



THE EMPATHETIC ENGAGEMENT OF AKEANON BUKIDNON WOMEN FARMERS ON VEGETAL LIFE

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ABSTRACT

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This paper is an exploration on the probable ethical consideration of vegetal beings stemming in empathy. Empathetic paradigm to vegetal life is conceivable to be in concurrence with the indispensable features of plant ontology. What vegetal life seems to endeavor? The emotive sphere of empathy with vegetal life eclipses their mode of being and projects, the constructs as well as the goals hope or intended by the human empathizer onto the object of empathy. The disclosure on vegetal life depicts the finitude of empathy, its anthropocentric and probable unethical underpinnings.

Empathizing with vegetal life is a potentially conceivable reality. The philosophical viewpoint of this probability declines the uniqueness of vegetal beings and may be regarded as ambassadors of something huge than ourselves i.e., the sacredness of life. Empathy is exemplified on this elemental commonality. The substantial congruence of the empathizer and the empathized with, fused by one reality that both are living beings. The community of living then engenders the intended foundation for the ethical compartment.

The peculiar ontology of vegetal life must be depicted as an embodied finitude to empathy and is considered resistance to a totalizing vitalism. Such presupposition depicts a series of impediments to the humanistic, anthropocentric, and narcissistic ethics predicated on the underlying sameness of the ethical action as well as the object of a human action. This viewpoint is not claiming that vegetal beings indispensably undermines the ethics of empathy. It is not also proposing that an alternative (non-empathetic, or the eclipse of emotive sphere, and non-rational) ethical paradigm to vegetal life, is unfathomable. An ethics can stem from vegetal life would decline human self-recognition in and projection onto the sphere of the flora, or more, specifically, would indispensably consider an affirmation of the irreducible distinction between this sphere and that of human's earthly existence.

INTRODUCTION

The paper begins with a brief introduction. Then we will discuss briefly the lines of demarcation between compassion, pity, and empathy. Will observers be empathetic on the sight and sound of the amplified uncanny destruction of vegetal life in the forest? The visibility of the emotive sphere on law enforcement officers seems eclipse. But what about the civil society? The rationale for a profound commitment is a microcosm of the more exemplified contentions on the intentions behind ethical façade of the environment. On the verge of deforestation, it is deemed to be a configuration of an expansion of the legacy bequeathed to future generations depicted as crucial natural purifier of a vehement air pollution, an intrinsic value incommensurate with any economic calculation and benefits from other government projects.

In repudiating deforestation, environmental adherents sense a certain empathy with the destruction of plants vicariously classifying as such with the fate of the uprooted plants. What vegetal life seems to endeavor? This research hope to present new philosophical knowledge that could be applied by *Akeanon Bukidnon* Women Farmers and their children who are in their legal age.

The paper concludes with the findings that empathy is exemplified on two forms: first, an apophatic and unconscious recognition of what we repudiate and attribute to the vegetal beings. Second, on the opposite pole, signifying our emotive sphere to something we are not supposed to. So, in vegetal ethics, empathy, configuring an implicit self-referentiality and narcissism, must be indispensably non-dialectically overcome.

The extraction here is an exposition of the diverging spheres and paradoxes of vegetal beings ontological finitude or peculiar ontology on the possibility of empathy accentuating on the indispensability for a non-anthropocentric foundation of vegetal ethics.

EMPATHY, VEGETAL ONTOLOGY AND THE BOUNDARIES OF EMPATHY

In highlighting the massive wooded area, the buzzing of chainsaws and the infernal noise of heavy tree removal equipment are integrated in an uncanny, deafening choir with the cracking of the field birches and oaks that have given in to the unforgiving metal. What do human observers feel at the sight and sound of the amplified uncanny destruction?

Officials tend to experience a taste of satisfaction in their unlimited efficacy to convert. At a towering financial gain, the entire place is set into a network of highways, hotels, and housing units. Law enforcement officers appear not affected at all, save for their blind rage of protesters on their environmental crime. But what about the concerned members of civil society? The activists who have been camping and others around the clock attempted to defend the forest with their bodies in the face of disproportional, violence and the overwhelming chances of defeat. The rationale for immense commitment is the microcosm of the amplified debate surrounding motivations behind ethical contentions with the environment. The forest, on the verge of dissipation deemed to be a part of the legacy, bequeathed to the generations: an indispensable natural purifier of the already jeopardized air. an intrinsic value incommensurate with any economic escalations and benefits from the projected highway.

