

# We, singular plural (fragments of a conversation)

*Nós, singular plural (fragmentos de uma conversa)*

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**Abstract:** This philosophical essay examines the problematic nature of the pronoun “We” as a contested political and ontological concept. Drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy’s notion of “singular plural,” the text critiques fixed collective identities (national, ethnic, or ideological) as reductive and exclusionary. It explores the tension between the necessity of communal articulation for political agency and the risks of homogenization, emphasizing how “We” oscillates between emancipatory potential and coercive appropriation. Contemporary thinkers like Judith Butler, Tristan Garcia, and ecological theorists (e.g., Baptiste Morizot) inform discussions on fluid collectives, intersectionality, and non-human alliances. The author advocates for reimagining “We” as an open, processual practice—rooted in shared action rather than identity—to navigate fragmented public spheres, ecological interdependence, and ethical responsibility amid polarization.

**Keywords:** collective identity; singular plural; relational ecology; public sphere.

**Resumo:** Este ensaio filosófico examina a natureza problemática do pronome “Nós” como conceito político e ontológico contestado. Baseando-se na noção de “singular plural” de Jean-Luc Nancy, o texto critica identidades coletivas fixas (nacionais, étnicas ou ideológicas) como redutoras e excludentes. Explora a tensão entre a necessidade de articulação comunitária para agência política e os riscos de homogeneização, destacando como “Nós” oscila entre potencial emancipatório e apropriação coercitiva. Pensadores contemporâneos como Judith Butler, Tristan Garcia e teóricos ecológicos (e.g., Baptiste Morizot) fundamentam discussões sobre coletivos fluidos, interseccionalidade e alianças não humanas. O autor defende o “Nós” como prática aberta e processual—ancorada em ação compartilhada, não em identidade—para navegar esferas públicas fragmentadas, interdependência ecológica e responsabilidade ética frente à polarização.

**Palavras-chave:** identidade coletiva; singular plural; ecologia relacional; esfera pública.

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Singular Plural: in such a way that the singularity of each one is inseparable from his being-with-others and therefore, in fact, and in general, a singularity is inseparable from a plurality. (...) The singular is first of all each one, and therefore also each one with and among all the others. The singular is a shared plural. (Jean-Luc Nancy, *Être Singulier Pluriel*)

We do not know what “We” is the name of: we have to say it, as an opening of the scene and of the word. Nothing is more difficult, more obscure and more opaque than what is installed when we utter the pronoun “We”. We do not know whose name “We” is, what this impersonal pronoun names and who is named by it. Henceforth we without inverted commas, he who requires all the reduplicated inverted commas. We do not know what it designates or how to designate it. We don’t just know who We are: we don’t know what We is or who the We is when we say it. We do not know what We means to each or every one: what it circumscribes or groups, who is gathered under that label or under that name. It has become, in the register of words and political acts, a difficult word: dense, equivocal, slippery, even insidious. Who is We? What is this We when you say, when someone says We? What set or group, what gathering is this that makes a We this indefinite and indeterminate collective? How to say it in the singular (We, let’s remember, is the first person plural), because We is a singular, but a singular that designates a plural: a public plural, as if saying We made public and manifest a certain gathering, a certain grouping, a certain way of making collective or making community. But We who, exactly who? Me and you? And them – not them or them? Us with whom or Us against whom? Us, the humans? We, the earthlings? We, the living? When we ask ourselves – (to whom? to Us?) – the problem is not only the who but also the what: what is Us, to say Us and above all, why to do it, how to do it (yet). In other words: how to do it collectively? How to enunciate the singularity of an irreducible plurality of differences, which are nevertheless in a certain re-union?

(...)

