



## Book Review

### **INGOLD, TIM. BEING ALIVE, ESSAYS ON MOVEMENT, KNOWLEDGE AND DESCRIPTION. 2011. LONDON, ROUTLEDGE**

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Although social imaginary concerns on the rise of global cataclysms, problems of ecology, climate change and natural disasters resulted from the greenhouse effects, the British anthropologist Tim Ingold shows how all these assumptions rests on a great paradox. *Being alive* seems to be more than a book, as in his former book named the Perception of Environment, Ingold collates many of already published bibliography in his long career to achieve an all-encompassing edition. Although each chapter has been written by diverse occasions and moments, the reading is not scattered.

The present book focuses on the dichotomy of Cartesian dualism and our current understanding of the world. Unlike hunters and gatherers, West has developed a monopoly of technology and a sedentary form of production, which contributed to the formation of a particular paradigm. Throughout the nineteen chapters that form this book, Ingold not only exerts considerable criticism to Science (biology) but also invites readers to re-consider the roots of anthropology from a new way. Most certainly, the structure of western thought evidenced a division between the self, and the perceivable environment, between humans and non-humans, animals and inert objects.

Taking his previous cues from Gibson as well as other phenomenologist philosophers, Ingold argues convincingly that the point of departure in ecological debate should aim at deciphering the western ideology. Rather, the specialists today turn their attention to the trust of technology, or the needs to renew the existent energy sources. As this backdrop, West considers the human life as disengaged from the natural ethos. The modern discourse not only keeps the supremacy of reason to sort the world but also is entitled to dominate other organism and live forms which lack of conscience. This point of view leads West to preserve nature excluding the human presence. One of the aspects that characterize the existent ecological policies is the total absent of humans

in reserve and preserved parks. It is not accident that humanity and nature are mutually excluded. As civilization, the sense of knowledge we produce signals to a deeper division whose borders are determined by the sedentary logic of capitalism. To validate this path-breaking thesis, Ingold takes the example of hunters and gatherers who see the world from a relational view. Not only these nomad groups do not need the surplus of production to monopolize, but they connect with nature from another stance. The nature should not be domesticated or controlled to create a general well-being because it provides the sources for survival.

The discussion with Heidegger respecting to what Ingold calls, “the dwelling perspective” deserves considerable attention. The British anthropologist acknowledges that anthropology is based on the premise some forms of “humans build” are projection from environment. This alludes to think that the space should be built (symbolically created) to be dwelled, as both were two separate facets of living. In order for nature to be safe, also no human intervention should be achieved. At the opposite, Ingold proposes a relational view of ecology to remind that building is not dwelling. Humans inhabit the space at the same time they live. Therefore, the dwelling perspective should set pace to a much broader weaving paradigm.

Following this explanation, it is interesting to evaluate the problem of ecology in perspective. Hunters and gatherers take the food of animals to fulfil their basic needs. Nature gives to humans everything they need, but with some restrictions. Like ancestors, animals serve the role of protectors of hunters here and afterlife. In the case humans attempt to monopolize the hunting activity, animals withhold their flesh leading them to starvation and misfortune. Animals play a pervasive role in the cosmos, they may be protectors or monsters depending on what humans do. By hunting is not killing, the sacrificed animal rebirth to life continues in a cyclical way. This cosmology concentrates a strong relational way of being in this world irrespective of technology and culture. Nor dwelling is opposite to live, neither culture is a human invention to be inserted in a hostile environ. Unfortunately, anthropology from its inception failed to break the Cartesian dualism considering the other (aboriginals) in opposition to the own culture. By the way, the concept of culture as technology, labour and history were conducive to strengthen the old sentiment of euro-centrism that facilitated the advance of imperialism.

The first anthropologists constructed the sense of others not only in opposition to Europe's life, but also validating the ideology of evolution, placed by Darwin in the fields of biology. Western travellers contemplated Americas and Oceania as a vast place to dwell, to civilize, to domesticate according to a matrix that proclaimed the supremacy of white-man over all nature. In doing so, the concept of labour was more than important simply because it allowed in improving the land. For that reason, Ingold proposes a new paradigm to change the dilemma; we humans are moved by the reason. Technology, intelligence, the habit of dwelling and the concept of landscapes have been socially constructed to expand the belief that reason, which is only human, can be expressed by means of language. Equally important, it would be interesting to discuss the dichotomy between labour and leisure. As Ingold put it, both are two side of the same coin. Even if the division between what is reasonable and desirable was proper of sedentary tribes

(pastoralism), capitalism introduced two significant changes. First and foremost, it expanded the belief non-western cultures were petrified in the time. The aboriginal groups not only were a pre-stage of Europe civilization, but also they do not have a proper consciousness of their history. Both prejudices are present in the specialized bibliography of seniors' anthropologists and ethnologists. Secondly, the capitalist eye forged the myth the leisure liberates the workforce from its oppression. Ingold explains convincingly that the ideological power of capitalism rested on its efficacy to control and mark goods and workers. The formers are marked by the price of exchange, fixed at the market. The later, rather, depends on its capacity to consume the fabricated merchandises. To put this in bluntly, workers move their resources to fabricate precisely the merchandise they will consume in their free-time. Successfully, capitalism leads us to think the dichotomy between labour and leisure is enrooted in Ancient Greece (as many other myths as technology, knowledge and environment). All these terms are the residual result from a significant rupture accelerated by capitalism to see the self as something external to natural world. In view of that, it is almost impossible to reverse the problems of ecology without changing the existent ideology of capitalism.

To be honest, *Being Alive* exhibits a masterful combination of ethnographies, sources, combined with the polished English that guides readers into a fresh and necessary argument. Just for a lapse of time, one might imagine that the unquestionable truths such as culture, work, technology, intelligence and reason were social construes recently adopted by the capitalist logic to indoctrinate the worker's mind. Other civilizations remain unfamiliar with these concepts.

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