

Decolonial theories: origin, categories, and critical intents*

Teorías decoloniales: origen, categorías e intenciones críticas

Teorias decoloniais: origem, categorias e intenções críticas

[Traducciones]

Damián Pachón Soto, autor**

Karen Yolima Torres Tafúr, traductora***

Citar como:

Pachón Soto, D. (2023). Decolonial theories: Origin, categories, and critical intents (K. Y. Torres Tafúr, Trad.). *Análisis*, 55(102).

<https://doi.org/10.15332/21459169.8603>



Abstract

This paper presents the epistemic and political proposal of the Modernity/Coloniality group. I display the conformation of the group, its members and principal conceptual and theoretical elaborations. The essay exposes with thoroughness the contribution of collective Modernity/Coloniality, in special, its critic of modernity and the epistemic colonialism which Europe and the named First World has put under the “periphery”.

Keywords: Group Modernity/Coloniality, colonialism, Enrique Dussel, Walter Mignolo, Anibal Quijano, Arturo Escobar, epistemic.

* This article is an update by the author of the text "Nueva perspectiva filosófica en América Latina: el grupo Modernidad/Colonialidad", published in the journal *Ciencia Política*, 3(5), 8-35 <https://doi.org/10.15446/cp>

** Universidad Industrial de Santander, Colombia. Ph.D. in Philosophy. Colombian philosopher, researcher in the areas of Latin American and Colombian philosophy. Member of the Colombian Society of Philosophy, visiting Professor at Foreign Studies University of Kobe, Japan. Email: dpachons@uis.edu.co; ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9055-0118>

*** Degree in Philology and Languages: English from Universidad Nacional de Colombia and Master in Translation from Universidad Autónoma de Manizales. Email: kytorrest@gmail.com

Resumen

Este artículo presenta las propuestas epistémicas y políticas del grupo Modernidad/Colonialidad. Se describe la formación del grupo, sus miembros y sus principales desarrollos conceptuales y teóricos. El ensayo ofrece una exploración exhaustiva de las contribuciones realizadas por el colectivo Modernidad/Colonialidad, en particular su crítica a la modernidad y al colonialismo epistémico impuesto por Europa y el denominado Primer Mundo sobre la “periferia”.

Palabras clave: Grupo Modernidad-Colonialidad; colonialismo; Enrique Dussel; Walter Mignolo; Anibal Quijano; Arturo Escobar; epistemología.

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta a proposta epistêmica e política do Grupo Modernidade/Colonialidade. Ele descreve a formação do grupo, seus membros e as principais elaborações conceituais e teóricas. O ensaio apresenta em detalhes a contribuição do coletivo Modernidade/Colonialidade, em especial sua crítica à modernidade e ao colonialismo epistêmico a que a Europa e o chamado “primeiro mundo” submeteram a “periferia”.

Palavras-chave: Grupo Modernidade/Colonialidade, colonialismo, Enrique Dussel, Walter Mignolo, Anibal Quijano, Arturo Escobar, epistemologia.

Presentation

The main problem of modern Western philosophy, therefore, lies in the selective form of its radical skepticism: in the fact that it never seriously or systematically questioned coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 157).

This essay introduces a new philosophical and political movement that emerged in Latin America, the Modernity/Coloniality Group (MC). I will divide this essay into two parts to achieve such a goal. In the first part, I will present the group, its members, its main characteristics, and its place in the philosophical panorama of the 20th century. In the second part, I will present the conceptual bases of the group, the main theoretical contributions, and its critical thinking. It will also deal with concepts such as the world-system, the myth of modernity, the coloniality of power, the coloniality of knowledge, epistemic violence, zero point, and the coloniality of being.

The Modernity/Coloniality Group

In a paper presented at the Third International Congress of Latin Americanists in Amsterdam (July 2002), Arturo Escobar, a Colombian anthropologist and professor at the University of North Carolina delivered the lecture “Worlds and knowledge in another way,” in which he broadly introduced the MC Group¹. The lecture title is relevant because, in my opinion, it contains two core aspects regarding the group’s work: “Worlds and knowledge in another way,” which refers precisely to a utopia where a better world and a new epistemological project are sought. Both cases are alternatives to Eurocentric modernity in their civilization project and their epistemological proposals.

The group is made up of several intellectuals from Latin America. Some reside in their respective countries, others in the United States. It is heterogeneous and transdisciplinary. They share a common conceptual heritage, carry out research, engage in joint publications, attend events, and frequently meet to discuss their contributions. In the MC Group, there are also intellectuals who are engaged in activism or committed to political movements, social movements, NGOs, etc. Hence, they are not conventional philosophers who are locked and isolated in their libraries and, from there, with their books, conceptualize the divine and the human. This does not mean that the individual work of the philosopher lacks value; in fact, it does have value. Actually, the great philosophical systems of the past were built individually. However, in the case of the MC Group, what nowadays has been called *transdisciplinarity*, *i.e.*, the confluence of the disciplines for the study of a particular object, is practiced. We no longer work monolithically in compartments. We approach the object of study from different angles and perspectives. It is no longer exclusion but the active inclusion of different types of knowledge in research that prevails. Therefore, in the group, we find philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, semiologists, etc.

It should be noted, then, that the group discusses the individual contributions of its members and debate the new resulting concepts; if applicable, they are welcomed by the group. As a result, we find concepts that become popular among the members. Subsequently, we can find some outstanding individuals and others who play minor roles in the collective regarding participation or theoretical contributions. Undoubtedly, the outstanding individuals of the collective are the Argentine philosopher Enrique Dussel; the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano;

¹ <http://www.decoloniality.net/files/escobar-tabula-rasa.pdf>

and the Argentine-American semiologist and cultural theorist Walter D. Mignolo, who have contributed the concepts that have become the foundations for the other members. There is a second level of members who, likewise, have made relevant contributions, but their work already incorporates the contributions of the previous triad. The Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gómez, the Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar, the Venezuelan sociologist Edgardo Lander, the Venezuelan anthropologist Fernando Coronil, the Puerto Rican philosopher Nelson Maldonado Torres, the Puerto Rican sociologist Ramón Grosfoguel and the American linguist Catherine Walsh, who works from the perspective of cultural studies in Ecuador, are among them. Other intellectuals close to the group or who represent new generations are Oscar Guardiola Rivera—a Colombian philosopher—, Zulma Palermo, Freya Schiwy, Juliana Flórez, and Mónica Espinosa. At this point, the dialogue, contributions, and joint academic activities that the main members of the group have jointly carried out with the American sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein deserve acknowledgment.

Why the modernity/coloniality paradigm? The answer is simple, although the conceptual wealth that arises from this paradigm is complex and analytically useful, coloniality is constitutive of modernity and not derivative (Mignolo, 2005, 61, translation). This is a basic postulate of the group useful to demystify the simplistic and Eurocentric reading, where colonialism emerges from modern logic and, at most, provides only resources and labor for the constitution of global capitalism. In fact, it is a horizontal process: without coloniality, there is no modernity and vice versa. Modernity and coloniality are two sides of the same coin. One is inconceivable without the other. Let us say, for now, that thanks to coloniality, Europe was able to produce human sciences as a single model—although not in a causal, but in an interdependent relationship—, which is valid, universal, and objective to produce knowledge. At the same time, it discarded all the peripheral epistemologies. At the base of the group there is, therefore, a deconstructive reading of the traditional vision of modernity, special attention to colonialism, to the cultural and epistemic subalternation of non-European cultures, and critique of Eurocentrism, as Arturo Escobar pointed out in the lecture above.

