



Language, Neuter, and Masculinity: The Influence of the Neuter-Male in the Reiteration of Social Models, A Philosophical Analysis Starting with Cavarero, Irigaray, and Butler

Alberto Grandi¹

Università degli studi di Bari "Aldo Moro", Italy

Abstract

Gender studies has generated numerous questions around “neutral” forms, such as the concept of “Self”. The aim of this analysis is to highlight how “neutral” forms are central to the reiteration of the binary model and the dominance of “man²”. Historically, man is the archetype, placing his supremacy as part of the natural order of things. Inserted into this model, many thinkers have considered the male as the transcendental gender, so, elevating the masculine as universal, a-sexed and decorporealised. In this way, man has convinced himself that he’s not conditioned by his masculinity and can speak for all humanity, becoming the *logos* through which he declines the rest. Man, therefore, has made himself “neutral” – both in the conceptual sense and in the grammatical structure (particularly of binary languages such as Italian) – by taking control of language. Through it, he orders and constitutes the world, developing dichotomies and signifying anatomical bodies. In this research, it is intended to work on language and the relationship between “neutral” and power, emphasizing how that relationship is central to the reproduction of the patriarchal model. Through a critical philosophical reflection, which sees a logical-linguistic and historical-processual methodological structure, the discourse of the I-neutral will be crossed, pointing out how that “neutral” is in truth male. The concluding goal will be to, through “fluid” visions, build the basis for a language that is truly neutral and ready to embrace multiplicity, without relations of domination; a language really inclusive and not a reiterator of the patriarchal model.

Keywords: masculinity, language, social models, neutral, power relations

¹ A graduate in Philosophical Sciences, he is currently a PhD student in Gender Studies at the University of Bari Aldo Moro. The research project concerns the analysis of masculinity and linguistic performativity in the context of gender studies, with a dual purpose: on the one hand, philosophical and social analysis, starting from a pragmatist perspective and deepening the theme of the constitution of people and power relations. On the other, the aim of developing appropriate communication strategies to contrast discrimination and produce inclusive environments, in particular in corporate realities.

² Intersectionally intended as male, white, cisgender, heterosexual, able and middle-class

1. Introduction

Gender studies has produced numerous questions about the philosophical and social models that construct and constitute our contemporaneity. In this critical reading, there are also all those forms defined as “neutral”, which underlie the basis of fundamental concepts of our thought: such as the Self. In the philosophical field, specifically in a reading of gender studies from the prospective of the philosophy of language, the following questions are asked: can we really think of a neutral-universal subject? Are neutral forms and discourse truly devoid of gendering? Is the elevation of the masculine as the Self-universal really neutral, de-corporeal, a-sexed, and, therefore, irrelevant to power relations and the constitution of the person? Can the concept of Nature, central in the gender studies and sex difference themes, be considered a neutral element of the discourse?

It is precisely on these questions that I would like to begin the analysis, by emphasising how “neutral” forms, philosophically and grammatically, are central with respect to the reiteration of the binary model and the domination of the male; here intersectionally understood as white, heterosexual, cisgender, occidental, middle-class and ableist.

In the occidental civilization, man - in the sense of patriarchal intersectional masculinity - is the canon, the archetype, the model on which the entire social structure is based; developing a continuous perpetuated praxis. Male supremacy, in this way, seems to be part of the natural order of things, in an inevitable biologism that defines power relations and hierarchical roles. This naturalness, discursively produced and performed every day by language (Butler, 1990) - in all its facets: words, actions, images, bodies, media, etc. - is what has made “man” invisible and universal, de-corporealised and a-sexualised. Inserted in such a model, the various thinkers throughout history, from the pre-Socratics to the contemporaries, have considered the masculine as a transcendental human gender, therefore without the need to think – and think themselves – in terms of gender. In this way, man has convinced himself that he is not influenced by his own masculinity and can speak for all mankind indiscriminately, becoming the logos through which the rest declines. In this way, definitions and categories have developed from hierarchising dichotomisations, which in repetition have found a naturalising and apriorising force on which we have then founded reflections, relationships, and societies, such as: man/woman, man/animal, heterosexual/homosexual, citizen/foreigner, able/disabled and so on. Given this invisibilisation of masculinity, over time we have questioned the relationship of the speaking subject with nature, with God, with other living beings, but we have never questioned that such analyses were always the outcome of a man's world produced and universalised by his own language (Irigaray, 1991, 279).

