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The Sexistential Vulnerability of Bodies in Contact in the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy

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ABSTRACT

The philosophy of sexual existence as a mode of expression of the “con-being”, pivotal in his book “Sexistence”, occupies a relevant space in Jean-Luc Nancy’s late philosophical production. In this text, the body, the touch, the sex are protrusions that dot a conceptual map that is the result of a long philosophical militancy marked by an authentic “haptic ontology”, a sign of a thought of relationality, interdependence and “sexistential vulnerability” that connotes the bodies in contact that we all are. But Nancy goes so far as to elaborate a “trans-ontology” through which the “r-existence (resistance) of sexistence” is manifested, that is to say that stubborn rejection of distinct and different bodies to the homologation and uniformity of the identical and of the identity shared by “trans-feminism” which makes its strong point of the inexhaustible combinatorics of the sexes. Thus, both for the sexistential approach and for the transfeminist one, at the heart of every theory are the lives and practices of distinct and different sexual bodies in relation.

Keywords: body; haptic ontology; Jean-Luc Nancy; sexistence.

1. FOR A PHILOSOPHY OF SEXUAL EXISTENCE

Insofar as a man exists, he is, insofar as he exists, already transposed into other men, even if in fact there are no other men in the vicinity. To be there of man, to be there in man means therefore – not exclusively, but among other things – to be transposed into other men. To be able to transpose one-

self into other men as to compete with them, with being-ness in them, has always been the case by virtue of man's being-ness – as being-ness. In fact, to be there means: to be with others, and precisely in the manner of being there, that is, of existing with. (Heidegger, 1992, p. 265)

The “being-with-others” is for Heidegger the foundation of a philosophy of “being-with”, in fact, after this passage, he makes it explicit and precise: “‘being-with’ [Mit-sein mit] belongs to the essence of man’s existence, that is, of each one as an individual” (Heidegger, 1992, pp. 265-266). This peculiar inclination of Dasein, the Heideggerian “being-there”, declined according to the instances of the “formation of the world” and of the porosity, indeed of the “penetrability” that characterizes human experience as the “continuous growth of what man relates to” (Heidegger, 1992, p. 251), is the distinguishing mark with respect to the “formation of the world”.

Also is the distinguishing mark with respect to the animal, since the human being appears marked by the ontological relationality of “being-there” in its constitutive link with other human and non-human alterities and with the “world”.

Co-ontology, or “ontology of the with”, which Jean-Luc Nancy has placed at the center of his reflection, focusing on the existential praxis that involves humans, decentralizes this “being-with” with respect to the metaphysical order: in a certain sense, the onto-theoretical fundamentalism of the second Heidegger had condemned it.

Such a shift of co-ontology along with the inclined plane of the lived life, which is concrete, acted by the human-beings-in-relationship that cohabits the social space is the philosophical figure of Nancy’s most recent reflections: this involves a decisive shift, full of consequences, from the metaphysical plane to the physical-existential one, just in the sign of a porosity and penetrability of the “being-with”. This move is the keystone of *Sexistence*, an essay published in France in 2017 and in Italian translation two years later (Nancy, 2019), which develops along a trajectory in clear continuity with Nancy’s deconstructive positions on the body (Nancy, 1995) and love (Nancy, 1992, 2009a e 2009b); which are particularly relevant and innovative in the context of contemporary thought insofar as they represent a further piece of a thought that thinks ontologically about human relationships in their concrete factuality, in their giving themselves in the lived life of each and all as an experience of “with”: with-living, with-being. Thinking about sex as an existential fact boldly pushes itself to the elaboration of a sexual ontology (Apter, 2019) that takes seriously the “singular plural” erotic vulnerability that human beings experience in their existence.

