how propaganda can be used for bad as well as for good purposes. To change people's minds, irrespective of whether they hold morally approbative or disapprobative ideals in high esteem, sometimes some form of manipulation will be helpful. In Stanley's words, "It is hard to see how direct challenges to the ideals will be effective" (2015, 66) and he argues, *a fortiori,* that in our non-ideal circumstances propagandistic rhetorical strategies are even a prerequisite for achieving the liberal democratic ideals of freedom and equality for all (2015, 115).

Stanley's conceptualization of propaganda contrasts with what he sees as the "classical sense" of propaganda, defined as *"manipulation of the rational will to close off debate"* (2015, 48). By definition, this moral understanding of propaganda goes paired with the idea that propagandistic speech violates the Kantian norms of discourse, which consist of the assessment of *reasons* as the ultimate justifying source of knowledge. But paradoxically, as I indicated, this is the model of normativity (or at least the Habermasian version of it) which Stanley himself employs throughout his defence of liberal and deliberative democratic communication. Stanley slides into murky waters here. If there is good and bad propaganda, there is no *a priori* way to decide which propagandistic practices we should condemn as morally *bad* and which should we praise as morally *good*. Nevertheless, Stanley does try to distinguish between democratically unacceptable propaganda (what he calls "demagoguery") and democratically acceptable, or even democracy-enhancing, propaganda (what he calls "civic rhetoric") (2015, 82). In his typology, propaganda undermines democracy if its purpose is to support what he calls "flawed ideologies" (2015, 5) and "flawed ideological belief" (2015, 179). This, in turn, suggests that he believes that not all ideologies or ideological beliefs are flawed, and indeed, he holds that, like "propaganda," the notion of "ideology" is also morally impartial. He thereby aims to delineate a revisionist concept of ideology which can be both true and false. Contrary to how the concept of ideology came to be understood in the Marxian "critical theory" tradition as perforce epistemically deficient, Stanley thus forges a revisionist conception of ideology as a set of beliefs, values, and norms that can be both true and false. However, this only changes the question of how to distinguish between good and bad propaganda *into* how we may decide what makes certain ideologies and ideological beliefs flawed.

Since Stanley characterizes ideological belief (both true and false) by "its resistance to rational revision" (2015, 187), the criterion of correctness for an ideology is not just the extent to which it resists bypassing deliberative ideals. Rather, Stanley seems to believe that this criterion lies in the extent to which ideological belief either *enhances* or *erodes* susceptibility to rational argumentation. As he pictures it: while pernicious demagogic speech employs flawed ideologies "to cut off rational deliberation and discussion" (2015, 47), civic rhetoric "can repair flawed ideologies, potentially restoring the possibility of self-knowledge and democratic deliberation" (2015, 5). The idea is that whereas demagoguery *decreases* our susceptibility to the deliberative democratic norms

of discourse that consist of giving and asking for reasons, civic rhetoric *increases* this susceptibility. (As we have seen in the Coltrane-case, in our non-ideal circumstances, the circumvention of rationality is even a necessity for the advancement of liberalism and social democracy: "There is a structural problem in certain imperfectly realized liberal democracies that necessitates civic rhetoric" (2015, 115)). The synthetic dependency of the correctness of an ideological belief on our resulting susceptibility to reasons suggests that Stanley believes that the knowledge about this correctness, if ever, comes only *a posteriori*. But this renders his analysis self-contradicting, for the latter belief radically contravenes the Kantian framework (in which Rawls and Habermas postulate their theories) in which ideological belief and propagandistic speech are *a priori* violations of the rational will. Stanley's analysis begs the question here: he aims to defend the ideals of liberalism and democracy by warning of the threat posed by harmful propaganda (demagogic speech), which in turn is being warned about by appealing to the ideals of liberalism and democracy.