Considering the diverse rational explications to one side: is it possible that rationally the opponents of

deforestation sense an empathy with the felled trees, vicariously identifying with the fate of the uprooted plants? If empirically this is the case, does the empathetic engagement of human beings to plants, not to speak of animals hold the potential for grounding environmental ethics the way it has recently shared up the engaging ethics to me?

While it is conceivable that someone could empathize with the plants themselves. Philosophical accounts of this possibility declines the uniqueness of vegetal beings and treat them as representatives of something larger than themselves, namely, life. Empathy presupposes the elemental commonality, the circumstantial sameness of the empathizer and the empathized with, integrated by the fact that both are living beings. The commonality, or indeed, the community of the living would then proffer the desired basis for the ethical configuration. In what ensues, however, we claim that plants and their peculiar ontology could be interpreted as embodied boundary or finitude to empathy and as points of resistance to totalizing vitalism. As such, they depict a series of boundaries and finitude to the humanistic, anthropocentric and narcissistic ethics predicated on the underlying sameness with the ethical actor and the object of his or her action. We do not envisage that plants indispensably undermines the ethics of empathy in general, nor to claim that an alternative (non-impatience, or non-emotive and rational) ethical paradigm to vegetal life is unfathomable. An ethics toward an arising from plants would preclude human self-recognition in and projected onto the world of the flora, or, more affirmatively, would entail an asseveration of the irreducible divergence between this world and that of human beings.

Moral philosophers would rather draw conceptual lines of demarcation between compassion, pity, and empathy. Compassion, entails a context of togetherness in pathos or suffering. Although the most profound etymological stratum of meaning is irrevocably lost in most contemporary argumentations. Compassion is a painful emotive sphere occasioned to another person's undeserved misfortune.^{19th} century philosophers like Schopenhauer underscore the burgeoning community that comes together through the experience of suffering with. The configuration of compassion at its most profound context is not narrowed down to other human beings, but potentially embraces all suffering creatures, so that the basis of morality is not any sort of abstract thinking nor a rational connotation of duty but rather the felt engagement or linkage we have with all living beings capable of suffering. The felt linkage or engagement forged on this sentiment, albeit less anthropocentric than the ties binding us exclusively to other persons, unavoidably leaves out those beings, like plants. We deem incapable of suffering. Humans, to be sure, integrated in communities, ecosystems and rhizomatic assemblages with plants, but these multifaceted interactive formations do not usually demonstrate a compassionate rapport. it is, thus, questionable, whether one can be with the plants at all, precisely, because the prospects of suffering with them are severely restricted.

The behavioral disposition of pity is perhaps more inclusive of all living beings that compassion, even though the degree of complexities it depicts outweigh any advantages it might gain. In its worst scenario, it objectifies the pitied creatures, treats them from the standpoint of moral superiority, and therefore, impedes, the possibility of mutual determination that would integrate the one who pities and the object of pity. This is why according to Nietzsche's

observations, it engenders escalation of suffering rather than put an end to misery, and revels in reactive affect. Pity is the emotive supplement to the very injustice it sanctions, the injustice in which it bows as though to the iron necessity of fate. Pitying the trees cut down in clear space for a highway does not prevent, but, in fact, generates mobility and easier to carry out the practices of deforestation accompanied by the most heartfelt emotive appendage. Resigned in the face of ruthless logic of contrived economic indispensability, pity allows the subjects who indulge in it to perceive themselves as caring or empathizing individuals, not as participants in a cold-blooded massive destruction of the environment.

In contrast to the symmetrical community of sufferers that demonstrates oneness together in compassion, on the one hand, and the asymmetrical, condescending disposition of pity, on the other. Empathy is an attempt to engage with the experience of the other qua other, or, literally, to feel into the other. Instead of compassionately suffering with the other or sensing for the other, empathy bears upon the other's psychic interiority, into which it is a representation by means of projective imagination. Why then should we do it? As we noted above, that empathy presupposes the substantial sameness of the empathizer and the empathized with, "disrespecting the divergences of the other?" Here, the example of plants – which is more than an example – may illuminate the endemic problems of empathy in other domains of ethics. The inaccessibility of the other's psychic interiority and of experience, forces the empathizer to project her own emotive sphere onto the other through empathy. I deposit in the other, as construed by me, something that is already in me and, thereafter, re-discover myself in the other. The paradoxes of the process stems into the sharpest relief in contradictory to the background of the plants being that sets ontological finitude in the possibility of empathy and highlights the indispensability for a non-anthropocentric foundation of vegetal ethics.