In this book, the precise and insistent propensity to investigate the “being” of sex precisely as a relationship that invests, crosses and touches living beings in the course of their time shared with others, restores philosophical dignity to an object as central to human experience as it has been neglected by traditional theoretical thought. Sex here, understood as experienced and practiced by the “singular plural being” that we are, in the existential pragmatics that marks the experience of each through the relational openness that builds every identity from its encounter with otherness, does not suddenly appear in the thought of the Strasbourg philosopher. It progressively becomes a relevant object of investigation starting from some not negligible interweaving with the centrality of touch and contact in Nancy’s thought, a real leitmotif of a philosophy centered on the body and on its worldly and existential disposition. To the point that, reread through the lens of a reflection all hinged on the “being-with” and on the “in-common” (Nancy, 2001), the body, the touch, the experience of the body and the experience of the communal, touching, sex are nothing but protrusions, sharp reliefs that punctuate and enliven a conceptual map that is the result of a long philosophical militancy marked by an authentic haptic ontology. A marking figure of a thought of relationality, interdependence, erotic vulnerability with respect to the being-with-others/and that constitutes the singular plural being-ness that we are.

With respect to her previous reflections on the body and on love, *Sexistence* (Nancy, 2019b) is equivalent to a further stage of a thought that travels far and wide, while maintaining the tension between phenomenology and ontology, the territory of “sex” not as a mere object of theoretical speculation, but rather as an event that owes its importance in human life to being practiced, lived, experienced and performed. The theme does not appear in Nancy’s bibliography unexpectedly, in fact, the essay dedicated to *Sexistence* is preceded by some relevant reflections that find considerable space in various texts scattered in a long theoretical path marked by the philosophical commitment aimed at understanding the dynamics of the most intimate relationality (from *Il c’è del rapporto sessuale* to *La nascita dei seni*, to the collection *Del sesso*, up to the interview granted to A. Van Reeth published under the title *La jouissance*).

A signpost on this journey is the irreducible protagonism of sex in the lived experience of living beings, a centrality that returns to be reaffirmed in the 2017 book precisely because the sexistential lens (sex understood precisely as an essential event of existence) allows the transcendence and overcoming of both its biological reduction in function of the reproduction of the species, as well as of the sociological: this limits itself to appreciating exclusively the quality of instituting social gender roles, but also of the

psycho- and sexist one that considers its specificity in the constitution of the subjective, bodily and psychic individuality on a conscious and unconscious level. Nancy's intention is clear and wants to make sex a contemporary object of philosophical thought, bringing into play a sexual ontology that fully assumes the value of existential fact, irreducible to disciplinary epistemologies or scientific approaches, in the awareness that sexual relationships change and transform historically, just as they produce mutations and transformations at the level of individual and collective histories. Sexual relations are, in fact, actively transformable, transformed and transformative, the object and subject of radical alterations and changes in the "I", the "we", and the "with".

In the articulation of the philosophy of sexed existence that animates, runs through and strikes *Sexistence* (Nancy, 2019b), Nancy's successful attempt to think of sex as a fundamental and inalienable category of the very thinkability in a holistic, complex and multifaceted key of the human being-in-the-world as being-with opens new perspectives of meaning that can be declined by understanding sexism as a form of *r*-existence. On this side, such a vision, inevitably crossing the conceptual and pragmatic outcomes of historical feminism, which has posed a priori and with unprecedented radicality the question of the embodied body as a sexed and sexual body, opens up to an irremediable question regarding the connections that, as a fertile contemporary perspective, an anthropology hinged on sexism can have with the current gender, transfeminist and queer (Bernini, 2017) philosophies. Nancy's perspective, however, with respect to this acquired kinship with feminism, on one hand centered on the sexed body, on the other on the performative dimension that directly invests it and on which both insist, is distant from it: as Apter has pointed out, it does not imply an explicitly political position, even though its assumption is in fact political (Recchia Luciani, 2019); in fact, while it is true that "Sexistence deals with bodies in pleasure rather than with bodies demonstrating to demand justice in the streets" and moreover "touches only superficially on the long history of the debate on sexual difference", "this does not mean that Sexistence is not political. It contains a politics of recognition – of difference as such" (Apter, 2019).

Recognizing the radical difference of the other is a possibility opened up by sex in its making and unmaking between acting subjects, in the performative dimension that upsets and overwhelms them, that opens up the otherness of the other's body to the unexpectedness of a recognition that is given in carnal contact. The body reveals here, precisely in the circumstances of the sexual encounter, its multiple characteristics, forcing us to abandon the corporeal signifier in order to question ourselves on the

meaning of the body in itself and for itself, on its plural singularity, on the sense of acting-with that crosses it and that shakes it, shakes it, moves it, gives it a performative/transformative action that radiates towards the whole of existence.

