



Liberating pedagogy and decoloniality: dialogues among Paulo Freire, Enrique Dussel, and Ramón Grosfoguel

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Abstract

The colonization of Latin America was a historical event that impacted the entire world, leaving enduring consequences that persist to this day, such as Eurocentrism and epistemic racism/sexism, which have entrenched their claws into Westernized universities, hierarchizing epistemologies. In this context, Enrique Dussel and Ramón Grosfoguel propose pluriversal transmodernity, a decolonial project aimed at fostering intercultural philosophical dialogue among all peoples, promoting the valorization of epistemologies marginalized by Europe and the United States. Paulo Freire, with his Liberating Pedagogy, contributed through his proposal to appreciate popular knowledge, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the social, historical, and political context in which individuals are situated. Therefore, the objective of this article is to correlate the ideas of Freire, Dussel, and Grosfoguel, aiming to contribute to a debate that inspires decolonial and emancipatory educational practices, centering the knowledge produced by Latin American authors.

Keywords: Decoloniality. Dussel. Liberating Education. Freire. Grosfoguel.

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Resumo

A colonização da América Latina foi um evento histórico que impactou todo o mundo, trazendo consequências que perduram até os dias atuais, como o eurocentrismo e o racismo/sexismo epistêmico que cravou suas garras nas universidades ocidentalizadas, hierarquizando epistemologias. Nesse sentido, Enrique Dussel e Ramón Grosfoguel propõem a transmodernidade pluriversal, um projeto decolonial que visa um diálogo filosófico intercultural entre todos os povos, promovendo a valorização das epistemologias menosprezadas pela Europa e pelos Estados Unidos. Paulo Freire, com sua Pedagogia Libertadora, contribuiu a partir de sua proposta de apreciação do conhecimento popular, destacando a importância de reconhecer o contexto social, histórico e político em que o sujeito está inserido. Portanto, o objetivo deste artigo é correlacionar as ideias de Freire, Dussel e Grosfoguel, visando contribuir com um debate que inspire práticas

educativas decoloniais e emancipadoras, valorizando os conhecimentos construídos por autores latino-americanos.

Palavras-chave: Decolonialidade. Dussel. Educação Libertadora. Freire. Grosfoguel.

1 Introduction

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The choice of this topic is justified by the need to deconstruct the effects of colonization in Latin America, which hierarchized cultures and knowledge while imposing a Eurocentric hegemony. This process culminated in the epistemicide of indigenous cultures and the marginalization of peripheral knowledges, with visible repercussions in educational and academic structures that persist to this day. In this context, articulating Paulo Freire's liberatory proposals with the decolonial objectives of Enrique Dussel and Ramón Grosfoguel is a fundamental strategy to value the epistemologies of the oppressed and promote a more inclusive education centered on the exteriority of the Other.

The aim of this article is to establish a correlation between the ideas of Freire, Dussel, and Grosfoguel, understanding the consequences of colonialism in Latin America and worldwide, and proposing Freire's pedagogy as a means toward Pluriversal Transmodernity (Transmodernidad Pluriversal), thereby contributing to the construction of a comprehension that inspires decolonial and emancipatory educational practices.

The methodology employed is bibliographical in nature, with a qualitative approach, grounded in the analysis of the authors' central works and complementary studies that engage in dialogue with their proposals.

The colonization of Latin America was a historical event that completely altered the course of the continent and the world. Europe established itself as the center of the world, while continents such as Latin America and Africa were regarded as "peripheries"; their identities and knowledge were devalued, their histories disregarded, thus establishing Eurocentrism globally.

Enrique Dussel, in his philosophy of liberation, critiques the myth of modernity and the “discovery of America,” redefining it as the concealment of the subjectivities of indigenous peoples. His advocacy of transmodernity is presented as a decolonial project aimed at overcoming Eurocentric hegemony, proposing a pluriversal world in which the knowledges and cultures of the “other faces” are recognized and respected—faces oppressed in the process of concealing the Other and its exteriority.

Ramón Grosfoguel is a Caribbean author, specifically from Puerto Rico, who addresses the epistemological consequences of colonization for Westernized universities, focusing on the problem of epistemic racism and sexism embedded in the foundational structures of these institutions. He advocates for a decoloniality that is primarily anti-imperial, aiming at pluriversal transmodernity.

