

WHAT THE SONG OF THE ACHÉ WOMEN TELLS.
THE REPRESSION OF FEMALE POLITICS WITHIN PRIMITIVE
AND HISTORICAL SOCIETIES THROUGH AN ANALYSIS
OF PIERRE CLASTRES' ESSAY *THE BOW AND THE BASKET*

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ABSTRACT

The more single members of society hold themselves equal among each other, beyond the generalised classifications of sex and age, the more *sapiens sapiens* society comes closer to Kant's utopian illuminism as the model of humanism. Conversely, the maximum of anti-humanism is achieved among patriarchal societies, in all of their expressions, organised around the principle of hierarchy in a decreasing fashion, from the idea of the female to male subordination onwards. Pierre Clastres' great contribution to the understanding of humanistic social logic is the discovery that in primitive society the community, as a unit-totality, exercises its control over political power; a power embodied in the institutional figure of the leader, the One of La Boétie. Through the pages of *L'Arc et le Panier*, Pierre Clastres analyses the female-male relationship in the Amerindian tribe of the Southern Aché. Proceeding from his observations on food production, he brings out a sort of wild humanism, often contradicted later in many passages from his *Chronique des Indiens Guayaki*. This latter work presents the emergence of the practice of femicide within Southern Aché society. Proceeding from a cultural interdiction of Aché females to use the bow: the hunter's tool, one that marginalizes women in food production, we will examine several studies on matrilineal societies stretching from Morgan to Malinowski. An *iter* that will be accentuated by war between communities, reaching all the way to patriarchal totalitarianism. In this framework, the local matrilineal choices of primitive society acquire a new humanistic sense of control over the politics of hierarchy as suggested by the ethnoarchaeological research of Marija Gimbutas and her school. In the light of Gimbutas' studies, Kantian humanism becomes the cultural form of struggle against the patriarchal hierarchical degeneration of our historical Western societies, whose human regressive stabilisation is expressed by the imperialistic states and their monotheistic religion, confirming the fundamental affirmation of Pierre Clastres: "*Avant d'être économique, l'aliénation est politique*".

Keywords: Malencontre, Sustenance Meal, Sexual Meal, Pecking Order, Egalitarian Sharing, Natura Naturans, Natura Naturata, Matrilineal, Patriarchal.

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The philosopher of old was certainly not mistaken when he affirmed that history looks to the detail and poetry to the universal (transposing, that is to say, practical historical problems into universal human values)

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When quoting in his essay *Liberté Malencontre Innommable*, a seminal passage from *Discours de la Servitude Volontaire*, Pierre Clastres makes the pivotal point of his meditation the capital question posed by French philosopher Étienne de la Boétie:

...quel mal rencontre a esté cela, qui a peu tant dénaturer l'homme, seul né de vrai pour vivre franchement; et loui faire perdre la souvenance de son premier être, et le désir de le reprendre?

thus opening back political speculation to a libertarian perspective. The *Contr'Un* was, from Pierre Clastres' anthropological standpoint, an almost inevitable choice as an outset for his studies representing one of the most outstanding pamphlets of the French Renaissance and containing such ideological strength to provoke the birth of Montaigne's *Essais*. During the nineteenth century, the *Discours* were taken up by the radical pamphleteers and elevated to cornerstone of the critique against State-based societies as well as anarchy's *urtext*. In the decade 1960-1970, La Boétie became once again an exemplary space of reflection not only for Pierre Clastres but for a whole intellectual community of the time: the entourage gravitating around the Parisian human sciences magazine *Libre*, a group that shared the communal conscience of experiencing life under a tyrannical society, just like La Boétie during his time. The thinkers of *Libre* viewed the political habitat of the Cold War years as the opposition between neo-capitalist mercantilism and Leninist Marxism (Bolshevism). Said habitat took up its roots after WWII with the defeat of Nazifascism and reorganised the political life of the planet once again in the form of a totalitarian repressive expression.

In the political meditations of the young libertarian thinkers of *Libre*, La Boétie had also survived a political habitat overpowered by tyranny, a time described by the author of the *Contr'Un* as: "as long as history itself". Before said time though, La Boétie explains, man had been free; before the time of the coming of the tyranny of kings and priests in La Boétie's words the "*malencontre innommable*". The thinkers of *Libre*, however, shared a consciousness about the possibility of the existence of something more during the times preceding the slavery of the species: the political

form of free societies among the *sapiens sapiens*. The anthropological research of the group of *Libre* reconstructed the true and original form of human society or 'prymaeval' this the real root of 'primitive', from which tyrannical historical societies were derived through a process of political involution.

Wreckages of 'primitive societies' had survived until the 1960-1970s confined to a few tropical rainforests. These Sylvanian, hence 'savage', societies had been an object of study for Pierre Clastres, who acquired much more than a knowledge *in re* of what constitutes a free society: he pieced together the dynamics of this freedom. Clastres deduced that primitive societies remain beyond servitude by remaining beyond a State-based structure and preventing the development of internal power structures, whose phenomonic social form is found in the process of hierarchization. This process is made possible by the constant control that primitive societies exercise on their political structures, while in historical societies the same power structures saturate the whole social body through a hierarchical cancerogenous process culminating in the figure of One tyrant oppressor of all others. This is the State-based society founded on taxation and militarization, two functions that turn the people into serfs in constant financial and bloody debt quantified, from time to time, by the needs of the tyrant and the bureaucratic machine: generally one and the same.

The young intellectuals of *Libre* perceived this looting of their society operated by the politics of government embodying both neo-capitalism and bolshevism at once, two social machines engaged in mock combat to stage their farcical version of freedom. Clastres distinguished himself among the members of *Libre* for the radical speculative audacity of his thinking. He first stated that 'primitive society' refuses political forms that would dichotomize it into a 'dominant/dominated' relationship, acting as one entity in the control of the community over politics. State-driven societies, on the other hand, develop the diminutive split 'dominant/dominated' through the bureaucratic apparatus. The State-driven machine then permeates the whole social tissue operating through a further split guided by its leaders, thus stalling any other political form except for the duality 'command-obedience'. While these State machines might be phenomenologically different, they remain structurally the same, creating the very same dichotomized 'dominant/dominated' society. In Clastres' rendering, within *sapiens sapiens* communities the political machine is an alternating duality: *aut* primitive society and freedom *aut* State machine and servitude.

