Thinking *from* Fragility

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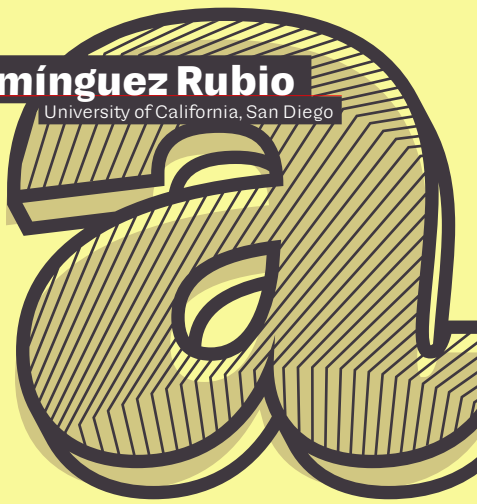

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The purpose of this article is to claim the need to re-imagine contemporary ethical and political vocabularies from a radical recognition of—and confrontation with—fragility. More specifically, this article seeks to highlight the importance of cultivating an awareness of those moments when bodies, objects, and the worlds we inhabit begin to crack and reveal their fragility; and the relevance of recovering these moments as spaces from which to open up alternative ways of thinking and imagining. On the one hand, this article will argue for the necessity of thinking *from* fragility, as an opportunity to rectify the arrogant refusal to think about limits that has characterized much of modern thought, which can be achieved through an attention to practices of care, repair, and maintenance. On the other hand, it will advocate for thinking from these practices as means to cultivate forms of attention to what remains after rupture, and to claim it as a space from where to imagine which ethics and politics are possible beyond collapse.

Keywords
vulnerability
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Thinking from Fragility

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This is an era of withdrawn certainties. Objects that once seemed solid are now revealed as fragile and brittle. We can see how facts that seemed conclusive, or truths that seemed indisputable, are now easily dismantled with just a few mouse clicks. We witness how the sharp tongue of a populist trickster is enough to shake the foundations of centuries-old political institutions. All, while the increasingly unbearable burden of racial, gender, and economic inequalities threatens to fracture the fragile *politeias* that organize our life in common. And, if that was not enough, we see how climate change is reshaping a planet that not long ago operated as a kind of eternal constant upon which to build possible futures, and that now reveals itself as an excess that short-circuits the very possibility of imagining those futures.

Over the past decade, this withdrawal of certainties has brought about a radical paradigm shift in social and political thought. Not too long ago, this was a type of thought focused on explaining the processes of production and reproduction of different social, economic, and cultural forms. Now, however, it is a thought focused on the question of how to prevent those forms from falling apart. Long gone are those optimistic models of growth and development that, even well into the 20th century, still dreamed of controlling Nature while propelling us toward an endless future. Instead, we are confronted with the urgent need to replace those 'sweet' developmentalist daydreams with models that enable us to confront these 'catastrophic times' (Stengers, 2015) on a 'damaged planet' (Tsing et al., 2017).

In recent years, proposals have emerged that seek to re-imagine ethical and political vocabularies capable of facing the challenges that threaten us. Notions such as 'naturecultures' (Haraway, 2008), or figures such as Gaia (Latour, 2017), the Anthropocene (Chakrabarty, 2021), or the Capitalocene (Moore, 2016), have emerged as attempts to capture this new era, when Nature can no longer be imagined as an external and constant variable, where neither growth nor progress can be assumed as inevitable, or when adjectives such as 'green', 'sustainable' or 'responsible' cannot hide the fact that capitalism has run out of a planet to devour.

In this brief text, I want to claim the need to re-imagine these ethical and political vocabularies from a radical recognition of—and confronta-

tion with—fragility. More specifically, I want to claim the need to pay attention to those moments when the bodies, things, imaginaries, and worlds we inhabit begin to crack, revealing their fragility; and the relevance of recovering those moments as spaces from which to open up alternative ways of being, doing, thinking, and imagining.

However, in times like these, when it is easy to succumb to defeatist melancholy (if not outright pessimism), this invitation to think about fragility might not appear to be the most advisable, or hopeful, pursuit. What I would like to argue in the following pages is that thinking about fragility does not have to be a pessimistic or defeatist endeavor. Quite the contrary. My argument would be that thinking about and above all, *from* fragility, constitutes a necessary step towards opening the possibility of articulating alternative and hopeful ethical and political vocabularies.