Reflecting on the relationship between the masculine-neutral and the representation of the “Self”, thus becomes a fundamental operation to re-signify dominant models, opening paths to new and non-hierarchical possibilities. Indeed, the constant use of false neutral views – through conceptual and grammatical aspects – produces a direct impact on the power relations and the thoughts of every person. The universalization of the male and his body to global possibility leads, inevitably, to the development of androcentric structures in all fields of knowledge. This is why there are still discussions today, for example, about gender medicine; in fact, even in the medical field, the conceptual framework of the I-neutral – reiterated by language – has led to a focus on the male, excluding other physicalities with dangerous consequences. The maintenance of this false neutrality implies, therefore, the maintenance of hierarchizing dichotomies that prevent the achievement of real equality both in daily life and in the workplace.

The focus of this analysis will therefore be to shed light on these mechanisms, so that further thought can be given to the development of truly inclusive and neutral communication strategies that deconstruct patriarchal patterns.

2. Self-neutral

In relation to the concept of the Self-neutral, is interesting the analysis of Adriana Cavarero, an Italian philosopher and feminist (whom I will reread from an intersectional and queer philosophy perspective) in *Il pensiero della differenza sessuale (The Thought of Sexual Difference, 1991)*, where she writes:

To the 'I' of discourse, that same discourse that I am now thinking and saying in Italian, it happens that its being male or female does not concern it. The subject 'I' is male, but it is not gendered. Thus, when one says 'I am woman' or 'I am man', the 'I' indifferently bears and accepts gendering, being in itself neutral. In this way, philosophical discourse can legitimize and affirm the 'I think' and make this neutral subject a self. And it can also eliminate the 'I think' and simply say 'I' since it is precisely in it that the universal presents itself (1991, 43).

However, that masculine grammatical gender that the self carries within itself somehow makes this representation of universality wobble. In fact, saying "self", in a certain way, is already saying "I am man". The specification serves only to express to being an "extension" of it, such as the feminine or what, intersectionally, does not fit into the heterosexual, cisgender, white, able-bodied, occidental binarism.

So, the question arises: what "body" does the Self evoke in our minds when we use such a form or concept? Does it really produce an image that is not filled with already established and hierarchizing meanings?

As emphasized by many thinkers, from Judith Butler to the Italian psychologist Chiara Volpato, what we evoke in our minds by using the conceptual model of the "neutral" is "the sign of its subject" (Cavarero, 1991, 47), so the masculine and all that, that term, brings with it. Therefore, it refers to a thought, to a "materiality", and therefore to a world-view, in line with the binary as well as hierarchizing model that considers man as canon. A concrete example would be, in Italian, the use of the words that refer to professions declined only in the masculine: such as the example of "*magistrato*" (male magistrate)³. In this case, not only is the mental image of a man evoked when using such a term, but it also perpetuates the model that sees power roles linked to the masculine dimension. Thus, the stereotype of *agency*, the male *propensity* for apical and powerful positions, is reiterated, as opposed to the female *communality*, the female *propensity* for more empathetic and collaborative roles, that instead nails them to hierarchically inferior roles. It is also interesting here to underline how, with this linguistic procedure, it welds not only a different role of power between men and women, but, by using the term "propensity", it emphasizes a conception of inevitable naturalness. So, the use of terms such as the one used as an example (*magistrato*) has a dual function: it reiterates specific social roles and, at the same time, justifies that impartiality through the concept of "nature". Declining the term into the feminine (from *magistrato* to *magistrata*) for indicating a female magistrate, is thus a practical and concrete act that challenges the patriarchal model, not only at the grammatical level but also at the political-conceptual level.