We can also say it, without caution or nuance. So often we fee it, so often we are regimented. To pose We as a problem is to pose the problem of (collective) “identities” nations, religions, ethnicities, communities, groups, minorities, majorities supposedly identifiable because they are entangled or intertwined with We, entangled in an identification. Identifying: this is our unholy and merciless passion, like an addiction to the form of language and thought. But are we really condemned to have to identify? But nothing today has become

more problematic than the word identity: brandished and raised, used and used up, in many struggles for recognition and ference, in fratricidal clashes and power struggles. How have these We, these collectives, these declinations of belonging and kinship of similarity and entanglement, of the interweaving that makes the substance of what we would call the social or the historical been formed and enunciated? How to enunciate and decline today the belonging, the adherence, the combat, the desire, the strength a We? How many infinite tasks in the labyrinth of genealogy archaeology await us (since always). But also: how to refuse and reject these We made in haste and by pressure ("the good Portuguese", the extreme right), to disidentify and disobjectify, to disentangle this embarrassment of simplifications and generalizations? How is it that these many of Us seem to stall and recrudescence, to return ghostly when we already thought them cursed or dismantled? How is it that other We emerge and form on the horizon, while others falter, shudder, disintegrate multifariously? How can we be responsible and co-responsible, (creators and co-creators) for collectives (or connectives, we should perhaps write) that will invent themselves or that, on the contrary, are in deliquescence, liquefying with history? How to deal with these abusive and usurping, totalizing and totalitarian We, these We, too hastily enunciated, too quickly unified? Who said it, who can say it? What do you mean by that?

Who decided, who chose, who drew the dividing line, the one that circumscribes, sometimes precariously, sometimes by force of law or force without law, the included and the excluded of the We? What We were, when we were (the same) We? What will we finally be, when we become We? The formation and meaning of this singular name of a plural, the essential pronoun of the political voice, of the claim and the revolt, of the affirmation and the "in the name of". Who today can speak "in the name of", if they do so by multiplying the cautions and cautions, the endorsements? Is the first person plural even a "person" if, without further affirmation: a "person" may not be a plural? Shouldn't we then, instead of saying I, always say We – I (1st person plural), I – We (1st person singular)? It is an alchemy of the verb, this, as Rimbaud wrote.

We need to shed some light on the obscure ways in which we are hitched, integrated, linked, connected, mixed and assimilated, reconnected and retained and multiple incorporations and introjections to the more-than-I and the more-than-one, to the collectives that gather us and that gather us, that welcome us or that harvest us. The political terrain of mobilization and militancy, of commitment and engagement, is today (more than ever?) fragmented, divided, populated by rifts and clashes. Irreconcilable and aggravated confrontations, with no depalletization in sight. Many (of us?) today are demarcating and disidentifying themselves, feeling an impossibility (constitutive?) and an impotence (native?) of making a group or belonging, of consenting to the heroclite mixture of the

different in a common: in a common sense or in a common feeling – what sense and what feeling today would identify us to a peacefully identifiable We? We the couple, We the teachers, We the intellectuals, We parents and children, We Europeans, We Westerners, We the rich and developed, We post-this and post-that, We Anthropocene and apocalyptic citizens, disintegrated and pulverized? From us (plural) are these us (singular) made and confabulated? We ask ourselves more and more insistently, piling perplexity upon perplexity, disillusionment upon disillusionment, scepticism one after the other radical and stabbing doubt. But the question remains: how to come together and what to come together for today? With whom, to do what, with what objective, with what desire, with what hope, in the name of what? How to experiment and rehearse collectives, to constitute or establish them, even in a dispersed or divergent, multiple and multiplied way? This is the motto: how to make a “public sphere” if it is not a sphere and even if it is not fully public?

Judith Butler, in her latest essays, has been interested in these new forms of mobilization and uprising, of protest and outcry asking in what forms (legal, philosophical, constitutional, politic artistic, etc.) but above all asking what other forms of doing politics are these that seem to emerge in the non-identified modes of collective doing and assembly. And what might be emerging again beyond and beyond the saturated and agonized space of identity and identification politics, of identification operations and identitarianism. Always and still identification: deadly, deadly, dead. Reflection on the right to assemble and the right to dissent, on civil disobedience and non-violent protest, on the modes of activism and public demonstration, the conditions and dynamics that make them possible, their implications and their unanticipated effects their complications and their phantasmatic impasses. What does it mean to be a group or a group of people and, first of all or after (the party was nice, man) to enunciate a singular We of a plural? (Because the We is always the singular of a plural, it is not too much to say it: pure oxymoron or pure paradox, staging of the impossible). What is the democratic content of such a movement or gathering and what is its real or dreamed effectiveness? How can we understand the concerted action of bodies and spirits, the combined and confluent wills amidst the sensationalism of media coverage, its inaccuracies and inadequacies, its instrumentalizations? How can we think or rethink the practices of direct action or antagonistic practices, or even the simple gesture of criticism and refusal, of dissent and affirmation of another life, another desire, another meaning?

