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Alberto Pacheco Benites

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A PROLOGUE REGARDING VIOLENCE¹

By: Alberto Pacheco Benites

« *It's not a question of worrying
or of hoping for the best,
but of finding new weapons*»

GILLES DELEUZE – *Negotiations*

The world spills violence. The violence of our socio-political and economic system, the violence of our media practices and logics, the violence of the reactionary demonstrations that have appeared around the world in recent years. From precarious ways of life that leave a large part of the population to survive –or to be exploited– to conservatism and extremism, through a general lack of empathy, as well as a lack of understanding of the ecological problem, all features of something that crosses different realities: violence. Playing with the phrase, we could say that a spectre is haunting the entire world: the spectre of normalized violence, which runs through everything.

If it is something that occurs in practically all instances and dynamics of the social, it is because is consistent with the logics that sustain the very rhythms of Modernity as a whole and the systems and institutions that are part of it. Thus, from competition as a form of interrelation, to submission to the informational regime and its acceleration. Therefore, what these lines seek is, first, to shed light on what inaugurates the trail of violence in the modern world and its mutations (from the dawn of Modernity to neoliberalism and its forms). Likewise, the various manifestations of current violence (neoliberal and digital) are reviewed, trying to make a cartography of the manifestations of violence, later articulating with the contribution of Kevin Boileau's book.

FROM PRE-LIBERAL VIOLENCE TO NEOLIBERAL VIOLENCE

The violent dynamics of Modernity logic can be traced back to Renaissance humanism itself, an earlier moment that will be decisive for the route of its course. And it is that, before the consolidation of classical Capitalism or the politics of Liberalism (protagonists since the dawn of the 18th century and a constituent part of the modern paradigm and system), and even before the realization of the rational spirit (typical of the Enlightenment thought), traits of a violence are already manifested in what is usually attributed to the modern dynamics of meaning. So it is rather under the umbrella of Renaissance humanism that the foundations will be laid for certain forms of modern violence.

It is during this period that man's relationship with nature will undergo a turn. This will take the place of a *thing*, of an *object* that has to be understood as that *to be* transformed, used or employed by the *subject*. The link with nature changes since, from then on, it will not even be possible to empathize with what has been reduced only to its condition of *thing* or –even more emphatically–

¹ This text is translated to English by: Alejandro Engelhardt Seminario and it constitutes the Prologue of the book *The Inauthenticity of Human Violence: A Critique of Modernity* (Montana: EPIS Press), written by Kevin Boileau, PhD, and published on August 2021.

to its condition of «exploitable resource». The conception of nature as an *object* whose utility lies in its transformation and in the operations carried out on it (that is, in its conversion into a «natural resource»), will be the correlate of the consolidation of a utilitarian sense of the world by man².

At the same time, this shift corresponds to placing man in the centrality of meaning; first as an interpreter and articulator of the world (something typical of humanism until its Renaissance version) and, later, as a *transformer* that must operate with nature. This position of an «active subject» with respect to the passivity of the natural object is characteristic of an extractivist appropriation that could be considered violent in relation to nature itself. Hence, before considering this kind of dynamic as inherited solely from liberal thought, it would be worth taking into account these pre-liberal mutations.

On the other hand, it is important to point out that this way of thinking would circumscribe such violent processes as that of the colonization of the American continent, as well as the first great extractive exploitations of natural resources.

Although, as Kevin Boileau's book reflects, at the heart of liberal and capitalist logic beats the basis for the constitution of a violent dynamic of the subjects, the truth is that for the reality of America (from Patagonia to Alaska, passing through the Caribbean islands) and for its contemporary violence processes, that pre-liberal violence could be considered as something resonant. And it is that the current outbreaks of violence in the continent will be marked by various consequences of forms of violence traceable to the process of invasion and colonization itself (which occurred in the context of the humanist paradigm of rebirth), whose defects we still carry. It is on the basis of that violence as a way of life, of that violence legitimized through mechanisms of exploitation and domination, that the liberal apparatus and its dynamics would later be established³.

