The Facemask Paradigm: Symptoms and Non-neutral Limits during Coronavirus
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The pandemic caused by Covid-19 has scholars thinking of how political relations may change, how this pandemic will transform political bonds. Several feminist and ecologist scholars and activists think of this pandemic as a crucial moment for the subversion of the capitalist androcentric system. However, as we will present over this article, the feminist and the ecologist responses to the crisis are not the unique voices raising in these times.

As a point of departure, this article locates itself within the Spanish context. Not only has the pandemic created a scenario which makes visible the importance of care and emotional labour. Furthermore, it is also making visible its necessity as the *new normality* - the concept used by the Spanish government to denominate the scenario that follows the confinement - brings with it the possibility of further outbreaks of the virus and a new turn to working from home, making it even harder to conciliate. Furthermore, social distancing has also made visible how the spaces we inhabit in our daily lives have been built around the market's necessities and not around human needs. As the difficulty to maintain social distancing in the streets has shown, cities and public exterior spaces have not been built around people's needs but round the needs of consumerism and capitalism. Cities have been created to facilitate the transport of goods and not for people's enjoyment of the city, just like the project of *Haussmanisation* in Paris aimed to. Not only have public spaces shown how they do not fit people's needs, but confinement has also made visible how precarious homes - which have been defined as *infraviviendas* (infra-housing) - had been built for workers that were supposed to stay out of their homes most of their time to produce or consume. This inhabitancy crisis is critical in Spain, where the peak of the building of *infraviviendas* led to the 2008 financial crisis that sprung from the real state bubble.

Nevertheless, although feminists and ecologists are trying to generate a debate on necessity to put life at the centre, speak of bodily interdependency, and articulate a comeback to rural areas as different strategies to generate a feminist framework upon which to rethink politics. The truth is that the framework in which Covid-19 is treated in Spain, as in several other countries, is that of warfare. Moreover, every theoretical framework upon which politics operates implies the imposition of a specific political relationship.

By focusing on the example of the Spanish society, this article aims to analyse how the Schmittian political relation of friend-enemy is taking place in discursive operations in this pandemic crisis and observe why a war narrative has been chosen. Furthermore, this article aims to proportionate a feminist turn of the concept of antagonism to rethink political relations in pandemic times to articulate a feminist response to this crisis through a Lacanian reading of two of the main phenomena that have characterised this pandemic crisis, symptoms and facemasks. The article introduces a Lacanian reading of the crisis in which facemasks function as the non-neutral limits of a signifying chain that separate

friends from enemies and symptoms work as the Master Signifier of the pure threat to locate the enemy easily. Non-neutral limits are best defined as limits that separate homogeneity from radical alterity, presented as the threat, while neutral limits can be defined as those present within a plural homogeneity and do not establish a relationship of enmity. Together non-neutral limits and symptoms articulate the political relationship of friend enemy imposed upon society through discursive operations.

However, the present article analyses how, by reading facemasks and symptoms from a Lacanian and feminist approach, we can articulate a different political relationship: the facemask paradigm. By focusing on how surgical facemasks work (they are not used for a person to avoid the transmission of the virus from another person, but to stop you from transmitting the virus to another) the facemask paradigm subverts the classical Schmittian relationship by posing the threat inside of you and not outside. This new interpretation of the threat also implies a new political relationship based on feminist notions of corresponsability and bodily interdependence that results in what we define as *reversed antagonisms*. Thus, the facemask paradigm proposes a new political relationship in which the elements on both sides of the facemask - the Real and Reality in Lacanian terms - do not collide negatively but, instead, create an opportunity to conform coalitions.

Lastly, the article introduces the facemask paradigm, a paradigm in which non-neutral limits work by positioning the threat inside the signifying chain and not outside of it, entailing a subversion of the classical Schmittian notion of antagonism that implies a new political relationship based on corresponsability and bodily interdependence resulting in reversed antagonisms.

The use of facemasks in Spain

Before we dwell in the idea of antagonism and its possible feminist subversion, let us introduce a reading of the Spanish case to show the relation between facemasks and political relations.

