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José Rafael Luna Valencia

Consequences of panpsychism: towards Andean chrono-political ecology.

Introduction:

This work elaborates an epistemological argument making the grounds for a political axiom capable of dealing with dire situations of our modern times. For doing so, I'll problematize the meaning of *conscience* as an incomplete notion of what mindedness is, proposing *intelligence* as a broader epistemological basis for recognizing the *integrity* of living beings, therefore, as a scope capable of considering the 'ontological status' of several Others to which their being has been denied by colonial domination and annihilation. With another pair of glasses, I hope that we will be able to *relate* to the beingness of unrecognized presences, and—if the argument holds, and the basic condition for resilience, and ontological conservation is *relation*—work to shape an image of a more-than-human-planet.

For elaborating the arguments on epistemology I will go through postulates of panpsychism, which will extend our understanding of what mind is. Because mind is a medium through which we relate with others, and because of the universalization of the ontological status of mindedness that panpsychism offers us, we will need a scope for focusing our attention, and have a notion on *how and to what relate*. I'll discuss some limitations of panpsychism that can be addressed from Andean holism in order to argue for a relational epistemology, which gives way to a post-anthropocentric political axiom. I'll examine how Andean ontology comes as a fitter scope for knowing *how to relate ethically and therefore politically with the world* after the overcoming of anthropocentric cosmogony.

Paths of mystery:

There's an original sense of mystery that runs across existence. In a way, it is behind the effort of these words, of states, empires, tribes, of academia at the moment of asking eternal questions about our place in the universe, and raising current preoccupations such as a condition of a planet in despair. Life's restlessness gathers in the context of the Anthropocene. Mystery thickens. This era challenges for a *resolute* decision-making event at a planetary scale¹, as an effort of making way for the future of a planetary-being: the conception of a beating, world-wide Earth-Being (Marisol De la Cadena, 2015).

Western epistemological tradition has found the question of "who?" as a founding question in philosophy, and the "I" as the gateway for addressing that mystery—appointing philosophy as the work of a philosopher, and mindedness (as consciousness) as a feature reserved for the

¹ Heidegger's '*anticipatory resoluteness*' is forced in the context of a decaying world to reframe what it means to resolutely grip a hold of the idea of finitude, through a radicalization of being-in-the-world as inescapably and primordially *being-with*. I argue the details of this in another work made on 2020.

Subject. On sight of necropolitical (Mbembe, 2003) practices of governance in global history and contemporaneity, it seems like the question stemming from the individual falls short at grasping crucial sides of the *accessible* Being in general. Maybe a fitter question to address the mystery is just...“*what?*”

As a starting point, mystery draws us back to think about our closest milieu: our eyes, ears, skin, palate. It draws us back to our desire, to our own mind and *consciousness*—here we encounter the detour towards epistemological individualism. But it is because of the inputs the individual receives through their sensory mediums that they find *in* themselves the world again. There’s no gap. One is the world. –In face of anthropogenic dread, and to avoid that ‘epistemo-centric’ detour, another philosophical path may open by questioning what *intelligence* is.

I start from questioning *intelligence* instead of *conscience* because the inquiry on this latter has been exhausted of answers by hegemonic subject-oriented philosophies. If there’s going to be an answer to this geological restlessness, and if we consider Anthropocene’s birth date in 1492 (Mendieta, 2019), there needs to be an account of reality that is able to deal with ontological misrecognitions (of “race”, culture, color, species, gender, sex, place, etc.) and alterity violations inherited by subject-oriented colonial philosophies. To recognize the unrecognized, one basic commonality to look for is intelligence.