These were Clastres' formative studies in the years 1950-1960s that shaped his libertarian political speculation. His anthropological politics

focused on locating and reconstructing the reasons for the inexplicable shift from the politics of freedom of the origins to the politics of servitude characterizing historical societies. Otherwise said: finding an answer to the question formulated by Étienne de La Boétie in the *Contr'Un*: "Why man, born free, accepts to serve"?

La Boétie, a thinker steeped in the classics, had speculated about and made his the focus of Hellenistic thought: man is naturally free, servitude is a product of the process of civilization. This idea has been canonised by Aristotle as an effect of the persuasion that in the *polis* the citizen's freedom was possible only through the servile work of others. But this explanation, which leads through its coherent development to the Marxist motto: *civilization is the freedom of the few based on the work of the multitudes*, does not persuade La Boétie. The philosopher sees the enslavement of man over man as hierarchical subordination; a fact in itself inexplicable. In the laboetian mind no one can force a single subjectivity into obedience and so, to account for the unaccountable, he creates the metaphor of the *malencontre*. Pierre Clastres goes back to this idea and the importance of a deep understanding of it, turning it into the starting point of his research on the birth of political science. His work in the field of political anthropology has left us, after the tragic car accident that cut short his meaningful life in 1977, a wealth of speculation all revolving around the fundamental problem of laboetian voluntary servitude. A dehumanized man cannot be defined as free; how is it then that man, succumbing to voluntary servitude, loses his humanity?

Today, but already to his contemporary reader, Clastres' anthropological speculation as delineated in his essay *La Société Contre l'Etat. Recherches d'Anthropologie Politique*, centred around the question of the relationship between politics and domination, appear as a Minerva born from Zeus' head. His answer to the question of the translation from nature to culture is centred around two fundamental moments of any human society: 'food' and 'sex'; or, as Marx would have put it: the problem of 'production' and 'reproduction' of every social machine. Clastres, first among all, has been able to clearly identify that during this pivotal passage from 'nature' to 'culture' the decisive question of man's dominion over man is at stake.

During the first half of the 20th century, some naturalists were accidentally led by their research on socialisation among animal communities to stumble into the political problem of social animal species. This research on natural sociability set them in a lacerating conflict with Political science, as already experienced by Darwin who involuntarily found himself questioning well rooted scientific truths shaped by religious beliefs. They offered a novel vision of social politics shaped and codified through ethology

and their study of complex forms of natural sociability found among mammals.

This ethological reformulation of human politics, finds its own Darwin in the figure of Austrian naturalist Konrad Lorenz, who besides the discovery of 'imprinting', elaborated the understanding of the intersubjective social sadomasochistic relationship: 'dominant/dominated' by identifying its existence in nature. This relationship is a remunerative libidinal form within natural mammal societies that comes to its full fruition within *sapiens sapiens* societies, when organized under the One, making every form of tyranny the real regressive renaturation of human politics.

In the field of political science, this discovery could be described as Copernican. Clastres reaches this same conclusion through his ability to see the universal oppositional relationship between 'nature' and 'culture'. This tension between nature and culture is rooted in the deep complexity of the structural web organizing primitive society and the control of the logic behind the process of natural socialization. If this latter is left to its own devices it will lead to hierarchically organized societies, phenomenologically developing further into communal human politics, that is to say: the domination of man over man, whose immediate manifestation is the primacy of male over female. This political symbolic trait, aggregated and linguistically conveyed, is the marker of all the so-called 'patriarchal' societies, or societies of the One.

The two decisive semantic re-significations of the adjectives 'primitive' and 'wild' clearly identify Clastres' revolutionary understanding of the capital problem of the domination of man over man within an anthropological context. The adjective 'primitive', after Clastres, related to the noun 'society', acquires a completely new meaning: primitive because it comes to represent the *urform* of human society, engendering all forms of historical ones, through successive, even though not necessarily progressive, developments. Before Clastres, there was a tendency to consider Darwinian evolutionism itself as an incessant progress towards higher forms. It suffices mentioning the hegemonic cultural vision of the eighteenth-century's elaboration of the stages by Smith, Turgot *et alius* and even more so, the historical dynamics that still in the late 1960s, despite Hiroshima, survived as progressive optimism based on industrialization, where the real critical break from this mental scheme was due to Rachel Carson (1962). Also the metaphor 'savage society' acquires a completely new universal meaning: 'wild' because it is capable of living in the primaeval forest without altering it structurally, due to its wise ability to maintain a desired, rational and ecological balance and integrate it through the vegetable garden and the orchard, using well thought out technological manipulation, aimed at not altering its habitat (Sahlins 1972). The 'savages' or 'primitives' know

how to maintain an ecological balance through a controlled use of natural resources and, above all, a no less careful balance between resources and population, through demographic control. 'Primitive' society intended as 'primaeval', is the first structure of social relations where the *sapiens sapiens*, breaking with the hierarchical order of natural societies, outlines its humanistic form, founding it on the principle of 'egalitarian exchange'. This cultural and linguistic relationship is symbolic but, above all, antithetical to the natural dominated/dominant relationship. Dominated/dominant is in its turn a natural relationship because it is typical of animal societies organised around hierarchy duels (Tinbergen 1951).

Building a social order beyond the natural 'dominant/dominated' sadomasochistic dialectic is the meaning of every local process of humanization, whose first original solution is the model of primitive society offered by Clastres's anthropological studies. It is the first form of human society because it overcomes the sadomasochistic dialectic that is the shared experience of all mammals' natural societies. This authentic metamorphosis of 'natural society' into a 'human society' occurs through a translation into human culture that regulates the consumption of nature, where primitive society also feeds itself in decisive universal moments: the necessary 'sustenance meal' (Sahlins 1972) and the no less necessary 'sexual meal' (Malinowski 2000 [1929]).

The following quote is the rendering in Clastrian synthesis of the oppositional dialectic relationship 'culture/nature' shaped by the natural necessity of the two meals and the cultural shape they assume in primitive society; that is to say: primitive society consumes both sustenance and sexual meals externally to the natural sadomasochistic dialectic.