Among education theorists, Paulo Freire proposes overcoming the contradiction between oppressors and the oppressed through educational practices oriented toward liberation. His approach values popular culture and “knowledge from lived experience,” fostering students’ critical awareness of the historical, social, and political contexts in which they are embedded. In this sense, Freire defends an emancipatory education that not only instructs but transforms, preparing individuals to act as protagonists of their own history.

This article is structured into four main sections. The first section connects the European invasion, described by Dussel, with the Theory of Antidialogical Action, described by Freire, seeking to demonstrate that colonization was an antidialogical process. The second section addresses democratic inexperience and closed societies, explained by Freire, as consequences of colonization. The third section examines epistemicides, explicated by Grosfoguel, and their consequences for Brazilian universities. The fourth section presents liberatory pedagogy as a pathway toward pluriversal transmodernity.

2 1492 and the Theory of Antidialogical Action

It was in the context of the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the “discovery” of the Americas, in 1992, that Enrique Dussel wrote the book *1492: The Concealment of the Other* (*1492: o encobrimento do outro*) as a form of protest against this celebration of colonization, which brought so many negative consequences to Latin American countries. In this work, he describes the historical process of invasion from the perspective of indigenous peoples, subverting the hegemony of Eurocentrism. He presents four figures that appear in the development of this historical unfolding: invention, discovery (concealment), conquest, and colonization of the indigenous peoples.

According to Dussel (1993), the term *Invention of America* (*Invenção da América*) was proposed by the Mexican historian Edmundo O’Gorman in a historical reconstruction of the ontological experience lived by Christopher Columbus upon arriving in the Americas. Columbus’ main objective was to reach Asia, specifically India, via the West, aiming at the expansion of the Christian faith and the acquisition of nautical knowledge to obtain wealth. In his journey, he reached the Americas, believing he had arrived in Asia, and died in 1506 still holding this belief. In all his letters and writings, he described reaching Asia upon seeing the indigenous peoples, whom he called “Indians,” in reference to India.

In this sense, for Dussel, the “Asian-being” attributed to Latin American indigenous peoples was an invention that existed only in the imagination of the great Mediterranean navigators. It was the first form of concealment of the Other, who was not discovered as Other, with their particularities and differences, but rather as the already known “self,”¹ the Asian.

The term *discovery* refers to the experience of the navigator Amerigo Vespucci, who, unlike Christopher Columbus, realized that he had arrived at a land unknown to them,

¹ The “self” (*si-mesmo*) that Dussel addresses is a projection that Europeans imposed on the Other, deriving from themselves and ignoring the differences and particularities of the Other.

and not Asia. It is through the short work *Mundus Novus* that Vespucci describes the discovery of a Fourth Part of the World, since at the time it was believed there were only three parts (Europe, Asia, and Africa).

For O’Gorman, in his ontological foundation, this experience is not a “discovery” of the new, but simply the recognition of a matter or potential upon which the European begins to invent his own “image and likeness.” America is not discovered as something that resists as distinct, with the Other, but as the matter upon which the “self” is projected. Therefore, it is not the “appearance of the Other,” but the “projection of the self”: concealment (Dussel, 1993, p. 35).

Thus, this “discovery,” according to Dussel (1993), was, in fact, the concealment of the Other, since the indigenous peoples were not recognized with respect for their differences, but were instead seen as a European “self,” that is, they were expected to be like the Europeans. “And it was in this way that the Europeans [...] became [...] the ‘missionaries of civilization throughout the world,’ especially with the ‘barbarian peoples’” (Dussel, 1993, p. 36). This marked the beginning of the conquest.

The conquest of the indigenous peoples of Latin America was not an aesthetic or contemplative experience like the two previous figures, but the praxis of domination over indigenous peoples. The main subject of these practices was the European military man.

Conquest is a military, practical, and violent process, which dialectically incorporates the Other as the “self.” The Other, in their distinctiveness, is denied as Other and is subjected, subsumed, and alienated into the dominating Totality as a thing, as an instrument, as the oppressed, as a “hired” laborer, as a “wage worker” (in future plantations), or as an African slave (in sugar mills or other tropical product industries) (Dussel, 1993, p. 44).

This gives rise to what Dussel (1993) calls *ego conquiro*, translating as “I conquer, therefore I exist.” Through conquest, violence, and dehumanization, Europeans subjugated the Other to assert their superiority.