The beginning of the pandemic was characterised by a confusion strengthened by fake news, this confusion and the lack of knowledge on this new virus created a perfect storm for spreading the virus. Additionally, one of the main reasons Covid-19 has spread so quickly is that governments and scientists were not aware that asymptomatic people could transmit the virus so fast and easily during the beginning of the pandemic, which led research and healthcare systems to exclusively target people with clear symptoms such as cough and fever as well as profiles with higher risk such as the elderly. Symptoms were the only available element to locate the virus. Meanwhile, the high rate of asymptomatic carriers of the virus led many people to - unwillingly and unconsciously - transmit the virus. Furthermore, another critical element to understand the Covid-19 crisis in Spain derives from the lack of facemasks. Facemasks were first interpreted as unnecessary and only vital for high-risk profiles.

Both symptoms and facemasks can be read in political terms through a Lacanian translation. As Ernesto Laclau affirms in his book *Emancipation(s)*, signifying systems are systems of difference, that is to say, the elements of a signifying chain are relational (Laclau, 2007). However, '[…] the very possibility of the system is the possibility of its limits' (Laclau, 2007, p. 37). That is to say, for the signifying system to functions as a totality, there needs to be a clear cut between what is inside the system and that which

lies outside. Thus, limits' […] have to show themselves as the interruption or breakdown of the process of signification' (Laclau, 2007, p. 37). These limits cannot be neutral, '[a] neutral limit would be one which is essentially continuous with what is at its two sides, and the two sides are simply different from each other' (Laclau, 2007, p. 37). These non-neutral limits can be easily seen as the critical element in political relationships, the limits separate *me* from *you*, the inside from the outside, the positive from the negative.

> A system constituted through radical expulsion interrupts this play of the differential logic: what is excluded from the system, far from being positive, is the simple principle of positivity - pure being. This already announces the possibility of an empty signifier - that is a signifier of the pure cancellation of all differences (Laclau, 2007, p. 38).

Thus, the signifying chain's framing process works by following the *differentia especifica* principle developed by Carl Schmitt in his relational dichotomy friend-enemy (Schmitt, 2007); a relational and discursive process placed at the very basic notion of the political community. Friends are located inside the frames of Reality (the signifying system). On the other hand, real enemies are placed outside, rejected, and left in the Real out of the signifying chain. Furthermore, the imposition of non-neutral limits implies the emergence of different master signifiers that come to name what rests inside and outside the system.

> […] the category of point de capiton (nodal point, in our terminology) or master-signifier involves the notion of a particular element assuming a 'universal' structuring function within a certain discursive field - actually, whatever organisation that field has is only the result of that function - without the particularity of the element per se predetermining such a function (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. xi).

The signifying chain's framing process works as the operation that funds Reality with the Master's Discourse development. In his *Seminar XVII, The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, we find Lacan's articulation of the four discourses (2007). Lacan starts his *Seminar XVII* by describing the structure of the Master's discourse. Lacan affirms that the decision to start with this discourse is due to its historical importance. This discourse's structure illustrates how a Master Signifier comes to intervene upon a battery of signifiers, creating a new knowledge. Thus, a signifying chain's framing operation can be seen as developing a Master's Discourse. As we can infer, there are two main elements in the funding operation of Reality that takes place through the framing of a signifying chain; these are non-neutral limits and Master Signifiers. These two key elements are visible in facemasks and symptoms when reading political relationships within pandemic times.

On the one hand, facemasks work as non-neutral limits that separate the subject from the threat. Facemasks have two sides, the inner side that touches the carrier's mouth and the outer side that works as a shield from the threat. On the other hand, the Master Signifier that comes to represent what lies outside the signifying system, the Master Signifier of the Threat (MST) is represented by symptoms. Let us see how information on symptoms and the use of facemasks have shaped Spain's political and social relations.

When we analyse how the pandemic has developed in Spain and how research has been making information available, we observe two different scenarios.