It is culture itself, as the element farthest from nature, which is totally committed to the rejection of this power; and isn't it precisely in its relationship with nature that culture manifests an equally profound disavowal? This identity in the process of refusal leads us to discover in these societies an identification of power in nature: culture is the denial of both; not in the sense that power and nature are two different threats, the identity of which would be none other than that – negative – of an identical relationship with the third term, but rather that culture perceives power as the resurgence of nature itself (Clastres 1974: 40).

Only by placing the preemptive statement: "culture perceives power as the resurgence of nature itself" at the centre of the analysis of Clastrian anthropology, we understand its revolutionary implications. This statement allows us to fully grasp the reason why the choice of an egalitarian exchange is the sole complex symbolic action determining and achieving the humanization process on a social phenomenical level, as an escape

from the sadomasochistic libidinal relationship defining natural societies. The egalitarian exchange is antithetical to nature's relationships built on hierarchy duels (on the psychological level a sadomasochistic relationship); these latter are prohibited by good primitive social rules, thus interdicting the form of sadomasochistic libidinal pleasure governing the social natural space. Primitive communities, by introducing 'egalitarian exchange', suppress the hierarchical relationship within their social space, replacing it with an equitable one.

The egalitarian rule of exchange centred around the hunt is attained through the hunter's interdiction to consume his prey; thus establishing a reciprocity of exchange and an uninterrupted food supply, possible only through the mediation and governance of linguistic symbolism and thus achieving the daily metamorphosis of 'nature' into 'culture'. The original primitive form of human society was achieved, as observed by Clastres, by humanising the exchange of food predation through the exchange of prey, remoulding it into sustenance within the community. This exchange transforms the prey on which the community feeds from 'external nature' into 'internal culture'. A shift that reshapes the natural externality of predation, while importing the preyed element into the community, making food consumption a culturally managed joint experience within the tribe. If the sadomasochistic relationship is overcome through this moment of passage, its natural instinctual basis cannot, however, be suppressed but only controlled by culture or, to put it in today's technical linguistic terms to better describe the natural sadomasochistic underlayer of the cultural action: 'repressed'. This technique of repression finds its fulcrum in the initiation rites, shaping a social psychological phenomenonic idea of freedom. Primitive society is managed in an egalitarian form through the logic of possible exchange but only by repressing the natural sadomasochistic psychological drive embodied by an initiatory pedagogical path. Consequently, the sadomasochistic form of natural social language becomes the hierarchy duel, in ethology defined as the 'pecking order' (Schjelderup-Ebbe 1921).

The process of humanization passes through a repression of the egotist drive that persists and it is ready to re-emerge as soon as it finds an attenuation of the repressive egalitarian and civilising moment within the social tissue. The suppressed egotist drive is an endemic potential source of conflictual forces within the subject and by the subject; while within the egotist subject it is the root element of potential social disorder. This egotist re-emergence of natural subjectivity channelled into social subjectivity by local cultural repression can already be found among the hunters of primitive communities as supported by research in the field by the exemplary instance of Aché hunters' song.

The Aché (Axe people), also known as Guayakí, Guayaki-Aché, and Guoyagui by Guarani-speaking neighbours and thus mistakenly labelled by early anthropologists that had first come into contact with the latter populations, were a group of tribes now extinct, from the jungles of Southern Paraguay, already studied in the late 1940s by Alfred Metraux, who suggested it as an object of ethnographic research to Pierre Clastres. Clastres accepted the invitation and with his friend Lucien Sebag, spent a significant amount of time among the Aché people, whose memory he handed down to us through his *Chronique des Indiens Guayaki – Ce que Savent les Aché Chasseurs Nomades du Paraguay*. This narration spanning between the 1950s and '60s carries a tragic depth by retracing the ethnocide of a group that had long entered a regressive phase due to eroding external aggressions.

Even before their devastating contact with the West the Aché, under pressure from neighbouring tribes, had to take refuge in an impoverished part of the jungle to ensure their survival; a step that forced them to abandon horticulture and seek their sustenance mainly by hunting. The scarcity of plant-based food in the area of the forest they had retrieved to, led them to practice differentiated infanticide, favouring the killing of newborn females, since in Clastres's explanation hunting, a male prerogative through the interdiction of the use of the bow for females, was the main source of tribal subsistence. Generally, in primitive societies procuring food obtained from plants is a female task, and the Aché were no exception. The local scarcity of plant resources in the bush, among other factors, resulted in the marginalization of the females within the tribal chain of food production, compared to the males engaged in hunting, now the main source of food supply. However, the solution to the problem of the sustenance meal through differentiated infanticide of females posed the problem of the sexual meal once the male generation of those suppressed females came of age. This shortcoming was resolved by the Aché in an egalitarian direction, that is: through polyandry.

The polyandrous solution, however, weighed heavily on the single Aché male, forced to suffer it due to the primacy of an egalitarian social collective system but imposed on an otherwise natural subjective egotism. Polyandry became an additional element of the local complex repressive transformation of the internal nature of the group. Sex, viewed through the construction of an institutionalized sexual sharing of the female partner by at least two males, was subjectively unpleasant to the single adult male, yet socially necessary to maintain the egalitarian order in the sexual-reproductive sphere. The price to the adult male was a further repression added to the repression of the aforementioned sharing of his prey; an additional egotist repression of the male natural sadomasochistic psychological component, as identified by the following passage:

The great opposition between men and women, central in its position and powerful in its effects, leaves its mark on all aspects of the life of the Guayaki. It also establishes the difference between the singing of men and women... totally opposite in form and content. They express two ways of life, two presences in the world, two completely different value systems. It is barely possible to talk about singing when talking of the women: in reality, it is a generalised 'tearful greeting'... women sing while crying. In a tearful tone, but with a strong voice, crouching, their faces hidden in their hands, punctuating every phrase of their melody with strident sobs... The singing of women is never joyful... Its themes are always death, disease, white violence. The women thus take on all the pain and anguish of the *Aché* people in the sadness of their song.

The contrast created between their song and that of their male counterpart is surprising. It seems that among the Guayaki there is almost a sexual division of linguistic work, according to which all the negative aspects of existence are borne by women, while men address mainly its celebratory aspects or if not its pleasures, at least the values that make it bearable.