Dussel (1993) describes Hernán Cortés’ conquest of the Aztec people in Mexico, taking advantage of the indigenous peoples’ unfamiliarity with battle artifacts already in use in Europe (cannon fire, cavalry charges, etc.), which he used to intimidate them and

reinforce his position as a deity². “It was an entire pyrotechnic performance, to ‘admire’ the religious symbolic ‘world’ of the Indians. The Aztecs were disoriented” (Dussel, 1993, p. 46).

He negotiated with some, divided others, and gradually defeated them—in violent battles in which the soldiers, a small handful, demonstrated in every way the skills acquired over more than seven centuries of fighting against Muslims on the Iberian Peninsula: the use of firearms, gunpowder cannons, trained killer dogs, horses considered unknown gods, etc. (Dussel, 1993, p. 47).

The colonization of the *lifeworld*, the final figure explicated by Dussel, refers to the domination of the indigenous peoples’ daily life. Here emerges the phallic ego: the use of sexual violence against indigenous women. A sexuality is imposed based on domination, violation, and dehumanization of the Other. “Purely masculine, oppressive, alienating, unjust sexuality” (Dussel, 1993, p. 52). Meanwhile, the domination of indigenous men was carried out through forced labor and enslavement.

Dussel explicates the myth of Modernity, which consists of a reversal of blame in the colonization process—blaming the innocent (the indigenous) for their suffering while exonerating the guilty (the colonizers) for acts of cruelty. This myth conveys the idea that the colonizers were civilizing heroes and that the genocide of Latin American indigenous peoples was a necessary step toward modernization.

Against this narrative, Dussel (1993) opposes the myth of modernity, showing that the reality was that the Europeans were guilty—they were the barbarians who used violence, domination, and conquest to subjugate other peoples. The indigenous peoples, the victims, were dehumanized, subjugated, enslaved, and exterminated by European cruelty and greed in pursuit of wealth and hegemony.

In Freire (1983), dialogicality is one of the foundations of Liberatory Pedagogy. In this sense, he analyzes cultural action theories developed from both antidiological and dialogical matrices. He thus describes the theory of antidiological action, which constitutes

² The Aztecs believed that Hernán Cortés was the god Quetzalcoatl.

a form of oppression and has four main aspects: conquest, divide to dominate, manipulation, and cultural invasion.

Conquest is a necessity of antidiological action; it is its main objective and essential for maintaining the state of oppression. It is essentially a form of dehumanization, as in the act of conquest there is a conquering subject and a conquered object. The former is introjected into the consciousness of the latter as a host, stealing their word and culture (Freire, 1983).

The mythification of the world serves conquest. The masses are alienated through myths so that they perceive reality as immutable and thus become passive, mere spectators who do not transform the world, failing to exercise their ontological vocation as subjects intervening in reality.

All these myths, and others that the reader may identify, whose introjection by the oppressed popular masses is basic for their conquest, are delivered to them through well-organized propaganda and slogans, whose vehicles are always the so-called “mass communication media.” As if the deposit of this alienating content within them were really communication (Freire, 1983, p. 164).

An indispensable condition for maintaining the status quo is the strategy of divide to dominate. For the elites, the union and organization of the masses constitute one of the main threats to the hegemony of their power. “Concepts such as union, organization, and struggle are promptly branded as dangerous” (Freire, 1983, p. 165).

The manipulation of the masses is a fundamental instrument of conquest and the maintenance of domination. Its purpose, beyond deception, is to anesthetize the popular masses so that they do not think critically. Myths, which are alienating and false contents introjected into the masses through the media, are the primary means of manipulation used by the elites.

Finally, cultural invasion is described as one of the characteristics of antidiological action and serves conquest. Freire (1983) characterizes it as the penetration of the invaders into the cultural context of the invaded, imposing their own worldview. It is a violent, alienating process aimed at making the Other perceive their reality through the

dominator's perspective, turning the Other into an inauthentic being convinced of their inferiority.

Freire (1983) warns of the influence of cultural invasion on formative institutions such as schools and the family itself, since these are embedded in social, historical, political, and cultural contexts, and consequently are conditioned by structural forces.

Homes and schools, primary, secondary, and university, which do not exist in the air but in time and space, cannot escape the influence of structural objective conditions. They largely operate within dominating structures, functioning as agencies that form future "invaders" (Freire, 1983, p. 180).