How can we say no while still saying yes, affirming life where it stagnates, where the desert grows? Gatherings, being-to-gether, go beyond demands and speeches, they are not reduced to the expression of a right of demonstration or indignation, just as the political is not reduced to politics, nor politics to policies, in its sense of administrations and governances of public affairs. The gathering,

the being-together, as an exemplary figure of a We, singular plural, is not reduced, restricted or limited to what seeks to circumscribe and inscribe it in the recognizable and the known, it is not subjugated to categorizations. In the past (but not so long ago), Antonio Negri named this We-to-come as a multitude, but which was already there as a swarm, that of the digital cognitariat (itself also a figure of the proletarian), multitud, beyond any identification with a people or with a recognizable and designable collective subject. The figure enunciates: a force and a desire, mobilisers, a starting point for action whose point of arrival is constitutively indeterminate and unanticipated. Radical politics, radical forms of solidarity and mutual aid, that make-it-self and make-it-do, collectives and communities, that rise up against the destructive power of state violence and war, the power of the multinationals and the great mercenaries who today are the economic and political forces of the great industries and the great conglomerates of power: how to respond to them? Another meaning and configuration of the public space and the public sphere would also be emerging and radically in question, in this rethinking of what We are, of what it means to say We (and at the limit, we would be led to return to the “question of freedom”, so archaic, so Greek). This is where I wanted to go from, or this is where I wanted to arrive. But where to? One must always ask, ask the insistent and obsessive question of where (where to find, where to locate, where one sees and hears, where one identifies). There? Here?

(...)

It is a question of shared convictions, before the convergence of struggles. Intersectionality, she said. We have to connect with convictions that are not convergent and with convergences without convictions: that is our destiny and our drama, insurmountable and undefeatable. That is why “We” is (all?) less a question of identity (of origin, of myth, etc.) than the affirmation of a refusal, of what we cling to and where we stand. We stand up and say “no” together: an unidentified us is glimpsed and intertwined, so that we can finally say “yes” to everything with which we will finally begin. And we do not all stick to or maintain the same things, nor do we stick to or maintain the same words. The same things, towards them, the who are always already other, relaunched in words, which never form anything but the very alterity (other), transcendence, close the immanence of life, of bodies, of looks, of gestures. The question is not to say who we are or where we come from, but where we going, or where we want to go together, where we will go if we get together, or rather: who will we be if we get together, what we can be together or do together, which will only be if we become or do We Together, but where, to where? Who together?

(...)

It resounds in We, it resounds in the We, a kind of apology or a call to be-together or to do-together: as if the We were this (immeasurable) expansion or dilation (of the heart) of an enlarged gathering the like of something that opens up. But the We is immediately followed by a feeling of indeterminacy (or of infinity, contrasting with the intimations of mortality): what is this scene (more-than-sphere) that opens in this utterance of a We, what space of possibilities is opened there, what community is this (dare we still say this word so beautiful, knowing how communitarianism is the very logic – the hyperbolic – of identification and identity)? What does this we of a community, written, said, felt, have in common? This force, if coming together, of appeal and summons, to be or to act, is today mobilized and commodified in countless wars or confrontations of the multiple nodes that clash and attack each other.