While with her gestures the woman hides and seems to humiliate herself... the hunter exalts himself in his song with his head held high and his body erect. The voice is powerful, almost brutal, sometimes simulating anger... The man speaks almost exclusively of his hunting exploits... of his ability to shoot the arrow... "I am a great hunter... I,I,I". The difference in songs admirably expresses the opposition between the sexes. The women's singing is mostly a choral lamentation, heard exclusively during the day; that of men almost always explodes during the night, and their voices, sometimes simultaneous, can give the impression of a choir: it is a false impression... Each hunter is a soloist" (Clastres 1984 [1974]: 87-88).

The different way the song of the women and that of the men is conveyed represents the decisive gap in the logic of the local nature-culture exchange in the *Aché* area. To retrace and explore this tear we proceed from the pre-emptive statement of Claude Lévi-Strauss: "... in savage culture men exchange women". (Lévi-Strauss 1958). What makes this statement true is the 'nature' vs 'culture' exchange within primitive communities. The sexual dimension is also translated from nature into culture through an exchange with the external nature through the group's law of reciprocity, in this case between males, to culturally regulate sex, transforming it into 'eros' as defined by the marital exchange. In the context of the primitive community, according to Lévi-Strauss, the relationship between male and female is not on an equal level, as reciprocity is entirely internal to the male sphere, where the female element is transformed into a culturally governed sexual-reproductive meal proceeding from the reduction of the female in its natural sexual dimension to a dimension external to society, because socially dangerous, if not translated into culture proceeding from the incest taboo.

In the context of primitive society, the translation of one's sexual dimension is not self-managed by the feminine, nor by the individual, nor does the feminine frames itself as the antithetical part of the community in a dialectic exchange with the male half. The sexual dimension is managed by male society as a whole, an affirmation proven by the differentiated practice of infanticide in the tribal Aché context.

We could then adduce a cultural justification: women don't hunt; but the taboo that prohibits women from hunting is also cultural, and it is the signal of differentiating factors already acting in the direction of hierarchization in savage society; an infringement of its rigorous egalitarianism, but also an opening that will then make possible for the male half to assert itself through the same process of hierarchization. We are witnessing the return, in cultural clothing, of the natural politics of hierarchization under the dominant alpha: the One of La Boétie, as exemplified for instance by the history of Polynesian royalty.

But, as we will discuss later, not in all primitive societies, against Lévi-Strauss' statement, men exchange women; not where the feminine places itself before the masculine on an equal footing. While generalizing Lévi-Strauss' statement as true, it follows that only when the feminine is sexually consumed through matrimonial regulatory forms established by the masculine, does it become an element incorporated into communal culture. Therefore, within a good wild egalitarian society, and precisely as in the ancient polis and in the mediaeval municipality, the egalitarian circle is that of males who, by birthright and family lineage, once reached social maturity, will enjoy full political rights. The non-negligible difference between primitive society, the communalism of the polis and the mediaeval city is that in primitive society, once the initiation rites have been completed, all the males of the community enjoy absolute political equality. Whereas the equality enjoyed by all the *de pleno jure* males of the ancient polis and mediaeval municipality excluded from the political sphere: slaves, servants, labourers and, above all, women: historically the last to recover, within the framework of bourgeois representative democracy, the political *pleno jure*. Clastres considers Aché society an exception compared to the egalitarian paradigm of primitive society, but a paradigm that in ethnographic documentation has met several exceptions both among primitive African, Asian and Amerindian societies. For what reason then is the egalitarian paradigm at a gender level already broken in primitive society?

On this complex topic a significant contribution is given by the studies of B.A. Mann through the history of the Iroquois, whose so-called 'matriarchy' has been analytically described to us by H.C. Morgan. In its last political form, Iroquois society was the result, of a violent conflict between

a predatory priestly class that exploited collective work confiscating it to its advantage, and the widespread revolt of its subaltern groups under the wise political coordination of a female leadership: the Great Mothers. The Mothers were able to guide a rebellion against priestly claims, to the point of overthrowing the political dominion of this caste through a century-long civil war.

The Iroquois shamans had seized political control of the Six Nations through a program of corn confiscation of corn that would be used exclusively for religious purposes with mass consumption vetoed as a tribal taboo. The hunting economy then took a privileged place compared to that of the garden and the field. Generalising the Iroquois experience, we identify how religion, hunting and war are the holy trinity of the egotist drive toward subordination of the other, starting from female subordination. This process in the political space of primitive communities moves toward renaturalization through the hierarchization of society, achieved by cultural manipulation and mediated by language. It is a process that constructs a symbolism that denies equality and favours hierarchy, exploiting the affirmation of guiding cultural myths. These cultural myths are mostly elitist myths of a religious nature that transform political action into a subordinating machine operated by the chain of command under the One.

The division of society into dominant/dominated had been triggered by the actions of the Iroquois holymen. However, a previous egalitarian political tradition remained alive around the cult of the maternal, as a metaphorical social place, the 'good society' in Iroquois political semiotics, symbolically assimilated to the self-imposed egalitarian love of the mother for all her children. The mobilizing force of this symbolic element served as a guide for the oppressed, constituting the cultural opposing element. This was the heart of Iroquois humanism: the Great Mothers, who led the resistance by rebuilding an egalitarian society with agriculture structured around corn, pumpkin and beans: sustenance cultivated and distributed in solidarity, centered around the protection of the 'helpless ones': that is, the new generations, the old and the weak.

Differently from the cultures of Central and South America, the North American tribes have elevated the figure of the Mother to their symbol, and not as a reproducer, but as a custodian of superior altruistic knowledge, a cultural model that lasts to our days overcoming the same ferocious post-Colombian neo-naturalism that came from Europe (Dyk 1938, Mann 2006).

