

TEXTS BY JACQUES CAMATTE (3)

ENMITY AND EXTINCTION



HE phenomenon that prevents the taking of immediate and effective measures to halt global warming and the destruction of nature is the dynamic of enmity that controls the behaviour of the species. The relationship between the two, therefore, is evident and ineluctable: the dynamic of enmity inevitably leads to the extinction of the species. A convincing example: a measure that would have a positive and fairly rapid effect on global warming and the destruction of nature (the two are absolutely linked) would be to abolish armies and to stop producing weapons without suppressing the wages of those who work in armies and in the arms industry. Instead of being paid and paid to destroy, they would still be paid, but paid to do nothing, which would allow them to be able to envision the life phenomenon [*le phénomène vie*] differently. Such a proposal would be rejected as utopian, unrealistic, etc., with the argument most often invoked being that one must be able to defend oneself. So even people who are neither warmongering nor bellicose think that they may be attacked and that they must, therefore, protect themselves. This further implies that any other is potentially an enemy or a foe. However, such steps concern the whole planet, both on the earth's surface and below, on the seas and in the ocean depths, in the atmosphere and in space.

Enmity commands other practices, such as intense lighting at night (fear of aggression), or the nocturnal lighting in shops. In this second case enmity is linked to competition and the need to be recognised. But it also operates in politics, as well as in the domain of knowledge with polemics. In order to assert oneself the individual needs an 'enemy'; one must assert oneself against another. The whole sphere of the life of the species is imbued with enmity. This behaviour is founded in relation to the separation from nature, a key consequence of which is the separation of power and love; power is affirmed mainly at the pole 'man,' while love at the pole 'woman,' but they also coexist within both men and women, and this constitutes one of the fundamentals for ambiguity. However, what 'connects' human beings to each other and enables them to form a whole is enmity.

As far as its relations with other living beings are concerned enmity prevails, and this also goes for every element of the cosmos, as human beings need support to found 'the enemy.'

In different forms, various theorists have made the same observation. In *L'Homme Imprévu* André Bourguignon states:

Indeed, no species devotes itself so relentlessly to the realisation of its misfortune, to the destruction of beings and things, no species practices so stubbornly intraspecific, individual and collective violence and murder; no species treats its



young so inconsistently, carelessly, even cruelly; no species subjects females so harshly. Thus, for a thousand reasons, man has become a 'mad' animal. [...] This is what we thought we saw in the facts and in the long story that began with the hydrogen atom, and perhaps ends on Earth with Mankind.¹

In *L'Homme fou. Histoire naturelle de l'homme*. 2, he clarifies why Mankind is mad. He bases his reasoning on quotations from Blaise Pascal, stating: "Moreover, the madness of Man is attested to by the duality, the division and incoherence of his mind."² To this he adds enmity: "Enemy of himself, Man is also an enemy of his fellow men."³ But it is better to view this as unreason, or unreasonableness, rather than 'madness,' or, more precisely, as *speciosis*⁴ since it affects the human being more profoundly. Thus, in the case of ipseity [*ipsésiation*] people feel so threatened that they shut themselves up in themselves, meaning that relations with others become impossible; while in their alienation they identify with something else and shut themselves up in that, meaning that they are unable to return to themselves. Madness is another form of extinction, because for the individual, as for the species – if it occurs – it puts the brakes on all development, and all becoming. Madness in the Pascalian sense stems from the fact that the species, having separated itself from nature, vainly seeks to find its place in it, which

is the basis of its wandering. It consistently leaves the 'natural furrow.'