Communitarianisms, as many as the crumbs and debris of humiliated and offended communities, failed and tried, interrupted and fractured, haunting and phantasmatic? Not only between the Us, trapped and ankylosed, but between Us-selves (when is the same the same?), with diffuse and undefined contours, hostage to multiple instrumentalizations, reconductions and rechannelings. Polarizations and divisions are aggravated by screens that broadcast and replicate images of the same and the identical: us and them, outsiders and insiders, but also a We that develops autoimmune pathologies (Derrida and Esposito have written luminous pages on these immune and autoimmune logics of the common and the community: we should return to them) that intermingle and corrode, crossed by the inevitable paroxysms of identities (all, each), by the traps of identitarianism (all, any). The issues of hospitality and welcome, mutual help and conviviality fight against the massive tendency towards polarization, which is perversely nourished by identity stasis. But there are nodes that form and emerge to enunciate a claim or a right that subsumption to a made and given identity: how to do them justice? There is, we could perhaps say, a recourse to the word we which, while obscenely displaying insidious appropriations, also demands (of us?) a recomposition of forces of modes of protest and revindication, of defense of a threatened or precarious right, of defense of an intimidated way of life. The word therefore sounds like a voice of identity confrontation enunciated by the abusive and usurping we, but also like the indistinct voice of a hope: an appeal, a militant appeal for the strength, for the courage of an emancipating we (which opens a convergence without conviction or a conviction without convergence). We must therefore ask what is said each time we say we: we must listen to the We and what rises up in it, what is its elan and its vital impulse, what is the practice of the collective and the connective, of being-together and doing-with, that it promises and discern what system of coercions these usurping and abusive nodes sometimes harbor.

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Many authors (I will not name them here, but the list is immense in addition to those already mentioned: Baptiste Morizot, Barbara Stiegler, Emanuele Coccia, Marielle Macé, Patrice Maniglier and many others) are now investigating this horizon of enunciation: who are the knots that arise today, threatening or emancipating, their fragility and their strength, their cohesion and their dispersion, the horizon and their demand. About all the multiple, emerging and unanticipated ways we have of (knowing) ourselves and (feeling ourselves to be members of a we, of a community, members of a singular plural. We have to find new ways of reflecting on the becoming of the Western We or the contemporary We or the human We: what happens to this We if we think of it as inextricably intertwined with the multiple beings and life forms that are its partners and allies in the ecological niches where we live (the bacteria, the viruses, the insects, the trees, the rivers, the forests, the glaciers) but also all the urban and artificial ecosystem contexts that we have created and that have separated us or created other barriers and borders with these partners and allies? It is one of the crucial questions of contemporary anthropology (Tim Ingold, Eduardo Kohn, Anna Tsing, Phillipe Descola or Bruno Latour) of its attention to the interwoven singularity of life forms, to their intricacies and interdependencies sometimes inextricable and often inseparable, from concrete communities. It is a question of thinking about new links or other connections (or ones that we are only now discovering or rediscovering) ways of relating or “ways of being alive” (the title of Baptiste Morizot’s beautiful and deeply political book), with these living others who are the innumerable living species that populate terrestrial ecosystems. Baptiste Morizot, in his book *“Ways of being alive”* (or already in *Les diplomates*), shows the intricacies, fertile and emerging of ways to transform our behaviors as masters and lords, as owners of a large store of resources at our disposal, a stock of energies or raw materials, into partners and allies: as diplomats, i.e., beings in permanent negotiation, in exchanges of information, materials and energy, which have to be mapped systemically, within a relational ecology, capable of composing and scheduling multiple and interdependent modes of relationship with other living beings, capable of talking to and receiving something from others, of entering into exchanges and gifts of alliance, establishing pacts and ecological coalitions of mutual aid and cooperation (Kropotkine, who saw and tried to enunciate this as the great logic of the evolution of life).

And this without rushing to be autonomous and independent subjects, quick to consider themselves and act as single and purely free entities that exist outside the immense web of relationships that constitutes the fabric of life (or in the case of human subjects, without the immense web of independence that

makes us all dependent on each other for the smallest things that we take for granted), subjects identical to themselves identified and substantial, proud of their identity substance. The opposite of a certain Darwinist vulgate that makes ecosystemic relations a struggle of all against all, where the right of the most adapted has become the right of the strongest, where the pressure of the co-creative and co-organising encounter has become competition and the struggle for survival.

(...)