When correlating the works of Dussel (1993) and Freire (1983), we notice similarities between the actions of the colonizers during the invasion process and the characteristics of antialogical action. In 1492, Europeans were the conquering subjects, while Latin Americans were the conquered objects, resulting in the dehumanization and inferiority of the Other.

The invasion of Latin American territory is closely related to what Freire characterizes as cultural invasion. At no point was the lifestyle or worldview of the indigenous peoples of Latin America respected. On the contrary, Europeans violently imposed their ideals, crushing and destroying as much of indigenous culture as they could. They demonized religiosity, disrespected local ways of life, raped indigenous women, enslaved and decimated entire populations—all in the name of the god of modernity: the so-called capital.

Myths, manipulation, and deceit were present at every moment. In addition to employing unfamiliar instruments of war to demonstrate divinity to the indigenous peoples, there was the massacre of the Aztec nobility, who had been invited by Pedro Alvarado, one of the Spanish conquerors, to a "festivity" without weapons, only to be locked inside the temple and murdered with extraordinary cruelty (Dussel, 1993).

Furthermore, myths were created that persist to this day, such as that of the "encounter of two worlds," which conveys the idea of a "[...] new world as a culture built from the harmonious unity of two worlds and cultures: European and indigenous" (Dussel,

1993, p. 64), when in reality, the encounter was neither friendly nor equal, but rather the domination and destruction of the Other.

From all this, we can conclude that the colonization of Latin America—the process Dussel called the “concealment of the Other,” specifically the Latin American indigenous peoples—was a violent and oppressive antidialogical action, as it was based on cultural invasion, the conquest of the Other, their dehumanization, and manipulation through myths founded in the New World and Modernity as a political-pedagogical project of eternal conquest.

3 Closed society and democratic inexperience: consequences of 1492 for Brazilian society

The closed society, as characterized by Freire (2020), is antidialogical, anti-democratic, and colonial, based on cultural alienation, rendering people reflexive³ rather than reflective. The elites, distant and above the masses, command them, prescribing what they should think, want, and do. Themes such as popular participation, freedom, and education are minimized or manipulated to maintain the status quo of domination and oppression.

It serves as the starting point for the transitional moment of society—a period of significant change in which old themes and beliefs are replaced by new ones. The goal of this process is to achieve an open society, that is, a dialogical, democratic society in which people are the subjects of history, creators and re-creators of culture, resulting in popular participation.

The marks of a Brazilian society with a closed structure have their origin in our democratic inexperience—one of the deepest historical roots of the country (Freire, 2020).

³ The term *reflexive* indeed refers to reflexes—actions performed without the mediation of thought. A simple example occurs when one inadvertently touches a hot pan and immediately withdraws the hand. In this case, there is no time for reflection: the body reacts automatically, driven solely by instinct.

This deficiency is a direct inheritance of Portuguese colonization, which did not provide conditions for the flourishing of democratic life. Driven by a dominating impulse, the colonizers sought not to establish an autonomous and participatory civilization but merely to exploit the territory economically and subjugate its inhabitants.

Democracy, which, before being a political form, is a way of life, is characterized primarily by a strong degree of consciousness transitivity in human behavior. Transitivity that neither emerges nor develops except under certain conditions in which humans are engaged in debate, the examination of their own problems and common problems, in which humans participate (Freire, 2020, p. 108).

From its earliest times, permeated by inequality, colonization in our country was oriented toward large estates—farms, sugar mills, and extensive territories owned by a single person, who also “owned” other people, who were dehumanized and objectified.

What developed was a culture of oppression and antidiálogo, grounded in slavery, which did not recognize indigenous and Black people as human beings, as subjects creating and re-creating history and culture. On the contrary, they were treated merely as things, negotiable products with the colonizer’s ultimate goal of profit.

There is really no possibility of dialoguing with the structure of large landholding and the type of economy that characterized it, markedly autarkic. Dialogue implies a mindset that does not flourish in closed, autarkic areas. These, on the contrary, constitute an ideal climate for antidiálogo, for vertical impositions, for the emphasis and robustness of the masters, for authoritarianism, for the harsh law imposed by the very “owner of the lands and the people” (Freire, 2020, p. 94).