The neutral self, precisely because it is neutral, from the Latin *neuter*, should position itself as "neither one nor the other" of two elements considered antithetical. A term etymologically appropriate to the binary structure, which posits thought primarily through oppositional dichotomies subordinated to the principle of non-contradiction. However, that self defined as

³ In Italian, the term *magistrato*, as well as many other words since Italian is a binary language that uses the masculine-neutral, simultaneously denotes a job related to a male-sexed body (male magistrate) and the non-sexed magistrate. It is also interesting to argue that the term *magistrate* is masculine because until a few decades ago women could not assume that role, so it is the specter of an obviously patriarchal model.

neutral does not position itself as “neither one nor the other”, but as “one that signifies and dominates the other”. In fact, the self is never neutral, but masculine, despite being ready to accept sexualization. A gendering that specifies itself, however, in the declension to what is not male, since in the masculine it expresses something that its gender already announced. As Cavarero writes, that announcement “I am a man” is a warning that reveals the sign of the authentic subject of discourse: a masculine subject who assumes self to be universal (1991, 44). Its use evokes, therefore, the “image” of a particular signifier. It evokes a “body” with definite anatomical traits – male, white, able-bodied, occidental – which, inevitably, will affect the thought and world-view of anyone using such “neutral” forms; reiterating models that will be assumed pre-discursively and, consequently, naturalised (Butler, 1990). An aspect of, the latter, that Chiara Volpato, in *Psicologia del maschilismo (Psychology of Masculinism, 2020)*, reports through numerous scientific data collected through psychological and sociological tests. Methodologically, one of the best tests to assess this is through anonymous interviews or questionnaires. An emblematic case, which underlines how the use of (false) neutral grammatical forms – or concepts – generates “masculine” visions and images in mind, are the differences reported – in Italian school contexts – by the answers to the question: “which is your favourite writer” and “which is your favourite writer or your favourite female writer?⁴”, generating very different data that will inevitably influence both the thoughts of the individuals and the empirical data collected subsequently for statistical calculations. To better understand this last aspect with a further case, in Italy there is a high disparity in participation, between men and women, in engineering (men) and obstetrics (women) faculties (as emphasised by multiple gender balance sheets of Italian universities). This will produce a series of statistics that will then, rhetorically, be used to emphasise the “natural tendency” of the male, rather than the female, to orient themselves in certain jobs. In truth, this “tendency” is the outcome of stereotypical concepts and languages that prescribe the way people should be, based on their gender; manipulating and influencing their thought, as pointed out by the Turkish-German activist Kübra Gümüşay (2020), and their ways. There are numerous other cases that could clarify this, even moving away from the linguistic-grammatical perspective. One of these might be road safety, where the canon of reference has been, until a few decades ago, the male body alone. This led to the testing of crash-tests exclusively with dummies constructed from a stereotypical male body, excluding other physicalities and, consequently, reducing their safety. This occurred, as already argued, because the male emerges as the “neutral” and universalizable canon. Referring to Cavarero’s logical parable (1991, 43), which to be discussed shortly, universalizing the male was then mistakenly believed that even the male body could particularize itself into the rest, holding it as a global model. Highlighting this problematic give us the opportunity to rethinking of those tests and concretely increasing the security of women and many other different physicalities.

Returning to the issue of the neuter, we can see how the term “man”, therefore, denotes two aspects from which a hegemonic rhetoric then developed. On the one hand it denotes, in fact, a finite, sexualised being. On the other hand, a universal, a-sexed and decorporealised being, produced by language through an ascending logical parabola that absolutizes precisely the finiteness of the first aspect. Then, through a descending dynamic, this universality will be able to comprehend and specify itself, both in that finite masculine that generated it, and in all the rest, which will be incorporated by the logical process. Thus, there is a circularity where man

⁴ Like I said in the case of “*magistrato*”, Italian is a non-neutral language. In fact, in Italian, we use the word “*scrittore*” for indicating the “neutral-asexual writer” but also the “male writers” and the word “*scrittrice*” for indicating only the “female writer”. So, as Cavarero said, in Italian grammar the man indicates both the universal and the particular. It follows that when the term “*scrittore*” (writer) is used in people’s minds, tendentially, it will create an image of a *male man*, with the stereotypical traits that everyone gives to the category “writer”.

is both universal and particular, while the rest is only particular. The particulars then, in a binary logic, are each other's. But, in truth, man's otherness is founded in man himself who, preliminarily posing himself as universal, then admits himself as one of the particulars in which the universal can be specified. On the contrary, woman's otherness is founded in the negative: the universal-neutral man, particularising himself as "man" sexed in the masculine, finds himself in front of the man sexed in the feminine, and says that he is other than himself (Cavarero, 1991, 47). Rereading the philosopher from an intersectional perspective, we could say that this is also the case for homosexuality, transsexuality and so on, making everything that is not "male" - white, heterosexual, cisgender, bourgeois - particulars produced by a neutral-masculine.

