

held to be inferior. It is applied to mask the problem.

## **Capitalism as colonisation**

There is a close relationship between a dualistic approach to the world as an assortment of objects, and the idea that the adequate treatment of these objects (including everyone and everything not adhering to the societal contract) is to exploit them as commodities. As I have argued in “Enlivenment” (2013, 2019), treating everything outside the contractual society as material good only denies its own life and the role it plays in ours, denying also our own aliveness. This attitude changes reality into a dead zone. It introduces turns our understanding of the world into a “metaphysics of death” – as anything important has only to do with the re-arrangement of material building blocks devoid of personal relation. We – material beings – stick to the waist in this dead zone; we are crazily afraid to drown further (and to die), and hence we wage a constant war and deliberately drag others under (“better them than us”).

The liberal economy, with its antagonism between resources (which are traded) and subjects (who trade or need to be supplied with things), is one of the many manifestations of this dualism. Dualism entails a capitalistic economy, because dualism is the concept of reducing persons to things, and capitalism enacts just that. If we separate ourselves from the remainder of the world, all things become means, and we become means, too. If we sort the world in two boxes, inside and outside, the damage is already done. Positing a subject here and an object there inevitably leads to the destruction of both. Subject and resource, agents and goods – that is the working formula of capitalism. Things there, actors here, this is also the ideology of war.

The western episteme is waging a war against every (human and non-human) person not included in the club. From this

perspective, there is no difference between enclosure, commodification, colonisation and warfare. All of those not only attack living systems, they also damage psychological and emotional identities connected to life and life's dependency on other lives. They are all attacks on "aliveness" itself – a capacity of life that is unavailable and incomprehensible to the dualistic mind. They are attacks on reality. For the Italian philosopher Ugo Mattei (quoted in Bollier 2014), the opposition of subject and object already is a commodification. In this vein, political scientist David Johns (2014:42) observes, "Colonialism is nowhere more apparent and thriving than in the relationship between humanity and the rest of the earth."

If we are colonising life, it follows that we also colonise – and oppress – ourselves, because life is part of us. Western metaphysics rejects the healthy capacities of embodied human beings to live productive lives in mutuality with a world rife with creation. This denial is explicit regarding a large number of humans, where we call it colonial thinking. And it is implicit with respect to nearly all other living beings, where this refusal is upheld by mainstream science. Through the western cognitive mindset, we deny all embodied beings their healthy capacities – including ourselves. The proponents of the cognitive schism, which is the hallmark of the empire, are deemed to be slaveholders, but they are also slaves.

Paradoxically, the critical reflection of the western paradigm I put forth in this essay must itself fall through the epistemological sieve the western paradigm has constructed – as it draws on experiences not within the framework of science. The Western model is inert to critique from within – and it is immune to attack from the outside. Just so is capitalism. It is high time that we move outside our human shell and call the others for rescue. As philosopher Val Plumwood (2013:441) asserts, "We need a thorough and open rethink, which has the courage to question our most basic cultural narratives."

This rethink is a double-sided move: It means to investigate cosmologies, which westerners have forsaken long ago – and it means to put confidence in the fact that the capacity to participate in those cosmologies is part of our own being. We should explore these capacities. We should grant space for what anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) called the “savage mind”, our own ability to adhere to the “compact of being”, as poet and ecophilosopher Gary Snyder (1990) says, the rules and ecstasies of the ecological mutuality of life.

The savage mind is the antidote to what post-colonial thinker Achille Mbembe (2016) names the “abstract universalism” of the cognitivist mindset. The savage mind does not entail wildness in the sense of the western, Hobbesian cliché, but a reliance on one’s own existence as productive participation in an ongoing creative process bringing forth diversity and meaning, and providing life in an unlimited way, if it is taken care of. The savage mind understands how to participate in a live-giving cosmos. The savage mind is what sleeps inside of each of us, when we stop in our tracks, startled by the beauty of a rose, by the movements of the leaves in a breeze.

The savage mind is our way to no longer adhere to what is expected from us by the cognitive enclosures of the west. Wild is not devoid of rules, to the contrary. The rules it grows from, however, are not those of usurpation, but of reciprocity. “Wild” has been denigrated as “red in tooth and claw” or touted as “unlimited personal freedom”, but it is none of this. Wild is the capacity to follow the rules in order to be alive and to experience this aliveness as it is, from the inside and from the outside.

It is important to retain that we have a sensory capacity for what these rules to produce life are. In ecological terms, self-decolonisation means to allow our whole embodied self to have a say. It means to admit that feeling, intuition, and the experience of connection are integral ecological

capacities which we share with all beings. Self-decolonisation means to allow ourselves our own feelings. We can trust them when we keep in mind that feelings are a living being's ways of keeping track with the community of others, how she is faring in it, and how they are (Weber 2017).