First scenario: The other as a threat (carriers of the virus have symptoms). Some people are visibly recognisable as the threat as they are carriers of the virus because they have fever and cough symptoms. Within this scenario, the MST is imposed and helps locate the threat. On the other hand, the facemask is not assuring me total protection from the virus. Furthermore, I cannot access to facemasks as there is a lack of medical supplies. Therefore, I will not need to wear a mask as I have no symptoms. However, if somebody is coughing in the street, or the middle of the supermarket while not following social distance recommendations or using the facemask while having symptoms, she becomes a threat. Within this scenario, the responsibility to establish the signifying chain's limits rests on those outside of the signifying chain as they are catalogued as threats.

Second scenario: The undefined threat (there are asymptomatic carriers of the virus). This second scenario takes place once scientific research and the statistical data from contagion and deaths make it visible that asymptomatic people are dangerous carriers of the virus with transmission potential. Within this scenario, the threat is not clear because there is a lack of an MST. The person standing in a supermarket aisle beside you may be a carrier, furthermore, now you may be a carrier of the virus and transmit it to vulnerable profiles putting their lives at risk. In this scenario, anxiety is strengthened as the threat does not have a bodily dimension; you cannot easily locate the threat in another person. Furthermore, the anxiety that characterises this scenario is dramatically increased as the lack of facemasks in Spain made it impossible to find available facemasks at pharmacies. In other words, the lack of an MST is intensified by the lack of non-neutral limits that made it impossible for the population to establish separation from the threat. From our point of view, this scenario supposes three possible outcomes that imply three different political relationships. Let us develop them.

The Inquisition Paradigm

Within the Inquisition paradigm, everyone becomes a possible threat. Everyone becomes vulnerable and is susceptible to become a threat since there is no symptom. This scenario's underlying political reading is that of antagonism with no MST and lack of non-neutral limits.

In his major work, *The Concept of the Political*, Carl Schmitt affirmed that the criterion of politics is the distinction between friend and enemy (2007). It is easy to observe the central role that this criterion occupies in the Covid-19 rhetoric, especially in the Inquisition paradigm in which everyone becomes a possible threat. In her book *On the Political,* Chantal Mouffe presented a renewed and critical reading of the Schmittian relationship between friend and enemy (2005). While Carl Schmitt emphasised that each realm had a specific criterion (economics: profitable and unprofitable, morality: right and wrong, aesthetic: beautiful and ugly, and so on) (2007). Chantal Mouffe affirmed that, while antagonism is ineradicable and thus the political is not disappearing, the truth is that the specific criterion drew by Schmitt is becoming diffused,

> What is happening is that nowadays the political is played out in the *moral register*. In other words, it still consists in a we/they discrimination, but the we/they, instead of being defined with political categories, is now established in moral terms. In place

of a struggle between 'right and left' we are faced with a struggle between 'right and wrong' (1993, p. 5).

This transformation and diffusion of the political criterion are easily visible in the actuation of the *balcony police*.[1] There is a clear differentiation between those who stay home and stick to the law and those free-riders that do not stick to mandatory confinement. Furthermore, this decision to stick or not to mandatory confinement is measured by the moral criterion of right and wrong. Those who stick to confinement are good and do the right thing, while those who leave the house are evil. This moral criterion overrides intersectionality and precarity. Over the first weeks of the confinement, neurodivergent people and autist children and carers, have been both insulted and threatened from balconies, as well as homeless people, people who survive on daily income from recycling, or doctors and cashiers that walk to their jobs. Within this scenario, the capacity to do the right thing to be a part of the *we* becomes, yet again, a privilege since confinement, as Judith Butler has pointed out, is only reachable by a few ' […] 'the household' is figured as a space of protection, but that is hardly true for many people' (2020). This moral criterion becomes even more dangerous and abusive when confinement is not voluntary, but mandatory, as it has become in Spain, where the political-moral criterion of right and wrong also acquires a juridical dimension becoming legal and illegal.