It is my contention that at the heart of Stanley's conceptual taxonomy there is a fork in the road that he neglects. Either propaganda and ideology are understood as non-moral phenomena, making them qua philosophical phenomena impossible to pin down without circular reasoning – then, there is no fruitful way in which we can distinguish between propaganda and ideology on the one hand and the use of reason on the other. Or, the alternative route, adopting an understanding of propaganda and ideology as pejorative terms for morally bad phenomena, which are so, then, on the Kantian philosophical basis that renders propagandistic speech a moral violation because it is a tool that by definition bypasses rationality. Stanley ambiguously shifts between these alternatives: he does at least claim to employ the terms "propaganda" and "ideology" as morally impartial, while simultaneously, paradoxically, in his delineation of what distinguishes bad propaganda and flawed ideological belief from good propaganda and correct ideological belief, he relies on the principles of reasonableness and democratic deliberation that preclude moral neutrality of these very phenomena. (It is interesting to see, if only briefly, what happens when we do justice to the supposed neutrality of propaganda that Stanley initially purports to conceptualize. Then, the concept's utility disappears, for there would be no criterion to differentiate between propaganda and the use of reason. Perhaps the conceptual void of the novelty of his definition of propaganda makes Stanley withdraw from it in his actual analysis).

For my present purposes it does not matter much that I believe the radical contingency of our theorizing practices renders a strict philosophical dichotomy between propaganda and rationality not very useful. (This is what initially made me enthusiastic about Stanley's revisionist definition of propaganda). It is beyond the scope of this review to investigate the details of this revisionist belief, and where it leaves us is in combatting moral cynicism, political irresponsibility, harmful ideologies, and pernicious propaganda. As I said, my main critique addresses the internal inconsistency in Stanley's analysis. As it turns out, he does want to maintain a metaphysical distinction between propaganda and the use of reason. He asserts that his book is "about the nature of propaganda and propaganda generally, that is, about the *metaphysics* of propaganda" (2015, 76). He seems to believe this is what the ultimate rationale of his book requires:

to map how propaganda works and, more particularly, how demagogic speech is presently threatening our (nominal) modern liberal democracies. Obviously, this is not an original project; the old Greeks were already concerned about the endangerment of political stability by the exploitation of people's emotions. (This undergirds Plato's condemnation of a democratic form of government). Stanley is well aware of this, and as he admits: "[t]he argument of this book is not new" (2015, 192). Apart from situating the discussion in the context of the present century by using interesting recent empirical data and fascinating novel insights from the social sciences, Stanley contributes nothing substantial to the more than two-thousand-year-old philosophical conversation on the relations between reason and rhetoric.

Given the rarity of much-needed analysis of morally and politically significant real-world phenomena in recent academic discourse, the aspirations of Stanley's project are praiseworthy. Yet I am sceptical about how he pursues his analysis – that is, about whether it is possible to do justice to the phenomena of propaganda and ideology as in themselves morally neutral while at the same time cherishing the hope for construing a "metaphysics of propaganda" that helps to prevent the occurrence of these phenomena as subverting liberal and democratic ideals. It seems to me that we do not need Stanley's taxonomy of propaganda in order to be able to observe that societies with "flawed social structures give rise to flawed ideological belief" (2015, 179). This observation leads to the bold but important and pressing – yet again not really original – political argument that Stanley forges: that liberal democracy is so in name only if political equality is not supported by a fairer distribution of wealth. Based on a rich body of recent subject matter, especially from social psychology, Stanley persuasively argues that substantial material inequality leads to epistemic barriers to acquiring knowledge and to false legitimation narratives by the wealthy elite, thereby clearing the ground for effective democracy-undermining propaganda.

This overt political argument also informs Stanley's later work, in particular his 2018 book *How Fascism Works*. Most importantly, what he shows there is how fascist politics is not dependent on an institutionalized self-identifying fascism. It thus decouples a specific form of government from governing practices; "fascist politics does not necessarily lead to an explicitly fascist state" (2018, xiv). In this way Stanley is able to argue how fascist tactics are increasingly being employed by leaders in many Western countries that self-identify as democracies, in particular in the recent history of the United States. Besides propaganda, the fascist tactics Stanley distinguishes include the appeal to a mythic past, anti-intellectualism, unreality, hierarchy, victimhood, law and order, sexual anxiety, and a dismantling of public welfare and unity. What binds these tactics, Stanley insists, is the idea of a politics of "us" versus "them", or a politics of fear. Beginning where he left off in *How Propaganda Works*, his book on fascism is more social and political than philosophical, for it is written as an explicit warning against fascism, that is, "in the hope of providing citizens with the critical tools to recognize the difference between legitimate tactics in liberal democratic politics on the one hand, and invidious tactics of fascist politics on the other" (2018, xvii).