In this model, therefore, man occupies a totally different position from every other person or living being. A model that is constantly reiterated precisely by the use of a language that, by universalising the particular 'male', performs certain categories and power relations; constitutively influencing each person, who will assume and be shaped by the language he inherits and uses. An aspect, the latter, that the Italian philosopher Ferruccio Rossi-Landi specifies in *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato*, (*Language as work and as a market*, 1968), where he writes:

As a repeater of compulsory and over-personal models, the language worker finds himself in the situation of not knowing what he is doing when he speaks, of not knowing why he speaks the way he does, and of belonging to processes of linguistic production that condition him from the very beginning (1968, 104).

The neuter masculine thus allows the circularity of man between the universal and the particular, holding the power and control of the – linguistic – bar that cuts through the gendered "particulars" (man bar (/) non-man), delimiting their boundaries and permissions. Thus, hierarchising and categorising signifiers, bodies, signifying them. I purposely use the dichotomy man/non-man to indicate on the one hand the necessity of the neuter-masculine to render thought binary through hierarchising dichotomous caesuras. On the other to indicate by "not-man" the dominating structure of man-white-heterosexual-cisgender-western-bourgeois-able, which establishes every facet of multiplicity, intersectionally, from his universalised self.

It thus appears that man has made himself non-sexual by taking control of language. With it, he orders and constitutes the world, developing dichotomies and signifying anatomical bodies, nailing down permissive fates.

In the contemporary neutral self and the logical process that produced it, as Cavarero said (1991, 47), something monstrous is therefore concealed. Theoretically, in the neutral universal, nothing should recognise itself, except with the addition of the sexuality that specialises. But, as we have seen, man fully recognises himself in the neutral universal thanks to that monstrosity that allows the coexistence of neutral and masculine. In this universal, man is there with all the concreteness of his whole being - a sexualised and masculinised living being - and because he is there, he recognises himself, says, thinks and represents himself with a language that is his own. On the contrary, everything that is not man must be said from a "neutral" language that has already thought it. The non-man, in short, is not the subject of his own language, but says and represents self through categories of the other-man's language. Indeed, the subject of this language has defined himself from the start as identical with language itself:

“man is a rational animal” (ζῷον λόγον ἔχον⁵). Man is the living being that holds the language. Man is the *logos*; “Man is the one who says things and the world, says himself as the sayer. He thinks the whole and thinks himself as the thinker” (Cavarero, 1991, 50). All other people, on the other hand, do not self-represent themselves in language, but receive their man-made representations. They speak and think, but not from them, but through the inheritance of a foreign language. A language that is dense, genealogically – in the Foucauldian sense – of power and domination. Everything that is not man is thinking themselves “thought”, their “thinking themselves” is a thinking themselves in the language of another who has already thought them, enclosing them in foreign concepts and predetermined permissions. As Butler writes in *Bodies That Matter*:

The construction of gender operates through exclusion, so that the human is not only produced in replacement and opposition to the inhuman, but through a series of forclusions, of radical erasures, to which the possibility of cultural articulation is denied (Butler, 1997a, 26).

Language thus becomes a foreign inheritance. Yet, as Derrida points out in *Le monolinguisme de l'autre* (*The Monolingualism of the Other*, 1996), it is always inheritance, insofar as it is unformed by us and therefore preceding and constitutive to us. In other words, language is a constitutively influential inheritance. Consequently, putting the two reflections together - taking the risk of juxtaposing two distant authorities - we could argue that the inheritance for non-humans is twofold. They, in fact, inherit a language, in the Derridean sense, which perpetuates the assumption of a foreign language, which has already thought them, in the sense of Cavarero's reflection.