For A. Bourguignon the root of this Pascalian madness lies in the inadequate behaviour of adults towards children, which can go as far as child abuse. The implication, then, is that Mankind must change:

When the child, his abilities, and needs become even better known, better conditions of development can be offered to him; for at present, without parents and teachers being aware of it, his education generates psychical conflict and contributes little to the full development of his potential.⁵

If man could change, it would only be possible through a profound transformation of the conditions imposed on him in childhood.⁶

1 André Bourguignon, *L'homme imprévu - Histoire naturelle de l'homme* - 1, Editions PUF, p.10. On the issue of the importance of the child I have, in other texts, quoted various theorists. The interest of A. Bourguignon's work lies in its historical and paleontological approach, which takes into account the relationship of the species to nature, and also touches on the possibility of extinction.

2 Cf., p.18.

3 Ibid., p.18.

4 [Trans., See Revue Invariance, *Point d'aboutissement actuel de l'errance* - 14.2.1 *La spéciose: structure*.]

5 *L'homme imprévu*, pp. 303-304. ¶ Let us add the point of view of an anthropologist, François-Robert Zacot: "Three examples. Three symptoms that all have one thing in common: the appropriation of the child by the adult. They all bear witness to the pathology of our cultural era. ¶ "In vitro fertilization (IVF), which seems justified, however, produces a lack of transmission between parents and child; the child has and can have no place in a history or in a filiation. Although present, the baby does not exist. What counts is the desire of the adult, the desire of medicine. Which is then inscribed into their logic." ¶ The same is true, according to him, of adoption and same-sex parenting. He concludes: "It (cultural logic) builds danger because it constructs Mankind out of the loss of self." "l'Occident, l'adulte et l'enfant," in *Le Monde*, 9 November 2007.

6 *L'Homme fou*, p.16. On page 316 of the same book, he says: "For those who dream of a better world, the only way to transform mankind would be through a radical change in the conditions offered to pregnant women, and children; for it seems that in all cultures the young of humans are raised in poorer conditions than the young of wild animals, whose psychic development, it is true, is less demanding." He adds, this presupposes a revolution "currently inconceivable." Should it come to pass, "there would remain an uncontrollable element, the unconscious desires of the parents. Do they

It is obvious, then, that the source of all evils lies in the inadequacy of adults' behaviour in connection to children, and especially in relation to babies. How did we come to this, since surely the species must have originally behaved very differently, or it would have disappeared long ago? To answer this question, we must first reconsider its characteristics. First of all, the upright position was established, then brain size grew, and this conditioned what is defined as the prematuration of the child. However, in my opinion this is an inadequate formulation. The important increase of the encephalon and therefore of the head implies, given the anatomical characteristics of the woman's pelvis, an exit of the foetus from the uterus during the ninth month of gestation. But is this necessarily prematuration? The infant marsupial, for example, emerges from the maternal uterus as something like a 'larva' and continues its development in the marsupial pouch. It, therefore, has two stages of development. This is comparable to what happens in the case of the human species. The gestation phase in the uterus – uterogestation – which ends at birth, is followed by what can be called *haptogestation* [a phase of *Homo sapiens* development that occurs after birth and lasts approximately up to two years – *T.N.*], a gestation which is achieved through constant contact between the mother (and even other adults) and the child.⁷ Anticipating this, we can say that prematuration imposes itself because the period of haptogestation has disappeared, or been withdrawn [*escamotée*].

Before continuing, I would like to clarify the notions of juvenility, fetalisation, and neoteny (as I have already done in more detail

know why they want to have children? Do they know that they ignore their real needs and very often raise them disastrously?"

7 I recall that the origin of this term comes from the work of Ashley Montagu who spoke of uterogestation and exterogestation. I replaced extero by hauto in reference to Franz Veldman, founder of haptonomy.

in *Données á intégrer*). The first two indicate that juvenile traits are conserved in the adult, which is evident when comparing the development of *Homo sapiens* with that of the apes closest to it. Neoteny indicates the same thing but adds the idea that sexuality is acquired at a younger stage than that of adulthood, which is not the case with humans. These three notions, then, do not concern what is misleadingly termed prematuration.