Claiming fragility as a space from which to think may seem somewhat paradoxical, particularly when considering the traditional understanding of this concept. If we look back, we can see that much of modern thought has been characterized by a refusal to think about fragility, and even more, to think *from* fragility. Fragility has been an absent figure in a thought that has predominantly focused on analyzing the processes involved in the production and reproduction of different social, cultural, and economic forms. Consequently, this thought has primarily focused on analyzing the variables that animate these processes (e.g., agencies, intentions, interests, structures), disregarding those moments when things break, stop working, or collapse. It could be argued, therefore, that fragility has been an orphaned figure of social thought.

It is true, however, that in recent years there has been a robust thought about vulnerability, especially by feminist scholars (Butler, 2016, 2020; Mackenzie et al., 2014). However, and despite their similarities, vulnerability is not the same as fragility. Vulnerability refers to the immanent, and therefore always open, possibility of being damaged. Fragility, on the other hand, refers to a specific type of damage, that causes something to break. In other words, while vulnerability speaks of the possibility of something being damaged, fragility places us at that very moment when something damaged breaks and ceases to exist.

Vulnerability and fragility therefore refer us to two different thresholds. While vulnerability places us at the threshold of damage, at that moment when the radical exposure of something to another capable of hurting or injuring it is revealed, fragility refers us to the very idea of an end, to that threshold at which something ceases to be. The difference between these two thresholds explains why thinking from vulnerability and fragility are exercises that, while complementary, open up different questions. Vulnerability thinking opens up the question of the kind of responsibilities, obligations, and practices towards that

which can be harmed, or has been harmed, but still persists. This explains why much of the thinking around vulnerability tends to have a preventive, prophylactic, or restitutive character, mainly focused on frameworks and practices that can protect or mitigate the possibility and effects of harm (think, for example, on how debates around 'vulnerable populations' tend to be framed in terms of preventive, protective, and assistencialist policies, or how notions like conservation, mitigation, and adaptation dominate the discussion on 'vulnerable ecosystems'). Thinking from fragility poses a different set of notions, as it places us in front of the end of things and bodies, forcing us to assume, and think from, their loss, and to ask ourselves what kind of horizons and possibilities arise from it.

The previous lines offer insights into why fragility has remained unthought in modern thought. Few concepts are as anathema to modern thought as that of fragility. It could be argued that fragility is an almost unthinkable figure for modern thought. This is partly because, as Achille Mbembe (2019, p. 64) reminds us, modern thought has been marked by its failure to properly think of its own finitude. The overarching narrative of modernity is nothing but the tale of a progressive triumph over fragility. Not surprisingly, one of the prevailing narratives in the social sciences, from Comte to Latour, has been the one that differentiates and hierarchizes societies based on their capacity to design systems that allow us to overcome, or at least domesticate, fragility. While the voices, lyrics, and arrangements may vary, the melody and chorus of these narratives lead us to the same story: that which tells us about the transition from pre-modern/cold societies, in which fragility appears as a tragedy due to their limited ability to confront their environment, to modern/hot societies that, thanks to their techno-scientific advances, have successfully designed systems and infrastructures capable of taming fragility, allowing them to attain a certain degree of what Anthony Giddens (1991) called in the nineties 'ontological security'.

It is understandable why, from a modern perspective, fragility is seen not as a figure from which to think or imagine, but rather as a figure to be overcome. However, this does not mean that fragility has been completely disregarded. What distinguishes modern discourses is a peculiar type of analytical sleight of hand that has allowed fragility to be assimilated into these discourses without the need to be thought about, let alone confronted. The clearest and most extreme example is the solutionist techno-utopian discourses, where fragility is framed as a design problem to be solved and, more importantly, as a solvable problem. Similar to classical epics, or contemporary Hollywood plots, these discourses do not require one to pause and think, let alone anguish over, the fragilities revealed by climate change, since the hero—a role often occupied in late capitalism by some variant of the visionary entrepreneur—will come to solve them in the last moment thanks to the inventiveness of his scientific and technical designs, thus saving

the planet and mankind. Within this mythopoetic context, fragility is seen as a temporary problem, as it is merely a matter of time until human inventiveness can design the appropriate socio-technical solution.