Thus, towards the 18th century, with the subsequent emergence of the constituent triad of the modern system (Capitalism, Liberal Democracy, Newtonian-Cartesian Heritage Science), what happens is the acceleration and optimization of these dynamics of power and of domination: these will be part of the framework produced by the mutual consolidation of such systems.

Thus, on the one hand, science would emphasize the *subject-object* relationship⁴, favoring a technical approach and productive optimization with respect to nature, which would drive the engine of the Industrial Revolution that would take place within it. This, at the same time that the apparatus of

² It is worth mentioning that, by the 20th century, even man himself will fall under this logic of utility.

³ If not, let us think of the depredation of natural resources –especially minerals– that has occurred in various parts of the South American territory since the 16th century (the paradigmatic case is that of the silver mines of Potosí), as well as all the discussion around the condition of the natives, with respect to whom it was urgent to determine, for example, their condition as barbarians or savages, their condition as «sons of god», that is, their very quality as «humans», such as that it is illustrated in the famous debates of the «Valladolid Controversy» between Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda. In both cases, a centrality of man with respect to that nature-object is evidenced, as well as a division that would later emphasize and deepen the inequalities during the constitution of the different States in America.

⁴ Cf.: Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

power-knowledge that the Social Sciences would deploy, at the service of *reason of State* and subsequent *governmentality*, would consolidate forms of modern power exercise⁵.

On the other hand, Capitalism would consolidate as a form of economic relationship *par excellence*, also changing cultural and political forms forever. Both from its initial, more mercantilist version, as well as in the line of the more classical liberal economic proposal, the productive apparatus will be essential for the constitution and consolidation of the Nation-State⁶.

Finally, the logic of liberal politics would allow the articulation of both systems and would not only consolidate itself as the political form of the management of that Nation-State, but also introduce a new conception of the individual, their rights and the logics of representation.

However, this triad of articulated systems that serve as the basis for Modernity and that would be positioned as the compass for the project of *progress*, the way in which the supposed enlightened *promise* the achieving of a «better world» could be fulfilled, It ended only by configuring the most brutal expressions of violence that had been known until then.

Thus, the search to reinforce a democratic and liberal Nation-State, which reserved the monopoly of legal violence (something that was at the heart of the very emergence of the State⁷), caused during the 20th century the tragic appearance of various forms of totalitarianism and the occurrence of military disasters, including two World Wars. On the other hand, the idea of general wealth (and social improvement) based on the growth of the market from the capitalist logic, served as the basis for the appearance of forms of inequality and exploitation that generated various social overflows from, even , the 19th century itself, when the discussion around «the social question» appears. Finally, science and scientific thought, as well as the faith in technical progress, not only sharpened the relationship of dominance / extraction / abuse with respect to nature, but was also at the service of those war tragedies, as well as the productive apparatus. In other words, instead of constituting the *via regia* for the supposed advance and progress –as it happened in Cartesian dreams, enlightened and later positivist–, science went far from configuring any kind of exit.

This modern scaffolding (Capitalism, Liberalism, Science) reinforced the dynamics of a violence that have been characteristic during the last centuries. So, if the intention is to trace a kind of contemporary «genealogy of violence», the entire articulation of the modern apparatus, as well as those features that stand out from a period prior to its consolidation should be considered. And, again, it is with the turn of humanism, which places man as the articulator of the world, that these characteristics settle.

However –continuing in the spirit of such a genealogical journey– emphasis should be placed on the dynamics of contemporary violence, which certainly involve some mutations with respect to

⁵ Cf.: Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population. Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–78* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007).

⁶ Along these lines, Adam Smith's proposal in *The Wealth of Nations* links the growth of the State precisely with the consolidation of the national market. Said growth, moreover, went through taking care of individuals and avoiding their alienation, something that happens far from the dynamics of current Capitalism.

