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THE DECOLONIAL DEBATE: EXPRESSIONS O DEBATE DECOLONIAL: EXPRESSÕES

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REVERSING THE LOAD: THINKING FROM OUR EXTERIORITY
INVERTIR LA CARGA: PENSAR DESDE NUESTRA EXTERIORIDAD
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Abstract

This writing aims to draw attention to the epistemological and ethical-political surveillance that is our duty to avoid migrating to other philosophies as a mechanism to experience what is identified as the other side of modernity and globalization of our time. In this sense, it invites us to think about everyday life from the heterogeneity, fluidity, antagonisms, and hybridity that constitute us as urban-modern subjects, based on the certainty that the decolonial experience is not exclusive to certain groups and territorialities. Of course, this assertion stems from a non-probabilistic sampling. It arises from the observation of colleagues, students, co-workers, to name a few, who express the need to be connected to the history and ways of being in the world/living in an alternative way, as the Andean world inhabitants do. They thus search to feel as part of the history of Abya Yala. Far from attempting to provide an answer as a result, this work invites us to reverse the loading, that is, to stop thinking from the other's exteriority to look from our own, understanding that we come into harmony, affinity and trust with the exteriority of the other from ours. Thus, reversing the load means establishing a non-hierarchical relationship of knowledge based on the recognition of common problems with other people due to having been and continuing to be colonized, even though we live in different places and have dissimilar trajectories. This is how it will be feasible to know and generate another thought and our own from our place of enunciation and habitation, without migrating to epistemes that do not belong to us. Only in this way will we stop seeing the other as different, running the risk of subalternizing it and imposing our agendas and concerns on it.

Keywords: Decolonial thought, Other thought, Place of enunciation and habitation

1 Introduction

On March 21, 2022 I was invited to the first session of a seminar entitled "Modernity, decoloniality and geopolitics of knowledge¹" to discuss the passage from decolonial thinking to decolonial doing. This late concern for the methodological aspect of decolonial thinking resonated with me, which motivated me to give a postgraduate seminar the following year (August 2022) focused on decolonial thinking. This is a debt among decolonials, or at least, an issue that has not been worked on yet, except for a few references. The Colombian pedagogue and researcher Alexander Ortiz Ocaña has been developing a concrete proposal he presented in session 3, "Altersofía y hacer decolonial", of the Encuentro Conversatorios de Saberes, organized by the MAD AFRICA Association, held in Seville, Spain, on June 28, 2023.

Although some referents of decolonial thinking resolved the methodological issue from militant research, and others did it from the field of pedagogy and educational research, the question of decolonial doing was overlooked in these investigations. This is why Ortiz Ocaña was taken as a reference, since for him decolonial doing has a pragmatic sense and unfolds in three concrete actions: communal contemplation, alternative conversation and configurative reflection². Beyond this contribution, it is clear that decolonial work is under construction and seeks to broaden voices and different types of registers to access this other knowledge.

The aforementioned discussion is brought to this paper because it placed at the center of the stage the question of the concealment of the other, a theme often discussed and exposed in Dussel's work "1492: The concealment of the Other". This work is still thought-provoking and still relevant. Remembering this work motivates us to make an introspective work to realize that many times we think and write from that so called exteriority of the other, that is to say, placing the other as an alien to me, as someone who is located beyond the abysmal line still, overlooking the interscalarity, interactoriality and multidimensionality that characterizes our time.

From these concerns, we raise questions to think about what it means to invert the load. How to think the decolonial in our days for those of us who live in urban-hybrid contexts, more modern than colonial according to the rhetoric of modernity? How to think the other from our space, time and daily life without migrating to other epistemes, to other locations or ways of inhabiting linked to a

¹ At the Universidade de La Salle, in Canoas-Porto Alegre, Brazil.

² See Ortíz, A., & Arias, M. I. (2018, 2019) and Ortíz, A., Arias, M. I., & Pedrozo, Z. (2018).

relational ontology that has little to do with the urbanity of our daily life? Is it possible to ascribe to another ontology, such as the relational, erasing the more than 200 years of intrusion of modernity and instrumental rationality that have shaped a subjectivity and way of relating between humans and non-humans?