Among historians, there are also multiple voices questioning the vacillations and fractures of the us: its relations with the territories it has colonized and instrumentalized, its geopolitical power plays, and taking responsibility for its historicity. It is a question of preventing historical narratives from becoming monolithic blocks, from solidifying and hardening too quickly, from staging the fable of a unified and continuous we, of a national or territorial identity, for example. Or of a white and Christian Europe, resolutely Greco-Latin, tragically heroic in the face of its countless and fearsome eco-miscegenations and ethnomixtures: we have to dislocate territorializations, not settle as in a conquered land, immemorial reflection of the children of the former colonizers. It is a question of making *“our history less obviously ours, of making it intrigue and amaze us, of making us stop pretending to have a relationship of immediate connivance with it, of a hasty transparency of it to itself or of Us to Ourselves”, as the historian Patrick Boucheron puts it. A history(s), as Georges Didi-Hubermann charmingly narrates, made up of “multiple strata, stratifications and stratigraphies of multiple times, crystallizations of times that diffract and disseminate along the pious illusion of the historical continuum”*. From a warrior narrative of victors and vanquished, from the warrior rhetoric and confrontation that we see today, once again, taking the front and the stage, as happens, moreover, on a daily basis, in the political game.

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In 2016, Tristan Garcia published an inciting and challenging essay, committed to a certain way of thinking about emancipation and its identity derivatives, entitled “We”. It is interested in the great speeches and the small phrases, the slogans and the manifestos which make our condition tangled in collective identities, in practices of the collective. Here, the We appears as the overlapping of layers (calcs and terraces, decals), of dense or porous planes, which we select or mobilise tactically to communicate social identities. to decline belonging, re-cutting and re-mounting (all the We is a system of clipping and circumscription,



which manages conflicts of clipping and jurisdiction) in the space of recognition of the social species, genders, types, classes, generations, minorities. A whole proteiform range of constructions, which are ways of situating and mapping belonging, our loyalties or allegiances, sometimes unacknowledged, or our repudiations or silences, assumed or denied.

This understanding highlights a living model of compositions and agency, some more ideological, others more speculative, some more disciplinary or biopolitical control (Foucault, Negri, Agamben), others more emancipatory (but what does emancipation mean today?). We are – or rather we participate – in a mobile and dynamic constellation that is being redesigned and reconfigured with other living multiplicities, that extends, crosses and entangles, that interweaves with other identity compositions. This is an attempt to rethink political existence as a war of nodes, in a double see wars of (collective) identity knots that oppose each other in conflict, in a struggle for representativeness, recognition or influence, but also, in another sense, of identity as a thing of knots and loops, of bonds and links that are interwoven, ties and bindings to identity blocks where (one) thinks to subsume a certain identification (always identification), more or less precarious and transitory, more or less durable, subterranean and silent, which keep us (despite everything) with some perception of gathering among ourselves, but at the same time, from which we are torn dissidents, sometimes in pure loss or orphanhood.

Tristan Garcia redesigns the narrative of the adventures of modern and contemporary emancipations (still ongoing and unfinished), the coming to visibility of still invisible and inaudible collectives whose nodes have only gained audibility and visibility over a century of struggles. These are all, so many, proliferating and contradictory nodes, which today we glimpse identifying from their incessant and recurrent dis-identification: we the women, we the Jews, we the blacks, we the people, we the refugees and stateless people, we the workers, we the immigrants, we the living, and you continue. All these we, we are susceptible to cross paths with them but above all to cross paths in Us (in the pierced or pierced interior of each illusory individual), in our broken histories and shared memories, crossed or abandoned dwellings, in the direct or indirect relationships we maintain with times and places. The internal or internalized multiplicity that each (one of) us is and that places each (one of) us never entirely coinciding with itself. The one-differing-from-itself, infinitely. Tristan Garcia questions this internalized multiplicity that runs through us and that has made itself ostensible, that shows itself in an exposed fracture, that makes itself explicit or affirms itself in its multiplicity. The second part of the book, incisive, talks about the “*constraints of identification*” that traverse and inhabit us, like an unidentifiable background, but which segregates mechanisms of identification and recognition of which we are the elements in a system or links

in a chain, which express and manifest, which activate, the uncertain form of certain “us”. All of these are historical processes and processings, constructions generated to integrate us into certain categories of belonging and identification, to locate us on a map of descriptions and form about us a predictability and an algorithmic monitoring, a profile, we could say today, of a surveillance capitalism (to use the expression, so accurate of the book one of the most important of this century, I believe – by Shoshana Zuboff, which deals only, at its centre with all procedures and programmings of “identification”, in a broad sense).