⁷ Cf.: Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States AD 990 1992* (Oxford: Wiley, 1993).

the violence of the modern world. And it is that, although with Modernity a logic of acceleration of social and human dynamics is inaugurated, it will be in the last decades of the 20th century (and until today) that this logic is going to accelerate even more so, to unusual levels. Thus, the forms of current violence are conditioned precisely with the mutation of liberalism into neoliberalism and with the contemporary communicational overflow, which places it differently in the social context.

ABOUT OUR NEOLIBERAL-DIGITAL VIOLENCE

It would be necessary to start by stating that, even when its logics centered on the individual have well served as the basis for the logics of later violence, the truth is that classical Liberalism had not yet instituted dynamics that exacerbated the sense of dislocation and erosion of the entire social fabric. Neoliberalism, on the other hand –and as Foucault well traced in his biopolitical analysis–, is going to place both the exacerbated competition for all spaces of the social, as well as the conception of the subject as a resource of itself, such as the bases on which to articulate social dynamics⁸. And so, with the conception of neoliberalism not only as an economic configuration, but as a whole conception of society, the door was opened to an unprecedented deployment of violence. Let's say, if the foundations of modern thought inaugurated the path of violent drifts, the neoliberal acceleration would take them to the limits of their overflows.

In this sense, to account for some of the broad scope of current violence, three «fronts» of contemporary violence are proposed here:

a) The violence of the system itself. It is embedded in the very conception that neoliberalism proposes of society and in its economic rationality. And it is that the processes of competition exacerbated between subjects, as well as the general precariousness of living conditions (either through the privatization of services or the flexibilization and deregulation of labor), supposes the configuration of violent dynamics in various –although complementary– levels.

On the one hand, it implies throwing large sectors of the population into the dynamics of survival, without the minimum guaranteed conditions for a dignified life or under the dictatorship of «every man for himself». On the other hand, it places the subjects in the place of representing a threat to the survival of the *other*, as they all compete to improve mainly their purchasing abilities. Thus, under the shadow of precariousness and competitive desire as a *dictum* of culture, violence accumulates, while the possibilities of creating links diminishes.

It is violent, then, that way in which neoliberalism throws us to survival as a way of life. It is something that goes beyond the mere focus on the individual, typical of Liberalism; although it is rooted in it, it supposes a mutation in this regard. Rather, it is a cannibalistic safeguard of living standards, given the possibilities of access for each individual to increasingly privatized services.

⁸ While the ordoliberal proposals of the interwar period already give a privileged place to the competition and place as the medium par excellence for social relations, the North American neoliberalism of the Chicago School onwards, in addition, will be in charge of placing the productive optimization of the subject as in value par excellence. This even leading to a new form of subjectivity, that of the «entrepreneur of himself». Cf.: Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–79* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008).

Services, these, that precisely have to do with decent living conditions and that are also central to the success and well-being of society as a whole (health, education, housing, etc.) and that go from being a concern of *the common* to being entangled with the same logic of goods. Thus, it can be *accessed / acquired*, devouring options to *others* (by law of supply-and-demand) that do not have the basic conditions for a possible or feasible fair access «competition».

In this sense, there is a considerable leap from *liberal individualism* to *neoliberal necro-politics*, based on access capacities and that implies managing death for large sectors of the planet based on economic possibilities. While the first incubates a violent conception of relationships and inter-relational dynamics on a personal level, the second legitimizes this form of competition as a desirable way of life, proliferating to almost all spheres the violence of not considering the other as part of the same problem but as competition *par excellence*. The obsession with «economic success» or that contemporary «cult» to the growth of economic possibilities, is a correlate of this. In the same way, it is the marginalization and stigmatization of poverty and the lack of access: the whole line of reasoning around «the poor are poor because they want to». This results in forms of even more explicit and generalized violence.

Hence, this capitalist acceleration marks a difference with respect to classical Liberalism that, although it may have laid the foundations of this conception, did not legitimize or expand such type of planetary dynamics.