It was also necessary to explain the reason for the term “coloniality” mentioned in the paradigm and to differentiate it from the term “colonialism.” According to Aníbal Quijano (2007), they are two related but different concepts. Colonialism refers to a pattern of domination and exploitation where

[...] the control of the political authority, of the production resources, and the work of a given population is held by another of a different identity, whose headquarters are, moreover, in another territorial jurisdiction. But it does not always, or necessarily, involve racist power relations. *Colonialism* is obviously older, while *coloniality* has proven to be deeper and more enduring over the past 500 years than colonialism. But the latter was undoubtedly engendered within the former. Even more, without colonialism, coloniality could not have been imposed on intersubjectivity in such a rooted and prolonged way. (p. 93).

For his part, Nelson Maldonado Torres, perhaps more clearly, although following Quijano, has differentiated them as follows:

Colonialism denotes a political and economic relationship in which the sovereignty of one people resides in the power of another people or nation, which constitutes such a nation in an empire. Conversely, coloniality refers to a pattern of power that emerged as a result of modern colonialism. Still, instead of being limited to a formal relationship of power between two peoples or nations, it refers to how work, knowledge, authority, and intersubjective relations are articulated with each other through the world capitalist market and the idea of race. Thus, although colonialism precedes coloniality, coloniality survives colonialism. *It is kept alive in learning manuals, in the criterion for good academic work, in culture, in common sense, in peoples' self-image, in the aspirations of subjects, and in many other aspects of our modern experience. In a sense, we breathe coloniality in modernity daily* (Quijano, 2007, p. 131, highlighted outside the text).

This shows that colonialism is much more than a political, military, legal, or administrative imposition. Colonialism reaches deeper layers in the form of coloniality and still survives despite the decolonization or emancipation of the Spanish colonies in the 19th century or those of Asia and Africa in the 20th century. The MC Group wants to show that despite the end of modern colonialisms —such as those in America, Asia, or Africa— coloniality survives. At this point, it is necessary to remember that with the legal-political emancipation of Africa or Asia, a process that culminated in the 60s, we began to speak of the post-colonial era. The impressive number of emerging studies seemed to indicate the end of colonialism since times were already “beyond” it. However, while that traditional “external” colonialism ended, the subjective, imaginary structures and epistemological colonization survived. That is why the cited authors have claimed that coloniality survived colonialism. However, the coloniality that survived is redesigned and readapted in postmodern post-Fordist capitalism, but it does not disappear. This new coloniality is what some authors of

the group call post-coloniality; ultimately, a post-modern coloniality that has adapted in the latest version of global capitalism, in the era of information and knowledge, in the era of biotechnology, genetic engineering, patents, transgenics, etc. This modern imperial coloniality was transformed into post-modern global coloniality (post-coloniality) because of the old, unequal, and hierarchical relations between the center and periphery. For example, the relations between Britain and India still remain, but they are globally redesigned. This is evident in the undervaluation of traditional knowledge, the exploitation of flora and fauna in third-world countries, and the monopoly of GMOs by multinationals, etc. (Castro, 2005a, pp. 74 et seq.).

Now, what schools of thought are considered by the group members as fundamental? By tracing the theoretical sources from which the collective feeds, we find typically Latin American schools, as well as European and North American schools, such as liberation theology, dependence theory, philosophy of liberation, post-colonial studies, cultural studies, subordinate studies, Marxism, debates in Latin America on modernity and post-modernity, etc. In fact, it is a broad perspective enriched by the dialogue the authors have had with intellectuals from the so-called third world, Europe, and the United States.

Despite the philosophical and thinking schools that nourish the group, it is pertinent to clarify some aspects since the relationship with representatives of other schools, even among them, has been theoretically conflicting and, at the same time, has incidentally contributed to the serious and critical debate of perspectives. In a presentation by Santiago Castro-Gómez and Ramón Grosfoguel, the limitations of the two views that have normally been opposed were highlighted. However, considering exceptions and nuances, both have unilateral approaches. The first one is the perspective of the “world-system,” where the majority of its members adopt a position that prioritizes economic structures, the international division of labor, and the strategic military dominance in the process of capitalism accumulation on a global scale and in its reading of colonialism. From this perspective, it is thought that discourses, the symbolic, and imaginaries belong to the superstructure and, therefore, are derived from the economic-political base. The second one is related to Anglo-Saxon post-colonial studies and cultural studies that generally ignore, pretermite or undervalue the economic-political aspects and prioritize discourse analysis, the symbolic, and the formation of subjectivity. In this regard, the two cited authors have said:

The critique from cultural studies and *postcolonial studies* characterizes the modern/colonial world-system as a system of cultural significations. They believe that semiotic spheres such as mass media imaginaries and “discourses about the other” are an overdetermining element of the economic-political relations of the capitalist system and that the struggle for the social and political hegemony of the system necessarily passes through the control of these semiotic codes. For them, economic and political relations do not make sense in themselves but *acquire meaning* for social actors from specific semiotic spaces. (Grosfoguel and Castro-Gómez, 2007, p. 16).

They add,

The fact is that world-system theorists have difficulty thinking about culture, while Anglo-Saxon authors of post-coloniality have difficulty conceptualizing political-economic processes (Grosfoguel and Castro-Gómez, 2007, p. 16).

Regarding these two reductionisms or unilateral views, the MC Group proposes the union of both perspectives, that is, they postulate that a reading of capitalism and colonialism must unite political, economic, and social aspects, as well as linguistic, semiotic, discursive, gender, and race ones, among others. Ultimately, they state that no group determines the other but that global capitalism constitutes a complex network of powers. Thus, capitalism is acknowledged to have diverse, heterogeneous, and multiple processes that make up a “structural heterogeneity” (Quijano, 2007). Many power devices converge here, for instance, classes, gender, race, and discourses embedded in horizontal networks, with no higher governing levels. Thinking capitalism in this way implies embracing what the authors call, following the Greek philosopher Kyriakos Kontopoulos, a “heterarchical thought” (Quijano, 2007, p. 18).

In addition, compared to Anglo-Saxon cultural and post-colonial studies, there is another radical difference in the MC Group. The former feed from postmodern sources and are discourses inscribed in that crisis of modernity patented since the 60s by social science in such a way that the Eurocentric imprint still marks them. For some, postmodernity, like Grosfoguel, (2007) “is a Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism” (p. 74). Its sources are, in part, the authors of this school and post-structuralism. The MC Group establishes its theoretical bases on the Latin American tradition, such as the theory of dependence —although they strongly criticize it—, the philosophy of liberation, and the theory of Participatory Action Research (PAR) by Orlando Fals Borda. However, its members are not deprived of the postmodern influence, which is notorious in the book *Critique of Latin American Reason* (1996) by Castro-Gómez.