Intelligence after conscience:

In trying to elucidate in what would an interstellar encounter with intelligence consist of, Lem Stanisław, gathering from Iosif Shklovsky, considers the figure of the “miracle”: that trace of “astroengineering” that conforms the signature of a civilization comparable to ours: daunting radio signals, architectural formations, light displays, etc. But if alien life traces aren’t so obvious, how should a phenomenon be in order to be considered a miracle? Lem considers that it should display “...a course of action that **resembles** to ours, at least broadly. What is it that drove our search for “miracles”? An attempt to find a **multiplication** of our current capabilities.” (Stanisław 2013, 56; Emphasis added)

Although, as Lem recognizes, such criterion is quickly criticized as anthropocentric, a provisional axiom can be that the search for intelligence is a search for *resemblance*. But within post-anthropocentric discourse one may speculate about invisible, mineral, gaseous, or even liminal cooperations that opens intelligence up. How to relate to the unrelatable? This could be an aporia, or just a matter of time, as it happens with all kinds of beings to which, in the past, we could only access metaphorically. Was there ever a metaphor?

In holistic epistemologies or contemporary panpsychism, this primal ‘*what*’, swiftly overcomes the Conscious Human as the only aspect of mindedness. In cases of indigenous holisms (which I’ll address in the latter two sections), we lead to understand minds in the physical and metaphysical sides of particular or diffuse entities or of complete landscapes, or throughout non-discrete elements, like waters or winds. On the side of panpsychism (which we’ll explore in the next section), theorists consider the “*likeness*” of any being (Shaviro, no date, 2) as an irreducible grain of mindedness, a sort of cosmic ontological condition, the “coordinate 0°, 0°” that every entity has and that conforms its capacity to relate.

If to look for intelligence is to look for **resemblance** at least in a will to **multiply**, therefore, we might say that we “just know” when we encounter intelligence, because this conforms the primal double experience of encounter with the *Other* which by the same movement brings the *I* as well. Beauty is met by sight, and sight is met by the intelligence of seeing. Sight is taught by topologies that carve the neural pathways of the seeing eye. In a sense, the landscape sees itself.

On this line, to find intelligence sets up the experience of a mixture between uncanniness and familiarity, such as for example in the encounter between sexes, genders, cultures, species, beings... How do we know it's *play* that we see in an octopus? Albeit our radically distinct evolutionary path, as animals we just know, and become happy and playful too. Is it not relatable the thirst of plants? –Truth is... complete yet unknown wisdoms could be learnt from all kinds of beings. Modern episteme is dull; there are thousands of millennial learnings that coloniality's epistemological violence has covered over. Still, until today, kinning/resembling practices with heterodox entities endure within indigenous societies around the globe.

Although I'd say that finding an alien plant could already be a miracle/intelligent being, Lem does “raise” the bar for such consideration to all-too-human standards. In thinking about intelligence, he notes that “nonintelligent” beings, such as animals or plants, are homeostats of the first kind that are capable of adapting to changes in their environment by using “regulatory mechanisms, determined by genetic information” (Stanisław 2013, 60), but which fail at coping with genetically unanticipated environmental conditions. Lem finds these beings/systems as just “programmed in advance”.

He recognizes intelligence in “organisms endowed with the “second-order regulator,” the brain, which [...] is capable of changing the “action plan” (“self-programming via learning”)” (Stanisław 2013, 61). According to this, a being displays intelligence when it is able to act according to new information, not only by adapting to the environment, but also adapting the environment to itself.

But in this sense, intelligence is basically the same as the subject-centered definition of ‘consciousness’. However, under panpsychic assumptions of mathematician Rudy Rucker (Shaviro, no date, 13), notions of the human mind as computational (processing) system, allow us to approach a broader understanding of what mindedness is. If Mind is like a *universal flow* towards which every entity attends, then human *consciousness* appears like a chip, a computing, refractive/creative lump on top of a sort of universal psycho-cosmic circuit board. Consciousness as mere human computational capacity grasps a figment of the vast worlds where Mind grows. Psyche is all, therefore panpsychism.