But this relationship between neoliberalism and violence extends far beyond the very logics of economy and refers to a different form of the factual exercise of institutional violence. In good account, the context of the neoliberal has always needed violence to impose or perpetuate itself. Thus, on the one hand, there is the fact that neoliberalism itself and its acceleration have been brutally imposed through dictatorships (Chile and Argentina in the 1970s), before having become hegemonic at a global level, through the governments of Thatcher and Reagan. This, without considering the levels of brutality to which the safeguarding of the neoliberal economic order can appeal in the face of possibilities for change. In this sense, the social outbreaks of recent years (from the *Occupy* demonstrations, to the riots that have overflowed in Latin America since 2019, the most recent being that of Colombia in 2021, passing through the «yellow vests» in France, among many others), show the decibels of violence with which the institutional response can roar. In a similar line of analysis, some proposals have realized how the imposition of a neoliberal dynamic almost supposes the foundation of a state of «civil war» in societies⁹. Finally, as mentioned, neoliberalism appears as a «recipe» whenever there is a destroyed institutionality (either by dictatorship or by war), since it is this context that gives up so many spaces of social organization to this generalized criterion of depoliticization of structures and privatization of social dimensions. Foucault himself explores a similar line when he detects neoliberalism and introduces

⁹ Cf.: Éric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato. *Wars and Capital* (Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2018). Also: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

a logic by which it is the functioning and economic efficiency where the legitimation of the state order is based¹⁰.

On the other hand, however, factual violence also operates at a less «macro» level, permeating the closest environments in the various societies around the globe. This is the case of the dramatic increase in crime levels and the transnationalization of conflicts (something that happens hand in hand with the increase in the international arms business every year). And Hardt and Negri had pointed out at the beginning of the 21st century that the state of exception would become a constant in a world of generalized and perennial wars, as well as towards 2019 Lazzarato points out that today it is rather «a period of blurring, of hybridization of the State of law and the state of exception»¹¹.

To this should be added what is happening with the current proliferation of crime or drug trafficking, as well as the culture of violence unleashed down to the tiniest fibers of daily life. We are witnessing what has been referred to as a «privatization of war»¹², that is, the proliferation of combat zones around the various societies which functions as a totalization of the violent logic that replaces the great warlike conflicts as isolated occurrences (in the style of the 20th century). There also resides another mutation to consider and that is that, while in the modern order that institutional factual violence corresponded to a reinforcement of the State as a figure, in the neoliberal context the violence dissipates and begins to permeate various social strata. The whole proliferation of the culture of weapons in societies like the North American one and the attacks perpetrated in schools and shopping centers are symptomatic of this.

b) The violence of the media. In order to draw something illustrative, it could be approached from two points of entry. In the first place, from the logic of the media; second, because of what happens with content and speeches.

With regard to the former, it is something that is perhaps less «evident» and corresponds, on the one hand, to the «soft» violence of the contemporary *informational regime*¹³. That is, with the submission to the violence of speed and information saturation that are imposed as a norm and that transform the sensibilities and even the anthropological constitution of the subjects, transforming their forms of reasoning. This imposition is configured through the harassment of screens, present as the quintessential medium through which almost all of our existence unfolds and develops, including the development and configuration of our own subjectivity.

It is a form of violence that takes shape from the ecstasy of the instantaneous, the violence of total and overflowed communication, which also erodes the social fabric by disconnecting subjects through technological hyperconnection. A violence that puts affections, relationships and the very

¹⁰ Cf. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of...*

¹¹ Cf. Maurizio Lazzarato, *Capital Hates Everyone. Fascism or Revolution* (Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2021), p. 9

¹² Cf.: Franco «Bifo» Berardi. *Futurability: The Age of Impotence and the Horizon of Possibility* (London: Verso Books, 2019).

¹³ Cf.: Alberto Pacheco Benites, *Mutaciones de nuestro Régimen informacional [Mutations of Our Informational Regime]* (Lima: UCAL, 2018).

way of constituting (or not) bonds in a digital and accelerated «orbit». Berardi even emphasizes how we witness the time of a generation that not only has received more language from a machine than from its own mother, but have also experienced and increasing absence of the body of other subjects¹⁴.

