



Oedipal Humanity: Helplessness, Castration, and the Society-Nature Neurosis*

Humanidade Edipiana: Desamparo, Castração e a Neurose Sociedade-Natureza

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Abstract: The essay aims to present the interpretation of the society-nature relationship as a reworking of the Oedipal complex and neuroses in the psyche. With the support of psychoanalytic and philosophy readings, I discuss the human feeling of continuation or discontinuation with nature and the impacts of the interdictions against instinctual desires between the erotic and destructive actions of human beings. I present two possible interpretations of the neurosis triggered in the collective superego through the transferential relations with the mother and father figures: Mother-Nature and Father-Nature. I analyze some examples derived from castration traumas in contemporary society: the fear of nature and the fear of death. Finally, I signal the need for continued research on the Oedipus derivations of the society-nature relationship, in order to relate geography and psychoanalysis to understand human neuroses in the world and time in which we live.

Keywords: Eros; anguish; Oedipus; psychoanalysis; society.

Resumo: O ensaio visa apresentar a interpretação da relação sociedade-natureza como reelaboração do complexo edipiano e de neuroses na psique. Com apoio de leituras da psicanálise e da filosofia, discuto o sentimento de continuação ou descontinuação humana com a natureza, problematizando os impactos da interdição dos desejos instintuais entre as pulsões eróticas e destrutivas do ser humano. Apresento duas possíveis interpretações sobre a neurose desencadeada no superego coletivo com as relações transferenciais das figuras materna e paterna: a Natureza-Mãe e a Natureza-Pai. Analiso alguns exemplos derivados dos traumas de castração na sociedade contemporânea: o medo da natureza e o medo da morte. Por fim, sinalizo a necessária continuidade de pesquisas sobre as derivações edipianas da relação sociedade-natureza, com vistas a relacionar geografia e psicanálise para entender as neuroses humanas no mundo e no tempo em que vivemos.

Palavras-chave: Eros; angústia; Édipo; psicanálise; sociedade.

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1. Introduction

It is believed that the inhabited surface of the planet is constantly modified by human actions that, in some way, interfere with the dynamics of natural phenomena as a function of economic aspirations. In this way, it is considered that nature has become a form of human work, a social product, or a socialized object.

Within the scope of what we call human geography, research on the spatial unfolding of industrialization, migration, agricultural mechanization, extractive activities, and the growth of cities often approaches socialized nature as an undisputed fact.

On the other hand, the natural sciences are still able to recall the formations of geological time itself, that is, without the interferences of economics in processing rocks, soils, waters, and forests into commodities. Even so, the legacy of purely physical studies, such as those of the naturalists of the 19th to mid-20th century, is increasingly adapted to a type of stance that prefers to list damage to natural elements in order to plan for sustainability in using resources.

All research that seeks to explain how humans relate to nature is valid and needs economic support so that we, as a society, can better conduct our lives in monumental cities and rural spaces composed of beautiful landscapes.

As a geographer, I contemplate from a place that is suspect: after all, I am passionate about my profession and about thinking about the world from this scientific point of view. However, I deviate somewhat from the academic rites of my own training area. I like to think of geography as an almost philosophical reflection on the experience of the human being with the planet and the universe. In other words, the relationship of the human being with nature and the feelings that emerge from the consciousness that takes part in this relationship.

In this essay, some perspectives will be addressed that consider the anguish of being alive on the planet and the awareness that this phenomenon is disturbing, simply because we are unaware of a comprehensive theory that contains true explanations for human inquiries. We are all very tiny in the face of the natural forces that move the Earth, so what about the universe, its magnitude, its beginning or end, if we can grasp these concepts within the space-time sequences that we are most accustomed to?

Philosophy can be perceived as a quest for knowledge to alleviate the despair we suffer, notably with the certainty of death. At the same time, with psychoanalysis, I foresee the potential to review some aspects of the human experience with nature and, who knows, propose interactions between different fields of knowledge capable of alleviating some narcissistic wound that may be in

me or in eventual readers who are willing to accompany me: we are small and ephemeral in the face of nature, we know it, and we suffer with it.

The psychoanalytic dictionary allows us to locate some definitions of the term "neurosis", chosen to title this essay. Initially, it was defined as the field of pathologies without organic explanations in medicine. Later, it came to be understood as a personality disease stemming from psychic disturbances due to trauma that manifests in social behaviors. Finally, according to Sigmund Freud (1898/1996), neurosis arises from unconscious conflicts, with a sexual basis, originating in childhood. As such, neurosis would be the result "of a defense mechanism against anxiety and of a compromise formation between this defense and the possible fulfillment of a desire" (Roudinesco and Plon, 1998).