Likewise, while the group welcomes Marxism for the analysis of the “European/Euro-American capitalist/patriarchal modern/colonial world-system,” it strongly criticizes its abstract universalism, its Eurocentrism, and its philosophy of history, as well as its negligence of the ethnic, discursive, and symbolic aspects:

What Marx maintains in common with the Western Bourgeois philosophical tradition is that his universalism, despite having emerged from a particular location—in this case, the proletariat—does not problematize the fact that this subject is European, masculine, heterosexual, white, Judeo-Christian, etc. Marx’s proletariat is a conflictive subject internal to Europe, which does not allow him to think outside the Eurocentric limits of Western thought. Neither cosmological and epistemological diversity nor the multiplicity of sexual, gender, racial, and religious power relations are incorporated or epistemically situated within his view. (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 69).

This set of aspects is what Castro-Gomez has called “Marx’s blind spot,” where he has also stressed that these are not important for the German philosopher simply because colonialism, which deals with them, belongs to premodern feudal relations and is a “moment” of communism so that it will disappear in the dialectic between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie (2005a, pp. 13-20).

Finally, it is necessary to state that the question of the name of their theories is quite problematic. The group shares theoretical aspects with “post-colonial theories,” which include Anglo-Saxon and subaltern post-colonial studies, but at the same time, it has great differences with them²; they share some theoretical bases, but the MC Group mainly feeds from Latin American and non-postmodern or post-structuralist theorists —an exception is Santiago Castro-Gómez—. Likewise, the MC Group has a different place of enunciation, Latin America, although part of its members works in universities in the United States, where a large part of the members of post-colonial studies also resides. That is why the MC Group has decided to enroll in what they call “decolonial theories.”

After introducing this working group, this “community of argumentation” (Escobar), its composition, its political, transdisciplinary, heterogeneous, critical,

² One of them is that the MC Group focuses on the colonial-modern heritage of Spain and Portugal in America from the 16th to the 20th century, while traditional post-colonial studies focus their work on the English and French colonialism of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The former place the latter within the Eurocentric tradition, as they share the classical vision, according to which modernity is represented in the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, while they place it in 1492. See, *Revista Nómadas*, nº 26, Bogotá, Universidad Central, 2007. In particular, the Publisher.

and Latin American character, the following section will present its fundamental conceptual and theoretical framework. It will also expand and precise much of what has been previously stated.

The conceptual apparatus of the Modernity/Coloniality Group

In non-Europe, non-European or non-white racial identities had been imposed. But they, like age or gender among Europeans, correspond to “natural” power differences between Europeans and non-Europeans. In Europe, modern institutions of authority, e.g., modern nation-states and their respective identities, are being established or already established. But in non-Europe, only tribes and ethnicities are perceived as the pre-modern past because they will be replaced in some future by nation-states “as in Europe.” Europe is civilized. Non-Europe is primitive. The rational subject is European. Non-Europe is a subject of knowledge. As appropriate, the science that will study Europeans will be called “sociology,” while the science that will study non-Europeans will be called “ethnography” (Quijano, 2007, p. 113).

This part aims to show the theoretical and conceptual framework of the MC Group. However, it is necessary to say that a finished presentation of the entire program would require more space or a study of different nature. That is why, perhaps, some concepts are omitted, but not the most important ones. After this explanation, we can start with the core concept that make the others emerge, *i.e.*, the “world-system” created by the American sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein in his monumental study *The Modern World-System* published in 1974. Wallerstein, greatly influenced by Fernando Braudel, changed the traditional perspective through which capitalism was seen. The contribution of the book consisted in pointing out that the world-system, understood as the set of networks and commercial circuits that emerged with the discoveries in the 15th and 16th centuries, helped to “deprovincialize” Europe. This perspective was considered because the interesting part in the future was the possibility to see the world relations of capital and the study of the peripheries, the semi-peripheries, and the centers. The book shows the momentum that capitalism took once the Mediterranean Sea was replaced by the Atlantic Ocean, with which history was made, for the first time, according to Dussel, *World History*. That is to say; the American sociologist took an essential step regarding the critique of

Eurocentrism, an aspect that will be of utmost importance in the work of the second Dussel³ after the 90s and in that of Anibal Quijano.

The second concept, anchored in the previous one, is the critique of Dussel's modernity or what he calls "the myth of modernity." The liberation philosopher wants to show that modernity is not the line that departs from Greece, Rome, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and European modernity. For the Argentinian, this is a Eurocentric vision, a self-image that Europeans created, particularly the German romanticism of the late 18th and early 19th centuries and philosophers such as Kant and Hegel. In this reading, modernity appears self-constituted, a product of itself, the result of intra-European processes and phenomena. This reading hides colonialism and the contribution of other cultures in the constitution of Europe. In other words, this vision generates Eurocentrism.

Accordingly, Dussel turns to the world-system concept to show that modernity is not the product of intra-European phenomena but a world experience, not a local one. It is global in the sense that it was formed thanks to maritime and commercial networks since 1492. Therefore, for the Argentinian, modernity was born in 1492 with the discovery of America, although it had its possibility in the European cities of the late Middle Ages. Dussel affirms:

We propose a second vision of "Modernity" in a global sense, and it would consist in defining, as a fundamental determination of the *modern* world, the fact of being (its States, armies, economy, philosophy, etc.) the "center" of World History. That is, empirically, there was never a World History until 1492 (the date of initiation of the world-system). Prior to this date, cultural empires or systems coexisted with each other. Only with the Portuguese expansion since the 15th century, which reached the Far East in the 16th century, and with the discovery of Hispanic America the entire planet becomes the "place" of "one" *World History* (Magellan-Elcano circumnavigation was completed in 1521) (Dussel, 2005, p. 46).

This means, simply, that the modern world was only possible with Europe as a "center." Still, that position was achieved only by Europe from 1492 because before, for example, it was larger and even more scientifically and technologically developed in the Muslim world, the one that invaded Constantinople in 1453 and

³ The first Dussel emphasized that European thought from the Greeks to Heidegger handled a totalizing and dominating ontology that concealed and exerted violence on otherness, the other (Dussel, 1983, 79 et seq.). However, in the second Dussel there was a shift from the ontological to the ethical and epistemological (Castro-Gómez, 2005a, 44-45). This does not imply that other concepts of the first Dussel have disappeared, simply many of them have been reformulated.

that contributed, to that invasion, among other things, to the discovery of America. For Dussel, Spain was the first “modern” nation to open the first modern stage of “global mercantilism.” Therefore, Dussel’s argument departs from many common interpretations. The Argentinian proposes the existence of two concepts of modernity. The first one begins in the “long 16th century” with the discoveries of Portugal, Spain, and Italy; the second one is made up of the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment of the 18th and 19th centuries. What Dussel has called the “second modernity” is the only modernity that Europe has recognized. But for Dussel, this second modernity would not have been possible without the processes that took place in the first modernity. In the second modernity, Spain, Italy, and Portugal were replaced by new imperial powers: Holland (17th century), France, and England. Besides, Descartes, for example, is “the product of a century and a half of Modernity: [it is] the outcome and not a starting point” (Dussel, 2005, p. 46). The Argentinian philosopher also highlights from this reading that only since 1492 does Europe locate other cultures as its periphery; it is to say that there is a peripheralization process of the other. Ethnocentrism arises with that process, which has, in fact, been characteristic of all cultures. However

[...] European modern ethnocentrism is the only one that *can* [thanks to History that now has a World character, D.P] pretend to relate to “universality-worldliness.” The “Eurocentrism” of Modernity precisely means confusing abstract universality with the concrete worldliness hegemonized by Europe as its center (Dussel, 2005, p. 48).

