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The Right to Difference: Identity and Self-Expression in Contemporary Citizenship

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Abstract- This paper examines how contemporary citizenship is increasingly shaped by diverse personal identities and their public expression. Assuming that contemporary innovations (LGBTQIAPN+ aggregations, the expansion of abortion for women and assistance for consensual individual deaths, studies into differentiated human conditions – objective and subjective – ethnic-racial emergencies – traditional or not – and care for specific corporealities) have unprecedentedly taken on human differences as citizenship rights, the author defends the thesis that the emerging network society stems from a contemporary tendency towards generalized competition for intimate self-exposure. By applying the concept of Agonistic Gift (Marcel Mauss), which referred to competitions between donors of works or activities, it is arguable that contemporaneity is a diversifying sociability because intimacy has become the object of competitive generosity. In order to explore this point, the author inductively selected and analyzed an interview with digital influencer Giovanna Titanero, who was selected because her followers adopt several different or even opposing lifestyles, to discuss the exponential contemporary social plurality and, by recovering the notion of community diversity (Ludwig Feuerbach), concludes that parliamentary self-reforms can make democracies representative of emerging human and cultural diversity.

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The Right to Difference: Identity and Self-Expression in Contemporary Citizenship

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> I'm here, you're there; we're external to each other; that's why we can be two without harming each other; there's enough room.
>
> *Ludwig Feuerbach (1843)* [1]

I. Introduction: Human Diversity in Contemporary Times

Human diversity is an issue that permeates the entire spatial and temporal trajectory of humanity. Human differences are commonly recognized from any experience of humanity in general. Since the African genesis of our species (self-titled Homo Sapiens), our specific evolution has been characterized by the profusion of genetic subdivisions in populations whose genomic distinction, although on the same continent and therefore hundreds of thousands of years before migrating out of Africa, already assumed intrinsic differentiations. To such an extent that our primordial African genetic diversity contained even greater genomic distances than those we would come to see between populations that remained and those that left the African continent. The genetic diversification among African Homo Sapiens also corresponded to exponential ethnic multiplication, as the first human languages – some of which are still African dialects today – took shape through these African population subdivisions (Scerri *et al*., 2018).

Long before it was adopted as the scientific basis of Anthropology as a methodological discipline, where cultural relativity was no longer recognized through ethnocentric prejudices between human groups (Boas, 1940), ethnocentrism was a historical-cultural constant as much Eastern as Western, i.e. a tendency to prejudge the supremacy of their own group and the corresponding reduction or even denial of humanity to other groups. It's worth noting that both the ancient Greeks and the ancient Chinese called the different groups they encountered "barbarians" (Pagden, 2009, p. 62-68; Granet, 1979).

However, in contemporary times or even today, human diversity is becoming an increasingly ostentatious population parameter at least since the middle of the 20th century, which significantly advanced during its end and became especially widespread in the 21st century. In fact, differences are highlighted as human characteristics whose bearers have been included in citizenship.

Among other indications, this is what we can perceive in addition to feminist pioneering, throughout the aggregation of the acronym LGBTQIAPN+, between old and recent ethno-racial configurations, along with the latest projections of human bodily diversity, legalizations for medically assisted deaths and the international proclamation of cultural diversity by UNESCO in 2005.

For more than two centuries, women's long struggle for the recognition of the human "other half" on equal terms with men has continued to be a theme of the early feminist movement, despite the successes of the suffragettes for women's right to vote, whose political achievements in today's democracies and during the 20th century can be traced back to the protests for women's suffrage at the end of the 19th century. New demands for parity with men are growing,

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[1] Excerpt from the work: *Gründsatze der Philosophie der Zukunft* (Founding principles of the philosophy of the future) (Feuerbach, 1843).

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even in the field of women's political representation and even where women exercise electoral citizenship (UK Parliament, 2009). It remains a challenge to recognize femininity in its quests, even scientifically, as observed in methodological controversies about women as a specific human condition and in fundamental topics that permeate various sciences, such as Medicine (Merone *et al*., 2022).

Evolving from the first Gay Pride Parades (militant marches) in the USA and during the 1960s, mobilizations for the visibility and social acceptance of other non-heterosexual sexual orientations, unusual sexual characteristics and even genders other than the traditionally recognized males and females have emerged profusely in various parts of the world since the beginning of the 21st century (BBC, 2022).

Lesbians (women who are sexually oriented towards other women), gays (male homosexuals who founded the initial movement), bisexuals (people who are sexually oriented towards men and women), transgenders (people who are subjectively male with female anatomy or subjectively female with male anatomy), queers (people subjectively without any gender or sexual orientation framework), intersexuals (people with objectively male and female sexual characteristics), asexuals (people with no sexual orientation towards any other), pansexuals (people with a diffuse sexual orientation towards any attractive objects), non-binary people (people who are not subjectively male or female) and other human beings outside the social majority identities (such as transvestites or men who prefer to wear traditionally feminine clothing and women who prefer to wear traditionally masculine clothing) are mobilizing for their inclusion as citizens. This is why they denounce harmful discrimination, many of which is physically violent (Naciones Unidas, 2012).

The movement has expanded its plurality as much as possible since it included the human conditions of non-male or non-female genders, as its scientific findings have also evolved *pari passu* (Ricklefs *et al*., 2018). In addition to other conditions not based on strict cisgender heteromasculinity, they condensed differentiated identity claims (Butler, 1993), together with women and homosexual orientations in everyday life (Silva *et al*., 2024) and, after controversies over the autonomy of the movements, they are being pushed forward on emerging political fronts for electoral representation, including in nations of the global South, where they have already acquired a magnitude equivalent to the pioneers of the global North (Szwako, 2017).