So how can we not think of the mastery of agricultural techniques, urbanization, industrialization, and the spread of cities across the Earth's surface, if not as productions that flourish from the geo-psychic¹ realms of the human mind as forms of defense for existence and the desire to continue existing? Given this questioning, I will start by defending the idea that exploring the postulates of psychoanalysis can be very productive for thinking about the society-nature relationship.

Here, I tend to substitute the word "relationship" with "neurosis" to highlight the contradictory affections that contemporary society faces in true situations of love, hate, or indifference toward nature. This is not a pejorative use of the term; quite the opposite, apparently, we are all neurotic because of our hybrid condition between the cultural and the natural. Some disorders affect all human beings who are considered "cyborgs²" in a technified socationature³.

2. Ocean and Atlas

Since the Aristotelian *physis*, we are faced with the idea of spontaneity that may lie behind everything that is self-generated and corrupted in nature⁴. A different proposition from the demiurgic ideal that allegedly created the cosmos and time as an image of order and eternity.

¹ Juliana Maddalena Trifilio Dias (2019) is credited with conceptualizing this idea.

² From Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" (1991/2009).

³ From the "cyborg urbanization" proposed by Erik Swyngedouw (2009).

⁴ I refer here especially to books I and II of *Physics* (Aristóteles, 2009). In the Philosophy of Landscape seminars coordinated by Adriana Veríssimo Serrão (Center of Philosophy of the University of Lisbon, 2017) I was invited to join this reading/debate to compare the different paradigms of nature proposed by Plato (*Timaeus*) and Aristotle (*Physics*). This made me think of two distinct categories related to conceptions of nature up to the present day: Nature-Creation and Nature-Creature. The first relates to the continuous, self-generated movement of the creation and corruption of forms. The second comes from the demiurgic ideal of cosmic organization based on the archetype of perfection. I think that contemporary society carries with it these two ways of conceiving nature: as an uncontrollable entity that, in turn, awakens

Perhaps, from the need for comfort for our consciousness came the attempt to refocus the importance of the human being in the world by his own faculty of thinking⁵. If my existence is guaranteed by the fact that I have understanding and insight into it, then am I the entity that dominates spontaneity? Am I to be pleased with natural eternity as an object to the dissatisfaction of my curiosity and, consequently, in favor of the evolution of my own thinking?

The qualitative and quantitative sublimity of nature seems to strain human judgment again to a peripheral or subordinate position. The imposing mass of the open sea or the mountain in the splendor and erection of its youth cause wonder and disturbance to re-emerge in front of and behind the eyes of those who observe them.

In the human being, the contemplative attitude leads him to a kind of feeling that can be called oceanic, in other words, a proud feeling of belonging to the universe that, even if one is not able to understand it, one knows that it has been and will be part of its history. It is a part of our psychic constitution whose elaboration arises from the correlation between our ego and nature⁶ (Freud, 1930/1996, p. 77).

In fact, the awareness of being part of the universe may not be an appropriate idea to consider the human-world continuum. One must think of this continuity as a still unconscious phenomenon dating back to early childhood. Psychoanalytic theory refers us to the fusion between inner and outer worlds in the psyche. In other words, the intertwining between the external world and the centrality of the infantile ego, which in itself is concretized as being the world itself.

The pleasure principle and its opposite, displeasure, are the foundations of the difficult construction of the external world in the human mind. The first steps in the unveiling of objects outside the "I" are already delineated from the moments in which the satisfaction of hunger, which is a non-pleasurable sensation, demands the expression of suffering, which is the act of crying, and the mother's breast becomes objectified and then internalized or represented in an introductory way as something whose absence brings anguish to the child. This can be the moment when the first drop of water separates from the whole, when from the ocean depths spring the first signs of a massive chain that will forever unsettle the self.

The Atlantic feeling, in reference to the giant of Greek mythology, is the fruit of the process that makes the world heavy for the consciousness. After all, to sustain an object far beyond our

the desire for order. So urbanization would represent the spatial realization of imposing a cosmic order on inhabited lands (one example).

⁵ René Descartes: "I think, therefore I exist" (1637/2001).

⁶ This analogy is at my own risk. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud refers to the "universe" rather than "nature."

faculties of strength and understanding is something overestimated. Here, the pillars of support we use to prevent the heavens and the Earth from collapsing⁷ in hecatomb in our mind, and not annihilating us completely, could be related to the judgment work of the superego: the psychic instance regulating desires and, by analogy, eroticism and destruction among people themselves and in their relations with nature⁸.

3. Eros and Destruction

What allows the human being not to be afflicted by deep angst in the face of reality? This is a contradictory question in itself. After all, isn't it possible that all of us are already plunged into deep anguish? I would like to start from the following prerogative: yes, we live in a kind of delirium of illusion that, in turn, can be proven by the human feeling of supernatural power and limitation.