Through the affirmation of the local primacy of the priestly, hunter or warrior class, but often also through a regressive combination of these three functions (Dumezil 1992) – let's think for instance about the symbolic weight of hunting in historical society – natural hierarchy

colonises the primitive egalitarian social system of human communities organized around the primacy of the maternal, whose function is guarding the growth of a safe human habitat for the generations to come. The masculine takes over the feminine when it places *vim* at the centre of social existence, through the primacy of hunting or war in combination with a religion legitimizing violence, overtaking the feminine mediating influence and thus starting a process of regression of the local egalitarian human society into the natural hierarchical society of the ONE, hence the birth of tyranny. Once the feminine is subjugated, the masculine only temporarily retains political equality within itself. A case of Laboetian *malencontre* that rapidly hierarchises the entire social body through the function of command, nourishing it with sadomasochistic pleasure.

This is the political form known as patriarchy, typical not only of the Semitic context but also of Indo-European pastoral societies. Patriarchy became the preferred political form of the Indo-Europeans when militaristic degeneration imposed predation as an economic resource (Gimbutas 1970) that developed in extreme forms, first through the Roman Empire and later through Western colonialism. The criminal drift of Western colonialism will end up turning it against liberal democracy, that had guiltily tolerated it, and through an aberrant sociopolitical process of darkening of the human reason, it will culminate in Nazi-fascism, the worst local Western historical form of *malencontre*.

To critically understand the capital Gordian knot *aut* patriarchy and tyranny *aut* matriarchy and freedom: without untying it with the edge of a sword, but through the wise patience of reason, we must look back at 'natural society' (Chauvin 1976, De Waal 2021). The study of these opposing realities identifies the natural origin of political power not in the sexual reproductive function but in the leadership function established through the precedence of access to food, the other capital site of the phenomenological manifestation of natural symbolic power in the ritualized form of hierarchical duels, the channel established in mammal's natural societies known as the 'pecking order' under a dominant alpha animal. Therefore, if sexual relations do not represent the form of political power in nature, they are, however, the privileged phenomonic place of representation in the natural environment, because in mammal's natural societies the dominant alpha exercises its power by mating *ad excludendum* with all the females in estrus, whether or not the individual female consents, with local exceptions always due to a physical balance of strength between the male and female, for instance among elephants.

In nature, the cyclical estrus connected to physical pleasure is the mechanism that leads the females to copulation; a process where the feminine is the passive element.

The autonomy identifying the feminine in the social sphere will manifest itself only by proceeding from parental care toward the fruit of copulation. Feminine estrus activates in the alpha male the manifestation of its political power, exercising the monopoly on females as well as its privileged access to food, achieved through the semiotics of hierarchy duels. The natural dialectic governed by said duels will come into contradiction, in the context of mammalian societies, when and where a capacity of autonomous, identified erotic thought will be determined in the female bodies. So far this leap has materialized in two species of the anthropomorphic family: the bonobos and the *homininae*.

A natural mutation has occurred in the female bodies of these two species: the separation between fertility and orgasm. While reproductive capacity remained linked to natural cycles, orgasm became a mental possibility managed by the individual female subjectivity (De Waal 1982). This biological mutation in the sexual sphere came into contradiction with the natural form of sociability because it activated the capacity for an autonomous will within the female subjectivity of the two species in question, determining their will to choose male mediums of sexual pleasure. This resulted in the rejection of the unwanted sexual partner; which becomes 'rape' if the rejected medium imposes his strength in search of his sexual pleasure, thus activating a sadomasochistic libidinal remuneration. In the female body, moved by an autonomous erotic desire, surfaces the impulse to reject the sadomasochistic dialectic causing revolutionary implications for the social order.

Through their observations, the naturalists have found that among bonobos there is no longer a dominant alpha male, but a matriarch, assisted by other females who coordinates the social life of the community where the males move atomized, forced into authentic courtship to obtain consent for copulation.

Just as in the female body of the bonobos, the separation between ovulation and oestrus also occurred in the body of the *homininae*, with the possible immediate effect of rejecting the logic of natural socialization through the alpha animal.

Why then, this erotic autonomy of the feminine did not determine, as among the bonobos, a society that thinks of itself as feminine triggering a complete reorganization of the political space under female primacy?

Among the *homininae* two decisive elements, persisting to this day in the *sapiens sapiens* as a residual form of *homininae*, created an important differentiation from bonobo society: language and the manipulation of nature through technology enhanced by linguistic communication.

The sharing of words articulated through linguistic complexity around the management of both technology and the sexual meal, prevented the

atomization of the male *homininae* and the collapse of the command function articulated around the duels of hierarchy.

The removal of the alpha male within the *homininae*, due to an acquired manipulative technique and the development of language, had to be mediated and explained through linguistic symbolization. This action of refusal by the feminine to play a passive role in copulation signified by 'rape', this action of refusal determined itself through the generation of a new, overall psychological situation summarized by the word 'love'. This set copulation in a novel explanatory linguistic area, culturalizing it through the combination of the refusal of 'rape' and the idea of amorous reciprocity; a simultaneously local and universal transformation of the natural order of the group in an egalitarian design of reciprocal cultural exchange.

Only once this decisive step toward the symbolic linguistic immaterial has been completed does each *homininae* community generate the need for the social space of a new unitary mobilizing element: the right of the individual subjectivity to an autonomous desire. Love as the semantic representation of autonomous desire governs the formation of the couple, family life and of community. It is Dante's universal loving reciprocity, that already had in nature its tangible manifestation as maternal love. Love causes a break in the natural egotist personality, opening it to the other and it is directly oppositional to the universal value of egotist closure that culminates in the exercise of tyranny: the social universalized political form of rape of the State as a female body well signified by the roman myth of Lucrezia, connected to the symbolic foundation of the Roman *res publica*.

Tyranny becomes the politics of rape applied to the social body when compared to freedom as the politics of eros within the same body. After a community has humanized itself around the mothers' openness to eros, the politics of rape are only possible because in the male human psyche the perception of the horror of rape is not as immediate and evident as in the female body. Guided by their sadomasochistic drive, single individuals within a community allow themselves to become involved in the egotist politics of tyranny, to the point of not seeing, taken by the advantage they derive from it, that they are participating in the rape of their own social body that integrates them militarily and ideologically in subservience to the One, which makes them its willing mercenaries.