Ethnic-racial diversity, in both aspects, is always adduced in the teeth of European whiteness made hegemonic by colonialism, which has achieved greater visibility through social movements to rescue the origins and ethnicities corresponding to blackness and extinct or remaining indigenous populations. Thus, the significant active African-American presence in the US is due to the recent expansion of genetically rescued African ancestries (Tishkoff *et al*., 2009), but now in the midst of an exponential population differentiation due to migrations to the US from the Latin American and Asian continents, making traditional American whiteness a minority (Morris & Treitler, 2019).

As much as American blackness (although decades later), Brazilian blackness also began to assume identity mobilizations – including the category of the brown population, along with the black population – in greater social magnitude, sometimes noting genetic specificities as relevant as they are for the remaining Indigenous population (Benes *et al.,* 2024), sometimes through the reorganization of Quilombos, as territorial refuges formed by enslaved people who scaped from colonial slavery, through their current *Quilombola* descendants (CONAQ, 2021). In the Chamber of Deputies, a black caucus has, more recently than ever, been given an unique position to discuss and propose legislative issues pertinent to brown and black Brazilians (Alves & Azevedo, 2023).

In the same unprecedented and recent sense, a growing indigenous reorganization – also not restricted to the Brazilian territory – has acquired visibility to the point of its own ethnic-racial agendas, which have an impact on global discussions on forest genetic heritage and other planetary biodiversity issues (Pinto, 2018; WIPO, 2024).

Individual human diversity is still assumed by permissive legislation on consensual death and physical approaches to specific corporealities:

- Breaking with religious traditions, which forbid the disposal of one's own life, individual death has become the object of unusual medical care to dignify the dying of people with individually intolerable suffering. Beginning with Switzerland's pioneering approach, which allowed for a mere suicide decision regardless of motivation, the dignification of dying without pain has been extended into national laws, the majority of which opt for compassionate death assistance, in other words, consensual euthanasia in the context of individual disabilities that arise during life (Boffey, 2023). Both modalities of assisted death presuppose different individual connotations for life and the unquestionability of others.
- Breaking with uniform gymnastic and aesthetic standards of body self-care, the option for individualized gymnastics guidance (personal trainer) continues to spread as a modality of guided physical exercise, as well as overcoming the efficiency of the results provided by other modalities, especially collective ones (Yunhang *et al*., 2024) and the widespread questioning of self-

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images that are standardized or even retouched in favour of certain ideals of beauty, has given rise to critical mobilizations in defence of aesthetic parity among women in a body positive movement that has already spread to some nations in the global North (Cwynar-Horta, 2016). Both types of body approach have individual body differentiation, including their specific availability, as an unquestionable factor for anyone else.

The same proclamation of cultural diversity – although at the broadest collective or global level today – whether among symbolic values or lifestyles, came in 2005 through the International Convention (for the Protection and Promotion of Diverse Cultural Expressions on the Protection of Diverse Cultural Expressions[2]) and whose content provides for it both between and even within companies (UNESCO, 2005).

Therefore, unlike the sexist abortion ban and colonialist[3] or Nazi[4] Racism, the above differences list citizenship rights because they are formulated as identity options corresponding to socially recognized individual faculties.

The possibility of women having abortions (Fetterolf & Clancy, 2024), to vote or expose their bodies as they are: of social self-identification by lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender people, queers, inter-sexuals, asexuals, pansexuals and non-binary people; of blackness rescuing and Indigenous people updating their ancestry, respectively genetic and ethnic; of individually specified physical exercise; of dying for medical assistance or of their own symbolic exteriorization are autonomous expressions of gender, stylistic, genetic, ethnic, gymnastic, creative or suffering differences in the range of human diversity. This contemporary re-signification of human differences is the premise of this article.

This assumption corresponds to the following hypothesis to be investigated: that contemporaneity, as simultaneity between past and present temporalities (through unlimited digitalization) and immediate articulation between all geographical spaces (through communicational or commercial globalization), intensifies human proximity in general and, consequently, between their different individual conditions. In other words, to be contemporary is not to become even more diverse than you already are or even have always been like any human being, but to be closer to those who differ from you in human time and space, as human proximity is intensified by the current transcendence – mainly digital – of markets and social communication, making encounters between the various possible human differences probable on a daily basis.

The hypothesis will be investigated using the inductive analysis method, through a representative *case* of the world of possibilities provided by the digital relationship between influencers and their followers on the web.

II. Diversity x Community in Modernity

Human individuality was first conceived as the radical alterity of an equivalent other, in Ludwig Feuerbach's rejoinder to Max Stirner, during a philosophical debate in 1845. Stirner's critique of the objectively human interdependence postulated by Feuerbach, which would result in the inadmissibility of independent individual subjectification, was intrinsically human as the Stirnerian bias conceptualizes humanity as characteristically individualized in existences that are as subjectively as they are absolutely separate (Stirner, 1972, p. 18-19). He replied that individualization is specifically human because it is due to the interactions between human differences, as the relational objectivity within which individualities are singularized and uninterrupted throughout individual lives.