The desire for permanence on Earth is driven by religion itself with its rites (and myths), which capture the faith of the followers through the promise of eternal life. For example, for Christians, "death itself is a passage into life" (Kierkegaard, 2004, p. 23). Nobody wants to die, and this can be despairing.⁹ "In every human life that thinks itself already infinite, and wants to be, every instant is despair" (Kierkegaard, 2004, p. 34). But if this is inevitable, then let there be some sort of continuity to remedy the despair¹⁰. Hence, the unshakeable belief in the eternal is transfigured into an example of the erotic movement that contributes to escape from the anguish of finitude, from its presentiment.

Certain behaviors of contemporary youth, notably the middle and upper social classes, illustrate the direct correspondence between the ego and external reality. Many of these young people, although in existential crises, have a very objective desire to fulfill in their lives: happiness. In their own way and conceptions of pleasure, they want to be happy independently of legal rules and impositions to satisfy their desire.

⁷ There are reports of ancient civilizations that feared cosmic events such as the possible disappearance of the Sun, as in the case of the Egyptians, and the fall of the Cosmos itself, as in the case of the Babylonians in the first millennium B.C. (Tuan, 2005, p. 94).

⁸ It is worth remembering that, for the purposes of the argument I propose, I tend to think of the collective manifestations of the superego according to what Sigmund Freud presents as the "cultural superego," that which "developed its ideals and established requirements [...] dealing with the relations of human beings [...] covered under the title of ethics" (1930/1996, p. 148).

⁹ In Baron de Holbach's words: "The man who exists cannot have any idea of non-existence; as this state unsettles him, his imagination sets to work in the absence of experience, to paint him good or bad this uncertain state. [...] He finds himself in general neglect, destitute of all help, and feeling the rigors of this awful situation" (1780/1996, p. 310).

¹⁰ Dating back to the Neanderthals are the first records of the burial of the dead, which "documents the uniquely human belief in life after death" (Tuan, 2005, p. 75).

Middle-aged people onwards face juvenile impulses for happiness from positions that are sometimes more or less complacent, always in an attitude of "forgive them, they don't know what they are doing" or warnings like "when you are my age", symbolizing a higher level of experience that only time can provide.

However, as the Egyptian priest told Solon¹¹ (Plato), we are all children. The analogy here is meant to illustrate the continuance of this state of childishness to this day. In a sense, the human being remains in childhood, "from which it is so difficult to get him out" (Holbach, 1780/2010, p. 39). Even with all the knowledge accumulated about our own history and all the technological apparatus that allows us to improve this knowledge, we are still small children before the unaccountable totality of nature.

It is speculated that primitive man, by controlling fire, experienced two contradictory pleasures: creation and destruction. This dialectical relationship would have been experienced in the measure in which, when producing the fire, to have its control, he had to urinate on it in order to put it out. It is necessary to highlight the following: such conjecture can be found in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, where Sigmund Freud refers to the human fascination with fire and its phallic symbolization. Primal man, by controlling fire, would have controlled a facet of his own sexual instinct. Or better, the control of the phallic impulse, which would be the dispute with the natural power through the very material expelled by his sex, would have given the possibility of mastery and manipulation of fire without the impetus to engage in a homoerotic competition with it (Freud, 1930/1996, p. 98).

The society-nature rift may be a modern advent, accentuated by industrialization and its reflections on urban order. But perhaps the first major step towards the contradictory (neurosis?) society-nature relationship was the eros-destruction dialectic from the first acts of pyrotechnical domination. Henceforth, the history of social change on Earth's surface has been elaborated as a succession of acts on the border of tensions between man's sense of power and the premonition of his own frailty.

¹¹ One of the recollections reported by Critias to Socrates in the *Timaeus*. Critias recalls his grandfather's account of the wise man Solon's journey to Egypt and when this wise man is questioned by a priest who tells him that the Athenian people are still rather young in soul, in the sense that they know little about important catastrophic events that have troubled mankind (Platão, 2001).

4. Mother-Nature

As babies, human beings are satisfied in the mother-child unit. Despair and satisfaction, the latter as the extinction of despair, as a feeling of relief, of an introjective "I" naturally seated in the mother-child unit, do not yet allow us to understand that this unity does not exist, because there is in fact a duality, that is, a relation between "I" and the other.

Humans are born defenseless and helpless. Without parental care, the child would not survive¹². "Nature sends man naked and helpless into this world which is to be his dwelling" (Holbach, 1780/2010, p. 33). The primary condition for all of us is this: dependency and the need to connect with others. Social life has always stood as a milestone of survival and defense... against nature. If it were not for the most elemental social order, by nature, we would not be able to cope with our own incapacities, weaknesses, and instinctual desires¹³.

Through psychoanalysis, the Oedipal experience opens paths of psychological interpretation about human affections from the first years a person is alive. Parental bonds are very important for creatures that do not know what to do with themselves, for obvious reasons such as motor incapacity and emotional lack of control. Soon, the mother is incorporated into the child's world, or rather into the world that is the child itself.