Panpsychic assumptions

Following the cybernetic metaphor, we can imagine Mind as the electricity (analog to Whitehead's *feelings* (affects)) running through computing/refracting architectures: *intelligent*² arrangements of mind-stuff. Mind runs inside processing individuals and transits

² Here we can locate a definition of *intelligence*, an emergent entity displaying harnessing and rearranging behaviors towards the world and itself based on computing or processing things out of existence.

the relations between them. For understanding the full image, we could roughly say that in panpsychism the recognition of a thing as a thing (its 'ontological status') depends on the thing's participation on a sort of "universal psychic commerce". This status is given to both individuals *and relations*.

Relations, under panpsychism assumptions, are beings in their own right, and differ from "discrete" entities (*actual occasions*, as Whitehead refers to them) in that *they are held in time*: "traditions" (in a cosmic sense) blurred across multiple single-occasions, leaping into metaphysics. They are conventions, durations held between "actual occasions", which at their time—if we endow them with being—, in their *coming together* conform further occasions of another scale. For example, cultures interacting with other cultures, histories forming histories.

Being seems to display a structure of concentric scales, spirals of conventions going throughout macro and micro levels. Relationships across scales in non-contiguous and non-linear manners challenge subject-oriented cosmologies based on eschatology, teleology and Eurowestern hierarchy. We find a concrete example of this in how human libido is enmeshed with culture, which is enmeshed with the environment, making true ecological disasters the correlate of erotic best seller novels (Pettman, 2021). Our libido becomes the world, and the world becomes our libido.

At this point, this display of cosmic mereology (parts and wholes theory) comes as a moment of dizziness. To consider beings within beings while de-centering the subject from minded agency, leaves us stranded within an infinity of scales and directionalities for making sense of reality.

What should be taken in account for understanding things?

For answering this, Shaviri observes both in Whitehead and Latour a principle of irreducibility and *integrity* of all beings. In an attempt to not fall into the sort of extremist materialism that would, for example, reduce the being of a chair to its absolute basic components—subatomic particles—Shaviri offers what he has called "...the argument against smallism. For the **integrity** of objects of all sizes, in their spatial—rather than just of their ultimate microcomponents—is really the same thing as the **endurance of objects through time.**" (Shaviri, no year, 12, emphasis added)

Placing a better epistemological basis:

If we consider the Anthropocene's existential dread as product of misunderstanding the world, a lack of *grasp*—by overseeing beings' mindedness and therefore their ontological procuring—then another conception of knowing is necessary: an epistemology that is able to make do with humans' computing capacities and aspirations, enabling us to grasp that upon which our own existence depends, thereby establishing *relations*, practices of *kinning and resembling* as means for *multiplying* (but importantly as an ends as well.)

To avoid finitude, our dexterity arranging architectures for Mind to flow through (reproducing intelligence) has to improve. The process of oneness transiting to togetherness and back into oneness, appears as a cosmic condition; the challenge of successfully "prehending" (as Whitehead refers to the successful affective juncture between two actual occasions) the

world. Inasmuch we prehend the world and become it, we fulfill what seems to be one basic principle of life: *to kin, and multiply through that*. Contemporary panpsychism opens up the range for otherness recognition, thus the range for becoming-others, exceeding previous epistemological frameworks.

With what should we relate, how, and why? To start answering that question, what do we need to keep on questioning (computing, processing) at all? We need to breathe, eat, drink, be warm, a home, and someone to pose the question. Taking a step back from mereological infinity that panpsychism opens for us, but also attaining to its own principle of irreducibility, we can settle the *time of life* as the horizon for epistemological considerations.

But now we are soon moved to ask what life is. The feature “living” becomes diffuse once we look close enough. Natasha Myers’s considerations illustrate this, when noting how plants make life out of seemingly nothing: “they reach out across the cosmos, drawing the energy of the sun into their tissues so that they can work their terrestrial magic. Plants are world-making conjurers, pulling matter out of thin air.” (Myers, 2019) She regards plants as life’s common denominator, and suggests direct cooperation or “conspirations” with them, by tapping “into their desires for forms of life that are not *for us*” (Myers, 2019), thus fostering adequate conditions for plants to grow—sharing a desire for clean waters and winds, and the sovereignty to live by one’s own rhythms, outside homogenous capital time.