For Feuerbach, individualities would repeatedly result when they were autonomous amid heteronomous relationships, and he exemplified this by referring to the difference between Stirner and his wife: "Follow your senses! You are a man from head to toe – the self that you separate in thought from your sensible, masculine essence is a product of abstraction [...]. But as a man, you refer essentially, necessarily to another self or being – to a woman. Hence, if I want to recognize you as an individual, I cannot restrict my recognition to you alone, but must simultaneously extend it beyond you, to your wife. The recognition of the individual is necessarily the recognition of at least two individuals. [...] Because [...] gender does not in fact mean an abstractum, but only you in the light of the singular self-fixed by itself, the other, and in general the human individuals existing outside of me" (Feuerbach, 1845: 433-434).

Accordingly, during the debate with Stirner, Feuerbach unfolded or made even more explicit the human differential radicality as integral to the content of his previous intellectual production. In which he had

[2] Cultural Studies, that originated in the UK, was a transdisciplinary scientific object that gave impetus to the progressive recognition, until then merely anthropological, of cultural diversity in humanity (Williams, 1958; Hall, 1993).

[3] In 1775, Immanuel Kant listed the human races, correlating body morphologies then found during European expeditions, from whites with a swarthy complexion as the original human gender into four derived races, with very blondes forming the first derived race, coppery reds the second, blacks as the third race and finally olive yellows (Kant, 1977, p. 100).

[4] In Hitler's ideology, solidarity between human beings would not be naturally unlimited because it would deny the natural supremacy between human races, in which the Aryan race, or the race with a vocation for uninterrupted racial progress, would be followed by those capable only of copying it, those merely utilitarian for the Aryan progress they were meant to serve and, finally, those parasitic on others and incapable of cohesion in solidarity even among themselves, whose extinction would benefit humanity in general (Hitler, 2009, p. 262-270, 288-289, 301-305).

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already appeared, although not yet theoretically focused in:

- *1830:* When he considered individual death as a condition intrinsic to individuality arising from the very exercise of singular lives, which wear them out, continuously throughout our existences, both because they are limited by the others among themselves and because of the self-dissolution inherent in the adoption of mere singular purposes while living: "The birth of one being is the death of another; the impulse to self-preservation in nature is also an impulse to destruction. You don't realize [...] that life can only continue as a contradiction, that every living thing has its mortal enemy, manifesting a limit and the finitude of life itself. [...] Humans die only for humanity; [...] only because they exist and live separately and simultaneously in essential unity with other humans. Death is present only where there is as much unity as there is distinction. [...] The characteristic feature of modern times is that in them man as man, the person as person, and hence the singular human individual, has been recognized in himself, in his individuality [...]" (Feuerbach, 1980, p. 78-79, 186).
- *1834:* When he conceived of the human soul as constant self-subjectivation given the objective differentiation that would complete it, partially or totally, because it tended towards fusions of love with whoever or whatever was absolutely different from itself, but precisely because of this, each human identity would be a reciprocal belonging to the difference that welcomed it: "What then is [...] the soul of an [...] authentic poet? Poetry. The soul of a philosopher? Philosophy. Take away, if you can, a *Goethe*'s poetry, that is, his poetic vision of the world and life, and a *Spinoza*'s philosophical vision of the world and life, and what will you have left? [...] *Man*'s *life is his vision of life*. [...] What is it to create and to think if not to make of your own life a common heritage, a life that everyone else can also live with [...] if not to make of oneself [...] an object [...] not only for oneself but also for others? [...] A perfect, true marriage between man and writer [...] only takes place when the wife [...] participates [...] in the husband's thoughts and state of mind, [...] when she penetrates them and makes them her own." (Feuerbach, 1967: 573, 575, 626, 1967).

We also owe Feuerbach's production an answer, as pioneering as it is detached from the sociological tradition, to the following question: can human diversity give rise to a community? Can our individual differences become a community among themselves?

In his philosophical-political manifesto of 1843, Feuerbach not only answered the question in the affirmative but also that human diversity should, because it could, correspond to a new human community. After all, *any community*, like the smallest of them, is an affective bond between different objective subjectivities, as their differences are the attractions that bring them together by synergistically completing each other. They could then align themselves reciprocally and indirectly through a collective commitment that safeguards current differences and stimulates future differentiations, making the whole of humanity *politically* communal in a community that is humanly unlimited by its absolute diversity.

"The mystery of reciprocal action is resolved only in sensibility. [...] I am I – for myself – and at the same time you – for another. But I am only this as a sentient being [...] And he is only *something who loves something* [...]. The new philosophy [...] is undoubtedly also based on reason, but on reason *whose essence is the human being*; therefore, not on reason without being, without color and without name, but on reason impregnated with blood. [...] The *natural point of view* [...] of the *distinction between me and you*, in *subject and object*, [...] is also the *point of view of philosophy*. [...] *Truth is only the totality of human life and essence*. [...] Essence [...] is contained only in the community, [...] a unity which, however, is based only on *the reality of the distinction* between I and you. [...] *Solitude is finitude and limitation, community is freedom and infinity*. But the secret [...] of common and social life – the secret of the necessity of the you for the I – the truth that no being [...] is in itself a true, perfect and absolute being, and that only the connection, the unity of beings (constitutes truth and perfection. [...] All fundamental relationships – the principles of the different sciences – are only *different species and modes of this unity*" (Feuerbach, 1843, topics 32, 35, 50, 58, 59, 60, 63).