There was no communal experience, as the people had no freedom to think, reflect, act, or express their beliefs, religiosities, and traditions, or to participate in political decisions. “Among us, on the contrary, what prevailed was human muteness. It was their non-participation in solving common problems. In truth, with the type of colonization we had, communal experience was lacking” (Freire, 2020, p. 95). For Dussel, this represents an exclusion of the Other.

In this sense, these consequences of colonization and democratic inexperience are closely related to the way education is conducted in Brazil. Teacher-student relationships are almost always vertical, following an authoritarian, anti-democratic, and

antidialogical logic. This is what Freire (1983) criticizes in Brazilian education, which he terms “banking education.”

In the “banking” view of education, “knowledge” is a donation from those who consider themselves wise to those who consider themselves ignorant. This donation is founded on one of the instrumental manifestations of the ideology of oppression—the absolutization of ignorance, which constitutes what we call the alienation of ignorance, according to which ignorance is always located in the other (Freire, 1983, p. 67).

In this conception, educating is an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the educator the depositor. That is, teachers are the subjects who possess all the knowledge to be inserted into the student, who is a mere object and possesses no knowledge.

Excessive teacher narration is one of the main characteristics of this educational model. For Freire (1983), such narrations are emptied of concrete dimensions, as they do not take into account the students’ prior knowledge and realities, which transforms the teacher’s speech into hollow words, lacking expressive meaning for the students. The focus is solely on mechanical memorization of information.

Thus, it can be observed that the colonization process, with all its particularities highlighted by Dussel and Freire, produced profound and lasting consequences for Brazilian society from the colonial period to the present. Its effects extend to various aspects of social life, especially political formation and education, which continue to reflect an experience historically marked by the absence of democratic ideals.

4 Epistemicides and the consequences for Brazilian universities

From the previous discussion, we can see that colonization had consequences for Brazilian education, but also for various Westernized universities. According to Grosfoguel (2022), the knowledge structures of these institutions are fundamentally based on

epistemic racism and sexism, which originated from the four epistemicides⁴ of the fifteenth century, including those of indigenous peoples and Africans in Latin America, as well as of women. In this sense, there is a hierarchy of knowledge—an “epistemic apartheid”—in which knowledge from the Global South and knowledge produced by women is undervalued and segregated.

From 1492 to the present, one of the most invisible hierarchies of the world-system has been the global epistemic hierarchy, whereby knowledge produced in the “West” is considered superior, while knowledge produced in areas labeled “non-Western” is deemed inferior. Since the sixteenth century, epistemic racism/sexism and the Eurocentric fundamentalism that produces this global epistemic hierarchy have been reproduced worldwide through the globalization of the Westernized university (Grosfoguel, 2012, p. 339).

Dussel (1993) presents an example of indigenous epistemicide by recounting the destruction of the *tlamatinime*. According to León-Portilla (*apud* Dussel, 1993), the *tlamatinime*—wise men or Aztec shamans—were responsible for transmitting wisdom to new generations, guiding them and illuminating the path of their people. They were, in essence, the philosophers of Aztec civilization. Their education took place at the *Calmécac*, an institution where children separated from their families to learn through codices⁵ and dialogue with the masters, cultivating knowledge and reflection.

According to Melo (2007), the *Calmécac* curriculum included the teaching of astrology, myths, sacred paintings, divinatory calendars, history, hermeneutics, interpretation, oratory, and rhetoric, aimed at preparing students for the priesthood and high administrative positions in the Empire.

According to Grosfoguel (2022), just as in the conquest of Al-Andalus, where epistemicide was carried out against Muslims and Jews through the burning of the Library of Córdoba and other collections, Europeans also aimed to destroy the knowledge of the indigenous peoples, resulting in the elimination of codices.

⁴ *Epistemicide* is a term coined by Boaventura de Sousa Santos and refers to the destruction of knowledge and epistemology, closely linked to the destruction of peoples—that is, genocide.

⁵ According to Melo (2007), codices were sacred books that gathered diverse information, such as knowledge about gods, rituals, religious festivals, plants, maps, and other subjects.

Thus, in contrast to the Eurocentric narrative, it becomes evident that indigenous peoples—as well as many other cultures outside the European and North American axis—possessed and still possess their own epistemologies, with knowledge systems, beliefs, and languages rooted in their cultural contexts. However, due to successive epistemicides, these forms of knowledge were systematically undervalued and replaced by knowledge considered “universal” in academic institutions.