For Natasha, an alternative to the Anthropocene that is good for us is the Planthropocene, a world adjusted for plants, because, as she says, we always have been “of the plants”, and that for understanding what plants want, to remember... “that your senses are already vegetalized. Consider who taught you how to taste, how to smell, and how to experience color. Plants are the artisans who have taught us so much about beauty and form.” (Myers, 2019)

Plants are indeed somewhere at the basis of intelligence creation. It is around 12000 years since humans have been decidedly becoming plant. Human history begins with this peculiar bonding. We have had true prehensions with them, becoming interested in what they care about. But in the same way in which our purpose of living incites us to resemble plants, a plant’s life and interests hinges on its capability to resemble and become another. Plants become Sun through heliotropism, planet through gravitropism, wasp, mycelium, etc.

Panpsychic reservations with relationalism:

Considering these series of becoming implications, Myers’ effort to have plants as a concrete anchor for basing resembling practices (ethics) really opens the floor for placing that anchor anywhere. Should we locate the basis of these ethics on nutrients, gases, photons or a Sun God? This is a problem that, at least from Whitehead’s approach, the ontology that holds a panpsychic epistemology tackles through the theoretical requirement the rejection of *relationalism*: “the idea that every entity is entirely determined by, and can be completely described in terms of, its relations to other entities. [Relationalism displays a structural image] A structure in this sense is founded upon what Manuel Delanda calls “*relations of interiority*: the component parts are constituted by the very relations they have to other parts in the whole...” (Shaviri, NO DATE, 5; citing Delanda 2006, 9). Rejection to relationalism has as basis that any “actual occasion” is an inviolable space from which it is able to make a decision on

how to react to the world outside, and have freedom by this. But, wouldn't this represent a principle of separatedness?

Shaviri, with an informed grasp of Whitehead's thought, recounts how this irreducibility concerns in a great deal a notion that resembles equilibrium, and not a petty defense of subjectivism:

"Whitehead, I think, is more balanced than either Harman or myself. He understands the need for both relation and separation; his metaphysics posits both of these as equally crucial requisites. [...] Every entity in the world, he suggests to us, has both privacy and publicity, both an inside and an outside. This means that both sides of process – the beneficent widening of relationships in circles of concern, on the one hand, and the *absolute self-enjoyment of the individual entity*, on the other – happen at every moment, and form part of every occasion." (Shaviri, NO DATE, 11, emphasis added)

Panpsychism remains having an interiority, its 'likeness' and 'absolute self-enjoyment' as the basis of freedom. Relations, for Shaviri, "are the shackles of causal efficacy; they are the obligations from which no entity is ever free" (Shaviri, NO DATE, 11) because of their boundedness to past and future times, whereas that grain of individuality is in his view what allows self-creation in the lived present. But decisions, as Heidegger would say, are simply made on the go of situations because we are always already *in* the world (Heidegger, 2008). The space of decision is the very actual occasion as a process, woven by all the implicated chronic relations. Being is time, life's chronic. This is why the definition of an 'actual occasion' would instead demand a principle of relationality/time for its constitution. This we'll discuss in next section.

Andean "gauge" for tackling relational infinity:

Somewhat similar to panpsychism, Andean holism recognizes ontological status to Pacha Mama, Taita Inti (father Sun), and everything in-between. But different from object oriented ontologies (OOO) like in contemporary panpsychism, Andean ontology is relational. Relationality is a cosmological ontogenetic principle: the presence of something brings the presence of everything to which it is related. Plurality is constitutive. Relationality *is a principle*, not an additional moment of a potentially relatable entity. It is rather the very act of relation that gives and creates being. A solipsistic moment does not exist—there really isn't a single moment when an individual is alone, since its conception it is *within*. A living being's *integrity* depends on being well related at all times, at home.