What is more common than bodies? “Community” means first and foremost the naked exposure of equal, banal, evidence that suffers, that enjoys, that trembles. (Nancy, 1995, p. 42)

Being is singular and plural at the same time, indistinctly and distinctly. It is singularly plural and plurally singular. (Nancy, 2001, p. 43)

We are the one-the one for the other-the other-each in ourselves and in the other, for ourselves and for the other, through ourselves and through the other. Neither solitude nor fusion, or one as the other: never so much alone as reunited, confused, indistinctly distinct. (Nancy, 2019, p. 97)

The singular and plural being of bodies in contact is the beating heart of Nancy’s tactile and sexistential ontology, a singular plural sexuality that is beyond any obvious duality or banal binarism, beyond any supposed essentialism of sexual difference as such. For this reason, Nancy’s move to overturn Lacan’s assumption according to which “there is no sexual relationship” by concentrating, on the contrary, precisely on the instance of meaning and on the ontological consistency of that “there is”, and thus vigorously asserting that “there is” (Nancy, 2007, 2013) is not a sexual relationship. and thus vigorously asserting not only the phenomenological reality of sex, but also its powerfully pragmatic, relational and anthropologically performative/transformative dimension, shows deep affinities, all to be investigated, with the radically feminist and then queer approach that focuses on the body that performs and on sex acted out as con-being the very meaning of its own reflection and action, political and theoretical at the same time. This is why the interweaving between these theories and positions and the co-ontological posture of the Strasbourg philosopher is so fruitful. In his capital text *Being singular plural*, he has elaborated the idea of an institutive “being-with” that binds and connects human beings, generating the “we” and giving life to an irreducible dimension of singular plural con-being.

That being is, absolutely, being-with: this is what we must think. With is the first trait of being, the trait of the singular plurality of the origin or origins in it. [...]

The “with” remains between us and we remain between us: nothing but us, but nothing but an interval between us. (Nancy, 2019, pp. 26-27)

The recourse to “being”, here understood in the radicality of a being-in-common, that is, of a being-with, takes place in the sphere of practiced

and performed sexuality, which is the object of Sexistence, mobilizing on the philosophical level, as Emily Apter has noted, “a theory of sexual ontology”, insofar as that text is, more or less explicitly, dedicated to recording “the ‘happening’ of ‘being’ in sexual acts” (Apter, 2019). And the kind of “being” which is given, that happens in sexual intercourse is originally, ontologically, constitutively the being-with, or the with-being of a we without which the being of sex neither gives itself nor happens. The sense of a performative inter-relationship that constitutes us as loving subjects, in the very act of making love.

“Sex is an abyss and a violence: through the latter, which we undergo, we fall into the former, where we understand nothing” (Nancy, 2016). Paraphrasing Kant, Nancy describes in this way the acceleration imposed by the uncontrollable and unmotivated drive that pushes individual entities to face each other and unite in the common space/interval, to meet on the ground of the “with”, to share in the expansion of an “us” the primordial condition of being singular plural. Sex happens as the dense and intimate form of a relationality that is built starting from the “incommune” that it implies, in that area of contiguity and sharing, in that common place, where the “we” actively but transiently inhabits. There, the relationship takes place in the form of an unreconcilable dialectical tension between interiority and exteriority, which is the distinguishing feature of practiced, inter-acted sex, itself a territory of interconnection and exchange; an (erogenous) zone of the innumerable possible variants of sexual relations (beyond and beyond every possible genre), in which those acts occur under the species of an oscillation between I and we, between inside and outside, between an inside and an outside, always on the threshold of the other’s otherness.

Nancy writes: “Touching the limit, that’s the question of relationship” (Nancy, 2016, p. 40) – in this fulminating phrase, two philosophical objects capital in the reflection we are going through are condensed, as in the fusion point: touching and relationality. But Nancy goes even further and adds immediately afterwards, “And also that of touching as such, and sexual intercourse is the epiphany of touching: of kissing, of making love” (Nancy, 2016, p. 40). This interweaving, with its palindromic nexuses, of relationship and touch, indelibly marks the all-bodily experience of con-being with other(s), materializing the carnal thickness of the haptic ontology within which sexuality is placed as one of the limits, one of the thresholds to which we tend, that flux, that flow in which relationship becomes motion and transport in the dynamic tension of desire.