The artificiality, that is to say, the fragility of each of the categories of belonging, the factitious and fictitious construction the fictions they nourish the fables they stage, the crises they refuse to face and which for this very reason, and to some extent even in spite of it, keep them still in apparent operation, some of them more rampant and on the rise, strategically instrumentalized according to the interests of certain groups or systems. We are well aware that all this is happening before our eyes, every day on a screen near you near us. He seeks to hypothesize a critical and cautious relationship with the use and abuse of the we (of identities and identifications): how to think of identity as a use of the word and of the statement, of the affirmation that does not force the differentiation that separates, nor does it force the similarity that unifies, as a creative, questioning and attentive relationship with the uses of identity and of the identical, but also with the exacerbation of difference as an absolute difference that congregates in an identitarianism or in a hypostasized and inassimilable alterity (the absolutization of difference would be so harmful – because it would be symmetrical to the absolutization of the identical as totally identical to itself). The same and sameness, identification and identity as hyperboles of a phantasmatic knot (and a knot), the cradle of a segregating emancipation and a deadly polarization.

(...)

The “we” is not so much the terrain of emancipation and liberation as the terrain of imprisonment and dependence. This is its constitutive ambiguity, which demands or summons our discernment. But we are neither more independent than dependent, nor more free than integrated into the order and necessity of the laws of nature and the universe, neither definitively emancipated nor incurably belonging: we are, perhaps, always both of these things, simultaneously, sometimes even at the same time. We have an irreconcilable dual nature, constitutively unfinished and capable contradiction, transverse by contrary drives. The mechanics of identity become complexified and denaturalized, belonging understood as pluralized, complicated, with layers of time covered over and reconstructed. The question of community, or of plural communities, rather, is the question of participation: how do we take part and are separated in large ensembles, in forced or desired

gatherings, in a series of identifying and identity circles that intersect as in set theory, places of allegiances and infidelities, places of claim in which we try to position ourselves, move, displace, etc. Contemporary identities are made of plural incisions and multiple exclusions, that is to say contradictory belongings that are spatialized, which can try to visualize as spaces or landscapes on a map, as more or less imagined, more or less real territories that move: calques and trails that densify or condense around a strange attractor, a *“collective name”*. The *“collective names”* are spheres or circles of belonging, or perhaps fences that delimit and circumscribe a property and therefore establish a division between included and excluded. But we circulate between and through these circles, we intersect them, we make tangents, even if they seem opaque and composite to us. But this spatial figuration of the political, this spacing that makes identity a movement of approach and distance, of displacement and territorialization, and not exactly a family home (or a common house) or a static container. We walk among these containers of contradictory identification, trying to trace a path or a tactful path: and the path is different for everyone, a homosexual black woman does not take the same path as a poor white man who is unschooled, or a young cosmopolitan urbanite: what collective names will each of them appeal to in order to find a little more freedom, dignity, recognition, rights. Identities are more than a dwelling place, in the sense of an abode or permanence in a stabilized place, they are an uncertain navigation through moving elements. More than a subjection or a subjectivation, they are dynamics of individuation (if we wish), something that is progressively defined in advances and retreats, in fills and empties, like a breath (inhale and exhale) or a pulse (a systole and a diastole). Tristan Garcia says: *“everything is a question of priorities between these circles and our desire to circulate between them and through them. (...) From time to time, at certain important moments in our lives, our order of knots suddenly changes and the very shape of the knot is our old convictions. Each one of us has experienced a change in the priority of our belonging and kinship, and a transformation of what we thought we perceived of ourselves and others”*. Sometimes we realized that until now. I thought I came as this or that, lived as this or that, and then... all this becomes a problem or a question that we have to unravel, like a ball of yarn that has become a tangled standard that now seems to us like a cocoon or an incubator that has artificially kept us alive.