However, the sociological formulation of community or *Gemmeinschaft* established an intellectual tradition that was completely opposed to Feuerbachian community diversity and characterized it, as opposed to the conceptualization of Society or *Gesellschaft*, as individualities brought together by rational calculations, as a grouping formed around what is *strictly common to its members*. Although both concepts presuppose the individuality of the members, *regardless of their singular differentiation*, only the concept of community refers to affectively linked unions of indeterminate duration.

In Ferdinand Tönnies' seminal formulation, communities presupposed *common parental, territorial and/or traditional origins* that implied minimum dimensions that should never be exponentially inflated in order to ensure *regular meetings between its members*; "The community of blood is regularly linked [...] to the common possession of human beings themselves. In the community of place, relations are linked to the soil and the land; and in the community of spirit, [...] the

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common links [...] sacred and with honored divinities. The three kinds of community are closely linked to each other in space and time, and consequently in each of their particular phenomena and their development, as well as in general human culture and its history" (Tönnies, 1988, p. 32).

As opposed to community, society or *Gesellschaft* would emerge without such communitarian attributes or would become societal as they erode towards the generalization of impersonality in the collective knowledge of each member and their inter-individual relationships: "In theory, society consists of a human group that lives and dwells side by side peacefully, as in the community, but unlike the latter, its components are not organically linked, but organically separated. Whereas in the community, men remain essentially united, while in society they are essentially separated, despite everything that unites them" (Tönnies, 1988, p. 52).

In both the Feuerbachian community and the sociologically classic Tönniesian community, the following marks are communal: collective affective empathy, the permanent nature of the group and the objective interdependence of members whose individual situation immediately derives from the general collectivity.

However, the Tönniesian community, conceptually, sociologically and classically adopted[5], differs from the Feuerbachian community on another fundamental point: the former is a community of origin or common origins, while the Feuerbachian libertarian community is destined for or towards the common destination of affirming all differences. In this regard, the Feuerbachian bias is the most appropriate, because it is pertinent to the contemporary world in which intentional communities are notoriously as important or more important than traditional ones, as evidenced by the emergence and widespread of influencers on social networks.

Therefore, if the Tönniesian community bias applies to *traditional* communities, whose members have been (literally) embedded with each other for a long time, if not from birth, the Feuerbachian bias is directed at *intentional* communities, whose members deliberate, if not continuously, the exercise of community life. While Tönnies' sociological examination (followed by the sociological tradition) highlights the *common* past as a collective delimitation, Feuerbach's deliberative appeal proposed a *common future* whose construction would be both the means and the end of the total human community.

[5] The sociological classics and their current revisiting adopted the Tönniesian diagnosis of ongoing community erosion with corresponding societal ascension and the same characteristics attributed to each group (Durkheim, 1978; Weber, 1987, p. 77-80; Bauman, 2005).

III. Plural Community Nexus: The Case of Influencer Giovanna Titanero

Exploring knowledge of the typical activities of *digital influencers* on social media – notoriously already as relevant or even more than traditional media in contemporary social communication – is fundamental to understanding the networked or informational society, marked by the widespread circulation of information (Castells, 1999).

In this sense, the interview below with Italian-Brazilian *influencer* Giovanna Titanero, who is active on various social media, especially Instagram (@giovannatitanero), is a good way of characterizing the media activity that is fundamental to this new type of media emerging in contemporary times, and especially the relationships she establishes between herself and those who follow her, forming specific social networks.

According to previous contacts (via Facebook Messenger and Whatsapp) and a preview of the interview, which took place on March 23, 2023 and was published by the Casa de Rui Barbosa Foundation on its institutional YouTube channel (Casa Rui Barbosa, 2023), she is a young white woman, 1.65 m tall, born in Brazil to a father and mother originally from Italy, with a degree in Economics, a Catholic who doesn't usually attend church and lives in the city of São Paulo. When she was interviewed, her hair was red, she was wearing a low-cut white dress, with a metallic Catholic crucifix hanging from a shiny necklace and in an environment with pink curtains, flowery wallpaper and a white bookcase with books and decorative objects.

The interviewee said that her family background was from a traditional Italian community in Brazil "[...] with rules and customs from centuries past, [...] more duties than [...] in a more contemporary family". The first-born in a large family (with three other siblings), she also attended a Catholic boarding school.

She later graduated from an economics school in São Paulo, where she also perfected her mastery of digital technologies, which were professionally relevant. Still, she had already mastered them in general terms long before she went to university: "Since I was a little girl, I already knew how to use computers, just more technical things, like investment platforms [...] I learned how to use them in line with [...] one of my professions."

Before becoming an *influencer*, she had worked in two professional occupations in the financial and fashion markets: "I had previously worked as a financial consultant, modelling clothes and accessories, [...] which ended up in my career as an influencer". In other words, she used her *expertise* as a female model for clothing products and accessories to make up her social media presence: "I saw that there was a link between the fashion and digital media niches, that would be good for me".

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At the time of the interview, she had been working in digital media for 6 years and had been dedicating herself exclusively to it for 3 years: "Instagram, mainly, Youtube, Facebook and, rarely, Twitter[6]". At the time, she had 145,000 followers on Instagram (@giovannatitanero) and her YouTube performance was linked to a business association for cultural entrepreneurship (ANCEC).

During her selection for my research, she had already listed the products directly conveyed by her media work in the segments of fashion, alternative fashion (*goth*, *rock-metal* and *kawaii*[7]), artistic make-up and *cosplay*[8], and *fitness*[9]. She also considered her main activities – except for motivational activities for Culture entrepreneurs – as aesthetic entertainment.