The politics of freedom are born only when and where the horror of rape and the fight for the affirmation of reciprocity clash and the latter tries to impose itself. This moment in *sapiens sapiens* history is confirmed by a set of archaeological and linguistic relics, all telling us that the metaphor that has governed and must govern the humanization process is the one elevating the maternal body to first universal paradigm. It follows that the

Lévi-Straussian statement: “in primitive societies men exchange women” already describes a primitive society contaminated by the logic of rape and therefore very close to our *malencontre*.

To clarify this complex issue, we move our analysis from an anthropological ethnographic field to the philological historical one, as identified by the speculations of J.J. Bachofen.

Bachofen, through the philological analysis of mythological pagan texts and artefacts, and referencing back to his theory on matriarchy, was able to identify the effects of the revolutionary turning point for the *homininae* species shaping and resulting in the rejection of rape, that is to say: the passage from ‘nature’ towards ‘culture’. Bachofen did not arrive at the decisive causal foundation of why the female body underwent the scission of estrus from the cyclicity linked to natural ovulation and in so doing stimulating the mental psychological sphere whereby sex becomes eros through linguistic mediation. However, he grasped the mythical juridical effects of this phenomenon, even though they gave incongruous signals with respect to the political order of the patriarchal hierarchy. It was then necessary to give these inconsistencies other explanations proceeding from the fundamental one: “It is not history that explains the myth, but the myth that explains history”. This vision permeates the two masterpieces *Das Mutterrecht* (1861) and *Die Sage von Tanaquil* (1871) and enucleates, in relation to the patriarchal cultural sphere, a different kind of social structure, supported by the concrete factual data gathered in the field by ethnographers L.H. Morgan and B. Malinowsky.

The *ur*-form of primitive society had at its centre not the dominion of a Bachofenian matriarch that is to say a social articulation through the female bloodline: it was rather matrilineal. Many field studies noted widespread forms of matrilocal residence for married couples in primitive society; for instance, as documented by Morgan, in the case of the Iroquois, where women were not only relevant, but of decisive weight within the tribal council’s deliberation.

Bachofen glimpsed the weight of the feminine in societies still on the threshold of history, but then translated it into the language of his own patriarchal cultural model. Lévi-Strauss makes this same mistake by explaining the symbolic figure of the mother in the primitive community through a patriarchal political logic, while *de facto* patriarchal political power is a neo-naturalistic regression of the humanization process that, by vetoing the figure of the patriarch, vetoes the figure of the matriarch as well. By stating that in primitive societies men exchange women, Lévi-Strauss only confirms the strength of cultural conditioning in this area of study that led him to universalize the interpretation of political power as experienced by him in a patriarchal context.

Cultural conditioning is a factor connected to the educational process of reordering the relationship among things and feelings within a social landscape dominated by symbolic structures often beyond the verification capability of subjective reason. Symbolic constructions such as faith in the immortality of the soul, patriotic militarist myths, papal infallibility *ex cathedra*, the solvency of the public debt and so on are simply suggestive and not factual. The regression from culture to nature is governed by the symbolic level but it becomes possible only where and when the symbolic structure produces a transcendent symbolic space governing the here and now. In the absence of said transcendent symbolic space, not even militarism, can impose the regression of primitive society in hierarchical renaturation.

The Nuer people (Evans-Pritchard 1940) represent a case in point. A Nilotic population of shepherds pressed between 1700 and early 1900 to the north-east by Islamic religious expansionism, and to the south-west by the attack of local African royalty, the Nuer were able to push back both Islamic and African pressure due to their ability to form a common military front under the guidance of local war leaders who often became the fulcrum of aggregations for different tribal armies composed of masses of men mobilized, not so much to resist the attackers, but to launch plundering expeditions. Among the Nuer these leaders, once the military expedition was over, returned to be individuals; certainly they were prestigious figures within their tribal structure but incapable of exercising authority, given the lack within their tribal intellectual sphere of a dominant transcendence from where to tell society how to be guided.

Every Nuer, like every savage subjectivity produced by the initiatory path, knows perfectly his duty to be social. When the shepherd becomes part of an army, this decision does not transform him into an atomized entity within a community directed by an outsider. The savage Nuer warrior allows his integration under a commanding force only as a transitory tactical solution, and as a necessity of the war function. But the general meaning of his actions is very clear to him and he remains master of it. Nothing forces him to continue a war if he does not consider it necessary for the well-being of the community in case of a defensive war, or advantageous to the community if an offensive one. When the Nuer leader tries to use the strength of the warriors who follow him to his advantage, he immediately finds himself alone.

Unlike the wild warrior, the mercenary becomes, similarly to the crowd of believers around the temple, an atomized entity, a prototype of the mass man, whose role and destiny is to be a subject of the local lord and then of the State.

In the Mediterranean cities of the Neolithic revolution, due to their particular form, the drift towards the State was long prevented by the self-

organization of the assembly around the circulation of free speech: the dialectic nature of debate provided a solution to the general problems of the local community, with as a collateral effect the birth of philosophy and science, in the context of Hellenic Ionia, centred around the city of Miletus (see Martinetti 2021).

Democratic politics in the Mediterranean *polis* gain their strength from the assembly of the armed people and are articulated on two levels, around the free circulation of speech: firstly through individual assemblies of local corporations (blacksmiths, weavers, potters...); secondly through the general assembly of the city, specifically those of the ancient *polis*, and later in central northern Italy of the so-called *liberi comuni*, composed of all citizens in arms, defenders of local freedoms.

The political opposite of democratic assembly is tyranny; a prevailing political form that proceeds from the *malencontre*, characterized by the universal combination of militarism and religion. The social outcome of tyranny is the production of the mass human, the bureaucratic mercenary, a cultural construction that makes possible the function of hierarchical political command by confiscating and controlling the circulation of free speech.

Tyranny is nothing other than a return of the *sapiens sapiens* to the original *homininae* society of a few million years ago.