The seemingly bizarre query concerning empathy with plants was highlighted before by Donon Cairns in a series of philosophical dialogue that occur sometime 1932. When explicating about animals, Husserl differentiated man's animals and explicated on unceasing decrease of the possibility of empathy as one descends the scale. Concerning empathy with plants, Husserl hesitated them either as mere physical unities or as psycho physical objects. Cairns inferred that, he got no clear viewpoint whether Husserl conceived of it as an impediment case of empathy or not. What remains lucid is the likelihood of empathy is grounded in the degrees of ontological proximity between the human empathizer and the living object of empathy. The more similar their respective beings the greater the possibility in question. Ontology, or, rather, ontological divergence is the key to ontological phenomena.

So as to carve out an ethics of vegetal life that would diverged both from ethical treatment of animals and of the environment as a whole, it is indispensable to outline certain features of the plants' ontology that disengages them from humans, animals and inanimate things. Plant is not an inanimate being. It's life is drastically dissimilar to human and animal vitality. Such ontology is in excess of the static condition of the inanimate thing, the condition which is itself a theoretical fiction premised on the logical principle of identity and non-contradiction; something, as Plotinus would put it, both differentiates the branch of a plant from a stick and creatively

molds the former better than the latter. The impersonal excess that has generated the life of plants into a fetishized mystery and has engendered the early animist speculation does not foreshadow anything in animal or human existences. From the anthropocentric perspective, vegetal life, so foreign to our own, is alien to life itself with which human facticity is metonymically identified, so much so that pseudo-Aristotle (Nicolaus and Damascus) imputes to plants a "lifeless soul," classifying them as deficient things and only secondarily as living beings (De Plants 316a, 37-40 and 316b,6).

Given the chronic incompetence of the metaphysical tradition to come to terms with the ontology of vegetation, the foundation for empathizing with the plant have also been eclipsed, especially because the potential object of empathy has remained hopelessly obscure. The vegetal life has been subject to the extremes of religious reverence and a blatant negation of its veracity, the extremes between which empathy may be experienced. An empathetic engagement is allergic both to the too much of a monumental reality that overwhelms the human (vegetal life as a fetishized mystery) and to the too little of pure materiality that leaves us coldly indifferent (vegetal life as the seat of the lifeless soul. The distance between the elusive principle of the plants vivacity and human existence seems, therefore, to forbid the kind of intimacy and identificatory projection of the I onto the other that are the cornerstones of empathy.

By means of overcoming the pervasive metaphysical obscurity, surrounding the philosophical status of vegetation, a sober comparison of the plants towards the particular markers of distinction, at the belief of ontology that erect further impediments to an empathetic identification with vegetal beings. In contradictory to animals and humans, plants live without psychic interiority. They metaphysical distinction is eclipsed between the interior and the exterior and do not set themselves in contradictory to the environment and sustains them. Their unimaginable passivity exceeds by far the pathos that invites empathy, precisely because they live without the emotive sphere, on at the very least, without feeling themselves feel. Capable of registering stressful environmental stimuli and reacting at the level of biochemical alterations in the cells of leaves and stems, plants do not suffer in the same way as sentient beings permeated by a network of nerves. When humans empathize with plants, they, thus, ultimately empathize with themselves, turning the object of empathy into a blank screen, onto which essentially human emotive spheres are projected. A presumably sensitive ethical paradigm veers on the side of instrumentalization, in that it uses the plant and, instead, is utilized as a support to human self-identification, for the anthropocentric and narcissistic machine that, Godlike fashions the entire world after its own image. This formal dissimilarity between vegetal life – free from the enclosure of psychic interiority, endowed with a material and extended soul, defying all motions of individuality and organic totality – and the sentient existence of animal and human beings as one of the most serious impediments to a rigorous philosophical justification of an empathetic engagement to plants.