However, she was curious about the stylistic non-affinity that she found due to the extreme plurality among her followers: "It's interesting that my niches don't talk to each other [...]. I got into things that were of interest to me and worked on top of that. Because my niches involve alternative fashion, more aimed at the goth/dark public [...] and I also have training niches, [...] a routine of training in a bodybuilding gym [...] I also have a music niche, [...] which is also my hobby[10]. Mostly, it's the fashion and artistic make-up niche, more focused on [...] characters of my own, not cosplay. And kawaii, which is a more modern Japanese culture, encompassing make-up, accessories and decoration more focused on childish, "cute" and "innocent" things.

Exposing herself on a daily basis through social media, Giovanna is conscious of exemplifying personal image models in tune with lifestyles adopted or at least admired by other people: "In reality, what I do is inspire people to have other styles, to think differently, to have a better self-image, [...] broadening their horizons." Her intimate plurality is fundamental to her daily self-exposure: "There is no predominant one, [...] I really like all the niches I work with. [...] I'm always in various guises, a kind of chameleon. I don't like to stick to standards."

When defining her activities as an influencer who inspires the adoption of specific behaviours by those who follow her digital posts, she specified her legitimacy to inspire fitness and entrepreneurship, even though she wasn't a specialized instructor or business owner: "I'm not a physical education professional, [...] nor a trained nutritionist, [...] I'm just an enthusiastic person on the subject. I've enjoyed training [...] for about six or seven years. What I can give is my experience, [...] for example, to people who are discouraged, [...] about endorphins[11]. There are a range of Brazilian entrepreneurs [...]. It's possible to achieve great goals with not so many resources".

Last but not least, she strictly relates the products she sells to the corresponding personal images and says that there are no conflicts within her digital sphere between the contrasting styles of her plural followers, from which she only receives compliments, suggestions or, rarely, positive criticism: "It would be more like [...] cosmetics, clothes and accessories. Because in all niches there is a common denominator, which is image. [...] If you're in a business niche, a fitness niche, goth music, alternative, metal or dark, they all [...] have their own outfits. [...] and that's what I am to all of them: a common denominator."

She summarized her various digital facets on social media as, at least implicitly, motivational for the individual differences she assumes: "I mainly try to convey the message that people have the right to be who they are. [...] As long as you don't offend anyone, [...] you can be whatever you want. [...] Society is very restrictive in wanting to put you in boxes [...] and other than that, it makes you feel uncomfortable. Why should it be like that if people aren't equal?"

IV. Intimacy as a Contemporary Agonistic Gift

The interview above makes it abundantly clear that the social plurality that is contemporaneously emerging and, at the very least, fostered by influencers on increasingly wide-ranging social media that exceeds the expectations of contemporary analysts, who have diagnosed it as a collective outbreak of stylistic differences that are merely compartmentalized.

As influencers function as *plural* community nexuses through the confluence of different or even opposing lifestyles, intentional communities emerge whose intrinsic plurality allows for personal distinctions not found within *hippie* communities cut off from everyday life (Roszak, 1968), in postmodern individual-lizations that are resistant to any aggregations (Lyotard, 1979) or as mere crystallized urban "tribes" that are unmistakable from one another (Maffesoli, 1988).

Because the community nexus, functionally exercised by influencers on social media, as exemplified above by Giovanna Titanero, *can be a confluence of different lifestyles* from motivational people with multiple stylistic tendencies.

[6] Currently, it is called X (author's note).
[7] As understood by the interviewee, these are individual styles whose self-image refers, respectively, to terrifying myths in Western culture, rock music with maximum sound power and performance speed, and childish aspects or personal infantilization.
[8] As distinguished by the interviewee, there is artistic make-up when an unusual self-image is composed. Still, it is appropriately authorial, while it can also be for the composition of a certain character already patented on the market.
[9] As designated by the interviewee, it is a self-image made up of items commonly worn by those who train in gyms on a regular basis and to physically sculpt their own bodies.
[10] The interviewee also often exposes her musical mastery of the violin.
[11] The interviewee refers to the pleasurable hormone produced during a moderate or intense workout.

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Even as a single case, her trajectory of coming from a traditional family community, focusing on a wide range of individual trends, at least indicates the potential for social media – in which the influencer character brings together users – to enable *multiple belongings for the same people*. After all, it is notorious that hegemonic and alternative fashion, entrepreneurship and bodybuilding, heavy metal stridency and kawaii softness, gothic mysteries and sunny beaches are contrasting options.

Her influencer narrative also makes it possible to understand today's diagnosed information society (Castells, 1999) in a narrower sense: as based on the widespread circulation of *personalized information* (if not strictly personal), because it refers directly to personal vocalization or at least is referred to by it.

Such an approach to social networks, especially in the digital sphere of social media, can be achieved by applying the Maussian concept of "Agonistic Gift" to the information circulating in them and influencers as their central cohesion. This is undoubtedly the case today, given that by July 2024 the absolute majority of the world's population (5.45 billion) are Internet users and the absolute majority of users of the World Wide Web (5.17 billion) are members of the current social media. Of these, Instagram stands out for its exponential growth since its formation in 2010 (although Facebook, Youtube and Whatsapp were even more prominent, with all four having more than 1 billion accounts each), but it is the social media that is almost completely capillarized[12] by *influencer marketing* (Statista, 2024; Sprout Social, 2024).