Why, then, Sexistence? Why a neologism to say what has always pushed (a drive, an impulse, a momentum) human beings towards the

“we” of “with”, of relationship, of relation? What does that peculiar kind of rap-port “bring”? Nancy answers: “Never therefore a support, at the most a transport: the relationship is supported only on its transport” (Nancy, 2013, p. 27). What is implied by this is that action, in that special type of rel-action, is above all a movement, a motion “from” and “to” a place; it is the action of bodies that are acting, active, moved; it is the performance (Nancy, 2016, p. 18; Nancy, 2017, p. 14), the performative of coming into contact, of touching and touching. It is good to specify, however, with Nancy, that the performative element of making love is analogous to sexual performance only and exclusively with respect to a “doing”, that is, to an act or a work that induces one to try “to think and to say in some way the actuality of this act”; it is this last phrase that describes with a certain accuracy the central argument of *Sexistence*, that is, to think and say sex in its making.

Even when the action in the sexual relationship is only co-action to repeat, conditioned reflex, stagnation of the gesture that replicates incessantly, it consists in a movement of bodies and between bodies. The space of between is an area of tra(n)-site, it inaugurates each time a tra(n)-section – and a tra(n)-sation: the between becomes trans – that is, in the interval between the bodies one can already in (tra)vidify their meeting, the exchange, the union, the overlapping and the tra-sposition, that tra(s)-port that animates and gives life to the rap-port. In this sense, then, bodies “gendered”, and their genderedness is revealed through “distinction” (Nancy writes: relationship “is the distinguishing”, the “opening up of the between-two through which there is two” [Nancy, 2013, pp. 24-25]) and through “difference” (in Nancy’s words, “the difference of the sexes” [is] “the difference of sex, insofar as it differs from itself” in its “relating” or again in the “ajar of the between, of the ‘between us’ or intimacy: the sex that differs is the spacing of intimacy. Intimacy is the superlative of interiority” [Nancy, 2013, pp. 31-32]). Sexistence is therefore between the self’s descent, between the self and an outside that estranges it from itself, spacing between interior and exterior, between inside and outside. The connection of meaning between sex (a “violence” that drags in the “abyss”) and existence (“existence exists in the plural, it is singularly plural” [Nancy, 2001, p. 79]), which can be given only in their intertwining and reciprocal referral, remains unspeakable and indescribable otherwise than as sexuality, that is, as the declination of a philosophical eroticism that articulates and unravels an ontology of desire, a philosophy that takes charge and focuses on sexual existence. Nancy’s theoretical gesture is clear and decisive: the sexist questioning forcefully poses the ontological question of, about, around sex as a relational experience of con-being on the part of distinct

and different bodies that tra(n)sit towards the event that inaugurates for them an active contiguity, a becoming proximity in the space-time of the encounter and the con-contact, in an “incommune” in which being coincides with singular plural sexism.

Nancy loves playing with words, dissecting and connecting, in order to put them in tension, creating resonance between them, echoes of meaning, and the *jeu de mots* that sums up sexiness is this: “I = sex. I s’it, you s’they, we sexist” (“Je = sexe. Je s’exe, tu s’exes, nous sexistons”). A whole “alchemy precedes this complex montage” (Nancy, 2019, p. 47). Much more than a mere calembour, this combination re-takes, that is, re-takes, rap-takes, tra(ns)-takes and tra(ns)-duces (echoing here yet another trans-ition) the intimate pulsation (its internal rhythm) that is needed to conjugate, à la Nancy, the newly coined verb *s’exister* (in Italian “*s’esistere*” – or also, slightly unfaithful but more evocative, “*s’es(s)istere*”). This is how thinking and philosophically speaking about sex lays bare, in the game of references and cross-references to words and deeds, the sexistential vulnerability that connotes us as human beings: bodies in contact that in the exposure to the otherness of others, in which each and every one of us experiences the epiphanic giving of the touch of the relationship, come to touch the intangible limit of the other.