The problem within this scenario, from a Schmittian approach, is apparent, the monopoly of the political by the State may be undermined or weakened by the creation of multiple private enemies instead of a unique public enemy declared by the State as the fundamental political institution. Within this state of inquisition, the political seems to emanate from different sources questioning thus the State's political monopoly. The state thus needs a unique political enemy, as Carl Schmitt affirmed,

> The enemy is not merely any competitor or just any partner of a conflict in general. He is also not the private adversary whom one hates. An enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity. The enemy is solely the public enemy, because everything that has a relationship to such a collectivity of men, particularly to a whole nation, becomes public by virtue of such a relationship (2007, p. 28).

Within this scenario, the State has not managed to impose a hegemony that can introduce a public enemy. Thus, the inquisition starts when the balcony police act without a political criterion and personal conflicts create private enemies. In this sense, mandatory confinement and temporal suppression of fundamental rights reinforce the idea of the all against all. I must stick to temporary suppression of human rights for a higher good; I must screw myself, so the other and I enjoy a higher good. However, not everyone is following the mandatory confinement or the recommendations for self-isolation. These irritability and hatred are products of a scenario without an MST or non-neutral limits that allow me to locate the threat and protect me from it and create a status of anxiety that gives rise to an inquisition in the form of *balcony police*. This paradigm is a clear

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[1] The term of the balcony police has been used in Spain to refer to people who while confined look out of their windows or balcony yelling and insulting those who were in the streets.

example of how the threat and the others' monitorisation provoke a clear political (and social) relation/bond based on the Schmittian friend/enemy relation intensified by a collective paranoia. However, one could also ask whether this imposition of private enemies can weaken the state or whether the state could take advantage and take these popular apprehensions in their favour. In this sense, we believe there is a clear differentiation between how private enemies worked during the inquisition and how they work during a pandemic. During the witch hunt, private enemies could turn into a state tool as your neighbour could monitor you for state goals. However, during the pandemic, the goal is not to locate the threat in your neighbourhood but to locate it in the radical alterity of the virus to be able to grant a radical threat outside of society that allows the state to achieve a social cohesion that legitimises the suppression of fundamental human rights. Thus, the balcony police can be defined as counterhegemonic because it embodies the threat within the signifying chain.

This Inquisition Paradigm has been overcome in Spain with the imposition of a political narrative based on warfare.

The Viral War Paradigm

The State, to impede the emergence of new political communities able to debunk it as the main actor in the political realm, creates a narrative of warfare to avoid private enemies and create a public enemy shared by all. That is to say; the state exhibits the *jus bellis*.

> The state as the decisive political entity possesses an enormous power: the possibility of waging war and thereby publicly disposing of the lives of men. The *jus belli* contains such a disposition. It implies a double possibility: the right to demand from its own members the readiness to die and unhesitatingly to kill enemies. The endeavor of a normal state consists above all in assuring total peace within the state and its territory. To create tranquility, security, and order and thereby establish the normal situation is the prerequisite for legal norms to be valid. Every norm presupposes a normal situation, and no norm can be valid in an entirely abnormal situation (Schmitt, 2007, p. 46).

Thus, to ask its population to expose their lives to cure the ills and support the national economy, the MST is imposed upon the virus. Furthermore, due to the lack of facemasks, people, especially women, started to sew facemasks with fabric to protect themselves. Thus, while the State is in charge of developing a Master Discourse that imposes the MST upon the virus to create a totality in which the *we* is identified with the population of the country, the population itself starts creating their non-neutral limits to the already indicated threat.

The viral war of all against the virus aims to repress the possible emergence of cleavages and antagonisms within the population. The hegemonic political discourse develops a narrative in which *we* (as nation, society or humankind) need to be strong and together to fight the threat, in this case, a virus, an abstract entity. Thus, in this sense, the antagonistic relationship takes the form of the struggle of Reality against the Real within the Lacanian framework. By the end of May, Spain developed a new industry dedicated to the fabrication of facemasks, and the government regulated the prices of facemasks in stores. Furthermore, free facemasks were given by the administration to the population to

protect themselves from the virus. Thus, the neutral limit against the threat was finally established, shaping the signifying chain and political relationships in Spanish society.