As the perception senses develop, as a consequence of brain growth and the complexification of neuronal communication in contact with the exterior, the awareness of what is a "different body or body outside my own" will occur from the most immediate and fusional contact with the mother figure.

This mother-child fusion is the first source of human pleasure and satisfaction; after all, the most primitive needs are satisfied through it. The solution to the original abandonment would reside in a simple formula, given by the combination of the elements of a hungry mouth + nutritious breast. As pointed out by Lachaud (2001), the mental identification of a child watching another being breastfed by its mother¹⁴, or by another woman emotionally attached to the child, might have enough power to trigger the affection of jealousy in the human psyche.

¹² This characteristic is fundamental to social life. Yi-fu Tuan, when dealing with prehistoric life, reminds us that "one can infer a 'child-centered' family life, due to their long period of dependence, for this was already a trait that distinguished these proto-humans from non-human primates" (2005, p. 74).

¹³ In "The Future of an Illusion," where Sigmund Freud discusses his own proposals, referring to the "weak intelligence governed by instinctual desires" of human beings (1927/1996, p. 57). Thus, he shows disbelief in the civilization that generates neuroses in people whose ethical rules in life in society come from religious pitfalls.

¹⁴ Denise Lachaud (2001, p. 41) explains the *Confessions* of St. Augustine as a brutal example of that bond created in breast-feeding: "When St. Augustine - to take up again the example so explored by Lacan - sees his little brother hanging on his mother's breast, he feels jealous of him. In this context, the mental identification would be similar to something like: "that is my place or should be my place". Further on, the psychoanalyst states that "from the breast to the territory,

The first, most immediate, and attached object of desire of a human being would be his mother, in the context of the fusional relationship mentioned earlier. Through psychoanalysis, it is possible to identify neuroses¹⁵ in adults, whose origins are located in the space-time of the earliest childhood.

The emphasis of the mother figure would play such a powerful role in the instances of the unconscious and, later on, of human consciousness that, in the face of the immense power of nature over humanity, the latter, in the sweet innocence of its long infancy, tries to heal its anguish with death by means of the projection of the mother onto nature itself.

Analogous to Lachaud's (2001) words, I use the expression "from breast to Nature" to express a collective mechanism of transference in which the maternal representation of nature may be the consequence of the feeling of helplessness and the need for security of the human being, who has no control of himself or of the outer world.

One of the consequences of the transference Mother-Nature relationship could be exemplified through concerns about the finitude of the resources necessary for human survival. The angst of the absence of food, that is, the lack of the breast at the first symptoms of hunger, could mirror our worries about the absence of the mother, the absence of nature represented as the continuation of our own bodies, and the soothing of our most immediate needs.

Contemporary concerns for environmental sustainability may be the adult version of the desire to keep the source of satisfaction of our necessities always available in times of suffering. Despite eco-feminist critiques of patriarchal abuses of nature, perhaps the greatest motivation for the cultural creation of the ideal of Gaia was the original human helplessness, that is, the inability to survive on one's own.

5. The Father-Nature

"In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Let it be so." This example of triangulation goes beyond the Oedipus complex in a non-neutral way. The triad uniquely falls to the figure of God. If nature is a mother, there must be a father who legislates over her and her children.

the passage will be very rapid. It can be translated pathologically by the fear that someone will take your place, that someone will take your wife, your job, your country. Hence xenophobia. Fear of the foreigner. Fear of the Other" (p. 48). A perspective that I will explore later as "Fear of Nature."

¹⁵ Juan Nasio addresses neurosis as a mental condition originating from conflicting ideas and emotions, because, often contradictory and/or interdicted, as is the case of the most primal neurosis in humans caused by Oedipal mechanisms. "Because neurosis is above all the simultaneous action of opposite feelings and because the Oedipal child suffers, like a neurotic, from the painful conflict between relishing the pleasure of fantasizing and being afraid of being punished if he perseveres" (2007, p. 26).

Just as the woman was considered the fruit of a man's ribs, the narrative about the relationship between God and Nature puts him in the position of command: He made the other.

In people's imagination, the representation of nature in the male place is evidently not common, but it does exist. The transference of the maternal figure has the power to move the most passionate speeches in defense of the one who cradles the sinners who possess her, corrupt her, and finally satiate their desires in a forbidden field. This process characterizes a neurosis, that is, the simultaneous action of opposite feelings in the psyche. After all, if there is an interdiction to satisfy the desires in the maternal body, the "polluzione"¹⁶ in the waters, in the atmosphere, the violation of the Earth and the forests, are all erotic manifestations that emphasize the guilt of the neurotic.