Stanley's work is engaging, persuasive, and beautifully written. Still, let me address two critical points about Stanley's political analysis, before commenting on its

broader relationship to his previous work. First, given Stanley's explicit contemporary political orientation, it unfortunately lacks a treatment of the recent information technology revolution. Stanley discusses the fascist tactic of spreading conspiracy theories and "fake news," but he neglects to reflect on the vital influence of the infiltration of big tech and social media which have transformed our social and political lives since the onset of the present century. It is hard to see how one can understand the political world today – in particular its (proto-)fascist tendencies – without seriously engaging with the enormous role played in it by big tech and social media platforms. (By contrast, in the same genre, David Runciman's *How Democracy Ends* (Runciman 2019) contains a much more in-depth engagement with the information technology revolution).

Secondly, it remains unclear to what extent the fascist tactics Stanley investigates strictly limit themselves to the realm of illiberal and anti-democratic politics. Consider, for instance, Stanley's comments on the fascist use of a mythic past as a weapon for political gain, which he opposes to a liberal democratic treatment of history as "faithful to the norm of truth" (2018, 19). Is this not somewhat naïve? Stanley's preferred non-ideal perspective would surely lead one to accept that there is at least a grain of truth in the (in)famous slogan "history is written by the victors." (It is worth noting here that Charles Mills's critique of ideal theory entails, crucially, that the common narrative of formal liberalism, and gender and racial equality, in fact contains a covert manifestation of illiberalism, and gender and racial injustices, by silencing the histories of patriarchal and colonial oppression in its theoretical apparatus). There is, of course, a difference between a biased portrayal of history – perhaps even unintentional and unconscious – and a historical fiction that is fully politicized. Nevertheless, Stanley could have done a better job in making clear when a society's dealings with its history turns from liberal to illiberal. The same goes for his understanding of academic expertise as a force of liberal democracy. The question arises, when does the defence of intellectualism turn into an elitist and undemocratic faith in technocracy?

Yet again, we ought to commend Stanley's generally practical orientation and his engagement with the vicissitudes of our non-ideal, real-world politics. Moreover, Stanley avoids running into explicit difficulties precisely because he keeps a safe distance from providing theoretical underpinnings of his ideal of liberal democratic legitimacy – there is no mention of Rawls and Habermas in the book. Nevertheless, it is clear Stanley's castigation of fascism assumes an ideal theory framework. Take, for instance, Stanley's description of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as "a powerful iteration and expansion of liberal democratic understanding of personhood to include literally the entire world community" (2015, xviii). The problems of ideal theory arise immediately. Let me try to illustrate this by drawing attention to a historical episode about a formative moment in the history preceding this Universal Declaration of Human Rights. After the First World War the victorious countries came together during the Paris Peace Conference (1919-1920) to set the peace terms for the defeated powers. Famously, out of the conference came the League of Nations. Although often considered to be a key moment of moral progress in the West, the creation of the League cannot be separated from what happened to the "racial equality clause" that the Japanese delegation proposed to include in the Covenant of the League of Nations. The clause reads as follows:

> The equality of nations being a basic principle of the League of Nations, the High Contracting Parties agree to accord as soon as possible to all alien nationals of states, members of the League, equal and just treatment in every respect making no distinction, either in law or in fact, on account of their race or nationality. (Cited in Shimazu 1998, 20)