Empathy, literally, means "feeling into." Its basic operation will be disliked as soon as it comes across vegetal beings that fail to exemplify the depth into which or any other feelings may probe. A corollary to the eclipse of something in a noumenal soul or psychic interiority in plants

is that their life processes could not be understood in behavioral terms on the model of either human conduct or animal instinct. To be sure, vegetal life demonstrates non intentionality of its own, for instance in the plants striving toward the light of the sun and the mineral nutrients hidden in the earth. The plant may be said to have a world, in the context of working on the world and living with it, modifying the environment of which it is an integral part and the zero point of a specific orientation in its milieu. Yet, the vegetal being of the world does not exhibit that plants possess and appropriate their environment. The sense for their world, or to paraphrase Heidegger: the world-of-plants, cannot be assimilated to the human being-in-the-world through analogy imputing to them a diverging sort of autonomy, mastery of method. For this reason, also, an empathetic construal of plants will be.

Husserl foreshadow the flight of the plants world from our understanding when he said that his paradigm would infer not to exclude plants having sensitivity after all. It only connotes that we should be incompetent of recognizing them. There is lacking any bridge of empathy and of mediately determined ground. Vegetal sensitivities, if there are any, remain unrecognizable. They are not similar to those of humans and higher animals because all the tools at our disposal, including empathy and rational mediations are impotent when it comes to bridging these sensitivities on our own. In the face of this impossibility, the query emerges: How could we draw together the world of human beings and that of plants, while existing imputation to sacrifice the specificity of either perspective? What could be the function of bridging the two worlds, all the while maintaining them and respecting the foreignness of vegetal life?

Empathy envisions an articulation of two diverging worlds, standing for two ontological paradigms to the environment. It offers an immediate mediation rounded in passion, an emotive projection that fails to preserve what is it about the existence of plants. Empathy functions by analogy or by analogical presentation rendering the possible experience of the other legible as a function of the presumed established between that experience and my own. Edith Stein on her doctoral dissertation on the problem of empathy highlighted by the experience of the other should be grasped on the ground of the givenness as a sensitive, living body belonging to an "I", the living that not only fits into my phenomenal world but is itself the center vegetation of such phenomenal world. The plant, too, is a center of vegetation to the world, but its body, which is a loose conglomerate and a multiplicity of vegetal bodies, does not belong to an "I" and does not follow the course of subjective individuation. The boundaries or finitude of empathy here bleed into the edges of phenomenology, extended to existences other than human and charged with the task of outlining the non-anthropocentric orientations to and ways of being in the world.

A more subtle method of inviting the rapprochement of the human and the vegetal worlds entails shrugging off the metaphysical excesses of spiritual anthropocentric ontology and claiming the indispensable superficiality of the human psyche and the crucial role of the nonconscious intentionality in any embodied existence. From Nietzsche's famous claim that there is no doer behind the deed, through Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body, Deleuze and Guatari's 'plateaus', demonstrating the illusion of subjective profundity, the 19th and 20th century philosophy, however, unwittingly brought the meaning of the human into the greatest

proximity to the being of plants. At the extreme, to empathize with plants is to recognize in ourselves certain features of the vegetal life, rather than to project the metaphysical image of human existence onto other life-worlds. This uncanny recognition has been somewhat more prevalent in poetry than in philosophy, with the Portuguese author Fernando Pessoa and the French writer Francis Ponge embracing. If only as unattainable ideals, several aspects of plant ontology, including existence without the head (Ponge), or the simplicity and blissful ignorance, where the lack of consciousness is redoubled by the eclipse of self-consciousness (Pessoa). Reversing the trajectory of narcissistic identification, whereby the empathizers empathize, in the last instance, with themselves (or at best with what is very much like them), the appreciation of the vegetal other in the human implodes the entire anthropocentric theo-metaphysical edifice. While we do not recognize ourselves in plants, we register something of the plants in us, so that the failure of recognition, not to speak of self-recognition, becomes productive of an ethical engagement to vegetal life.

Amidst its complexity, the poetic-philosophical rapprochement of the two ontologies disallows empathy and compassion alike. The divergence between the human and the plant, the distance between the one and the other, the foreignness of the one to the other are accentuated by the very endeavor at surmounting them. The means for imagining a human communion with plants and of adopting several features of their existence act, precisely, as impediments to establishing a unity with them: poetic writing – though it is, both in the context of Pessoa and that of Ponge, quasi-phenomenological, unadorned, descriptive, pointing back to the thing themselves – sets the writers disengaged from the vegetal world. It is, most likely, in reaction to this paradox that Ponge desires to write and to think from the position, from the perspective, and from the spatial viewpoint of the plant. And yet, even this interjection of the human in the place of the vegetal other does not amount to an empathetic engagement predicated on projective identification but to Levinas's ethical "substitution in separation", so that the I puts itself in the position of the other, taking care not to annihilate the other's alterity, or to Deleuze and Guatari's "becoming plant", as a step in the series of molecular becomings breaking down the identity of the subject to the point of becoming inorganic and becoming imperceptible. The very conditions of possibility for empathy are undercut and ethical substitution as much as in the strings of becomings, to the extent that they dissipate with the identity and the consolidated unity of subjectivity. Such undermining of empathy, in turn, facilitates an ethics of vegetal life attuned to the plants' unique ontology and sensitized to their non-identity, the disseminated multiplicity of their being.