Guilt emerges from the encounter with interdiction. In psychoanalysis, the Oedipus complex leads to the interpretation that the structuring element of the interdiction is the father figure, that is, the representation of the limit in which the phallic place of the child is occupied by the germinating superego, which signals the angst of castration. Among children, the unconscious identification of the father as the one who legislates does not necessarily presuppose a problem, since the foundations of the social organization lie in the mechanisms of control of instinctive impulses, the ban on incest, the outbursts of violence and murder¹⁷.

However, when the father's representation is violent, the anguish of castration appears as a pathological cause. Therefore, the generation of traumas becomes the consequence for a person's unrest, carried throughout their whole life. By analogy, I would call a movement of transference the one arising from the feeling of uncontrolled nature to the subjective impact of castration, when the human being "discovers" that nature's maternity can also be transfigured into the omnipotence of an entity from which it is impossible to subtract the phallus: the natural sublime¹⁸.

6. The Fear of Castration

The history of humanity is the history of life in society, without which it would not be possible for humans to remain and reproduce on Earth. Social life is a strategy for facing the challenges imposed by the human being's natural exterior and interior.

¹⁶ Pun intended on the Italian noun.

¹⁷ "I think you have to take into account the fact that destructive tendencies and therefore antisocial and anticultural tendencies are present in all men, and that, in a large number of people, these tendencies are strong enough to determine their behavior in human society (Freud, 1927/1996, p. 17).

¹⁸ This is where I draw attention to the "negative pleasure" treated by Immanuel Kant (2017) in his *Critique of the Faculty of Judgment*, specifically in the Analytic of the Sublime. Kant presents negative pleasure as a dubious feeling that arises from the contemplation of the greatness of nature, something like an unpleasant pleasure, a respect accompanied by fear.

If we were guided only by our instinctual desires, social life would certainly not exist. This is because instinctual desires are not only composed of the productive impulse of sex as a generator of life and a source of pleasure. Crime, for example, could be socially accepted if the social rules did not recognize the difference between vices and virtues, almost as a kind of sadistic appeal that attempts to surrender consciousness to nature, perceived as an entity incapable of being offended.

When the Marquis de Sade, in opposition to Rousseau's doctrine, ignores the goodness of the human being and emphasizes his innate evilness, stating that man is born evil and society improves this characteristic, in fact, there is the clear objective of abandoning the so-called legal rules. These rules are very important so that violence and murder do not reign in disorder and lead to the very end of life in society.

If the Marquis de Sade operated with a speech within a specific time and political context, this does not prevent me from taking up his ideas to think about what they might be at the present time. At this point, it is interesting to return to Sigmund Freud and his opening words in "The Future of an Illusion", when he provokes his reader about the foolishness of those who wish to abolish civilization. The core argument is that breaking away from social rules would lead human beings to the unrestricted state of their instincts, "nature would let us do as we please" (Freud, 1927/1996, p. 25). But since every act unleashes something else, the consequence would be self-destruction¹⁹, and nature would have its own way of controlling human actions.

However, no one harbors the illusion that nature has already been subdued, and few dare to hope that one day she will submit entirely to man. There are the elements, which seem to mock any human control; the Earth, which shakes and scratches and buries all human life and deeds; the water, which floods and drowns everything in a whirlwind; the storms, which sweep away everything in their path; the diseases, which we have only recently identified as attacks from other organisms; and, finally, the painful enigma of death, against which no remedy has been found and probably never will be. It is with these powers that nature rises up against us, majestic, cruel, and inexorable; once again it reminds us of our weakness and helplessness, from which we thought we had escaped through the work of civilization. (Freud, 1927/1996, pp. 25-26)

In this web of considerations about the role of nature in the civilizing process, the fear of the Oedipal castration would be transposed, by analogy, to the feeling of castration stemming from natural forces. Such a premonition would result in anguish over the subtraction of the phallic place of the human being by nature itself. Therefore, the whole structure of control over natural dynamics

¹⁹ As an example, murder could illustrate this situation. Destruction would also be on the list of human instincts, and the death wish/action of a murderer would have the potential to activate the death wish/action of others. This way, society would annihilate itself.

would have been forged as a result of various fears: housing + fear of the atmosphere = home; nutritious body + fear of being eaten = hunting and domestication of animals; need to take care of children + fear of invaders = family core.

See that, in this context, I am giving examples of more immediate and necessary situations for survival and reproduction. Beyond the choice to devour in order not to be devoured or to dominate one group in order not to be dominated by another, there is an affective equation given by the following elements: helplessness + fear of heaven = myths, creation of gods; helplessness + fear of the Earth/death = religion; helplessness + fear of nature = philosophy/science; helplessness + fear of human nature = rules/interdictions/social life.

The foreknowledge of castration stirs the human being in the face of nature. And, by mentioning commotion, nature as "an immense chain of causes and effects ceaselessly flowing from one another" (Holbach, 1780/2010, p. 61), I can relate the fear of castration to the distressing experience of the natural movement that makes us ephemeral, just like the ephemeral insects mentioned by Baron de Holbach, which are born and die on the same day: how fleeting is our day, our life on the Earth's surface?