Europe managed to become a “center” thanks to the riches of America (Spain and Portugal) and the knowledge and experience acquired during the 16th¹ century, that is, thanks to the conquest. It was not with England or other countries that they entered the logic of colonialism a century later. This is the reason why Dussel will say that before the Cartesian *ego cogito*, the *ego conquiro* existed in Latin America. And that *ego conquiro* (I conquer) is synonymous with the violence inflicted on the conquered populations. Hence, the reading of modernity as violence against the other. Another aspect that will later appear invisible and called by the colonizer to emerge from the minority, from barbarism or savagery⁴. Europe thus appears with an internal rationality that is covertly irrational against

⁴ Later we will see how modernity as a paradigm of violence is fundamental in Maldonado-Torres for his theorization of the “coloniality of being”, a concept proposed by Mignolo but developed by the Puerto Rican.

the other on account of its saving mission or the pretension that the other passes through the same historical development stages. This is what Dussel has called “developmental fallacy,” which, of course, does not merely refer to economic concepts. It was thus that “Latin America enters Modernity [...] as the ‘other face’ dominated, exploited, concealed” (Dussel, 2005, p. 48).

Therefore, it is essential to mention the consequences derived from the “myth of modernity.” Dussel says the following:

- a. Modern civilization is self-understood as more developed and superior.
- b. This superiority forces the most primitive, rude, barbarian people to develop. That imperative appears as a moral requirement.
- c. The model of that development must be the same as the one followed by Europe.
- d. In this process, violence is embedded in the civilizing process. Violence against the barbarian who opposes civilization is justified.
- e. Modernity appears as a savior, but in this process, it creates victims (the colonized native, the African slave, women, and the destruction of the environment).
- f. The “barbarian” appears in this scheme as guilty because he opposes civilization, which in turn justifies the “innocence” of the modernizing enterprise.
- g. Finally, this civilizing character of modernity interprets sacrifices as inevitable. Barbarism, savagery, weakness, etc., justify these sacrifices because, ultimately, the benefit is, according to the colonizer, for the uncivilized, the premodern (Dussel, 2005, p. 49).

These aspects are fundamental to understanding the MC Group’s emancipatory project, but that is not the only purpose; the goal is also to understand that from this critique of modernity and Eurocentrism to the modern myth, a conceptual deepening that completes and overcomes the postulates of Dussel arises. I believe this is what authors like Mignolo, Quijano, and Castro-Gómez achieve.

At this point, it is pertinent to introduce the third fundamental concept of the group, that is, the “coloniality of power.” The Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano, who has also strongly criticized Eurocentrism, proposed the concept. Quijano is one of the group members that places the most emphasis on the economic issue, thereby correcting some of the shortcomings of traditional cultural and post-colonial studies. For many, including Castro-Gómez, this is the “key” concept of the MC Group. This centrality occurs because the concept

allows an analysis of power that exceeds Foucault's perspective, mainly because it defines a control structure of subjectivity since the 16th century and not since the 18th century, as the French philosopher showed. Additionally, it places the "racial dimension of biopolitics" at the center of the analysis and, finally, draws the epistemic consequences of such conflict. It is an evidence of how the dominance that guarantees the incessant reproduction of capital in modern societies necessarily goes through the Westernization of the imaginary (Castro-Gómez, 2005a, p. 58).

Consequently, the "coloniality of power" is, above all, a structure of domination used to subdue the population of Latin America after the conquest. Hence, coloniality is related to the invasion of the imaginary of the other, in this case, its Westernization. There is domination through a discourse inserted into the world of the colonized people but also reproduced in the locus of the colonizer. In this way, the colonizer destroys the imaginary of the other, makes it invisible, or subalternizes it, while, by denial, he reaffirms his own. Thus, the life of the colonized people is transformed, and consequently, their worldview of the dominant culture is internalized. The coloniality of power represses the ways of producing knowledge, imaginaries, the symbolic world, and the images of the colonized people and imposes new ones. The concept refers to various aspects, such as the naturalization of the invader's imagination, the epistemic subordination of the other, and the fetishism that the colonialist manages to create from his own culture. This last idea implies that the colonialist culture appears as seduction, hence the snobbery that seeks to imitate it (Castro-Gómez, 2005a, p. 60). I think this explains the snobbery of the Colombian aristocracies of the 19th century, when they wanted to emulate the dresses, manners, and even the language of the French that José María Vergara and Vergara masterfully described in his writing *The Three Cups*:

Casimiro Viñas was called Casimiro de la Vigne, and as he had no nickname before, he was called like that for *secula seculorum*. The waiter was talented and made a fool of himself; he spent a semester getting angry every time his ridiculous last name was taken away and given his elegant nickname. To contradict him, the other boys only called him de la Vigne. At the end of the semester, the rascal Casimir faked that he accepted the nickname to please them and began to sign with that nickname. This is how he managed to be baptized with the name he wanted. That surname gave him a good figure and a sympathetic character; he has entered all the halls of the so-called high society among us (1967, p. 31).

The Colombian critic Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot called Rastacuerism this type of simulation (Pachón, 2015); he took the term from Rubén Darío. This Rastacuerism, so typical of the Bogotá and Latin American aristocracies, represents the consequence of the coloniality of power described above, namely, that “Cultural Europeanization became an aspiration.”

The coloniality of power built the subjectivity of the “peripheralized.” Therefore, it is necessary to go to the basis of the concept, that is, to the notion of race. Only in this way the complex relations between race, color, the occidentalization of the imaginary, epistemic subordination, and world capitalism are elucidated. Then, it is essential to break down the concept of Anibal Quijano.

According to the Peruvian sociologist, although it is possible to trace racial categorizations in the Middle Ages, it is in the 16th century that the problem appears in the foreground.

In its modern sense, the idea of race has no known history before America. Perhaps it originated as a reference to the phenotypic differences between conquerors and conquered, but what matters is that it was very soon built to reference supposed differential biological structures between these groups (Quijano, 2005, p. 202).

For Quijano, it is clear that the idea of race was applied first to natives than to blacks and that the concept of “white” is perhaps a British or American invention since there is no record, according to him, of such uses in the 16th century. It is clear, moreover, that the concept of race is an abstraction, an invention, that has nothing to do with biological processes and does not attest, for example, to greater or lesser intelligence. The union of color and race was created, then, in the 16th century.