Given the radical openness of being as being-related, that which a being is in a time and space is determined by the prehension of a thing-at-hand (affectively close) which, as happens with plants, lead us toprehend beyond it: the thing's own covenants with other things (cooperations, memories, spirits, traditions, etc.). For addressing a thing in its particular actual occasion, its durations are *freely designated* (in an act of remembrance) to work in a given context, thus giving place to the emergent reality of actual occasions. A rock may carry the guts of a mountain and be used for ceremonial purposes, it can be part of a building, or a weapon to interpellate a bad government.

A science rooted in this understanding has *meaningful approaches* to its “objects”, without totalizing/objectivizing purposes. It’s worth to note that there are thick and thin ontological fields, topographies of intense or sparse relationality, that display degrees of participation in the suggested “universal psychic commerce”.

Ontological plurality of things makes them recede from total prehension. Complete containment is unachievable because being is not an inherent content of an entity, and because the totality of the network that holds it as a relation is infinite. But impossibility of complete prehension does not necessarily result in chaos. Rather, the recognition of the world and the subject as *inexhaustible* is the condition for them to be *prehensible* in the first place: *they keep on giving more*.

Are we falling back towards the principle of the irreducible grain of ‘likeness’, an unstained privacy? No—in fact we’re stating that that which does not show *participates laterally, indirectly* at the ontogenetic moment. The jealousy of interiority, the very act of *deciding what to give* is the gesture of generosity and understanding restrain that enables juncture. Entities do not appear exegetically in front of each other. Their encounter usually is casual and vague. Still, in the holiest approach, sacred beings appear with even more shadows. Mystery is always there. In highly relational occasions, entities come in diffuse, concrete, literal, and metaphoric ways. Always excessive: *inexhaustible memories from pasts and futures appear as the very guarantee of time*.

A principle of irreducibility needs to be rethought in order to not get lost in unending relationality, and also to have a basis for freedom. This basis would be *memory* as a praxis able to access relations in function to context. This is compatible with Shaviro’s notion of the integrity of a being that consists in its *endurance through time*, as it’d consist in overcoming unending relationality by “dialing specific modulations of time” *through memory*.

Within Andean relational cosmology—*inspired by an agrarian habitus*—to be a part of something does not imply hierarchy in Eurowestern terms, as relations are governed by the corollaries (*theoretically* proposed by Josef Estermann) of *correspondence* (which posit a double way relationship), *complementarity* (which posits an “ontological deficiency” of things (Estermann 2006, 139), and that is interpreted through the allegory of sexuality (which *all* beings have): a non-complemented entity lacks fertility and is unable to generate being; concretion is impossible without merger), and *reciprocity* as the ethical realization of these corollary-principles within the lifeworld.

These corollaries discard Eurowestern hierarchy that would tyrannically interrupt self-enjoyment in benefit of shackling traditions, because they explain relations as the very production of being. To be is to relate, and there’s no interruption of self-enjoyment because there’s no time if a being remains immanent, and without time there’s no being, hence no enjoyment at all. *Relation opens up the possibility of freedom*. Outside and inside merge and are co-constitutive in that the feeling of insideness, of home provides the condition of possibility of agency. This is not contradictory to OOOs’ postulate of rejection to *correlationism* whereby the world is unthinkable without humans (Shaviro, NO DATE, 4). The world could indeed do well without humans. But Andean correlation rather posits a *response-ability*³ to

³ For a further theorization of what responsibility as an *ability to respond*, see Bawaka Country 2018.

humans if we are to *prolong the conditions that allow us to exist*. Remember that our existence within a relational framework is enmeshed with more beings, thus the *importance of humanity overcomes anthropocentrism*.