As Chantal Mouffe affirmed, '[c]onflict, in order to be accepted as legitimate, needs to take a form that does not destroy the political association' (2005, p. 20). Mouffe's solution to antagonism is the articulation of a new form of we/they called agonism. While antagonism is a we/they relation in which the two sides are enemies who do not share any common ground, agonism is a we/they relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognise the legitimacy of their opponents (2005, p. 20). We could infer that Chantal Mouffe's articulation presents adversaries as a sublimated form of enemies.

However, we aim to offer a different approach to antagonism. While we agree that antagonism and *polemos* are crucial elements of politics, we believe that a new political relationship needs to be articulated. Let us analyse how the use of facemasks illustrates different manners of articulating political antagonism and how the facemask paradigm can help us articulate a feminist conception of antagonism.

The Facemask Paradigm, a feminist turn of antagonism

Before we dwell in the feminist subversion of antagonism, we need to point out a specific aspect. Although there has been significant controversy and confusion over the use of facemasks, there is a precise fact that basic cloth and surgical face masks do not avoid transmitting the virus from another person. Instead, facemasks stop you from transmitting the virus to another person.[2] If we analyse how these facemasks work, we can infer that they present a reversion of the antagonistic political relation.

In the classical political relationship introduced by Carl Schmitt, we see how the non-neutral limits are located between we (friends) and they (enemies). Furthermore, the MST is imposed upon what lies outside the signifying system. If we look at how basic cloth and surgical facemasks work, we see that the relationship they establish is the opposite. I must wear a mask as I may be a potential threat to someone who may be more vulnerable. Thus, the facemask works as a non-neutral limit, but it radically interferes with how the MST is distributed, the other is not the threat, but I am. It is a situation of reverse antagonism.

The facemask paradigm, reverse antagonism, allows for an alternative reading that presents *me* as a threat. As we will argue, this third possible outcome represents a feminist subversion and articulation of the antagonistic relationship. By establishing a reverse antagonism, I do not see the other as an enemy because he or she imposes a threat. Instead, I am aware of the fact that I may imply a lethal threat to the other. Thus, I decide to think of me as a possible threat to the other and *wear the facemask*. In this sense, we offer a renovation of the classical Schmittian political relation between friend-enemy. First, we agree with Mouffe, Laclau, and Schmitt when they pose antagonism as the central element of political relations. However, we believe that Mouffe's agonistic

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[2] We are taking these two types of facemasks as the example of facemasks as they have been widely recommended for public use.

relation as a solution for inequality is not enough in a political reality where not every subject holds existence. Let us clarify this point.

While Chantal Mouffe advocates for the sublimation of antagonistic relationships into agonistic ones, Chantal Mouffe's analysis lacks a critical point on how the framing operation works by unequally distributing subjectivities. There is a clear difference between the pandemic caused by Ebola and the current Covid-19 pandemic, which relies on the virus's different spatial affectation. While Ebola strongly hit Africa, it barely affected European and North American countries, while Covid-19 quickly spread in Europe and the United States. While Covid-19 has caused the emergence of a worldwide shared war narrative, the Ebola crisis did not suppose such discursive operation. We believe that the main reason Ebola did not affect politics, in the same way, has to do with the ontological status that affected populations hold. We thus, ask ourselves who are the ones that enter - in terms of subjects - into discursive operations.
As Lacan says, discourse is

> […] a mode of functioning or a utilisation of language qua link […] is a link between those who speak. You can immediately see where we are headed - it's not just anyone who speaks, of course; it's beings, beings we are used to qualifying as 'living,' and it would, perhaps, be rather difficult to exclude the dimension of life from those who speak (1998, p. 30).

We see here that the ability or capacity to speak does not imply a subject's entrance into the bonds of discourse. By referring to beings and life itself, we believe an ontological differentiation between subjects determines whether a subject enters in the signifying chain as speakers. Therefore, we can assume that those who speak, who enter into discourse, understood as a signifying chain, are specific beings that are qualified as living. This ontological differentiation is also present in the theoretical work developed by Judith Butler on grievable lives, in which she introduces the idea that not every life is conceptualised as livable nor living (see Butler, 2009, 2004). Since not every subject is conceived as living, not every subject can enter the signifying chain by producing signification, in other words, as speakers. We suppose that Lacan is aware of this disparity when he affirms that

> Every dimension of being is produced in the wake of the master's discourse - the discourse of he who, proffering the signifier, expects therefrom one of its link effects that must not be neglected, which is related to the fact that the signifier commands. The signifier is, first and foremost, imperative (1998, p. 32).