2. TRANS-ONTOLOGIES

In the multi-sexual juncture in which we wander, it is an ontology in transit that takes the stage (“primary”, Freud would say here); almost a conceptual oxymoron since it denies and disavows itself by failing and disowning in itself the very stability presumed and claimed by every ontology. In fact, an ontology in transit, or that transits by becoming transontology is already a post-ontology, an ontology that has gone beyond itself in the systematic rejection and reversal of its own stabilization/essentialisation, in an unconditional acceptance of its own status of transit, movement and crossing, which contrasts *ab origine* and *semel pro semper* the static vocation, understood as immobile stability and identical to itself, of traditional ontology. Can there be, then, an ontology disseminated, dislocated and dynamic? The Greek *δύναμις* is equivalent to “force”, active energy, and such a trans-ontology in the field of genderedness seems to correspond to what the “poet, feminist, Black, mother, warrior, lesbian” Audre Lorde calls “erotic power”, unstably placed – she writes – “between the beginning of our sense of self and the chaos of our deepest feeling” (Lorde, 2014, p. 129) a “reserve of strength”, of self-renewing joy, because when it has been expe-

rienced once, it wants and knows how to re-initiate itself, relaunch itself, reiterate itself as a force of con-division.

It is on this metamorphosing, transformative and instituting erotic power of new relationships, each time engaged and put into action by sex, that a first decisive encounter takes place between Nancy's dynamic ontology or sexual "trans-ontology" and the "erotic power" declined in the vocabulary of Audre Lorde's intersectional feminism. On this possible parallelism is played the possibility of adopting the sexist view as a hermeneutic option and conceptual key also for the contemporary trans-feminism and intersectional feminism r-existence. In *Sexistence* (Nancy, 2019b), on the other hand, a theoretical approach is clearly explained that thinking about sex with the "value of an existential" gives it a sense (in the double meaning of meaning and perceptual apparatus) that invests everyone, no one excluded, indeed it includes, through them, the hetero-sex as the homo-sex, the trans-sex as the poly-sex, precisely because it transcends the genders and the subjects themselves involved in the sexual relationship and looks only at the bodies in the performativity (in turn scattered, dissociated, divided, dispersed) of being-with and of the "incommune", however transitory and regardless of any orientation, regardless of its sense or lack of sense.

This difference from oneself, this dissemination and demultiplication of sex constitutes the deepest and most difficult lesson of the study of gender. (Nancy, 2019, p. V)

Remember what Freud says: there is feminine and masculine in each individual, biologically and socially determined. This coexistence of feminine and masculine in each person, should not be thought of as two chromosomes against each other, but as an interrelationship, as a complexity itself infinite. (Nancy & Van Reeth, 2014, pp. 38-38)

At stake here is rather a trans-sex as a crossing of sex and the meaning of sex, whose vital thrust pulses beyond identity, gender, orientation, sexual preferences, practices and erotic tastes. This path, which connects genderedness to feminist experiences of r-existence (Lonzi's, Lorde's, Butler's and Preciado's, for example) points out not insignificant affinities – first of all, the centrality of the gendered body – between the most recent feminist orientations (post-binary, trans-gender, gender-fluid, non-heteronormative) and Nancy's position with respect to sexual ontology and its purely performative dimension. Significant points of overlapping and similarity are found in the common propensity to distance from any metaphysical hypostatization, including heteronormative and exclusionary binarism, and to philosophically take charge of sexual practice; since the set of those radically liberating experiences that involve embodied and desiring bodies

in rel-actions whose characteristic is the growth and accumulation of transformative and revolutionary “erotic power”.

Sex is thought of both by feminism (think at least of Carla Lonzi’s “clitoral woman” [Lonzi, 1972], Anne Koedt’s [Koedt, 1970] considerations of the “myth of the vaginal orgasm” and, much more recently, Paul B. Preciado’s [Preciado, 2018] ideas about the orgasmic revolution and “anal terror”) and by Nancy of Sexistence primarily and substantially as a doing, a performance, a relational experience of ontological/existential con-division, of spacing between con-tiguous bodies that experience individually and together, in contingency or continuity; in con-tact and distancing, the inside/outside of their inhabiting, positioning and dislocation in the world according to their desire. Orientation, positioning, direction, spacing and movement open up to a geometric and geographical representation of the phenomenological object of the sexual transitology; what comes to be drawn is a fluid map in which the crowded landscape of dense, fleshy bodies witnesses their mutual tangency, the variations of touching and con-contact and the infinite possible intersections as well as transitions, crossings, encounters, interlockings, an infinite “dissemination” (to quote Derrida) of desire.