In fairness, in Edith Stein's phenomenological account of empathy, the unity of the empathizer and the empathized with is neither presupposed nor actually accomplished. Through empathy, Stein asseverates, the feeling of oneness and the enrichment of our own experience becomes possible, provided that this emotive sphere is not interpreted as an indicator of the actual unity with the recipient of empathy. Phenomenologically speaking, the feeling of oneness deduced from empathy does not attain fulfillment in experiential evidence. Even so, it betrays the ontology of vegetal life dispersed into a multiplicity of sub-individual growths that forego the arrangement of the parts of plants -root, stem,

leaves, flowers and so forth – into the totality of an organism. When transposed onto the world of vegetation, the empathetic interaction of the I and the other dissipates, as an adjunct to the divergence between the two, an indispensable facet of plant ontology, according to which the other is not one. The vegetal other, above all cannot be gathered into a whole in itself, let alone along with something or someone else. What finally thwarts empathy is the ontological scale of vegetal existence incommensurate with that of a human subject: the Nietzschean sub-individual growths occur on a scale that is too miniscule to be registered on the subjective radars detecting nothing but the concrete integration of identity. Now, the metaphysical projections of plant ontology run into a diametrically opposed problem of the vegetal scale that is too broad and overwhelming to elicit an empathetic response from a human subject. In continuing to explore the boundaries of empathy, it is worthwhile to note the disengagement of the metaphysical image of vegetal beings, on the one hand, or spirit, as such, and, on the other, into the analogs of everything that is superficial, dispensable, and antiquated in human and animal bodies.

METAPHYSICAL PROJECTIONS OF PLANT ONTOLOGY

The extraordinary metaphysical projection onto a magnitude of universal proportions spans the writings of the philosophers of antiquity, as much as of modernity. Plotinus imagined the soul of the world in the shape of an enormous plant. Hegel visualized in the plant and its stages of development, growth and maturation a metaphor of spirit. Novalis pictured nature as a gigantic tree, on which we are the buds. The sheer impersonality of plants and the collapse of the divergence between the individual and the collective in their being offer vegetal ontology enough flexibility to metonymize the entire whereof it is a part, to stand in for nature as a global movement of generation, growth and decay. Although it is complex, if not impossible, for humans to recognize themselves in the non-individuated being of plants amplified to the entire world, the second metaphysical projection, mapping animal and human organs onto the plant, generates a series of morphological and structural functional homologies that facilitate such recognition. Both materialist and idealist philosophers resort to what we might call the tactics of ontic-biological interpretation: Lorenz Oken and Goethe deem the flower to be the highest stage of the plant's spiritual unfolding and the equivalent of the head, Julien La Mettrie equates foliage to the lungs, bark to skin, and roots to the digestive tract, Gaston Bachelard, ensuing Paul Claudel, alludes to the trees vertical position as a posture of heroic uprightness. As a consequence, these and other thinkers have domesticated the alien ontology of vegetation, rendering the ontic features of plants familiar through a reductive comparison to their animal and human counterparts. Collectively, the projections of the human onto the plant and of the plant onto the world are tantamount to a metaphysical transposition of the human onto nature as such, the transposition, where the domesticated and homologous fragments of vegetal life are utilized as the means in the narcissistic self-recognition of the human in the environment. (let us recall, in this presupposition, that the notion of narcissism, itself, deduced from the nature of a mythical character – Narcissus – that was bestowed upon a flower, thereby completing the enchanted circle of the anthropomorphization of plants and the vegetalization of the world).