In the quote above, Lacan refers to a specific relational structure that discourse can take, the Master's Discourse. As we have analysed earlier, it is in this structure that we observe the operation of the introduction of the signifier (Master Signifier) that functions fixating the signifying chain. We want to add a second idea that we extract from the relation between Butler and Lacan, that the imposition of the Master Signifier cannot be done by just any subject, but the first condition is for this subject to be living. Furthermore, the Master's Discourse structure is not a temporal stage in the construction of Reality as a discursive operation, but a form of discourse that operates continuously and prohibits the entrance of certain subjects categorised as non-living. In other words, there is a constant struggle to be able to impose the Master Signifier, a struggle that is commonly known as

the struggle for hegemony. Thus, by introducing Butler to Lacan, we can radicalise Lacan's affirmation and add that not only the establishment of *points de capiton* is reduced to power relations, but every relational operation in discourse responds to a struggle for power to control and govern inclusion and exclusion from the signifying chain. Thus, not only does discourse have its limits, as limits of the signifying chain itself, but they also set limits to who can produce signification and meaning.

Discourse does then establish what exists and *who exists*. Thus, how are we to speak of those who do not form part of the signifying chain as producers of meaning, in other words, as speakers? We here stick to the Heideggerian differentiation between existence and ex-sistence analysed by Bruce Fink. As Fink affirms, ex-sistence

> […] was first introduced into French in translations of Heidegger (e.g., *Being and Time*), as a translation for the Greek *ekstasis* and the German *Ekstase*. The root meaning of the term in Greek is 'standing outside of' or 'standing apart from' something […] Lacan uses it to talk about 'an existence which stands apart from,' which insists as it were from the outside; something not included on the inside, something which, rather than being intimate, is 'extimate' (1995, p. 122).

Thus, when translating, or shifting, Lacanian theoretical corpus towards an analysis of social reality in political terms, we are obliged not to speak only of things, but of subjects that enter, or are excluded, from processes, mechanisms, and institutions. Thus, those who are not seen as living, as speaking, only have an ex-sistence. Ex-sistence thus refers to a different ontological status characterised by the fact that the subject stands outside of something. In our Lacanian analysis, we believe that the subject stands out of the signifying system. On the other hand, and opposing ex-sistence to existence, existence refers to the ontological status of the subject that stands inside the discursive relation proper of the Master's Discourse. In this sense, if existence refers to the ontological status of beings that inhabit Reality, ex-sistence, as there is no pre-discursive Reality, refers to the ontological status of the beings that inhabit the Real '[t]he real is perhaps best understood as that which has not yet been symbolised, remains to be symbolised, or even resists symbolisation; and it may perfectly well exist 'alongside' and in spite of a speaker's considerable linguistic capabilities' (Fink, 1995, p. 25). From our political approach, we understand that Mouffe's agonistic relationships can only occur among subjects who exist, as they are recognised subjects. However, this agonistic relationship does not overcome the radical alterity that separates the signifying chain from that which rests outside of it.

From our perspective, for feminist politics to put life at the centre and provide every subject with existence needs to embrace reverse antagonism. The idea of reverse antagonisms relies on the affirmation that political relations rely on antagonism, nevertheless, by acquiring the inversed position, that is to, say if feminist agents are aware of their potentiality as threats; they will be able to articulate a political theory and praxis that finally embraces intersectionality. That is to say, by adopting the facemask paradigm subjects with existence can read themselves in terms of potential threat to those subject with ex-sistence who do not enter into hegemony struggles and discursive operations. If feminist economics and politics are characterised by their desire to pose life

at the centre, feminists are obliged to ask themselves, which lives are they addressing. Is it the white life? The cisgender life?