According to Grosfoguel (2022), countries are subjected to a false epistemic universalism, which, in reality, corresponds to knowledge produced from a provincial perspective of five Westernized nations: Italy, France, England, Germany, and the United States. This knowledge is elevated to the status of universal truth, disregarding the historical, social, and political contrasts specific to each nation.

Westernized universities, from the outset, internalized the racist/sexist structures created by the four genocides/epistemicides of the sixteenth century. These Eurocentric knowledge structures became consensual. It is considered normal for Western men from five countries to produce the canon of all disciplines within that university. There is no scandal in this; it is merely a reflection of the naturalization of racist/sexist epistemic structures that prevail in the modern and colonial world (Grosfoguel, 2016, p. 43).

Silva Neto (2023) addresses the epistemic Eurocentrism entrenched in academia, especially in teacher education, as a modern/colonial project *ad infinitum*⁶, that is, through the hegemony of Western knowledge in the curriculum, to the detriment of the epistemology of the Other, aiming to maintain an eternal colonization of knowledge.

We argue that, since the invasion/conquest and concealment of the Other (the Amerindian), invading, denying, and concealing the Other were strategies to subsume oneself into this Other—the Amerindian, in the newly invaded and conquered world—and remain mechanisms of concealment of the Other, still in progress *ad infinitum* in Latin America and Africa, now subsumed into the curricula of the Human and Social Sciences (Silva Neto, 2023, p. 32).

⁶ Latin term meaning “infinitely.”

In the Brazilian context, it could not have been different. According to Silva (2018), the creation of higher education in Brazil, following the arrival of the Portuguese Crown in 1808, aimed to serve white, colonial, slaveholding elites, reinforcing the interests of Portuguese colonialism. In this process, indigenous and Black knowledge was silenced, while European theories were imported and legitimized, contributing to the consolidation of scientific racism in the country.

Freire (2020) also identifies marks of colonization in universities. According to the author, in these spaces Brazil is not studied as a historical subject, possessing its own characteristics rooted in its social and cultural context, but is analyzed from European and North American perspectives. Thus, by internalizing Eurocentric thought, the idea is consolidated that Latin American countries occupy a peripheral position relative to Europe and that their history began only in 1492.

[...] the consciousness of Brazilian intellectuals, or of the vast majority of those who thought and wrote within Brazil, had as a reference point for both their thinking and the evaluation of their thinking the reality of Brazil as an object of European, and later North American, thought. Thinking about Brazil, in general, was thinking about Brazil from a non-Brazilian perspective. [...] Turning their backs on their own world, disgusted by it, they suffered because Brazil was not identical to the imaginary world in which they lived. Because Brazil was not Europe or the United States. In truth, by internalizing the European view of Brazil as a backward country, they denied Brazil and sought refuge and security in erudition without the true Brazil; the more they wanted to be cultured, the less they wanted to be Brazilian (Freire, 2020, p. 129).

In agreement with Freire's thought, Figueiredo and Grosfoguel (2007, p. 38) affirm that "knowledge production in Brazilian universities, as in almost all Western universities, privileges Eurocentric epistemology," resulting in the marginalization of Black intellectual contributions in academia and the negligible presence of these authors in higher education curricula.

According to Silva (2018), even though there is a movement to adopt public policies for minority access to universities, one of the greatest problems of Brazilian higher education is the difficulty of epistemological change that seeks to value ethnic-racial

diversity and its knowledge, which is set in opposition to the Eurocentric knowledge transmitted by academia.

For the decolonization of Westernized universities, Grosfoguel (2022) asserts that, among other measures, three actions are necessary. The first is to recognize that provincialism and epistemic racism/sexism in Westernized universities are the results of the colonial/patriarchal genocidal/epistemicidal projects of the sixteenth century. The second is to break with the false universalism imposed by the Western white man. The third is to introduce epistemic diversity into the canon of thought, promoting inter-epistemic dialogue among various traditions to create new concepts and ideas collaboratively.

5 Pedagogy of the Oppressed: a path toward Pluriversal Transmodernity

As previously analyzed, the European invasion of Latin America, as well as the four epistemicides presented by Grosfoguel, brought consequences for Latin America and the world, particularly in the educational sphere, which has shown itself to be based on antidialogical and anti-democratic principles, hierarchizing epistemologies by imposing a provincial universality on the world and verticalizing the teacher-student relationship.