On the other hand, this same dimension centered on media logic is also consistent with the algorithmic nature of violence. In other words, with the ability of platforms and digital media to transform our lives into data. That is, the way in which they constitute us into a data bank that can be used as market material for the most recent form of Capitalism, which exploits them almost as if they were commodities. This aspect, which seems to have concretized the Deleuzian proposal in relation to a «society of control»¹⁵, supposes –because of its ever more intrusive and monopolizing nature– a certain violence of the system itself with respect to the lives of the subjects.

It is a feature that goes beyond the discussions around the implications at the level of privacy of the subjects or around the alterations that this implies with respect to the freedom of information, so much in vogue today¹⁶. And, in addition to that, what this logic emphasizes is the desire to «prey» on resources, characteristic of the current digital industry. In other words, the capacity to generate more and larger plots of data extraction in the vast territories of our lives, which will progressively end up more and more commercialized and commodified. Thus, as in another previous configuration of Capitalism, nature became in that territory something to be «conquered» in an extractivist logic, today the giants of the digital world seem to be thrown into that same spirit, but this time in relation to fields that have to do with production of our own subjectivity and life¹⁷. There is also an eagerness to force territories of social life. And it is that, finally, it implies the consolidation of a structure of services monopolized by a handful of private companies that assume the power to dominate and control social functions and services that today are considered necessary and indispensable for the subjects.

All these implications, however, correspond to that first dimension of media violence, which falls on the side of logic and functioning.

The second dimension, on the other hand, has to do with a rather discursive dynamic of the media in relation to violence. They have ended up mitridatizing violence in society, in the same way that a poison is inoculated until we become immune. The media, therefore, have made us immune to the symbolic effects of certain violence.

¹⁴ Cf.: Franco «Bifo» Berardi, *Heroes. Mass Murder and Suicide* (London: Verso Books, 2015).

¹⁵ Cf.: Gilles Deleuze, «Postscript on control societies» in: *Negotiations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

¹⁶ For several years now, the effects of «echo chambers» or the so-called «filter bubble» refer to the fact that people consume information that is consistent with their prejudices and consumption habits by algorithm decision, which in ultimately only strengthens positions and prejudices already typical of the users. See: Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble* (New York: Penguin, 2011).

¹⁷ By the 1970s, Félix Guattari had anticipated that the next form of Capitalism (which he called «Integrated World Capitalism») would focus its economic operations precisely on subjectivity itself and its production. See: Félix Guattari, *Plan sobre el planeta. Capitalismo mundial integrado y revoluciones moleculares* [*Plan on the planet. Integrated world capitalism and molecular revolutions*] (Madrid: Traficantes de sueños, 2004).

Apart from the violent operations of media logic (whether due to speed or saturation, or because of the ability to subsume everything in a dynamic of commodification of corners of our lives turned into data), apart from this, there is also an operation in terms of symbolic and discursive effects.

Throughout the last decades and prior to the entire digital explosion, the media have inoculated violence. «Real violence», let's say, is normalized and becomes part of the everyday as a result of the imaginary dynamics of the media. And it is that, by normalizing the presence and treatment of overt violence, it has become part of the daily landscape. From urban criminality and brutal expressions of extreme crimes, to terrorism or the effects of drug trafficking, all the spillovers of the manifestation of violence (con)form our daily buffet of images. This has ended up normalizing such content, while reducing the symbolic impact of its effects. It is something that comes from overlapping –in the same accelerated flow of images without depth– from the most heinous crimes to the entertainment news, all traversed and dissolved as a result of the acceleration of the omnipresent screens. Thus, in parallel, this class of events become part of what is acceptable in the everyday environment (they become normal) and also –in an almost ironic effect– contribute to configure a state of anxiety, a state of generalized alarm, in order to show rampant violence, especially due to urban crime or terrorism.