Responsibility and empathy as the kernel of political relationships can reverse antagonism. The reason why we believe that the antagonistic political relation has been articulated around the idea of we (victims) they (threat) has to do with several processes that have praised the alienation of the subject around those who surround it.

Although alienation is a mandatory element in Lacan's identification, we believe that how current political systems, through individualism, impose alienation, produces an articulation of politics that results in what we may call politics of paranoia. Within this political paradigm, what we find is a continuous status of political anxiety that drives the subject to a state of paranoia in which they feel threatened.

Alienation is a common element in the multiple processes of masculinisation typical of the construction of European societies. Bodily alienation, the idea that humans are independent of each other and only rely on their own acts is a common idea from androcentrism. Corporal alienation denies the interdependence of the bodies and denies their dependence on infrastructure and external elements. The denial of interdependence is palpable when the political relationship is understood in Schmittian terms of friend-enemy. Corporal alienation understood as the community's dismemberment produces fragmentation of the commons by establishing the law of competition for survival.

On the other hand, body alienation allows the human body to be separated from the natural environment necessary for its maintenance, thus preparing the ground for an ecological crisis. The current Covid-19 crisis has strongly hit and questioned the liberal and androcentric idea of the isolated subject that is born alone and dies alone. Bodily interdependence has been visible not only through contagion but more importantly, trough networks of care. Judith Butler has also pointed out the visibilisation of interdependence in the current crisis in her easy 'Capitalism has its limits' (2020).

Our bodies' dependence on external structure, such as health care systems, has also been a critical element during this pandemic. Furthermore, as Fabio Vighi points out, an elemental point to understand the emergence of Covid-19

> […] coronaviruses such as MERS and SARS, together with similar pathogens like Ebola, originate from an increasingly aggressive agro-economic industry, which devastates entire ecosystems by placing in close and explosive proximity animals deprived of their habitat, intensive livestock breeding, and urban suburbs with high population density and poor sanitation (2020).

This ecological critique is also presented by Ian Parker who affirms that

> The conditions of possibility for this current viral crisis include the concentration of human populations, industrialised farming in which huge populations of genetically-similar animals are bred and contained in the same space, and the rapid destruction of natural habitats such that virus's in the 'wild' are released into food production networks (2020).

Thus, the current crisis makes visible bodily interdependence and could also be analysed as the product of humans' alienation from their environment, and alienation that finds its roots in the shift from organistic theories to mechanistic theories in the Middle ages. As Ian Parker puts it

> Contemporary capitalism is configured as 'the enemy of nature' not only in the sense that the planet is treated as inert matter to be exploited, a process driven by the search for profit, but also in the sense that each one of us, subjects of capitalism, become alienated from nature (2020).

Bodily alienation thus has economic and political consequences. On the one hand, it is necessary for capitalist consumption as it provokes a separation between producers and consumers which entails the invisibilisation of the harmful effects on the natural environment and constant invisibility of the working conditions imposed by the relocation of production. On the other hand, the political outcome of bodily alienation is present in the Schmittian relation of friend enemy in which the threat is always the other.

Although there seems to be a mantra that affirms that Covid-19 acts by putting all of us at the same level as we are all vulnerable to the same threat, this is not what the statistics show. While the effects of Covid-19 are depicted as the *Danse Macabre* in which the universality of death levels up any social differences working as a *memento mori*, the truth is that Covid-19 hits in higher rates poor and working-class districts. As Judith Butler pointed out '[t]he virus alone does not discriminate, but we humans surely do, formed and animated as we are by the interlocking powers of nationalism, racism, xenophobia, and capitalism' (2020). Covid-19 is not operating upon virgin grounds but, upon a political scenario funded on the classical Schmittian political relationship. To this classical paradigm, we offer that of the facemask paradigm. However, how can we possibly inscribe this new relationship within our current societies?