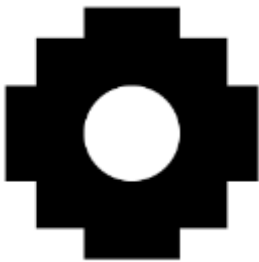
Towards Andean chrono-political ecology:

Kay Pacha in Kichwa is usually used to refer to the present, the precise moment when the Being presents itself as it is, like a “cosmic ct scan” of the universe giving away forms and shadows. This picture has life in it, a miracle “pale blue dot” (Carl Sagan), containing all that could vitally interest us. Life is shaped with “lines” drawn by beings relating. Ephemeral and enduring relations that go deep into the past (giving depth to the image) scaffold life and intelligence within that “scan”.

Kay Pacha temporal reference is political as its epistemic-relationality assumptions call for action (work) for keeping those “lines” constantly drawing. Relationalities are maintained and assumed. In this different epistemology the act of knowing is political, because it understands that knowledge itself depends on relating/resembling; hence, *how should one relate? To whom?* These are questions that, as we have seen through the postulates of panpsychism, aim to the *time of life*, the spatio-temporal lines upon which it hinges: intelligent autopoietic diagrams of relations/temporalities.

Kay Pacha’s holographic image provides a notion of the political as it demands certain resembling practices. Because these practices are directed to inherently temporal relations as temporal relations, time emerges as political philosophy’s core subject, hence that the politics of ecology (ecology being the science of relations between living beings) are chronopolitics.

The highlands that imagined these conditions of existence figured that humans’ role in the universe is attained to the bridge-like structure named *Chakana*. *Chakana* is an Andean core enduring symbol. It’s polysemic and can talk to daily interpersonal relations, to agro-ritual cycles, biological, political cycles, etc. In its vertical axis conforms a staircase that connects the underworld with the heavens. Estermann recounts that this axis is signified by the principle-corollary of correspondence. We could say that it depicts what from panpsychism is seen as the universe’s mereological structure. Its *horizontal* axis, Estermann recounts, is signified by the principle-corollary of *complementarity*. The *runa*, the human, is a *chakana*, like an “engine” of an intelligent universe, which not only dissevers the world to him/herself, but *dissevers the world to itself*: opens the earth so the sky can enter as rain, so plants can reach back up. But everything really, in a relational cosmos, is a *chakana*, in a dense or sparse way.



Conclusion:

By accounting the various perspectives that we explored, and also, considering the sensation of “terminalism” (Farman, IN PRESS) that the Anthropocene brings along, we could say that our current problems as a species and a planet are due to governing relationalities/time regimes.

There is no room for saying that the aches of our world have to do with a lack of relationality. If anything, we can say that some relations are risky and fatal. Relation is simply “the rule of

the game”, a cosmic condition. In fact, our relationalities, as a world system, economically, informatically, etc., are extremely potent nowadays, but their articulation lacks the awareness of their vectorial capacities in terms of time distribution/design. Techniques for relation-management, alternative *time technes* that differ from the capitalist one (empty time as Benjamin refers to it)—i.e., agricultural knowledges, techniques and modes of production that escape the model of the Plantation (Mendieta, 2019), governabilities shaped by heterogeneous time perceptions, and hacking public policy (Chandler, 2018)—are needed to safeguard our *collective continuance* (Whyte, 2018).

Instead of inventing new rituals from scratch—as Myers suggests for the Planthropocene—perhaps we should turn towards indigenous millennial knowledges (rituals), heal coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000), do science through renewed epistemologies, and as “modern humans” *at least* become indigenous (well related, at home, not a tourist) to our own planet. As Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui notes, “...there’s no need to do “field work” in a faraway and remote community, to understand that there’s an indian episteme up the sleeve in many places, and that we could inhabit, that is, make body of it.” (Rivera Cusicanqui 2018, 113; my translation). There’s no time for the millions of pilgrimages of urban citizens in order to legitimize better rearrangements of relationalities by freely deepening our memory within space.

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