What is relevant here is to show how the concept of race plays a fundamental role in the development of modern capitalism. “In America, the idea of race was a way of conferring legitimacy on the relations of domination imposed by conquest.” It was a way of justifying the old notions of inferiority and superiority. With the concept of race, some human groups appear inferior, not only phenotypically, but their cultural productions and knowledge are also inferior. And this classification of the world’s population will play a key role in budding capitalism. First, the concept will allow a “world classification of the population,” where the colonized people are the producers of raw materials and those who facilitate labor. It is a worldwide form of control of labor and its products in favor of emerging capitalism.

But the concept of race had other consequences: it produced a racial division of labor and a racial division of wages. Whites did not do ignoble trades and received wages; while natives were subjected to servitude, blacks were enslaved, and, of course, wages were a monopoly of the Spanish colonizer. The wage was the aspect that articulated all those relationships. In Europe, wage labor allowed a greater dynamism of capitalism. According to Quijano:

This coloniality of labor control determined the geographical distribution of each form integrated into world capitalism. In other words, it decided the social geography of capitalism: capital, as the social relation of control of wage labor, was the axis around which all other forms of control of labor, its resources, and its products were articulated [...]. But at the same time, this specific social relationship was geographically concentrated in Europe, above all, and socially placed among Europeans throughout the world of capitalism. To that extent, Europe and Europeans became the center of the capitalist world (Quijano, 2005, pp. 228 & 221).

The concept of race yielded another consequence that has already been mentioned and which is also at the basis of the concept of the coloniality of power. It was not only a question of European ethnic superiority but also of epistemic superiority. All forms of native and black knowledge production and other cultures afterward were considered useless. They were only myths, pre-rational knowledge, magic, etc. In this sense, Europe inflicted what Castro-Gomez (2005), following the Hindu theoretician Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, called “epistemic violence,” which in a strict sense is best described with the terms coined by the Venezuelan sociologist Edgardo Lander when he called these same phenomena “coloniality of knowledge” (p. 24). So, the coloniality of power implies the coloniality of knowledge. This is what Quijano (2005) tells us: Europe also concentrated under its hegemony the control of all forms of control of subjectivity, culture, and especially knowledge, and the production of knowledge (p. 209). Additionally, later we will see how the concept of “epistemic violence” is related to Castro-Gomez’s concept of “the zero point.” It is possible to affirm, once and for all, that all this reflection on the epistemological hegemony of modernity, and its epistemic racism, led the group to propose “other” forms of knowledge and create the social sciences restructuring program in Latin America.

Mignolo (2005), an active group member, has theorized —by speaking to the imaginary— the topic of Occidentalism (pp. 55 et seq.) and Orientalism. In the case of Orientalism, the Argentinian author does not share with Edward Said, a Palestinian author expert in post-colonial studies, the affirmation according to

which the West is defined as opposed to the East. The reason is that this happened in the 19th century, then Said continues to maintain a Eurocentric perspective since he only recognizes the “second modernity” and the discourses on the other forged by France and England, ignoring the first modernity theorized by Dussel and the discourses on the other produced in the 16th and 17th centuries. Said ignores the first universalist discourse with which Europe builds the other and understands itself at the same time. Moreover, Occidentalism did not emerge in the face of Europe. Still, because America was recognized as an extension of Europe and not as its other exterior, it created an internal differentiation. That is notorious with the term Western Natives used to call the New World. Therefore, the Occidentalist discourse precedes the one mentioned by Said.

The convergent view between Said and Mignolo is the recognition that a discourse and the implantation of an imaginary are required to sustain a relationship of coloniality. Politico-military domination is not enough. Besides, Said, following Foucault, has given the MC Group the idea of the relationship between the birth of the human sciences and their correspondence with colonialism. Next, we will deal with this issue and emphasize the link between the human sciences, the nation-state emergence in Europe, and capitalism.

For Wallerstein, Dussel, and Mignolo, the modern nation-state must be read from the perspective of the world-system. In fact, it is the nation-state that marks the modern project, described by Weber as a rationalization of life and disenchantment with the world⁵. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber (1997) claims: the motto of all research on rationalism, this simple proposition, which is often forgotten, should be included: it is possible to ‘rationalize’ life from fundamentally different points of view and in very different directions (p. 80). Rationalization is the task of the State. To achieve this, it had to homogenize the lives of people and to create a social synthesis and a specific subject to shape the nation. The State had to form specific identities that would enable it to carry out its political, social, and, of course, economic programs and projects. According to Weber himself, the relationship between the State and capitalism was one of interdependence. Foucault called it governmentality. In this

⁵ From the perspective of Dussel and the MC Group, the interpretation from Weber to Habermas, through the Frankfurt School, moves in the perspective of Eurocentric social science. They assume that there was a continuous process of rationalization from traditional to modern societies or, in Marxist terms, from pre-capitalist society to capitalist society, ignoring coloniality, the complex processes that consolidated world capitalism and modernity itself and, worse, legitimizing the violence exerted on those to whom Europe had to modernize.

task, the State realized its need to manage the social sciences. They served as a useful tool to establish their hegemony over society. Castro-Gomez (2005c) says:

The birth of the social sciences is not an *additive* phenomenon to the frameworks of political organization defined by the nation-state. It was *constitutive* of that framework. To govern the social world, one first had to generate a platform from which it could be scientifically observed. Without the aid of the social sciences, the modern state would not be able to have control over the lives of people, define long- and short-term collective goals, or construct and assign to its citizens a cultural identity. The restructuring of the economy according to the new demands of international capitalism, the redefinition of political legitimacy, and even the identification of the peculiar character and values of each nation, all required a scientifically endorsed representation of how social reality “functioned” (p. 147).

The social sciences were related in their matrix to capitalism: they sought to adjust the lives of men to the apparatus of production. That was precisely what Foucault showed (2000, p. 111 et seq).

The social sciences organized by the modern state played a fundamental role in the invention of the other. This is where *Orientalism*, a book by Edward Said, published in 1978, plays an important role. The author pointed out that colonialism had a cognitive dimension, which is equivalent to saying that there was a “colonial discourse” of the human sciences, but Michel Foucault did not realize it. Moreover, Said made his reading from the French philosopher; that is, he placed the problem in the 18th and 19th centuries, the “second modernity,” without realizing that the problem had occurred at least two centuries earlier⁶. The sciences created, for example, the notion of progress. Ethnography, in carrying out comparative studies, created the vision that certain cultures belonged to the past of Europe. Therefore, the path from that barbarity to the present state of European culture was called progress. Today, we know the effects that this idea has had on the third world in the version of economic development, for example. With the idea of progress, Europe created a timeline where it appeared at the top. This meant delegitimizing spatial coexistence. That is to say, a mechanism of power operated there because if all the people existed then at the same time, for

⁶ Mignolo has shown how Renaissance humanism in the 16th century should be viewed from the perspective of the world-system. To prove it, it would be enough to mention the Valladolid debate between Las Casas and Sepúlveda, as well as the Montaigne *Trials*. The invisibility of the contribution of colonialism to that humanism is what the Argentinian has called “the dark side of the Renaissance”, as well as coloniality, which is different from colonialism, as already pointed out, is the “dark side” or the “hidden face” of modernity.

example, in the 17th century, although in different geographical spaces, why assume that some cultural forms were superior to others? In fact, there was an assessment based on ethnocentrism whose background had the idea of race, with which the other was subalternized and considered pre-modern, barbaric, wild, and uncivilized, as Quijano showed.