Another example illustrating how a thought of fragility has been cloaked can be found in the different vocabularies of 'risk', 'resilience', and 'sustainability' that have emerged in recent decades in diverse fields, such as sociology, economics, environmentalism, architecture, design, or development. In contrast to the mythological structure of solutionist discourses, in these frameworks fragility does not appear as something defeatable or solvable, but as something assimilable and, to some extent, controllable thanks to the design of socio-technical systems that will allow us to transform fragility from an inescapable tragedy into a measurable, calculable, and, therefore, governable 'risk'.

These—and other—analytical sleights of hand have allowed the faux integration of fragility into contemporary discourses and practices, without disrupting the overarching secular narrative of growth, and, much less, confronting the idea of its potential end. There is no need to confront that end because the inexhaustible creativity of human inventiveness will make it possible to design technologies and infrastructures that will either overcome fragility, or reduce it to something controllable.

Unfortunately, we are already in a world where fragility refuses to be diluted in bland techno-utopian fantasies, or domesticated by comforting imaginaries about resilience and sustainability. This is because, as Michel Serres (1995, p. 16) reminds us, we now find ourselves in a world where fragility has shifted sides. This is a world where the infrastructures and technologies that a few generations ago seemed to justify a sense of 'ontological security' are now revealed to be powerless to contain the excess of an implacable planet capable of undoing the economic, social, and urban models that organize our lives; or where despite our celebrated scientific and technological power we can still witness how a virus can claim millions of lives in just a couple of years.

We have to confront a world that surpasses, by orders of magnitude, our capacity to contend with its transformations. There is no human design capable of stopping the devastating consequences of polar ice melting and the resulting global sea-level rise, or ocean acidification, or the deadly heatwaves and floods that now threaten us with death and destruction every year, to name just a few examples. If something has become clear, it is that the grand modern narrative that envisioned the dawning of a new era in which progress would result in a gradual—but unstoppable—subordination of Nature to human designs, was nothing more than a midsummer night's dream. Now, waking up from this modern dream, we find ourselves, once again, in front of an excessive world, a world where fragility does not appear as something that can be eliminated or even tamed, but

as the inescapable and insurmountable condition of living in this planet. We are now in a world where fragility is no longer a problem to be solved, but a reality we have to confront and coexist with.

Here, I would like to raise the possibility that we do not need to confront fragility as a problem; rather, I would like to argue that this confrontation can be an opportunity to elaborate new ethical and political vocabularies. In this text, I would like to claim the need to think *from* fragility as an opportunity to rectify the arrogant refusal to confront limits that has characterized much of modern thought. Thinking *from* fragility not only compels us to face these limits and learn to think from them, but it also compels us to confront the precariousness of the worlds we inhabit and account for the social, economic, and ecological costs of maintaining them. However, my primary interest here is not to explore fragility as a negative figure from which to criticize or create counter-narratives to modern thought. Instead, I would like to explore fragility as a generative space from where to think about alternatives. As I will argue in the following pages, thinking *from* fragility offers us an invitation to think about and from limits, as well as an opportunity to think about what lies beyond them. In other words, it is simultaneously an invitation to think about what is lost when something falls apart, as an opportunity to think from what remains in that collapse, and to reclaim that space as one from where to imagine what kinds of ethics, policies, and practices can be built beyond collapse.

But, how do we think *from* fragility? What does fragility help us to see? What kinds of questions does it allow us to ask? Why are these questions important? What kinds of politics and ethics can emerge from fragility? And perhaps, most importantly, what do we mean exactly by 'fragility'?

WHAT IS FRAGILITY?

If we adhere to the basic definition given by the *Diccionario de la lengua española* (Real Academia Española & Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española, n.d.), 'fragile' is defined according to the following three meanings:

1. adj. Brittle, and easy to break into pieces.
2. adj. Weak, susceptible to deterioration with ease. (...)
3. adj. Said of a person: Of little physical or moral strength.

Within this definition, we can identify two assumptions that underpin the common sense around the notion of fragility. The first assumption is that, when we speak of fragility, we are referring to a property of things and bodies. And more specifically, that we are talking about one of those 'primary properties' that philosophers talk about, which are those properties understood as inherent qualities of things, since they are independent of any external observer. According to this definition, whether something is fragile or not depends on its

internal composition. Fragility, defined in this way, is something that belongs to ontology, to the very being of things. Consequently, it is something fixed and given in advance within the nature of things, much like having a specific material density or molecular composition.