Therefore, the relationship between influencers and followers is paradigmatic of the social relationships configured in social networks woven within the framework of social media because they are *global*; in other words, their associativity is unlimited in those made possible by users of these social communication services. In this way, the information or network society that has emerged since the end of the 20th century (Castells, 1999) may have its understanding deepened by the specific relationship established by influencers with their followers and the application of the concept of Agonistic Gift, formulated by Marcel Mauss (1872-1950) in the seminal *Essay on the Gift* published a hundred years ago (Mauss, 1925), which can reveal the social foundation of emerging contemporaneity.

By postulating the exercise of gift as a triple installment of the obligations to give, receive and exchange goods, among themselves and underlying the fabric of sociability in general, Mauss's work has become an obligatory reference in the social sciences, with the concept of gift being widely spread in sociology and anthropology.

In this sense, generosity or obligatory availability for the benefit of others, as well as being socially fundamental, can be distinguished into two types:

- By generalized sharing through total benefits, in terms of the members and goods exchanged between them, or gift-sharing (Mauss, 1925, p. 7).
- By *challenging* each other through competitive services and concerning their recipients, or *Agonistic Gifts* (Mauss, 1925, p. 8-9).

In this sense, the second type of gift, Agonistic Gifts, is the type in which donors compete with each other and/or with others to provide goods that expose them personally to the recipients. Therefore, this is the type of gift through which I will analyze the role of social media in contemporary times, insofar as self-exposure is fundamental.

As *any kind of goods*, including immaterial ones, can be the object of donation, receipt or retribution by human beings, information *in general* can also be provided without or with emulation between its services. So, I propose to explain the direct correlation between influencers and followers on social media, the magnitude they have already reached in the world population and the very emergence of the network society because *in network society personal intimacy has become an object of Agonistic Gift*, that is, of *obligatory generosity being exercised through the competitive provision of personal information* or, at least, information held by specific identities.

As a result, influencers are the ones who stand out in the competition to provide information on social media, but they are not the only individuals who provide it, since these media spheres should also be conceived for what they result in: the generalization of social networks as *social relationships woven by informational Agonistic Gifts of personal intimacy*. After all, *influencers provide information* that is intrinsic or pertinent to their specific identity, which is *received by anyone else and reciprocated by those who follow them, among other influencers*.

A characteristic of contemporaneity and the very basis of the advent of the Internet is *agonistic intimacy*, i.e. *widespread agonistic provision of intimate information*, even when the identity of the provider is not complete. This is also the reason for the widespread contemporary adherence to *reality shows* (Reiss & Wiltz, 2004), which currently compete with the assistance of fictional media products and services.

In fact, if we accept that intimacy has become a contemporary Agonistic Gift, not just as a body, but in any specifically personal aspect, as long as it directly or indirectly relates to someone in particular and whose information is the *object of personalized exposure*, the

[12] While Instagram's exponential growth continues to underpin predictions that point to it as the likely definitive social media of the future, since April 2024 Tik Tok has been recognized as the most competitive social media, even though it is the most recent (Statista, 2024).

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analysis that predicted social spectacularization was the one that came closest to the present day (Barros, 2021).

By explaining contemporaneity through the rise of intimacy as an Agonistic Gift, we have the methodological advantage of broadening our understanding of the network society as characterized, not only by the generalized circulation of information (Castells, 1999), but also by specifying that its characteristic is the *generalization of personal or personalized information through unlimited agonistic informational services to each other*. Contemporaneity is socially informational because there is an increasing personalization of communications or intimate informational services as *competitive social obligations*.

This contemporary tendency towards agonistic intimacy leads to its increasingly open exposure by personal subjectivity itself. Exposed as an Agonistic Gift of information, it competes *contemporaneously* with other subjectivities, which also expose themselves (with varying degrees of assistance from others). Social media have emerged in contemporary times as people choose to inform others without discrimination and their provision of information, until then held personally, is exercised competitively with others and for others too.

They are more consequences than causes of current social networks, which tend to be global in scope. Therefore, the emerging preponderance of services in the economy, a post-industrial characteristic of its unlimited technological informatization (Castells, 1999, p. 224-225), does not come from the economic valuation of information *tout court*, but it becomes informational as *all social relationships become more personal*, beyond the social relationships of family or neighbourhood proximity. For this reason, social networks have become the preferred form of contemporary social relations, no longer restricted to the people most closely associated with them.

In this sense, it is reasonable to assume that contemporaneity is informational because its *sociability personalizes individualities* (and not the other way around), shattering them through multiple individual belongings that I prefer to call "*dividuation*" (Lopes, 2017, p. 45-55). In other words, the exercise of intimately informational Agonistic Gifts turns individual identities into multifaceted ones, diversifying them or articulating their intrinsic (subjective and objective) diversities with the various identity facets of others. Although the limits of the current research do not include their followers, multifaceted identities would not be exclusive to influencers (given that, notoriously, this role can be exercised under a monolithic identity). As the exercise of Agonistic Gifts of intimate information is the basis of contemporary sociability, multiple self-reported identities are also likely among other influencers or even among the followers of influencer Giovanna Titanero, even if she assumes them eventually or even more than others.

Finally, this closes the argumentative cycle opened by the introduction to this article. Because the differentiation of contemporary sociability or the greater relative prominence of human differences (compared to past eras), the assumption of this research, *also comes from the exercise of intimate Agonistic Gifts in contemporary times*.