By assuming language and becoming its monstrous holder (the neutral-masculine self), man produced his essence - which he identifies in language itself - defining himself and thinking, thus establishing, everything else. The first great caesura of difference, on a theoretical-relational level, in other words the binary sexual difference, occurs precisely from language and those who hold it; which made it possible to establish the dichotomous models with which the bodies that inherit it are signified and which, consequently, reiterate that same model, continually giving it life. From there, then, develop the great binary structures by which man - and patriarchal masculinity (I use the term patriarchal to specify a masculinity fused with white, heterosexual, cisgender male dominance) - hold their sway: mind-man/body-woman, culture-man/nature-woman, and so on. Binarism that exclude a priori everything that does not fit the model; thus, leaving no room for homosexual, transsexual, fluid thoughts, except as anomalies or pathologies of the “natural” and “normal” binary and solid reality. Indeed, the fluid, as identified by Irigaray, and re-read by me in an intersectional and queer key, questions solid and binary categorical stability:

Occidental logic will refer to and sustain a mechanics of solids. The fluid will always overflow reason, ratio, overstep the measure, plunge back into the undifferentiated. Forgetting that without the fluid, this would have no unity, the fluid always being present between the solid substances to unite them, to re-unite them: without the operation of the fluids, there would be no discourse.

⁵ From the Greek "Zoon logon echon" translated to "man is a rational animal" is the famous phrase used by Aristotle to emphasize man's ability to reason and express himself rationally as a characteristic trait that distinguishes him from animals. It is important to specify that for Aristotle only man, intended as male, is a complete human being, while woman is “imperfect.” From which we can deduce that the true and “complete” rational animal is man, hierarchically superior to woman and therefore possessor, in a higher sense, of reason and language.

But the operation of fluids is not enunciated as a condition of truth, of coherence of the logos. It would mean revealing its unstable construction, its mobile ground (Irigaray, 1991, 287).

The neutral is thus that element which should have rejected - or at least not made it the exclusive - logic of binary opposition, of the *aut-aut*, of heteronormative binarism.

The binary structure of language greatly influences the constitution of the people and their relationships. As Irigaray points out (1991), all dichotomies, such as being/not being, true/false, and so on, remain the opposites from which the person bases self to entry into language, where one is subjected to the principle of non-contradiction. Alternatives are therefore all evaluated, compared, framed, and determined hierarchically. This leads to a Manichaeian view of reality – as well as truth (in the singular) – developing and welding together rigid and stereotypical views of self and relationships. However, the neuter alludes to the overcoming of a binarism that, in truth, welds; reiterating, consequently, male dominance. Today's philosophical and grammatical neuter is a reiteration of the hierarchical and dichotomous man/woman model, which provides for a heteronormed binary structure, albeit alluding to the overcoming of that same binarism.

“Unveiling the false neutrality of such thought and its value of alienating women is the first necessary step towards a thought that contemplates women as subjects, and precisely as thinking subjects,” says Cavarero (1991, 56). A reflection that we could also extend intersectionally beyond the binary logic of man/woman.

So, using truly neutral languages (which involves the use of non-binary structures, or specific symbols such as *schwa*) implies not only a direct political and anti-discriminatory stance, open therefore to the multiple identities present, but will also produce new ways thinking. Indeed, as previously discussed, using masculine declensions, for example, implies an evocation of specifically gendered mental images, welding a perception of greater presence, authority, and competence. In school or corporate contexts, one could, hence, revise documents, texts, ways of writing e-mails, communiqués, advertisements, using structures that are open to multiplicity and do not reiterate a particular point of view. Rewriting intended not only at the grammatical level, but also conceptually, creating, for example, new declensions to indicate job roles, as well as tests designed on bodies not strictly male.

At the application level, this work is having experimentation in two partner companies of my research on the Italian territory. In them, I and a colleague of mine, are making several interventions of rewriting and staff training that is showing positive concrete feedback. We, in fact, began by drafting an operational program that saw, initially, generic surveys and private, personalized interviews, and then deepened, as soon as a positive climate was established, with targeted tests and training courses. After the first year of experimentation, according to the results of questionnaires and interviews, the perception of discriminatory acts seems to have diminished and, simultaneously, an increased awareness of linguistic structures, in particular the false neutrality of the Italian language; leaning toward more open and inclusive forms of communication in all aspects - verbal, non-verbal and medial communication.

To recapitulate, rethinking the grammatical and conceptual forms inherent in language, means breaking down a mechanism that places a particular as a universal that, precisely by holding the *logos*/language, structures and signifies everything else from its own experience and position. Using such symbols means removing that oblique bar between man/non-man to make space for fluidity, for “humanity” in its plurality. Rethinking the concept of the philosophical “I” means bringing to light the masculine hidden behind the “neutral” and the symbolic violence it enacts on a daily basis.

In order to combat masculine domination, “we must distrust the neutrality of language, its scientific objectivity” (Cavarero 1991, 78), since speaking is never neutral. Every word carries

with it the weight and influence of domination, discrimination, and hatred, penetrating the flesh and body of those who use and receive such language.