The second assumption underlying this definition is the description of fragility in negative terms. Fragility is conceived as something that subtracts and diminishes; as a defect, a lack, or an insufficiency. The fragile is that which lacks sufficient solidity, strength, durability, or autonomy. According to this definition, fragility is seen as a state of deficiency and, therefore, as a condition to be avoided or, if that is not possible, repaired, overcome, or, at the very least, mitigated. It is thus not surprising that this understanding of fragility has been often instrumentalized by different moral and political discourses to explain, legitimize, and establish a position of superiority over those perceived as inherently more fragile and thus weaker and inferior: those who, coincidentally, tend to occupy subaltern positions, such as women, the elderly, children, individuals with disabilities, racialized minorities, impoverished populations, refugees, immigrants, indigenous peoples, etc. (see, for example, Quijano, 1999; Wynter, 1994). It is also not surprising how this classic notion of fragility has been used by these same moral and political discourses as an alibi to justify interventions upon these marginalized groups. We do not need look far to see examples of how the notion of 'fragile states' has been mobilized to justify unjustifiable wars, or how the idea of 'fragile economies' is routinely used by organizations such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund to legitimize the imposition of their economic and social models.

This conventional definition of fragility describes a world where identities and positions are predetermined. A world in which there are, on one side, those things and bodies whose properties render them fragile, and whose precarious existences make them perpetually dependent and in need of help and attention. And, on the other side, those bodies and things whose properties make them solid, robust, and, thus autonomous.

What this definition of fragility overlooks is that sometimes the most solid rocks can break as easily as a soap bubble, just as a humble sheet of paper can become more durable than the sturdiest of rocks. In other words, what this definition forgets is that fragility is not a property inscribed in things and bodies, but rather a condition that emerges from their relationships. Or to put it in another way, what this definition forgets is that when we talk about fragility, we are not discussing an ontological property, but an *ecological form*.

To illustrate what I mean, let us consider what appears to be a fragile object. For example, the humble sheet of paper we just mentioned. If we were to leave it outdoors, it would degrade in a matter of days, thus confirming

that it is an inherently fragile object. Yet, if we decide to store this same sheet in a controlled environment, let us say at 35 °C and 80 percent relative humidity, its useful life would extend from a couple of days to approximately three years. At this point, one might begin to question whether 'fragile' is the best way to define it. If we lower the temperature a bit further, say to 20 °C, our sheet of paper would become a remarkably solid object, capable of lasting for about a century. And if we were to place it in an environment at 10 °C and 40 percent relative humidity, its lifespan would stretch up to 1,200 years, making our once-fragile sheet of paper as solid and enduring, if not more so, than iron or stone. This shift from fragility to solidity cannot be solely explained by reference to the properties of the paper itself, since nothing about it has changed. It has not undergone any alchemical transfiguration resulting in new properties. The only intervening factor is the change in the environmental conditions where our sheet of paper is placed.

The example of the humble sheet of paper reveals a fact as simple as it is easily overlooked. Namely: *nothing is fragile by itself*. And it is not, because nothing is by itself. Fragility is not a pre-given property in the nature of things, but a condition that is rendered. There are no fragile things, but things that *are made* fragile. This idea has four important corollaries:

The first is that fragility is a relational and deictic concept and, therefore, empty. Much like concepts such as 'near' or 'high', fragility only acquires its meaning through the relationships in which an object or body is inserted. This is precisely what our sheet of paper illustrates. Paper is neither fragile nor solid in itself. It becomes one or the other depending on the relationships where it is placed, or the specific purposes for which we intend to use it. Something can be fragile under certain conditions, or for a specific purpose, while being extremely solid under others. Furthermore, something can be fragile and solid simultaneously. For instance, a spider's web may seem fragile to us, but it is perfectly solid for a fly.