Of course, these questions exceed this article's response capacity, but in its development, we will try to construct a sense of the expression "to invert the load", the argumentative core of this writing, together with its pair, to stop thinking from the exteriority of the other. In this search for abandoning the desire of coupling ourselves to the other, of migrating towards the indigenous, peasant or dissidences, it is from where we build our own knowledge known as others. But for this to happen, we must recognize what is this exteriority that inhabits us, and how the other is constructed in us, inhabitants of urban-hybrid spaces. In short, it is from these concerns that this article is elaborated. Throughout the article, we will retrace this idea/proposal of inverting the burden and thinking from our exteriority the production of other knowledge.

2 Some considerations on decolonial thinking and other knowledges

Without pretending to make a genealogy of decolonial thinking, on which much has already been published, and considering Escobar's article (2003) an obligatory reference material for those who wish to delve into the subject, I will only refer to why the questions posed above are inscribed in the decolonial debate. The first mention is because the decolonial is concerned with other ways of knowing and producing knowledge concealed by the rhetoric of modernity, which, unlike postcolonial thought that has focused on marking discontinuities with the colonial order; the decolonial has examined its continuity through colonial legacies.

Subscribing to the idea that there are different ways of valuing the present, and that pluriverse we are all (Cuestas-Caza, 2019), it is necessary to promote other models of existence created by us and not to migrate to ways of being and inhabiting distant from our everyday. Although we demand the need to create "other" ways of thinking, feeling and existing, and this requires the configuration of new types of knowledge and science, moving away from the epistemology that privileges the subject-object relationship to migrate towards other models of existence (Albán, 2019), it is also true that these should be inhabited naturally and not from a rationality that requires constant vigilance to maintain its coherence. Accessing other knowledge requires real listening, rehearsing ways of reasoning that escape the frames of modern epistemologies, recovering ways of thinking proper to the territory, where the scientific and the everyday interpellate each other (Albán, 2019).

By saying "other knowledge" we recover this notion of the Moroccan thinker Khatibi from the beginning of this millennium, for whom it will be understood not as an addition to the hegemonic project "but as an interpretation or disruption from locus of enunciation different from the hegemonic project" (Albán, 2012, p. 25). It is often homologated to other thought "(...) it can be understood as a set of interpretative and comprehensive procedures of the world in its cultural and natural dimensions, put into action within a given culture (...) they differ and distance themselves from the logocentric logic" (Rosero, 2020, p. 14). This allows us to elucidate that "the other", apparently, would be linked to beliefs and practices, knowledge and liberating knowledge of oppressive relations that are carried out daily, symbolically disputing the control of meanings.

It is appropriate to make a distinction between knowledge and knowledges, which are sometimes taken as synonyms in this type of writings. Mignolo offers us this differentiation:

The philosophical-scientific notion of "knowledge" began to replace the philosophical-rhetorical idea of "knowing." While knowledge was conceived as an activity linked to reading and books, "knowing" began to be conceived as the confluence of experience and reason (Mignolo, 2015, pp. 79-80).

It is also often associated with other thought to another paradigm, associated with orality as the scenario of diverse constructions and infinite knowledge. Paradigm other or thinking of another was the argument in the work in Escobar (2003). In this opportunity, we recover from Mignolo this definition:

"paradigm other" means "the diversity (and diversality) of critical forms of analytical thought and future projects seated on the histories and experiences marked by coloniality rather than by those, dominant until now, seated on the histories and

experiences of modernity" (Mignolo 2003: 20) and conceives it as "diverse"; and that considered in its utopian dimension has to build a "hegemony of diversity". (Albán, 2015, p. 29, own underlining).

The elements underlined above relate this notion to that of border thinking, alluding to that experience of dwelling on the edges, on the borders, in the interstices, sharing the need to decolonize, to liberate oneself. "The germination of a border epistemology that goes beyond the binary constructions of Westernism" (Mignolo, 2015, p. 195). We will only add that quote since it is not the object of this communication to introduce this thematic here. Returning to the expression "other knowledge", it possibly appears as one of the most widespread in the last two decades among humanities and social sciences writings. Other knowledge, other thought, other paradigm appear as expressions that come to refer to a thought and knowledge that wants to stop being colonized, inferiorized, and is rethought from the very subjects that have experienced these processes of subalternity.