The relationship between the social sciences and nation-state and colonialism is clear: thanks to the social sciences, Europe was built backlit. This is clear in the idea of progress that invaded science, philosophy, and economics from the 17th century (Castro-Gómez, 2005b, pp. 21-42). This is how these sciences appear deprived of their “objectivity” and purity because what comes to light is that they were “ideological devices” generated within what Mignolo has called the “modern/ colonial world-system.” As a corollary, through Castro-Gómez, the following can be emphasized:

The social sciences function structurally as an ideological apparatus that, inside, legitimized the exclusion and discipline of those people who did not conform to the profiles of subjectivity that the State needed to implement its modernization policies. In contrast, outside [in its colonial relationship, D.P], the social sciences legitimized the international division of labor and the inequality of the terms of exchange between the center and the periphery, which means the great social and economic benefits that the European powers obtained from the domination over their colonies. The production of inward alterity and the production of outward alterity were part of the same power device. The coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge were located in the same genetic matrix (Castro-Gómez, 2005c, p. 154).

For Castro Gómez, since ethnography, geography, anthropology, paleontology, archaeology, and history study the past of civilizations, their cultural products and institutions allowed comparisons with respect to the European world and, therefore, justified colonialism. What is interesting here is that the canon, the mold, the measure, and the pattern of comparison is that of the “center” of world history, that is, Europe, where the rest was naturally inferior. That is, the other was seen as mere nature, a vision that became popular in the 18th century and that has its echoes in Hegel. But the matter was not new. The other is “naturalized” as early as the 16th century. Las Casas, for example, claimed that great Mexican architecture proved that natives were men of culture. Still, Sepúlveda claimed that spiders and bees could build architectures that not even man could imitate, yet they were animals.

There is a fifth fundamental concept of the MC Group related to the already discussed topic of sciences, and that serves to explain, above all, what can be called the “Eurocentric epistemic hegemony” over the rest of the world. This is the concept of the “*hybris* of the zero point” by the Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gómez. The concept could be related to that of coloniality of power or even subsumed in that of coloniality of knowledge, but given its enlightening importance for the birth of the social sciences in Europe and its subsequent monopoly on the other ways of producing knowledge, the epistemic hegemony produced during modernity and the relationship with colonialism, we will deal with it here independently. In addition, this concept has served the Colombian philosopher to raise a critique of the university and, at the same time, to propose a restructuring or re-foundation of it.

To elucidate the concept’s origin, it is necessary to refer to Descartes and the 17th century, when many things had changed. There were interesting advances in physics, mathematics, astronomy, navigation, and technique, and world capitalism was in the making. It was all this spirit, forged since 1492, that made possible, as Dussel maintained, a Descartes and, therefore, the birth of modern science. It is precisely this science that emerges strongly in this century with authors such as Bacon, Galileo, Spinoza, etc. This science is, in its origins, intertwined with philosophy. However, the gaze on the world begins to change with it. The medieval world begins to tear, and a new conception of the world is born. Danilo Cruz Vélez, the forerunner of philosophy in Colombia, will say that with Descartes, the nascent world found security. This security was installed in subjectivity, which would trigger a process that lasted until Husserl (Sierra, 1996, p.95). In fact, what Castro-Gómez wants to emphasize is that the paradigm of how the world is observed changes completely with Descartes. In short, men require clear and distinct truths, which take them away from the false. Mathematics becomes the prototype of knowledge. Reason settles now where God was previously installed. The reason became the new God, and with it, the mathematization of the cosmos and nature arose, which is now *res extensa*, but ultimately, the claim to regulate equally the *polis*, the community, and society came from there. This project is what the Colombian philosopher, following Stephen Toulmin, calls the “cosmopolis” project (2005b, pp. 23-24).

The fact that knowledge is based on mathematics is the guarantee of truth, of the unquestionable. That is why it was necessary, Castro-Gomez says, to get rid of common opinions and assume reason to arrive at the truth. It is necessary to consider, by the way, that this was Hegel’s postulate in the introduction of the

Phenomenology of the Spirit (1807) when he enunciated his program of elevating philosophy to science. Descartes, therefore, announced the program where opinions, *doxa*, error, and uncertainty, disappeared. He sought absolute security in the certainty that the “I think, then I exist” threw at him. That postulate, together with the dualism *res cogitans-res extensa*, led to the place, cultures, and sites of enunciation being made invisible. The universality of knowledge could not be linked to the plurality of spaces and cultures⁷. That secure point, from which everything is observed, everything is looked at, is what Santiago Castro-Gómez calls: the “hybris of the zero point” (2005b, p. 25). This means that Descartes founds a new beginning and

Starting all over again means having the power to name the world for the first time; to draw borders to establish which knowledge is legitimate and which is illegitimate, defining, for example, which behaviors are normal and which are pathological. Therefore, the zero point is the absolute epistemological beginning, but also that of economic and social control over the world. Placing oneself at the zero point is equivalent to having the power to institute, to represent, to construct a vision about the social and natural world recognized as legitimate and endorsed by the State. It is a representation in which “enlightened men” define themselves as neutral and impartial observers of reality (Castro-Gómez, 2005, p. 25).

This is Descartes’ great contribution. The term *hybris* serves to refer precisely to the sin committed by humans in wanting to be gods. Descartes committed that sin, for his *ego cogito* replaced the observant, meaningful, and controlling gaze of the reality of the medieval God. Thus, there is a substitution: the “the-politics of knowledge” of the Middle Ages is replaced by the “ego-politics of knowledge” of the modern/colonial world-system (Mignolo).

Descartes, thus, founded universal reason, a reason where knowledge is self-produced. The subject of that knowledge is decorporalized, decontaminated. He is located in the place where everything can be seen, but at the same time in the place where he cannot be seen. It is the absolute epistemic place. Ramón

⁷ Husserl, in the 20th century and at the end of his life, in his book *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, criticized modern science, especially Galileo, who made abstraction from the world of life and detached himself from it, from the sensitive. That is, Husserl brought to mind the mathematical abstraction detached from the material world. Science forgot that and that oblivion caused, in part, “the crisis”. For Husserl, the world of life is something concrete, the source of any cognitive enunciation about the world, which is why it cannot be disregarded. This fact refutes the presumed subjectivism that has bequeathed it to the father of phenomenology and that he himself rejects in his cited book (Husserl, 1991, 28 and 130).

Grosfoguel rightly said: It is a philosophy where the epistemic subject has no sexuality, gender, ethnicity, race, class, spirituality, language, or epistemic location in any power relationship and produces truth from an inner monologue with himself. Therefore, “the epistemological myth of Eurocentric modernity of a self-generated subject with access to universal truth, beyond space and time [...] through a blindness to his own spatial and corporeal location within the cartography of global power” (Grosfoguel, 2007, 64, translation).