To return to haptogestation. The psychologist, Franz Renggli affirms that babies constantly want to be carried and German psychologists talk about *tragling*⁸ and consider the human baby to be in a state of nesting, the nest consisting of the arm and chest surrounding and supporting the baby and the breast. Babies must be constantly carried until they acquire the ability to walk upright – after a phase of crawling which should not be prevented – and the mother and father cannot meet this requirement. As a result, a very cohesive community is necessary as was the case in the initial emergence of *Homo sapiens*.

Over the millennia, following the separation from the rest of nature – which generates both enmity and ambiguity towards nature – the community becomes fragmented and various forms of organisation emerge. Correlatively, the separation of mothers from their children increases, requiring the invention of technical objects such as the cradle, or the creation of jobs such as that of a wet-nurse, which implies that the more humans separate themselves from nature, the more they separate themselves from their own naturalness. Currently we have reached the stage where the baby has become a strange and alien being, often creating unease and disarray for the parents because of the rising up in them of the repressed memory [of their own childhoods – *T.N.*], in which their own continuity [with nature and their own naturalness – *T.N.*] was

8 [Trans., From the German, *tragen*: to carry.] See the Glossary on *Revue Invariance*.

lost. The species survives thanks to the enormous technico-scientific developments that compensate for the knowledge and behaviour that is immediately repressed and then lost; even if certain elements of naturalness persist. This causes scientists to intervene to uphold rationality and the out-of-nature becoming.

The baby, being a stranger, is not accepted in its naturalness, it is often perceived as disturbing and preventing the parents from living what they call their life. However, as the child grows older and nears maturity, he or she can be accepted by adults because he or she becomes an understandable being with whom a fulfilling relationship can be established. In this way the covering-over of the initial painful child-phase can take place. This process is consolidated as the child becomes domesticated, [a condition – T.N.] which finds it as a human being in society. Indeed, one is not born a man or a woman, but one becomes one. This implies a process of acquisition, a continual work, an indefinite progression. These are the bases on which the ideology of progress is elaborated, which is also imbued with an enmity toward nature, the past, and in regard to others (the enemies of progress). The repression of naturalness entails a becoming that leads to wandering.

So, what drives men and women to have children? The most important reason, though unconscious, is the desire to be saved and to form a community. Until this desire is universally recognised it will be impossible to stop the dizzying growth of the population. To varying degrees, every child starts out as a saviour. Curiously, the adult who wants to flee all dependence - what was experienced as a child - is looking for a being who, in his or her eyes, represents dependence par excellence.

All despotic communities, whether they have disappeared or still exist, as well as societies with various forms of State, have sought to adapt mothers and children to the initially communitarian and then social becoming and

have never tried, instead, to adapt such becoming to the natural needs of mothers and children. Thus, over millennia, there has been a relentless separation of mother and child and the living conditions of children have only worsened, particularly with the establishment of patriarchy, where the child becomes an object of contested power.

The unconscious hatred of mothers, and thus the enmity and ambiguity that follows, combined with the hostile relationship to nature, is the basis of the behaviour of the speciosed species that has now reached the end of its wandering.⁹

In order to avoid extinction we have to abandon the dynamics of enmity as the foundation of both the intraspecific and interspecific process of life (that extends to the whole cosmos). This implies the restoration of continuity via the acceptance of the naturalness of the child and the retrieval of the naturalness of adults. This can only be achieved through an immense inversion.

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Traditionally, Camatte's writings have always been copyright free, so many translations of his texts are also copyright free and offered to the world for a process of successive correction and reworking by others, in order to make them more and more faithful to the original French text. This is the process that has already happened, and continues, in the Italian translations to be found at Il Covile. These translations are offered in the same spirit of collaboration and assistance and to this end we can offer in process translations of "De La Vie" and "Le Devenir à L'inversion" for anyone interested in contributing to making the post 80s works of Camatte more widely known.

⁹ I do not elaborate here, since all these themes have been developed in other texts, for example in *De La Vie*. However, I will be revisiting them in the continuation of *The Emergence of Homo Gemeinwesen*.