One need only think of the way the history of being called an insulting name is embodied in the body, how words enter the limbs, shape the gesture, bend the spine. It would be enough just to think about how racial or gender insults live and thrive in the flesh of the person to whom they are addressed, and how these insults accumulate over time, disguising their history, taking on the semblance of naturalness, shaping and shrinking the doxa, which counts as reality (Butler, 1997a, 229).

3. Self-neuter and masculinity

The philosophical self thus sees the universalisation of a particular - the masculine - grafted into a binary man/woman structure, from which all other categories are then defined. In this logical process, what is man, intersectionally understood, sees a universalisation that leads to the erasure of one's own sexuality and body. Patriarchal masculinity - and the power relations it has established - thus becomes something natural and biologically inevitable, disappearing from the scene and from reflection, being able to become the "neutral" with which the rest can be thought and described. This "neutrality" is thus a constitutive element of masculinity itself, which bases itself on a series of rigid characteristics that are genealogically, in the Foucauldian sense, charged with hierarchising power. Before proceeding, I specify that, as analysed by Australian sociologist R. W. Connell in *Masculinities* (1995), there are multiple forms of 'masculinity', with multiple facets. Here, however, the intention is to identify the deeper basis present in most of them, investigating the sociolinguistic praxis present at the bottom and not the stereotypical characteristics present on the surface and slightly mutable throughout history.

The binarism "neither one nor the other" is the first of these constitutive elements. Patriarchal masculinity, in fact, needs a dichotomous structure to signify itself, starting with the alienation of a whole series of characteristics that it cannot possess (such as the procreative possibility of the body) or does not tolerate in itself (such as emotionality associated with natural and therefore corporeal elements), then nailing them down in its other, femininity. In line with Butler's conception of gender performativity (1990), it follows that patriarchal masculinity acquires its meaning from the - performative - relationship that the signifiers "man" and "woman" have with each other within a heterosexual binary system. Such signifiers, such bodies, taken individually, in fact, would mean nothing, they require their other to understand what is allowed and what is not allowed to be and do. They refer, therefore, to a praxis that runs on the surface of signifiers which, however, are continually signified from the inheritance of language and the models it brings with it. The structure of the masculine-neutral is a heavy mover of this praxis that allows the signification of the male at the expense of the subordination of the feminine and the exclusion of everything else. Heterosexual binarism is, in short, necessary insofar as it allows the signification and universalisation of masculinity, exploiting its other as an element to which to assign what it cannot possess; such as, for example, procreative possibility (Ciccone, 2019). Indeed, the man must separate himself, forget his relationship with nature - as opposed to the woman - producing an eidetic structure that enables his dominating relationship with the other. As Irigaray writes in *To speak is never neutral*:

An eidetic structure commands the functioning of our truth. Neither entity nor relation to entity can be named outside the reference to a model that determines its manifestation as an approximation of its ideal being (1991, 280).

In this model, what does not fit into heterosexual binarism must be eliminated, discriminated or incorporated as an anomaly. Thus, in the form of psychic disorders, the homosexual man simply becomes a feminised (biological) male (imitating characteristics that are essentialistically and biologically not his own), the woman a masculinised (biological) female, and so on.

The assumption of language as its essence and the consequent dichotomisation, such as that between mind-logos-culture and, subordinately, body, has inevitably established power relations between the constituent parts of binarism itself. Insofar as the mind-logos-culture has been defined as hierarchically superior to the body-pulsion-nature. The association of the masculine as mind-logos-culture and the feminine as body-pulsion-nature necessarily sees a subordination of the feminine. According to the scholar of masculinity and founder of the Italian “masculine plural” (*Maschile Plurale*) association Stefano Ciccone, this subordination is also fundamental to indirectly acquire bodily procreative power that man does not possess. From this follows a whole series of stereotypical assignments, mutable in the cultural-historical process, of attitudes, possibilities and aptitudes appropriate to the binary man/woman model; for example, the man will be competitive, aggressive, strong, while the woman will be cooperative, emotional, weak, consequently generating paternalistic structures that trace the superiority of the male-protector to the female-defender.