Another affinity between r-existing trans-feminism and s-e(s)istent-transontology lies in the reference to that ontological vulnerability which, intrinsic to the open and relational nature of the singular plural body, shows it for what it is – a place that can be travelled over, crossed and traversed. But not in the sense of impoverishing, debilitating a “social vulnerability” (so often noted and focused on by J. Butler), but rather as a perspective of availability to the intersection that consists precisely in preparing for the encounter with the body of others, or the intimacy of crossing and being crossed // and. In the infinitely “disseminated” unfolding of sex as a relationship of “opening to the world”, the body undertakes the search for an unattainable exteriority otherwise than through rel-action – it is the only possible action of escape from the self and from its own. It is in this closure of the experiential universe of the self to every possible variable, to every a-going intersection, to every possible nuance of con-being that the flesh becomes vulnerable, takes the risk of intimacy with the otherness of the other’s body, of the mutual exposure of nudity, of the double con-contact of touching that touches and is touched, to a tactile and haptic experience of shared desire.

In this expansion, sexistential vulnerability comes into play in sexual performativity, taking on the risk of eros, love, pleasure, and jouissance (Žižek, 2001) – trans-ontological, relational, and intersectional vulnerability that, in unfolding in the union of singular plural bodies – separate,

distinct, and different – in sexual action, creates the conditions of their spacing, within and beyond every possible encounter, within and beyond every plausible distance and detachment.

Intersectionality is then also a method, a theoretical aptitude that considers and assumes bodies starting from their carnal thickness, from their performative materiality, from their unrepeatable uniqueness and from their reciprocal inter-actions through which metamorphoses and transforms subjects, rel-actions and the world. Intersectional sexuality is connoted, therefore, both as a relational ontology realized in acted and performed sexuality, “erotic power” that is triggered between bodies through sex and enjoyment (Nancy & Van Reeth, 2014), as a social fact and socially relevant that impacts on the human world by modifying it. It is yet confirmed, in this way, an element already pointed out by Freud, also later by over fifty years of feminism, as well as by Foucault’s monumental project, unfortunately unfinished, on the History of Sexuality, that is, the sex practiced among living beings is not a private fact. In other words, that sex practiced among living beings is not a private, intra-subjective and individual fact, but, on the contrary, a very important and influential social and political (Bernini, 2017) event that indelibly marks community practices, transforming and altering them over time, as well as group inter-actions, collective ways of acting, precisely because it is an integral part of the shared public sphere. In this sense, the “incommune” of sex is the “incommune” of the community¹.

That same powerful tra(n)sformative element, powerful matrix/motor of what in the words of Audre Lorde is the “erotic as power”, is specifically equivalent to what sexual acts, exchanges and customs, radically changing over time, especially as social practices put into being, constituting themselves as a specific revolutionary sphere, both individually and collectively (for example, being more or less stigmatized and censored, more or less accepted and legitimized), depending on the historical periods (here, too, the historical Foucault of sexuality remains the cornerstone of a reinterpretation of the entire social organism *sub specie sexualis*). The socially relevant element of sexuality, addressed by both psychoanalysis and feminism since the “second wave” of the sixties and seventies, in Europe and the U.S., was also articulated around a deep awareness of the diversity of drives and desires that drive different subjectivities to sexual encounters, to the point that, in a certain sense, it can be said that the philosophical, anthropological and political claim of “sexual difference” (starting with

¹ I am infinitely grateful to Jean-Luc Nancy for discussing this issue with me at length while we were revising together the Italian translation of *Sexistence* (Nancy, 2019b).