The second corollary, which follows from the previous point, is that there is no such thing as a single fragility given in the nature of things; instead, we have different types of rendered fragilities produced (and reproduced) by different configurations. This is easily verifiable with a simple look around us. We live immersed in a capitalist system structured around the systematic production of fragility, a system that relies on things breaking down to fuel the infernal cycle of production, consumption, and waste, around which contemporary profit extraction is organized. This explains, for instance, why the majority of our computers and electronic devices break after only a couple of years, if not months, of operation. These are not fragilities that can be explained simply by the natural propensity of things to break; rather, they result from meticulous design strategies aimed at artificially increasing their fragility, something that is achieved by either sealing these objects both physically and legally to prevent their repair, or by subjecting

them to incessant updates that render them obsolete and dysfunctional within just a few cycles (Jackson & Kang, 2014).

The third corollary is that fragility is not a quality ascribed to a particular category of things. Everything, ranging from a sheet of paper to a star, can be made fragile depending on the relationships in which it is embedded. Thus, when we describe something as fragile, we are not describing an inherent 'attribute' of that thing, but rather the *position* that thing occupies in a certain correlation of forces at a given time. This is precisely one of the fundamental teachings of critical disability studies when they remind us that what makes disabled bodies fragile and dependent is not a quality or deficiency inscribed in them, but the position they occupy in certain socio-material arrangements that subtract, inhibit, or impede the realization of their capacities (McRuer, 2006).

The fourth corollary is that describing something as fragile is not a neutral and innocent operation. It cannot be because, just as we cannot describe something as 'distant' without adopting a particular point of reference, it is not possible to describe something as 'fragile' without simultaneously inscribing it in a concrete framework of relationships and establishing our own position within it. Thus, when we describe something as fragile, we are inevitably choosing to position it within a particular frame of reference rather than another. For instance, when we describe a spider's web as fragile, we are opting to situate it within a human frame of reference, rather than, say, an insect's frame, where it might never be described as such. Similarly, when we describe a body with a disability as fragile, we do so by adopting an ableist framework of relationships that assumes a particular definition of what a body is (or should be) as its reference point.

If we take this ecological definition of fragility as a starting point, we find ourselves in a very different world. A world where fragility is not a natural and fixed category, but a relational and contingent condition. A world where things are not fragile, but in which things are rendered fragile. A world in which the question of fragility no longer refers us to the interior of things, but to the relationships in which they are embedded. In short, a world in which the question of fragility always, and necessarily, refers us to an Other: Fragile compared to what? Fragile for whom? Fragile for what? What or who keeps it fragile? Why and for what does it keep it that way?

These questions open up a very different distinct endeavor. Understanding fragility is no longer a matter of identifying what properties make a particular thing or body fragile. Instead, it involves understanding the ethical and political frameworks that allow certain things, and *not others*, to be described as fragile. However, to investigate these frameworks it is not enough to simply pay attention to the relationships in which something is inscribed; it is necessary to study what kind of practices render certain things, and *not others*, fragile, and what conse-

quences such operation entails. And this is something that requires us to shift our attention to practices that have traditionally been left out of our narratives, such as those of care, maintenance, and repair.

MIMEOGRAPHIC LABOR

Care, maintenance, and repair works are part of what I have previously referred to as 'mimeographic labor', which we can define, broadly speaking, as those practices that prevent the fragile worlds we inhabit from falling apart (Domínguez Rubio, 2020). Examples of this mimeographic labor include the maintenance work that supports different techno-scientific infrastructures and systems (Callén & Criado, 2016; Jackson, 2014); the care work that maintains the relationships, bodies, and affections that weave our lives (Murphy, 2015; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017); or those works that maintain the symbolic orders that give meaning to our lives (Domínguez Rubio, 2016).

Despite their ubiquity, these mimeographic labors have tended to be outside the focus of social thought. In part because these labors have been regarded as purely mechanical tasks devoid of real political, aesthetic, or historical value, since their role has been understood as purely reproductive or palliative, intended to simply 'keep things as they are'. This explains, for example, why the different agents engaged in these mimeographic practices, such as housewives, artisans, cleaners, nurses, technicians, mechanics, caregivers, etc., have been almost completely absent in social science narratives. These narratives have preferred to focus on those responsible for producing 'the new', such as politicians, philosophers, artists, scientists, architects, or designers, which have been often seen as the only ones capable of producing real political, economic, or historical change.

