

The Swimming Pool of Discomfort: A Post-marxist Discourse without Exceptions

Close your eyes. Bring your most recent uncomfortable moment to mind. Notice if remembering this moment contradicts with the air that is flowing through your esophagus and down to the abdomen. Don't be alarmed. Remember that there are other parts of your body co-existing along with your uncomfortable theme. Whatever it is that is hidden behind your horizon, a dark notion of something not quite describable, not quite graspable, but something you would much rather erase: that thing, and the pro-active movements of your body are allowed to co-exist. For instance, you could rotate your limbs frivolously through space, even while the uncomfortable moment is present. And then there are also the pro-active and self-regulating features of your body that can be found within. This includes the pulsation of your heart, rhythmically conducting the pace of your survival. The circulation of your blood, the cell regeneration of your molecules, the discourse between your nervous system and your brain and all the other organs ebbing and flowing such as kidneys, liver and spleen. And your whole body sending your breath in and out so that it's leaving and re-entering your body, sometimes caught in a short retention perhaps, in a moment of unease, in a pool of discomfort. And don't forget the narrative of your digestive tract and the tactile response of your skin. Knowingly or unknowingly: your physical structure is self-regulating your survival, notwithstanding of your mood and continuously driving you through your emotional highway. Consider allowing the driver to have conversations with all the sensations you feel, whether joyous or unpleasant.

We have yet to recognise the potential within our negative sensations, so how about thinking of all those other beings who also experience unease or even pain. As living creatures, we are all united by the universal notion of pain. Nobody enjoys it, yet we all face it frequently. Is there a way in which we can unite our aversion towards suffering and in solidarity? There is no hierarchy to pain. There is no need to divide our discomfort into different ratios and it is meaningless to measure it. What we could do though, is building a supportive structure around it so that any pain arising can be better maintained.

Let's start by building a wall together. At a certain moment I ask you to pass me a brick and then I add it to the wall. The first act — asking for the brick — is linguistic; the second — adding the brick to the wall — is physical. Do I exhaust the reality of both acts by drawing the distinction between us in terms of the linguistic and physical opposition? Evidently not, because, despite the differentiation in those terms, both actions share something that allows them to be compared, namely the fact that they are both part of a total operation which is the building of the wall.

So, then, how could we characterize this totality of which asking for a brick and positioning it are, both, partial moments? Obviously, if this totality includes both linguistic and physical elements, it cannot itself be either linguistic or physical; it has to be prior to this distinction. This totality which includes within itself the linguistic and the physical, is what we call real discourse. What must be clear is that by discourse we do not mean a combination of speech and talk, but rather that speech and physical movement are themselves but internal components of discursive totalities.

Karl Marx observed that capitalism only expands through permanent transformation of the means of production and the dislocation and progressive dissolution of traditional social relations. Such dislocation effects manifest, on the one hand, in physical commodification, and on the other hand, in the set of phenomena linked to uneven and combined development. In these conditions, the radical instability and threat to social identities posed by capitalist expansion necessarily leads to new forms of discourse within a collective imaginary which reconstruct those threatened identities in a fundamentally new way. Discourses on rights play a fundamental role in the reconstruction of collective identities. Once human bodies accept the legitimacy of the principle of equality in one sphere, some of us will attempt to extend it to every other sphere of life.

We have to remember this viral effect embedded in our attempt to seek equality and in physical form. We have to do so not just towards the ones we consider as our 'classic' enemies, a notion we should abandon completely. We have to, also, use our discomfort, not just to disagree, but also to foster the full integration of our political demands and hopes. Dispersion and fragmentation of our intentions are not the way. Nuanced critique and a continuous melding of acceptances and questionings will, however, drive the idea of a post-marxism state further. We must continue our discourse within all the discomfort we are experiencing along the way. And that is not just linguistically and in our speech, but also physically, exposing the weaknesses of our personal emotional structures and training our resistance towards uncomfortable moments. Thoughts are situated in our bodies and fully present as feelings and sensations. Our bodies are personal. And the personal is political. Only by personally exposing ourselves to the uncomfortable inequalities and tensions around us, can we regulate our discourse within the parameters of honest hope.