In this sense, Dussel (2014) proposes *Transmodernity* as a decolonial project, in which there is critical intercultural dialogue that values the diverse epistemologies marginalized or ignored by European and North American modern culture, promoting horizontal relationships in philosophical discussions. Therefore, the transmodern project:

En primer lugar, indica la afirmación, como autovalorización, de los momentos culturales propios negados o simplemente despreciados que se encuentran en la exterioridad de la Modernidad; que aun han quedado fuera de la consideración destructiva de esa pretendida cultura moderna universal. En segundo lugar, esos valores tradicionales ignorados por la Modernidad deben ser el punto de arranque de una crítica interna, desde las posibilidades hermenéuticas propias de la misma cultura. En tercer lugar, los críticos, para serlo, son aquellos que viviendo la biculturalidad de las “fronteras” pueden crear un pensamiento crítico. En cuarto lugar, esto supone un tiempo largo de resistencia, de maduración, de acumulación de fuerzas. Es el tiempo del cultivo acelerado y creador del desarrollo de la propia tradición cultural ahora en camino hacia una utopía trans-moderna. Se trata de una

estrategia de crecimiento y creatividad de una renovada cultura no sólo descolonizada sino novedosa (Dussel, 2015, p. 293).

In this sense, for Dussel (2002), the *trans* in *transmodernity* means “beyond”—beyond Modernity and what Europe and the United States value. This decolonial project starts from the exteriority of the Other, which was obscured by the movement initiated in 1492, excluded by modernity and considered insignificant, barbaric, a-historical, inferior, and underdeveloped.

Grosfoguel (2022) also addresses the concept of transmodernity developed by Dussel, which, according to him, points to the liberation from oppressive structures.

Transmodernity is an invitation to produce, from different political-epistemic projects existing in the world today, a redefinition of the many elements appropriated by Eurocentric Modernity and treated as inherent to Europe, toward a decolonial liberation project beyond capitalist, patriarchal, Eurocentric, Christian, modern, and colonial structures (Grosfoguel, 2016, p. 45).

Grosfoguel (2022) further affirms that Transmodernity aims to transform colonial “uni-versities” into decolonial “pluri-versities.” That is, instead of a single holder of hegemonic epistemology, there will be a plurality of knowledge and ideas incorporated into universities, respecting cultural, historical, and political differences and valuing epistemologies beyond Modernity.

The decolonial struggle for pluriversal transmodernity must be linked to anti-imperialism, because: “no hay capitalismo mundial ni sistema imperialista global sin la dominación racial/colonial del mundo” (Grosfoguel, 2022, p. 60). Imperialism uses colonialism; to be decolonial is to be anti-imperialist.

According to Amin (2005), imperialism began in 1492 with the conquest of the Americas. Its second phase occurred with the colonial subjugation of Asia and Africa, based on the Industrial Revolution. The third phase, under U.S. hegemony, has developed since the fall of the Soviet Union. Imperialist objectives include: “control of market expansion, plundering the planet’s natural resources, and the overexploitation of labor reserves in the periphery” (Amin, 2005, p. 84).

The military dimension plays a central role in the United States' imperialist project, which carries out "preventive wars" to maintain its monopoly of domination (Amin, 2005). Césaire (2020, p. 33) also critiques U.S. imperialism: "[...] the barbarity of Western Europe today is incredibly large, only far surpassed by one: the North American."

Similarly, Freire (2023, p. 243) criticizes imperialism and the new forms of subjugation of peoples, stating: "What I defend and suggest is a radical break with colonialism and an equally radical refusal of neocolonialism," advocating for the overcoming of schools with colonial characteristics.

In this context, the importance of Freire's Theory of Dialogical Action (1983) becomes evident in the process of valuing the epistemology of the oppressed, aiming to achieve pluriversal transmodernity. A critical education seeks to raise awareness of the Latin American reality and overcome the oppressor-oppressed dichotomy. Freire (2020) provides a concept of dialogue:

And what is dialogue? It is a horizontal relationship of A with B. It arises from a critical matrix and generates criticality (Jaspers). It is nourished by love, humility, hope, faith, trust. Therefore, only dialogue communicates. And when both poles of dialogue are thus connected, with love, with hope, with faith in one another, they become critical in the search for something. Then a relationship of sympathy between both is established. Only then is there communication (Freire, 2020, p. 141).