On the other hand, the media treatment of violence tends to fall into two common vices. In the first place, by *marginalizing* and *stigmatizing* certain groups or populations (migrants, the poor, etc.), building or reinforcing stereotypes in relation to violence, focusing its coverage on imaginary mostly related to certain sectors (geographic and demographic). This not only contributes to the erosion of the social fabric as a whole, but also reduces the possibilities of establishing ties of empathy.

Secondly, however, when the media has to deal with extreme violence or brutal criminality (serial killers, lurid crimes, attacks, mass killings, etc.), they choose rather to isolate the violence, placing it as something almost alien to their own social fabric. For this, the explanation and coverage tends to focus –mainly– from the side of the psychiatric pathology of the perpetrators. And, although it is clear that in many cases this «pathologization» can be correct, the truth is that this kind of isolated explanation, as well as the media coverage of it, ends up becoming a kind of «monster factory»¹⁸. It is preferred to isolate certain «monsters» (focusing the problem on the individual), rather than to echo the violent dynamics of the system itself and the violence that it configures, from its economic or political logics and that, ultimately, produces such individuals.

It is easier to think in terms of a few «bad apples» than to fall back on what macerates the violence of a society. Such is the case, for example, of economic conditions, public policies, levels of widespread precariousness or even the dynamics of the media itself. It is known that the current epidemic of stress and anguish is related to these living conditions, as well as to the forms of media reasoning in the same way that the privatization of war already mentioned is linked to a generalized culture in pursuit of arms. .

¹⁸ Alberto Pacheco Benites, *Mutaciones de nuestro...* p. 102-107

In any case, it is necessary to consider these dimensions of the media in order to understand how much of the neoliberal-digital logic incubates in its bosom the veins through which the forms of current violence creep in until we are overwhelmed.

c) Reactionary violence. In this context, plagued by violence that is of a more *macro* nature, it has become evident that in recent years the reactionary responses to the possibilities of change or questioning are also very marked by violence. The truth is that the emergence of neo-fascism, expanded extremism, the return of openly expressed racism, as well as intolerance of all kinds around the world also account for a generalization of violence in its worst version.

The revival of various speeches by intolerant and extremists, as well as the proliferation of very marked institutional repression, are only symptoms of the violent scene that haunts us today. To mention just a few examples of this: the merciless responses of the Latin American governments regarding the ongoing demonstrations in recent years¹⁹, the incitement of the insurrectionary takeover of the United States Capitol by conspiratorial fanatics, the car running over of people in anti-racist BLM demonstrations or the emergence of openly neo-Nazi movements in Europe. These overflowing levels of violence are due to intolerance and unleashed counter-empathy, part of a phenomenon that has already been treated and well identified from different angles. Thus, while Badiou speaks of a «democratic fascism»²⁰, Lazzarato refers to a clear «neofascism»²¹. In the case of the institutional response, the idea of a «counterrevolution without revolution»²², seems to describe the scenario quite well. In any case, again, everything is framed in the context of precariousness and inequalities raised by neoliberal economic rationality. It is there that the discontent that boils and ends up exploding are incubated, just as it is around this system that reactionary defenses are wielded²³.

As previously mentioned, factual violence beats at the heart of neoliberalism, be it in dictatorship, repression or, more profoundly, in the generalized disarticulation of the instances of politicization of the social. And, finally, it is in the generalized depoliticization of society (another of the neoliberal actions *par excellence*) where the cause of these current manifestations lies. There the origins of this contemporary outbreak of extremism can be traced, which return like pus in a sore that stubbornly has not finished healing.

¹⁹ One can count deaths by the dozens in the manifestations rising in Colombia (2021 and still ongoing), Peru (2020), Chile (2019-2020) Ecuador and Haiti (2019), among others.

²⁰ Cf.: Alain Baidou, *Trump* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019).