Irigaray [Irigaray, 1985]) corresponded to a sexual revolution that invested the female body, also thanks to the diffusion of contraceptives and legally recognized and protected abortion practices. In a changed cultural climate we understand how the feminist discovery of the “clitoral woman” by Carla Lonzi (Lonzi, 1972; Malabou, 2020) has played a decisive role, making explicit the paradigm that has imposed universally that rigid norm, all male, of sex and pleasure that has entailed the millenary patriarchal deprivation/oppression/negation of female sexuality, basing it on its identification exclusively with the reproductive sphere, which has deprived women of the possibility of experiencing the free power of sex as a decisive experience of self-determination and “empowerment”. In more recent times, yet at the heart of the feminist “third wave”, Butler’s “performativity of gender”, which constitutes the definitive abandonment of sex as a category of belonging, triggers an ontological turbulence that reflects the relational vulnerability of human beings, allowing a definitive overcoming of the essentialism of sexual difference, with all its associated limitations. Butler in deconstructing feminist thought by denaturalizing the notions of male/female gender intends to deconstruct from inside the patriarchal phallogocentric power system, facilitating a proliferation, a dissemination of gender identities that disarticulates subjectivity by opening it to a potentially infinite range of sexual, social, political, discursive choices, etc. Homosexuality is, in this logical-political context, a decisive piece of this deconstruction of gender, starting from its alleged biological bases, as well as binarisms and dichotomies typical of the Western logos that accompany all the traditional narratives regulating sexuality (Butler, 2004, 2006, 2011).

In this complex critical horizon, the philosophical task today is also that of thinking about sex and the vigorous drive energy that it conveys, capable of transforming all of existence with its power, inducing those experiences of metamorphosis that, by crossing separate and distinct individual bodies (their surfaces, their folds, their orifices), open up the possibility of new experiences of co-division, new declinations of human life as sexuality. A condition that is beyond, then, the difference or – better – the sexual differences at work in the constitution of subjectivities (undifferentiated entities constitutively political), and that invests instead, with the burning magma of an incandescent desire and an engendered and irrepressible drive, the individual bodies – unique, unrepeatable, scattered and different, in their plural pluriversal singularity. Here, embodied and vulnerable bodies are caught in the original, primordial, founding experience of “being-in-common” – when beyond and beyond the endiad interiority/exteriority we reach the common place of intimacy, that making/taking of enjoyment,

in the pleasure of contact and exchange, in the very act of breaking the monadic envelope to meet the split that breaks forever the atomized singularity and founds the dawn of a community.

Trans-ontology and trans-feminism – as pragmatic experiences and philosophical visions of s-e(s)existence and r-existence, but especially as approaches that are activated in reality from concrete bodies in action –, are characterized by the centrality attributed to tran(s)-formation, singular plural, always in progress, on which they draw attention, since, in the words of Foucault, “one must understand the ‘flesh’ as a mode of experience, that is, as a mode of self-knowledge and transformation by oneself” (Foucault, 2018, p. 58). This characteristic allows them to redesign the social metamorphoses in which to inscribe future communities without constraints and in which desire can inaugurate and open up perspectives of liberation and self-determination to-come.

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RIASSUNTO

Nella più tarda produzione filosofica di Jean-Luc Nancy occupa uno spazio rilevante la “filosofia dell’esistenza sessuata” come modalità di espressione del “con-essere”, centrale nel suo libro “Sessistenza”. In questo testo, il corpo, il toccare, il sesso sono sporgenze che costellano una mappa concettuale frutto di una lunga militanza filosofica contrassegnata da un’autentica “ontologia aptica”, cifra segnante di un pensiero della relazionalità, dell’interdipendenza, della “vulnerabilità sessistenziale”, che connota i “corpi in contatto” che tutti e tutte siamo. Ma Nancy si spinge sino ad elaborare una “trans-ontologia” attraverso cui si manifesta la “r-esistenza della sessistenza”, vale a dire quel rifiuto caparbio dei corpi distinti e differenti all’omologazione e all’uniformità dell’identico e dell’identitario condiviso dal “trans-femminismo” che della combinatoria inesauribile dei sessi fa il proprio punto di forza. Così, tanto per l’approccio sessistenziale che per quello transfemminista, al cuore di ogni teoria vi sono le vite e le pratiche di corpi sessuati distinti e differenti in rel-azione.

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