There are four characteristics of Dialogical Action: collaboration, unity, organization, and cultural synthesis.

Collaboration, a fundamental feature of the Theory of Dialogical Action, can only occur if there is communication and dialogue: "Dialogue does not impose, does not manipulate, does not domesticate, does not sloganize" (Freire, 1983, p. 197).

There is no place for conquest or the mythification of the world. Problematizing reality is necessary to unveil myths.

For Freire (1983), the unity of the oppressed signifies a solidarity relationship among them, implying class consciousness, in which they comprehend the oppressive reality and recognize themselves as creative and recreative beings, capable of intervening

in the world and transforming their own reality. This unity of the masses is indispensable for liberation.

Organization is an extension of unity. Freire (1983) emphasizes that leadership must be in communion with the masses, with them, and not above them. Authoritarianism and conquest cannot be present, as they dehumanize and subordinate the Other. In this sense, dialogue is essential for communication and the democratic nature of the organization:

They forget that their fundamental goal is to fight with the people for the recovery of stolen humanity and not to conquer the people. This verb should not belong to their language, but to that of the oppressor. The revolutionary must liberate and liberate with the people, not conquer them (Freire, 1983, p. 100).

Finally, cultural synthesis, the opposite of cultural invasion, “does not deny the differences between one vision and another; on the contrary, it is founded upon them. What it denies is the invasion of one by the other. What it affirms is the indisputable contribution that one gives to the other” (Freire, 1983, p. 215).

There is no hierarchy or superimposition of one culture over another; rather, there is communion and horizontal exchange.

Education can be a tool for liberation and emancipation in the broader decolonial project of pluriversal transmodernity. Freire’s *Liberating Pedagogy*, based on dialogue, conscientization, reflection, and the valuing of popular knowledge, can contribute to the recognition of excluded epistemologies. “Education is an act of love, therefore, an act of courage. It cannot fear debate. Analysis of reality. It cannot escape creative discussion, under penalty of being a sham” (Freire, 2020, p. 127).

Thus, critical education must foster a careful observation of reality, analyzing historical, social, and political contexts, examining relations of oppression, and proposing means to overcome them.

6 Final Considerations

The covering-up of Latin America was not a “meeting of two worlds,” with a harmonious exchange of ideas and relationships, but rather an antidialogical process of dehumanization of the Other, in which genocide and epistemicide of the indigenous peoples occurred. In other words, besides destroying the original inhabitants of this land, the Europeans also aimed to destroy their ideas, traditions, and knowledge.

This process had consequences for Brazil, where the strong presence of dehumanization of the Other and the verticalization of relationships—leading to the population’s non-participation in political decisions—left a colonial legacy of democratic inexperience, characterizing Brazilian society as a closed one.

The effects of colonialism extended worldwide, as the epistemicides of the sixteenth century promoted epistemic racism and sexism as the foundational basis of Western universities, marginalizing the epistemologies of peoples outside Europe and the United States, thereby sustaining the Eurocentric idea that these countries are the center of the world.

We highlight Aimé Césaire’s assertion (2020, p. 9): “Europe is indefensible.” The European acts of barbarity, initiated in 1492, had drastic consequences that persist to this day in Latin America. We do not know our own history, culture, or epistemology, as these are taught in schools and universities from the conqueror’s perspective—that is, following a Eurocentric logic.

As a solution to this situation, transmodernity arises as a pluriversal decolonial project, which seeks, through interphilosophical dialogue among peoples beyond those valued by Eurocentrism, to valorize the epistemologies of all peoples, promoting a diversity of knowledge and ideas and freeing the world from the clutches of Eurocentrism that dehumanizes the Other.

Liberating Pedagogy, based on the Theory of Dialogical Action, by valuing popular knowledge and fostering collaboration, unity, organization, and cultural synthesis, grounded in dialogue, can contribute to this decolonial project, promoting the union of all

oppressed peoples to free themselves from the oppression that afflicts them—Eurocentrism.

Finally, we highlight Freire's words (2021, p. 86): "The future belongs to the Peoples, not the Empires," as the vision we must strive toward—a pluriversal transmodern future, where imperialism no longer has the power to marginalize and dehumanize Latin American and oppressed peoples worldwide.

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