It is not a surprise that amazes us that the morphological and structural functional homologies are the material substitutes for the experience of empathy and, in Husserl's argumentation, the guiding threads for the hermeneutical exercises, upon which the biological sciences are predicated. The lucid ties between brute (Tier, animal) and plant demands a solid ground that would neither intuitive nor empathetic; that is why the universal and completely indefinitely performed empathy that allows the analogy is not enough for the investigation; he needs concrete experience of concrete sensitivities related to concrete whereby, the analogy of the plant organs with brute animal ones must be broad enough to ground the probability of the interpretation.

Sound biological claims, interpreting the correlations of concrete sensitivities and concrete organs, take the place of "indefinitely performed empathy," which operates with a vague notion of similarity between figures of animal and plant lives. Philosophies in the western metaphysical tradition depended at a greater extent on the hazy figurations of the animal in the plant and thus, have fallen prey to the sort of empathy Husserl criticizes in Idea 111. Still, what the vague empathizers and the careful practitioners of biological hermeneutics have in common is that they privilege the ontic dimensions of diverging sorts of life, while altogether negating ontological divergence.

Abstract and concrete comparisons miss the sole and the most valuable contribution philosophy can offer to the query of life (and of lives), namely, the admiration of its ontological and ethical status.

If, as Heidegger notes, the complexity of critical thinking non-human living beings is that, though similar to us, they are far removed from humans by the "abys" of "our existent essence," then the ontological grounding of biological parallelisms must supersede both empathy and the biological strategies of interpretation. Heidegger believes and presupposes that plants and animals do not participate in the existential ontology of *Dasein* – a presupposition that is all the more doubtful, noting the plurality of existences and points of access to the world that correspond to specific ontologies, encompassing that of vegetal life. Once ontological investigations are geared toward worlds and existences other than human are advanced enough to offer a rejoinder to Heidegger, the similarities between various beings will also need to be rethought along ontological lines. It is this rethinking that could stem, for example, to the notion of ontological empathy, no longer determined by ontic similitude but, instead, by a context of proximity to the being of other creatures (e.g., the essential superficiality and non-conscious-being-in-the-world of humans and plants. Any future rapprochments between humans and other beings will develop on the terrain of post-metaphysical philosophy, which will be exceptionally attentive to the ontological uniqueness of non-human existences and mediate between various analogies without privileging the perspective of the human *Dasein*.

As far as metaphysical projections of plant ontology is concerned, however, few are as damaging, theoretically and ethically, as Hegel's reflections on vegetal life. In keeping with the trend of grounding facile ontic analogies between diverging classes of beings, Hegel depicts the parallel between the inside and between the foliage of plants and the coverings of animal bodies. As he presented his explorations on lectures on aesthetics, the real set of activities of organic life remains

veiled from our vision, we envision only the external outlines of the animal's shape, and this again is covered throughout by feathers, scales, hair, pelt, prickles, or shells. Such covering does belong to the animal kingdom, but in animals it constitutes forms drawn from the kingdom of plants. The ceaseless multiplication of material extensions and the empirical diversity of shapes and colors in the vegetal and animal kingdoms is contrasted to the real set of organic life., which is hidden, withdrawn from sight, non-phenomenal, interior, and, hence, spiritualized. The metaphysical divergence between the inside and the outside rules over the whole comparison and delineates, in advance, the distinctive value judgments bestowed upon the plurality of manifestations (and non-manifestations) of life. The "too much" of material proliferation stands in a direct proportion to the "too little" of metaphysical deficiency: the more vibrant, exuberant, and vegetal the external outlines of life - the more insignificant, impoverished, and sometimes reduced to a naught, the interior dimension of the creature's spiritual life. Beauty as such has not yet risen to the sphere of a context, when it is shattered into the bewildering variety of shapes and colors, evincing the vegetal heritage of animal beings. Plant and animal externalization of life, devoid of an interior, withdrawn, disengaged core, is not, in Hegel's perspective, an appropriate object of empathy, be it aesthetic or cognitive or ethical, for the spiritualized humanity.

What then of the human body? Does it inherit the ontic features of vegetal life? Whereas in his philosophy of nature Hegel is willing to concur that the skeletal endo-structure of all bodies harkens as far back as the mineral world, declined and rejected by the soft muscular and fatty tissues that surround the bones, in the texts on aesthetics he is more reluctant to acknowledge this dialectical heritage. In the lectures on fine art, the human body is thoroughly spiritualized, so much so that it becomes identical to sensitiveness and sensitivity, no longer impeded by external coverings:

The human body, on the contrary, stands in this respect at a higher stage, since in it there is everywhere and always demonstrated the fact that man is an ensouled and feeling unit. The skin is not hidden by plant-like unliving coverage. The skin itself allows the interior life to shine through it.