By assuming intimacy as an Agonistic Gift in general, contemporary human beings *necessarily make uninterruptedly explicit distinctive aspects of their identity in the face of others*. *Literally*, as explained by Facebook, the first social media to surpass 1 billion users that adopt subjective faces.

The informational Agonistic Gifts of individual subjective identities are matched by the extreme diversity of human identities, made ostentatious by the exponential widespread circulation of absolutely explicit human differences, currently at all times and in any space where there are social networks.

Humanity is not exactly becoming more differentiated than before today. Still, it is undoubtedly intensifying to a historically unprecedented degree the common knowledge of the various human identities, as distinct as they are because they are omnipresently circulating in the contemporaneity of the emerging network society. Contemporaneity can literally be defined as sociability directly exercised through personal data, whose autonomous circulation, giving and receiving intimate information, highlights the various characteristics of each individuality in its objective as well as subjective human diversity.

V. Human Differences as Social Qualities

To differentiate humanity is to discriminate between human beings. Differentiations have been found in human groups since their collective emergence, such as the classification as *polysegmental* among the first societies named by Sociology (Durkheim, 1978, p. 128; Mauss, 2017, p. 65) and characterized by polymorphic structures in which social life took place within demarcated segments and in the articulation between these segments formed by sexual, age, parental and generational divisions.

For both sociologists aforementioned, societies evolve towards greater articulation between their segments. In particular, Maussian sociology provides a more adequate understanding of the differentiations that emerge in sociability, since Mauss considers them to be foundational from the dawn of society. In Mauss' view, social evolution proceeds through differences that are increasingly interpenetrated (unlike Durkheim, who gives this role to the horde of undifferentiated members) (Durkheim, 1978, p. 128; Mauss, 2017, p. 65).

Social inequalities or the supremacy of some individuals and groups over others, however, come to

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correspond to human diversity, as the former is attributed superiority by the latter or are violently subjected by the former. This becomes a repeated dynamic, especially where and when families become hierarchical in dynastic societies, which classical sociology has called People, State or Empire (Mauss, 2017, p. 66-69).

With Modernity, characterized by nations as the ideal type of societies, *international* differences or differences between them (which did not occur between kingdoms or dynastic societies) became objects that could be given *paritarian status* although never completely, by the International Law that they wove together. Even the exercise of rights, internal to nations that were in the process of political democratization, by female or youth segments that traditionally didn't vote, was only made possible when supported by moral arguments – congruent to nations as a specific type of society, whose members are *not defined by their specificities* among themselves[13] – that considered them individuals independent of human anatomy or generation (Mauss, 2017, p. 80).

However, such a sociability organized around expository personalization, such as the one emerging today, does not result in modern or post-modern social relations, given that in both modernity and post-modernity, intimacy is an individually separate sphere (UN, 2000, p. 6-7 – article 12 of the Universal Declaration of 1948) or even hardened as such (Lyotard, 1979). Emerging *contemporaneity* is the sociability resulting from the exposure of identity without specific recipients and whose human differences are made *reciprocally* explicit as personal agonistic informational gifts.

The donation of intimate information is the contemporary motto, from which discriminating identifications between individualities emerge. Preserving or making them *positive* is the general challenge of contemporary citizenship in civil, political or social terms.

Modern citizenship does not traditionally contain the *right to human difference*. Through civil rights we externalize our personality on things or in the name of another; through political rights we participate in collective decisions and through social rights we are included in general activities, *regardless of our individual status* (Marshall, 1963; Assemblée Nationale Française 1989 [1789]; UN 2000 [1948]). In other words, making human differences civic implies a new political-legal logic that has not yet been elaborated, despite the already distant formulation by Feuerbachian community[14] diversity presented in section 2.

In fact, the opposite has been happening, through elective political affinities between conservative parties, organizing deliberate resistance to social differentiation and reaffirming homogenization, which tends to be an internal characteristic of nations (Lopes, 2024). A new ultra-right has been leading social reactions to national diversification or to making their internal differences explicit (Le Pen, 2021).

Monolithic national resistance to the diversification of citizenship has prevented Aboriginal voices (mainly *Maori*), therefore ethnically distinct within nations, from acquiring an institutional position in a democracy in which they have recently organized themselves for this purpose (Australia), or where they already enjoyed formal, although limited, dialogue (New Zealand). Reactionary misunderstandings, which are irrational because they fear a rupture of nationality, when it comes to *inclusive* initiatives by ethnic groups native to the same territory that has long been colonized. Thus, they denied the constitutional introduction of indigenous Australians, by a population plebiscite in October 2023, and began to question the New Zealand indigenous *status* traditionally conferred by treaty between the colonial administration and confederated tribes since 1858 (O'Sullivan, 2024; Clark & Hill, 2024).

Given that nations have traditionally tended to be monolithically defined as a characteristic not found in other types of societies (Mauss, 2017, p. 70-91), human differences can only be conceived as *qualities of humanity* from a perspective other than the national one, although they are emerging as such in this internal sphere.

The Feuerbachian humanistic bias, previously discussed because it conceptualizes a community of human diversity in such a way that each identity must be synergistic with the others, is what can support their reciprocal legitimacy, since they can all align without canceling each other out by being objectively corresponding.