The difficulty for human beings to face the certainty of their own death may originate from a psychic field marked by the feeling of castration towards nature, this entity that stands up against us and makes us aware of our weakness and helplessness (Freud, 1927/1996, p. 26). The awareness of finitude brought forth the religious pledge of a posthumous life, welcoming certain confident spirits to idealized paradises made of virtues, and even dreamed landscapes marked by exuberant vegetation, docile animals, clear waters, and pure air. In this way, paradise would symbolize the redemption of sins, God's forgiveness, and the welcoming of nature remade by Him as a reward for human beings' repentance for their carnal behavior and vices.

Human despair lies in an endless desire for life that, however, will never be fulfilled. While the will to live forever is questioned daily by the natural dynamics of the planet and one's own body, hopelessness continues to be soothed by utilitarian distractions that often restrict creativity and imprison freedom of thought, especially in accepting the nature of the potential force that moves the certainty of death.

The non-existent future is the certain demise of the human species. This is not philosophical speculation, since there are very substantial arguments to state such a thing with some shade of truth. Past generations no longer exist. Everyone who lived during the 19th, 18th, and 17th centuries, etc.,

no longer exists. Everyone living in this century will not exist in the ever-closer future. At some point, demographic replacements will reach insuperable limits, and this prediction may be intolerable.

Nature imposes the exercise of acceptance on the human being for his or her most intimate mourning. When someone is faced with the death of another, especially when it concerns close family members, the dilemmas that challenge the survivor are numerous. After the irreversible loss is no longer questioned, anger, depression, isolation, or feelings of abandonment are psychological processes experienced at different levels of intensity.

The premeditation of their own death also appears as a disturbance in the mourning period; after all, the nihilistic vibration makes everything meaningless. Work is not worthwhile. The pursuit of money and material goods is useless. Relationships and affections are put to the test as loving someone becomes unpredictable when people die. The images of one's own body rotting, when triggered in one's mind, generate unpleasant feelings and provoke the urge to imagine other things and situations capable of quickly erasing the memory of what was previously thought.

So, the difficulty of facing death can be a facet of this fear of losing the phallic place before nature. Industrialization, as a striking economic form in modern landscapes, represents something that goes beyond the simple insertion of machines into production lines or islands. Mechanization has represented and still represents the profound transformation of the relationship between human beings and nature since the first stages of the so-called European industrial revolution, which subsequently spread unevenly across all continents. The mechanical element has profoundly changed the Society-Nature *connection*, transmuting it into a Society-Nature *neurosis*.

7. The Society-Nature Neurosis: Some Consequences

Industry has become the mediator of human contact with the natural world. In the past, proximity relations were marked by the satisfaction of survival needs in a more direct way: for example, when there were cold and well-skinned animals close to their dwellings, they killed their prey, and used its hide for clothing, and its meat for nourishment. Nowadays, we experience such an intense process of productive alienation and fantasies about the goods consumed that many people often believe that the source of their food is the supermarket and not the countryside.²⁰

²⁰ On several news websites, a curious article presents the worrying figure of 16 million Americans who believe that chocolate milk comes from brown cows. In other words, there is an obvious immediate association between the colors of things to explain the origin of one from the other. This is a worrisome problem in many ways, notably from a matter of common sense to the questionable quality of education offered to this significant number of people. However, along with the possible hypotheses to be drawn from the situation, its direct relationship to the hypothesis of the removal from nature represented by it is considered (See: <[https://www.publico.pt/2017/06/16/mundo/noticia/mais-de-16-milhoes-](https://www.publico.pt/2017/06/16/mundo/noticia/mais-de-16-milhoes)

With this, we are not suggesting any attempt to return to primitive brutality, but we are debating the profound alienation of the human being in a world where economic regulations lead to lifestyles that take us far away from nature. Furthermore, the voracity of the dictates of productivity has given rise to unspoken prohibitions such as sickness, aging, and death.

Excessive concern about the production of goods and wealth makes people's economic performance dependent on high performance. In turn, this is synonymous with the marginalization of any kind of behavior or worldview that questions it. The recognition of a lifestyle far removed from the administrative sectors of large or small enterprises, from the commercial counters, and from the entrapment to the bank interest rates is very badly seen by many people who cannot free themselves from urban consumerism.

Society is then populated by bionic bodies whose work cannot cease. The cosmetics industry's diversification and quantity of products are not merely a reflection of vanity growth. Excessive concern with muscle hardening in gyms is not necessarily linked to healthy practices or some aesthetic ideal. Life is marked by standardizations similar to the patterns of overproduction for increasing profits. In order for this to happen, super bodies are an indispensable part of the great contemporary political-economic gears.