The association with the mind then led to decorporealisation (understood as the possibility of domination and disciplining everything about the body) as a necessary aspect of masculinity, as well as its possibility of becoming universal and neutral. The male's relationship with his body - silent and accessory - places him in a condition of elevating aspects considered 'incorporeal', such as reason and rationality. This leads to the construction of male identity on decorporealised elements, which are then elevated to universal and neutral; thus, initiating that logical process, identified by Cavarero (1991, 43), which sees a circularity between universal and particular masculinity. The body, therefore, becomes for man only an accessory element, useful as a tool to show his own physical superiority. The latter being a further rhetorical aspect of male superiority, but in any case secondary to the main quality, according to this model, of man: *logos*.

Hetero-binarism, the subordination of the feminine and decorporealisation are thus necessary elements for the formation of a specific masculine capable of universalising itself and becoming, monstrously, neutral, becoming a hegemonic praxis (the patriarchy). This is because, with language, it was able to create complementary categories, and give them different positions of power. On the contrary, a queer or fluid vision, would subvert the entire praxis, because it would break down the meaning and hierarchy power between the parts of binarism, so, eliminating binarism itself.

In this model, masculinity, in short, does not only contain the category that nails to specific anatomical bodies. But contains the entire binary praxis that thinks all categories and outlines their power relations. Masculinity, like man, is both particular: the stereotypical category; and universal: the patriarchy (in the sense of the praxis of power relations and domination). Patriarchy as socio-cultural praxis, therefore, creates masculinity (particularly in the sense of hegemonic masculinity based on the three elements: heterosexual binarism, subordination of the feminine, and decorporealization) but simultaneously constantly revives through masculinity itself; in a performative process already identified by Butler.

Bringing masculinity into the realm of philosophical reflection thus implies a deconstruction of the patriarchal model that has “thought” all other categories, *barring (/)* the binarisms it creates to delineate confines and power relations. It also allows a rethinking of masculinity itself, opening new paths based not on dominant binary relations, but on free possibilities or, as feminist Rosi Braidotti would say, nomadic identities.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, language is imbued with relational and constituent power, dense with false neutrality that reiterates patterns of domination. Every datum, from the biological to the philosophical, is never neutral but, as identified by Foucault, genealogically charged with knowledge-power. Power dictated both by the direct relationship between language and thought, and by the capacity of language to signify every aspect of reality, producing models of domination from categorisations that we retroactively assume to be natural. Models and concepts that elevated to universals and neutrals - like the philosophical self - we then used to establish relationships, establish meanings, define social roles, create work structures and so on. Rethinking the concept of the philosophical self, of the philosophical subject, means highlighting the masculine-monstrous hidden behind the "neutral". This is why, says Cavarero, in order to combat patriarchal masculine domination "we must distrust the neutrality of language, its scientific objectivity" (1991, 78). Speaking, in fact, is never neutral. Language is not only anthropological, but also andrological; in other words, that of a sexualised subject that imposes its imperatives as universally valid (Irigaray, 1991). Each word carries with it the weight and influence of domination, discrimination, and hatred, penetrating the flesh and body of those who use and receive such language. Reiterating stereotypes, possibilities, attitudes that enter into us to the point of shaping and influencing our desires and drives (Butler, 1997b). Analysing the masculinity that lies behind the false neutrality of certain grammatical structures and philosophical concepts is a decisive step towards being able to think of a truly neutral and inclusive gendered language. Breaking down binarism allows for the accommodation of a multiplicity that would otherwise be encompassed and eliminated. This can be done through the development of new languages that take the multiple into account and that jam, as well as unravel, the hierarchising power behind a language steeped in hierarchising binarism.

Working on language, on the structures that compose it, on the neutral, in conclusion, is what can enable a rewriting of dominant models. As Butler writes in *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative*: "it is precisely the expropriation of the dominant 'authorised' discourse that constitutes a potential site of its subversive re-signification" (1997a, 157). A neutral language, therefore, cannot be based on a particular made universal, nor on a solid binarism that excludes both sides, in the etymological sense of the term: neuter: neither one nor the other. But it must be based on welcoming the fluid that exists between multiple particularities. Symbols such as the schwa or the asterisk have precisely the task of indicating that void that can be filled and specialised in a specific way, as well as remain fluid. A neutral language must, therefore, stand on the void, on the space that exists between each specificity, being able to become, from time to time, that specificity that each person is at that precise moment of his existence.

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