These issues, as we know, are a concern of decolonial thinking because they derive from the continuity of a colonial order or pattern, and may result in an abstraction and repetition of ideas if we fail to articulate these categories of thought to concrete spatial and temporal experiences where they are configured. In a broader sense, under the umbrella of critiques of modernity, some authors recognize three perspectives around which they are grouped: the decolonial option, the epistemologies of the South, and border, liminal or margin thinking (Medina-Melgarejo et al., 2022). These distinctions do not seem to be so clear in practice. Rather, we are witnessing a multiplicity of positions occupied by thinkers, whose limits are labile. Similarly occurs with the other thought or paradigm, finding affiliation or anchorage in liminal, border or frontier thought, because in those particular contexts (border, marginality, subalternity) there emerged ways of being and inhabiting configured in praxis, in the doing of groups to cope with life, which the academy called other knowledge.

It may seem in the reading that decolonial, edge/border or liminal thinking are synonyms because they are positions that configure decolonizing thinking, where the main references are the Modernity/coloniality Group, the Epistemologies of the South and the so-called border authors (Medina-Melgarejo et al. ob. cit). In general terms, the way of problematizing throughout these years has been supported by what Escobar (2014, as cited in Sandoval, 2016) defined as one of the five emerging areas of research for another modern/colonial post-episteme social theory, and within it, the decolonial theory from situated studies. To conclude this section, it is a good synthesis to say that the decolonial option is not a theoretical framework, nor a methodology, but a way of thinking (as expressed in each Preface of the texts of the Detachment Series of El Signo editions) that questions the imperial, universal order that ends up covering up the other.

3 To trace a path from the exteriority of the other to one's own exteriority

In point 2 we constructed the notion of the other/other knowledge/other thinking as that which does not belong or has not entered the hegemonic modern project. The expression "thinking from the exteriority of the other" was taken from Salinas Paz (2021, p. 18) for whom the constructive task of philosophy is to renounce the philosophical modernity that starts from the ego and announces the foundation of its thinking from the exteriority of the other. To dismantle the philosophy that covers up oppression is the call made by this author. From this idea I began to recognize that in my thinking this modern ego had always prevailed and the leap to take would consist in registering the exteriority that inhabits me, recognizing that this room is not a geographical location, but a political, cultural, epistemological one, to cite some dimensions. This first step would be necessary in order to be able to reverse the burden and avoid swelling the exteriority of the other. Without this effort, we would continue to think that there are ways of being that belong to some groups because they are marked by certain conditions and locations (racial, territorial, ethnic, etc.), where the work of the researcher would be to make visible, unveil or denounce how these characteristics define the other and make it susceptible to processes of subalternization.

Grosso alerts us to thinkers such as Derrida or Benjamin who reacted against this closure of modern thought, opening spaces for the experiences of otherness. He will tell us, "that otherness is exteriority" (Grosso 2019, p. 235). Indeed, one of the debates in contemporary thought is the question of exteriority, given that it closed all alternatives and located alterity as exteriority in the face of the totality of the world-system. World-system is the work of Wallerstein (1994) and "refers to the two hundred years spanning the period between 1460 and 1650. That is the period of the formation of a new historical system called by Wallerstein modern world-

system or European world-economy or capitalist world-economy" (Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 33). Husserl, Sartre, Levinas have developed the concept of otherness as the presence of the other necessary for the construction of the self and intersubjectivity. Levinas never thought that the other could be an Indian, an African, an Asian. The other is exteriority; while in Dussel it is the poor and oppressed Latin American people with respect to the dominating oligarchies.

The other is America with respect to the European totality. That other, reduced to otherness, and explained how Latin America at the beginning of modernity was outside that totality, outside world history (Dussel, 1994). Latin America was the periphery of Europe, the first periphery of the modern-colonial capitalist world system. "Habermas, for his part, did not consider the discovery of Latin America to have any relevance for his argument; it does not actually enter into history (Dussel, 1994, p. 35)³. It enters into history, says Gonzalez Gonzalez (2007) in order for the ethics of liberation to become concrete. Although I will not dwell on the postulates of these thinkers because it exceeds the objectives of this work, and because I do not come from the field of philosophy, I take up again the idea of the other as exteriority linked to that of otherness that can be concealed, because in a synthetic way it is what Salinas Paz claimed above.