During their evolutionary process the *homininae* took the first step in the direction of the transition from Spinoza's '*natura naturans*' (nature in its integrity) to '*natura naturata*' (culturally elaborated) when, over two million years now, they began to manipulate nature through the systematic use of tools, but also by transforming a stone or a stick into a deadly weapon, making every hierarchy duel within the *homininae* pack deadly, while the sexual drive could transform the subordinate males into potential murderers of the alpha male. The introduction of the tool also transformed the local natural societies of the *homininae* into the most dangerous place for the individual hominin, because every hierarchy duel, if the tool was used, became a deadly clash. It became then necessary to either ban the tool or control the tool by banning its use as a weapon within the group. Imposing this limitation would have been possible only by repressing the egotist drive that had until then determined its natural social form through hierarchy duels. The use of the tool required transforming both the sustenance meal from its natural social form of pecking order, which descended from the dominant alpha, and the sexual meal from rape of the dominant alpha over all females, into a form of egalitarian sharing of food and sex, the only solution capable of preventing the systemic drift towards murder between conspecifics, introduced by the tool into the hominine horde, with the explosion of conflicts around access to the two meals. This shift was made

possible only after the natural mutation of female sexuality and because of it without leading to matriarchy, as among bonobos, because the path to matriarchy was blocked by both the development of language and tool usage.

The egotist drive, through the initiative of subjects with a strong personality, can ignite a regressive process through the manipulative control of both technology and language forcing *natura naturata* to regress to *natura naturans* in the neo-naturalistic direction of egotist fulfilment. *Homininae*, and later its local mutation *sapiens sapiens*, as described by the archeology of the tool, have proceeded in the direction of an increasing socialization both through food production and language that became the privileged channel of social approach and consumption of the erotic meal.

Linguistic communication has been and remains the social dynamic that transforms the original *natura naturans* of our species into *natura naturata*, but this involves, exiting from the natural hierarchy that acts accordingly to the principle of subtraction against the natural egotist drive. Subtracting sex, and before that food, is the meaning and outcome of the social order built on hierarchy duels: a social order *ad excludendum*.

Having achieved the control of language and technology, logical abstraction identifies that there is only one way out from the subtractive dynamics of *natura naturans*, built by and around the primacy of male physical strength: exalting the multiplicative principle of female fertility, which gives new life and renews erotic pleasure, realising nature as a new social form of existence through its humanized communal form. In other words to privilege, in opposition to the natural male logic of subtraction, the erotic multiplicative fecundity of the feminine, elevating the maternal figure to an aggregating social symbolism, and thus implicitly placing the principle of pleasure as a key founding element of socialization in its humanistic egalitarian form under the symbolic figure of a common ancestral mother and creating a new form of social nature: the Spinozian *natura naturata*.

On this transition from *natura naturans* to *natura naturata* we have clear archaeological documentation through the so-called Paleolithic Venuses. Motherhood as a synthesis, an explanation and a form of existence due to its generous multiplicative nature has been the way of thinking and living of our species for three hundred thousand years. This is the meaning of the specific cultural artefact of the Paleolithic Venuses. These statuettes, first in stone and then in ivory and terracotta representing the female body with its attributes of fertility, are scattered along the entire route of human migrations from Morocco, where the oldest of these Venuses was found dating back to 300,000 years ago, up to the entire Eurasian area. Symmetrically, symbolic representations of the male body were

missing throughout the archaic Paleolithic almost up to the threshold of the Neolithic.

It is the research of Marija Gimbutas (1989) that has masterfully uncovered the sensational cognitive symbolic content that is highlighted through the history of the Paleolithic Venuses: the cultural symbolization of nature as internal to the social space. This early recapitulating iconic symbolism of our species at its dawn, places maternal fertility at the centre of the process of socialisation, making it its unifying element.

From this redefinition of the Bachofenian matriarchy as matrilinearity, resulting from the research of Marija Gimbutas, we approach Aché society once again.

Among the Aché the feminine became subordinated to the masculine, similarly to what happened in historical societies where the most radical patriarchy has, at times, viewed femicide not as a crime. To Pierre Clastres this discovery came as such a shock that he did not want or know how to draw all of the coherent conclusions, building a linguistic mask of concealment founded on the objective fact that Aché society was threatened and marginalised by the loss of fruit and vegetables and self preserved by retreating into the forest, where Western genocidal repression finally overtook it, destroying it.

The internal essence of this regression within the Aché is the subordination of the feminine to the point of legitimising femicide. The degenerative process of human culture, the return of nature to its *interiora rerum* is a regressive possibility already active within primitive societies as soon as there is an opening for the re-emergence of the sadomasochistic egotist dialectics of natural society. This is a regression whose driving dynamics are rooted in the natural egotist structure manifesting itself at its dawn as gender inequality; the next step being the activation of the command function in the male social space: patriarchy.

Having established with Clastres that the Aché had regressed in the direction of reactivating the command function in their social body, compared to what original social form, and above all along which path, had they regressed?

Clastres narrates:

One of Terygi's wives was called Urigi, and she was his half-sister, both being children of the same father. For this reason, she could not have been his wife. But the tribe had very few women. In any case, it was much less serious than marrying a half-sister, daughter of the same mother. In that case, there would really have been incest, and Terygi would have turned into a howling monkey (Clastres 1972: 264).

Why is it that among the Aché only being carnally joined to the maternal sister is considered full incest? The only possible explanation is that we are faced with a cultural relic pointing in the direction of a once matrilineal society now moving towards a form of male primacy, the consequence of an imbalance in the transformation of the internal nature of the tribe into culture, technically breaking the egalitarian repression that establishes positive primitive society, through the primacy of egalitarian marital exchange.

Savage societies under the primacy of hunting tend to degenerate into meta patriarchy. This affirmation is supported by the analysis of a detail of social rule in the Kalahari hunting society. Here, during the tribe's travel marches, which often take place in extremely hot environments, the brother and not the husband has the task of carrying the sister's youngs on his shoulders (see Lee 1979).

Another and even clearer indication of the shift of male primacy compared to an original form of egalitarian matrilineal society under the pressure of the social primacy of hunting is that of the Bushmen with their most noted sacred dance involving both the male and female (Heinz and Lee 1978).

The dancers aggregate into two concentric formations. An internal female circle and an external male one, both rotating in opposite directions, marking time until reaching a state of trance. The males then press their hands against the women's bodies, to remove the evil that resides in them, but not provoked willingly by the females. It is a social evil that uses female bodies to penetrate society. The Bushman dance fights against the residual sexual power not yet translated into eros, which seeps into the community through the female by altering its good order. In this ritual dance purifying the social space, the individual male dancers, after having loaded themselves by osmosis with the evil that has penetrated the female bodies, withdraw and go to the edges of the dance space to exorcise it by physically vomiting it. Evil is therefore not feminine in Bushman theology but enters the social body towards a hegemony of the masculine over the feminine, as it is the masculine action that purifies the community.

