

Against Gender, Against Society

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xclusion is not remedied by inclusion but by attacking those forces that exclude, which are numerous and are rarely entirely within our control.¹

Gender is a tool of war. There is a war waged against our bodies, our minds, and the potential of our relationships: the social war. What is gender and what is it to be gendered? Genders are socially constructed categories that correspond to nebulous parameters surrounding behaviors, sexualities, aesthetics, socio-cultural roles, bodies, et cetera. Genders concretize differently in different places, times, and individuals; some will experience gender as very constricting, while others will never hit the boundaries their genders impose on them. Gender is inextricably connected to sexuality, and both perpetually shape and define each other. The two most commonly imposed genders are man/male and woman/female, and to stray away from them, move amongst them or act against them summons the enforcement agents of society. Gender benefits those who want to control, socialize, and manage us and offers us nothing in return. Every time a person is scrutinized and gendered, society has attacked them, confined them, waged war on them.

Social war is the conflict that spans all society. Social war is the struggle against society—that is to say, against all existing social relations. The self-destructive tendency within society, so-called “anti-social behavior,” the desire to command and to obey, acts of rebellion and acts of reinforcement, the riot and the return to work: these are the attacks and counter-attacks in this war. Social war is the battles between those who wish to destroy society and those maintaining it. Chaos against control. Nothingness and potential, against everything and the existent. Everything that holds society together insulates us from each other; each blow to domination and control is a step closer to each other, a step away from our imposed identities, our alienation, and toward infinite possibility. Because society is everywhere, the only way to escape is to win the social war: to destroy society. Gender is one of the fronts on which the social war is fought.

Gender itself is used as a tool for centralizing and colonizing. As Europeans moved outside of Europe to further colonial projects, they brought their ideas and conceptions of gender. The nuclear family and the specific genders and sexualities that it requires were foreign to many non-western cultures that form families in any number of other ways. The nuclear family is a unit

¹ Ignorant Research Institute. “How to Destroy the World.” 2012. <http://anarchalibrary.blogspot.com/2012/06/how-to-destroy-world-2012.html>.

that fits most easily in the social narrative of dominant western cultures; it plays easily into patriarchal power dynamics. Within the nuclear family, the patriarch does the work of the colonizer: socialization, policing behaviors and roles, and of course the enforcement and reproduction of genders capable of existing more peacefully within western hierarchies. The expansion of the church and the spread of Christianity played a large part in the spread of the nuclear family and western conceptions of gender and sexuality. Some populations accepted Christianity, integrating it into their cultures to varying degrees, while others were violently forced to “accept” it. This isn’t to say that gender didn’t exist in some form outside of colonialism and western cultures. Other forces are surely at play in defining and limiting what gender is, but what is certain is that the current “universal” and “natural” ideas of gender now stem in part from colonialism and a need to centralize and control non-western forms of life.

The cis/trans binary also furthers centralization and colonialism, assimilating and categorizing all identities outside of itself. Like all forms of representation, the cis/trans binary as an all-encompassing set of categories is both flattening and inadequate. There are genders that are not cis but do not place themselves under the trans umbrella. Despite this, anyone who isn’t cis is assumed to be trans, and vice versa. An LGBTQ avant garde moves to assimilate all “unusual” genders, and even the lack of gender, into trans-ness. This leaves no room for anyone to fall outside of these categories. This often plays out in a colonial manner, rendering non-western genders legible to and manageable by western LGBTQ narratives of gender and sexuality.

None of us belong to any gender outside the context of social war. That is to say, gender is a social imposition upon us, a means of keeping us under control (by limiting what is acceptable for anyone gendered in any way). The very existence of trans people of all stripes (especially non-binary people), and of intersex bodies which frustrate efforts to attribute gender to certain anatomical characteristics, calls into question the narrative that gender comprises two stable biological categories that follow from specifically sexed bodies. These realities push us to acknowledge that gender is something that happens to us and not something that we are inherently or “naturally.”

Each of us is a vast and unquantifiable nothing, an infinitely potent singularity. Imposing a gender on us, an identity even, can only stifle us at best and destroy us at worst. Attempting to define us will always fail. No category can fully contain us; any identity will necessarily restrain, and so we must oppose identity. However, we’d be foolish to deny the material consequences of the myths of identity—these myths are, after all, amongst the foundations of oppression. Anyone who is told they are a woman will be treated “like a woman,” despite the fact that women share nothing other than the myth of womanhood and the societal violence that accompanies this myth. Each time we are gendered, society is attempting to limit us: to certain behaviors and roles, to certain actions and aesthetics. Women are caring and weak; men are insensitive and strong. Gender robs us of our potential to do and be whatever, and then offers us a limited range of roles, actions, aesthetics and behaviors packaged as a specific social category. We have the potential to be anything, but gender is the myth that tells us we are specifically something and only that something. All the traits various genders “offer” are traits we can embody on our own, without the imposition of gender.

Behaving in ways that are seen as outside the domain of our imposed genders will inevitably bring down repression. Whether that repression manifests as an awkward laugh from a sibling or as a severe beating and prison sentence will depend on the context; either way, as long as gender remains intact, we will be limited to the lists of actions that are acceptable to the gen-

der we're perceived to be, lest we face corrective violence. We have nothing to gain from being gendered that doesn't come from either conforming to our own genders or as a benefit of policing or enforcing the genders of others. This is to say, we gain nothing from gender that isn't based on controlling others or limiting ourselves. Additionally, all gendering perpetuates and reinforces hierarchy. In terms of hierarchy, cis-ness and maleness are centered, prioritized, empowered. Gendering places people closer or further from the center, above and below others as a consequence. Because of the way genders are defined in society, different genders are valued more or less. This, combined with the fact that none of us can escape our socialization, leads to the constant perpetuation of the gender hierarchy by everyone. Every gender exists at an intersection of subjugated and subjugator. Combinations of gender, race, trans-ness/cis-ness, and a myriad of other factors create subject-positions within which it is possible to both oppress and be oppressed. Hierarchy has always gone hand-in-hand with control and domination. Gender is simply another facet of hierarchical control, of social war.

While some make demands of society to accommodate, respect or even equalize genders, we must look beyond gender equality and gender inclusion and destroy everything that perpetuates or imposes gender. We must turn against society itself. Gender is a war against all of us, and for those who desire freedom, nothing short of the total eradication of gender will suffice. To those of us who wish to remove all the walls between each other instead of being alienated from each other (and ourselves) because of groupings we never chose, to those of us that wish to access all our potential doings, our potential to become anything instead of pacing within the limits of genders we know to be inadequate, we say: let's destroy society, let's destroy gender.

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