The external dimension of human existence is a translucent screen for the life of the mind, the nakedness of the skin that encapsulates one ever more physically vulnerable and unprotected exhibits a renewed spiritual vitality of the inaccessible and inviolable interior life. The human exposure thus invites empathy as efficacious as plant and animal hiddenness and protection of the body repels empathetic overtures.

It remains implied in Hegel's writings that the identification with the aesthetic ideal of the human - an essentiality ideal, as an outcome - is contingent upon a barefaced denigration of animal and vegetal existences. Not only does the complete sensitization and vulnerability of the naked, hairless, and dis-closed human body elicit the vigorous context of empathy, but also the generation of this body in the course of an argumentation of "the beauty of nature" is contrasted to animal and vegetal corporealities, which repel empathetic overtures and with which it is impossible to identify. The unliving, plant-like coverings, presumably eclipse from the surface of the human body are, at once, the protective

shields in contradictory to pain especially excruciating pain and the embodied impediments to empathy, starkly contrasted to the human flesh that is everywhere, ensouled and feeling. To feel into this flesh, which is, in itself a sign of potential suffering, is to empathize with the interior life it transmits in all its external manifestations, in other words, it is to yield access to the spiritual realm through a body entirely suffused with the body idealized, refined, and sublated to the extent that it turns into a material imprint of spirit. The rarification of corporeality, its rendering subtle and amenable to the articulation of interior life (think, in this respect, of the Leibnizian "subtle manner" as a point of articulation of the body and the soul), thus, coincides with its winnowing from the vegetal heritage of excessive material proliferation.

In this sphere, at the apex of natural beauty already verging on the ideal beauty of art as it is grasped in the lectures on aesthetics, it is noteworthy to put forth what some might regard a vulgar reading of Hegel. The idealization of the human body, in a process completely entangled with the body's near de-materialization and cleansing of all remnants of plant and animal life., hinges, it is noteworthy to suggest, on the valorization of a specific notion and historically bound ideal of corporeality. The subtle racism inherent in the building of a hairless and spiritually transparent body integrates forces with the overt speciesism that pits plants and animals, taken to be aspects of petrified nature, in contradictory to the living logic of spirit. Nowhere is the Imbrication of racism and speciesism more clearer than it is in Philosophy of Nature, where, in the course of arguing on the role of light in the unfolding of the vegetal self, Hegel remarks: "the externality of the subjective, self like unity of the plant is objective in its relation to light. Man fashions himself in more interior fashion, although in southern latitudes he, too does not reach the stage where his self, his freedom, is objectively guaranteed. To those familiar with Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history such notions will not sound shocking: in the South, Hegel believes, the fashioning of human subjectivity is quite plant-like, largely determined by light, and thus, neglectful of subjective interiority. In turn, those who are externally determined are not free; heteronomous beings - a category that, in Hegel, encompasses the entire kingdom of plants and humans "in southern latitudes" - do not constitute the principle of their activity within themselves and fail to set themselves up in contradictory to their environment as purposeful subjects. As an outcome of dialectical coming, the human and the plant cease to be monolithic notions: beneath the veneer of empathy ideal of man, Hegel implies, lies the shared mode of being of plants and human beings living in the global South.

Just as preferring the hour of dusk and interior luminosity, dialectical thought shies away from the external light, to which the plant tends, so the Hegelian system as a whole negates the immediacy of life, elevating physical vigor in the sphere of spiritual existence. Dialectical empathy with the plant becomes possible on the condition that vegetal beings generates a transition from merely living things to symbols animated by culture, a dried flower turns into the medium, wherein *Geist* can finally recognize itself. In a letter dated July 17, 1797, Hegel invokes a garland of dry flowers offered to him as a sign of friendship that unites parted friends. The flowers are of course dry, he writes, and life has vanished from them. But what on earth is a living thing if the spirit of man does not breathe life into it? What is speechless but that to which man does not lend his speech? More precisely, the