Many investigations undertaken from the decolonial perspective - edge/liminal/border thinking- have been designed from that exteriority of the other, that is, from the experience of colonial wound with the pretension of making visible the concealment/marginalization/subjugation of certain groups and ended up achieving the opposite. In this attention paid to the way in which people produce knowledge in the spaces-temporalities they inhabit, and in the desire to communicate how the inhabitants mitigate and/or counteract the epistemic and memory dispossession of their vital spaces that has annulled/silenced/subdued their own knowledge, this was not done from the historical consciousness and discomfort of its inhabitants, but from a place of enunciation and academic habitation, not corresponding to the reality of those who suffer the colonial wounds. Thus a representation of the other was nurtured, of marginalized groups seen as outside history, as an exteriority.

Thus a path was traced that resulted in approaches to the problems of the other from that exteriority, thought from an argumentative-rational rationality that recreated the rational ontologies-relational ontologies dichotomy, in which epistemic dispossession went unnoticed by Western ontologies, as expressed by Gandarilla (2016). That non-attention to the situation of the colonized has been an obstacle, as Escobar (as cited in Duque, 2019) points out for the development of a modern dualist epistemology, but it has also been a great stimulus for its subsequent recognition in academia in recent decades.

If thinking in a decolonial key should avoid reproducing hierarchies, dualisms, and recognize that there are different ways of inhabiting and ways of valuing the environment, why in practice are some differences exaggerated or a theory extrapolated that ends up essentializing groups and placing them as the other of modernity, generating the opposite of what is proclaimed? I mean, in this path traced in pursuit of recognition and restitution of the denied, how many times do we end up migrating towards the indigenous, towards a relational epistemology that has little to do with the development of their daily lives of those who are making that record?

Cuestas-Caza (2019) is very clear in saying that the construction of alternatives does not consist of idealizing the world of the original peoples, since we are all pluriverse, not only indigenous people. This means that we must all strive to "live between worlds," says the author, that is, to live and think in the middle, with and from multiple worlds, as we attempt the (re)communalization of our daily existence, because the West is itself plural, inhabited by dissident voices and plural modernities. In a similar vein, Mendez Reyes and Mendoza (2017) warn about naïve yearnings for a lost identity, where the land and the return to the past are mythologized as a place of refuge. In contrast, the Latin American subject must be able to formulate an identity project, with an open dialectical attitude, without losing the perspective of utopia.

Tracing a path from one's own exteriority may be the path chosen by those who, not being indigenous, choose to recreate their lives from that inspiration, not as an imitation, but as an alternative. Here the option of locating oneself close to the other from one's own history and breaking with idealizations that can be made from the relational ontology that emphasizes the harmony of complements, multiple relationships between subjects and objects, or the demonization that fits from the rational ontology due to its instrumental

³ He is referring to intra-European Modernity.

character, is deliberate. In this scenario, I agree with Castro-Gómez when he states that we must not create an ontological dualism (as cited in Oviedo Freire, 2021), but that each must complete what is lacking in the other.

This is the idea of tracing a path from the other's exteriority to one's own, of inverting the burden and being able to recognize the production of other knowledge/own knowledge from the memories of the territory, whichever it may be, in order to face dememory and epistemic dispossession. What seems to be a theoretical postulate is supported by concrete research experiences when inquiring about knowledge related to food, to other ways of eating, less industrialized and more linked to the habitat in which one lives. This choice for another way of living/consuming, nowadays both rural and urban, also takes care of the health/disease relationship in another way, to cite some manifestations.

This attention to the production of other knowledge/local knowledge (not free from domination) requires combining intuition and rationality, and the experience of living and learning with and from others, without competing or speculating.

4 Thinking from our exteriority

As we have been constructing in this article, thinking from our exteriority implies placing ourselves as subjects also traversed by the persistence of coloniality, just like the populations treated as passive receivers of a way of inhabiting based on the capitalist experience that organized space-time and legitimized knowledge in accordance with the civilizing mission of the West. This mission produced modes of valuation and forms of universal-exclusionary inhabitation marked by the rhythms of capital, the voracity of new technologies that contribute to increase the experience of being part of a relative exteriority of the world-system, today of the global economy, not only from the economic point of view, but also for being increasingly outside the universally constructed normality and normativity.