Over the last decade, a growing number of authors have been questioning this description of mimeographic work (for an overview, see, for example, Denis & Pontille, 2022; Strebel et al., 2019). Building on feminist critiques that exposed the oversight of domestic labor in the critical thought of the seventies, these authors have advocated a change in the script, regarding the importance and position occupied by mimeographic works in our narratives. They have done so with two different arguments.

The first has been to point out that, contrary to how they have often been described, these labors of care, maintenance, and repair are not merely complementary or secondary; rather, they constitute an essential part of the practices that define the possibility of the fragile worlds we inhabit. This is because, among other things, it is through these mimeographic practices that it is possible to maintain, *or change*, the bonds that sustain and shape the social, political, aesthetic, and ethical orders in which we live. To illustrate this point, we only need to imagine what the world around us would be like in the absence of these mimeographic

practices of care, maintenance, and repair. Consider, for instance, what would happen to your home without the daily effort of domestic work needed to be done, day after day, to keep it habitable. Or think about what would happen to the streets, buildings, and parks of your city without the routine work of maintenance workers, gardeners, garbage collectors, and others. Or imagine what would happen to your computer, car, or any of your appliances, without the continuous work of care, repair, and update they require. What would happen is that, *pace* Marx, everything that seemed solid would melt into the air.

The second argument has focused on breaking the fallacious equation that reduces mimeographic labor with reproduction (Denis & Pontille, 2023; Dominguez Rubio, 2020; Jackson & Houston, 2021). This equation has been used to describe these works as purely reactive and inherently conservative, and to accuse them of constraining our ethical and political horizons within purely palliative and restorative frameworks. However, mimeographic labor never implies a return to the same, *even when it intends to do so*. Because, contrary to common assumptions, mimeographic maintenance and repair work never 'returns', 'restores', 'recovers', or 'reproduces' a lost identity. This work cannot return that lost identity because, as Deleuze (1995) reminded us, there is no possibility of repetition without difference, in the same way there is no reproduction without production. Mimeographic work is no exception to this, since it is a work that *always* operates through substitutions, additions, subtractions, and adjustments that leave scars, losses, and changes in its wake. That is why, when we look around us, we do not encounter a world of pristine and undisturbed identities, but a world of modified and mended identities, continuously made and re-made through patches, touch-ups, and changes. This is why the work of care, repair, and maintenance is never a purely mechanical exercise to preserve the same, but a work where the boundary between continuity and change, past and future, identity and difference, remembering and forgetting, presence and absence, is constantly generated and negotiated.

The mimeographic labors of care, maintenance, and repair remind us that the orders we inhabit are never given in advance, but have to be produced and sustained day by day, and for that very reason, they are continuously reinvented, reconfigured, and reassembled. Like Sisyphus, we are condemned to be incessantly engaged in this mimeographic labor of maintenance and repair. Mimeographic labor is, by definition, always unfinished and endless. And it is so because, even though we invest all mimeographic labor to maintain our orders, bodies, and objects, they never cease to be fragile. However, although it seems paradoxical, this does not mean that they are less solid. Rather, it means that fragility and robustness are not mutually exclusive states, but two sides of the same coin. That is, everything is always simultaneously fragile and solid.

If we see fragility from the perspective of these mimeographic practices, it no longer appears as a deficiency that can be fixed, eliminated, or overcome, but as an ineliminable *excess* to be confronted. This excessive and ineliminable condition of fragility confronts us with a series of ethical and political dilemmas. Because, while the need to attend to the fragile is always infinite, our capacity to attend to it is vainly finite. Attending to one fragility implies choosing to neglect another, just as deciding to take care for something necessarily implies choosing to neglect something else. What this means is that, contrary to what is often assumed, mimeographic practices are not the 'other' of oblivion or abandonment, but are, themselves, ways of producing oblivion and abandonment.

We must also remember that not everyone possesses the same capability to establish what is fragile and what needs these mimeographic labors. There are those who have the power to describe something as fragile according to their criteria and interests, and there are those for whom fragility is an imposed condition, despite their criteria and interests. We must also remember that each mimeographic intervention involves a value judgment about what deserves or needs to be cared for, repaired, and maintained, and what does not. That is why the work of care, repair, and maintenance can never be innocent, and why we should avoid romanticizing it. This confronts us with the following questions: How do we respond to the demand for care of the fragile? What or who deserves to be described as fragile? What or who has the capability to establish such a description? Which fragilities need to be attended to and which can be forgotten, abandoned? What are we willing to preserve, and what are we willing to throw away, in attending these fragilities, and at what cost?