dead Flowers turn into a double medium, a outlet, first, for empathy with the other (the missing friend) who is also pained by the separation and, second, for self recognition in an element of nature transformed through human activity. Dialectically speaking, dry flowers preserved as a memento are more living (living qualitatively distinctively, better more intensely, more authentically) than those growing in a field, the trees chopped down to create space for a new highway and make into furniture lead a spiritual afterlife ensured by the fact that the spirit of man has breathed life into them. Empathy with merely living things would, conversely, betoken an unmediated attempt at an emotional penetration into nature. In other words, something of a regression from the dialectical point of view. Spirit's ingress into the domain of its other (nature, wherein it does not recognize itself) is such that it productively destroys, through rational activity, whether it touches – a task that empathy accomplishes at the sphere of affect by declining alterity conceived by analogy with the empathizer. Dialectical empathy with the plant circumvents such immediacy by incorporating the dead flower, combined with others like in a garland, with spirit's depth, inner life, and universal meaning. Affect itself is synthesized with rationality when what elicits it is a product of human activity, be it as insignificant as the dry flower preserved as a reminder of an absent friend.

The price paid for dialectical empathy is of course steep, since it demands that natural life be extinguished before getting rekindled in the higher regions of spirit. Similar to other metaphysical currents in philosophy, Hegelian dialectics conceived the floral world as ontologically impoverished, lacking in X (be it consciousness, sentience, autonomy, or animation), and as a seat, simultaneously, of empirical excess and transcendental deficiency to be compensated for by dialectical re-birth. The metaphysical recognition of the human in the plant is conditioned by this understanding: the plant is a defective animal, a being in which human direct everything they are not or, better yet, everything they do not wish to be. The disengagement and repression of those aspects of humanity that do not live up to the ideal construct "man" precede the projection of these very aspects onto vegetal life in a cross-species psychological transference. Empathy – an offshoot of our domination over and violation of ourselves – thus assumes two forms: on the one pole, it stands for an apophatic and unconscious acknowledgement of what we do not want to be, what we have dissipated from our midst and attributed to the vegetal other; on the other pole, it signifies a last-ditch attempt to feel into what we are not supposed to feel, to reconnect, in a quasi-Feuerbachian fashion, with the disavowed features of humanity projected onto non-human existence. In any event, empathy serves exclusively human subjects, who depended on it to building their ideal selves or to retrieved alienated features of their own existence. If one is to imagine an ethics of plants, then empathy, with its implicit self-referentiality and narcissism, necessitates to be non-dialectically overcome.

CONCLUSION

Empathetic paradigm to vegetal life is conceivable to be in concurrence with the indispensable features of plant ontology. What vegetal life seems to endeavor? The emotive sphere of empathy with vegetal life eclipses their mode of being and projects, the constructs as well as the goals hope or intended by the human empathizer onto the object of empathy.

The disclosure on vegetal life depicts the finitude of empathy, its anthropocentric and probable unethical underpinnings.

Empathizing with vegetal life is a potentially conceivable reality. The philosophical viewpoint of this probability declines the uniqueness of vegetal beings and may be regarded as ambassadors of something huge than ourselves i.e., the sacredness of life. Empathy is exemplified on this elemental commonality. The substantial congruence of the empathizer and the empathized with, fused by one reality that both are living beings. The community of living then engenders the intended foundation for the ethical compartment.

The peculiar ontology of vegetal life must be depicted as an embodied finitude to empathy and is considered resistance to a totalizing vitalism. Such presupposition depicts a series of impediments to the humanistic, anthropocentric, and narcissistic ethics predicated on the underlying sameness of the ethical action as well as the object of a human action. This viewpoint is not claiming that vegetal beings indispensably undermines the ethics of empathy. It is not also proposing that an alternative (non-empathetic, or the eclipse of emotive sphere, and non-rational) ethical paradigm to vegetal life, is unfathomable. An ethics can stem from vegetal life would decline human self-recognition in and projection onto the sphere of the flora, or more, specifically, would indispensably consider an affirmation of the irreducible distinction between this sphere and that of human's earthly existence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Empathy for objects as well as personal empathy; these processes are often called simulative in a special sense. Attention to the phenomenology of bodily simulation might find pleasing and appropriate congruences of this kind, deepening, perhaps, my understanding of the work.
2. The emotions we feel in response to narrative art are not merely a series of unstructured affective eruptions, but episodes which take shape in response to and in anticipation of the events of the unfolding drama, and we may sense a harmony or appropriateness in the relation between the course of the emotion and the course of the narrative; the same thing happens with music.
3. Empathic responses are of special relevance to understanding our relations to the aesthetic, because these responses become particularly salient when we are in the presence of aesthetic things.

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