So, recognizing this exteriority in ourselves does not mean having a way of life and becoming peasants, or imitating indigenous practices or people of color; rather, the call of this writing is to perform a reflective exercise of recognizing the heritages that are recreated and make us part of that exteriority, but from our place of enunciation and habitation, without imposturing the voice, without inhabiting false places, without migrating to what we are not, because as Urrego (2018, p. 216) expresses, "we are not indigenous, we cannot pretend to work from epistemic traditions that do not correspond to us". Having said this and returning to the question that motivates this reflection, what does it imply to think from our exteriority? What is it that connects our saying and doing with that of liminal groups, even when the point of departure is very dissimilar? Because if border or edge thinking arises in that relative exteriority of modernity, of populations living in spaces-times that were denied/invisibilized for being considered backward, how does this connect with the history of urban, modern subjects, descendants of Europeans who do not recognize themselves as part of the history of Abya Yala?

One of the conclusions drawn in this paper is that we recognize ourselves as part of an exteriority. This is not only experienced by certain groups. Thinking from our exteriority, personally led me to look at my work in retrospect, and to realize that exteriority is not something alien to us; we also inhabit it and therefore we enter into affinity and trust with those others so different from our history. Globalization has brought us closer, living on the edges, in discomfort. Hence the need to reverse the burden in the light of a critical self-reflexivity to recognize what liminal experiences constitute us in this disturbing, unstable, but always utopian present, recognizing ourselves as part of this exteriority is the first step to stop seeing it as something that belongs to others.

Lander's (2000) contribution is essential to understand how the organization of time and space given by the European experience legitimized a civilizing mission that resulted in the invisibility of territories and the consideration of their inhabitants as passive receivers of the dynamics taking place in the place. From the conviction that there are no passive receivers, this text distances itself from romantic visions that think that traditional communities organize their daily life guided by love, consensus and solidarity, following De la Garza's criticism (2020). From this general foundation and recovering Escobar's (2019) affirmation about Latin American Critical Thought (PCL) not being in crisis, since a multiplicity of perspectives converge in it (from the most theoretical to the most communal perspectives; from the Modernity/Coloniality program to the perspectives of relationality and communality, and new spiritualities), I insist that it is necessary to broaden the horizon of research in territory to nurture the PCL, and in it, to recognize the importance of place by claiming other places of enunciation, other histories from the varied material conditions of life.

These multiple exteriorities make possible the encounter between the traditional and the modern, the us and the others, the urban-hybrid world marked by the neoliberal model and other ways of living. Hence the importance of recovering other sources, other histories to reduce epistemic and memory dispossession, and to destabilize unique visions fed by the development of capital that seek to install a single possible way of inhabiting and valuing the habitat, where characters, memories, events and feelings linked to the spatial and temporal framework of the place tend to be annulled, marginalized, devalued. In this sense, the invitation to invert the burden consists in getting out of a logic where the other is seen as that exteriority of the world-system, lacking autonomy in multiple senses, in order to rethink it as constitutive of our existence. To recognize ourselves as part of the exteriority is to invert the burden, or as Rosero (2020) expresses, it is to stop denying that other that constitutes us and to overcome the hermeneutics of the invader.

Personally, at times in my trajectory the question of relationality appeared and the recurring question was how to take into account that relationality or that indigenous inspiration in our urban-modern-hybrid contexts marked by a liberal model of life. Although my life did not correspond to relational ontology, nor did it address the indigenous question, the interest in thinking the other from an inspiration that does not emanate only from rationality was maintained. Again agreeing with Urrego (2018) in the starting point: "we are not indigenous", I held the idea that this did not imply that we could not claim subjectivities that were left out, and agree with some perspectives that denounce that the academy prioritized the knowledge of remote receptors, such as sight and hearing (Restrepo, 2010) underestimating the other senses and the role of affectivity, privileging the written word (Rosero, 2020).