This indicates that when Descartes postulates the *ego cogito*, he is not thinking about other cultures, or other knowledge, or other ways of producing knowledge. These are entirely covered up. He is not thinking that his philosophy is being done from Europe. However, it gives it universal value, perhaps because he has internalized the vision that non-Europe does not have rationality but magical, prerational knowledge. Hence, the first lines that open the *Discourse of the method* do not really refer to everyone but to the male Europeans. It is pertinent to remember the passage: “Good sense (reason) is the best-distributed thing in the world.” Later he will say that this “good sense” is “by nature equal in all men” (Descartes, 1986, p. 69), which does not really refer to all men because the vision that Europe had of America at that time was the one disseminated by chroniclers, travelers, and clerics, where the native and the black were deliberately considered subhuman and barbarians, which is why we must “civilize” them.

For his part, the Puerto Rican philosopher Nelson Maldonado-Torres has taken the consequences of Cartesian philosophy to another level:

Below the “I think,” we could read “others don’t think,” and within “I am,” we can locate the philosophical justification for the idea that “others are not” or are devoid of being. In this way, we discover an unrecognized complexity of the Cartesian formulation: from “I think, then I am,” we are led to the most complex notion, but at the same time more precise, historically and philosophically: “I think” (others do not think or do not think properly), then I am (others are not or should not exist or are dispensable) (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 144).

Needless to say, this epistemic claim of the West, which flourished in early modernity, still persists. That is why many still consider philosophy only the one produced in Europe, science only the one produced in the laboratories of the first world, and non-knowledge is, therefore, produced by so-called traditional knowledge. The coloniality of power created an epistemic fetishism that emphasized the coloniality of knowledge above the rest of the world. Hence, the epistemic hegemony of Europe prevailed over the globe. This operation

demonstrated, as the MC Group has maintained, the existence of a “geopolitics of knowledge,” that is, a unique, objective, impartial, universal, and true knowledge produced and managed from Europe. But the consequences of the European epistemic deed are greater. Once the European sciences —born in the countries with the greatest development of capitalism, such as England, France, Germany, and Italy— were placed at the “zero point,” a colonial look on the world was scientifically legitimized, that is, since then colonialism appeared scientifically justified. In this way, for example, anthropology began to study cultures to compare them with European development and to legitimize the need to modernize its object of study. Nonetheless, anthropology also listened to other cultures and ways of life and broadened Europe’s gaze (Restrepo, 2007). The example of anthropology explains the emergence of studies in the third world. Sciences were avid for exoticness. About orientalism, Castro-Gómez (2005b) said:

European domination of the world required scientific legitimacy and this is where the emerging sciences of man begin to play a fundamental role: philology, archaeology, history, ethnology, anthropology, geography, paleontology. By dealing with the *past* of Eastern civilizations, these disciplines build *the* enlightened present of Europe (p. 45).

All this testified again and ratified the colonial foundation of the birth of sciences in modernity.

Furthermore, this epistemic violence also produced the subordination of languages. That is, linguistic and epistemic geopolitics operated after the 16th century and, in particular, during the second modernity (Garcés, 2007, pp. 217-242). Mignolo has maintained that colonial or imperial languages have been, in ancient times, Greek and Latin; in the first modernity, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish; and, in the second modernity, French, English and German. Europe also exercised a linguistic monopoly. It despised the languages of the aborigines and underestimated the ideas, imaginaries, and worldviews of the cultures themselves. In this process, cultures with writing systems prevailed over a graph and oral cultures. The latter were barbarized. In his book *On the Tragic Feeling of Life* (1913), the vitalist-Christian philosopher Miguel de Unamuno argued: the blood of the spirit is language (1983, p. 313). As a result of the physical and epistemic violence exerted by Europe, American and African cultures bled to death, and with that blood, many spiritual manifestations disappeared.

Finally, only one of the most significant concepts of the MC Group remains to be explained⁸. It is a concept that synthesizes a large part of the previous ones because it denotes and contains all the practical consequences that derive from them. It is the inscription of the colonial exercise in the life and very existence of the colonized people. It is the concept of “coloniality of being” by the Puerto Rican philosopher Nelson Maldonado-Torres. He has built it through a dialogue with Heidegger, Levinas, Dussel, and Frantz Fanon, among others. Such a concept can be pondered as a synthesis.

Maldonado-Torres maintains that the being, as thought by Heidegger, is an exclusive being because it is the European being from the Greeks, which for the German philosopher was hidden by philosophy until the Modern Age. It was what Heidegger called the “forgetfulness of being.” However, the being of Heidegger does not include colonial experience, nor does it consider aspects such as race or gender. It is a European being. From this reflection, it is easy to accentuate something that Levinas and Dussel have insisted on: how that being negates the other, how it ignores otherness, and how it relegates the different, in the end, how it turns it into non-being, into nothing.

That denial of the other was a violent experience. Dussel has emphasized such violence born in modernity, which has its origin in the conquest. That is why Maldonado-Torres embraces the Dusselian concept of *ego conquiro* and relates it to the concept of *ego cogito*. The certainty of the conqueror being preceded the Cartesian certainty. Accordingly, the Puerto Rican turns to what Fanon, in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*, called a “Manichaeian colonial reality.” According to Fanon:

The colonial world is a Manichaeian world. It is not enough for the settler to delimit physically, that is to say, with the help of the army and the police force, the place of the native. As if to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation, the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil. Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values [...]. The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense, he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do

⁸ For some criticisms of decolonial thought, especially its totalizing reading of modernity and the modern project and some of its methodological proposals, you can consult (Castro-Gómez, 2019; Cadahia y Coronel, 2021).

with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers (2003, pp. 35-36).

That is, the colonizer disfigures and deforms the imaginary of the colonized people. It was what most Spaniards did with the natives. In this manicheization, the violence typical of the imperial ego, the imperial attitude of the *ego conquiro*, is inflicted.

The recurrence to the *ego conquiro* and the *ego cogito* aims to point out that before the methodical doubt in the field of knowledge about the self and the world, there was a doubt that preceded it. This doubt was based on the conquering self that in its violent action “doubted” the humanity of the conquered. That *ego conquiro* is represented by the Spaniards of the first modernity. That is why they doubted the humanity of natives. Hence, the debates about whether or not they had a soul. That attitude founded a form of skepticism that arose in front of the other, the different. It was a skepticism about their humanity, their status as men that belonged to the same species. It was a doubt about the other, the one that was dominated and that could be killed, humiliated, mistreated, and degraded because of his lack of humanity. That doubt was stronger and preceded Descartes. That doubt about the very humanity of the conquered is what the author calls “misanthropic Manichaeism,” a racist/ imperial misanthropism (2007, p. 134).