After all, both *collective* resilience and innovation can be contributed to by female, youth, indigenous, LGBTQIAPN+ and black differences to *cisgender heterosexual male whiteness*, to the extent that those human conditions objectively or subjectively acquired in their specific experiences are less incapacitated by possible illnesses or more prone to certain stimuli than heterosexual cisgender whites. Cardiac *stress*, body metabolization, forestry knowledge, empathic intuition and solar incidence are

[13] "The individual - every individual - was born into political life. [...] And the whole of society has become, to some degree, the state [...]; it is the totality of citizens. This is precisely what we call the nation [...] it is the citizens animated by a consensus. [...] Everything individualizes and unifies the members of a modern nation" (Mauss, 2017, p. 80).

[14] The closest formulation in the 1948 Universal Declaration to the Feuerbachian sense is that of article XXIX, which mentions the correspondence between the community sphere and the unique personality, but without extracting rights tout court from it: "Every human being has duties towards the community in which the free development of his personality is possible" (UN, 2000, p. 13).

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more beneficial or less harmful factors, when in large magnitude and respectively, for women, young people, indigenous people, LGBTQIAPN+ people and black people, just as much as they are stressful to the lives of white men who are traditionally providers from middle age onwards (Adaş *et al*., 2024; Rahrovan *et al*., 2018; WIPO, 2024; Merone *et al*., 2022; Ricklefs *et al*., 2024; CONAQ, 2021 e Alvarez *et al*., 2013).

Differences are a common heritage. This is broadened by the greater expressiveness of those differences since identities have always been, are and will always be constituted *in the face of others* (Feuerbach, 1845, p. 434), and the contemporary synonym of gender is pertinent to the expression of identity in general (Butler, 1993).

In the same way that animal and plant biodiversity consist of environmental genetic heritage, *human* biopsychosocial diversity must be conceived as *cultural* heritage in a broad sense and beyond that of collective memory because it refers both to the current exemplarity of expressions that have already become extinct, as well as to the greater expressive self-circulation and even contemporary self-diversification of human expressiveness[15].

Such a profusion – not least because it is unlimited – of contemporary identities would *not* fragment society or even democracies through the enclosure of identities that would make them non-communicable. *As long as* they take place in the same way as (literally) happens between followers of influencer Giovanna Titanero *and her*, they are channeled through (also literally) human focus points that bring them together regularly.

The identity challenge to citizenship is to assume that *every right is an identity right*, implying that humanity must choose between:

1) To amend the proclaimed (UN, 2000 [1948]) Universal Declaration of Human Rights to state that human identities are parameters that condition the exercise of any right: *Every right contained in this Universal Declaration is inherent to any human identity and whose exercise must also guarantee its expression in the concrete situation*.
2) Establishing that the *right to personal difference* summarizes and concentrates any rights, already or not yet proclaimed, since uninterrupted differentiation is an intrinsic human condition and therefore its invocation during any situation is enough to be the subject of collective deliberation, duly motivated without necessary correspondence to some other human right. Because every human right is summed up in the exercise of one's differences: *Every human being has the right to be treated differently by others and to preserve, rescue or build their personal difference in every situation in which they find themselves*.

Ultimately, the challenge of citizen identity implies a *self-reform of parliamentary democracy*. It is through the adoption of differentiated parliamentary voices that Parliament will not deviate from its historical-institutional mission in modern democracies but will also make a fundamental contribution to the collaboration of the diversity represented in its political sphere. This requires *more* (art) politics, not less, given the profusion of identities and each represented identity in it.

It is up to every parliament to rethink its institutional configuration so that it can focus on the various fundamental expressions of identity. Which, given their current profusion and the magnitude of women in the population, must:

1) Pairing women's representation (with a minimum percentage for *trans* women in their parliamentary seats) as equal to men's in the composition of Parliament as a decision-making collegiate body and as the only parliamentary caucus to decide on issues pertaining only to women;
2) Contain parliamentary seats specially allocated to representations, *according to their respective population percentages* (informed by the regular census), always consulted for priority parliamentary manifestation on issues that include their represented parties or as the only parliamentary decision-making bodies on issues exclusively pertinent to their represented parties:

2.1) Two parliamentary age groups (even though they are in the minority), respectively, for the elderly and adolescent representations;

2.2) Minority:

2.2.1) Parliamentary caucus representing human conditions LGBTQIAPN+

2.2.2) Parliamentary caucus of ethnic and racial representations (ethnically traditional or not and biotypical population minorities) or ethnic-racial.

The aforementioned parliamentary self-reform would be consistent with any electoral system, since it would consist of a mere redistribution of parliamentary seats to be chosen during universal suffrage among electoral blocs that, obligatorily, aim to fill them institutionally in Parliament. The experiences, although unsuccessful or reduced, of the *Maori* aborigines and the recent institutionalization of the Brazilian black caucus (of black and brown parliamentarians), in institutional terms similar to the women's caucus (although still a minority), are experiences that should be expanded, but already taken as reformist inspirations for

[15] The current anti-asylum trend to replace mental institutions for the treatment of mental suffering, by mental health professionals and family members of patients with psychoses (especially schizophrenia), has expanded Psychosocial Care Centers whose activities also lead to the productive inclusion of patients according to vocations revealed during the therapeutic process (Barros, 2021).

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parliaments. (O'Sullivan, 2024; Clark & Hill, 2024; Alves & Azevedo, 2023).

To live is to differ. Each human life, when we abandon any ethnocentric prejudice, may contribute, as long as those who are different from it can identify differences in it, whose own complementarity in an economy of human qualities (Lévy, 1994, p. 78-91) is as viable as it is necessary, in the present or in the near future.

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