In this thinking from our exteriority, personally, there appeared as a constant concern to recover the indigenous inspiration for the non-indigenous, and I found in the so-called "small stories starred by concrete subjects" a different way of saying and another way of facing the everyday, from the reality of each one; because as Restrepo (2010, p. 93) says "knowledge is neither here nor there, neither in the subject nor in the object, but in an intermediate place, a place of interaction and joint construction"; in other words, in the joint interaction between the self and the other, in that intersectionality. However, most of my contributions were concerned with denouncing the concealment of the other in contexts of dispossession promoted by the development of extractive-mining activities, but again, I spoke of an other, the one who lives in those contexts. And although I tried to account for the persistence of coloniality and how colonial legacies are intertwined in everyday life allowing the continuity of a colonial pattern of being (ontological dimension), knowledge (epistemic dimension) and power (economic-political dimension) that prevent the movement towards other possible modes of existence, I did so without reversing the burden, as if the problem only affected those groups.

Somehow reversing the burden and thinking from our exteriority forces us to situate ourselves in the concrete circumstances of our lives and pay attention to the dialectical movement of presence-absence (Vazquez-Melkén, 2014). While the former tends to accentuate a neoliberal capitalist way of life, doing everything possible to not let other ways of life emerge marking the absence of alternatives, that presence, in the same act, emphasizes the absence of possibilities and with it the configuration of alternative subjectivities

5 Conclusions

We are approaching the end of this paper and we are still thinking about the expression contained in its title. A few lines above I asked myself: of what exteriority am I a part, what makes me be in tune with those other protagonists of my research, if many times there is no shared history, nor location, nor generational proximity?

Little by little I came to understand that with my interlocutors we shared the feeling of being outside the dominant logic, totally or partially, or as if against the interests of the spheres that contain us or the fashions of the moment. Idealism and passion for what we do placed us on the margin, with autonomy and authority, and that made us indomitable. Being on the margin was accompanied by estrangement and loneliness. Even in the recognition and respect of others, this feeling remained. Our exteriority was to inhabit those edges. We were comfortable on the margin, but from the inside. Then finally, that Other was not so different from me. I could enter into dialogue, in tune with their saying and doing. We felt part of an exteriority that sought to differentiate itself from a dominant logic in the institutions, whose ways of doing were tinged with hierarchy, classification and differentiation. Somehow we shared a different way of thinking. Thus, I try a response to this concern to reverse the burden to stop thinking from the other's exteriority and to think from my own, developing an other thought from my place of enunciation and habitation.

Not as certainty but as suspicion, by inverting the load we would let out those experiences linked to the multiple violences to detach ourselves from it, and from giving place to the generation of other knowledge, not as a beautiful expression empty of meaning, but from that exteriority that we occupy. Continuing with the promotion of situated research, from this exteriority in which our daily life unfolds, there is room for concerns, desires, wishes, fears, memories and knowledge, which are also situated, because together with them a research praxis is being configured where the experiences of individuals and collectives gain relevance, with their stories and testimonies of life, making possible other ways of living life with dignity.

As a bet, in a broad sense, this paper intended to contribute to the corpus of works that problematize decolonial thinking, playing with the notions of exteriority, the other and other thought. Although this reflection was incipient, and it raised more questions than answers, it starts from an exercise of critical self-reflexivity. We have pointed out the importance of denaturalizing-desromanticizing situations of everyday life in order not to exoticize the other, or to load him with attributes that do not correspond to his reality. The challenge to reverse the burden is to recognize that stories are crossed by a multiplicity of actors and interests, that they are plural and heterogeneous, and that this apparent exteriority is also part of us. To exoticize the other would be to vindicate modern subjectivities that were left out of the world built by political and economic technology, but was anyone left out? For the time being, we must be attentive not to cover up the other, but not ourselves either. Recovering Ortíz Ocaña's words from the aforementioned conversation, it is up to us to self-decolonize, or in the words of Rosero (2020), to overcome the logic of the invader. That is what reversing the burden is all about, to divest ourselves of the modern ego that constitutes us. This is the openness and detachment that decolonial thinking invites us to realize.

I leave for the end some expressions of Palermo (2017, p. 14) in his restless search for answers, an attitude with which many may feel identified. Something similar happens to me in my sleepless nights: "to devote our sleepless nights to know a little more the place that inhabits us and we inhabit".

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