²¹ Cf.: Maurizio Lazzarato, *Capital Hates...*

²² Cf.: Bernard E. Harcourt, *The Counterrevolution: How our Government Went to War Against its Own Citizens* (New York: Basic Books, 2018).

²³ Davies has well called this context as that of a «punitive neoliberalism», in which the precariousness and the mechanisms of indebtedness of large sectors of the population is characteristic of a stage «in which governments and societies unleash hatred and violence upon members of their own populations», see: William Davies, «The new neoliberalism», in: *New Left Review*, N ° 101, Nov-Dec 2016, p. 130.

If neoliberalism has been in charge of systematically depoliticizing education and the various strata of society, how can we hope to build a notion of citizenship that can include forms of dialogue, instead of dragging itself through the twists and turns of reaction, closure, and intolerance?

To a large extent, this constituent dynamic of the neoliberal –which advocates and promotes the depoliticization of all dimensions of society– is consistent with the trend towards conservatism and extremisms of various calibers. Given the lack (or the general erosion) of spaces for organization and political dialogue; and given the preponderance of ecstatic information flows as the main source of current information, it is not surprising that the easy and extremist discourses (supported by the most supine passions) are the preponderant. In times of algorithmic censorship (which offers us only what reinforces our consumption) and the viral proliferation of *fake news*, it should come as no surprise that our depoliticized environment is perfect for the spread of all kinds of pro-reactionary communication. This is the case of conspiracy theories regarding supposed macabre plans in pursuit of a kind of global domination; for example, the laughable theory of QAnon or the denial regarding vaccines against COVID-19 as well as, in the Latin American case, the supposed neo-Marxist «New World Order» that –they say– allied with the Sao Paulo Forum it intends to destroy the family and the State, in addition to a long etcetera which is not worth delving in. It is, in any case, a rejection that is correlated to the labeling as an extremist, communist (or something similar) any alternative that goes against a supposed order to defend.

So, to put it in more concrete terms, if social relations are depoliticized (from the possibilities of union organization to education and its contents) and instead the indiscriminate flow of digital information is instituted as the main reference, it is almost obvious that it has derived in dynamics as violent as the current ones. On the basis of the general discontent resulting from neoliberalism, the information that corroborates and reinforces the narrowness of our own convictions and points of view is frantically emphasized. In this way, all options for dialogue and criticism are eliminated, and the possibility of political empathy is totally banished.

What is vital to highlight is that both dynamics cannot be considered separately, both are constituents of the neoliberal-digital order and both lay the foundations for the proliferation of violence at the levels that we witness today. There is, in the logic of such operations, a *via regia* to the normalization of violence as a form of expression.

If neoliberalism has configured something, with its privilege of competition, with its generalized precariousness, with its depoliticization of the social, it is precisely an erosion of the entire fabric of the social from different fronts, opening the door to violence as a leading form of our time. In parallel, the media discourse has normalized the presence of violence, they have made it digestible for society, as well as its logics have reinforced the erosion of criticism and spaces for dialogue, replacing them with the «ecstasy of the informational flow», by the violence of speed and the violence of the algorithmic tyranny of our consumption.

Again, the violence of our time is grounded in the thought of the modern paradigm and in the capitalist and liberal dynamics from its most classical version, but it is important to emphasize how the crisis of Modernity and its institutional order accelerated these dynamics until we were thrown into these different versions of neoliberal-digital «hyper-violence».

TO PIERCE VIOLENCE: ABOUT THIS BOOK

Oceans of ink have been spilled in all languages to announce and denounce the violence. And they will never be enough and it will never cease to be an urgent task.

Our times urge its approach and critical treatment from as many fronts as possible. It will always be necessary, let's say, to attack their joints from all the trenches that could be established, in order to try to build a society (and a humanity) that is at the very least aware of the drifts of violence that cross it.