Conclusions. Solidarity coalitions

What are the political responses towards Covid-19 crisis, and how can we introduce the facemask paradigm? As Ian Parker pointed out during his talk' *Viral Resistance'*, two different responses emerge from extreme-right sections. Ian Parker defines the first response as the 'far right state-oriented response' which '[…] call[s] upon the full resources of the state and to demand total obedience to rules over social distancing and lockdown', furthermore Parker adds that '[…] some on the left are tempted to take this kind of position' (2020). As we see, this first response is the equivalent of what we have defined as the Inquisition paradigm. The second response that comes from the extreme right is the libertarian response, which

> accuse[s] the state of arrogating to itself increasing power, using the opportunity of the virus threat to increase surveillance, even, in the most extreme off-beam of these responses to claim that the virus threat is exaggerated, that it is merely a pretext for ramping up of state control (2020).

In different countries such as Spain, the extreme right is developing both responses simultaneously, creating an increasing confusion in which the phenomenon of fake news plays a central role—facing these two different responses Ian Parker analyses two

different and dominant ideologies that are guiding state policies. On the one hand, the neoliberal response aimed at achieving the herd immunity putting life at risk and the markets at the centre. Several feminist economists have widely criticised this centrality of the markets and the constant threat that life has to face for a capitalist economy to work. On the other hand, the liberal response thinks of the crisis as a natural and unpredictable consequence that will bring a common purpose. To these four different responses that rely on the role of the State, Ian Parker introduces an alternative eco-socialist response in which horizontal solidarity, which he defines as an alternative organisation in which

> […] we can organise ourselves separately from the state, build on the networks of mutual aid and articulate these with already-existing organisations of what we can call, for shorthand, the 99% (that is working people, the excluded, marginalised, those who form the basis of the various different liberation movements around the world) […] a strategy of working from the base up, from the grassroots (2020).

We agree that the current crisis has to be faced with an alternative response, although Ian Parker emphasises the eco-socialist dimension of such an alternative, we aim to point out to the feminist dimension of such an alternative. This dimension is visible in the type of political relations that this alternative needs. When speaking of the 99%, it is necessary to recognise the intersectionality and the power relations among this vast group of people that do not necessarily imply a coalition. For an ecologist or a feminist alternative response to the current crisis that works from the base up, the base needs to recognise the cleavages separating it from conforming a coalition able to articulate a viral resistance.

The facemask paradigm introduces a political relationship that allows for creating and strengthening solidarity social networks that aim towards a feminist and ecologist transformation by introducing self-analysis. This political self-critique allows for the articulation of bodily coalitions. The facemask paradigm introduces a political relationship that allows for creating and strengthening solidarity social networks that aim towards a feminist and ecologist transformation. In the encounter with the Real that this pandemic crisis implies, the act that must occur is that of coalitions.

This coalition would imply a collective response to this pandemic's horrible consequences by those suffering at a higher level the effects of this crisis; precarious subjects could establish bonds that create a political coalition. The idea of bodily coalitions is introduced in Judith Butler's essay 'Bodily Vulnerability, Coalitions, and Street Politics' (2014). In this article, Judith Butler presents the potential that vulnerable bodies present when creating coalitions that defy the imposed order and normativity. The facemask paradigm invokes a further reading of vulnerability, not only has de virus made visible the inherent vulnerability of bodies, but it has also exposed how my own body could become a threat to the other by functioning as a means of contagion.

The Covid-19 crisis we are now facing could involve a radical shift in how political bonds are established if we understand how the threat may not inhabit the other but ourselves, just like the virus. We believe that reverse antagonisms offer two different and concrete ideas for political praxis. One the one hand, the idea of reverse antagonism implies a complete revision of international affairs since it introduces the idea of self-critique while intervening other countries, which has been traditionally legitimised on the grounds of fear. On the other hand, the idea of reverse antagonism radicalises certain

religious and humanist traditions through a Butlerian questioning of ontological statuses that aims to embrace those not seen as living. For example, religious traditions tend to leave out of their signifying chain those who do not stick to specific rules such as heterosexuality or the prohibition of abortion. Thus, this feminist turn innovates and radicalises the theoretical cohesion upon which religious or humanist traditions are based.

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