The mechanistic paradigm has yet to be overcome in the history of society, as it is at the apex of its evolution with the cyborg technologies of bioconstruction of almost inhuman super bodies. In the world of high-performance production, it is forbidden not to fit into the logic of exploitation and consumption, increasingly disguised as partnership and/or collaboration between those who effectively command and those who obediently comply, with the bonus of being treated as partners,²¹ and to stress the perversity of the logic behind these relationships with much joy, satisfaction, and "self-fulfillment".

Getting sick. Growing old. Dying. All three things mean disruptions in productivity. It is funny how, increasingly, news of terminal illnesses that act quickly until they push a person to death is commonplace. There are certain constraints on mothers and fathers of families that make them postpone medical appointments for any kind of treatment, whether preventive, follow-up, or curative. The lack of resources to pay for hospitals, surgeries, and medicines is also an important factor in the omission of diseases. However, the need to work uninterruptedly ends up taking many human beings

americanos-acham-que-o-chocolate-vem-de-vacas-castanhas-1775837?fbclid=IwAR126M23oh1Bcbea_VweV7FgL0OfbZTfJyOxtFfRIb7aaEhgV-X9FigrNVk>)

²¹ The speeches of certain companies that treat their employees as "partners", "collaborators", or even in households where bosses start treating cleaning ladies or cooks as "secretaries" are perfect examples.

to the limit of their immunological capacities. In contrast, the activity that should serve to guarantee sustenance and survival is transformed into the opposite: the labor that kills.

The cosmetic industry's make-up serves as a cover-up to the exhaustion of many women and men, as do vitamin supplement pills and all sorts of medicines that promise a cure for certain diseases and their symptoms in just twenty-four hours. For example, painkillers and anti-flu pills for day and night promise that people will be able to return to their jobs in an extremely short period without the ghost of sick leave. On the other hand, vitamin complexes help replenish the nutrients in bodies whose time and resources for good meals, even without agrochemicals, are deprived. Added to such situations are the psychotropic drugs that suppress the symptoms of boredom, sadness, and depression.

Aging enters in the same trail of temerity. The fast pace of cities and mechanical production in agriculture do not support time-lagged bodies. The slow pace of movement does not match the cyborg structures of the urbanization of steel, glass, fiber optics, satellites, powerful vehicles, ubiquitous computers, and multimedia storms that boast youth and perpetual consumption. Being old has become a kind of gap to disrespect that will never be corrected with mere passing signs or preferential seating in public transportation or commercial establishments.

To worsen the problem, many old people are drawn into jovial behavior as a sign of investment in good health and vigor. In this regard, the importance of advertising is fundamental; see the tourism industry's advertisements to sell packages to retirees who are expected to live intensely the last years of their lives. Moreover, the proliferation of gyms with training programs aimed at this public and the medical recommendations for the practice of the most varied physical exercises obscure the perverse aspect of subtracting the right to the natural course of life.

With the government's concerns about growing pension demands and reforms to cut public spending, there is an array of financial institutions that offer private pension services, and their advertisements often run on various media. On the other hand, companies are also betting on resignifying the elderly and breaking the "stigmas" associated with slowness, isolation, or immobility that are common in the aging process. Now, advertising is also investing in reinventing age and in the slogan of the young old man based on the idea that the age of the mind overrides the age of the body²².

Old people are portrayed in sportive, adventurous, and commercial images that insert them in the full domain of communication technologies, driving vehicles with powerful engines, or even in situations that demonstrate the breaking of taboos about sexuality. It is worth saying that people are

²² It doesn't matter that the body is 80 years old. What matters is that the mind is 25.

free to participate in society, affirm their identities, and seek pleasure; after all, we all live for the good and the beautiful in our lives. However, observing only the commercial appeal of the expression of these new forms of publicizing the process of old age is a way of not criticizing the order of economic impositions demanding infinite productivity.

As per Debert (1999), there is a process of reprivatization of old age in modern Brazil to the extent that it ceases to be a public issue and enters the field of the disappearance of social concerns. But for this process to be efficient, investment is made in images that represent disconnections between physical and mental age or, in the old-young paradox. Those absent from this picture are penalized for not investing in themselves through the consumption of goods and services capable of slowing down aging. So those who are "old-old" and not "old-young" will be blamed until the last day of their lives. The crime will be called being unproductive.

And death enters this field of reflection as an event to be equally denied. But before it is denied, it is marketed along the commodity-making treadmill. The ritualistic places of death are the cemeteries, now organized under the logic of maximizing profits. The real estate incorporation of the city of the living is present in funeral cities, which, in turn, seem to distance themselves from the religious rites of passage, constituent elements of culture, and all its symbolism, approaching the maximum exploitation of space-time and merchandise.