(...)

To pose the problem of subjects, collectives, to pose the problem of the We a certain way of posing the problem of the common and to a certain extent, is to pose the problem of the public sphere (that was the motto?), i.e., of access to the visibility and audibility of certain ways in which we or someone else can take the floor can clarify

or ask for clarification, can criticise and express anger or a desire for justice, but also to utter a few words or friendship love, of a desire to be together and to do together, to name what we lack or what we dream of, what we want to mobilize towards. This implies thinking about what this singular subject made of a collective plural can be: a subject that does not correspond to any determinable person but is constituted by a set of links or connections that meet in a given space and time, whose ties are invented and instituted by this power of encounter. A subject that is cut out or circumscribed by extracting an undifferentiated whole to open up a process of individuation that is potentially open and indeterminate a finite circumscription that opens up the possibility of infantilization, enlargement, expansion, alliance, transmutation. Perhaps this is what the Invisible Committee is talking about, in the text *The Coming Insurrection*, when it *"calls for the constitution of a knot that would not be defined – as collectives usually do – by an outside and an inside by a line of sharing between included and excluded, but would be defined by the density of the connections that compose it and by the recompositions and openings that infinitize it"*.

(...)

These dramatizations of the we that appear in the public sphere if they may be inconsistent and contradictory, nevertheless rehearse a bit, a proposition to unfold the open space of a we. Even if we don't know what a "we" is, how it is a "we" that we can take part in without belonging, that we can share without having to define ourselves. That it does not demand of each of us an identity identical to itself, or a proper and proper property, but something like a question or an openness, a hospitality: something that receives and welcomes and not something that demands an identification or an identity (Derrida wrote a lot about this when he spoke of unconditional hospitality, of endless cosmopolitanism). To speak of We, to speak of a We or to speak for or in the name of a We, encourages a questioning, a patience, a vigilance and an intensity of what we want to say and in what we do with what we say, in the scenes that taking the floor opens up in the public space. The representation of circles and spheres, which are images of circumscriptions that surrounds an outline, but also of an opening, like a lens or eye that opens a space of projection and visibility or a space of listening. A space of appearance (or appearance, Hannah Arendt would say) where free being appear to meet.

Jean-Christophe Bailly, in one of the most beautiful texts I know about the We, a text written in 2014 in the magazine *Vacarme* and republished in 2015 in the book *L'enlargissement du poème*, speaks of a We that does not designate a simple addition of identified or identity subjects, partly undefined potentially unlimited. A We that does not surround or enclose us in a sphere or circle, except if it is a circle that opens in itself a pure openness, even if an open circle is a pure

contradiction: it is no longer a circle but another figure. We would have to think not the squaring of the circle but the opening of the circle (that is to say: the circumscription of the We), if we understand by this that what it circumscribes is a hospitality and an opening. An open and enlarged We, or, as Marielle Macé also writes, “a We that asks what we can do, if we say and do a We. A We that would not open up the question of identity, but the infinite task that consists in making and unmaking collectives, belonging, kinship, plural enough together to be able to enunciate, to be able to assemble without resembling”.

(...)

We would be, constitutively and by definition, limitless but not necessarily indeterminate or illocalized: determined, rather, by a struggle, ideas, ties, embodied and lived emotions, by a certain desire for the future. We is not an end, nor an end in itself. We is a beginning or a beginning, a starting point and not a port of arrival (as if we could say we have finally arrived at We). We is the middle, simply a middle, in the ecological sense: a place of interdependence and connections, the starting point of an enquiry to be instructed with attention, patience, humility, freedom and courage. Listening to us or us as listening: isn't that what a public sphere is for, listening to each other? More than an identity or belonging, we, in multiple singular plural senses: as the name of a cause, a struggle, a task, a listening. This listening (or reading) here and now, of a voice that is written, was also, in a way, a we: fragile, ephemeral, precarious, at a distance but true.

### Rodrigo Rebelo Silva

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