In this sense, Kevin Boileau's proposal offers a perspective that allows a crucial operation: to overturn the various dynamics and logics of the system towards the constitution and structuring of the subjects. It is an approach to how subjectivity is configured in this context of proliferating violence. Thus, with the conceptual tools of psychoanalysis, phenomenology and ontological reflection, this book approaches –to say it with a Deleuzian tenor– the dynamics by which all the violence of the «outside» (addressed in the lines of this prologue) is *folded* in the subjectivity of the subjects. Ultimately, it is those who constitute their social ties and who experience or develop exchanges that become (or not) marked by violence. It is the subjects who, plagued by highly complex dynamics of violence, finally end up immersed in an «existential fragmentation», to use a term from the book itself.

Apart from the panoramic analyzes and systematizations with respect to violence (always necessary and useful), it is urgent to also address the dynamics that constitute us as *selves*, the cartography of the ways in which subjectivity is consolidated. And that is the bridge that builds Kevin Boileau's work. It is about unraveling how the workings of the system and the logic of power of Capitalism and the liberal system *fold* into subjectivities, giving rise to the workings of violent tenors. Let's say, it is not enough –although it is necessary– only to critically address the logics of necro-politics of the current configuration of Capitalism. It is also important and vital to understand how they relate to the structural and ontological constitution of the subjects. Find out what are the journeys that subjectivation goes through in times so plagued by structural violence. It is there that this book appears most strongly. In the terms of its author, it is about paying attention (without intending that this is a limitation, but rather a point of view from which to generate a crack or a *line of flight*) to those «inter-relational dynamics» and «intentional structures between individuals».

In this sense, it is important to emphasize the role that a perspective of this type embodies: it allows dialogue with the micro-political possibilities of the response. Although the micro-political²⁴ occurs precisely at the level of subjectivities and involves operating in transformations that take place at that level and that can open spaces to the most important political configurations, it is necessary to start by understanding how they are constituted and how they are configured.

It is precisely from this that possibilities of transformation can be conceived. Otherwise, if bridges and flows are not established between the systemic analysis of violence «from the outside» and the

²⁴ Cf.: Félix Guattari y Suely Rolnik. *Micropolítica. Cartografías del deseo* [*Micropolitics. Cartographies of Desire*] (Madrid: Traficantes de sueños, 2006).

dynamics by which they fold into subjectivity (as is the case in this book), the possibilities of articulating micropolitical transformations are compromised.

Thus, while it is vital to draw a kind of genealogy of what can give rise to dynamics of violence in the entire social fabric, something that can go from the ontological preponderance of man over nature (typical of humanism), towards the Objectual and transforming rationalism (typical of modern thought), towards the deployment of disciplinary logic and bio-political or governmental dynamics, to become (in more recent times) control logics (open and total), which are also consistent with the dynamics of the neoliberal as a whole, although it is vital to trace and explore such a genealogy, it is not enough. It is also crucial to understand the instances of possibility that unfold in the constitution of subjectivities. The book that follows, in good account, reflects on the cornice of these constitutional dynamics at the level of the subjects. In other words, how the subject is constituted within the framework of the systemic dynamics of violence.

And it is based on this reflection that possible ways out and ways of eroding violence can be explored, precisely by proposing a critique from the understanding of how it operates. This is in contrast to the vicious circle of what Kevin calls «self-actualization» and that corresponds to the discourses that somehow appease or quiet the responses that the dismantling of violence should awaken. Thus, the entire apparatus of pharmaco-psychiatry or psychiatry in its most banalized and commercialized version (as in life-coaching), only de-potentiates the possibilities of micropolitical responses (of transformation of subjectivities) with respect to the violence.

On the other hand, in order to try to establish a radical empathy that allows building bridges to erode the walls that violence imposes (at a subjective level), he urges us to consider the importance of analyzing the dynamics of the constitution of the subjects. The solution to our political entrapment is thus micro-politics. So the job is to have as many tools as possible to pierce violence in all its instances, despite the bleak outlook or circumstances. As the Deleuzian epigraph of this text refers to, there is no more room for fear or hope: we must look for new weapons. And we urge all possible weapons against forms of violence. This book is one of them.