

#Metoo ... and Transhumanism?

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Abstract: What is almost always missing from #Metoo is an analysis of the place of our biological condition. Transhumanism has some things to say on this subject.

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1. UNTHINKING THE BIOLOGICAL CONDITION

Since the beginning of the #Metoo wave, I have been struck by the near absence of one element in the analysis of most of the speakers I have read and heard: it is the place of our biological condition. For example, in June 2019, a French magazine was launching a special issue to reflect on the sources of the #Metoo wave [1]. The Editorial asks whether the causes are more social or biological. But none of the 26 articles that follow takes a close look at male biology in humans.

That same year, for instance, there was a huge crackdown on pornography in France. At the time, everyone agreed in denouncing the horror of the abuses committed by the French Bukkake gang [2]. But apart from the moral condemnations or those focusing on the excesses of this veritable industry, few people have asked themselves why, deep down, these videos exist and are being watched.

Many rightly denounce not only the acts themselves, but the social and mental structures that have enabled sexual abuse and crimes. For decades, if not centuries, thousands of women and children were subjected to these crimes without our societies being overly concerned, for the simple reason that they remained unspoken.

The fact that the "normality" of this situation has been swept away is real human progress. It comes at the price of certain opposite excesses, which are no doubt inevitable when oppression has weighed for so long and still weighs in the opposite direction.

This human progress is, however, relative. Millions of women and under-age girls are forced to have sexual relations, particularly in the context of unwanted marriages or marital relationships, without this being vigorously denounced [3]. At the same time, social movements are revisiting with today's eyes attitudes and acts committed decades ago. But the sharpness of the criticism that goes beyond the boundaries of time does not extend beyond the boundaries of space. As if the lives and integrity of non-Western girls in the 21st century were not so important (except when the aggressor is Western).

2. THINKING ABOUT DOMINANCE

I think that transhumanism has something to say about another almost unthought, or unthinkable, aspect. In fact, while virile, aggressive and even violent sexual behaviour is largely the consequence of cultural, economic and social constructs inherited from centuries

or millennia of patriarchy and male domination [4], it seems more than likely to me that it also has its origins in purely biological pre-determinations.

Painful as it may seem - because it shocks our sense of humanity - we have to admit that these videos reveal in a certain number of men - probably more than we would like to believe - a tendency to derive pleasure from sexual violence, or, by proxy in largely policed societies, from the 'spectacle' of such violence.

If we are willing to consider this hypothesis, beyond the obvious condemnation of criminal acts, we need to ask ourselves where this kind of pleasure comes from. Even if an important part of the explanation is based on historical accumulation, we can ask ourselves why the patriarchal model of male domination has imposed itself so strongly and almost universally. The social control of the procreation process by those who have more physical strength but do not give birth - i.e. men - and all the factors linked to the transition to a sedentary lifestyle are certainly important [5]. But I think we also need to look at purely sexual impulses, as well as the process known as 'dominance'. 'Dominance' does not refer to a situation of global and continuous domination in which one or more individuals impose their will on others, but to the type of relationship, sometimes barely meaningful, that emerges from everyday life, in which superiority or inferiority is exercised between two or more people. Dominance, an evolutionary form of social regulation, could also have the effect of calming stress or providing immediate satisfaction [6].

What happens in a man's brain when he experiences sexual desire? To what extent are either of them able to control the influx of hormones and neurotransmitters that lead to rutting? What does society have to offer to help men live their sex lives harmoniously and peacefully?

It's a vast field that can't be cover here. I'll simply point out that the most widespread societal response seems to be that of pornographic sites. As for the responses focusing on the biological dimension of the issue, the best known is undoubtedly that of VIAGRA. It seems clear that, in both these examples, the underlying discourse is to equate male pleasure with performance.

Another aspect that is not often analysed is the psychological and biological impact of relationships of domination and 'dominance' in the sexual act. A number of neuroscientific studies tend to show that exercising moral or physical dominance over one's fellow human can have the effect, notably through the release of serotonin, of procuring a feeling of satisfaction and well-being bordering on happiness [7]!

Is this perhaps the case? First and foremost, isn't sexual intercourse biologically programmed to produce sperm for reproduction? Isn't the performance of this act - the most important according to the logic of living beings - rewarded by the highest possible level of enjoyment : orgasm [8]?

But even if we accept this - undoubtedly simplistic - assessment of male pleasure, what can we propose?

A masculinist, supremacist position, which believes that gender and sex relations of domination should be allowed to express themselves on the grounds that they best correspond to "natural" reality, is no longer acceptable. Fortunately, it is the exception. But

not encouraging phallocracy will not make its biological underpinnings disappear or even recede.

In passing, let's say a very quick word about the work of science journalist and feminist Peggy Sastre. In her book *La domination masculine n'existe pas (Male Domination Does Not Exist)*, she challenges many of the ready-made ideas on gender relations. She is also one of the few who dares to point out the weight of our genetic pre-determination, which has earned her the wrath of both left-wing bio-conservatism and Éric Zemmour's far-right attempts to exploit it [9]. But anyone who looks beyond the provocative title of his book can draw progressive conclusions.

The cultural, social, legal and penal guidelines or constraints of any other kind, that different societies have developed over the course of history to regulate gender relations, and in particular sexual relations, are certainly considered necessary, but are proving to be relatively effective and limited.