Manichaeism disfigures and distorts the reality of the colonized people. The *ego conquiro* imposed the non-ethics of war typical of every imperial conquering attitude. And since modernity is based on these conquests, this turns out to be the paradigm of war. Modernity is intrinsically violent. It is related to genocide, war, and physical and spiritual domination. The rape and murder of women, children, and men come from the conquest. Modernity as a paradigm of war can dispense with the other, making it disposable, dispensable. The colonized people in this logic appear as “the damned of the earth.” That is why “modern colonialism can be understood as condemnation or life in hell, characterized by the naturalization of slavery” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 137). In fact, for the philosopher, that control over non-Europeans and nature comes from the Cartesian mind/ body division. Thus, the other appeared as an object of domain, an object to be taken (as the philosopher says in the *Discourse on the method*), appropriated, and plundered.

What Maldonado-Torres has meant with the concept “coloniality of being” is the inscription in the daily experience of individuals in situations where life itself is in

constant danger and can be lost around the corner. It is the normalization of exceptional situations, converting the non-ethics of modern warfare into something habitual, which haunts us. It is when we live dominated, subjugated, and hopeless. The coloniality of being has historically been shown in the colonized Americans and Asians, in the “wretched” of Fanon on the dark continent, and in the victims of the Nazi holocaust. The coloniality of being is the “damaged life” that Adorno spoke of in *Minimal Morality*. The philosopher of the Frankfurt School described it when he wrote an already famous section, almost a cliché: “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today” (Adorno, 1984, p. 248). The coloniality of being kills the hope of living, kills utopia, corrodes desire, puts it on hold.

Mignolo, who proposed the concept, maintained that it was engendered by the coloniality of being and knowledge. That is why it is a synthesis concept, which, of course, has racism as one of its constituent elements; it manifests the reality of millions of children who starve in the third world, the reality of the indigent or the wrongly called “disposable” in our context, as well as the destruction of the planet, since environmental predation, the usurpation of genetic material for the use of multinationals only indicates that the coloniality of power, in these postmodern times, changes into the biocoloniality of power, that is, in the control and colonization of life itself (Cajigas-Rotundo, 2007, pp. 169 et seq.)⁹.

Referencias

- Adorno, T (1984). *Crítica cultural y sociedad*. Sarpe.
- Cadahia, L. y Coronel, V. (2021). Volver al archivo. De las fantasías decoloniales a la imaginación republicana. En Marey, Macarena (ed.), *Teorías de la república y prácticas republicanas* (pp. 59-98). Herder.
- Cajigas-Rotundo, J. (2007). La biocolonialidad del poder. Amazonía, biodiversidad y ecocapitalismo. En Santiago Castro-Gómez y Ramón Grosfoguel (comps.), *El giro decolonial. Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*. Universidad Javeriana-Instituto Pensar, Universidad Central-Iesco, Siglo del Hombre Editores.
- Castro-Gómez, S. (1996). *Crítica de la razón latinoamericana*. Puvill Libros.
- Castro-Gómez, S. (2005a). *La poscolonialidad explicada a los niños*. Universidad del Cauca.

⁹ In this conceptual journey I omit some important works that have been developed within the group, for example, Escobar's theoretical work on development, post-development and nature, as well as other contributions by Fernando Coronil.

- Castro-Gómez, S. (2005b). *La hybris del punto cero. Ciencia, raza e Ilustración en la Nueva Granada 1750- 1816*. Universidad Javeriana-Instituto Pensar.
- Castro-Gómez, S. (2005c). Ciencias sociales, violencia epistémica y el problema de la “invención del otro”. En E. Lander (comp.), *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas Latinoamericanas*. Clacso.
- Castro-Gómez, S. (2019). *El tonto y los canallas. Notas para un republicanismo transmoderno*. Universidad Javeriana.
- Descartes, R. (1986). *Discurso del método*. Alianza Editorial.
- Dussel, E. (1983). *Introducción a la filosofía de la liberación*. Editorial Nueva América.
- Dussel, E. (1992). Del descubrimiento al desencubrimiento. En *Nuestra América frente al V centenario*. Editorial El Búho.
- Dussel, E. (2005). Europa, modernidad y eurocentrismo. En E. Lander (comp.), *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas Latinoamericanas*. Clacso.
- Escobar, A. (s. d.). Mundos y conocimientos de otro modo.
<http://www.decoloniality.net/files/escobar-tabula-rasa.pdf>
- Fanon, F. (2003). *Los condenados de la tierra*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Foucault, M. (2000) *La verdad y las formas jurídicas*. Gedisa.
- Garcés, F. (2007). Las políticas del conocimiento y la colonialidad lingüística y epistémica. En S. Castro-Gómez y R. Grosfoguel (comps.), *El giro decolonial. Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo*. Universidad Javeriana-Instituto Pensar, Universidad Central-Iesco, Siglo del Hombre Editores.
- Grosfoguel, R. (2007). Decolonizando los universalismos occidentales: el plu-riversalismo transmoderno decolonial desde Aimé Césaire hasta los Zapatistas. En S. Castro-Gómez y R. Grosfoguel (comps.), *El giro decolonial. Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*. Universidad Javeriana-Instituto Pensar, Universidad Central-Iesco, Siglo del Hombre Editores.
- Husserl, E. (1991). *La crisis de las ciencias europeas y la fenomenología trascendental*. Editorial Crítica.
- Maldonado-Torres, N. (2007). Sobre la colonialidad del ser: contribuciones al desarrollo de un concepto. En S. Castro-Gómez y R. Grosfoguel (comps.), *El giro decolonial. Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*. Universidad Javeriana-Instituto Pensar, Universidad Centraliesco, Siglo del Hombre Editores.
- Mignolo, D. (2005). La colonialidad a lo largo y a lo ancho: el hemisferio occidental en el horizonte colonial de la modernidad. En E. Lander (comp.), *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas Latinoamericanas*. Clacso.
- Mignolo, D. (2007). El pensamiento decolonial: desprendimiento y apertura. En S. Castro- Gómez y R. Grosfoguel (comps.), *El giro decolonial. Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*. Universidad Javeriana-Instituto Pensar, Universidad Central-Iesco, Siglo del Hombre Editores.
- Pachón, D. (2015). *Estudios sobre el pensamiento filosófico latinoamericano*. Desde Abajo.

- Quijano, A. (2007). Colonialidad del poder y clasificación social. En S. Castro- Gómez y R. Grosfoguel (comps.), *El giro decolonial. Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*. Universidad Javeriana-Instituto Pensar, Universidad Central-Iesco, Siglo del Hombre Editores.
- Restrepo, E. (2007). Antropología y colonialidad. En Santiago Castro-Gómez y Ramón Grosfoguel (comps.), *El giro decolonial. Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*. Universidad Javeriana-Instituto Pensar, Universidad Central-Iesco, Siglo del Hombre Editores.
- Sierra Mejía, R. (1996). *La época de la crisis. Conversaciones con Danilo Cruz Vélez*. Universidad del Valle.
- Unamuno, M (1983). *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*. Sarpe.
- Vergara y Vergara, J. (1967). Las tres tazas. En *Cuadro de costumbres*. Biblioteca Shering Corporation USA de la Cultura Colombiana.
- Weber, M. (1997). *La ética protestante y el espíritu del capitalismo*. Editorial Península.