Because of the power play of the major so-called "Anglo-Saxon" powers – the American, British, Australian, and South-African delegations – the clause was rejected. This is telling: a clause that demands acceptance of one of the most elementary cornerstones of the ideals of a liberal democracy – racial equality – was *rejected* by the countries that are usually seen as those in the forefront of fostering liberal democratic politics. This raises a lot of questions, but what is most pressing now is to recognize how the standard story of moral progress of twentieth-century Western liberal democracy is deeply, and one may say ideologically, biased. As Mills forcefully argues throughout his work, in order to come to terms with how these racist practices have shaped our ideas of freedom, equality, and democracy, the first step is treating the contentious histories of these ideas no longer as incidental aberrations in the process of realizing liberal democratic justice, but as structural features of our very often illiberal and undemocratic and therefore unjust status quo. This is also what the episode from the Paris Peace Conference makes clear: the question of what it means to be free and equal in our so-called "liberal democratic" but *de facto* illiberal and undemocratic world must take priority in construing our anti-racism and our anti-fascism. Although Stanley intends to commit himself to this emancipatory aim in his critical analyses of real-world propagandistic and fascist practices, it is unclear what his picture of "liberal democratic personhood" in fact means. Precisely this obscurity makes his analysis suspect of covertly relying on a standard ideal picture of liberal democratic justice as the polar opposite of blatant fascism.

Another instance which reveals Stanley's tacitly ideal understanding of liberal democracy becomes manifest when we take a closer look at his seemingly uncontroversial claim that "[i]n a healthy liberal democracy, language is a tool for information" (2018, 54). What use is there in insisting on the assertive function of language, given the actual widespread perversion of this function through deceitful or manipulative speech behaviour? Instead, the question we should ask is not how language functions in a healthy (or ideal) liberal democracy, as Stanley does, but what language does in our unhealthy and non-ideal social and political lifeworld. Within non-ideal theory, the study of language must not be (tacitly) constrained by assuming a counterfactual Habermasian ideal speech situation, but instead it must focus on language as it in reality works, which is often to distract, mislead, manipulate, and exclude. The general question for non-ideal theory thus becomes: how do we foster freedom and equality for all given our widely ill-ordered social, political, and linguistic behaviour? (We may point to an interesting, though so far largely neglected, analogy here: within ideal theory, the neglect of the dimension of power in relying on an ideal understanding of communicative behaviour mirrors the neglect of the dimension of power in relying on an ideal understanding of political behaviour).

Returning to Stanley's project, we may conclude that the critique inherent in the framework of non-ideal theory makes clear that, in order to deliver what he

promises *as an advocate of non-ideal philosophy,* it is simply not enough to merely reiterate an ideal picture of the nominal liberal democratic understanding of personhood in contradistinction to the inegalitarian fascist understanding of personhood (see, e.g., also (2018, 97)). Until the non–ideal project of asking what it means to be free and equal in our often illiberal and undemocratic circumstances takes centre stage, Stanley's tools, which are meant to help us distinguish valid tactics in liberal democratic politics from fascist politics, will do only a part of the job at best.

Let me end by underlining that in our contemporary context of widespread cynicism in public and political debates, Stanley's warning against how certain forms of exploitation of ideals imperil our liberal and democratic institutions is welcome. However, as we have seen, the urge to provide philosophical foundations for this warning – in the tradition of Kant's views of the norms of successful communication as rational communication, thereby posing a categorical prohibition on the practice of propaganda – commits him to an understanding of propaganda as inherently democracy-undermining. This is directly opposed to his revisionist concept of propaganda by which he himself tries to replace what he saw as this classical sense of propaganda. Despite this ambiguity which runs through Stanley's recent work, his aim to advance a political philosophy that is socially informed merits praise. Though he remains faithful to much of the traditional analytical philosophical principles in his metaphysical codification of propaganda and his general defence of liberal democracy against fascism, his largely careful analysis of how invidious political practices erode our liberal and democratic institutions is an impressive accomplishment. Therefore, notwithstanding the conceptual problems embedded in the notion of "propaganda" that Stanley fails to solve, anyone who wants to better understand our increasingly corrupt world of public and political discourse would do well to read Stanley's recent work.

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Biography

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