I note that under every sky, for example those of the taboos imposed by the Hindu quest for purity, those where we think we can control the "problem" by removing the image of women from the public space, and even those where, for decades, we have been fighting tooth and nail so that women can live and express themselves freely, the practice of rape seems far from disappearing [10].

3. ALLOWING ANYONE TO USE TECHNOLOGY TO CONTROL THEIR IMPULSES.

This is where transhumanist thinking has something to say. We are determined to use technology to reduce disease and ageing and to carry out mass vaccinations to combat the scourge of a pandemic. But it would be hypocritical to deny that this will have consequences for the biological condition of human beings. Similarly, we must not refuse to consider using biology (in particular neuroengineering) - in addition to our cultural, social and legislative arsenal - to enable those men and even women who choose to do so to learn to control their impulses and thus ward off the scourge of intersex violence!

Such a development would also be in line with the trend among the current rising generation, who want to be able to choose their gender orientation and the terms of their sexual life more freely. We can hope that this social and cultural shift towards less pronounced and therefore less conflictual gender relations will help to calm them down. It could lead to greater mutual respect [11].

However, we can't bet today that it will do away with the biological pre-determinations that continue to reside in the deepest recesses of each of us. If we want to make decisive progress towards this respect and appeasement, sooner or later we will have to add biological improvement to our social advances.

These issues are not confined to sexual violence. Violence in other contexts (profit-seeking, xenophobia and intolerance of all kinds, rivalries, armed conflicts, etc.) is also perpetrated far more often by men than by women. Yet violence is becoming "democratised": killing one's neighbour is becoming technically easier and easier, including

mass destruction. Allowing men's propensity for violence to go unchecked could, one day in the not-too-distant future, jeopardise humanity as a whole.

That's why it's worth repeating the warning issued by Henri Laborit (*Éloge de la fuite*, 1976) :

<<As long as we haven't made it widely known to the people of this planet how their brains work, how they use them, and as long as we haven't said that up until now it's always been about dominating others, there's little chance of anything changing.>>

Admittedly, this vision is deliberately exaggerated. Laborit was well aware that we do not use our brains solely to dominate others, and that social supervision inhibits a large proportion of violent domination tendencies. But fundamentally, most social relationships continue to have a strong dominance dimension, even if this dominance is increasingly symbolic.

At the time Henri Laborit was saying these words, the basic workings of our brains were considered to be virtually inaccessible data that we could not change. Today, after forty years of developments in neuroscience, we are still only just beginning to know where and how to intervene in our neurological system to voluntarily modulate our tendency to dominate [12].

Considerable progress is still needed to be able to act effectively and safely, but there is no doubt that biological engineering will be needed if we hope that one day something will really change in the human condition.

Notes

1. For example, in June 2019, L'Obs magazine is launching a special issue to reflect on the sources of the #MeToo wave. The Editorial asks whether the causes are more social or biological. But none of the 26 articles that follow takes a close look at male biology in humans. See Ursula Gauthier, L'Obs; « [Peut-on échapper à la domination masculine ?](#) », 27/06/2019.
2. *Le Monde*, « [Industrie du porno : quatre mises en examen à Paris pour viol, proxénétisme et traite d'être humain](#) », 19/10/2020.
3. See Wikipédia : « [Child marriage](#) ».
4. Sylvain Courage, L'Obs, interview with the archaeologist Jean-Paul Demoule, « [La domination masculine est la plus ancienne forme de pouvoir](#) », 27/06/19.
5. See Wikipédia : article « [patriarcat](#) »
6. See for example: Jacques Fradin and Camille Lefrançois, *Cerveau et Psycho*, « Dominant ou dominé » <https://www.cerveauetpsycho.fr/sd/psychologie/dominant-ou-domine-3835.php> , march 2007.
7. Jean-Didier VINCENT, *Biologie du pouvoir*, Odile Jacob 2018, chap. 2 « La Dominance », p.41.
8. Mathias chaillot, *NEON*, « Que se passe-t-il dans le cerveau pendant un rapport sexuel », 03/03/2020, < <https://www.neonmag.fr/que-se-passe-t-il-dans-le-cerveau-pendant-un-rapport-sexuel-551738.html> >
9. Éric Zemmour , *Le Figaro*, « [L'éternel féminin, impossible à dépasser](#) », 14/02/2018.
10. See for instance the trends in reported rapes worldwide over the 2010 decade : Wikipédia, « Statistiques de viols déclarés », < https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viol#Statistiques_de_viols_d%C3%A9clar%C3%A9s >, consulted on

26/12/2021. Measuring sexual violence, however, is very complex because legislation varies from place to place and from time to time (in the direction of strengthening legislation, especially in the least unequal countries) and because the rate of victims not filing a complaint is considerable.

11. See : Marc Roux, transhumanistes.com, « Quel genre pour le transhumanisme ? », < <https://transhumanistes.com/quel-genre-pour-le-transhumanisme/> >, 30/05/2023.

12. Sharon Begley, STAT, « [Can zapping people's brains reduce violence? Controversial study sees potential](#) », 02/07/2018 ; some clinical trials are controversial. See : David Adam, *New Scientist*, « [Brain zap therapy for aggression to be tested on prisoners](#) », 06/03/2019.