The events of the Indo-European herding peoples, mainly Semites and Mongolians (Gimbutas 1970) also show how herding goes in the direction of patriarchy. Where the latter asserts itself, it activates the neo-naturalist hierarchization of the social body in the first phase through the subordination of the feminine and then the reactivation of the natural function of command to hierarchically aggregate the entire social body. Historically, this transformation brought the shift among herding groups towards war economies, based on the predation of the work of others and culminating in the use of slave labour, which in Rome became the reason

for its wars of conquest. The first form of predation is that of the female body, the predation of women from other tribes, conceptually possible only after a male tribe has subjected its females. Where primitive society is at its height, the women of the community do not allow males to prey on other women (Biocca 1965).

Clastres writes:

Terygi was leading. At dawn, his men surrounded a rather large band. Nearly all the Kyrawa were killed and their women captured. The victory was greeted with joy, and the *Aché* divided the women of the vanquished. Terygi took three of them, all young... (Clastres: 263-264)

The dead enemies were eaten as natural prey, while the captured females became the sexual meal, physically reduced into total subordination. Women, even when subjugated and reduced into the predators' sexual meal, residually force the predators to culturally mediate their daily relationship with them, the males being unable to reduce the relationship to endemic rape. To be daily consumed, the sexual meal must be mediated by the linguistic vehicle. If women, the feminine in nature, are to be used or consumed, they must be digested, despite their subjugated daily life, through a necessary justifying linguistic mediation albeit degenerative in its form, such as 'prostitute' or 'concubine' in historical times, moving from the sphere of nature to that of culture.

With their singing, the *Aché* women remember during the day their right to equality within the human community beyond their being females but as entities belonging to the species. They follow a very specific path in singing, where they speak at the same time of the community as the sum of feminine and masculine denouncing an unacceptable condition of subordination, the consequence of male primacy in the social space of their community – but also in similar primitive communities – due to the relevance of hunting with relation to the food supply, of fighting as a form of predation in relationship to the same and of war as a form of predation in the relationship with other communities. It is this primacy that every *Aché* hunter claims through his nightly song. And he claims it in an individual personal way; revealing how through his singing he seeks compensation, a consolatory alleviation of the cultural repression that his ego suffers during the day, where he has to submit to the egalitarian law.

The song of the hunter is a cry of revolt against the egalitarian law that he is forced to obey during the day, in the light of the sun, when the individual subjectivity must act within the egalitarian law. The light of the sun is also the space within which the female lament arises, nourishing an individual subjective dream, just like the male ego, but which cannot

be unveiled at night, due to a sad condition of subordination prohibiting women from talking about their dreams in a communal setting. Are the Aché men, through their song, representing their whole dream or rather are they trying to give voice to an egotist self-declaration to compensate for a state of frustration of their social being as it takes shape within the rules of exchange, already partially unhinged by the relationship with the feminine? That the undermining of the good rules of exchange can culminate with the destruction of the wild order is evident in Neolithic societies through archaeological documentation, but also by the ethnographic studies of Polynesia with particular evidence from its monarchies of the Stone Age.

In the Aché community investigated by Clastres the good egalitarian rule of exchange, due to the loss of relevance of female labour, gave rise to a process of imbalance in the transformation of its internal nature (sexual relationship) into culture, from which primitive equality has suffered its first *vulnus*. This experience documents how the cultural repression of natural drives can escape the regulatory control of good community order, leading not to a pure regression into the antecedent state of nature, but to an irruption of nature culturally masked within the human social order, significantly signalled by the affirmation of a subordination of the female to the male.

In historical times culture, polluted by masking symbolisms, has interpreted pre-patriarchal society as matriarchal and not matrilineal as Malinowsky will later clarify, framing it within a progressing evolutionary process. These are the “*magnificent progressive fortunes*” mocked by the great poet and philosopher Giacomo Leopardi in his *Operette Morali*. But the regression of the feminine in the Aché community points to another and no less important lesson. Patriarchal civilizations can achieve the full subjugation of the feminine only by activating the command function by re-hierarchizing the entire social fabric under the One.

A tragically, early death at the height of his intellectual maturity prevented Pierre Clastres from drawing the full implications of his revolutionary discovery that “... culture experiences power (political domination) as the resurgence of nature itself”.

The dominion of man over man means the resurgence of nature within an egalitarian humanist society with, as its consequence, the inevitable destruction of the process of humanization. Inequality constitutes the inevitable further step in the chain of *melencontres* manifesting itself through the neo-naturalist form of the dominion of man over man with its first incarnation as the domination of the masculine over the feminine. To use the Spinozian metaphor, a regression from *natura naturata*, culturally elaborated, to *natura naturans*, nature in its integrity, that by reemerging can hierarchize any possible egalitarian human society, from the primitive one to the democracies of our historical time.

This is the *lectio magistralis* that comes to us from Pierre Clastres' page, well summarised by Montale's statement: "the real enemy is within us"; hence La Boétie's reflection already mentioned:

... quel mal rencontre a esté cela, qui a peu tant dénaturer l'homme, seul né de vrai pour vivre franchement; et loui faire perdre la souvenance de son premier être, et le désir de le reprendre?

must be overall corrected and amended as: man in nature is an entity psychically oriented by genetic inheritance towards servitude. However, he is not such until our species, freely evolved through primitive society and built on the symbolic elaboration of the Mother's body, operates, through language and technology, a manipulation of *natura naturata* transformed once again, via the spheres of sex and labour, in *natura naturans*. The *sapiens sapiens* societies regress into natural machines organized under the function of command, reactivating the dominated/dominant sadomasochistic libidinal relationship within the social body. On the contrary, *sapiens sapiens* asserts himself as free only through the repression of his drive towards hierarchy, or rather through the repression of his own egotist base that, if not repressed, re-emerges and tends to reorganize both the sustenance and the sexual meals in a neo-naturalistic direction, using language and technology, turning the freeing cultural habitat against itself.

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