TOWARDS FRAGILE ETHICS AND POLITICS

These are challenging questions. Questions whose answers trap us in ethical dead ends. Because each answer implies prioritizing one fragility over another, resolving one conflict to create another, gaining something at the expense of losing something else. But this is precisely what makes it important to insist on these questions, to sit down with them and think from them, and to do so without the temptation of solving them. Because it is as necessary to resist pessimism and defeatism as it is to abandon those narratives that lull us with the promise of solving these dilemmas and conflicts by appealing to a common fragility, or those fables of cohabitation that imagine the possibility of pacifying these fragilities by accommodating them in edulcorated pluriverses where these conflicts and dilemmas will be solved. What these discourses ignore is that we do not inhabit a world of common fragilities, but a world of divergent and uncommon fragilities that compel us to face these dilemmas without the wild card of an answer that can solve them.

However, confronting these divergent and uncommon fragilities does not need to be paralyzing. Rather, what is necessary is to cultivate a different relationship with fragility. To move from a thought *against* fragility—that is, a thought that only relates to it as something to overcome—to cultivating forms of thinking from fragility, that is, to a thought that invites us to engage with it without the desire to conquer, appropriate, or overcome it. This shift does not entail, by any means, that we should accept, celebrate, or embrace fragility. Rather, it is an attempt to cultivate a type of thought that has the courage not to shun or disavow fragility, a thought that confronts the fact that we live in a world of precarious, divergent, and antagonistic identities and forms. A thought that, as Haraway (2016) would say, dares to be stuck in the trouble that fragility presents us. And, perhaps more importantly, a thought that does not see fragility solely as a negative figure to think about limits, endings, and impossibilities. A thought capable of facing the limits, divergences, scars, and losses of this world, not simply as tragedy, or something to remedy, but as an opportunity to cultivate forms of responsibility and obligation towards that which falls apart.

A thought that reminds us, as Hartman (2019) does, that it is possible to affirm and generate life even from the cruelest imposition of fragility. That sees fragility as an opportunity to emancipate ourselves from that nostalgic yearning to recover or restore lost identities, and is able to open a political and ethical vocabulary that confronts loss, divergence, and alterity, without the desire to conquer them or appropriate them (de la Cadena, 2015). A thought that does not see those mimeographic works of care, repair, and maintenance simply as a promise to recover or return what is lost, but as an opportunity to reclaim those fragments that remain as starting points from which to build other ways of thinking, doing, and relating (Rafanell i Orra, 2015). A thought, therefore, that sees fragility as a generative space from which to open up the space to think, design, and experience a world to yet come. But capable of assuming that any such world will always be a fragile creation traversed, as Pignarre and Stengers (2021, p. 66) remind us, by divergent and antagonistic causes that no appeal to a "common" fragility can ever unite or resolve, and much less pacify.

What is needed, therefore, is to advocate for a thought that does not disavow or defer frictions, divergences, and conflicts, but compels us to give an account of them, that challenges us to confront them. But, and this is perhaps the most important aspect, that it does so while embracing and taking responsibility for its own fragility. Because the point is not simply to claim the need for a thought that thinks from fragility, but one that thinks *with* fragility. A thought that dares to be fragile. That rebels against the temptation of having the last word, that dares to confront the discomfort of not having definitive answers, that is able to accept the fact that any relationship we build, any interpretation we venture,

will always be fragile, partial, incomplete, tentative. A thought that, as Glissant (2020, p. 88) would say, is committed to remaining always open, fragile, rejecting any impulse to declare, decide, or fix itself in a definite way. A thought that invites us to confront the discomfort of living in a world of diverse and uncommon fragilities, a world where being together does not imply identity, where divergence and conflict are simultaneously tragedy and possibility. A thought that claims fragility as a propositional space for the ephemeral, the precarious, and the contradictory to emerge and challenge us. A thought, in short, that confronts fragility as an open invitation to live in a world that is not composed of settled objects and identities, but of forever unsettled, and unsettling, fragile identities, always in the process of being made and unmade. ◘

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