The remnants of death in the 20th century could still be widely represented by an array of architecture and art in cemeteries. The variety of sculptures and ornamental detailing of the tombs still manifested itself as a cultural practice of the model of society that is gradually shifting its relationship with the dead. Funeral companies market products ranging from insurance, urns, and wakes to the land that will be forever occupied in the necropolis. Such service packages are dressed up in sentimental tones and supposed poetics of eternity that are repeated again and again with each new funeral.

Many cemeteries have memorial chamber complexes, an important factor in, at first, "minimizing" the pain of those accompanying the funeral. However, the emphasis is on practicality in our fast-paced lives. Processions can congest traffic and cause grief for those accompanying the funeral. Attaching the mortuary chapel to the burial area turns out to be cost-effective, as funeral homes no longer need to spend resources on paying more drivers, gasoline, worn parts, and tires. Thereby, death is a living business.

With each passing day, the cemeteries are losing their artistic components and their landmarks to visitors. They are losing their visitors, who are not interested in contemplating the inert matter of

the remains of their loved ones. This kind of lethargy is unacceptable. Rectilinear, these places tend to use straight tombstones or construct them as closets with floors of drawers. Nowadays, enterprises have been justifying such practices by referring to sustainability. After all, it is not ecologically convenient to occupy large areas that should be conserved for the balance of the environment.

The distribution of the corpses follows the same pattern as in mass production. They are all placed side by side or on top of each other in the tombs, accompanied by flyer advertisements, themed canopies, or commercials on the gravediggers' uniforms. Even with all the remarks about the commercialization of death, there is still one aspect that makes perfect sense about it: there is a lot of fear behind its homogeneous scenery.

The fear of decomposition is so disturbing that it is accompanied by the recent phenomenon of an increase in the number of cremations. These occur under the same space-saving logic, as if it were their culmination, as graves are dispensed with. The ashes pulverize all physical recollection, and it is no longer necessary to look at the necropolis and face a future of non-existence. The purpose of merchandise fantasy is this: the distraction from the deep confrontation with the startlingly human condition of the awareness of finitude.

In the face of nature, we wish to be infinite and to possess some control in the form of impossible transfigurations, we create or try to recreate our phallic places. The tragicomedy of contemporary life may mirror a collective neurosis marked by contrasting fantasies of Mother-Nature or Father-Nature. The first would serve to regain dominion over the female, protecting her, caring for her plentiful breasts, and trying to conserve her milk forever because the child will live forever and will be forever hungry. The second is foreclosed²³, the name of the omnipotent father whose representation is not integrated in the unconscious, but resurfaces in reality as a hallucination, visible through alienated human behavior, negationist of oneself, and resistant to the fact that it is impossible to master nature.

8. Final considerations

This essay is defined as a first session, that is, the first hour in which we meet with the analyst to present the whirlwind of conflicts that fill our minds. In the present case, I have pointed out the

²³ The dictionary of psychoanalysis defines foreclosure as a Lacanian concept that designates a specific mechanism of psychosis. There is the rejection of a signifier outside the symbolic universe of the subject, it is not integrated into the unconscious, but returns in reality as hallucination (Roudinesco and Plon, 1998, p. 510).

theoretical proposition that human beings can present neurotic contents in their psyche because of their own understanding of nature and the ways in which they respond to such knowledge.

The Society-Nature interaction is often discussed in the contemporary world, mainly because it raises concerns about environmental preservation and economic practices capable of advancing the extinction of humanity. But I considered the existence of a plot of representations integrated into or out of the unconscious that elaborate the Society-Nature relation as a constant re-elaboration of the Oedipal complex: a fusional relation with the mother figure -> desire for possession -> representation of oneself as occupying a phallic place -> discovery of the phallic place of the father figure -> castration anxiety -> neuroses.

Such neuroses are mirrored in exemplary social behaviors of a world whose geographies are delusional:

- The contemporary world is marked by contradictory/neurotic speeches about nature and, especially, about the necessary actions for its conservation;

- While trying to preserve resources for the future, generations of children are starving in the peripheral countries;

- While large corporations set supposedly conservationist agendas and add value to their products, industrial pollution rates have never been higher;

- While large corporations spread speeches about enhancing the quality of life in order to mask the exploitation of workers, they win endorsements to deepen the exploitation of natural resources;

- While the cosmetic industry and rejuvenation programs overwhelm us with demands for high corporeal performance, we disregard our own biological limits in the vain attempt to escape death.

On the other hand, there are visions coming from catastrophist postures that pose nature as terrifying or vengeful, since human beings disrespect it and, therefore, the consequences are disastrous. Between the speeches of protection or fear, research should be done on the internalization of nature in the human psyche.

From readings of psychoanalysis and the understanding of neurosis as a mental conflict caused by contradictory emotions in the psyche, I sought to understand human beings' motivations to establish defense, control, or indifference mechanisms when it comes to thinking about the magnitude of nature as opposed to the ephemeral nature of life. Humbly, this essay only intended to start the analytical process about these issues.

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